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The Heideggerian Legacy in Paul Tillich's Ontology and Theological Anthropology

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Dissertation

THE HEIDEGGERIAN LEGACY
IN PAUL TILlich’S ONTOLOGY AND THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

By

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(Order No. )

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Doctor of Theology

Boston University School of Theology, 2013

Major Professor: Dr. Robert Cummings Neville, Professor of Philosophy, Religion, and Theology

ABSTRACT

This dissertation demonstrates that Martin Heidegger’s fundamental ontology was a significant influence on Paul Tillich’s understanding of divine and human realities, by showing that Tillich adopted Heidegger’s concern for being and his approach to the question of being. Heidegger’s philosophical influence on Tillich’s thought has been well known. But the specific nature of this influence and its implications has not hitherto been documented. Neither has the issue received much attention in the secondary literature on Heidegger. The study consists of two
parts. The first (Chapters 2-3) provides an intensive historical and philosophical survey of the background of the Tillich-Heidegger encounters. The second part (Chapters 4-7) is an analysis of the origins and development of Tillich’s theological and philosophical thought particularly in terms of his anthropology and ontology under the influence of Heidegger. The second part highlights the Heideggerian claims of human existentiality inherent in Tillich’s theological system, as distinguished from Tillich’s own theological creativity and philosophical originality. Chapter 2 identifies Tillich’s concern with existentialism as Heideggerian. Chapter 3 investigates the decisive and historically unique period of encounter between Tillich and Heidegger, the years 1924-1925, when they both taught at the University of Marburg. Chapter 4 underscores the important elements of Heideggerian existentialism in Tillich’s early theological program. Chapter 5 illustrates the challenge of modern existentialism that Tillich confronted in the person of Heidegger and discusses Tillich’s subordination of his metaphysics of meaning to the Heideggerian metaphysics of being. Chapter 6 suggests that Tillich’s choice of existentialism is indebted to Heidegger’s critical analysis of the relationship between philosophy and theology. Chapter 7 explores a central aspect of Tillich’s theological anthropology, the concept of finitude, in relation to Heidegger’s project of existential analysis of Dasein. The study shows that the Tillich-Heidegger connection is not a mere coincidental structural similarity and that Tillich’s call for transcending theism reflects Tillich’s interpretation of Heidegger’s philosophy as theologically oriented. The study thereby establishes a point of departure from which to explore on a deeper level the philosophical foundation of Tillich’s theological endeavor and vision.
This study refers extensively to the relevant German works of Heidegger and Tillich in comparison with their renderings into English. Whenever possible, I will rely on the volumes of the critical edition of Heidegger’s collected works – the *Heidegger Gesamtausgabe* – as sources for the texts. The critical edition of Tillich’s writings – the *Gesammelte Werke* – were published in fourteen volumes between 1957 to 1974, in which *Systematic Theology* was reprinted in German translation. The value of this collection is clear, for the first edition of his *Systematic Theology* was that which he attempted to express in English what he meant in German. As John Dillenberger notes, “For Tillich, spoken English took precedence over English texts, and his knowledge of English became primarily that of a spoken idiom….Tillich’s English writings have

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1. Although there are many different approaches to phenomenological and hermeneutic research on Tillich in dialogue with Heidegger, some of these have become blurred due to multiple interpretations of Heidegger’s language in the translated materials. For example, Miles Groth says that the main cause of misunderstanding Heidegger is that translators have not achieved clarity about Heidegger’s fundamental words, an understanding of which is crucial to gaining access to his thought. See Miles Groth, *Translating Heidegger* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2004).

2. With the publication of Heidegger’s works in the *Gesamtausgabe*, a standard system of reference has become possible. The first volume of the *Gesamtausgabe* appeared in 1975, one year before Heidegger’s death.

3. This German edition does not include everything Tillich ever published, for Tillich rejected a good number of works as “occasional pieces.” Volume 14 only provides a textual-history of all the documents and an index. But the volume is particularly helpful because it has a special section describing where related materials on or by Tillich can be found.

4. Marion Pauck is correct to say that at some points “English had clarified his abstract ideas and made them more understandable.” Marion Pauck, preface to *Dynamics of Faith*, by Paul Tillich (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), xiii.
a grammatical anchorage in German.\textsuperscript{5} But it should be noted that, in accordance with Tillich’s wishes, articles originally written in German and translated into English, often with considerable changes, should take the English translation as the authoritative version for the \textit{Gesammelte Werke}.\textsuperscript{6} Tillich himself was part of the translation team.\textsuperscript{7} Of course, there were also problems in translating his English into German because of Tillich’s conceptual development within the English language. Translating his German writings into English also gave rise to new sources of error.\textsuperscript{8} Hence, the question of which edition is “truer” to Tillich’s original thought has no simple answer. Whenever necessary, therefore, I will carefully compare the German translation with the English source text. Secondary sources that I have consulted for this study include commentary, discussion, and scholarly journal articles. They will give this study a certain amount of historiographical relevance as well. And yet, my preliminary searching for secondary sources revealed limited publications specific to the subject matter of this study. Despite the consistent acknowledgement of the importance of Heidegger’s ontologico-phenomenological hermeneutics as a paradigm for Tillich’s philosophical theology, scholarly inquiries into the actual discussions


of this issue are few in number and limited in depth. Obviously, the primary sources will offer the most rewarding data for my investigation.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I employ the following abbreviations for the following frequently cited works. In references to these texts, a slash separates the pagination of the published English translation and that of the original German work. Translations are frequently modified.

**Abbreviations of Heidegger’s Works**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Editor(s)</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>CTP</td>
<td><em>Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning).</em> Translated by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.</td>
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| LH | “Letter on “Humanism.”” Translated by Frank A. Capuzzi, In *Pathmarks*, edited...


**PT**  “Phenomenology and Theology.” In *Pathmarks*, translated by James G. Hart and
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**Abbreviations of Tillich’s Works**

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Publisher/Year</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARAC</td>
<td>“Aspects of a Religious Analysis of Culture.” <em>Theology of Culture</em>, edited by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


BNB “To Be or Not to Be.” Time 73, no. 11, March 16, 1959, 46-52.


EAMA “Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art” In Paul Tillich on Art and Architecture,

**EARA**


**EP**


**EPE**


**ERS**


**GRE**


**GW1**


**GW9**


**GW12**


**HJ**


**HW2**


**IH**


**Kairos**


Perspectives Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology. Edited by Carl E. xxii


CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of Martin Heidegger has been a major factor in the development of Christian theology in the twentieth century. The present study seeks to demonstrate and establish clearly and in depth the influence of Heidegger’s existential philosophy on the theological anthropology and the understanding of divine reality of Paul Tillich. At every significant turn of its intellectual history, Christian theology has been closely allied with philosophical movements. The contemporary theological scene is no exception in this regard. A wide range of existential theological positions is apparent among the various Christian faith traditions held by those who have been associated with existentialism. The dominant developments in Protestant theology in the twentieth century were directly influenced by and bound up with existentialist philosophy.\(^1\)

Particularly through Tillich, Heidegger’s existential phenomenology\(^2\) and hermeneutical analysis of lived experience have had tremendous influence on contemporary Protestant theology

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\(^1\) Perhaps it is something of an anachronism today to work with such divisions as “Catholic” and “Protestant” in the theological enterprise, for the theologies (though not the politics) of the Churches have drawn much closer together since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

\(^2\) For early Husserl, phenomenology is a discipline that endeavors to describe how the world is constituted and experienced through conscious acts. Husserl’s “pure phenomenology” describes what is given to us in immediate experience without being obstructed by pre-conceptions and theoretical notions. In contrast, Heidegger’s “existential phenomenology” aims at describing how phenomena present themselves in lived experience, in human existence. The difference is that, in Husserl’s classical phenomenology, the world as an object is “in” the domain of the consciousness of transcendental subject, whereas Heidegger’s existential phenomenology describes the world in which consciousness makes its way. For Heidegger, it is not possible to talk about consciousness, or even “consciousness of,” without such a world in which Dasein is always already out there. According to Heidegger, Dasein as being-in-the-world is not a subject over against that world. “Subject and object,” writes Heidegger, “do not
and spirituality. Heidegger’s former student, colleague and lifelong friend, Hans-Georg Gadamer recalls that there was too much enthusiasm for Heidegger in the 1950s and too little interest in the 1960s and beyond. It seems that the dominant era of existentialism as a philosophical movement is now remembered as a brief scene in the history of philosophy. But the ever-widening impact of Heidegger’s philosophy presses theologians to come to terms with his contributions to theology. It is undeniable that the legacy of existential thought remains as a leading force and directs America’s so-called mainline Christian theology in the present century. One such example is the influence of Heidegger’s existential philosophy on the contemporary Protestant theology through Tillich.

The impact of Heidegger’s ontological explorations on Tillich’s philosophical theology is quite evident and merits more attention than it has thus far received in the literature. All in all, Heidegger’s influence on Tillich was extensive, and yet Tillich avoided a direct evaluation of the theological significance of Heidegger’s philosophy. A close examination of the foundational ideas of Tillich’s theological system and Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis of being will coincide with Dasein and the world.” BT 87/SZ 60. What Heidegger accuses Husserl of is the “failure to offer any adequate account of the mode access” a subject could have to the world. Søren Overgaard, *Husserl and Heidegger on Being in the World* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), 10. Husserl’s transcendental subjectivity is a whole which includes within itself the experiencing subject and its objectivity. Subjectivity, therefore, is not the center of Husserlian phenomenology. The later Husserl develops a more existentially oriented phenomenology. See for example his 1936 work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

demonstrate Tillich’s indebtedness to the philosophical apparatus of Heideggerian existentialism as distinguished from his own theological creativity and philosophical originality. This dissertation attempts to show the legacy of Heideggerian philosophy in Tillich’s theology. However, it does not suggest that Tillich was a Heideggerian. In Tillich’s writings, there is no special preference for Heidegger’s way of framing ontology. If anything, Heidegger is seen as one of many existentialist thinkers alongside Augustine, Schopenhauer, Schelling and Kierkegaard. The present investigation only traces and analyzes Tillich’s creative appropriation and interpretation of Heidegger’s philosophy. What motivated this study is the observation that those references to Heidegger in Tillich’s works do not depict Tillich’s dependence upon Heidegger’s thought, so much as his willingness to demonstrate and illustrate his own theological project in relation to its similarities with other thinkers, and therefore those critics who have dealt specifically with the relation of Tillich to Heidegger have either felt it unnecessary or have been unable to cite specific passages to illustrate Tillich’s attitude towards Heidegger’s philosophy, and others only see it as a coincidental structural similarity. In short, the goal of this study is to demonstrate that Heidegger is as influential upon Tillich’s theological and philosophical formation as other important thinkers were. More precisely, this study attempts

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4 “Theology” is a widely used term. Within the collection of theological subjects, I isolate philosophical theology for the purpose of this study. It is in this sense that the word “theology” will be used in this dissertation.

5 ST1, 62, 165.


to highlight the Heideggerian claim of human existentiality inherent in Tillich’s theological system. But it proposes neither a rejection nor elimination of Heidegger’s legacy in it. My immediate task is not to take sides, pro or contra. Neither is there an attempt here to refute one thinker by means of the other. As a result, this dissertation will bear two fruits: (1) a theological analysis of Heideggerian influence on Tillich’s theology and (2) a church historical report on the influence of existentialism on theology in the present time.

For Tillich, as for many other contemporary theologians, the doctrines of human existence and the structure of being are of central importance and constitute the basis of his whole theological system. Tillich adopted Heidegger’s concern for being – the ontological perspective which had been absent from theology as much as from philosophy in the early twentieth century – and his approach to being through a description of human existence. In addition to the overall structure of his theology, Tillich was influenced by Heidegger’s philosophy in many specific aspects of his theological system. In Tillich, “ontology” as his concern for being and “anthropology” as the human existential condition are the two poles that sustain his theological system, corresponding to Heidegger’s two major concerns, the question of being and a question about what it is to be human. Tillich correlates these two poles by his method of correlation in such a way that the questions posed by the human existential condition are answered by the revelation of the “divine Ground of being.”

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8 ST2, 9. Otto Piper, *Recent Developments in German Protestantism* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1934), 136, has said of Tillich that “among the postwar theologians [in Germany] he has had the clearest view of the impossibility of expressing Protestant faith with the usual theological methods.”
his ontology and anthropology is the reason to limit the scope of this study to the discussion of
the impact of Heidegger’s philosophy on Tillich’s ontology and theological anthropology.
Comparing Heidegger’s entire thought with Tillich’s is a formidable task, and is certainly
impossible within the compass of a single dissertation. This study will provide an intensive
historical and philosophical survey and analysis of the origins and development of Tillich’s
thought particularly in terms of his theological anthropology and ontology. Anyone glancing at a
bibliography of work on Tillich might fairly conclude that all that could profitably be said about
his thought has been said, and much of it more than once. The justification of the present study
lies in its philosophical approach to Tillich’s work. Much of the criticism and praise directed
toward Tillich fails in that it takes little account of the philosophical traditions on which Tillich
drew. Before Tillich’s achievement can be fully evaluated, his thought needs to be examined
from the point of view of those philosophical traditions that are incorporated into it. This is a task
which, despite the large volume of literature on Tillich’s theology, has still not been adequately
done. The present study is intended to be a contribution to this important task. My approach to
Tillich’s thought is undertaken with the conviction that the meaning of many of the terms
appearing in his philosophical theology can only be made transparent by a careful
disentanglement of their philosophical background. For this reason, I will develop a detailed

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9 “Tillich’s ontology, which is closely related to the ontological effort of Martin Heidegger, is the
backbone of both his existentialist analysis and his existentialist theology.” Walter Leibrecht, “The Life
and Mind of Paul Tillich,” in Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich, ed. Walter Leibrecht

10 Tillich’s writings extend through 14 volumes, and the publication of Heidegger’s
Gesamtausgabe is ongoing, projected to have 102 volumes. For details and updates of the publication of
the various volumes of Gesamtausgabe, see the publisher’s website at http://www.klostermann.de.
philosophical and theological analysis of Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (1927), including his earlier and later works, and Tillich’s three-volume *Systematic Theology* (1951, 1957, 1963), including also his earlier and later works, which are the primary sources for the present study. In Chapters 4-8, attention will focus on Heidegger’s philosophical and trans-philosophical projects as the theological ground of Tillich’s thought, and throughout, the question of its relationship with Tillich’s system will be kept in view to disclose the Heideggerian root of its foundational theological concepts. The primary subjects are the question of God as Being itself – Tillich seems to have learned this title for God during the years at the University of Marburg, a brief but intense time of his intellectual ferment, when both Tillich and Heidegger taught at the University – and Tillich’s existential theological approach to it. Attention is given particularly to an analysis of Tillich’s language. I find that the earlier more general philosophical work of Tillich coheres easily with the later more theological thinking. Towards the end of his life, Tillich appeared to change his views in some respects, but the remarkable feature of his thought was its extraordinary consistency. But it is not my purpose in this study to attempt anything like a genetic account of the development of Tillich’s thought from his early dissertations on Friedrich W. J. Schelling down to his *Systematic Theology*. Rather, I wish to consider his mature philosophy and its core of ontology, especially as expressed in the first volume of his *Systematic Theology*, which was not to appear until twenty-five years after Tillich left Marburg.
It is undeniable that Tillich’s radically innovative vocabulary and, at certain points, syntax are significantly Heideggerian. Heidegger’s philosophical influence on his thought has long been well known. But the specific nature of this influence and its implications, which this study will demonstrate, has not hitherto been well documented. The following statement of Calvin O. Schrag, who was Tillich’s assistant while a graduate student at Harvard in the 1950s, explains the common scholarly attitude toward this research subject. “The Tillich-Heidegger connection would be a possible and important topic for a specific research project, but it is one we will not be able to pursue in the present essay. Suffice it to observe that Heidegger did play a role in shaping Tillich’s systematic theology.” Moreover, as John Powell Clayton observes,

11 “It may well be that Tillich’s ‘existentialism’ is no more than the expression of what he had learnt from Schelling and his teacher, Martin Kähler, in language learnt from Heidegger.” John Heywood Thomas, _Paul Tillich: An Appraisal_ (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 13. There is considerable overlap between Schelling and Heidegger. This might explain some similarities between Tillich’s thought and Heidegger’s. Heidegger himself maintained an interest in Schelling’s work throughout his career – for example his lecture on German Idealism in the summer semester of 1929, his lecture on Schelling and the essence of human freedom in the summer semester of 1936, his lecture on Schelling in 1941 and again in 1968 where he lectured on Hegel and the difference between Fichte and Schelling’s systems.


“There is.... no ready consensus in the literature as to the exact extent of Tillich’s intellectual indebtedness to Heidegger.”\textsuperscript{14} Many books and articles on Tillich simply state the basic concepts of his system and criticize his use or abuse of Heidegger’s language of existentialism from one point of view or another. Neither has the issue received much attention in the secondary literature on Heidegger. In my view, Tillich himself is partly responsible for the concealment of the existential origin of his theological system. It is noteworthy that most of the theologians who have dealt with Heidegger have been less hesitant than Tillich to judge the religious import of Heidegger’s thought. There are remarkably few direct allusions to Heidegger in Tillich’s own writings. Tillich is rarely explicit about his reliance upon Heidegger’s philosophical framework. In his three volume \textit{Systematic Theology} there are a total of 11 mentions of Heidegger,\textsuperscript{15} most of which tend to either make cursory references to certain aspects of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology\textsuperscript{16} or list him among other existentialist philosophers and theologians.


\textsuperscript{15} Volume one mentions Heidegger five times (183, 186-7, 208, 217), volume two, three times (12, 28, 84), and volume three another three times (62, 217, 247).

\textsuperscript{16} Heidegger’s project of fundamental ontology is an attempt, in \textit{Being and Time}, to raise anew the question of the meaning of Being through an analysis of the existence of Dasein for whom Being is a question. Three senses of the phrase “fundamental ontology” are indicated in the following groups of passages. (1) Passages stressing the ontical founding of ontology: SZ, 13, 194, 268, 301, 377. (2) Passages stressing the transition to scientific ontology: SZ, 37-8, 200, 213, 216, 316, 400. (3) Passages in which fundamental ontology deals with the fundamental question of the meaning of Being in general: SZ, 183, 196, 406.
Tillich’s unwillingness to admit any close and ongoing philosophical relationship with Heidegger does not seem to lie in his resentment against the Nazis. Tillich was an outspoken critic of the Nazis and was suspended from his position as professor of philosophy at the University of Frankfurt by the Nazi government. It is said that Tillich “wore it as a badge of honor to be the first non-Jewish professor thus dismissed by the Nazis.” In this regard, Tillich could not be more different from Heidegger, who at the same time was busy in translating his philosophical work into the language of the new regime. George Steiner points to the affinity between Heidegger’s *Being and Time* and Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* – both were simultaneously dark


18 Tillich was dismissed by the Nazis from his position on April 13, 1933, when he was the height of his German academic career as professor. Of the twelve dismissed at Frankfurt one was Tillich and the other eleven were Jewish. Mary Ann Stenger and Ronald H. Stone, *Dialogues of Paul Tillich* (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 2002), 176.


yet full of promise and expectation. According to Roy Dennis Morrison, “Heidegger became a Nazi culturally, mythically, philosophically, religiously, academically, and politically.” But this does not explain Tillich’s reluctance to pronounce himself a Heideggerian in the sense that he maintained or defended Heidegger’s central philosophical tenets. Tillich would later offer a critique of the “political romanticism” to which Heidegger fell prey in the early 1930s. Tillich has cautiously said that “It is not without some justification,” that the names of Nietzsche and Heidegger “are connected with the antimoral movements of fascism or national socialism” and of these two Nietzsche was certainly far more remote from modern barbarism, both in time and in thought, than Heidegger. But Tillich must have understood the difficulty of making a judgmental decision about Heidegger from his writings. In a 1946 letter responding to the questions concerning his relation to Sartre’s existentialism, known as the Letter on “Humanism,” Heidegger himself provides an example of this difficulty of bracketing knowledge of his personal life off from what he writes. The Letter was Heidegger’s first published essay after the

21 For a more detailed account of the connection between Heidegger’s philosophy and his Nazi politics, see Richard Wolin, The Politics of Being (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). Steiner stresses in 1978 that “There were instrumental connections between the language and vision of Sein und Zeit, especially the later sections, and those of Nazism. Those who would deny this are blind or mendacious.” George Steiner, Martin Heidegger (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 121-3. Steiner seems obsessed with Heidegger’s Nazism (153-66). But a decade later, Steiner argues that in 1927, the year Being and Time was published, there was obviously “no Nazism” in his philosophy. Steiner proposes that the question that really needs to be asked is not “What did Heidegger find in Nazism” but rather “What did Nazism find in Heidegger’s earthy, ontological thought?” Tamara Chaplin, Turning on the Mind: French Philosophers on Television (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 211.


23 TC, 81.
defeat of Nazism, and it is hard to read statements such as the following and deny he was undergoing “de-Nazification”\textsuperscript{24}: “Because we are speaking against ‘humanism’ people fear a defense of the inhuman and a glorification of barbaric brutality.”\textsuperscript{25} Tillich continued to draw from Heidegger’s existential insights in the human condition.\textsuperscript{26} Even as Tillich made his way to the United States, and even as he lent his support to the allied war effort (in the form of weekly addresses to the German people, urging them to abandon the Nazi cause), he continued to employ the fundamental existential categories Heidegger had outlined in \textit{Being and Time}.\textsuperscript{27} Moreover, in discussing Heidegger’s collaboration with the Nazis, Tillich shows himself to be charitable in judgment. “One should not judge the worth of a philosopher only in terms of the political shortcomings of one’s life. We have, for example, the caricatures of the great ancient philosophers, Socrates and Aristotle, and knowledge of the fact that even Plato was foolish

\textsuperscript{24} In 1945, Heidegger faces the commission of de-Nazification at Freiburg University. He asked a member of the de-Nazification committee to inquire about his supposed anti-Semitism intimated by Jaspers. In reply, Jaspers wrote a negative report that ultimately led to Heidegger’s forced retirement without license to teach. The university and its philosophy department came to Heidegger’s defense. In 1951, he was granted emeritus status and allowed to teach and lecture again at the university. Frank Schalow and Alfred Denker, \textit{Historical Dictionary of Heidegger’s Philosophy}, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD.: Scarecrow Press, 2010), xxix.

\textsuperscript{25} LH, 263/ GA9, 176.


\textsuperscript{27} Tillich delivered 112 addresses in German for broadcast into occupied Europe from March 1942 through May 1944. These powerful political sermons were broadcast into Germany by the U.S. Office of War Information. On Tillich’s wartime addresses, see Paul Tillich, \textit{Against the Third Reich: Paul Tillich’s Wartime Addresses to Nazi Germany}, eds. Ronald H. Stone and Matthew Lon Weaver, trans. Mathew Lon Weaver (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). For more recent attempt to revive this legacy, see Jean Bethke Elshtain, \textit{Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World} (New York: Basics, 2003), 99-112.
enough to become an adviser to the Hitler of his time, the tyrant of Syracuse. In spite of these facts, one cannot identify the worth of a philosopher merely with the personal decisions of daily existence, the terms and circumstances of which are constantly changing.”

These episodes undercut the possible suggestion that Tillich’s intentional dissociation of himself from Heidegger arose from his uncomfortable feeling against the Nazi supporters. Rather, as James Luther Adams reveals, Tillich simply “was good at covering his tracks and he didn’t want anybody uncovering them.”

This study will prove rewarding in that it will help the discerning contemporary theological reader to read Tillich more critically and better understand his thought. It will also bear meaningful and lasting church historical witness which would contribute to posterity’s critical assessment of a memorable encounter of two great thinkers of the twentieth century.

This study will combine analysis and interpretation. The principal research method used in this study is philosophical hermeneutics that is primarily concerned with interpreting, clarifying, and evaluating arguments. Making diagnostic use of philosophical methodology in the assessment of the existential theology of Tillich is in itself doing theology in correlation with the present situation. There is some indication that Tillich gradually came to have respect for the role of philosophical hermeneutics in a philosophically authentic mediation of theology. Tillich went so far as to suggest that analytic philosophy could potentially serve the present age as a sort of

28 HJ, 24-5. This lecture was delivered at the Cooper Union Forum, New York City, March 23, 1954.

“conceptual clearing house” in the same way that scholastic philosophy had served the medieval period. In attempting to philosophically analyze Tillich’s ontology, I will attach great importance to grounding Tillich’s complex thought in the historical traditions of philosophy upon which he drew, hoping that the neglected philosophical approach to his work will uncover the unexpectedly subtle and perhaps long-forgotten philosophical meanings of his basic theological concepts. Hence, while some repetition of the themes of earlier commentators is inevitable, the approach of this study presents Tillich’s ontology in a fresh light. Many of the works on Tillich are overly influenced by the particular theological viewpoints of their authors. For instance, two of the major English writings on Tillich which I referred to above, Kenneth Hamilton’s *The System and the Gospel: A Critique of Paul Tillich* and J. Heywood Thomas’ *Paul Tillich: An Appraisal*, are both written from standpoints which are largely unsympathetic to the kind of theology Tillich produced. The standpoint of the present study is sympathetic towards Tillich’s theological aims and methods. I am convinced that to achieve an understanding of Tillich, it is important to practice what Kenan Osborne calls “willful suspension of disbelief.” By this he means that a person must first seek to approach Tillich’s theology in an open, willing-to-learn attitude. In other words, one must first follow Tillich’s system as a working model. I will approach Tillich’s work from his own standpoint of liberal Protestantism and in the belief that

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30 Paul Tillich says that “we have no such clearing house, and this is the one point at which we might be in sympathy with the present day so-called logical positivists or symbolic logicians or logicians generally. They at least try to produce a clearing house.” NRL, 53.

the language of existentialism is an indispensible asset to Christian theism and that theism cannot finally avoid ontology.

In the mid-1930s, Heidegger appeared to move away from the sort of analysis of Being that he pursued in *Being and Time* towards a greater concern with language and with the function of philosophical language of the western metaphysical tradition in obscuring the “unconcealment” of Being in its “house of language.” This change in emphasis is often called “the turn” in Heidegger’s thinking. Heidegger shifts to the point of view of what he calls the “history of Being,” which, he suggests, was originally illuminated for only a moment in the early Greek (pre-Socratic) experience, but then gradually occluded by the rising tide of metaphysics. Accordingly in his later writings, Heidegger developed his thought on the basis of the tragic world experience as Greek tragedy has developed it, that is, on the basis of the happening of truth that comes to pass in an art which is seen from the viewpoint of Greek tragedy. This so-called “turning” of the later Heidegger was often understood as a reversal in the sense of a departure from his earlier standpoint. Many commentators are in agreement that Heidegger

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33 “Unconcealment” as the meaning of the Greek word for truth was not spoken by Heidegger before 1928. In *Being and Time*, for example, the word unconcealment only appears in one passage, and it is introduced only to be equated with “uncoveredness.”: “To say that an assertion “is true” signifies that it uncovers the entity as it is in itself. Such an assertion asserts, points out, ‘lets’ the entity ‘be seen’ (ἀπόφανσις) in its uncoveredness.” BT, 219/SZ, 175.

34 “Thinking accomplishes the relation of being to the essence of the human being. It does not make or cause the relation. Thinking brings this relation to being solely as something handed over to thought itself from being. Such offering consists in the fact that in thinking being comes to language. Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home.” LH, 239/GA9, 145.
dropped the word “ontological” in the later works. It has been argued that, a few years after the publication of *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger dropped the earlier notion of “ontology” altogether. Heidegger said in *Being and Time* that “Of course only as long as Dasein is (that is, only as long as an understanding of Being is ontically possible), ‘is there’ Being….Being (not entities) is dependent upon the understanding of Being.” Simply put, Being and *Dasein* “‘are’ equiprimordially.” That is, Being is an entirely intrinsic phenomenon in *Dasein*. But the later Heidegger claimed that the Being that ‘is there’ only in and through *Dasein* is already conceived as essentially transcendent in relation to *Dasein*. Being is only “illumined for man” in the light cast by man’s own projects. That is, it is through our existential questioning that determines how Being will appear and give itself to us. “But this projection does not create being. Moreover, the projection is essentially a thrown projection. What throws in such projection is not the human being but Being itself, which sends the human being into the ek-sistence of Da-sein that is his essence.” But this only means his turn away from the analytic of Dasein, which was focused in

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35 Michael Roth, *The Poetics of Resistance: Heidegger’s Line* (Evanston, IL.: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 46. Heidegger himself has said, “I have forsaken an earlier position, not to exchange it for another, but because even the former position was only a pause on the way. What lasts in thinking is the way. And ways of thought conceal within them the mysterious factor that we can walk on forwards and backwards; even the way back first leads us forward.” *Sprache*, 98-9.

36 BT, 255/SZ, 212.

37 BT, 272/SZ, 230.

38 LH, 257/GA9, 168.
Being and Time as the most direct route to the study of Being itself, to Being. Heidegger’s basic concern with Being remains constant throughout. His thought overall manifests a deepening or radicalizing of his interest in Being and Time.\(^{40}\) Even if, as J. G. Gray claims, Heidegger’s interest moves “from human existence to nature” as his later writings proceed, the plan of the projected work begun in Being and Time nevertheless confirms that Heidegger remains at all times concerned with the question of being.\(^{41}\) His shift marks only a decisive break from his earlier study with respect to language. But Heidegger’s philosophy is onto-centric throughout. Heidegger’s retrospective claim reveals the fact that Heidegger himself is very emphatic about this issue. “One need only observe,” he says, “the simple fact that in Being and Time the problem is set up outside the sphere of subjectivism – that the entire anthropological problematic is kept at a distance, that the normative issue is emphatically and solely the experience of Da-sein with a constant view to the question of being – for it to become strikingly clear that the ‘Being’ into which Being and Time inquires cannot long remain something which the human subject posits. Rather Being, stamped as presence by its time-character, approaches Dasein. Consequently, even in the initial steps of the question of Being in Being and Time thought is called to a change

\(^{39}\) LH, 257/GA9, 168. It has been argued from this that the philosophy of the later Heidegger was as a whole more compatible with Barthian theology. James M. Robinson, “The German Discussion of the Later Heidegger,” in The Later Heidegger and Theology, vol. 1 of New Frontiers in Theology: Discussing Among German and American Theologians, ed. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 5.


whose movement corresponds to the turn.”\textsuperscript{42} This statement disproves that his turn is a “reversal.” Heidegger says that “The thinking of the reversal is a change in my thought. But this change is not a consequence of altering the standpoint, much less of abandoning the fundamental issue, of \textit{Being and Time}.” The later Heidegger is a phenomenologist for exactly the same reasons as the early Heidegger.

But the question whether these interpretations are correct is beside the point here. For, as Tillich’s selective appreciation of Heidegger suggests, Heidegger’s turn was already after Tillich had become thoroughly imprinted with Heidegger’s earlier ontological language and ideas. What matters is the fact that Tillich saw the “late” Heidegger in unbroken continuity with the “early” Heidegger. Tillich did not understand this movement in Heidegger’s thought which happened in his work in the mid-1930s, as a conversion, a moving away from the insights of \textit{Being and Time},\textsuperscript{43} but, as Christopher N. Chapman argues, “a logical development”\textsuperscript{44} from his concern with the world and the human condition as described in \textit{Being and Time}. As I will discuss in Conclusion of this study, Tillich also saw that Heidegger’s early religious orientation was

\textsuperscript{42} Preface, xviii-xix.


\textsuperscript{44} Christopher N. Chapman, \textit{Freud, Religion, and Anxiety: How Freud’s Critique of Religion Neglected His Advances in Psychoanalytic Theory} (Morrisville, NC.: Lulu.com, 2007), 76.
fulfilled in his later works. In a published lecture from 1954, Tillich remarks: “The answers one finds in the later Heidegger….do not come from existentialism but from the medieval Catholic mystical tradition within which he lived as a seminarian.” Gadamer underscores this point while addressing the question of why Heidegger retained an orientation to religious issues despite forsaking a career as a theologian: “…it was Christianity once again that challenged the thought of this man and held him in suspense; it was once again the old transcendence and not the modern worldliness [Diessetigkeit] that spoke through him….it was clear to Heidegger that it would be intolerable to speak of God like science speaks about its objects; but what that might mean, to speak of God – this was the question that motivated him and pointed out his way of thinking.”

Heidegger’s early major work, Being and Time, which Heidegger regards as Heidegger’s “fundamental book,” provides an important reference point for the interpretation of the profound ontological concepts in Tillich’s philosophical theology. It is certainly not correct to say that only the early Heidegger was significant for Tillich’s theological development. Even though the early Heidegger who was existentialist and phenomenologist is the central concern of

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45 Tillich must have been well versed in both early and later works of Heidegger. Tillich comments on the difference between Sartre and Heidegger that “Sartre draws consequences from the earlier Heidegger which the later Heidegger did not accept.” CTB 149. This demonstrates Tillich’s knowledge of both early and later works of Heidegger.

46 HJ, 27.


this investigation, Heidegger’s later thought also bears important relevance to the present study. My discussion will also address Tillich’s understanding of the theological potentialities and aims of the later Heidegger. The character and extent of its significance for Tillich’s theology will occupy us at appropriate places in this study. The next two chapters provide a historical survey of the background necessary for understanding Heidegger’s influence on Tillich’s thought. Chapters 4-8 will explore in closer detail Tillich’s creative appropriations of Heidegger’s existential thought. Chapter 8 concludes the study with a comprehensive summary of its findings and by pointing out important issues for future study within the framework proposed in this study.
CHAPTER TWO
THE AGE OF MODERN EXISTENTIALISM

The Definition of Existentialism

Jean-Paul Sartre once complained that the word “existentialism” was “so loosely applied to so many things that it has come to mean nothing at all.” Walter Arnold Kaufmann, who wrote convincingly on this subject, said: “Existentialism is not a philosophy, but a label for several widely different revolts against traditional philosophy. Most of the living “existentialists” have repudiated this label, and a bewildered outsider might well conclude that the only thing they have in common is a marked aversion to each other…Certainly, existentialism is not a school of thought nor reducible to any set of tenets. The three writers who appear invariably in every list of “existentialists” – Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre – are not in agreement on essentials. Such alleged precursors as Pascal and Kierkegaard are different from all

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1 Tillich experienced the First World War as an absolute catastrophe, the collapse of the bourgeois period of European culture and “the end of a theology that could exist in a happy alliance with the bourgeois optimism of progress and stability.” Christoph Schwöbel, “Tillich, Paul (1883-1965),” in The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought, ed. Alister E. McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 639. It was a tragic witness to much erosion of the confidence in the idea of human progress – the maxim of rationalistic Enlightenment thought – while romantic idealism failed to account sufficiently for the despair and sense of helplessness experienced by both individuals and communities in their concrete, contemporary predicaments. With this emerging crisis Tillich saw the genesis of modern western European existentialism. He claimed that “When with 31 July 1914, the 19th century came to an end, the Existentialist revolt ceased to be revolt. It became the mirror of an experienced reality.” CTB, 130.

2 Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism is a Humanism, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven: Yale University, 2007), 20.
three men…” Tillich notes that “But existentialism is not only a revolt; it is also a style. Existentialism has become the style of all great literature, of the arts and the other media of our self-expression. It is present in poetry, in the novel, in drama, in the visual arts, and it is my opinion that our century will in historical retrospect be characterized as the period of existentialism.”

It is necessary to begin with a definition of existentialism that will guide this study. There are many dictionary definitions of existentialism. Each carries some degree of truth. For instance, existentialism can be defined, in short, as “a theory that affirms the primacy, or a priority, of existence.…[in] relation to essence.” Of course, this definition is not comprehensive. It only explains Kierkegaardian existentialism which was developed in protest against Hegelianism, but to which neither that of Heidegger’s existentialism nor Tillich’s belongs exactly. Kierkegaard was concerned with the actual existing individual. The existence that humans live is one of

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4 AHCT, 539.


actuality. Possibility is not real for him. The conceived possibility is not the end in itself but a
goal to be actualized in one’s own actuality. For Kierkegaard, reality is actuality, hence actuality
is prior to, or higher than, possibility. Therefore, his treatment of existence does not deal with
the strictly philosophical problem of transcendence. For him, human essence does not transcend
its existence. The essence is to be found within existence. The essence of human existence is not
a “state,” but the “act of transgressing from possibility to actuality.” Our essence is what we are.

But the opposite can be said for Heidegger and Tillich. At the very beginning of Being
and Time Heidegger states, “Higher than actuality stands possibility.” For Heidegger, human
existence is a creature whose being is constituted by possibilities. Human existence cannot be
understood from actual objects, but only from possibilities which make that existence what it is.
Heidegger makes a distinction between “ontic” and “ontological.” An ontic inquiry is concerned
with individual and actual facts or events, and seeks to establish some general classifications and
laws for these actualities. An ontological inquiry, on the other hand, is “concerned with the

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8 Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments, vol. 12.1 of
Kierkegaard’s Writings, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton
University Press, 1992), 320-1. But this does not mean for Kierkegaard, as Sartre puts it, that existence
precedes essence. Kierkegaard dissociated himself from such form of existentialism. While Kierkegaard
asserts a very real and irreducible freedom, he does emphasize that humans are created beings subject to
certain limiting factors, for example, a dependence on God. For Kierkegaard, “it [human freedom] is a
deeply “entangled” freedom, entangled in its own given purpose and orientation, namely, for the self to
choose to be and to become that self which it has been given to be, both in its past and its future. The
struggle and the agony of this kind of freedom must be apparent to every human with any degree of self-
awareness and self-consciousness.” Arnold Bruce Come, Kierkegaard as Humanist: Discovering My Self

9 Türker Armaner, “The Reception of Kierkegaard in Turkey,” in Kierkegaard’s International
Reception, ed. Jon Stewart, vol. 8 of Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Farnham:
Ashgate, 2009), 8.

10 BT, 63/SZ, 38. Heidegger’s emphasis.
general structures that, as potentialities, pervade human existence.”\textsuperscript{11} Simply put, the distinction between ontic and ontological distinguishes between concern about beings and concern about being. This distinction between the ontic and ontological is cardinal for the understanding of Heideggerian existentialism. Tillich’s analysis of human existence is based on the distinction between essence and existence, or “a distinction between essential and existential being.”\textsuperscript{12} Essence is potentiality, or possibility, and existence is an imperfect state of essence. Essence is real, therefore possibility is prior to, or higher than, actuality.\textsuperscript{13} For this reason, Tillich repudiates Hegel’s notion of reality as the union of essence and existence.\textsuperscript{14} Existence as actuality is the fragmentary expression of the possibility.\textsuperscript{15} The true meaning of existence or being, for Heidegger and Tillich, lies behind the Platonic distinction between essence and existence.\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{12} ST1, 202.

\textsuperscript{13} “The principle that being precedes acting implies a basic criticism of the history of religion.” ST2, 80.


\textsuperscript{15} “The task of existential philosophy was first of all to destroy this Hegelian “reconciliation,” which was merely conceptual, and left existence itself unreconciled.” EP, 82-3.

\textsuperscript{16} In Plato, possibility is what is in its very essence ordered to being something individual, that is, to exist contingently, or to be what it is in determination with other beings. Tillich does not share Plato’s devaluation of sensory reality. In connection with the end of history, Tillich speaks of “essentialization,” the return to what something is essentially. In his view, the new thing that is actualized in time and space adds to essential being and is not lost. ST3, 427.
Heidegger is right in protesting that he and Sartre have nothing in common in this regard. Heidegger denied that his thought ever dealt with Sartrean existentialism, describing his approach to phenomenology in *Being and Time* as an “analytic of existence,” or a “hermeneutic of Dasein.” Heidegger points out Sartre’s failed attempt to define existentialism as a philosophy that concerns the true meaning of existence because his is merely a Kierkegaardian attempt to reverse the priority of essence and existence. “Sartre expresses the basic tenet of existentialism in this way: Existence precedes essence. In this statement he is taking *existentia* and *essentia* according to their metaphysical meaning, which from Plato’s time on has said that essential precedes existential. Sartre reverses this statement. But the reversal of a metaphysical statement remains….in oblivion of the truth of being.” I resist Christopher N. Chapman’s classifying Tillich as a Sartrean existentialist. It is highly disputable to say that “Tillich was never a Heideggerian.” Chapman explains that Tillich is an existentialist in that he is concerned with the meaning of truth in relation to human beings and their existence, but “After *Being and Time*, Heidegger’s philosophy is neither explicitly concerned nor unconcerned with this sort of

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17 LH, 250/GA9, 159. Heidegger’s “Letter on ‘Humanism’ (1949)” is a response to Sartre’s “Existentialism Is a Humanism (1946).”


19 BT, 62/SZ, 38.

20 LH, 250/SZ, 159.
analysis of meaning; he tries to dig beneath the metaphysics implicit in such ideas.” Chapman suggests that Heidegger should be designated as a “post-phenomenologist.”

As I will show in what follows, however, Tillich’s actual concern with existentialism comes much closer to the work of Heidegger than to Sartre. Tillich opposes Sartre’s “pure existentialism” in so much as it denies all essential structure. Tillich interprets existence as both the actualization of and the estrangement from essence. He is not satisfied with mere existential analysis. He drives beyond it to that point of identity where the infinite reveals itself in the finite, where the split of subject and object is overcome. Hence, Tillich criticizes Sartre. “We can make the same criticism of Sartre’s pure existentialism and his sensitive psychological analysis. The greatness of this man is that he is the psychological interpreter of Heidegger…But…Sartre says man’s essence is his existence…We have the same problem in Heidegger. Heidegger talks also as if there were no norms whatsoever, no essential man, as if man makes himself.” Tillich reads Sartre as “overstepping the bounds of existentialism by denying the reality of structures in existence at all.” Tillich’s term “essence” corresponds to Heidegger’s concept of “authentic existence” and Tillich’s term “existence” is analogous to Heidegger’s “inauthentic existence,”


22 Tillich explains the identity as follows. “The *prius* of subject and object cannot become an object to which man as a subject is theoretically and practically related. God is no object for us as subjects.” TT, 25. The “*prius*,” or *a priori*, is the point in the human being where the human being is one with God. The *prius* is the precondition of subject-object division of reality.

23 TSEP, 121.

which will be discussed in later chapters. Tillich writes, “[I]n the background of Heidegger’s ontology lies the mystical concept of being which is without significance for Sartre. Sartre carried through the consequences of Heidegger’s Existentialist analyses without mystical restrictions. This is the reason he has become the symbol of present-day Existentialism, a position which is deserved not so much by the originality of his basic concepts as by the radicalism, consistency, and psychological adequacy with which he has carried them through.”

Tillich sometimes defines his existentialism as the “philosophy of existence.” But strictly speaking, Tillich’s theological philosophy is fundamentally the philosophy of essence that is concerned about existence in order ultimately to understand and explain its estrangement from essence. For Tillich, without an essentialist basis, existentialism, religious or otherwise, is incomprehensible. On the relation of existentialism to essentialism Tillich writes: “Existentialism is not a philosophy which can stand on its own legs. Actually it has no legs. It is always based on a vision of the essential structure of reality.” Tillich makes much the same point when he writes, “Whenever existentialists give answers, they do so in terms of religious or quasi-religious traditions which are not derived from their existential analysis.” He is aware of the

25 CTB, 149.

26 EP, 79; IH, 40.


28 Perspectives, 142.

29 ST2, 25.
existentialism’s surreptitious essentialist presuppositions in its claim to priority of the existential. Tillich argues that without the essential, human discourse would be impossible since discourse presupposes the universals and so the essential structure of mind and reality. “Existentialism served Tillich well to identify in existence the distortion of the essential. But distortion always depends on the reality of the distorted.”\textsuperscript{30} It is such an understanding of the priority of essence to its distortions in existence which enables Tillich to be consistent when he states, “Often I have been asked if I am an existentialist theologian, and my answer is always short. I say fifty-fifty. This means for me essentialism and existentialism belong together.”\textsuperscript{31} Pure essentialism and pure existentialism are equally impossible. Tillich’s vision of the ontological and epistemic intimacy of essence and existence leads to the conclusion, “So mere existentialism does not exist.”\textsuperscript{32} Therefore, it is not appropriate to consider Tillich as an existentialist as popularly done. It “obscures the underlying essentialism of his reflections on existence.”\textsuperscript{33}

Existentialism can be defined in a more comprehensive way as a type of philosophy that is concerned about the nature of human existence and endeavors to analyze the basic structures of human existence.\textsuperscript{34} There have been arguments that lead plausibly to the conclusion that


\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Perspectives}, 245.

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Perspectives}, 143.

\textsuperscript{33} Carl E. Braaten, “Paul Tillich and the Classical Christian Tradition,” in \textit{AHCT}, xxv.

\textsuperscript{34} Fernando Molina, \textit{Existentialism as Philosophy} (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1953), 2.
Heidegger was not an existentialist at all. It certainly must be conceded that Heidegger’s stated philosophical interest was in the question of the meaning of Being and not in the ethical or psychological issues of the popular existentialism that concerned Kierkegaard and Sartre. Heidegger does state that his philosophy is an ontology and that his chief preoccupation is with Being and not with existence. Heidegger also vehemently repudiated Sartre’s description of his thought as an atheistic existentialism. In an interview with his former student, Heidegger said, “I am not primarily concerned with existence….My book bears the title Being and Time and not Existence and Time. For me, the haunting question is and has been, not man’s existence, but ‘being-in-totality’ and ‘being as such.’” But Heidegger’s philosophy can be understood as existentialist in that it is deeply concerned about human existence in order to answer the question of Being. As Nathan A. Scott argues, it is the “…brilliant originality with which [Being and Time] probes the essential modes of human being – anxiety…care…temporality…‘resoluteness’…transcendence…that makes Being and Time one of

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36 “Existentialism is the struggle to discover the human person in a depersonalized age.” Jackson J. Spielvogel, Western Civilization, Volume C: Since 1789, 7th ed. (Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth, 2008), 904.

37 In a way, Heidegger repudiated this classification of his thought in that existentialism was unsystematic. See his “Letter on “Humanism,”” in which he repudiates both existentialism and humanism. For Heidegger, existentialism is “a restricted philosophy that is on another track and headed in a direction different from that of his own thinking.” William Alan Sadler, Existence and Love: A New Approach in Existential Phenomenology (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969), 64.

the classic texts in the literature of modern Existentialism. In the same vein, Tillich’s theology can also be identified as existential despite his preference for systematic treatment of his thought. Kierkegaard criticized Hegelianism as claiming to be able to reduce all of existence into one philosophical system. Hegel believed that his system could achieve an immanent identity between thought and being, or thinking and existing. Against this notion, Kierkegaard wrote, “A logical system is possible; an existential system is impossible.” Implicit in this statement is the fundamental separation that Kierkegaard posited between thinking and existing. Kierkegaard’s critique against Hegel expresses the “existential danger” that tempts philosophers to philosophize themselves out of existence into objectivity and the system. But Tillich makes a distinction between systems in a narrow and a wider sense. The first kind starts with a set of the highest principles and deduces from them a whole hierarchy of lower ones. The second kind is not hierarchic-deductive. But it is a system in which a whole of propositions are


40 Hegel argues for the identity of thought and being. This does not simply mean that all that exist are things in our or God’s mind. Nor does it mean that all existing things are thinking things. It means that all existing things are intelligible to thought because they have a logical form that is identical with the categorical structure of reason.


44 “The present system is by no means deductive.” ST1, 68.
“consistent, interdependent, and developed according to a definite method.”  

In other words, his Christian theology as a system is “a totality made up of consistent, but not of deduced, assertions.” It is in this wider sense that Tillich sees the necessity of a systematic approach to the question of Being in order to understand and expound theological problems. Every meaning, however fragmentary, seeks a system. Without it, existentialists could not communicate even fragments. Tillich makes an existentialist creed: “Every meaningful fragment is an implicit system, as every system is an explicit fragment.”

In the final analysis, Heidegger and Tillich can be interpreted as existentialist thinkers in the sense that the ultimate concern of their philosophical inquiries is directed toward the meaning of concrete, personal human – “my” in Heidegger, “our” in Tillich – existence. William Lovitt argues that “Heidegger is not an “existentialist.” He is not concerned centrally or exclusively with man. Rather he is centrally concerned with the relation between man and Being, with man as the openness to which and in which Being presences and is known.” This view treats Heidegger as if he were an ontic scientist rather than ontological thinker – “Ontic” is the counterpart to “ontological,” characterizing beings, not their being. Heidegger has never been a mere observer of human being or of the relation between human being and Being. Heidegger

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45 PTM, 23-4.

46 ST1, 66.

47 PTM, 23-4.

argues against such attitude of detached or isolated subject that would regard the world around it as objects of scientific observations. For Heidegger, the investigation of the beings, including human being, of the detached, scientific regard, which are the objective things termed “present-at-hand,” is ontic. \textsuperscript{49} At the outset of \textit{Being and Time}, Heidegger introduces a distinction between “ontic” and “ontological” that will be crucial to all that follows in the work. Heidegger does not conceive of his philosophical project as an ontic science among others. His investigation is ontological precisely because of its existential engagement of his own being. Dasein “as a whole” is to be brought into focus in order for an authentic ontology. This focusing on the whole is possible only “on the basis of the extreme existential engagement” of the philosophizing person himself or herself. \textsuperscript{51} The fundamental ontologist can existentially analyze only what he or she has existentially lived through.

\textbf{Overcoming Nihilism}

Twenty-first-century existentialism renews the meaning and purpose that were left out of the old philosophy. Perhaps no other philosophical movement has had as great an impact on the philosophy, literature, and general cultural outlook of the twentieth century as has existentialism. Existentialism has attracted more attention from non-philosophers than any other recent

\textsuperscript{49} BT, 136/SZ, 102.

\textsuperscript{50} Heidegger holds that every science has some prior understanding of the “being” (the “\textit{what it is}” and the “\textit{that it is}” ) of beings it studies. In this sense, ontic science is an applied ontology.

\textsuperscript{51} MFL, 139/GA26, 176.
philosophical movements. The existentialists react in common against their philosophical heritage. It is perhaps the force of this reaction against the past that has gained this movement much of the attention it has received, the force of “the hostility to closed systems, secular or religious, which pretend to be exact mirrors of what the world is all about.” For this reason, it is generally accepted that existentialism is necessarily a “philosophy of pessimism” – or at least, of a very limited, Stoical kind of optimism. For instance, Sartre described himself as a “Stoic” in the popular sense of the word. He goes on to characterize Stoicism as a philosophy directed towards a total existential transformation of the individual, a philosophy that might teach one how to live, although he concludes that he cannot wholly endorse the Stoic conception of freedom as detachment from both external objects and other people. Indeed, most of the

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57 Jean-Paul Sartre, War Diaries: Notebooks from a Phoney War 1939–40, trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 1984), 293. “It would be wrong to interpret me as saying that man is free in all situations, as the Stoics claimed. I mean the exact opposite: all men are slaves in so far as their lives unfold in the practico-inert field and in so far as this field is conditioned by scarcity.” Jean-Paul Sartre, Theory of Practical Ensembles, trans. A. Sheridan-Smith, vol. 1 of Critique of Dialectical Reason (London: New Left Books, 1976), 331.
existentialist texts seem to share this experience. Existentialism pessimistically reflected the anxieties of the twentieth century. Max Scheler wrote, “This is the age when man has become fully and thoroughly problematic to himself.” This does not mean that life has suddenly become a problematic object to be solved. The problem is the situation in which the human needs to strive to be. The problem is the question of what it means for the human to be. The problem is the human itself as a question, not the human life as its possession. The central point of the pessimistic existentialism of the twentieth century was the absence of God. As Albert Camus expressed it, “A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity.” If the world is absurd and without meaning, humans are without meaning and purpose as well. This means that humans have no preordained destiny and are utterly alone in the universe. Reduced to despair and depression, humans have but one source of hope – themselves. “Man is nothing else but what he makes himself. Such is the first principle

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58 Existentialism is certainly a cure for superficial optimism about the future of human existence on earth. But it can be argued from the twenty-first-century perspective that the existentialist picture of human predicament erred greatly on the side of pessimism.

59 Max Scheler, Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos (Darmstadt: Reichl, 1928), 13.

60 “Man is the question he asks about himself, before any question has been formulated.” ST1, 62.

of existentialism,”

62 declares Sartre. Hence, “existentialism is a humanism.”

63 Such an atheistic existentialism could never have come into being in an age of religious faith. Atheistic existentialism is “a post-Christian philosophy.”

64 Most Christians of whatever status in the medieval period believed that life was meaningful because God had created them, and Christ had redeemed them. The starting point of nihilism is the feeling that human existing is a question mark. The twentieth century has been a witness to the human feeling of frustration for having been thrown out of the promised land. There was a feeling that humans were in the world on their own. Existentialism was born largely of the desperation caused by this situation. The world is absurd, but humans are still unique. They determine what they will be. Nevertheless, there could be no escape from the pessimistic conclusion.

65 For the human being is free, but the world is empty and meaningless. This leads to nihilism in the end – Nothing matters.

Nietzsche defined nihilism as the situation which obtains when “everything is permitted.” If everything is permitted, then it makes no difference what we do, and so nothing is worth


63 Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism is a Humanism, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven: Yale University, 2007), 18.

64 Colin Wilson, Introduction to the New Existentialism (London: Hutchinson, 1966), 19. Wilson distinguishes between the “critical existentialism” of such thinkers as Camus and Sartre and the “positive existentialism” of the new existentialists, which “rejects Sartre’s notion of man’s contingency…Its bias is therefore distinctly optimistic, and its atmosphere is as different from that of the ‘old existentialism.’”

(17-8) David Holbrook, Gustav Mahler and the Courage To Be (London: Vision Press, 1975), affirms the possibility of a positive existentialism by invoking Tillich as his hero.

anything. He saw himself everywhere surrounded by the varied permutations of nihilistic worldviews, a total exhaustion of values that could not be restored. “This nihilism doomed to extinction the age of humanity that had begun with the Socratic transformation of Hellenic values and that had developed into modern science.” New values and new forms of life were required. Attempting to overcome nihilism, Nietzsche claimed to have revealed the essence of nihilism and the way toward a self-overcoming of nihilism. But Heidegger still sees in the philosophy of Nietzsche nihilistic pessimism and he considers it as the final moment of metaphysics. Although Heidegger’s initial readings of Nietzsche favored his perspective of the possibility of overcoming metaphysics on the basis of his aesthetics, that is, on the basis of his concept of will to power as art, he soon began to associate Nietzsche’s name with the


69 Heidegger concludes that “In metaphysics as such is concealed the reason why Nietzsche can indeed experience nihilism metaphysically as the history of value-positing, yet nevertheless cannot think the essence of nihilism.” WN, 93.

70 James J. Winchester, Nietzsche’s Aesthetic Turn: Reading Nietzsche After Heidegger, Deleuze, Derrida (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 40. For Nietzsche, art is “the most important way in which a being is made into a being” and art is the highest gestalt of the will to power. N1, 154. Heidegger thought that, in Nietzsche, the essence of art, the will to power, constitutes the affirmation of Being of beings. Central to Heidegger’s project of overcoming metaphysics is a new understanding of time. He attributed to Zarathustra his own vision of time. Heidegger thought that his interpretation of the moment in Thus Spoke Zarathustra seems to be offered as a precursor to an authentic understanding of time as passage towards death, which would help prepare the way for an eventual overcoming of metaphysics thought.
“completion of the metaphysical nihilism.” For Heidegger, nihilism originates from “forgetting Being itself” in which the true meaning of beings, or beings in particular, is grounded. Being concerned solely about “beings in particular” necessarily leads to nihilism. Forgetting Being itself eventually makes “beings in particular” meaningless. For Heidegger, it is not, strictly speaking, that nihilism takes place because beings suffer a loss of value. Therefore nihilism cannot be overcome by re-creating values for beings. Nihilism was the central problem of Nietzsche’s philosophy. He understood nihilism as the devaluation of the highest values, and proposed a radical revaluation as a means of overcoming of nihilism. Nietzsche said, “Attempts to escape nihilism without revaluing our values so far: they produce the opposite, make the problem more acute.” Nietzsche’s desire to overcome nihilism and his revaluation of values mistakenly took human subjectivity itself as the source of nihilism. Heidegger points out that


73 Nietzsche asks, “What does nihilism mean?” and he answers “That the highest values are losing their value.” Then he adds, “The aim is lacking; “Why?” finds no answer.” Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, The Will to Power, trans. Walter Arnold Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1968), 9. Italics original. “Hence we can grasp Nietzsche’s concept of nihilism adequately only when we know what Nietzsche understands by value. It is from here that we understand the pronouncement of God’s absence.” WN, 70.

74 For Heidegger, this attempt to overcome nihilism by way of a willful revaluation worsens the situation. “It is precisely in the positing of new values from the will to power, by which and through which Nietzsche believes he will overcome nihilism, that nihilism proper first proclaims that there is nothing to Being itself, which has now become a value.” N4, 203.

thinking in terms of “values” involves essentially “the viewpoint.” This causes Nietzsche to be trapped within the modern metaphysics of subjectivity which began with Descartes. Heidegger claims, “Insofar as Nietzsche experiences nihilism as the history of the devaluation of the highest values, and thinks of the overcoming of nihilism as a countermovement in the form of the revaluation of all previous values,” Nietzsche’s thought is itself fundamentally nihilistic. Nietzsche’s reevaluating of the lost traditional values is based on a self-certain subjective Will. With Nietzsche everything that exists becomes a willed, or created, value. As a result, even Being becomes something that is merely willed by Nietzsche. Being is reduced to a mere value among others. This is nihilism because in Nietzsche there is no true ontological foundation. Heidegger says that “[Nietzsche’s] supposed overcoming is above all the consummation of nihilism. For now metaphysics not only does not think Being itself, but this not-thinking of Being clothes itself in the illusion that it does think Being in the most exalted manner, in that it esteem Being as a value.” Nietzsche’s “overman” re-creates values to self-overcome

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76 N3, 198.

77 The difference between Descartes and Nietzsche is that Descartes grounds truth in the self-certainty of human consciousness, while Nietzsche grounds truth in the will to power of the overman. Heidegger explains, “That Nietzsche posits the body in place of the soul and consciousness alters nothing in the fundamental metaphysical position which is determined by Descartes.” Nietzsche merely gives priority not to the soul and consciousness but to the body and its drives, or will to power. N4 133.

78 N4, 200.

79 This foundational insight and radical criticism regarding traditional metaphysics are emphasized by the early as well as by the later Heidegger. For example, see Identity and Difference published in 1957, in which the idea of ontological difference, or “the ontico-ontological difference,” is submitted to powerful scrutiny.

80 WN, 104.
nihilism caused by the loss of values of beings. It is in this doctrine of the overman that Heidegger locates the completion of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity. “Nietzsche never thought existentially,” says Heidegger, “he thought metaphysically.” The overcoming of nihilism by re-creating values for beings through the shaping of the overman is at bottom a humanism, indeed the last phase and the fulfillment of humanism under the condition of God’s absence, where humans in the form of the overman become the center of all things and the absolute value.

Nihilism reaches its culmination when metaphysics that has forgotten Being itself, the ultimate and the most fundamental meaning of existence, self-creates values of existing. The “essence of nihilism,” according to Heidegger, “is the history in which there is nothing to Being itself.” Nietzsche claims that the “highest concepts” such as Being itself is nothing but a

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83 WN, 94.

84 N4, 201.
“fume.” He thinks that “Heraclitus will always be right in this that being is an empty fiction.”

Thus according to Nietzsche, what is needed to overcome nihilism is not a reopening of the question of being, but a “will to power” strong enough to posit its own “new values.” Heidegger describes nihilism as “the stagnation of our awareness of Being itself in an anthropocentric table of values.” Heidegger’s analysis of Being itself overcoming nihilism begins with the thought that Being matters, in contrast to the feeling of nihilistic despair that “nothing matters.” Likewise, Heidegger’s meditation on nihilism becomes a philosophical turning point. In Heidegger’s form, therefore, existentialism can still be optimistic.

85 “[T]hey should not occur at all! – the “highest notions,” that is, the most general, the emptiest notions, the last fume of evaporating reality.” Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, The Twilight of the Idols, trans. Thomas Common, vol. 11 of The Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, ed. Alexander Tille (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1897), 117.


87 Nietzsche identifies the will to power as characteristic of modern person’s thinking and acting. Tillich understood the Nietzschean will to power as a rejection of Schopenhauer’s buddhistic resignation. It distressed Tillich that Nietzsche was so frequently misunderstood and misinterpreted. Tillich attempted several times, as did Heidegger, to correct the erroneous, prevailing interpretations of Nietzsche’s concept of will to power, showing it to be much more profound than the popular concept that many scholars had associated with the rise of Nazism. For Nietzsche, Tillich insists, “power is the self-affirmation of being. Will to power means power to affirm one’s power of living, the will to affirm one’s own individual existence.” P 198-207; CTB 24-31. Tillich has pointed out that Nietzsche proclaimed the absence of God but reclaimed God as “creative life.” Nietzsche challenged whatever opposed life. NBS 307-9.


89 Michael Gelven, a well known writer of commentary on Heidegger, thinks that the threat of nihilism is profoundly answered by Heidegger. He says, “It is difficult to understand why so many contemporary theorists….should make the outrageous claim that Heidegger espouses nihilism, or that his thinking “leads” to nihilism.” Michael Gelven, A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, rev. ed. (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989), 13.
The valuable can be valuable when it is meaningful. Nietzsche is correct when he use the terms “meaningless” and “valueless” interchangeably. No value can be independent of a valuing consciousness. This means that there is no necessary value. For the nihilist, everything is necessarily valueless. Nothing is meaningful. Fundamentally, nihilism is the problem of meaninglessness of existing itself. Creating new value vis-à-vis nihilism is the last resort of the anti-nihilist. In Heidegger’s view, the powerless anti-nihilistic metaphysics cannot go farther, or worse, than this. Nietzsche’s philosophy is the culmination of problematic metaphysics that dissolves itself meaninglessly into nihilism. The attempt to overcome nihilism should start by examining the meaning of the “meaninglessness of existing.” But to understand such meaninglessness, one must first know the meaning of existing itself. Therefore, the first step towards a remedy for nihilism should begin by answering the question of existing itself, or Being itself. But the question of Being itself is not the question of existing things.

**Overcoming Metaphysics**

Metaphysics molds our sense of what it means for something to be. Metaphysical thinking in the West takes place within the difference between Being and beings, an “ontological difference,” and nihilism begins with “the metaphysical forgetfulness of Being.”

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The forgetfulness of Being itself is the forgetfulness of the ontological difference. The ontological difference between Being itself, or being as such, and beings in particular can be explained as a difference between “what sort of thing an entity is” and “their [entities’] manners of being.” Heidegger’s assertion on this obvious distinction is intended “to raise the question of what it means for something to exist,”92 the most fundamental question about existence. Heidegger stresses that nihilism is the outcome of the withdrawal or “default” of Being itself at the origin of all Western metaphysics.93 From the very beginning of the Western history, Being itself was left unthought.94 The question of Being itself was forgotten and withdrew into the background, and beings in particular take precedence as the already presupposed object of metaphysical inquiry. Being itself was conceived not as it is in itself, but as an a priori cause, which means that Being itself was thought as a being, a supreme being as the first cause, behind which there is utter emptiness. Heidegger laments that “Metaphysics does not ask about the truth of Being itself.”95 In the introduction to Being and Time, Heidegger announces his project as


94 WCT, 103.

95 LH, 246/GA9, 154.
overcoming the ontotheological metaphysics, which has thus far provided an understanding of what and how entities are. In Heidegger’s “history of being,” Plato is the first ontotheologist, and Nietzsche is the last. The problem of ontotheology is the confusion of Being itself with Highest Being which, disguised as the “grounding ground,” “all-founding entity,” and so on, is as a matter of fact a being among beings in particular. Since Aristotle, a science of being as such needed to posit Highest Being, or God, though not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. With this, ontology becomes theology, or, as Heidegger puts it, “ontotheologic” in its very nature.

The history of this confusion precedes Christian theology. Many things played the role of Highest Being under the direction of various philosophers. Nietzsche’s Highest Being was the

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96 Heidegger says, “The thinking attempted in Being and Time (1927) sets out on the way to prepare an overcoming of metaphysics” which is ontotheological. IWIM 279. “We understand this task as one in which by taking the question of Being as our clue, we are to destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being – the ways which have guided us ever since.” BT 44/SZ 22. Heidegger’s emphasis.


98 OCM, 58.


100 OCM, 59.
will to power in its eternal recurrence.\footnote{From Heidegger’s perspective, Nietzsche’s will to power is not a mental capacity but rather the “innermost essence of Being.” WN, 79. Heidegger finds in Aristotle the origin of Nietzsche’s concept of the will to power as a metaphysical principle. “No matter how decisively the interpretation of being as will to power remains Nietzsche’s own, and no matter how little Nietzsche explicitly knew in what historical context the very concept of power as a determination of being stood, it is certain that with this interpretation of the being of beings Nietzsche advances into the innermost yet broadest circle of western thought….For Nietzsche power means all this at once: dynamis, energeia, entelecheia….Although Nietzsche does not appreciate the concealed and vital connection between his concept of power, as a concept of being, and Aristotle’s doctrine….we may say that the Aristotelian doctrine has more to do with Nietzsche’s doctrine of will to power than with any doctrine of categories and modalities in academic philosophy.” N1, 63-5. Heidegger interprets will to power and eternal recurrence of the same as the traditional metaphysical elements of essence and existence. N4, 237.} The human subject now plays the role of Highest Being in science and technology as the metaphysics of modernity. In *Being and Time*, as noted above, “overcoming” was originally called “destruction.”\footnote{Heidegger later noted that the term “destruction” had lent itself to a misunderstanding “of insuperable grotesqueness.” OQB, 315/GA9, 244.} But what Heidegger exactly meant by the word, as he later explained, was “deconstruction.”\footnote{“I do not say….that alleged demolition…a destruction….has no other intent than to reattain the originary experiences of being belonging to metaphysics by deconstructing [Abbau] representations that have become commonplace and empty.” OQB, 315/GA9, 244-5.} The metaphysics that is to be overcome in order for nihilism to be overcome is only a problematic ontotheological metaphysics. “Wherein does the overcoming of nihilism then consist? In the getting over [Verwindung] of metaphysics.”\footnote{OQB, 313.} The problematic metaphysics is a metaphysics that “does not recall Being itself.”\footnote{IWIM, 278.} Heidegger has never intended to destroy or eliminate metaphysics as such. He says instead, “Metaphysics remains what comes first in philosophy….We can no longer accept the claim of metaphysics to preside over our fundamental relation to “Being” or to decisively
determine every relation to beings as such. But this “overcoming of metaphysics” does not abolish metaphysics. Overcoming means “inquiring first into the truth of be-ing – into that which in metaphysics never became a question – and never could.”\(^1\)\(^0\) Overcoming is transforming. As long as man remains the animal rationale, he is the animal metaphysicum….if our thinking should succeed in its efforts to go back into the ground of metaphysics, it might well help to bring about a change in the human essence, a change accompanied by a transformation of metaphysics.”\(^1\)\(^7\)

The guiding light of the early Heidegger’s pathway of thought is the question of Being itself that arises from the thinking of the ontological difference between Being itself and beings in particular. Heidegger calls attention to the fact that the traditional ontological metaphysics takes for granted the meaning of Being itself, and that the history of the ontological questioning has been a history of the problem of the Highest Being. The history of the traditional metaphysics has been preoccupied with an attempt to show what this Highest Being is and to prove that this Highest Being is. The history of this attempt has been nourished by the error of the metaphysical interpretation of Being itself. But for Heidegger all that is worthy of thought about Being itself is hidden behind the pseudo ontological difference made between the Highest Being and beings in particular. What is hidden is Being itself, not Highest Being. He presents a new notion of Being itself by indicating that which remains “unsaid, unthought, unquestioned” in

\(^1\)\(^0\) CTP, 128/GA65, 182. Heidegger’s emphasis.

\(^1\)\(^7\) IWIM, 279.
all metaphysics.\footnote{KTB, 362/GA9, 307.} Being itself is not itself in the same way as a particular being is, or even as a Highest Being is. It is not a being. But the event of the ontological difference does not mean a splitting apart of Being itself and beings in particular. Being itself, or being as such, becomes manifest to the thinker only in and through particular beings. The concept of the ontological difference is a thought of Being itself with beings in particular. This new understanding of Being itself is something quite different from the ambiguity of that meaning of being as such that has been taken for granted by traditional metaphysics. In the traditional metaphysics, an ontological difference was made erroneously between God, or Highest Being conceived as the ontological ground of all beings in particular and of itself (“causa sui,”\footnote{OCM, 60.} or “ens increatum”,\footnote{BT, 46/SZ, 24.}), and beings in particular. The difference was made between the highest being and other beings. “Metaphysics thinks of the Being of beings both [ontologically] in [terms of] the ground-giving unity of what is most general, what is indifferently valid everywhere, and also [theologically] in [terms of] the unity of the all that accounts for the ground, that is, of the All-Highest.”\footnote{OCM, 58.} Metaphysics as ontotheology forgets Being itself because of its mistakenly taken-for-granted ontological difference between the highest being as God and the rest of beings. For Heidegger, the God of the traditional metaphysics is a consequence of the hidden transcending of being human. This reduction of the divine to the God of philosophy is the consequence of the ontotheological
structure Heidegger discovers at the core of the entire tradition of Western metaphysics. For Heidegger, “God as thought in metaphysics is not the God of faith, but a consequence of the way metaphysics thinks transcendence.”¹¹² God as given in metaphysics is nothing other than a projected and transcendent “I.” “Nihilism proclaims this “I” dead.”¹¹³ Therefore, the spoken declaration of God’s absence declares only the absence of the God of metaphysics, not the God of faith.¹¹⁴

**Overcoming Religious Nihilism**

Paul Tillich, commenting on Barth’s *The Epistle to the Romans*, wrote that “the extraordinary effect that Barth’s book has is summed up in the words of one pastor: “it is now possible to preach again!”¹¹⁵ But Barth was an “epistemological nihilist”¹¹⁶ who rejected knowledge, which could function independently of faith, as a means to truth. He believed that we


were completely isolated and shut off from God and from truth, and he knew that the theological recognition of this fact led to existential nihilism. But for Barth such nihilism is not the end result of theological inquiry, but rather, in an important sense, its point of departure as an essential part of faith. Barth deepens the epistemological nihilism, which has become endemic to life in postmodernity, in order to give a religious interpretation, so that it may culminate in faith. For Barth, says Karen Leslie Carr, genuine faith is only possible within the context of nihilism.\footnote{117} But for Tillich, Barth’s way of overcoming nihilism resembles the Nietzschean way of self-overcoming nihilism. Faith that overcomes epistemological nihilism is a value-laden phenomenon. That is, faith overcoming nihilism is generated by that which is valuable, or God. Neo-orthodoxy is the return of the orthodoxy that takes it for granted that its apology makes sense in a meaningful way. The idea of absolute, or supreme, value that sustains the Christian faith of both orthodox and neo-orthodox traditions violates “the correct and indispensable first principle of the neo-orthodox movement that “God is in heaven and man is on earth.””\footnote{118} Theology, whether orthodox or neo-orthodox, cannot ascribe value to God. Tillich points out that “the attempt of neo-orthodox theologians to escape this mark of finitude [of theology] is a symptom of that religious arrogance against which these very same [neo-orthodox] theologians are fighting.”\footnote{119} If God does not ground our faith upon the valuable, then nihilism threatens to

\footnote{117}{Karen Leslie Carr, \textit{The Banalization of Nihilism: Twentieth-Century Responses to Meaninglessness} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 76.}

\footnote{118}{ST1, 52.}

\footnote{119}{ST1, 52.}
overwhelm our faith. This undeniable reality compelled Tillich to speak, alternatively, of a “God above the God of theism.”

The God of the old theology cannot be the answer to “the question of the ultimate meaning of existence,” which leads to the question of Being itself. Tillich argues that theology must be an “answering theology” that ultimately answers this question. Religious nihilism is the “existential situation” of the human being ontologically estranged from God, without the answer to the question of the ultimate meaning of existence. For Tillich, therefore, the estrangement to be overcome is “estrangement from Being itself.” Both Heidegger and Tillich worked out a post-theistic interpretation of Christian faith and attempted to overcome nihilism by answering to the question of Being itself. In order to overcome the religious nihilism by way of answering the question of the ultimate meaning of existence, however, the question must first be asked rightly concerning the ultimate meaning of existence. A right question about the ultimate meaning of existence can be raised when the ultimate meaning of existence is analyzed in a right way. For Tillich, existential philosophy was a means to analyze the ultimate meaning of existence and raise questions about it in the right way. For this reason, “each part of his

120 CTB, 187.
121 ST1, 13.
122 ST1, 6.
123 ST1, 52.
theological system begins with an extensive existential analysis, systematically penetrating to an understanding of the structures of our existence."\textsuperscript{125}

The uniqueness of Tillich’s systematic understanding lies in the distinctiveness of its existential foundation. Efforts to continue the use of an ontological grammar after a rejection of a metaphysics of theism are observed in Tillich’s project of “transcending theism” through an appeal to the God above God.\textsuperscript{126} Although Tillich recommends that we be done with the categories of theistic metaphysics, in his three-volume \textit{Systematic Theology} he still finds a utility in the resources of ontology for speaking about the God above God as “Being-Itself,” “the Ground of Being,” “the Power of being.” To be sure, there is more than the Heideggerian influence that provides the background for Tillich’s \textit{Systematic Theology}. Tillich draws deeply on the works of many theologians and philosophers, including the theological traditions of Augustine, Jacob Boehme, Meister Eckhart and Martin Luther, together with recurring references to the philosophical contributions of Kant, Hegel and Schelling. But Heidegger’s project of fundamental ontology was of the greatest single influence on Tillich’s semantics, categories, metaphorical language, and theological symbols.


\textsuperscript{126} CTB, 182-6.
CHAPTER THREE
TILlich’S ENCOUNTER WITH HEIDEGGER

In the spring of 1924, Tillich accepted a position as associate professor of theology at the University of Marburg, in order to replace the theologian Rudolf Otto. The meeting of the two thinkers has been widely discussed. What has not really been discussed, however, is the philosophical and theological milieu in which this meeting took place. This is understandable because the work of the two thinkers moved to a level that seemed to leave no place for historical reflection or for reflection of a specifically philosophico-theological sort.

Preparation

When the existentialist thinking became a major impact on European thought, its introduction into the sphere of religious thought could easily be expected, especially since there are elements in existentialist thought which are capable of removing the gap between religious thought and itself. The existentialist themes of estrangement and authentic existence could hardly fail to attract the attention of religious thinkers because in connection with them the existentialist analysis of the human existence has emphasized such uncomfortable and threatening experiences as anxiety, despair, and death. Schelling, an early nineteenth-century idealist, was the first
dominant influence on Tillich’s philosophical development.\textsuperscript{1} It should be recalled here that Schelling is the one who coined the term “existential philosophy (\textit{Existentialphilosophie})” to designate his later philosophy.\textsuperscript{2} The most significant aspect of Schelling’s thought that Tillich emphasizes in his interpretation of his late philosophy and which was so clearly absorbed into the foundations of Tillich’s own thought is his philosophical theology,\textsuperscript{3} or his philosophical solution to the problem of religious nihilism. Tillich’s analysis of Schelling’s intellectual development and the centrality of religion in his philosophy was not very well accepted as compared to other philosophical interpretations of Schelling. But there are its supporters.\textsuperscript{4} As Russell Re Manning sums up, “the identification of the philosophical absolute with God,” “the religious fulfillment of creation and history,” and “the continuity between myth and revelation” are major ways in which Tillich’s view of Schelling stresses the theological aspect of Schelling’s

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\textsuperscript{1} Tillich states that “what I learned from Schelling became determinative of my own philosophical and theological development.” P, 142.
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\textsuperscript{3} By contrast, Andrew Bowie, one of the most prominent interpreters of Schelling, denies that theological necessity of Schelling’s late philosophy. He admits that “the project of Schelling’s later philosophy is to make Christianity into a philosophically viable religion.” But, he continues, “it would, however, be invidious in a philosophical account of his work to focus primarily on this question, given the complexity of the issues involved.” Andrew Bowie, \textit{Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction} (London: Routledge, 1993), 141.
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philosophy.\textsuperscript{5} It is well known that there are at least two periods in Schelling’s philosophical career and it is work of the later more theological, period (“Schelling II”\textsuperscript{6}) which influenced Tillich’s philosophical and theological system-building.\textsuperscript{7} Much of his later philosophy is concerned with the attempt to turn Christianity into a philosophically viable religion.\textsuperscript{8} Tillich says that “I had found the union of theology and philosophy in the philosophical explanation of the Christian doctrine through the older Schelling.”\textsuperscript{9} Tillich regards the philosophy of Schelling’s second period as being the decisive break with Hegelian idealism and the beginning of modern existentialism\textsuperscript{10} which “represents a revival of the existentialist elements of earlier thought in

\textsuperscript{5} Russell Re Manning, \textit{Theology at the End of Culture: Paul Tillich’s Theology of Culture and Art} (Leuven: Peeters Publishers: 2005), 84.

\textsuperscript{6} ST1, 165.

\textsuperscript{7} Schelling’s reputation as an idealist had been firmly established on the basis of his earlier publications. This account of Schelling’s position in the history of philosophy began to change in the early decades of the twentieth century, as the voluminous works of his post-Hegelian philosophy began to be published and studied by subsequent generations after his death. Schelling scholars have not been able to reach a consensus on when his “later” philosophy begins. “Some think….that Schelling published his drafts, thus creating a situation in which each new book makes a new period in his ephemeral thought….Others see substantial lines of continuity in all of Schelling’s thought. They replace strict periodizations with accounts of the development of earlier notions in his later works.” Jerry Day, \textit{Voegelin, Schelling, and the Philosophy of Historical Existence} (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 7n10.


\textsuperscript{9} “Here [Schelling’s second period] lies the philosophically decisive break with Hegel, and the beginning of that movement which today is called existentialism.” IH, 35.

\textsuperscript{10} AR, 11; EP, 76-7.
Plato, in the Bible, in Augustine, Duns Scotus, Jacob Boehme, etc.”\textsuperscript{11} He writes, “This appeal to “Existence” emerged just a hundred years ago in the decade from 1840 to 1850. During the winter of 1841-42 Schelling delivered his lectures on Die Philosophe der Mythologie und der Offenbarung in the University of Berlin before a distinguished audience including Engels, Kierkegaard…”\textsuperscript{12} Tillich did his postgraduate research on the writings of Schelling. In 1910 Tillich wrote his first dissertation on Schelling and submitted it to the University of Breslau to obtain his doctorate in philosophy.\textsuperscript{13} Two years later he wrote another thesis on Schelling.\textsuperscript{14} His second Schelling dissertation awarded him the Licentiate in theology which was the highest theological degree that could be earned in Germany.\textsuperscript{15} This detailed knowledge of Schelling’s later work, together with his knowledge of Kierkegaard and his dependence on the philosophy of

\textsuperscript{11} IH, 540.

\textsuperscript{12} EP, 77.

\textsuperscript{13} Its English text was published under the tile of The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling’s Positive Philosophy: Its Presuppositions and Principles, trans. Victor Nuovo (Lewisburg, PA.: Bucknell University Press, 1974). The dissertation was originally intended as a criticism of Troeltsch’s theory of absoluteness of Christianity. Nevertheless, Tillich expresses his thanks to Troeltsch for “the influence his work has had upon the spiritual foundations” of his first major publication, which he significantly dedicated to Troeltsch when he died in 1923. In its preface, Tillich confesses that “It was his passionate aspiration to arrive at a system.” SS 18. The German original of The System of the Sciences, was first published in 1923; it was reprinted in the first volume of Gesammelte Werke.

\textsuperscript{14} Its English text was published under the title of Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling’s Philosophical Development, trans. Victor Nuovo (Lewisburg, PA.: Bucknell University Press, 1974).

life movement, had prepared Tillich to accept existential philosophy. It is not without significance for Tillich that Heidegger lectured on Schelling. According to Heidegger, he developed a “growing interest” in Schelling in the years between 1910 and 1914. He offered his first seminar on Schelling’s essay, “Philosophical Investigations on the Essence of Human Freedom,” in 1927-8. Heidegger judged Schelling’s treatise on the essence of human freedom to be his “greatest accomplishment and at the same time was one of the most profound works of German, thus of Western philosophy.” Heidegger saw in Schelling that “a new essential impulse enters into philosophy’s basic question of being.” Although Heidegger worked on Schelling lather than Tillich, Heidegger’s engagement with Schelling must have granted Tillich a closer affinity with Heidegger.

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16 Tillich understood his own work to be related to, although by no means identical with, the “life philosophy” inspired by Henri Bergson. Thomas G. Bandy points out, however, that Tillich’s appreciation of Bergson comes only at the point of his own preoccupation with the concept of participation, “the mutual participation of the infinite and the finite.” Thus “Tillich’s criticisms of Bergson came precisely at the points where his own developing concept of participation departed from Bergson’s thought.” Thomas G. Bandy, “Tillich’s Limited Understanding of the Thought of Henri Bergson as “Life Philosophy,” in Theonomy and Autonomy: Studies in Paul Tillich’s Engagement with Modern Culture, ed. John J. Carey (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1984), 4.

17 GA1, 56.


19 GA42, 147.
Tillich remarks, “The World War in my own experience was the catastrophe of idealistic thinking in general.” Tillich longed for a real religion vis-à-vis religious nihilism, beyond a mere possibility of religion, and he worked on securing the philosophical viability of theology that explains true religion. He thought that for a theology to be true and real, it had to speak to the existential realities of estrangement, despair, and death. Tillich develops his concept of true theology as “theonomous philosophy,” the ultimate task of which is “the making visible of the inner transcendence of Being itself.” Tillich was in this regard attracted to several aspects of Schelling’s philosophy, particularly his distinction between negative and positive types of philosophy. Put simply, “whereas negative philosophy, or the rationalist philosophy of pure reason, is aprioristic and deductive, positive philosophy is aposterioristic and empirical.” Negative philosophy is so named in that it negates particular, subjective differences of experience “in order to understand the a priori nature of the mind common to all human beings as such.” In agreement with Kant, Schelling admits that the whole world lies in the nets of the understanding or of reason. But Schelling perceives a fundamental limitation in this type of thinking. “There is obviously something other and something more than mere reason in the

20 IH, 35.
21 As early as in 1923, Tillich described and explained his concept of theology as “theonomous philosophy” or “theonomous metaphysics.” SS, 204, 210.
22 CI, 233.
23 CHR, 64.
world, indeed there is something which strives beyond these barriers.” A negative philosophy does not explain “how exactly [reason] got into those nets.” A different aspect of philosophy is needed to account for the meaning of perceived structures in reality. Positive philosophy presupposes the truth of essence in order to understand particular things and events as true appearances of it. In short, “what positive philosophy “wants” is to understand how finite things can be true appearances of the infinite All.” Experience is the only means of proof in positive philosophy. It was Kant, according to Schelling, who unwittingly prepared the way for a clear distinction between the two types of philosophy specifically in his critique of metaphysics, but he criticizes Kant for extending what he had proved only for his epistemological argument to philosophy in general, thereby “tacitly” assuming that “there is no other philosophy than the pure rational philosophy” employed by the former metaphysics and his own negative philosophy. Kant claimed the end of metaphysics by his demonstration that the concepts of the understanding are not applicable to the supersensuous realm. Schelling countered that if that is the case, the supersensuous realm could not only not be known, it could not be thought. Kant had fallen into a contradiction. In his *Philosophy of Nature* (1797) Schelling attempted to demonstrate the

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possibility of the existence of the outside world. For Schelling only the positive philosophy can produce understanding of religion and this is done by means of its elevating a philosophy of mythology and of revelation. He suggests that “it is with the transition to positive philosophy that we first enter the sphere of religion.” In other words, the distinction between positive and negative philosophy means a distinction between a philosophy that is truly religious and one that does not make room for religion. Schelling’s understanding of a true religion is given in the exposition of the nature of religion in his *Philosophy of Revelation* (1841-2), which makes a distinction between two types of religion, scientific and unscientific. “Scientific religion” is an entirely rational religion manifesting the original unity of the intellect and the object, and as such is completely ideal and unhistorical. Elsewhere Schelling says that it is not religion at all. “Unscientific religion,” on the other hand, is so thoroughly “historical” a phenomenon that is based on a pre-rational consciousness of God. For Schelling, unscientific religion is the true religion. In his lecture “The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion,” Tillich furthers Schelling’s distinction between the two types of religion and illustrates an “ontological type” of philosophy

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28 The ultimate solution is found in the absolute identity of mind in us and nature outside us, which is reflected in Tillich’s “question of an underlying unity of subjective and objective reason.” ST1, 76.


of religion as that which explains Schelling’s unscientific, true religion.\textsuperscript{32} Tillich contrasts an “ontological type” of philosophy of religion in which humankind’s estrangement from self, world, and God was overcome, and a “cosmological type” in which God was confronted as essentially different from oneself.

“Schelling’s positive philosophy is an attempt to think philosophically about the divine activity in myth and revelation.”\textsuperscript{33} In a sense, what is positive is the divine.\textsuperscript{34} Schelling reflects, “At the end of negative philosophy I have only possible and not actual religions, religion only “within the limits of bare reason.”” The real religion is a religion that satisfies the longing for the real God and for redemption through the real God. The real God cannot be a mere logical postulate as in Kant. But this is not the end of the relationship between philosophy and religion. For Schelling, the resolution lay in the combination of negative and positive philosophy. “Any philosophy which does not remain grounded in the negative but tires to reach what is positive, the divine, immediately and without that negative foundation, will inevitably end up dying of spiritual impoverishment.”\textsuperscript{35} Positive philosophy is not meant to replace, but to supplement and ground negative philosophy, which, in its turn, helps understand positive philosophy. Schelling notes that when positive philosophy joins negative philosophy, the latter is not changed in any

\textsuperscript{32} TT, 10-29.


way, “on the contrary, by this it finds itself grounded for the first time in its true essence.”

Positive philosophy is a philosophy which gives an account of what lies beyond philosophy but which comes to philosophy for its comprehension. Schelling argues that “Without philosophical religion it is impossible to comprehend the real religions – mythological and revealed – or to interpret and give an account of them.” It is not very difficult to see in Tillich’s notion of a theonomous philosophy a parallel to Schelling’s positive philosophy which unites the autonomy of reason with an ultimate concern for the divine Ground and activity. Tillich confesses that “I find more “theonomous philosophy” in Schelling than in any of the other idealists.” His enthusiasm for Schelling drew him to Heidegger when both were at Marburg in 1925. For Tillich regarded Heidegger’s work as “theonomous philosophy” which unintentionally establishes a doctrine of man which is both the doctrine of human freedom and human finitude, and which is closely related to the Christian interpretation of human existence. Tillich knew that Schelling’s program for the unification of philosophy remained incomplete, for Schelling did not rewrite a negative philosophy from the positive philosophical point of view.


38 IH, 35.

39 “The result is that Schelling’s own “negative philosophy” comes to mean his own earlier philosophy of identity and “positive philosophy” the larger fragments published posthumously as his late philosophy.” Vincent A. McCarthy, Quest for a Philosophical Jesus: Christianity and Philosophy in Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, and Schelling (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1986), 186.
philosophy of Heidegger better serves to the need to satisfy “the quest for a new theonomy” than that of Schelling, who recently has been elevated to the status of the teacher of Heidegger. From Tillich’s perspective, Heidegger’s thought in Being and Time “is so closely related with the Christian interpretation of human existence that one is forced to speak of a “theonomous philosophy.”

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**Heidegger’s Protestantizing Turn**

Tillich was prepared for Heidegger’s philosophy by his reading of Schelling. For example, Schelling raised the question of the “ground” of being, or of what is beyond being and thinking, beyond being and nothing, in a form that appears to be more radical than the way it is raised in Hegel. Alfred Jäger points out that the structure of Heidegger’s question of being is

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40 ST3, 252.
42 OB, 27.
43 Tillich speaks of the “three factors” that prepared the ground for his acceptance of existential philosophy. “The first was my close knowledge of Schelling’s final period, in which he outlined his philosophy of existence in response to Hegel’s philosophy of essence.” OB 56. So there is a real sense in which for Tillich “Heidegger’s ideas were filtered through Schelling.” John Heywood Thomas, Tillich (London: Continuum, 2000), 11.
made more accessible and intelligible by reference to its background in Schelling. But what finally won Tillich in his Marburg days from resisting Heidegger’s thought to an active learning from it was Heidegger’s close interest in Martin Luther’s theology of the Cross and his doctrine of faith as trusting in a promise. Tillich saw in Schelling the first appearance of the break with the Western metaphysics of being, and that Heidegger represented that break by incorporating it into a constructive philosophy, which Schelling was unable to do.

Both Heidegger and Luther drive Christianity away from the metaphysics of Scholasticism back to historical life. The background of the strong theological aspect of Heidegger’s thought is important for understanding Tillich’s affinity for Heidegger. For the purpose of the present study, it is of the upmost importance to review the events of Heidegger’s education, professional appointments, teaching, research, and publications. For they cast new light on Tillich-Heidegger connection. My review will focus particularly on Heidegger’s discovery of Protestantism through the theology of Luther. For it is through Heidegger’s “Protestant turn” to Luther that Tillich had an “existential encounter” with Heidegger. The

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following detailed analysis of Heidegger’s early theological commitments will help us to describe the Heideggerian legacy embedded in Tillich’s system in distinction from his own theological creativity in it.

Heidegger was born in a rural Catholic town in south Germany. His father was a sexton and he grew up as a Catholic. It is said that Heidegger and his only brother grew up playing in the church courtyard and helping their father in the church. In 1903, at the age of 14, Heidegger entered the seminary, 30 miles away from home, and lived a semi-monastic life, attending the local grammar school. Three years later he moved to the Jesuit Seminary of the Archdiocese of Freiburg with the intention of joining the priesthood. After graduating in 1909, Heidegger entered the novitiate of the Jesuits. But he did not meet the strict health requirements of the Jesuits. He had to leave only after the initial test period of two weeks because of his heart troubles. In the winter of 1909, he transferred to the seminary in Freiburg, the Collegium Borromaeum, where he continued his theology studies until 1911. Heidegger’s early works published in this period forcefully defended the authority of the Catholic Church against the

49 ST3, 165.


53 These works are suppressed in Gesamtausgabe and not mentioned on official lists.
modern worldview.\textsuperscript{54} This means that Heidegger’s intellectual journey began as an antimodern.\textsuperscript{55} His early publications in 1911, appearing in a Catholic journal, praised the Church’s stand against the “influences of modernism” – against the “decadence of individualism” and “the trendy wave of subjective worldviews” that are “adapted to life instead of the reverse.”\textsuperscript{56} But in February of 1911, Heidegger was again forced to break off his seminary studies when a medical examination revealed his heart trouble.\textsuperscript{57} The road to priesthood was blocked forever.\textsuperscript{58} From then on, Heidegger intended to become a Catholic philosopher. On July 26, 1913, Heidegger received his doctorate in philosophy at the University of Freiburg. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on a problem central to the early Husserl, entitled \textit{The Doctrine of Judgment in


\textsuperscript{57}Hugo Ott, \textit{Martin Heidegger: A Political Life}, trans. Allan Blunden (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 64-9, 95, holds that this involuntary abandonment of his theological studies became one of the reasons for Heidegger’s later grudge against the Church.

Psychologism. Having received his doctorate in 1913 and his license to teach in 1915, he hoped to get the chair of Christian (Catholic) philosophy in Freiburg University.

Heidegger, in his pursuit of the chair, endeavored to assure the administrative officers of Freiburg’s Catholic archdiocese, in writing letters to the university, that his academic work would be devoted to “researching and teaching Christian-Scholastic philosophy” [September 20, 1914], that he saw himself as standing “in the service of Christian-Scholastic philosophy and the Catholic worldview” [November 23, 1914], and that this philosophical career would be dedicated to “making the intellectual riches stored up in Scholasticism available and usable for the spiritual battle of the future over the Christian-Catholic ideal of life” [December 13, 1915]. Moreover, in a handwritten curriculum vitae that he presented to the philosophy department on July 2, 1915, he declared that his “basic philosophical convictions [remain] those of Aristotelian-Scholastic philosophy” and that his lifework would be taken up with “a comprehensive presentation of medieval logic and psychology in the light of modern phenomenology.” In fact, since 1913,
Heidegger had been in close contact with Heinrich Finke who was an eminent member of Freiburg University with influence in its philosophy department. Finding a patron in him, Heidegger must have been “an active candidate for the chair in Catholic philosophy” since 1914 through June of 1916. As Husserl, who was present at the faculty meeting of June 23, 1916, recollected, Heidegger was inside favorite for the chair, “under the protection of our “Catholic historian,” Colleague Finke.” But the decision made on the meeting came as a disappointment to Heidegger. The justification for that decision can be ascertained from Husserl’s letter to Professor Paul Natorp of Marburg University, who later inquired Husserl about Heidegger’s suitability for a professorship at Marburg. In his 1917 letter to Natorp to answer the latter’s inquiry about Heidegger, Husserl writes that “he [Heidegger] is confessionally tied [to Catholicism]….Accordingly, last year [June 23, 1916] during committee discussion about filling the professorship in Catholic philosophy here in our Philosophy Department…. [Heidegger] was

62 On November 14, 1913, the Catholic priest Engelbert Krebs, Heidegger’s friend and colleague, records in his diary: “This evening between five and six he [Heidegger] came to see me and told me how Finke had urged him to do his thesis on some aspect of the history of philosophy, and that Finke had clearly given him to understand that as long as the chair remained vacant Heidegger should seek to qualify as a lecturer as soon as possible, thereby making himself available as a candidate.” Rüdiger Safranski, Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil, trans. Ewald Osers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 46. Heidegger had known Krebs since his early teens, co-teaching a seminar on Aristotle’s logic with him at Freiburg in 1916. Krebs married Heidegger and his fiancée Elfride Petri in 1917.


placed in consideration, at which point Finke discussed him as an appropriate candidate in a religious-denominational sense….In the final analysis we found him to be too young and not yet mature enough for the position here, or even for a supplementary assistant professorship.” 66

Whatever the reasons may have been, this decision was shocking to Heidegger. For this event took its place in a chain of frustrating experiences: Heidegger’s rejection at the hands of the Jesuits in 1909, the subsequent interruption of his theological studies in 1911, and now Finke who nourished the expectation that Heidegger would become a full professor breaks his word. As Herman Philipse notes, “Catholicism had thwarted his ambitions for a third time.” 67 These events amount to three rejections Heidegger received from the Catholic Church. Heidegger must have felt betrayed. This bitterness in the traumatic experiences of Heidegger’s formative years entailed the following verdict: “Among other things, Communism may, perhaps, be horrible, but the matter is clear: Jesuitism is diabolical, if you will excuse the expression.” 68 Several years later, Heidegger “emerges as a “protestant apostate,”” 69 teaching at the Marburg University which has been famous since the time of the Reformation as the first Protestant university in the world.


Heidegger underwent “the personal and philosophical conversion” after acquiring another motive for moving away from Catholicism in 1916. He spent the summer of 1917 reading the Protestant theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher and began to read Luther closely as early as 1918. A small grant through Husserl allowed Heidegger to obtain the complete Erlangen edition of Luther, which was far superior to any other editions then available and the publication of which created a new basis for the study of Luther. That year, Heidegger married Elfride Petri, a Lutheran student at Freiburg, in a Catholic ceremony at the Freiburg University Chapel, but a week later remarried in a Protestant ceremony in the presence of the Petri family. Accordingly, the marriage was annulled when Catholic authorities learned that the couple had also been married in a Protestant church. Heidegger felt tension between, on the one hand, the conformity to ecclesiastical authority that the Vatican’s anti-modernist campaign demanded and, on the other hand, the “inner truthfulness towards oneself and those one is supposed to teach.” The increasing tension arising from the confrontation between religious demand and inner truthfulness that was demanded by his vocation to philosophy, or, as he describes, “the tension between ontology and speculative theology,” culminated in his abandonment of his “strong


73 MWP, 252.
[dogmatic] Catholicism. In fact, Heidegger’s Protestantizing turn predates 1916. Already in 1914, Heidegger could mock pope Pius X when he issued a *motu proprio* *Sacrarum antistium* in 1910, an “anti-modernism oath” to be taken by all Catholic scholars. In a cynical letter to his friend, Heidegger wrote that “Perhaps as an ‘academic’ you could apply for better treatment: all who succumb to having independent thoughts could have their brains taken out and replaced with Italian salad.” This contradicts the impression he gave to the faculty of the Philosophy Department of Freiburg University. Heidegger may be said to be opportunistic in this respect.

His connection with the Catholic Church remained ambivalent in so far as he clearly declared himself a Catholic on questionnaires from the Ministry of Education of the Weimar Republic which controlled the universities in 1920s in Germany.

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76 Herman Philipse, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 445n370. Gregory Bruce Smith, *Martin Heidegger: Paths Taken, Paths Opened* (Lanham, MD.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishes, 2007), 18, explains that “Heidegger professed an allegiance to Catholicism when it was necessary or convenient and utterly turned his back when it was no longer necessary.”

It was Heidegger’s philosophical research, not his anger, however, that led him to annul his faith in Roman Catholicism. Heidegger left the Catholic Church because of his independence of mind, and his relationship to the Catholicism as an organized religion came to an end. In 1919, at the age of thirty, and on the occasion of the baptism of his first child, Heidegger officially broke with the Catholic faith, writing to the priest who had married Heidegger and Elfride in 1917 and who would have performed the baptism. Heidegger said that “over the last two years I struggled for a basic clarification of my philosophical position…. [However] epistemological insights extending to the theory of historical knowledge have made the system of Catholicism problematic and unacceptable to me, but not Christianity and metaphysics – these, though, in a new sense.” As Pádraig Hogan points out, the “epistemological insights” refers to the phenomenology of Husserl whose work on securing the foundations of knowledge was an

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78 In fact, Heidegger’s anti-Catholic statements are many, significant, and public. For instance, defending the purity of the revolutionary movement of Nazi, Heidegger wrote angrily to the leader of the German Student Association when the Catholic student fraternity at the University of Freiburg was becoming a powerful agent for the Catholic Church’s organizational and spiritual influence in Freiburg in 1934: “We must in no way allow this clear Catholic victory to continue, especially in this region.” Victor Farías, *Heidegger and Nazism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 178.


80 John D. Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University, 1982), 60. Heidegger did not formally leave the Church. It is not possible under Catholic canon law. But this did not mean that his relationship to the Church was not merely passive and formal. Before receiving the offer from the University of Marburg (which he would take), Heidegger gave three courses on subjects closely allied to theology; In the winter semester, 1919-1920, “Philosophical Bases of Medieval Mysticism”; during the winter of 1920-1921, “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion”; during the summer of 1921, “Saint Augustine and Neoplatonism.”
inspiration to Heidegger. The reference to metaphysics “in a new sense” indicated his rejection of the scholastic philosophy that had been central to his previous academic concern, and it points to the ingenuity of Heidegger’s interest in the question of being, a question that was to occupy him throughout his life. That rejection was in consequence of Heidegger’s view that “the foundations of scholastic philosophy produced a theology that proceeded not so much from the challenges posed to faith by Scripture, but from all-embracing metaphysical claims raised to the level of dogma.” Heidegger claims to have grasped the values held by medieval Catholicism “better perhaps than its official interpreters.” His letter to the priest concludes with a profession of faith in free Christianity: “I believe myself to have the inner call to philosophy. By fulfilling this call in research and teaching, I wish to do all that is within my powers for the eternal vocation of the inner man – and only for this – and so to justify my existence and my work itself before God.” This important letter bearing witness to a decisive turning point for Heidegger addresses his own development over the previous two years beginning with his study of Schleiermacher’s second “Speech on Religion.” This may be the first “turn” in Heidegger’s

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thought. Charles B. Guignon notes that “its importance cannot be emphasized enough. For with the turn from Catholicism to Protestantism, the philosophical interests of the young thinker shifted from the questions of logic to those of history….and from dogmatic theology to the theology of the New Testament.”

These two years, 1917-19, have been said to be Heidegger’s lost years, the “obscure and virtually unknown” period of which Theodore Kisiel calls “the interregnum.” As Ben Vedder notes, “This marks the end of his career as an aspiring Catholic philosopher, the course he had set for himself since his dissertation in 1913.” At the same time, Heidegger turned to Husserl “the father of phenomenology,” for intellectual support because Heidegger felt that his own work and interests were “close to Husserl’s thought and would grow in precision and coherence as a result.” Heidegger first met Husserl in 1916 when the latter took the chair of non-Catholic philosophy at the University of Freiburg – the chair that Heidegger himself would come to occupy thirteen years later. Heidegger had been reading the work of Husserl since his seminary

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89 Victor Farias, Heidegger and Nazism (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 54. When Heidegger left the seminary in 1911 and determined to devote himself to philosophy, his first wish was to study under Husserl, then at Göttingen, but financial problems kept him at Freiburg. Now the situation worked out to his advantage with Husserl’s transfer to Freiburg in the spring of 1916.
days and had identified Husserl as a potential mentor, hoping to work as his assistant. When Husserl, who also called himself a “free-Christian” and a “non-dogmatic Protestant,” learned that Heidegger had “freed himself from dogmatic Catholicism,” he was happy to help Heidegger get some part-time teaching at his university. Husserl understood Heidegger’s turn to his own particular brand of nondenominational Protestantism as the result of “difficult inner struggles” that precipitated “radical changes in [Heidegger’s] basic religious convictions.”

Heidegger worked as a Privatdozent (unsalaried lecturer) and as Husserl’s assistant from 1919 until 1923 at Freiburg. Thereafter at Marburg, where he was appointed associate professor in the fall of 1923 and taught until the summer of 1928.

Heidegger became a two-in-one candidate when the faculty of Marburg University was informed of his developments in applying phenomenological method to the history of

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90 Heidegger later recalled, “Both volumes of Husserl’s Logical Investigations lay on my desk in the theological seminary ever since my first semester there. OBT, 74-5.


philosophy, for the University had needed both a professor to teach phenomenology and a professor familiar with the history of medieval philosophy. In a recollection of his student years at Marburg, Gadamer writes, “When my decisive encounter with Heidegger occurred, I was a young man and had just completed by doctorate in philosophy….For the entire time of my study….the feeling had accompanied me that something was missing….a feeling about which I was somehow reassured when I met Heidegger. All at once I knew. This was what I had missed and what I had been seeking.” In his new position as an Extraordinariat (associate professor) at Marburg, Heidegger could develop his own thought in full independence and in relation to a new philosophical environment. Although important ingredients of Being and Time were formulated during his early academic years in Freiburg, it was not until his first Marburg period that he began systematic work on this project.

Heidegger’s serious interest in Luther began around 1917 with his study of Schleiermacher. Heidegger began from the assumption that, as he said in his lecture course

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1919-20, “the ancient Christian achievement was distorted and buried through the infiltration of classical science into Christianity. From time to time it reasserted itself in violent eruptions (as in Augustine, in Luther, in Kierkegaard).”99 From 1919 to 1923 Heidegger immersed himself in private research on Luther. Karl Jaspers recalled his visit to Heidegger in the spring of 1920, when he “sat alone with him, watched him at his Luther studies, saw the intensity of his work.”100 It is reported that Heidegger even carved above the door of his house words from Luther’s translation of the Old Testament engraved.101 It is certainly not correct to say that Heidegger became acquainted with the work of Luther through Rudolf Bultmann, his colleague at Marburg.102 Luther’s most significant influence on the young Heidegger was his critique of scholasticism as the theology of glory, a critique that took issue with scholastic theology on the basis of genuine Christian experience in an effort to attain the true, Biblical faith. Luther attacked scholasticism as the theology of glory. The theology of glory “substitutes metaphysics for authentic discipleship and presumes to “have” God by seeing the divine glory omnipresent in

99 GA58, 205, 61-2.


102 Eugene Thomas Long, Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion 1900-2000 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 311. It may be said that Heidegger became acquainted with the work of Karl Barth through Bultmann.
creation."¹⁰³ Through a progressive forgetting of the meaning of authentic faith and a substitution of Aristotle for the Bible, medieval Christendom lost touch with the reality of God. The theology of glory claims to have a sure metaphysical knowledge of God deduced from incredible empirical evidence. In Luther’s view, the speculative notion of an omnipotent and omniscient First Cause is idolatry for it is the construction of a God of our own making. “The condition of this life is not that of having God but of seeking God,” Luther argued.¹⁰⁴ S. J. McGrath observes that “In the early Heidegger’s interpretation of the history of philosophy and theology, Luther’s de-Hellenization of Christianity is singled out as a moment when the factical experience of life comes to the fore.”¹⁰⁵ In his early study of Luther, Heidegger was particularly attracted to the Lutheran doctrine of the deformation of human nature resulting from original sin. Luther’s critique of the theology of glory led Heidegger to undertake an intensive study of the factical experience of life, a concept taken from Wilhelm Dilthey,¹⁰⁶ of the New Testament stories in an effort to recover authentic Christian experience. Luther argues, “Let us rather follow experience,


¹⁰⁶ Heidegger expressed esteem for Dilthey and admitted to being inspired by his mode of phenomenological observation. But he was careful to insist that none of the contemporary orientations could serve as a point of departure for this thought. At this early time, Heidegger claimed to proceed independently. Jeffrey Andrew Brash, *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning*, Rev. ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 102.
which shows…that from the very nature of the [unclean] seed we acquire ignorance of God.”

With Luther, Heidegger found in the New Testament stories a wholly different set of pre-philosophical paradigms. The first discussion of “factual life” was given in a lecture course he offered in the winter semester 1921-22 at the University of Freiburg. He explains the two aspects of what the “experience” of factual life designates as “the experiencing activity” and “that which is experienced through this activity.” However, “factual life-experience is comprised of both the activity of experiencing and that which is experienced,” and one cannot separate one from the other. “The experiencing self and what is experienced are not torn apart….“Experiencing” does not mean “taking-cognizance-of” but a confrontation-with, the self-assertion of the forms of what is experienced.” Factual life-experience is thus both a “what” and a “how.” “Factual” does not mean naturally real or causally determined, nor does it mean real in the sense of a thing. “The concept “factual” may not be interpreted from certain

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107 Martin Luther, *Lecture’s on Genesis, Chapters 1-5*, trans. George V. Schick, vol. 1 of *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia University Press, 1958), 166. It would be incorrect, however, to maintain that Luther’s soteriology of extreme corruption is based on experience alone. The premise of Luther’s doctrine of salvation is the revelation of God’s infinite love. Only in the light of the Christ event can we recognize the depravity of human fallenness. Revelation shows Luther what could not otherwise be known, the infinite mercy of God; experience confirms what is revealed, the extent of our fall.

108 The lecture course was entitled “Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Introduction to Phenomenological Research” and its entire third part was devoted to “factual life.”


110 *PRL, 7/GA60*, 8.
epistemological presuppositions.” A factual life is a life of human Dasein in an understanding of its own being as a question and a burden. A factual life of Dasein questions and burdens itself because it is and it is without a whence and whither. A factual life is a life in understanding of Dasein’s thrownness into its “here.” For Heidegger, such living within an understanding of being is a fact. “Facticity” is the designation….for the character of the being of “our” “own”

111 PRL, 7/GA60, 9.

112 Thomas Sheehan, whose carefully constructed new “paradigm” for Heidegger research has been both provocative and influential, also criticizes the translation of Dasein as “being there”: “One of the least happy moves of Heidegger-scholarship has been to translate the Da of Da-sein as ‘there.’ But with Heidegger’s Da…there is no there here.” Thomas Sheehan, “A Paradigm Shift in Heidegger Research,” Continental Philosophy Review 34 (2001): 193. Albert Hofstadter, “Translator’s Appendix: A Note on the Da and the Dasein,” in BPP, 335-6, explains that “No English equivalent is quite possible, not being-here, nor being-there, nor being-here-there. The reason is that the Da is not just a here or a there or a here-there, but rather is the essential disclosure by which here, there, here-there become possible. It is the source.” I am persuaded by Daniel O. Dahlstrom that the “colloquial uses of ‘da’ with ‘sein’ suggest a nearness and a dimension that is lost if ‘Da-sein’ is translated ‘there-being’ or ‘being-there.’” He recommends “being-here.” “[B]eing-there” has the distinct disadvantage of introducing a distance where there is none….More importantly, translating ‘Dasein’ as ‘being-there’ runs the risk of rendering the theme something that need not be a matter of intimate, pressing concern, or in other words something that we do not necessarily care about.” Daniel O. Dahlstrom, Heidegger’s Concept of Truth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xxiv-xxv. Heidegger explains his use of “Dasein” in Being and Time as follows: “In the philosophical tradition, the term “Dasein” means presence-at-hand, existence. In this sense, one speaks, for instance, of proofs of God’s existence. However, Da-sein is understood differently in Being and Time. To begin with, French existentialists also failed to pay attention to it. That is why they translated Da-sein in Being and Time as être-là, which means being here and not there. The Da in Being and Time does not mean a statement of place for a being, but rather it should designate the openness where beings can be present for the human being, and the human being also for himself. The Da of [Dasein’s] being distinguishes the humanness of the human being. The talk about human Da-sein is accordingly a pleonasm, avoidable in all contexts, including Being and Time. The appropriate French translation of Da-sein should be: Etre le là, and the meaningful accentuation should be Da-sein in German instead of Dasein.” ZS, 120. Jeff Malpas explains that the French translation Heidegger proposes here, “être le là (being the there),” does not dispense with the idea of the “there” at all, but rather “proposes a particular emphasis in the way the “there” is understood to relate to “being”…“being-there” means the kind of being that is or has its own “there.” Jeff Malpas, Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2006), 48. William Lovitt notes that, in a letter to the editor J. Glenn Gray (October 10, 1972) concerning the publication of [his essays on technology], Heidegger emphatically expressed his preference for “openness” and his disapprobation of “there” as a translation of da in Dasein. William Lovitt, introduction to The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays, by Martin Heidegger, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper, 1977), xxxv.
Dasein. More precisely, this expression means: in each case “this” Dasein in its being-there for a while at the particular time….insofar as it is.”¹¹³ The hermeneutics of facticity is not a “chilly science of facticity,”¹¹⁴ like “the botany of plants.”¹¹⁵ Rather, it can be understood as factical life itself interpreting itself. Heidegger’s early Freiburg lectures significantly turn on the notion of factical life, through which he discovered a new approach to theological texts. But Heidegger does not explain exactly what factical life includes. Heidegger does explain what non-factical life is. The non-factual condition of this life is such that the human will twists everything with its perverse intention to make something of itself on its own and be free of God. Luther says, “Just as reason is overwhelmed by many kinds of ignorance, so the will has not only been confused but has been turned away from God.”¹¹⁶ Heidegger discussed the three Heidelberg theses in his course of summer 1921, “Augustine and Neo-Platonism,”¹¹⁷ the purpose of which was an interpretation of Augustine’s ontotheology and its proof text, Romans 1.20, “For the invisible things of God ever since the creation of the world are clearly seen in the things that have been

¹¹³ OHF, 5. Heidegger’s emphasis.


¹¹⁵ OHF, 37/GA63, 46-7. Heidegger dismisses the word “philosophy of life” as a redundancy. “Factual life” is equated with Dasein. Therefore, “philosophy of life” is intrinsically a tautology, for philosophy deals with nothing except Dasein itself. “Philosophy of life” is comparable to “the botany of plants.” BT, 72/SZ, 46.


¹¹⁷ PRL, 113-227/GA60, 159-299.
made.” On the basis of this text, according to Heidegger, Augustine and the Scholastics assumed “a basic knowledge of God manifest in creation, a natural revelation of a constantly present God.”  

The invisible things of God are seen through the visible things God has made. This text was taken to be a Pauline confirmation of the Platonic ascent of the soul from the sensible to the supersensible world. Heidegger maintains that it is a misunderstanding of the passage that returns again and again in patristic writings as the foundation for the whole of patristic philosophy. It is only in Luther, Heidegger contends, that the meaning of this text is properly elucidated. Luther does not deny that Paul affirms a natural knowledge of God. However, under the pressure of sin, we cannot but misinterpret the natural revelation, which is the non-factual condition of this life. As John D. Caputo argues, this view of Luther fundamentally shaped Heidegger’s idea of a hermeneutics of facticity. Heidegger quotes Luther, “The man who looks upon the invisible things of God as they are perceived in created things does not deserve to be called a theologian. He who sees what is invisible of God in what has been created, is no theologian. – The presentation [Vorgabe] of the object of theology is not attained by way of a metaphysical consideration of the world.”

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119 PRL, 212/GA60, 281.


122 PRL, 213/GA60, 282.
attitude towards the relation of philosophy and theology as formulated in his theses for the
Heidelberg Disputation of 1518.\footnote{123} One of the most arresting features of Heidegger’s
philosophical work in the early Freiburg period was his call for philosophy to return to its pre-
philosophical origins,\footnote{124} to the long neglected conditions of “factual life,” or “facticity.”\footnote{125} “The
point of departure of the path to philosophy is factual life experience. It seems, however, as if
philosophy is leading us out of factual life experience.”\footnote{126} Luther had studied Aristotle’s
writings in detail and lectured on them. “I understand him,” Luther maintained, “better than
Thomas or Duns Scotus.”\footnote{127} According to Luther, “it is not that philosophy is evil” in itself for
the Christian, but rather its “misuse,”\footnote{128} which lies in replacing the New Testament with Aristotle
instead of working from a position of faith. One should only “philosophize well.” Luther
comments on Paul’s statement in Romans 8.18-27 in his 1515-16 Lectures on Romans that “[t]he
Apostle philosophizes….in a different way than the philosophers and the metaphysicians do.”

\footnote{123}{John Reynold Williams, Martin Heidegger's Philosophy of Religion (Waterloo: Wilfrid
Laurier University Press, 1979), 95.}

\footnote{124}{John D. Caputo, Demythologizing Heidegger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993),
60.}

\footnote{125}{BT, 82/SZ, 56.}

\footnote{126}{PRL, 8/GA60, 11.}

\footnote{127}{Martin Luther, “An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning
the Reform of the Christian Estate (1520),” trans. Charles M. Jacobs, Works of Martin Luther
(Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company and the Castle Press, 1915), 2:147.}

\footnote{128}{Martin Luther, “Heidelberg Disputation (1518),” trans. H. J. Grimm, in Career of the
Reformer I, vol. 31 of Luther’s Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia University Press,
1958), 55.}
Thus Luther creatively appropriated Aristotle’s philosophical concepts in order to clarify the Christian sense. But Heidegger complains in his 1922 essay on Aristotle that the believer-God relation of original Christianity is forced into the foreign Aristotelian concept. “This means that “the idea of human being and the Dasein of life [as presented in the traditional theology]….is based on Aristotelian “physics,” “psychology,” “ethics,” and “ontology.””,\textsuperscript{129}

Heidegger initially appreciated Husserl’s method of phenomenology and its strength for a theoretical justification of mathematics and logic. But he soon began to see that Husserl’s phenomenology was mistaken. Heidegger came to a conclusion, as Richard Sembera explains, that “Husserl’s orientation towards a philosophy of consciousness and towards a traditional conception of science – in other words, his focus on the theoretical problems of logic and mathematics – was misplaced.”\textsuperscript{130} Heidegger criticizes Husserl for confusing the difference between” the formal worlds of the theoretical sciences” and “the actual pre-theoretical life-world of everyday experience.”\textsuperscript{131} “Husserl, rather than discovering the foundation of the formal sciences in consciousness, had imposed a theoretical foundation upon consciousness for the sake of justifying the ultimate validity of logic and mathematics.”\textsuperscript{132} For Heidegger, the “lived” world as the pre-theoretical life-world has little thing to do with the world as it is described in formal

\textsuperscript{129} PIZA, 250/PIRA, 372.


Heidegger questions accordingly the true nature and reality of the actual life-world in which the human subject lives. Heidegger’s investigation of factical experience of life developed as a direct response to this question. This is “the authentic question of Being.” Hence, the authentic question of Being arises from factical life experience. One of the Heidegger’s early names for his expanded phenomenology was the “hermeneutics of facticity,” or what came to be called in *Being and Time* an “existential analytic.”

As illustrated above, Heidegger’s attempt to formulate a hermeneutics of facticity was inspired by Luther’s critique of Aristotelian metaphysics and medieval Aristotelian scholasticism. Heidegger was convinced by Luther’s theology that it was possible to experience in a completely new way the Christian faith, that is, in its primordiality. Taking his

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134 BT, 490n1. The correlation of “fundamental ontology” and “existential analytic,” which Heidegger discussed in *Being and Time*, was anticipated in the title of the 1923 course in which “hermeneutics of facticity” and “ontology” occur together.


136 Heidegger focused particularly on the young Luther’s violent critique of Aristotelian scholasticism. According to Heidegger, Luther’s destruction of Aristotelian scholasticism underwent a “derailing.” He thought that the later Luther did not push to its radical conclusions the destructive commentary on Aristotle and Aristotelian scholasticism that Luther had started in his youthful period because the later Luther fell back under spell of Greek conceptuality. “In his earliest works, Luther opened up a new understanding of primordial Christianity. Later on, he himself fell victim to the burden of tradition; then, the beginning of Protestant scholasticism sets in.” PRL, 213/GA60, 282. Heidegger’s emphasis.
lead from Luther, who described as “destruction”, his project of recovering an authentic
Scriptural Christianity beneath “the conceptual scaffolding of medieval theology,” Heidegger
makes his attempt at a “destruction” of the traditional, or the Aristotelian, metaphysical
conceptuality of western theology and philosophy, in order also to uncover the original or
primitive Christian experience, an attempt which he called “phenomenology of religious
consciousness” in 1919. The prototype of the “destruction of the history of ontology” in Being
and Time, and of what was later called “overcoming metaphysics,” was this essentially
theological project of 1919 in which Heidegger set out to recover the original categories of
factual Christian life. John van Buren explains that “The young Heidegger saw himself at this
time as a kind of philosophical Luther of western metaphysics….The young Heidegger’s
concern….was to find a new “genuine beginning” not only in a new ontological language, but
also in the end of Aristotelian-Scholastic theology and the initiation of a new Lutheran

137 In his Heidelberg Disputation, Luther uses the term to translate Paul’s word in 1 Corinthians 1
of “destroying” the wisdom of the Greeks with the concrete historical logos of the cross. On the basis of a
close reading of Heidegger’s scattered references to Luther, John van Buren concludes that “Heidegger’s
very term Destruktion and its sense came not only from Kant’s notion of ‘critique,’ but more so from
Luther’s 1518 Heidelberg Disputation.” John van Buren, The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden

138 John D. Caputo, Demythologizing Heidegger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993),
172.

139 On May 1, Heidegger writes to his friend Elisabeth Blochmann that “my own work is very
concentrated, having to do with principles and the concrete: basic problems of phenomenological
method….constantly penetrating anew into the genuine origins, preliminary work for a phenomenology of
religious consciousness.” Briefwechsel, 16.
theological language in his phenomenology of religion.”¹⁴⁰ Luther was referred to and discussed, along with Paul, Augustine, Pascal, Schleiermacher, and Kierkegaard, repeatedly in Heidegger’s lecture courses from 1919 to 1923.¹⁴¹ In van Buren’s word, “the Heidegger of the early Freiburg period seems actually to have been moving for a time toward “a kind of free mystical Lutheranism or free Lutheran mysticism.”¹⁴² But it was not Luther’s religious faith that inspired Heidegger. Heidegger saw in Luther, rather, an “attitude” toward theoretical philosophy that was his own.¹⁴³ Ben Vedder explains that “As philosophy does not offer knowledge of God, according to Luther, so Heidegger maintained in similar fashion that theoretical philosophy does not offer insight into factical life. In the theoretical approach to religion and to God, the factual was displaced and concealed in the form of questioning after a metaphysical entity.”¹⁴⁴ Heidegger attempted to go beyond Aristotelian metaphysical concepts so as to discover its sources in factical life. Heidegger put this discovery to work not as a way of rejecting


¹⁴¹ TDP, 15; GA56-57, 18; GA58, 58, 62, 204-5; GA61, 7, 182-3; GA63, 5, 14, 27, 46, 106.


Aristotelian metaphysics, but rather as a way of re-interpreting Aristotle. That is, as discussed above, Heidegger’s “destruction” does not mean to annihilate but to break through the conceptual surface of traditional Aristotelian metaphysics in order to retrieve its living roots and life-giving experiences. Therefore, the “destruction” of metaphysics or of the history of ontology in *Being and Time* is always to be understood as a fundamentally positive operation, not a negative one. Heidegger says that “to bury the past in nullity [Nichtigkeit] is not the purpose of this destruction; its aim is positive.” Precisely speaking, Heidegger’s destruction is a “deconstruction” of “factically oriented Aristotle.” The Luther scholar Gerhard Ebeling, with whom Heidegger later collaborated, argues that Luther also defends the “true Aristotle” against Scholastic misinterpretation. In Luther’s references to Aristotle shows his attention to the hidden aspect of Aristotle that he believed the Scholastics did not correctly understand. “It is very doubtful whether the Latins comprehended the correct meaning of Aristotle,” Luther writes. Luther even said that Aristotle was sent by God “as a plague upon us on account of our

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146 BT, 437/SZ, 385.

147 BT, 44/SZ, 23. Heidegger’s emphasis.


sins.” But a plague is, strictly speaking, not Aristotle himself, but Scholastic distortions of him. “The father of ontotheology” is not Aristotle, but the Latins. Heidegger thought, as did Luther, that Aristotle had the greatest phenomenological sensitivities in the ancient world. The task of the re-interpretation of Aristotle on which he had set out was to recover the factical life experience that had taken conceptual form in Aristotelian philosophy. The factically oriented Aristotle whom Heidegger attempted to defend is the Aristotle whose object is not God but life. It can be said in this sense that the shift of Heidegger’s interest from theological studies about Catholicism to philosophical studies about factical life experience is an “atheological turn.” However, we cannot conclude from this that Heidegger was an atheist, which I will discuss below in detail to better illuminate Tillich’s philosophical affinity to Heidegger. What he really wanted to do was to “find a way of getting himself out from under theology while still keeping in touch with what theology had been about.” “Theological questions motivated [Heidegger] from the start.” Heidegger’s “atheological turn” should be understood to mean that his

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152 BPP, 232/GA24, 328-30.


philosophy no longer addresses directly the problem of God. It is a turn to a “Godless theology.” At Bultmann’s invitation, Heidegger, in the summer of 1924, gave a lecture to the Marburg theologians on the concept of time. This lecture is a perfect example of Heidegger’s “philosophical silence on matters of theology.” He assured his audience at the beginning that he did not wish to say anything on theological or divine matters and he would confine himself to the “human.” “But he then talked about the human in such a way a theology of the type of Bultmann’s fitted like a key into a lock.” Appropriating Luther’s early theology, Heidegger attempted to lead the theological “questions” of sin, faith, and human relation to God back to more properly philosophical territory. Therefore, Heidegger’s claim to incompetence in theological matters is to be understood as a claim to incompetence in giving “answers” to the theological questions. Without such a competence in theological questioning, his works would have not evoked lively responses from the leading theologians of the twentieth century. Heidegger’s interpretations of Aristotle at this time were so innovative that they were directly responsible for the appointment that Heidegger received from Marburg when the university


157 GA64/CT.


needed someone who could teach phenomenology in relation to the medieval theology, as explained above. Heidegger confirms the influence of Aristotle on his own original thought. He says in *Being and Time* that “the question we are touching upon is not just any question. It is one which provided a stimulus for the researches of Plato and Aristotle, only to subside from then on as a theme for actual investigation.” Heidegger calls his study of Franz Brentano’s work on Aristotle “the ceaseless impetus for the treatise *Being and Time.*” Heidegger’s purification of Aristotle consisted of a twofold retrieval, of Aristotle on the one hand and of the original structures of factical Christian life on the other. This is evidenced by the fact that *Being and Time* is thoroughly interwoven with theological questions. The very goal of *Being and Time* was “to formalize these factical structures to give them a formal-ontological conceptualization.” The hermeneutics of facticity of *Being and Time*, which was “a

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161 “Heidegger’s knowledge of Luther and his capacity to link philosophy and Protestant theology were selling-point in favor of his candidacy for an academic position at Marburg.” George Wright, *Religion, Politics and Thomas Hobbes* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 213n9.

162 BT, 21/SZ, 2.

163 RP, 21.


hermeneutics of the New Testament experience of life”¹⁶⁷ and also was “the earliest form of Being and Time;”¹⁶⁸ was Heidegger’s principal preoccupation even after Being and Time. Tillich must have thought that these two tasks were one in Heidegger. For Heidegger’s 1919 letter on his break with Catholicism that occasioned his embrace of Lutheranism and the introduction to Being and Time both cite metaphysics as the primary motivation for the project of retrieval. It is precisely because of this nature that the work was received with enthusiasm by the contemporary Protestant theologians. Caputo writes, “When Christian theologians looked into the pages of Being and Time they found themselves staring at their own image – formalized, ontologized, or as Bultmann said “demythologized.”¹⁶⁹ What Being and Time had discovered, Bultmann said, was the very structure of religious and Christian existence. As Theodore Kisiel and Thomas Sheehan observe, Heidegger’s Being and Time refers to Luther only twice, and they occur marginally to its project of a fundamental ontology and existential analysis of Dasein. But in his early lecture on the problem of sin in Luther and in Heidegger’s attentive reading of Luther’s

¹⁶⁶ In 1959 Heidegger published an account of a dialogue occasioned in 1953/4 by the visit of a Japanese scholar. In this dialogue, while discussing the term “hermeneutics,” Heidegger makes the following remark: “The term ‘hermeneutics’ was familiar to me from my theological studies. At that time I was particularly agitated over the question of the relation between the Word of Holy Scripture and theological-speculative thinking.” Heidegger follows up this remark by stating that: “Without this theological background I should never have come upon the path of thinking.” OWL, 9-10.

¹⁶⁷ John D. Caputo, Demythologizing Heidegger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 50. Caputo says that “This is the sense in which the hermeneutics of facticity has a “jewgreek” structure.”


works provide abundant evidence that indicates “the impact of Luther on Heidegger’s entire project.”\(^{170}\) This does not mean, however, that Heidegger intended to do theology as such in a certain way. *Being and Time* is a philosophical investigation and the debt to Luther is methodological. In his definition of the relationship between philosophy and theology Heidegger is attempting to achieve such a connection between philosophical questioning and theological interpretation. Tillich takes up this task and develops it in his *Systematic Theology*.

**Heidegger as a Lutheran at Marburg**

In his last lecture series at Freiburg in the summer of 1923 that explored Luther’s influence on Kant and German idealism, Heidegger wrote that “Companions in my searching were the young Luther and the paragon Aristotle….Kierkegaard gave impulses, and Husserl gave me my eyes.”\(^{171}\) This ontology lecture course must have made a powerful impression. “Quite a number of men who were later to achieve name and standing in philosophy were then sitting at the feet of Privatdozent Heidegger, who was beginning to be regarded as the secret king of philosophy.”\(^{172}\)

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After his move to the University of Marburg in the fall of 1923, Heidegger’s preoccupation with Luther continued, and he continued to hold an interest in Luther late in his career, as evidenced from the assistance he gave the Luther scholar Gerhard Ebeling on his 1961 book on Luther’s *Disputatio de Homnine*. His engagement with Luther deepened in the context of seminars with the Lutheran theologian Bultmann, who had come to Marburg two years ahead of Heidegger. Heidegger quickly perceived Bultmann’s expertise as a valuable resource for his own interests. Bultmann also regarded Heidegger as a Luther expert. Heidegger immediately joined Bultmann’s theology seminar on the ethics of the Apostle Paul in the winter semester of 1923-24. In this semester-long participation in the seminar, Heidegger was invited to offer a two-part lecture entitled, “Das Problem der Sünde bei Luther (The Problem of Sin in Luther),” in which he followed closely with Luther in his critique of

\[\text{173} \quad \text{John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 150.}\]


\[\text{176} \quad \text{The two-part lecture was given by Heidegger in the last two sessions (February 14 and 21, 1924).}\]

\[\text{177} \quad \text{Student transcript has been published in Bernd Jaspert, ed., *Sachgemässe Exegese: Die Protokolle aus Rudolf Bultmanns Neuestamentlichen Seminaren 1921-1951*, vol. 43 of *Marburger Theologische Studien* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1996), 28-33. This lecture has recently been translated by John van Buren as “The Problem of Sin in Luther,” in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond*, ed. John van Buren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 105-10.}\]
scholastic philosophy, introducing into the discussion Luther’s interpretations of Genesis and Exodus. This collaboration with Bultmann also proved fruitful for Heidegger, who was at that time intensively occupied with Luther. The important contribution of Heidegger to this seminar concerns “Luther’s conception of the radicality of sin and the consequences of this radicality for a theological understanding both of the being of the human and of the human’s proper relation to God.” He concludes with Luther that “One can understand faith only when one understands sin, and one can understand sin only when one has a correct understanding of the being of man itself.” As such Heidegger attempted to reduce the theological questions of sin, faith, and human relation to God to philosophical issues.

The move from Catholic Freiburg to Protestant Marburg gave Heidegger an immediate and uninhibited opportunity to demonstrate his long familiarity with the Lutheran theology. Gadamer, who served as assistant to Heidegger at Marburg from 1923 to 1928 and eventually wrote his habilitation under Heidegger’s direction, offers a vivid picture of the time when Heidegger arrived in Marburg. It was, by Gadamer’s own account, a “tension-filled time when the theological break with historical and liberal theology took place….when the philosophical

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180 *PSL*, 110.

abandonment of Neo-Kantianism occurred, the [old] Marburg School dissolve, and new stars arose in the philosophical heavens."  

It was a time of crisis in theology and transition in philosophy. By this time Heidegger was well on his way toward a different direction from Bultmann. In other words, as Theodore Kisiel argues, “the real contribution of this academic year [in Marburg] to Heidegger’s development is not this religious content but rather the abstrusely formal elaboration of his hermeneutic phenomenology which inaugurates the year.”

It is clear, however, that during the formative period in his writing of Being and Time Heidegger does not consider his work to be divorced from theology. Rather, Heidegger’s confrontation with theological themes was of paramount important in his philosophical development at Marburg. Most importantly, Luther’s theology continued to play a central part of Heidegger’s

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184 Eric B. Berg argues that to develop a clear understanding of Heidegger, particularly “to make sense of Heidegger in section V and VI of Being and Time…one must first develop an explicit and comprehensive understanding of Luther’s 16th thesis in the Heidelberg Disputation.” Éric B. Berg, “Martin Heidegger’s Debt to Martin Luther,” *Kinesis* 32, no. 1 (2005): 47.

intellectual life in the Marburg years. Eric B. Berg observes that “the tone and occasion of the Heidelberg Disputation matches the intention of Being and Time,” the project of which took shape in 1922-24. The Luther scholar Edmund Schlink even went so far as to maintain that “Heidegger’s existential analytic of human Dasein is a radical secularization of Luther’s anthropology.”

The decisive and historically unique period of encounter between Tillich and Heidegger was the years 1924-1925, when they both taught at the University of Marburg. Shortly after his second marriage to Hannah Werner Gottschow, Tillich moved to Marburg, where he had been appointed as the successor of Rudolf Otto, the renowned systematic theologian and philosopher of religion. Tillich remained in Marburg for only three semesters, but this was a period of immense importance in his theological development. It was here that he first set about creating a systematic theology, lecturing on it. It is all the more important to understand the

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186 There are Heidegger scholars who attempt to avoid or to debase the theological influence upon Heidegger. See for example, Alfred Denker, Historical Dictionary of Heidegger’s Philosophy (Lanham, MD.: Scarecrow Press, 2000).


189 Thereafter, Tillich’s appointments were not to theological faculties but to religious studies (at the Dresden Institute of Technology, 1925-33) or in philosophy (at the University of Frankfurt, 1929-33).

190 Tillich traced the origins of his Systematic Theology back to the lectures which he gave at Marburg during the winter semester of 1924-5. He explicitly states, “I consider my lectures on “Systematic Theology” in Marburg, Germany, in 1924 as the beginning of my work on this system.” ST3, 7.
significance of this period from Tillich’s theological point of view. It was there that he met with existentialism in its twentieth-century form. Once there, he was thrown into a context of fierce theological debate represented by his students who were either radical Barthians or else enthusiastic followers of Heidegger.

I find widespread understandable inclinations to minimize, ignore, or deny the influence of Heidegger on Tillich in Marburg. It is impossible to agree, however, that “Tillich was never a Heideggerian,” and to reduce what he adopted from Heidegger to simply a matter of language, even if it is true that with respect to the problem of Being, their conclusions were seemingly opposed. I maintain that Tillich’s thought shifted in both emphasis and content after his encounter with Heidegger in 1924-5 and the publication of Being and Time in 1927, although this does not deny the fundamental continuity of Tillich’s thought. Phenomenology attracted attention in Marburg, especially with Heidegger’s arrival. But between 1916 and 1927 Heidegger

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191 According to my research, his lecture-notes for that course seem unfortunately not to be extant. It is not possible therefore, to measure the extent to which their structure and content contributed to the published version of the Systematic Theology.


193 The majority of the students were Barthians by the time Heidegger arrived in 1923 at Marburg. Tillich also found immediately that the theological faculty at Marburg was dominated by neoorthodoxy. It is reported that “Tillich dreaded the fact that most of his students at Marburg were Barthians.” Gary Dorrien, The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900-1950 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 491.

did not publish any work. This establishes a reasonable doubt as to “Tillich’s Heideggerian turn” in the mid-1920s. But it should be noted, as Hanna Arendt recalls, that Heidegger’s “fame” precedes the publication of *Being and Time*. The retrospective account of Arendt explains that “The beginning [of fame] in Heidegger’s case is….the first lecture courses and seminars which he held as a mere privatdozent (instructor) and assistant to Husserl at the University of Freiburg in 1919.” Heidegger was principally known “through his teaching, partly also through unpublished manuscripts of small circulation.” Arendt is right in saying that the immediate success of Heidegger’s *Being and Time* both inside and outside the academic circle would not have been possible, if his reputation among the students had not preceded its in 1927. The success of *Being and Time* only confirmed what his followers had known for years. “In Heidegger’s case there is nothing tangible on which his fame could have been based, nothing written, save for the notes taken at his lectures which circulated among students everywhere….There was hardly more than a name, but the name traveled all over Germany like

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the rumor of the hidden king.” This means that *Being and Time* was the outcome rather than the origin of a dialogue between Heidegger as a philosopher and the contemporary Christian theologians.

There are other more practical reasons that account for the attraction of Heidegger’s philosophy to Tillich. First, Heidegger, who was deeply influenced by religious and theological matters, was actively involved in theological debates and had influential interaction with the theologians at Marburg. For him, it was “a time of intense dialogue with Marburg theology.” According to Bultmann, the philosophy and theology faculties were cooperative at this time. It was in this academic ambience that Heidegger closely worked with Bultmann. Heidegger and Bultmann collaborated intensely in a number of joint seminars and study groups that included reading the Gospel of John in regular Saturday sessions. Quickly these joint seminars created a strong atmosphere of discipleship among those students who were attracted to these scholars.

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202 Heidegger and Bultmann became close friends, forming a friendship that remained intact years after Heidegger departed Marburg in 1928 for the University of Freiburg. When Bultmann published the first volume of his collected articles in 1933, under the title *Faith and Understanding*, he deliberately dedicated the volume to Heidegger. All the articles collected here from the years 1924-30 show the significance of Heidegger’s thought for Bultmann’s theological work. Their friendship lasted until their deaths although it was interrupted during National Socialism, due to Heidegger’s National Socialism and Bultmann’s strong opposition to it. Anders Gerdmar, *Root’s of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 401.

When Hans Jonas, who was a former student of Heidegger and later became one of the most severe critics of the theological appropriation of Heidegger, arrived on campus in 1924, he was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of these followers of Bultmann and Heidegger. The effects of these scholars were certainly not limited to their students. Tillich was impressed by Heidegger’s profound influence on his own students. Bultmann also acknowledges the influence of Heidegger on his own thought: “The work of existentialist philosophy, which I came to know through my discussion with Martin Heidegger, has become of decisive significance for me. I found in it the conceptuality in which it is possible to speak adequately of human existence and therefore also of the existence of the believer.” Bultmann was convinced that theology now had to move in an existentialist direction. “Bultmann’s continual attack upon liberal theology and his growing reservation about dialectic theology as well as Heidegger’s attack upon the traditional model of neo-Kantian epistemology captured the attention of both philosophy and

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207 Karl Barth criticized Bultmann’s existentialist reduction as early as 1929, and, to the great annoyance and of his friend Bultmann for this reason, Barth even refused to deliver a lecture on the controversial topic on natural theology which he had promised to give at Marburg. Hans Küng, Great Christian Thinkers: Paul, Origen, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Schleiermacher, Barth, trans. John Bowden (New York: Continuum, 2006), 208.
theology faculties at Marburg University.’” Troubled, as a result, the philosopher Nicolai Hartmann became convinced that “Heidegger’s ideas represented a negative atmosphere in the philosophy department.” Rudolf Otto, whom Tillich would replace, also became increasingly critical Bultmann’s work, as Bultmann grew closer to Heidegger. “At Marburg,” wrote the visiting scholar W. R. Boyce Gibson, “it is not [Rudolf] Otto that the theologians came to hear but Heidegger.”

Second, Heidegger left his mark on Tillich through the medium of the students who attended the lectures of both professors. J. H. Randall, Tillich’s colleague at Columbia University, writes that “Tillich found an exciting colleague at Marburg, Martin Heidegger. He was impressed by Heidegger’s profound influence on his students.” As Karl Löwith put it, Heidegger during this time resembled more a “preacher” than the typical academic. “The enormous success of his lectures and the extraordinary influence of his work” was a “natural

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213 Karl Löwith was Heidegger’s first habilitation student and sometime colleague. He labored over Heidegger’s philosophically rich correspondence with him for many years.
consequence,” Löwith suggested, of Heidegger’s role as a “displaced preacher.” The intensity and the touching quality of Heidegger’s teaching at Marburg are recounted from memory by Gadamer: “One cannot adequately present the dramatic appearance of Heidegger at Marburg. Nothing he did was intended to cause a sensation…but the force of his person and teaching rested in the fact that he would throw himself fully into his work and he transmitted this energy. There was always something new in his lectures.” Gadamer continues, “How could anyone following him then forget the breathtaking storm of questions that he developed early on in the semester….lightening flashed, leaving us half stunned.” Hannah Arendt also recalled the excitement of the group around Heidegger, telling us how they thought of him at the time: “Thinking has come to life again; the cultural treasures of the past, believed to be dead, are being made to speak, in the course of which it turns out that they propose things altogether different from the familiar, worn-out trivialities they had been presumed to say. There exists a teacher; one can perhaps learn to think.” The same excitement must have affected Tillich, triggering his interest in the topic of being and the structures of human existence in the world as well as creating a marked tension between the two. Tillich’s wife Hannah states that her husband’s main struggle at Marburg “was with the philosophy of Heidegger. He met some of Heidegger’s


doctoral students, and endless debates followed….The gossip about what Heidegger had said in a lecture about Paulus would be carried by Heidegger’s faithful underlings. Paulus would answer in his own lecture, and that would be forwarded again.”  

Consciously or unconsciously, Tillich became interested in Heidegger’s thought. According to Hannah Tillich, Tillich and Heidegger never met formally, but only informally. It was not, however, because of the tension between the two, but because “Heidegger was open only to the most formal relations.” Tillich’s theological existentialism inherits Heidegger’s early philosophical work. Tillich knew Kierkegaard and Nietzsche before his acquaintance with Heidegger. But “his exposure to Heidegger, who year after year held crowds of students captivated in his classes, was a crucial turning point in Tillich’s career.” For Tillich, the Marburg years were “brief but, intellectually speaking, very important.”

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218 Hannah Tillich, *From Time to Time* (New York: Stein and Day, 1974), 116-7. Tillich’s friends and biographers Wilhelm and Marion Pauck also testify that “Indeed, the only “conversation” Tillich seems to have had with him was by way of points made in the course of lectures, transported back and forth from classroom to classroom by students gossip.” Wilhelm Pauck and Marion Pauck, *Life*, vol. 1 of *Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 98.


Third, Tillich recognized that Heidegger’s philosophy was theologically oriented, though not theological in itself, and Biblically grounded.\textsuperscript{222} As both Heidegger and Tillich were laboring under and against the intellectual influence of Barth’s neo-orthodoxy at Marburg,\textsuperscript{223} a sense of shared alienation must have deepened Tillich’s sympathy with Heidegger. Tillich rejected neo-orthodoxy as being an inadequate alternative for the future because it “vacillate[s] between protest against and compromises with the spirit of capitalist society.”\textsuperscript{224} This even caused a general disregard for Tillich’s interest in the relationship of religion and culture at Marburg.\textsuperscript{225} Tillich was not a liberal, however. His career was begun when liberal theology was on the wane. The experience of the crisis of modern German culture made Tillich, a former Lutheran chaplain

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[222] Heidegger’s Lutheran theological orientation is evidenced by the fact that, as Bultmann recalled, “Heidegger himself never made a secret of the fact that he was influenced….most notably by Luther.” Helmut Peukert, “Bultmann and Heidegger,” in Rudolf Bultmann in Catholic Thought, ed. Thomas F. O’Meara and Donald M. Weisser (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 211.
\item[223] The debates and correspondence between Barth and Tillich in the 1920s and early 1930s clearly show that the two theologians were well acquainted with the other’s theological writings. Karl Barth had just launched neo-orthodoxy in 1919, overthrowing the liberal theology of his youth, as a series of false steps in the direction of secularism. Tillich and Barth met as early as 1919 through their association with the religious socialist movement. John Powell Clayton, “Questioning, Answering, and Tillich’s Concept of Correlation,” in Kairos and Logos: Studies in the Roots and Implications of Tillich’s Theology, ed. John J. Carey (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1984), 122n5.
\item[224] RS, 211.
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in World War I, highly critical of pre-war liberal theologians such as Ritschl, Harnack, and even Troeltsch, despite his deep admiration for them. Tillich particularly rejected a synthesis of Protestant Christianity and “bourgeois culture attempted by pre-war German liberal theology which was no longer viable in the face of the crisis of German culture.” For Tillich, liberal criticism was the glory of liberal theology, but liberal dogmatics tended to be religiously shallow. Tillich writes, “It was the Protestant principle that gave liberal theology the right and the good conscience to approach the Holy Scripture with the critical methods of historical research and with a complete scientific honesty in showing the mythical and legendary elements in both Testaments…In this respect Protestant theology must always be liberal theology…But it is also the Protestant principle that has induced orthodox theologians (both old and new) to look at Scripture as Holy Scripture, namely, as the original document of the event which is called “Jesus the Christ” and which is the criterion of all Scripture and the manifestation of the Protestant principle. In this respect Protestant theology must be “ortho-do.x” and must always maintain the ground in which the critical power of the Protestant principle is rooted.” Yet, Tillich

226 On a fundamental level, Tillich’s own attempt at correlating religion and culture – as so clearly expressed in his definition of religion “as the meaning-giving substance of culture” and culture as “the totality of forms in which the basic concern of religion expressed itself” – bore a remarkable resemblance to the basic agenda of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century efforts by German liberal theology to reconcile these two spheres of human experience. ARAC, 42.


228 OB, 48-9.
continues, “Is the acceptance of these propositions liberal, is it orthodox theology? I think it is neither the one nor the other. I think it is Protestant and Christian, and, if a technical term is wanted, it is “neodialectical.”” Tillich was neither a liberal nor a conservative. He found in Heidegger’s existentialism a better alternative framework for interpretation of the reality of God, an antidote to the theological weakness of Protestantism. Heidegger’s Lutheran theology in his Marburg period was more conservative than is recognized by many of its critics. Compared with Heidegger, Wilhelm and Marion Pauck have put it, Tillich was certainly more liberal, both theologically and culturally.\(^{229}\) This is an important fact to be considered in describing Tillich’s encounter with Heidegger, in that it rendered Tillich strongly sympathetic toward the theological aspect of Heidegger’s philosophical aims and methods.

Shortly after his arrival in Marburg, Heidegger attended a guest lecture by Barth’s friend and collaborator, Eduard Thurneysen.\(^ {230}\) Gadamer recalls Heidegger’s contribution to the discussion following the lecture. “I find unforgettable the way he [Heidegger] concluded his contribution to the discussion of Thurneysen’s address….he said it is the true task of theology, which must be discovered once again, to seek the word that is able to call one to faith and preserve one in faith….In speaking these words, Heidegger seemed to be posing a task for theology.”\(^ {231}\) To Gadamer’s surprise, “what Heidegger said ran counter not so much to the spirit


\(^ {230}\) Barth began his Biblical studies with Thurneysen that led to the commentary on Romans.

of the place as to what rumor in Marburg attributed to Heidegger.\textsuperscript{232} This shows that Heidegger did not turn away from Christian faith. The following comment of Heidegger on Bultmann does indicate that he may have been theologically more conservative than Bultmann: “When I came to Marburg in 1923, my friend Bultmann had removed so much from the New Testament that there was almost nothing left.”\textsuperscript{233} It was the year 1924 that Tillich arrived in Marburg and, as indicated above, Heidegger lectured directly on Luther that year. For Tillich, there was more to Heidegger than a mere philosopher. Speaking in retrospect, Tillich recalls that when he was a colleague of Heidegger at Marburg University, he had the opportunity to hear Heidegger present a colloquium paper on the question of Being, one of his early articulations of the discussion between Being and beings: “The next morning, I took a walk with him [Heidegger], and he asked me what I thought about it (incidentally, it was one of the best he ever gave). To his surprise I told him, “You gave a sermon last night, an atheistic sermon, but couched entirely in the phraseology of early German pietism.”\textsuperscript{234} He understood immediately what I meant and accepted it.”\textsuperscript{235} Tillich’s “little respect” for Heidegger\textsuperscript{236} was certainly not because Heidegger’s philosophical program was disjointed from faith in God. Heidegger set forth his views on the relationship between


\textsuperscript{233} \textit{Heraklit}, 222.

\textsuperscript{234} AHCT, 366.

\textsuperscript{235} HJ, 17; Calvin O. Schrag, \textit{Doing Philosophy with Others: Conversations, Reminiscences, and Reflections} (West Lafayette, IN.: Purdue University Press, 2000), 23.

philosophy and theology in one of his last lectures at Marburg, “Phenomenology and Theology” (1928), in which Heidegger even insisted on the fideistic claim of faith. In his view, “Theology can only render faith more difficult, that is, render it more certain that faithfulness cannot be gained through the science of theology, but solely through faith.” He explains “faithfulness” as “a “graciously-bestowed” mode of existence.” Heidegger understands theology as a self-clarification of faith, and not a harmonizing of faith and reason. With this attitude he continues to resist the kind of harmonization of philosophy and faith that is characteristic of neo-scholastic theology and Christian philosophy. Heidegger has always held that there exists a sharp dichotomy between thinking and faith, and consequently between philosophy and theology. This applies also to Heidegger’s own thinking. For this reason, Heidegger has not developed for himself a specific philosophy of religion and he himself claimed to have no competence in matters of religion. Tillich must have thought that Heidegger is right in not attempting to give religious answers to the questions raised by his philosophy, questions which Tillich thinks must be answered by the theologian. The interrelation of philosophy and theology in the history of Christianity was criticized by Heidegger “for having been responsible for the degeneration of both philosophy and theology.” Thus, “even at the height of the theological reception of his

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237 PT, 46.


work in the United States, Heidegger maintained that he had no theological competence. In his letter to give “some pointers to major aspects for a theological discussion” held at Drew University, Heidegger advised that “One should avoid [in this letter] the impression that dogmatic theses are stated in terms of a Heideggerian philosophy, when there is no such thing,” But this does not mean that he broke off his theological studies. Many interpreters have said that Heidegger himself “maintained,” or “insisted,” that he was not a theologian. Indeed, his way into a religious career was hindered and he renounced a career as a theologian. But the direct evidence is entirely lacking to prove that he himself ever maintained that he was not a theologian. Rather, the reverse is true. The philosophically and interpersonally telling

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240 It is marked by an attention-grabbing theological conference, which took place at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, on April 9-11, 1964, on the relevance of Heidegger’s thought to protestant theology. Originally, Heidegger himself had been scheduled to give the inaugural lecture, but a few months before the event he withdrew for reasons of health. On the front page of the second section of the New York Times on April 11, 1964, there appeared an extended headline which read: “Scholar Breaks with Heidegger – Conference at Drew University is Told Philosopher’s Work Lacks Meaning for Christians – Pro-Nazism is Charged – Teacher at the New School Cites German’s Statement Ending with ‘Heil Hitler.’” An international consultation on Heidegger and language was also held at Pennsylvania State University in 1970.


242 The theme of discussion, “The Problem of a Nonobjectifying Thinking and Speaking in Today’s Theology,” was inspired by Heidegger’s emphasis upon the meditative thinking of Being. Heidegger suggests that there are two kinds of thinking: calculative thinking and meditative thinking. Meditative thinking refers beyond the human. It is a thinking which begins with an awareness of the field within which the objects of ordinary understanding appear. DT, 24.

243 PT, 39, 55.

correspondence between Heidegger and Löwith provides a revealing self-portrait of his fundamental orientation in the early 1920s. In 1921, Heidegger makes a “confession” to Löwith: “I work concretely and factically out of my “I am,” out of my intellectual and wholly factic origin, milieu, life-contexts….To this facticity of mine belongs what I would in brief call the fact that I am a “Christian theologian.” This involves a particular radical concern….I am all this in the life-context of the university.” There is no doubt that Tillich appreciated the theological orientation of Heidegger’s philosophy, but this does not mean that Heidegger’s existential analytic is theistic. Nevertheless, Tillich’s occasional references to “Heidegger’s emphatic atheism” should not be taken to mean that Heidegger is an atheist. James Luther Adams alleged that “Heidegger considered himself as an atheist, a person lacking in religious faith.” As John D. Caputo rightly points out, however, that Heidegger was an atheist is only a

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247 OB, 57; P, 70.

“popular impression” that was “hastily drawn.” Heidegger denied those accusations of nihilism and atheism that his *Being and Time* (1927) and *What is Metaphysics?* (1929) had caused, by defending his positive interpretation of being, and he radically distanced his thinking from an atheistic existentialism. He explains that “With the existential determination of the essence of the human being, therefore, nothing is decided about the “existence of God” or His “non-being”…Thus it is not only rash but also an error in procedure to maintain that the interpretation of the essence of the human being from the relation of his essence to the truth of being is atheism. And what is more, this arbitrary classification betrays a lack of careful reading.”

Heidegger, a baptized Catholic and former seminarian, has apparently never been subjected to any official condemnation by the Catholic Church. During the Marburg period, Heidegger did not regard his work as atheistic in any way. What he objects to is the wrong sort of deity. Heidegger became a critic of scholasticism, not because he was an atheist, but because he had rejected the intellectualist standpoint common to scholasticism. In laying a phenomenological-ontological foundation for theology, *Being and Time*, like every

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249 John D. Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University, 1982), 62. In an essay published a decade later, however, Caputo changes his view of Heidegger’s position. Caputo says that Heidegger “was after 1928 deeply antagonistic to Christianity in general….and he gives indications of having become personally atheistic.” But those that were provided as “indications” on Heidegger’s personal atheism is only episodes about Heidegger’s personal relationship with his students in the Christian faith. Caputo writes, for instance, “He [Heidegger] would not accept the young Jesuits who came to Freiburg as his doctoral students, and he treated other Catholic students like Max Müller exceedingly badly. When their dissertations were submitted….Heidegger treated them with distance and even disdain.” 333. John D. Caputo, “Heidegger and Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 333.

250 LH, 266/GA9, 181.
phenomenological inquiry, had merely put the question of God in brackets.\textsuperscript{251} \textit{Being and Time} is not atheistic, but it is methodologically neutral,\textsuperscript{252} providing an existential ontological ground on whose basis one may make a choice either for or against God. Heidegger said that we must practice a “methodological atheism,”\textsuperscript{253} or “theological indifference,”\textsuperscript{254} a systematic suspension of the data of revelation and faith in God, “in order to isolate the formal structure of the “factual life of Dasein.””\textsuperscript{255} In his 1921-22 lecture, Heidegger insisted that “questioningness [\textit{Fraglichkeit}] is not religious, but it may nevertheless lead me to a position where I must make a religious decision. I do not behave religiously in philosophizing, even if I as a philosopher can be a religious man. “But here is the art”: to philosophize and thereby to be genuinely religious, i.e., to take up factically its worldly, historical task in philosophizing, in action and a world of action, not in religious ideology and fantasy. Philosophy, in its radical self-positing questioningness, must be in principle \textit{a-theistic}.\textsuperscript{256} Philosophy is radical questioning, but to really question – to

\textsuperscript{251} Therefore, a comparison of the atheistic existentialism of Heidegger with the Christian existentialism of Bultmann can be legitimately made. See, for example, John Macquarrie, \textit{An Existentialist Theology} (London: SCM, 1955).

\textsuperscript{252} I suggest that “methodological neutrality” better explains than “methodological atheism” what Heidegger practiced in his phenomenological approach to the theory of being, for his method was not atheistic in the anti-theistic sense.


\textsuperscript{256} GA61, 197.
push one’s questioning to the very end – one must suspend, or bracket, one’s faith, for faith gives answers too soon. “For example, anyone for whom the Bible is divine revelation and truth already has the answer to the question “Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?” before it is even asked: beings, with the exception of God Himself, are created by Him….One who holds on to such faith as a basis can, perhaps, emulate and participate in the asking of our question in a certain way, but he cannot authentically question without giving himself up as a believer….He can act only “as if.””

This methodological neutrality reclaims the freedom of ontological inquiry against the constraint imposed by adopting the tenets of any religious doctrine. Therefore, Heidegger’s philosophical work was always “‘methodologically’ atheist.” As István M. Fehér points out, Heidegger used the term “atheism” in order to direct philosophy to the experience of factical life which lies beneath the phenomenon of faith, rather than to oppose theism. Hence Heidegger’s atheism “is more methodological than thematic.” For Heidegger, all philosophy is atheistic in a sense. Heidegger was “a theologian by tradition, and an atheist as a scholar.”


260 See Laurence Paul Hemming, Heidegger’s Atheism: The Refusal of a Theological Voice (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), which traces the development of his explanation of philosophy as a methodological atheism.

This made on the public mind the impression of atheism. To this, Heidegger responded that “It is preferable to put up with the cheap accusation of atheism, which, if it is intended ontically, is in fact completely correct. But might not the presumably ontic faith in God be at bottom godlessness? And might the genuine metaphysician be more religious than the usual faithful, than the members of a “church” or even than the “theologians” of every confession?”

There is little sense in calling Heidegger a theist in any conventional sense, however, and it lies beyond the scope of the present work to resolve the question as to whether the later Heidegger arrives at a religious position, or he moved “ultimately to a frankly “aggressive atheism.” In Heidegger’s thought, as Barth points out, “God and His revelation are not provided for at all, nor indeed can be.” But, as Barth later also says, “Heidegger does not deny the existence of a deity, only that this deity is concealed under the pseudonym of nothingness.” Even if God is real for Heidegger, he “placed the actuality of God prior to the

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division between theism and atheism and even prior to the logical form of contradiction.”

For the same reason, Tillich was never a theist in the traditional sense. It is meaningless, Tillich declares, to discuss the existence or non-existence of God. It is not meaningful to ask if God “exists” in the sense of being found within the whole of spatio-temporal reality. God does not “exist” in this sense. Divine being is never to be regarded as in any way comparable to finite being. God is not a creature, not a member of the world, and not even an existing thing. Tillich detected an important aspect of Heidegger’s pursuit of an ontological thinking as a whole, that Heidegger’s philosophy is theologically oriented. Tillich’s sympathy with Heidegger’s thinking resides in this theological potentiality. For Tillich, “the methodological atheism of the “early” Heidegger was still too theological.” With Heidegger, Tillich hoped for a conversion to authentic Christianity, prepared by methodological atheism. Tillich confesses that “by the appearance of the so-called “Existential Philosophy” in Germany, I was led to a new understanding of the relation between philosophy and theology. The lectures of Martin

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268 DF, 46.

269 TT, 25; ST1, 205. Barth also announced in his 1928 Bonn lectures that “there is no God,” so long as one insists on applying to him the “profane es gibt.” Karl Barth, Ethics, ed. Dietrich Braun, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), 317. Barth made this claim a year after Being and Time was published. But any possible influence of Heidegger on Barth is difficult to discern according to my research.

Heidegger given at Marburg, the impression of which on my Marburg students and upon some of my colleagues I experienced; then his writing, *Sein und Zeit (Being and Time)*, also his interpretation of Kant, were of greater significance to followers and opponents of his philosophy than anything else since the appearance of Husserl’s *Logische Untersuchungen (Logical Studies)*.”

Tillich was concerned with the problem of the historical Jesus and the New Testament during his student years. While unresolved historical issues from New Testament studies provided the focus for Tillich’s earliest theological development, philosophical concerns soon played an increasing role in his work. The impetus for this new development is his *Systematic Theology*, the first volume of which appeared in 1951. Tillich tells us that he began working and lecturing on it in his third and last semester at Marburg, that is, after his exposure to and developing troubles with Heidegger’s philosophy. This explains the role of Heidegger’s philosophy in his own project of systematic theology. Wilhelm and Marion Pauck point out that “there are some who feel that had it not been for Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, Tillich would never have developed his ontology as he did.”

Relative to this discovery of existentialism at

271 IH, 39.


273 MSA, 42. In 1925, Were it not for this personal identification one could suggest that Tillich’s 1925 treatise (“Religionsphilosophie,” in *Lehrbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Max Dessoir (Berlin: Ullstein, 1925)) was the beginning of his later system because the treatise, drawing together in systematic form many of the major philosophical concepts implicit in Tillich’s earlier thought, bears many parallels with the three volumes of *Systematic Theology*.

Marburg, Tillich has written: “It took years before I became fully aware of the impact of this encounter on my own thinking. I resisted, I tried to learn, I accepted the new way of thinking more than the answers it gave.”275 As he says, Tillich’s relationship to Heidegger was not accidental, but was a conscious relationship which he cultivated in order to achieve a new way of thinking. In some ways it was not a new way of thinking in that Tillich regards himself as having been prepared by his affinity with Schelling, his knowledge of Kierkegaard and the philosophy of life.276 It would be a mistake to assume that Tillich’s existentialism was simply an extension of Heidegger’s philosophy into theology. It is certainly not correct to say that Tillich could say no more because his own theological existentialism was so entwined with Heidegger’s. Rather, Tillich adapted Heidegger’s philosophy to fit his own theological purposes. More specifically, Tillich assimilated Heidegger’s thought to an older philosophical-theological tradition. Tillich did impose certain limits on the theological use of Heidegger’s analysis of existence, but he feels that it is valid within these limits and can be used with profit by the theologian to interpret the existence of the faithful.

275 AR, 14.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE QUESTION OF THE ULTIMATE MEANING OF EXISTENCE

The Question of the Meaning of Life

The central preoccupation of modern existential philosophy, broadly understood, is to understand how it is possible for human beings to live a meaningful life in a world where traditional meanings are no longer convincing. Life by itself does not constitute a twentieth-century philosophy. But it amounts to a constant theme throughout the twentieth century since European philosophers in particular continuously appropriate and transform the concept of life. The question of the ultimate meaning of life lies at the heart of Tillich’s theological enterprise. Life philosophy is of great importance for Tillich’s early development. But Heidegger’s philosophy shows him that life philosophy is not able to answer the question of the meaning of life, and that the question of the meaning of life is fundamentally the question of the meaning of “existence.” Following Heidegger, Tillich approvingly and critically engages himself with life philosophy in search for an alternative philosophy of life in order to answer the question of the meaning of existence.

For Tillich, the question of the meaning of existence is not merely the question of “existence in time and space.” By “existence” he means “the whole of human reality, the structure, the meaning and the aim of existence.”¹ That the world is, that the world exists, as

¹ ST1, 14. Italics mine.
Wittgenstein declared, is the mystical fact. People are endlessly fascinated with the spiritual and mysterious dimension of life. Existential thinkers agree on the importance of the question of the meaning of life, while they differ in their answers. By contrast, analytic philosophers for many years dismissed the question of the meaning of life as illegitimate. An extreme point of view, developing largely under the influence of logical positivism, held that the phrase “the meaning of life” is meaningless. Following a line of critical thought initiated by Kant, questions reaching beyond empirical knowledge were viewed as attempts at the old-fashioned metaphysics. But the mysterious matters in so far as it is believed to be the place where the answer to the question of the ultimate meaning of existence can be found. The Kingdom of God matters because it is “a symbolic expression of the ultimate meaning of existence.” The ultimate concern for Tillich is the meaning of existence. Life, death, God, Being itself, faith and religion are all penultimate questions. “I exist. Why?” This is the ultimate question, and Tillich believes that he shares this concern with Heidegger. Heidegger and Tillich are not so much ontologists as existentialists in


3 In recent years, this hostility to metaphysical questions has diminished and become less doctrinaire. See, for example, Karl Britton, *Philosophy and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969); W. D. Joske, “Philosophy and the Meaning of Life,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 52, no. 2 (1974): 93-104. Even some prominent analytic philosophers have suggested that questions about the meaning of life are intelligible and in fact important. See, for instance, Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). At the same time, however, there are few who are willing to return to traditional foundations of confidence in the meaning of life. Harry R. Moody, “The Meaning of Life and the Meaning of Old Age,” in *What Does It Mean To Grow Old?: Reflections from the Humanities*, ed. Thomas R. Cole and Shally Gadow (Durham, NC.: Duke University Press, 1986), 23, notes that “Thus the philosophical tendency is to reaffirm traditional questions of global meaning while at the same time avoiding the traditional answers, generally religious or metaphysical, that have been given to the question of the meaning of life.”

4 TR, 33.
this respect. Heidegger says that “Every question of philosophy returns to existence.”⁵ Heidegger was initially attracted to “life philosophy” under the overpowering influence of Nietzsche, and Tillich under the influence of Heidegger, concerning the question of the ultimate meaning of life which, as Tillich concludes, life philosophy “never was able to answer.”⁶ A comparison between Heidegger’s critique of life philosophy and that of Tillich, particularly concerning the life philosophies of Dilthey and Bergson, will demonstrate the important element of Heideggerian existentialism in Tillich’s early theological program.

Heidegger’s Concept of Life

As he had suggested in the habilitation’s conclusion in 1916, Heidegger “no longer believes in the corrigibility of the dogmatic system of scholasticism by authentic religious experiences.”⁷ Heidegger came to endorse the Lutheran thesis that Greek metaphysics had contaminated the Christian life of the spirit. “In the end, the system totally excludes an original and genuine experience of religious value…Accordingly, scholasticism, within the totality of the medieval Christian lifeworld, severely jeopardized the immediacy of religious life and forgot religion for theology and dogmas. This theorizing and dogmatizing influence was exercised by church authorities in their institutions and statues already in the time of early Christianity. [In a

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⁵ BT, 62/SZ, 38; LH, 261/GA9, 173.

⁶ ST1, 100.

situation like this[,] an experience like that of mysticism is to be understood as an elementary countermovement." Fundamentally and ultimately, Heidegger’s central concern was the meaning of life. “Life designates a manner of being for which each category from previous ontology is wanting.” As Gabriel Marcel describes it, life as a “mystery to be experienced” is a “problem to be solved.” The “meaning” of life is what Heidegger focuses on initially in his analysis of Christianity. In the early 1920s, his basic argument during his lecture course in the summer semester of 1920 is that, in one way or another, “life” is the central problem of contemporary philosophy. Heidegger thinks that “life” is central to problems in the contemporary philosophy of history and of culture, as well as the “logic of the sciences,” i.e., theories regarding concept formation in the sciences. The fundamental task that Heidegger gives himself is to gain a deeper appreciation for the problem of “life” by confronting the “concrete, contemporary situation.” For this purpose, Heidegger first attempted to reawaken an authentic Christian living, or the life of the Spirit. Thus, in his course on the phenomenology of religion during the winter semester of 1920-1921, interpreting Paul’s Letters, Heidegger analyzed the life-experience of early Christianity, which had been obscured by the Scholastic tradition. Then, Heidegger narrows down his object to life as such. Heidegger avoids biological approaches to

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9 IPR, 81/GA17, 111.

10 PIE, 12-20.

11 PIE, 21/GA59, 29.
life, “insisting always on the priority of philosophy over the sciences.”12 “Life” as such receives in-depth treatment in his lecture course in the winter semester of 1921-1922.13 In this lecture, we find a sentence that runs: “living = being-there [Dasein], being in and through living.”14 Heidegger is concerned with life because it is problematic. In the same lecture, Heidegger says that “life is worrying [Sorgen].” It is in its own anxiety that the living human being is concerned with its living. Gadamer states that “If we think this sentence through, we have before us the unity of Heidegger’s entire path of thought.”15

Dasein dies. It is born to that end. Heidegger writes, “The instant a human being comes to be alive it is old enough to die.”16 In an early lecture course at Freiburg, Heidegger cites Luther’s commentary on Genesis to similar effect: “For as soon as we abandon our mother’s womb we begin to die.”17 David Farrell Krell observes that “Almost always, “life” will appear in “scare-
quotes” in Being and Time. Almost always, “life” will have to be shooed away.”

Dasein lives to die. It is, Heidegger assures us, a fact. This seems to be all Dasein can know about its living. Nietzsche, Dilthey, and Bergson all characterized life as such an irreducible fact. But Dasein desires to understand the reason of its living. Hence it is agitated. Facticity refers, after all, to the fact in its being a fact, i.e., precisely the fact back of which and behind which one cannot go. For Heidegger, the fact of facticity is a fact of life. He endorses Dilthey’s remark that “‘life’ is that which one cannot get back behind.”

But Heidegger was deeply concerned with the meaning of, that is, the origin and destiny of, life. In Heidegger, life is not considered as such, but instead in relation to its ultimate values. In other words, he searches for a motive which maintains the concern and affliction over life. Life as such does not have any meaning that concerns Heidegger. The ultimate question is not what life is, but why we live. For Heidegger, genuine philosophy is a pre-theoretical originary science (Urwissenschaft als vor-theoretische Wissenschaft).

And that, he argues, is phenomenology. In his war emergency semester lecture course of 1919, Heidegger declares that “Phenomenology is the investigation of life in itself.” Again, he states in the lecture courses, “Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation Into Phenomenological Research,” which Heidegger delivered in the winter semester of 1921-1922, that “Philosophy is a basic How of life itself, so that in each case it authentically re-treives life,

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19 BT, 253/SZ, 209.

20 GA56-57, 95.
taking it back from decline, and this taking-back, as radical research, is life.”\(^{21}\) The genuine insights of phenomenology can be obtained only by “an honest and unreserved immersion in life itself in its genuineness, and this is ultimately possible only through the genuineness of a personal life.”\(^{22}\) Philosophy as phenomenology is the plunge into life itself in its authenticity in order for a breakthrough to pre-theoretical life. Philosophy, as Heidegger understands it, is therefore fundamentally an “originary science of the origin of [factual] life.”\(^{23}\) Heidegger’s phenomenology does not concern simply factual life, but life as arising from the origin. The life at issue here is “my” personal situation. “I myself” is really a decisive context in which I live. Having oneself is thus the expression of life in its originality.

**Heidegger’s Critique of Dilthey and Bergson**

Following the lead of the influential turn-of-the-century movement called “life philosophy,” Heidegger hoped to recover a more original sense of life by emphasizing futurity as the mode of authentic existence. The weakness of life philosophy in its attempted explanation of the meaning of life was called to Tillich’s attention by Heidegger’s critique of life philosophies of Wilhelm Dilthey and Henri Bergson. Consequently, Tillich’s critique of life philosophy centrally focuses on the loss of the meaningful future for human existence in life philosophy.

\(^{21}\) GA61, 80.


The philosophy of life plays an important role in Heidegger’s own development. His attraction to this movement was “a necessary stage to radical phenomenological philosophy.”\(^{24}\) It is clear from numerous references in his early lectures that one of the decisive inspirations for the young Heidegger’s turn to early Christianity is particularly the work of Dilthey, who, for Heidegger, is “the most important of the names one could suggest in relation to hermeneutics.”\(^{25}\) He regarded Dilthey as “the strongest effective philosopher for the next decades.”\(^ {26}\) Heidegger’s project of fundamental ontology in *Being and Time* originates from Dilthey’s philosophy of life. In 1925, Heidegger offered lectures on Dilthey’s philosophy of life with a reference to “a fundamental problem for the entire history of Western philosophy, the problem concerning the meaning (*Sinn*) of human life.”\(^ {27}\) Dilthey sought to base himself on “life” as the ultimate foundation from which all philosophy must proceed. Dilthey identifies “to understand life from life itself” as “the dominant impulse in [his] philosophical thinking.”\(^ {28}\) For Dilthey, life is a historical reality. The concepts derived from the natural sciences cannot be applied to the interpretation of life. Life must not be interpreted in the epistemologically abstract way. He suggests instead that philosophy must proceed from life as ever present reality and lived


\(^{26}\) GA59, 3.

\(^{27}\) WD, 144.

experience. Dilthey describes his understanding life in terms of a “descriptive psychology.”

Descriptive psychology is, as Pierre Keller defines it, “concerned with the individual experiences that make up an individual life as well as the distinctive way in which human beings experience their lives in different societies and historical epochs.” Dilthey explains that life manifests itself in developments of lived experience, and, in one’s life, these lived experiences are connected together into the structural whole of one’s life-history. And one’s life constituted as such is in turn grounded in the wider historical context in which it is an element. For Dilthey, therefore, the meaning of life is apprehended by analyzing the historical objectification of life. “Man does not understand his own self by means of any kind of rumination upon himself…only through an understanding of the historical reality generated by him does he obtain a consciousness of his capacities, for good or for ill.” Life is to be understood through categories derived from life itself by “entering ever more deeply into the historical world.” Dilthey says, “Only his history tells man what he is.” But Heidegger argues that Dilthey, and also Bergson, do not succeed in


determining the meaning of life because “futurity” remains occluded in their formulations. Heidegger points out that the proper method of understanding life is not scientific because science looks at things from the outside, and life can be understood only from within.

Heidegger criticizes Dilthey and Bergson for having moved merely on the ontical, empirical plane. In his view, historical existence in the past enables for one to act with a consciousness toward future possibilities. Thus, futurity becomes history’s dominant principle. Dilthey and Bergson do not provide us with a theory of human existence that accounts for this futurity of human existence. The genuine understanding of historicity of humanity requires an existential and ontological analysis of human existence. In contrast, the nineteenth-century understanding of history as a positive science attempted to capture the past the way it really was. This attitude originated with the theory of Leopold von Ranke whose understanding of historicity focused primarily on the object of research within the stream of historical time. This so-called historicism “remained incapable of providing orientation or directives for the historical present.” Heidegger regards historicism as dead end in twentieth-century German philosophy. Based on scientific objectivity and epistemological certainty, historicists tried to understand the reality of historical experience by denying or avoiding the problem of subjectivity. By attempting

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35 See, for instance, BT, 72-3/SZ, 46-7.

to interpret history within the frame of science, historicists denied the “subjective hermeneutic experience” that makes history possible at all. Dilthey objected to this approach by stressing the historicity of the subject. Dilthey emphasized the importance of lived experience as a response to the problem of historicism. According to Dilthey, historicity meant that all life was historically determined, which means for him that life was in history. This implies that the meaning of life is determined by its history. In Heidegger’s view, Dilthey does not make a serious approach to the problem of historicity of human being. Heidegger rejects the view that human life is simply something that occurs in history, and suggests, instead, that historicity is a fundamental category of human life. In other words, history depends on the historicity of human being. As such, Heidegger’s understanding of life experience denies Diltheyan ground of historical meaning. The historical understanding of humanity must proceed from the explication of the meaning of life. For Heidegger, history is determined by the meaning of life. Life as the lived experience of human existence is not in history. The human existence itself is the historicity of history. As he remarks, “History as *Geschichte* signifies a happening [*Geschehen*] that we ourselves are…we are this very happening…We are history.”

Dilthey was not able to ask the question about historicity as such because he did not ask the existential ontological question about the meaning of life. Heidegger suggests that Dilthey was at once aware of the radical nature of the question of the essence of history but also limited by his own approach. What is missing in Dilthey is an insight into the existentiality of consciousness, and consequently a hermeneutics of facticity. For Heidegger, the existentiality of

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37 SHW, 173-4.

38 BT, 72/SZ, 46.
consciousness is historicity. Dilthey made a distinction between the natural and the human sciences. According to him, the objects of the natural sciences are the facts that, as external appearances of objects and individuals, come into consciousness. The objects of the human sciences such as the science of history are internal. They enter consciousness from inside. Based on this distinction, Dilthey sought to describe the subjective conditions that produce historical knowledge of human existence. But, Heidegger accuses, Dilthey did not provide “an ontological interpretation of the being of consciousness.”

Dilthey has left ontologically uninvestigated the essential nature of humanness that makes lived experiences possible in the first place. The genuine meaning of history depends on the genuine interpretation of the lived experiences that constitute history. But the genuine meaning of lived experiences can be obtained by an existential ontological analysis of the existentiality of consciousness. In an unpublished essay written immediately before Being and Time, Heidegger remarks on Brentano’s psychology Heidegger that “Psychology was a doctrine of life, of human existence itself. Not only Dilthey, but also Husserl is determined by Brentano’s psychology, that does not want to explain psychological processes, but basic constitutions.”

Thus, Dilthey, like Descartes, fails to question into the existential structure of Dasein, forgetting that it is only Dasein who is allowed for lived experiences. Having no ground in an existential-ontological account of our human being, Dilthey’s work is determined by a general theory of the human sciences which is

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39 BT, 253/SZ, 209.

40 BT, 253/SZ, 209.

41 WD, 155.
constructed by a survey of natural scientific investigations in a purely analytical way and which is incompatible with his basic insight into the historicity of human being. Heidegger observes that, in Dilthey, “‘life’ is to be understood in the historical context of its development and its effects, and understood as the way in which man, as the possible object of the humane sciences, and especially as the root of these sciences, is.” He points out that “The historical is today almost exclusively an objective interest…because we do not genuinely see the phenomenon of existence today.”

Heidegger sees life as historical and grounded in an intimate immersion in the world. But life cannot be explained from mere analysis of its past. As George Seidel rightly explains, “The possibility of factual history or of historiological understanding, the very possibility of historiography as a science, depends for its basis upon the historicity of Dasein, and not vice versa.” Historicity refers to the possibility of history. The authentic sense of historicity is to be sought primarily in the way in which the past is made meaningful to the self. The past has meaning only according to the mode in which it is appropriated by Dasein in its concern for fulfillment of a sense of existence. But the past is appropriated by Dasein under the condition of its futurity. Dilthey’s way of disclosing life focuses only on personalities of the past, which are

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42 BT, 450/SZ, 398.


past things. For Heidegger, history as understood in historicism, that is, as objective events and processes of the past, is merely the ontic manifestation of a more fundamental ontological condition that provides its ground, namely the temporality of human life. It is the temporality of Dasein that constitutes Dasein’s historicity. It is not an objective past but “the happening that we ourselves are.” The historicity is what we ourselves are. After all, what is historical is Dasein. It is not that Dasein is in history. Heidegger says, “We contend that what is primarily historical is Dasein. That which is secondarily historical, however, is what we encounter within-the-the-world…Entities other than Dasein…are what we call ‘world-historical.’” For Heidegger, history must be studied by asking an existential ontological question about the temporality of the human being – The question is “existential and ontological” in that the existential analysis of Dasein is the only way to approach the ontological foundation of Dasein. Dasein’s temporality, the “there-ness” of “being there,” as the phenomenon of human existence, can be understood only against the background of the “being-ness,” or “Being itself,” of “being there.” For this reason, Heidegger continues to maintain that the sciences of history will not be grounded until one possesses an adequate idea of Being itself as the ontological Ground of Dasein, as distinguished from the concept of being in particular which is experienced as the existentiality of

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45 BT, 451/SZ, 400.

46 BH, 271.


48 BT, 433/SZ, 381.
Dasein.\textsuperscript{49} Dilthey admits the possibility of ultimate understanding of the meaning of human existence, but only at the end of human history. For him, a conception of the “meaning” of life makes sense only in terms of the “development” in history, that is, in terms of the accomplishment of certain values and goals in the process of history. Dilthey is not willing to accept the teleological conception of life. He thinks that such conception of life is an illegitimate metaphysics.\textsuperscript{50} For sufficient empirical evidence is lacking for such an idea of the ultimate meaning of life.\textsuperscript{51} He declares that there is no ultimate value or goal for life.\textsuperscript{52} Thinking of a certain goal or end in history is to go beyond the empirical evidence. Besides the purposes of human agents themselves, Dilthey rejects the teleology of life.

The beginning of the twentieth century saw another revival of interest in the mystery of human existence, mainly thanks to Bergson. He was also one of the philosophers who criticized metaphysical conceptions of truth and sought a new paradigm under the idea of “life.” He viewed life as endowed with a psychic character.\textsuperscript{53} Bergson “intuites the essence of personal life as an incessant tendency to self-creation. This intuition of personal existence makes its presence

\textsuperscript{49} BT, 455/SZ, 403.


felt.”  

Human life is constituted by the continuous stream of the felt psychic experience. In his study on time, Bergson presents “pure duration” in which the ego “lets itself live” as immediate givenness, or an inner object, that is accessible to our original “intuition” for theoretical contemplation. Personal life at any moment consists of a group of possibilities. Bergson pictures human existence as an ongoing process of creation founded on these possibilities. As such, life is always moving and accumulating experience. This movement is an élan or thrust. It has a direction, though not a goal. Bergson’s most striking illustration of human life is that of the rolling snowball. Human being is conscious of its personal life as an evolution. Bergson argues that the foundation of the life’s evolution is “duration.” Duration is what makes evolution possible. Life is possible because it endures. Duration is, for Bergson, the ultimate reality of life. For Bergson, duration is not merely a succession of instantaneous existences. It is an active, cumulative carrying-forward of past into future – Physical things do not endure, but change. Life process has a direction in the sense that it is irreversible, while physical change is reversible. We experience this duration as life. Our life does not consist in a succession of

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58 “My mental state, as it advances on the road or time, is continually swelling with the duration which it accumulates: it goes on increasing – rolling upon itself, as a snowball on the snow.” Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), 2.
separate moments, but we endure, mature, are creating ourselves. For Bergson, duration is real
time, and it is “what is happening, and more than that, it is what causes everything to happen.”

Time, in this sense, is vital, and the vital is of the nature of time. Time is the very essence of life,
and life is a phase of duration. Heidegger considers Bergsonian vitalism as an attempt to show
how life is better explained when it is understood through the concept of duration.

Heidegger’s objection is that Bergson’s narrow focus on biological evolution concerning
life does not go deep enough to answer the question of the ultimate meaning of existence. Again
Heidegger’s critique of Bergson focuses on the lack of the intuition of the motif of futurity in
historical time. The question of the relation between temporality and subjectivity stands in the
center of Being and Time. The discovery of the genuine meaning of “future” is one of the most
fruitful and important features of his analysis of being and time. An important goal of Being and
Time is to show that the genuine conception of time or temporality, which can function as a
horizon of understanding of being, must be developed on the basis of an interpretation of the
temporality of human existence. For Heidegger, Bergson “explicitly adheres to a theoretical
understanding of time consciousness in an emphatic sense.”

Heidegger maintains that, although Bergson sets out to criticize Aristotelian time, and explicitly contrasts his own concept of
“duration” to the quantitative time of Aristotle, he is unable to arrive at an adequate alternative


60 Mike Sandbothe, The Temporalization of Time: Basic Tendencies in Modern Debate on
Philosophy and Science, trans. Andrew Inkpin (Lanham, M.D.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 73. LQT,
view. He merely reduces time to a psychological phenomenon.\footnote{BT, 500/SZ, 432n30.} Bergson says that “There is a reality that is external and yet given immediately to the mind…This reality is mobility.”\footnote{Henri Bergson, \textit{An Introduction to Metaphysics}, trans. T. E. Hulme (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912), 65.} The goal of life is its own mobility without destiny. In contrast, Heidegger writes that “Only a reality that is essentially future in its being so that it is free for its death…makes possible something like destiny.”\footnote{BT, 437/SZ, 385.} This statement is perhaps the most evident expression of the fundamental disagreement between Bergson’s and Heidegger’s philosophy of life. What is the ultimate meaning of life for Bergson? Like Dilthey, Bergson thinks that the question is a pseudo-question.\footnote{Henri Bergson, \textit{Creative Evolution}, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), 275-7.} He thinks that the question of the ultimate meaning of life arises from the pseudo-idea of nothingness. “The idea of the absolute nought, in the sense of the annihilation of everything, is a self-destructive idea, a pseudo-idea, a mere word.”\footnote{Henri Bergson, \textit{Creative Evolution}, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), 283.} “The pseudo-idea would create a pseudo-problem.”\footnote{Henri Bergson, \textit{Creative Evolution}, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), 221.} The question of the ultimate meaning of life is a question derived from the question why there is something rather than nothing. But the metaphysical concept of nothing is a pseudo-idea. Bergson says therefore that the question, “Why does something exist?” is without meaning,
a pseudo-problem raised about a pseudo-idea. Life is a mystery and it becomes a problem only in the sense that life exists rather than not. All existence – matter, consciousness, God – becomes a question only when it is understood as a conquest of nothingness. Bergson concludes that there is not really a mystery about life. The whole something-versus-nothing question is based on an illusion, illusion that it is possible for there to be nothing at all. Bergson suggests that the idea of absolute nothingness is self-contradictory. Since nothingness is a pseudo-idea, he concludes, the question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” is a pseudo-question. Heidegger was not persuaded by this conclusion. For him nothingness is reality. It is the force that annihilates the realm of being. Heidegger declares, “Why is there being rather than nothing at all?” to be the “deepest,” “the most far-reaching,” “the most fundamental of all questions.”

The Primacy of Life in Tillich’s Post-War Religious Socialism

During World War I, Tillich served as a chaplain in the German army. According to Tillich, the horrors of the war aroused his “awareness of the irrationality of the existent” and undermined his assumptions about the meaning of life. The War marked “the breakdown of an older order, the end of a great historical epoch, the collapse of traditional conceptions of God and

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68 IM, 2/GA40, 2.
69 RS, 58.
religion.” Tillich recalls that his personal turning point came in the battle of Champagne in 1915. “All night long I moved among the wounded and dying as they were brought in – many of them my close friends. All that horrible, long night I walked along the rows of dying men, and much of my German classical philosophy broke down that night – the belief that man could master cognitively the essence of his being, the belief in the identity of essence and existence…The traditional concept of God was dead.” To make matters worse, Tillich came home to a broken nation and a broken marriage – Tillich’s wife ran off with his best friend. The experience left him “utterly transformed. The traditional monarchist had become a religious socialist, the Christian believer a cultural pessimist, the repressed puritanical boy a “wild man.” These years represent the turning point of Paul Tillich’s life – the first, last and only one.” Tillich must have “felt compelled to question not only the capitalist root of the war but much of the cultural and theological tradition in which he had been educated.” Tillich sanctions Heidegger’s observation about the features of modern society that prompt individuals to experience their lives as meaningless. Tillich agrees that “human existence has fallen into utter

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72 BNB, 47.


meaninglessness.”75 “A belief breaks down through external events or inner processes: one is cut off from creative participation in a sphere of culture, one feels frustrated about something which one had passionately affirmed, one is driven from devotion to an object to devotion to another and again on to another, because the meaning of each of them vanishes and the creative eros is transformed into indifference or aversion. Everything is tried and nothing satisfies. The contents of the tradition, however excellent, however praised, however loved once, lose their power to give content today. And present culture is even less able to provide the content.”76

Tillich writes, “The World War in my own experience was the catastrophe of idealistic thinking in general. Even Schelling’s philosophy was drawn into this catastrophe.”77 After the war, Tillich still ranked Schelling above other religious philosophers,78 but he thought that Schelling played down the experience of the meaninglessness. Tillich judged that Schelling perceived the meaninglessness in life, but Schelling’s romantic idealism compelled him to cover it up.79 For philosophy to be true and real, it had to speak to the existential realities of estrangement, despair, the void, the demonic, and most importantly death.80 Tillich says that

75 CTB, 136.

76 CTB, 47-8.

77 IH, 35.

78 “I must confess, that even today, I find more “theonomous philosophy” in Schelling than in any of the other idealists.” IH, 35.

79 IH, 35.

“The experience of the four years of war tore this chasm open for me and for my entire
generation to such an extent, that it was impossible ever to cover it up.”

In trying to understand Tillich’s philosophy it is important to bear in mind that his study of Schelling was substantial
influence on his philosophical outlook and his view of the development of modern philosophy.

John Heywood Thomas testifies that “His knowledge of Schelling was not only profound – he
was one of the century’s greatest Schelling scholars – but so sympathetic that, on more than one
occasion, he would quote a remark of Schelling’s as being his own.”

Before World War I, Tillich believed that Schelling’s philosophy of existence and his interpretation of history as the
history of salvation showed how the disciplines of theology and philosophy should be united,
“the eschatological unity of theology and philosophy,” which is the ultimate goal of Tillich’s
theological project. According to Tillich, Schelling’s philosophical development is orientated
towards the concept of “philosophical religion,” which expresses “the religious self-
consciousness of Idealism.”

“But to be sure,” Tillich laments, “not even Schelling’s philosophy

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81 IH, 35.


83 RIC, 381.

84 MGC, 40-1.

85 CHR, 24-5. Although Tillich’s view of Schelling’s intellectual development and the centrality
of religion within his philosophy has not found much favor among philosophical interpreters of Schelling,
it has not been without its defenders. See, for example, Thomas F. O’Meara, “Christianity is the Future
of Paganism”: Schelling’s Philosophy of Religion,” in Meaning, Truth and God, ed. Leroy S. Rouner
(Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 216-36; Joseph A. Braken, “Schelling’s Positive
Philosophy,” Journal of the History of Philosophy 15, no. 3 (January 1977): 32-43; and Emil L.
Fackenheim, “Schelling’s Conception of Positive Philosophy,” Review of Metaphysics 7, no. 4 (June
was able to bring about a unity of theology and philosophy.”

Tillich says that “If a union of theology and philosophy should again become possible, it could be achieved only in such a way as would do justice to this experience of the abyss of our existence.” It is very easy for one to view the influence of Schelling in the light of Tillich’s own claim that Schelling was the beginning of modern existentialism. Tillich’s connection with Schelling is so obvious that one can overestimate Schelling’s reference and read Tillich as some scholars do merely in the light of Schelling. The Protestant theologian of whom one might first think when the question of Schelling’s influence is raised is Tillich. Robert P. Scharlemann acknowledges that “No other one of either nineteenth or the twentieth century so explicitly acknowledged his indebtedness to Schelling.” And certainly, as discussed above, no other one has the distinction of having written his philosophical and his theological dissertation on Schelling. It would be wrong, however, to think of Schelling as the only key that one needs to Tillich’s thought, or to conclude that Schelling was the greatest single influence on Tillich’s philosophical development. Rather, as Tillich himself states, the Tillichian theological project begins by turning away from Schelling.

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86 IH, 35.
87 IH, 35.
90 IH, 35-6.
Tillich broke with liberal theology came with the experienced of war. This led him to engage himself in radical thought and politics. Tillich started his academic career as an adjunct professor of theology at the University of Berlin, from 1919 to 1924, before he began to develop his own systematic theology at the University of Marburg. During the Berlin period, Tillich was preoccupied more than anything else with politics. Tillich writes, “In the years after the revolution my life became more intensive as well as extensive. As a Privatdozent of theology at the University of Berlin (from 1919 to 1924), I lectured on subjects which included the relation of religion to politics.”

Tillich’s post-war interest in religious socialism was one of the war’s powerful consequences on his life. For Tillich, the goal of religious socialism was a meaningful society in which the power of life of every individual and every group can actualize itself. He organized a Christian socialist movement called “Kairos Circle,” and he was the first Lutheran minister to join the German Social Democratic Party. “Sensitive to these social, political and religious uncertainties,” Tillich wrote extensively during the 1920s and early 1930s concerning the strength and weakness of socialism. Consequently, Tillich’s political views were directed against the Nazi rise to power in 1933. Tillich must have been profoundly affected by the

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91 AR, 13.

92 MW3, 198. “The development of a meaningful society, in which the possibility exists to recognize the meaningful power of being of another, or what amounts to the same thing, the formation of a community as the unity of power and love, is the socio-ethical ideal of religious socialism.” PE, 53.


question about religious certainty\textsuperscript{95} posed in such a historically conscious age in which
“Nietzsche’s atheism and nihilism were only the celebration – if one may call it that – of the
triumph of the questions over any possible answers.”\textsuperscript{96} “Today man experiences his present
situation in terms of disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness, and despair in all
realms of life…It has given theology a new understanding of the demonic-tragic structures of
individual and social life.”\textsuperscript{97} It is not out of curiosity that Tillich is interested in politics, but out
of his desire to seek the meaning of life. Tillich asks, “Today, people in Germany know what
death is. But do they also know what life is?”\textsuperscript{98} Tillich justifies this desire to know the meaning
of life by saying that a Christina is called to love life. The way he chose to tackle the struggles of
his age was to offer a comprehensive account of the meaning of life at every possible level. His
moving away from politics is to make the problem of the meaning of life central to his system. If
Tillich’s early socialist existentialism was about how to live, his post-war theology concerns
“why” we live, “the primacy of life as over against its products.”\textsuperscript{99} Tillich writes, “The ecstatic
form of existence, which prevailed so widely during the first years after the War, as a reaction

\textsuperscript{95} “Looking at the past decade of my life I see no dramatic changes of mind but a slow
development of my convictions in the direction of greater clarity and certainty.” BRS, 733.

\textsuperscript{96} Robert P. Scharlemann, \textit{Reflection and Doubt in the Thought of Paul Tillich} (New Haven: Yale

\textsuperscript{97} ST1, 49.

\textsuperscript{98} ATR, 18.

\textsuperscript{99} EP, 110.
against the years of death and hunger during the War, made “the philosophy of life” very attractive.”

Tillich’s Critique of Life Philosophy

Tillich’s affirmation of the will to life was indebted to Nietzsche’s ontology of courage whose work he thinks as “the most impressive and effective representation of what could be called a “philosophy of life.” As did Heidegger, Tillich attempted to correct the erroneous, prevailing interpretation of Nietzsche’s concept of will to power, showing it to be much more profound than the vulgar concepts that many scholars had associated with the rise of Nazism – Tillich does confirm Nazi’s misuse of Nietzsche. For Nietzsche, Tillich insists, “power is the self-affirmation of being. Will to power means power to affirm one’s power of living, the will to affirm one’s own individual existence.” Tillich has pointed out that Nietzsche challenged

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100 IH, 37.

101 “Have ye courage, O my brethren? … Not the courage before witnesses, but anchorite and eagle courage, which not even a God any longer beholdeth?…He hath heart who knoweth fear but vanquissheth it; who seeth the abyss, but with pride. He who seeth the abyss but with eagle’s eyes, – he who with eagle’s talons graspth the abyss: he hath courage.” Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, vol. 4 of The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, ed. Oscar Levy, trans. Thomas Common (London, T. N. Foulis, 1909),73, sec. 4.

102 CTB, 27.


104 AHCT, 493.
whatever opposed life. These concerns of Nietzsche’s were also concerns of Tillich’s. Clearly Tillich saw himself allied with Bergson for his conception of the *élan vital*. Tillich felt that Bergson was also disturbed by the insensitivity of “static, scholastic, or positivistic mode of thought” about life. But, in Tillich’s view, Nietzsche, Bergson and other life-philosophers had instantaneous success and were unsuccessful in the long run. Tillich thinks that Nietzsche’s idea of the will-to-power is an adequate description of life process. But Tillich criticizes Nietzsche’s doctrine of the eternal return. “There is a lack of novelty, of the really new. True, Nietzsche did have a strong emphasis on the new in history…But this happens only within a particular segment of the circle. Nothing absolutely new is created.” This view introduces “a fatalistic psychology.” In Nietzsche’s world, the meaning of Dasein’s life must be self-created. Hence “A symbol such as the kingdom of God as the aim of history is very remote from Nietzsche.”

Tillich’s discussion and criticism of the philosophy of life after Nietzsche center on Bergson. For Tillich, Bergson appeared as the most persuasive proponent of “the primacy of life as over against its products” “The philosophy of life, which had been influenced strongly by Nietzsche, has set forth in very impressive fashion the distinction between creative life and petrifying

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106 AHCT, 502.


108 AHCT, 502.

calculation. Bergson in France and Simmel in Germany have restored to life its right to be considered as a primal and original datum…Now the way into the profounder levels of life is not to be found by means of physical and psychological analysis but only by means of intuitive insight, of apprehension of the basis of one’s own aliveness…It is the creative and inexhaustible ground of reality which has been rediscovered by the philosophy of life.”

“What has become familiar under the rubric of “life philosophy” is a tendency toward living existence. Life philosophy recognizes clearly that “life is not an object of controlling knowledge; that life must be killed in order to be subjected to the means-ends structure.” Bergson says that “In reality, life is a movement…[this] movement is of the very essence of reality.” In other words, reality for him is “pure creative life.” His definition of life “excludes those ideas of perfection and finality.” Human life is an eternal “becoming,” a ceaseless changefulness. Its essence is “dynamic creativity” which distinguishes itself from the merely mechanical. Tillich says against process philosophy that “A process philosophy which sacrifices the persisting identity of that which is in process sacrifices the process itself, its continuity, the relation of what is conditioned to its conditions, the inner aim (telos) which makes a process a whole. Bergson was

110 RS, 58.

111 ST1, 99-100.


114 ST1, 100.

115 ST1, 232.
right when he combined the *élan vital*, the universal tendency toward self-transcendence, with duration, with continuity and self-conservation in the temporal flux.”  

Tillich agreed with Bergson’s revolt “against the rising technology that devalued the human spirit and left existence meaningless” and with his “anti-rationalistic,” “intuitive,” “creative,” “dynamic” metaphysic of “the self-affirmation of self.” Tillich clearly saw that this anti-rationalistic approach paralleled his own attack on mere controlling knowledge that transformed people into things. Tillich perceived Bergson as one who desires to “save life from the destructive power of self-objectivation…for the preservation of the person…in a situation in which the self was more and more lost in its world.”  

At bottom, however, life philosophy shows how little it has understood its very self, its basic task, the ultimate “meaning” of life. It is not in terms of the ultimate meaning of life, but of the “way” of life, that life philosophy develops its theory. Bergson’s philosophy that explains life within “psychological categories” is not a theory of life in the strictest sense. Life philosophy does not discuss the foundation, or the origin, of life. Therefore “Any attempt to investigate the current philosophy of life with respect to its foundation must come to naught.”  

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116 ST1, 181.


118 CTB, 138.

119 ST1, 62n19.

120 IPR, 97/GA17, 133.
“mechanism” and “teleology.” These rival theories concerning the evolution in the sphere of earthly life “tried to assimilate the facts that Darwin brought to light, and people had to choose between the mechanical theory of evolution and the finalist theory of evolution. Bergson introduced his own theory by a criticism of these two.”\textsuperscript{121} Tillich pointed out that Bergson left no room for a vision of utopia, final harmony, or fulfillment. For Bergson the future is simply open without destiny. For Tillich, what is missing in Bergson’s life philosophy is the Heideggerian temporal ontology based on Dasein-centered “ecstatic temporality”\textsuperscript{122}, in which Dasein happens transcendentally, or “stands out (\textit{ek-sists}),” into its past heritage, into its present world and into its future possibilities. For example, as Heidegger says, “The future is not later than having been and having been is not earlier than the present.”\textsuperscript{123} In terms of the meaning of life, Heidegger says, the primordial and authentic temporality is the future. Throughout, Heidegger argues that the future takes temporal priority for Dasein. The priority of the ecstatic of the future explains the essential nature of Dasein’s being. For without the ecstatic of the future,\textsuperscript{124} it is hard to see how human life in the present moment could be an issue for itself in the first place. Heidegger

\textsuperscript{121} Arthur Aston Luce, \textit{Bergson’s Doctrine of Intuition: The Donnellan Lectures for 1921} (London: MacMillian, 1922), 111.

\textsuperscript{122} BT, 401-2/SZ, 350-1.

\textsuperscript{123} BT, 401/SZ, 350.

\textsuperscript{124} In Heidegger, temporality describes how Dasein exists in the world. Heidegger calls each of the three temporal dimensions (past, present, future) as an “ecstasis” in the sense that in each of them Dasein is not a self-contained substance but is “outside itself.” BT, 377/SZ, 329. The unified horizon (“ecstatic horizon”) of the triple ecstatic of temporality is what Heidegger understands by the temporal sense of the world.
claims that “temporality temporalizes itself primordially out of the future.” Without the priority of ecstasis of the future, consequently, “Bergson devaluated the present by denying the possibility of its anticipation.” The sense of historical purpose and destiny is lost when replaced by \( \text{élan vital} \). “What about the problem of utopia? In Bergson we have no utopia, we have the \( \text{élan vital} \), the dynamic, creative, and continuing life-force. Bergson has asserted even of God, Who for him is the Ground of the life-process, that He can be identified only in relation to the past, for in relation to the future God Himself is open and does not know, so to speak, what the future will be.” For Bergson, the future is simply and absolutely openness. “The future is genuine only if it is open, if the new can happen…This is the motive which led Bergson to insist upon the absolute openness of the future to the point of making God dependent on the unforeseen that might happen.” For Tillich, “A God who is not able to anticipate every possible future is dependent on an absolute accident and cannot be the foundation of an ultimate courage,” without which the ultimate meaning of life cannot be held up. How can there be meaning without purpose? Bergson says that evolution “takes directions without aiming at ends.” For Tillich, a physical force might do that, but not a conscious life. As Thomas G. Bandy has pointed out, “Bergson’s conception of the \( \text{élan vital} \)…does not carry any specific religious meaning or moral

\[125\] BT, 380/SZ, 331.

\[126\] ST1, 275.

\[127\] PE, 153.

\[128\] ST1, 275.
demand,” and it is this deficiency Tillich attempts to remedy by undertaking Heidegger’s existential analytic.129

Tillich wished to penetrate to the deeper levels of life’s reality. “Reality in itself is what it is, and it can neither be true nor false. This certainly is a possible line of arguing, but it is also possible to go beyond.”130 For this, Tillich is in accord with Heidegger’s claim that to make the distinction between the ontical reality and the ontological reality of life is “the fundamental goal of the philosophy of life.”131 The only kind of theology that deserved to be written after the war is that which was able to address the abyss in human existence that the war revealed. The “theology of culture” was created by Tillich in a moment in which the so-called “liberal theology” stood before its catastrophe as “a surrender of the Christian message to cultural trends,”132 although Tillich’s break with nineteenth century theology was not absolute.133 Tillich

129 Bandy is certainly right in describing Tillich’s appreciation of Bergson as “selective or limited.” For example, Tillich indicates that Bergson’s “concepts of process and becoming” are connected with his own theories of “being and nonbeing,” “existential anxiety,” “moral evil,” and “the demonic.” CTB, 33. He writes, “These philosophical ways of using the concept of non-being can be viewed against the background of the religious experience of the transitoriness of everything created and the power of the “demonic” in the human soul and history.” CTB, 33. As illustrated above, however, Bergson rejected the idea of nonbeing as mere word.

130 ST1, 101.

131 BT, 455/SZ, 403.


133 I would argue that Tillich’s theology of culture is as much an extension of the pre-War liberal tradition of theology as it is a reaction against it. Russell Re Manning, Theology at the End of Culture: Paul Tillich’s Theology of Culture and Art (Leuven: Peeters Publishers: 2005), 5-56, also describes Tillich’s theology culture as “liberal theology of mediation.”
was concerned to overcome the undeniable gap between religion and culture in post-First World War Germany. Tillich’s initial formulation of the idea of a theology of culture was given in a lecture at the Kant Society in 1919 to describe his proposals for a new understanding of theology able to “address clearly the urgencies of the general culture and yet remain faithful to [the] Christian church communities” of his time. Tillich’s theology of culture is in effect the elaboration of the philosophy of life that aims to be both theologically and practically relevant to the situation of humanity in the twentieth century. Tillich later described the situation toward which his theology of culture was directed and which he himself felt as a chaplain who had survived war in the trenches: “The political problems determined our whole existence; even after revolution and inflation they were matters of life and death. The social structure was in a state of


dissolution; the human relations with respect to authority, education, family, sex, friendship, and pleasure were in a creative chaos.”\textsuperscript{138} As Eugene Taylor points out, “Christianity was fast ceasing to be an influential force on industrial society.”\textsuperscript{139} Tillich’s position is that in the modern age, we need something more than traditional religion to guide us. The traditional theology completely failed to offer solution to the existential problem of meaning. The fundamental problem is that it is lacking in existential sensitivity that is strong enough to respond to the forces of the time. “It may provide some consolation, but does not adequately solve the existential problem lived by the existing individual. The individual remains with his and her quest for unambiguous life with no hope of attaining unambiguous life.”\textsuperscript{140} Tillich’s position is that theology must begin with the questions raised by the human predicament. “The answers provided by revelation will remain unintelligible if they are not correlated with and addressed to concrete existential questions posed by the place and time in which the theologian lives.”\textsuperscript{141} Tillich suggests that theology stand within the existentialist movement. The lack of existential sensitivity is a necessary consequence of defining religion with reference to the non-existential spheres of religion. “Religion has the peculiarity of not being attributable to any particular psychic function. None of the theories advanced either by Hegel, who assigned religion to the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{138} AR, 13.
\textsuperscript{139} Eugene Taylor, \textit{The Mystery of Personality: A History of Psychodynamic Theories} (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), 235.
\end{footnotesize}
theoretical sphere of the mind, or by Kant, who assigned it to the practical sphere, or by Schleiermacher, who assigned it to the realm of feeling, has survived…[Religion] is an attitude of the spirit in which practical, theoretical, and emotional elements are united to form a complex whole.” ¹⁴² The idea of a theology of culture tries to introduce the larger concept of religion, challenging the undialectical use of the narrower, “non-existential” definition. ¹⁴³ For this purpose, the Heideggerian existentialism functions as the philosophical foundation of Tillich’s project of a theology of culture. ¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² OITC, 39.

¹⁴³ ST2, 26.

¹⁴⁴ John Powell Clayton, The Concept of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of a Mediating Theology (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 118, points out that “Despite the not inconsiderable attention paid to Tillich’s ‘theology of culture,’ no one to my knowledge has succeeded satisfactorily in sorting out his concept of culture and the various layers of influence which are at work in it.”
CHAPTER FIVE
TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

The Essence of Life

Rightly understood, existentialism is always and only about life not only as an end but also as a source. Life is that out of which all existentialist philosophical enquiry develops as well as that to which it directs all of its questions. Hence, as Heidegger points out, the phrase “philosophy of life” is as pleonastic as the “botany of plants.”¹ The primary object of philosophy for the early Heidegger is life. Being and Time was largely inspired by Dilthey’s philosophy of life. Although in Being and Time, Heidegger’s tone is often critical when he speaks of the “ontological indeterminateness of Dilthey’s foundation,”² this critique, as opposed to his critique of Husserl, is not so much concerned with Dilthey’s philosophical points of departure as such, as with the fact that he did not carry these points through radically enough. In Being and Time, Heidegger recognizes his indebtedness to Dilthey, writing that “Our analysis of the problem of history grew out of an appropriation of Dilthey’s work.”³ Heidegger states that the ultimate purpose in Being and Time was to support the view of Dilthey. He says that “the preparatory

¹ BT, 72/SZ, 46.
² BT, 253/SZ, 210.
³ BT, 449/SZ, 397.
existential and temporal analytic of Dasein is resolved…in the service of Dilthey’s work.”

Heidegger takes more seriously Dilthey’s doctrine to understand life from out of itself. Heidegger aims at “a fundamental radicalization” of Dilthey’s philosophy. Heidegger’s fundamental ontology is an alternative philosophy of life that makes a clear advance on Dilthey’s work. From the early Heidegger’s point of view, fundamental ontology is an “ontology of life.”

Heidegger suggests that life philosophy’s historical research on human existence must be prepared by an existential analysis of the human being. In a lecture delivered the year before the composition of Being and Time, Heidegger remarks: “It is crucial to illuminate the being of the historical, i.e., historicity, not history; being, not beings, reality, not real things. What is of concern is thus not the question of empirical research on history…we do not yet have historicity. Dilthey penetrated into that reality, namely, human Dasein…Dilthey succeeded in bringing this reality to the fore. He defined it as living, free, and historical. However, he did not pose the question of historicity itself, the question about the meaning of being, about the being of beings. Only now, thanks to the development of phenomenology, are we in the position to pose this question correctly.”

As illustrated above, for Heidegger, the being of the historical is the human

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4 BT, 455/SZ, 404.

5 BT, 455/SZ, 403.


7 BT, 75/SZ, 50.

8 WD, 156.
being. Tillich finds that Heidegger’s existential analytic of Dasein is more direct approach to the question of the ultimate meaning of existence than that of any other life philosophies.

The question of the ultimate meaning of life must be approached by investigating the essence of life. For Heidegger, life is essentially a kind of existence. The concept of life in life philosophy exceeds Dasein’s existential structure of being-in-the-world. Dilthey’s concept of life, for example, contained too many biological and psychological, that is, “ontic,” connotations, so that the existential character of human existence was not sufficiently portrayed, and this existence was therefore in danger of continually being misunderstood as being mere objective presence. The “essence of life” is “existence,” which has to die. Therefore, the question of the ultimate meaning of human life is fundamentally the question of the meaning of human Dasein’s existence. For this reason, Heidegger avoids the concept life from his analysis of existence. “Heidegger’s shortcut,” says Theodore Kiesel, “stands in sharpest contrast to Dilthey’s detour of self-understanding through all the expressions of human life.”

Being and Time brings to our attention “the philosophical end of life philosophy” in that Heidegger “replaces Dilthey’s “hermeneutic of life with an existential analytic of Dasein,” which attempted to grasp the “lived

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9 BT, 75/SZ, 50.


11 GA29-30, 387.


experience” of self and world in order to retain the truth of world view, but in which life never became a problem in its mode of existence. Heidegger replaces “life” with “existence” seeing that this term better explains the ontological character of human existence. But what exactly concerns Heidegger is the meaning of Dasein, that is, the meaning of “human” existence, rather than existence as such or in general. The kind of existence at issue is Dasein’s existence. Therefore, the primary and central topic of investigation in Being and Time is not Being itself, nor is it time, although they are mostly discussed. The central topic, rather, is Dasein, a term that is often confusedly identified with the human being. Dasein must be distinguished from its existence. Dasein’s existence is that to which Dasein belongs.  

Dasein must be distinguished from human being as well. Dasein is the human being insofar as it is concerned about its own Being.  

The human being forgetful of its own being is being-nowhere. Dasein is a phenomenon that takes place through human being at the moment human being “understands itself in terms of its existence.” When Dasein takes place, Dasein “is already-in a world and is already caught up in the task of living. The project of my life stands before me as an enterprise I must take up and as a quest that has already been undertaken.” This means that life is not Dasein.  

Life is that to

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14 BT, 290/SZ, 246.
15 BT, 32/SZ, 12.
16 BT, 33/SZ, 12.
18 BT, 75/SZ, 50.
which Dasein is thrown. Dasein is the true essence of life. There is no true human life without Dasein. “Dasein is never to be defined ontologically by regarding it as life.”¹⁹ Dasein becomes merely a life when it is ontically treated. “Dasein may be considered purely as life. When the question is formulated from the viewpoint of biology and physiology, Dasein moves into that domain of Being which we know as the world of animals and plants. In this field, we can obtain data and statistics about the longevity of plants, animals and men, and we do this by ascertaining them ontically.”²⁰ For Heidegger, the meaning of Dasein cannot be explained without ontological investigation of Being itself. Hence, “existential concerns from Heidegger’s early period transform into ontological concerns in Being and Time, even if both of these concerns were operative for him all along.”²¹ The ontological origin of existence is explored in order to answer Heidegger’s existential questions about the ultimate meaning of life and human existence, which is the question of the meaning of Dasein. But Being itself cannot be an object of discussion or research. Human reason can only endeavor to approach it, and the only way to approach it is by way of analyzing Dasein in an existential way. In Being and Time, therefore, Dasein is analyzed as preparation for grasping the meaning of Being itself. Heidegger’s existential analytic of Dasein is deeply rooted in the philosophy of life, and his work takes the concept of life as philosophically fundamental. Dasein is the manifestation of life. Heidegger’s criticism of life

¹⁹ BT, 75/SZ, 50.

²⁰ BT, 290/SZ, 246.

²¹ Scott M. Campbell, The Early Heidegger’s Philosophy of Life: Facticity, Being, and Language (Fordham University Press, 2012), 4
philosophy is a criticism of the specific form of it. “Heidegger’s quarrel with these life-philosophers is a family quarrel.”

In the early 1920s, Tillich also attempts to formulate an alternative philosophy of life which, as a means to disclose the existential meaning of life, “liberates the word “life” from its bondage to the organic and psychological realm and elevates it to the level of a basic term that can be used within the theological system.” The System of the Sciences (1923), which is Tillich’s first major book after the First World War is essential background to any serious attempt to understand Tillich’s early project for a theology of culture, is a further stage of this


23 ST3, 11.

24 ST3, 12.

25 The System of the Sciences was an attempt to systematically understand the relationships among the various cognitive disciplines “to overcome the disruption of meaning incident to the separation of theology from other concerns.” James Luther Adams, Paul Tillich’s Philosophy of Culture, Science, and Religion (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 120. The book was not concerned directly with theology or religion. As Adams observes, the terms “God” and “Word of God” seldom appear in it at all. Tillich wrote, “…in my book Das System der Wissenschaften (System of the Sciences). My ultimate concern there was with the questions: How can theology be a science in the sense of Wissenschaft? How are its several disciplines related to the other sciences? What is distinctive about its method?” OB, 55. In his later years, Tillich viewed this work, which was his first large book, with some ambivalence. He explains the fact that the book had “remained without an extensive influence” by pointing out that it is “an outline, which attacks an enormous topic with limited means,” but he acknowledges that the writing of the book was an important event in the development of his thought, because for him “it was a first orientation in the confused variety of scientific operations, and the way to establish the place of theological work” within the whole of science. DSW, 9. Tillich also reports that the volume represents his “first and rather insufficient step” toward his later definition of theology and theological position. He nevertheless acknowledges that many of the ideas contained in the book have remained with him. PE, 55-7. There have been several solid studies about The System of the Sciences. For example, Robert Scharlemann undertook a comparative study of The System of the Sciences and Tillich’s later Systematics. See Robert P. Scharlemann, “The Scope of Systematics: An Analysis of Tillich’s Two Systems,” Journal of Religion, vol. 48, no. 2 (April 1968), 136-49.
development. The First World War provoked a fundamental reorientation of thought and life for Tillich because it presented in an unforgettable way the questionability of human existence. Robert P. Scharlemann writes, “If Tillich’s experience of the First World War was an exposure to sheer abyss – to the unanswered question of the meaning of existence at all – his experience of the 1920s was an answer to this question.” The war had shattered the idea of self-sufficiency, but in the 1920s a new current of expectation made its way through the German intellectual world. Gadamer says that the mid-twenties in Marburg were the beginning of an “exciting era of philosophical and theological discussion.” Thus, the First World War and the 1920s provide the experiential background for the questions and answers formulated in Tillich’s later existential theology. As illustrated above, Tillich’s dependence on the life philosophy movement had prepared him to accept Heidegger’s existential philosophy. Tillich notes that “A new impulse to “Existential” thinking came from the “Lebensphilosophie” or “Philosophy of Life”…The “Philosophy of Life” is not identical with Existential philosophy. But if we understand the latter in a larger sense – as for historical and systematic reasons we must – then the “Philosophy of Life” includes most of the distinctive motives of Existential philosophy.” Throughout his career, Tillich has held fast to a fundamentally existential motivation. Tillich writes, “The


28 EP, 79.
philosophy of existence asks the question in a new and radical manner, the answer to which is given in theology for faith.”

Transformation of the Subjectivistic Philosophy of Life

The concept of life dominated European philosophical movements up to the end of the 1920s. After that, Heidegger’s thought of being dominated European philosophy throughout the middle of the twentieth century. The turning point is Heidegger’s criticism of subjectivism of life philosophy. It is certainly not true that “The thought of Being drives out the philosophy of life.” Heidegger only rejects a particular type of life philosophy that lacks ontological approach to human existence and thus is unable to grasp the essence of life. The problem of such life

29 IH, 40.


philosophy is its failure to discern the fact that the existential is grounded in the ontological, the fact that the human existence is constituted by “being” and “there.”

It is in the early 1920s that Heidegger begins to use the term “life” in place of the Husserlian notion of consciousness to describe what is distinctive about human experience.33 “Life” is a term he takes over from Dilthey. Heidegger investigates the concept of life “with the less subjectivist perspective,”34 and gradually replaces it with “existence.” As early as 1910, Heidegger produced a series of book reviews, poems, and other texts, which represent the intellectual starting point of his philosophical development. In these texts he condemns what he perceives to be the subjectivist orientation of modern philosophy. He notes that “Certainly the modern age has…introduced subjectivism and individualism.”35 He sees this subjectivism and individualism as the central ingredient of “the anthropocentric humanism that has informed at every step the metaphysics of the modern age, expressed not only in the epistemological designs of grounding all knowledge in a cognitive subject, but also in the ethical designs of a domination and control of nature and history by a willful subject.”36 Heidegger probes the roots of the


35 AWP, 128.

various forms of subjectivism that have pervaded modern thought. He questions the whole mode of thinking whereby we take the “subjective” and the “objective” as signifying a basic epistemological or metaphysical distinction. According to Heidegger, subjectivism is an attempt to identify a single underlying foundation, or sub-jectum. It is in this sense that he describes subjectivism as “metaphysical.” Subjectivism reduces the human to mere subject and the world to object. Subjectivism “gives a certain priority to the human, but in a way that also privileges the purely objective.”37 The human is that which provides the fundamental criterion of what is. Being thus becomes that which can be represented to a knowing subject. Being always stands over against the knowing subject, and whose existence can be ascertained by a knowing subject. Being stands over against the knowing subject is necessarily a being, not Being itself. Therefore, Being itself is especially forgotten, according to Heidegger, in the Cartesian conception of being. Descartes fails to investigate the ontological status of “I am.” Descartes, says Heidegger, “takes the Being of ‘Dasein’…in the very same way as he takes the Being of the res extensa – namely as substance.”38 The meaning of Descartes’s concept of substantiality remains ontologically unclarified and is assumed to be incapable of clarification.39 “By characterizing the subject as res cogitans, a thinking thing, or a thing that thinks, Descartes treats the subject as if it were


38 BT, 131/SZ, 98.

39 BT, 126/SZ, 94.
ontologically equivalent to a thing, but with the added capacity for thought.”⁴⁰ For Heidegger, therefore, the problem of subjectivism entails the problem of objectivism. Thus, “the subjectivism that appears in *Being and Time* as the target of Heidegger’s critical engagement actually appears as a form of objectivism.”⁴¹ Heidegger suggests therefore that the Cartesian ontology remains rooted in the traditional metaphysics. The Aristotelian definition of a human being as a rational animal and the Christian notion of the human being as *imago Dei* are both ontologically misleading.⁴² Heidegger’s attack on Cartesian metaphysics is important for understanding *Being and Time*, for *Being and Time* is a direct attack on Cartesian metaphysics and thinking.

Transforming the subjectivistic philosophy of life is to be done by metaphysical investigation of existence and Being. But Heidegger recognizes that the modern metaphysics is itself subjectivistic, and subjectivism of the modern philosophy of life results from the subjectivistic metaphysics that questions and treats Being as a being standing over against the knowing subject, thereby forgetting the ontological difference between Being itself and beings in particular. The traditional metaphysics has been an attempt to explain the “meaning” of Being without considering Being as such. Heidegger is compelled to “overcome” the traditional

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metaphysics by transforming, not abolishing, it. His project of destructing and overcoming of metaphysics is his move beyond the impasse of life philosophy. Heidegger’s project of overcoming metaphysics should be understood as “metaphysical” re-approaching “life,” or as developing an “original” metaphysics of life through a destruction of the history of subjectivistic ontology. Subjectivity always seems to be involved in the conception of life. Thus Heidegger rejects all subjectivistic forms of philosophy of life. Heidegger radially admits a subjectivist tendency in Being and Time. But Being and Time is a work that is proposed to overcome the problem of subjectivism. An accusation was made against Heidegger’s broad range of “metaphysics,” that he “lumps together seemingly disparate phenomena under the rubric of “metaphysical.” But it is not true that “Heidegger’s relation to metaphysics is ambiguous.” In his view, there are only two types of metaphysics, subjectivistic and existential ontological. His understanding of metaphysics as existential ontological has concrete specificity concerning the term. To practice existential ontological metaphysics means to transcend the obviousness of the given understanding of Being in order to let the openness of Being in which beings come to presence. Heidegger understands the existential ontological metaphysical question of being

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45 Christopher Rickey, Revolutionary Saints: Heidegger, National Socialism, and Antinomian Politics (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 2002), 139n15.

46 Frank Schalow and Alfred Denker, Historical Dictionary of Heidegger’s Philosophy, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD.: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 185.
which lets beings appear as a question concerning the “what” of Being. Heidegger calls this existential ontological metaphysics as “fundamental ontology.”

A Postulation of the Unconditioned Being and Meaning

Existence is the essence of life, and it is itself the ultimate question that Dasein raises. Dasein experiences its existence as conditioned. The conditionality of existence is the ultimate problem that Dasein has with its existence. As early as 1916, in the conclusion to his qualifying dissertation on Scotus, 47 Heidegger made use of the following quotation from Novalis: “We everywhere seek the Unconditioned (Unbedingte) and ever find only things (Dinge).” 48 Heidegger states that “We are – in the strictest sense of the word – conditioned (Be-Dingten). We


48 GA1, 541. This passage is from the fragments of the poet Novalis, a passionate proponent of anti-modern medievalism who was influenced by Schleiermacher and Schelling. Gary J. Dorrien, The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity: 1900-1950 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 484, notes that “Tillich’s attraction to Schelling was rooted in his lifelong nature romanticism and his cultivated affinity for the poetry of Goethe, Hölderlin, Novalis, and Rilke.”
have left the presumption of everything unconditioned behind.” 49 The experience of “being conditioned here” leads to the thought that, as Heidegger points out, that which determines the conditionality of the conditioned cannot itself be a conditioned thing, but an unconditioned. 50 It is precisely this conditionality of human existence that compels us to seek the Unconditioned. In other words, in asking what conditions thing, we are seeking the Unconditioned. 51 Seeking the Unconditioned reveals the truth about the existential homelessness, or groundlessness, of everyday modes of experiencing Dasein as well as “homecoming,” the returning of Dasein to nearness to Being itself. The theme of homelessness and homecoming provides Heidegger with a subject matter of the greatest human importance. With existential homelessness and ontological homecoming we discern a ultimate theme that provides a unity to his life’s work – a key that Heidegger has left hidden in plain sight – The ontological search for Dasein’s home is the solution to Dasein’s existential loss of home. As Novalis says, “Philosophy is homesickness.” 52 It is “an urge to be at home everywhere.” 53 Philosophy as such a drive is possible because we are everywhere not at home. The aim of this longing is to be at home everywhere. Not just here and there. This “everywhere” Heidegger calls “the world.” 54 Seeking the Unconditioned, but not in

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49 VA, 179.


51 WIT, 7-10.


53 FCM, 6-8/GA29-30, 7.

54 FCM, 5/GA29-30, 7-8.
the traditional metaphysical sense, is to be at home dwelling in the world. It is to seek the answer to the question of the ultimate meaning of existence.

Tillich’s philosophical development of the doctrine of the Unconditioned is deeply indebted to Heidegger’s concept of the Unconditioned. Tillich appreciates Heidegger’s diagnosis of homelessness as the basic state of human being. The problem of existence which needs to be solved in order to answer the question of the meaning of life is fundamentally the problem of non-existence, as shown through the illustration of Tillich’s own war experiences. The problematized existence in Tillich is the existence before the threat of non-existence. Again it is not out of curiosity that Tillich is concerned with the question of the meaning of life. It is because of “ultimate insecurity” of his own existence. Tillich explains the existential insecurity as “an ultimate lack of weight, an indication of [its] possible non-being, a deficiency of ultimate necessity.”

If existence is absolute without possibility of non-existence, existence will not be problematized the way existential philosophy problematizes it. It only becomes an ontical object of scientific curiosity. The “threat” of non-existence is the limited duration of existence. The meaning of existence is questioned because of this limited condition. Tillich thinks that the answer to the problem of the meaningfulness of the conditioned existence in the threat of the possibility of non-existence can be provided by postulating an “absolute reality” of the Unconditioned. The term “the Unconditioned” is employed as the infinite Ground of meaning.

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55 IH, 271.

56 OITC, 40-1.
and being “without” the imposed categories of human understanding. The Unconditioned is one of the most important concepts in Tillich’s theology, which in his later thought is more frequently referred to in Heideggerian terminology as “Ground of being” or “Being itself.”\textsuperscript{57} As a matter of fact, Tillich has never elucidated in depth the concept of the Unconditioned. James Luther Adams points out that “Curiously enough, his writings lack any systematic presentation of the principal meanings he attaches to the term [the Unconditioned]. Nor do we find any systematic survey of the historical lineage of the concept. Moreover, we encounter a bewildering variety of usage.”\textsuperscript{58} Adams adds, “This is unfortunate, for his many and scattered references to it make for great difficulty in securing a consistent and synoptic view of it. The difficulty is increased by the fact also that Tillich has not remained consistent in his definitions.”\textsuperscript{59} It is because of the evolution of his view of the absolute reality under the influence of Heidegger’s ontology.

The concept of the Unconditioned is variously referred to as “the unconditioned transcendent,” “the unconditionally real,” “the unconditionally powerful,” “the unconditionally personal,” “the unconditionally perfect,” “the unconditional demand,” “the unconditioned meaning,” “the unconditioned form,” and so on. The Unconditioned is neither another order of

\textsuperscript{57} James Luther Adams, \textit{Paul Tillich’s Philosophy of Culture, Science and Religion} (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 32-52, provides one of the finest treatments of this subject.


reality nor a part of finite conditioned reality, but rather it is a postulate “whose conceptions are
created from the primordial concerns of the human spirit.”

It cannot be proved or disproved. “It can only be indicated.” The Unconditioned can be dealt with by indicating it as the meaning
which founds all realizations of meaning. The Unconditioned is not properly spoken of as
“existing” because it is postulated in order to answer the problem of existing. “Existence” is a
limiting concept. “Metaphysics does not ask whether the Unconditioned exists. This question is
meaningless…If the Unconditioned were established, it would no longer be the Unconditioned; it
would be some object whose existence it is possible to prove.” “It is the character of the
Unconditioned that it cannot be grasped; its power includes its unapproachable mystery.”

The Metaphysics of Meaning

For Tillich, existence as such is the absolutely given, and it points to the depth and
creative power of all reality, the Unconditioned. Accordingly, consciousness is directed toward
the Unconditioned. For, if existence has any meaning at all, there must be something behind

60 Kairos, 32. Tillich does not employ the term “postulate.” Rather, he explains it as an
“abstraction” from the religious symbols.

61 SS, 183.

62 SS, 183.

63 SS, 183.

64 RF, 76.
existence as the source of the meaning of existence. This “pointing” explains the relation between consciousness and existence. The phenomenon of existence in the threat of non-existence directs the consciousness toward the Unconditioned. “The direction of consciousness toward the Unconditioned is a necessary function that constitutes the reality of meaning.”65 “The concept “the Unconditioned” is therefore the central metaphysical concept.”66 The term is intended to avoid the limited conception of reality. The Unconditioned is not necessarily of infinite duration of time. The answer to the question of the meaning of existence is neither an infinite duration of existence nor non-existence. Tillich writes that the Unconditioned “is not a being, nor is it the substance or totality of beings…Even the predicate “is” already disguises the facts of the case, since we are here dealing not with a reality of existence, but with a reality of meaning, and that indeed is the ultimate and deepest meaning – the reality which shakes the foundation of all things and builds them up anew.”67 The Unconditioned is the absolute reality that gives meaning to the conditioned existence. For Tillich, the Unconditioned is a possible answer to his ultimate question. The Unconditioned is the self-sufficient meaning-giving reality68 that “supports all meaning-giving.”69 In The System of the Sciences, Tillich develops “a

65 SS, 183.
66 SS, 183.
67 OITC, 41.
68 SS, 183.
69 SS, 185.
philosophy of meaning as a foundation of the whole system [of the sciences]” which he calls “the metaphysics of meaning.” Developing metaphysics of meaning was an important step for Tillich to reduce politics to existential theology. This reduction in Tillich’s thinking indicates his changing from historical-political existentialism to individualistic existentialism, a shift of emphasis from the threat-character of historical existence to the threat of non-existence. Tillich

IH, 38.

Terence O’Keeffe, “Paul Tillich and the Frankfurt School,” in *Theonomy and Autonomy: Studies in Paul Tillich’s Engagement with Modern Culture*, ed. John Carey (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1984), 87, notes that “Tillich’s political and socialist thought became ‘frozen’ and we can see from the late 1940s the theologizing of most of the basic concepts of the 1920s and 1930s, which was completed in the almost totally apolitical text of *Systematic Theology.* This is in true sense the reduction of politics to theology.” David Henry Hopper, *Tillich: A Theological Portrait* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1968), 100 makes a similar claim: “What Tillich did…was essentially to abandon his earlier preoccupations with the broad social-political dimensions of history in order to offer a formulation (‘New Being’) more open to individualistic applications.” Evidence of deliberation and intent in Tillich’s move away from the tenets of religious socialism is found in his brief article, “Existentialism and Religious Socialism,” *Christianity and Society*, 15, no. 1 (Winter 1949-50): 10. In fact, as shown in *The System of the Sciences*, Tillich already sought to develop what he alternately called a “philosophy of meaning” and a “theology of culture” that might serve as an answer to the anxiety of meaninglessness expressed by his contemporaries. Theology underlay Tillich’s religious-socialist theory from the very start. Tillich writes, “…more obvious than the changes from the earlier to the more recent articles in this collection is the continuity of the main line of thought and the permanence of the basic principles. It sometimes strikes me (and this is probably a very common experience), when I read some of my earliest writings, how much of what I believed to be a recent achievement is already explicitly or at least implicitly contained in them.” AI, x-xi.

In a letter to one of his close colleagues and friend in the religious-socialist movement, Emanuel Hirsch, who became an ardent adherent of the movement of German Christian compromise with National Socialism, Tillich made a distinction between two types of existentialism: one that derives from the existence of individual and another that derives from the historical-political situation. There he numbered among the individualistic existentialists Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Jaspers; whereas he listed only Marx, Hirsch, and himself as standing for a corporate-historical existentialism. The letter was published as “Die Theologie des Kairos und die gegenwärtige geistige Lage,” *Theologische Blätter* 23, no.11 (November 1934): 305-6.

argued that “Metaphysics cannot attempt to grasp the Unconditioned from the perspective of being, but must try to grasp it from the perspective of meaning.” For the Unconditioned is not a being that can be treated as an object for metaphysical research. We can only grasp the meaning of the Unconditioned, but not the being of the Unconditioned. In The System of the Sciences, he describes his metaphysics of meaning as “genuine metaphysics.” This genuine metaphysics differs from the “original metaphysics” which Tillich defines later in Systematic Theology as an “analysis of those structures of being which we encounter in every meeting with reality.”

Tillich’s early metaphysics also differs from old-fashioned metaphysics that Tillich criticizes in Systematic Theology. It was not until his stay as professor of theology at Marburg in 1924 and 1925 that he was confronted by the challenge of modern existentialism in the person of Heidegger and subordinated his “genuine” metaphysics of meaning to the Heideggerian “original” metaphysics of being. The central task of his metaphysics of meaning is to explain the meaning of the Unconditioned in order to give meaning to the conditioned existence. Tillich’s metaphysics of meaning is not a merely abstract philosophical theory, but an integral part of a coherent philosophy of life. For Tillich’s interest in meaning has to do with the problem of the

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74 SS, 185.
75 ST1, 20.
76 R. Allan Killen, The Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich (Kampen: Kok,1956), 112, writes, “The surprising fact that emerges from a study starting with his earliest book, Das System des Wissenschafeten in 1923, and following down till today, is that no major change has developed in his ontology during the whole period.” Jeremy S. Begbie, Voicing Creation’s Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts (London: Continuum, 1991), 44n10, also points out, the ontology of the Systematic Theology is an extension of thoughts which were germinating in Tillich in the late 1920’s.
meaning of existence. The human being is for Tillich as being that is ultimately concerned about the meaning of its being. So Tillich places the primary emphasis on the experience of existing and the discovery of its meaning. Tillich’s metaphysics of meaning is not so much of an epistemology in the conventional sense as an existential hermeneutics in that its emphasis is on an interpretation of the meaning implicit in existence. Tillich’s interest in meaning has to do with the meaning of life against the problem of the meaningless life. His metaphysics of meaning flowed out of a longing to counteract what he felt to be a sense of meaninglessness and futility in his own culture. The decisive stimulus for Tillich to develop the concept of “meaning” was offered by “the storms of our times,” in which the meaning of existence is radically threatened. Tillich’s question of the meaning of existence is not abstract one.

God and the Unconditioned

Tillich states that “Metaphysics [of meaning] is the will to grasp the Unconditioned” although the Unconditioned cannot be grasped in the individual forms of objects. The

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77 Tillich has been criticized for his failure to recognize the primacy of epistemology in the field of philosophy. He acknowledged this criticism, and defends this comparative neglect of epistemology in the following terms: “Many contributors ask me about my epistemology, some of them with misgivings about the lack of a developed doctrine of knowledge. Again I answer… That in spite of this attitude I did not mean to neglect epistemology is proved by the First Part of my Systematic Theology, which contains under the title “Reason and Revelation” my theological epistemology.” RIC, 376.

78 EPE, 237-52.

79 SS, 183.
Unconditioned can never be made into an object. Rather, “the Unconditioned itself is to be grasped” in order to avoid an idolatry. “But metaphysics can grasp the Unconditioned only in the forms of the conditioned. This is the profound paradox inherent in metaphysics.” Metaphysics is nothing but the paradoxical attempt to fit into forms the experience of the Unconditional which is above and beyond all form. Tillich is concerned with the breakthrough (Durchbruch) of the Unconditioned into the realm of finite conditioned existence. This breakthrough is a revelation in the Tillichian sense. The Unconditioned that breaks in shows itself in the content by means of the form, that is, culture. Tillich suggests that the task of theology is to grasp the “breakthrough” of the Unconditioned into the conditioned, not the Unconditioned itself. The “breakthrough” of the Unconditioned is an illustration of the experience of the Unconditioned which is obtained when the consciousness is “directed toward” it. Tillich defines religion as “directedness toward,” which Tillich refines as a pure “being-grasped.” “The term “unconditional”…points to that element in every religious

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80 SS, 183, 185.
81 SS 183.
82 SS, 184.
83 OITC, 41.
84 The concept of breakthrough is introduced into Tillich’s thought in about 1919 – it appears in his essay “On the Idea of Theology of Culture” in that year – in order to formulate the way in which the Unconditioned is manifest in the conditioned. The concept of breakthrough is one of the identifying marks of his rejection of idealism in which God is established as subject to time and history.
85 OITC, 40.
experience which makes it religious. In every symbol of the divine an unconditional claim is expressed.\(^{86}\) Theology must be concerned with religion in order to grasp the breakthrough of the Unconditioned. Theology must also be concerned with culture because it is culture into which the Unconditioned breaks. Tillich puts this in the following terms: “Theology, therefore, is the concrete and normative science of religion…This implies a twofold denial. First, theology is not a science with a special object singled out from among others, and which we call god…Second, theology is not the presentation of a particular complex of revelation.”\(^{87}\) Tillich did not consider the theology of culture to be a subdivision of the wider theological task. In contrast to the contemporary dialectical theologians, Tillich demands that “the essential inter-relation of religion and culture demands that theology be re-formulated as theology of culture.” Theology is concerned with the conditioned, or culture, into which the Unconditioned breaks. Therefore theology must not segregate itself from culture but rather consider itself “as precisely theology of culture.”\(^{88}\) Tillich says, “It seems to me that the unconditioned character of religion becomes far more manifest if it breaks out from within the secular, disrupting and transforming it.”\(^{89}\) Russell Re Manning correctly interprets Tillich’s theology as “the synthesis of religion and culture,” that

\(^{86}\) Kairos, 32.


\(^{89}\) OB, 72.
is to say, “the synthesis of the two attitudes toward the conditioned and Unconditioned.”

“If consciousness is directed toward the particular forms of meaning and their unity, we have to do with *culture*; if it is directed toward the unconditioned meaning, toward the *Gehalt* of meaning, we have *religion*.”

As such, religion and culture are the proper objects of the theology of culture. On the other hand, as shown above, metaphysics is also the paradoxical synthesis of the two attitudes toward conditioned form and Unconditioned. For this reason, in Tillich, the genuine metaphysics and the theology of culture are identical.

The language of the Unconditioned implies the infinite quality of the Unconditioned and the necessarily finite human knowledge of it. Therefore the qualification of the Unconditioned is twofold – negative (limiting) and positive. The negative qualification of the Unconditioned is that which qualifies, or conditions, finite reality as its Ground or depth. In other words, the Unconditioned is that which is “presupposed in any meaningful order of thought or being.”

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91 WIR, 59. Interpreters are agreed that Tillich’s conception of *Gehalt* is among the most diffuse in his early work. John Powell Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of a Mediating Theology* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 197n17, says that “Tillich’s notorious lack of precision in the way he uses key terms is nowhere more evident than in the case of *Gehalt*.” Tillich does draw certain distinction with a view toward defining *Gehalt*. For instance, he says that *Gehalt* is “something other than” *Inhalt*: “By *Inhalt*, we understand the material as it is objectively is [*das Gegenständliche in seinem einfachen Sosein*], which is taken up through form into the spiritual-cultural sphere. By *Gehalt*, however, one is to understand the meaning, the spiritual substantiality, which alone gives significance to form. *Gehalt* is grasped in an *Inhalt* by means of form and brought to expression.” GW9, 20.

92 *Kairos*, 32n1.

Negatively, the Unconditioned is to be understood as a limiting concept. Positively, the Unconditioned points to its “paradoxical participation or manifestation in the finite, conditioned order.” As James Luther Adams observes, the concept of the Unconditioned was not differentiated as “negative” and “positive” in Tillich’s early writings. His later use of them reflects the result of his working out in detail his conception of the method of correlation between philosophy and theology. According to this view, philosophy is concerned only with the negative Unconditioned, and theology gives answers to the philosophical question of the negative Unconditioned by the Christian revelation of the positive Unconditioned. The positive Unconditioned is the symbol of the depth of things, “the basis of the being of things whereby ‘being’ is taken absolutely, transcendentally, as the expression of the secret into which thinking cannot penetrate.” As Mary Ann Stenger and Ronald H. Stone point out, however, “The positive meanings of the Unconditioned, especially in relationship to ontological participation of the infinite in the finite, raise the question of the relationship between the Unconditioned and God.” Tillich makes it clear that God is the symbol for the Unconditioned. In the early and

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96 IH, 83.

mid-1920s, Tillich speaks of God as “a symbol for the Unconditioned.” Tillich says in “Church and Culture (1924)” that “we can therefore speak of the Unconditioned simultaneously as basis of meaning and abyss of meaning. We call this object of the silent belief in the ultimate meaningfulness, this basis and abyss of all meaning which surpass all that is conceivable, God.”

Again in his *Dogmatik* of 1925, he says that “Revelation therefore, conceptually, is indirect. It is expressed in something that is not the thing itself…Since all our words classify objects in this world, the Unconditioned is therefore first the unspeakable. If it expresses itself after all, this can only happen in indirect words, in symbols. The symbol has the depth that it honors [or respects, *achtet*] the hiddenness and nonetheless points to what it means. Also the word “God’ is such a symbol.” But Heidegger’s fundamental ontology shows the weakness of Tillich’s metaphysics of meaning as a solution to his ultimate question. Persuaded by Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, Tillich comes to the understanding that the absolute hiddenness of the Unconditioned only means that the Unconditioned is a symbol itself, a symbol that symbolizes the absolute hiddenness of the God above God. The Unconditioned symbolizes “the Unconditioned meaning” of what is hidden. The metaphysics of meaning is, precisely speaking, a metaphysics of the symbolic meaning of the Unconditioned. The new

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98 RP, 804.
99 PI, 222.
100 *Dogmatik*, 39-40.
101 *Dogmatik*, 39.
102 WIR, 215.
understanding is that that to which the Unconditioned points is absolutely hidden behind Being itself. In order to answer the question of the ultimate meaning of existence, the metaphysics of meaning as the genuine metaphysics and theology calls for a metaphysics of being.

Tillich’s metaphysics of meaning does involve ontology, which Tillich calls the “metaphysics of being.” Tillich states that “[M]etaphysics must answer three basic questions: first, the question of the relation of the Unconditioned to the being (das Seiende)…The metaphysics of being, or ontology, answer the first question.”\(^\text{103}\) Ontology is subordinated to metaphysics whose object of inquiry is meaning. Tillich adds that “It is not the task of ontology, accordingly, to discern some “being” (ein Seiendes) behind the empirical phenomena; its task is rather to represent the structure of all beings (den Aufbau alles Seienden), and its unity.”\(^\text{104}\) As Adrian Thatcher argues, however, “the subsidiary role assigned to ontology as the metaphysics of being does not last long” due to the limitations of the metaphysics of meaning.\(^\text{105}\) After his becoming acquainted with Heidegger in 1925, that is, after his having been on the same faculty with Heidegger in Marburg, and more substantially after having been exposed to Heidegger’s fundamental ontology through the publication of Being and Time in 1927, Tillich’s philosophical position shifts to a more ontological formulation, replacing metaphysics with ontology, or a metaphysics of being, as the fundamental philosophical discipline. “Being” replaces “Meaning” as the ultimate philosophical absolute, and the question of being came to occupy a more central

\(^{103}\) SS, 185-6/SW, 132.

\(^{104}\) SS, 185-6/SW, 132.

\(^{105}\) Adrian Thatcher, The Ontology of Paul Tillich (Oxford: Oxford University, 1978); 5.
position. Accordingly, ontology became the most important philosophical inquiry for Tillich, particularly existentialist ontology.  

By the time of the systematic theology, ontology had come to mean what it meant in Heidegger. In *Systematic Theology*, Tillich defined philosophy as to make it virtually synonymous with ontology: Philosophy is “that cognitive approach to reality in which reality as such is the object,” and ontology is the “analysis of those structures of being which we encounter in every meeting with reality.” Philosophy and theology are both concerned with the question of being, but only from different perspectives. Tillich immediately adds that, although this was “the original meaning of metaphysics,” it may be less misleading now to speak of “ontology” instead of metaphysics because the term “metaphysics” has come to connote a “transcendent realm of beings” that is a “duplication of this world.” Tillich continues, “Philosophy asks the question of reality as a whole; it asks the question of the structure of being. And it answers in terms of categories, structural laws, and universal concepts. It must answer in ontological terms.” At its root, then, philosophy is ontology, the study of being. Ontology is the true center of all philosophy and its questions and concerns are implicit

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107 ST1, 18.

108 ST1, 20.

109 ST1, 20.

110 ST1, 20.

in every other approach to philosophy.\textsuperscript{112} Later in the Firth lectures, \textit{Love, Power and Justice}, which he gave at Nottingham in 1952, Tillich distinguishes even more sharply between ontology and metaphysics. There, he suggests that ontology “deals only with elements that are universally constitutive of everything that is. All events, persons, and all objective particulars are left to scientific analysis and to metaphysical constructions.”\textsuperscript{113} Tillich asks, “How is ontology distinguished from what has been called metaphysics?” He answers that “ontology is the foundation of metaphysics, but not metaphysics itself. Ontology asks the question of being…It separates those elements of the real which are generic or particular from those elements which are constitutive for everything that is and therefore are universal. It leaves the former to the special sciences or to metaphysics constructions; it elaborates the latter through critical analysis.”\textsuperscript{114}

The change in his conception of ontology and God that seems to take place during the mid-1920s can be dated by reference to his works \textit{The System of the Sciences According to Objects and Methods} (1923), \textit{Dogmatik} (1925), and “Die Gestalt der religiösen Erkenntnis” (1927).\textsuperscript{115} In his 1925 \textit{Dogmatik}, which appears to be a transitional work, Tillich starts to


\textsuperscript{114} LPJ, 23.
develop his ontology with a more existentialist bent. In the *Dogmatik*, Tillich calls God not only “the Unconditioned” (*das Unbedingte*) but also “the unconditionally being” (*das Unbedingt Seiende*). Seeing that, in *Systematic Theology*, *das Seiende* is equivalent to the created order while *das Sein* means “Being” and is mostly used as a designation for God, sometimes in the combination *das Sein selbst*, “Being itself,” this seems to be relegating the Unconditioned to the finite realm. But, as Robert P. Scharlemann points out in his unpublished paper, “Ontology of Tillich’s Dogmatics of 1925,” the adverbial rather than adjectival meaning (“that which is unconditionally”) is to be stressed in order to see *das Seiende* as an ontological, rather than merely ontic, concept. In later years, Tillich becomes more careful to distinguish God from *das Seiende* in reserving the noun *das Sein* for ultimate reality and reserving *das Seiende* for the created order, as well as through his refusal to state that “God exists.” This sensitivity in terminological distinctions was most likely a direct influence of Heidegger on Tillich’s thinking. *Dogmatik* of 1925 indicates that Tillich begins to define God in the ontological way, and Tillich’s use of the term “Being itself” in relation to God first appears in “Die Gestalt der religiösen Erkenntnis.”(1927). The Newsletter of the North American Paul Tillich Society reports that Tillich “was involved in a continuous conversation with Heidegger in this period [of

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the late 1920s up to 1930].” The evidence is drawn from examining the notes of articles that Tillich included in 1930 volume of his collected essays. The report suggests that Tillich did indeed dialogue in writing with Heidegger as early as 1927. For Tillich, Heidegger’s ontological difference provides a formal determination of the concept of God. Tillich realizes that Heidegger himself does not identify Being with God, but the rejection of the idea of God in the subjectivistic metaphysics seems to leave open the possibility of a new concept of God based on the concept of Being itself.

As Tillich’s thought was affected by his contact with Heidegger from 1925 onwards, he began to emphasize that the Unconditioned is not God. In his 1946 essay, Tillich says, “Neither “The Unconditioned” nor “something unconditional,” is meant as a being, not even the highest being, not even God. God is unconditioned, that makes Him God; but the “unconditional” is not God. In his 1947 essay, “The Problem of Theological Method,” Tillich again suggests that it is wrong to call the transcendent ultimate or the Unconditioned “God”: “There is, however, one point (which is only a point, without length or breadth) in which medium and content are identical, because in this point subject and object are identical: it is the awareness of the ultimate itself, the esse ipsum, which transcends the difference between subject and object and lies, as the presupposition of all doubts, beyond doubt; it is the veritas ipsa, as Augustine has called it. It is

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118 Cf. RV.

119 TT, 24-5.
wrong to call this point ‘God’ (as the ontological arguments does), but it is necessary to call it ‘that in us which makes it impossible for us to escape God.’ It is the presence of the element of ‘ultimacy’ in the structure of our existence, the basis of religious experience.” 120 The Unconditioned is the point at which the God above God and the human existence meet when the “paradoxical breakthrough” 121 of the divine revelation takes place.

It is undeniable that Tillich’s philosophical thought concerning the problem of existence shifted in both emphasis and content after his Marburg period, but to talk of Tillich’s Heideggerian turn in the mid-1920s is to overstate the case. Tillich’s thought cannot be evenly divided into two systems, for example, into an early Tillich and a late Tillich. The present research does not support neat divisions of Tillich’s theological development. As John Powell Clayton observes, “There are rather numerous strands which are roughly interwoven in the process of his theological and philosophical development. Some strands are extremely persistent, running all the way through from the earliest to his most mature writings, though there are sometimes slight and at other times great changes in colour and texture; some strands begin abruptly and others being almost imperceptibly; some end as abruptly and others simply fade out, perhaps to be revived later and perhaps to be abandoned altogether. The resulting “fabric” is far from consistent, either in pattern or in texture.” 122

120 PTM, 23.


Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics

Tillich’s prioritizing the metaphysics of being over the metaphysics of meaning involves an appropriation of Kant’s work in terms of metaphysics. Tillich reinterprets Kant in light of Heidegger’s concern with neo-Kantianism. Kant suggests that “Metaphysics must be science, not only as a whole, but in all its parts, otherwise it is nothing.”\textsuperscript{123} He considers the human tendency towards metaphysics as natural or inherent to the faculty of reason\textsuperscript{124} and holds that “it is impossible to conceive of reason to be devoid of this tendency, despite the illusion that results from it.”\textsuperscript{125} But “What has hitherto been called metaphysics cannot satisfy any critical mind, but to forego it entirely is impossible; therefore, a critique of pure reason itself must now be attempted.”\textsuperscript{126} The traditional, or dogmatic, metaphysics is a quest to have a priori knowledge of the reality independent of sensibility and experience. “It is through pure intellectual method that these metaphysicians want to arrive at the indisputable knowledge of the ultimate nature of objects. This conception, however, is radically mistaken. It is not scientific and empty as Kant


\textsuperscript{125} Saju Chackalackal, \textit{Unity of Knowing and Acting in Kant: A Paradigmatic Integration of the Theoretical and the Practical} (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002), 34.

shows in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.\(^{127}\) The nature of the problem of traditional metaphysics as posed by Kant is its seeking a standpoint that could only be appropriate to God. For Kant, however, our inability to know what a thing in itself is the first step in recognizing what it means to be human.\(^{128}\)

As will be discussed in the following chapter, Heidegger conceives of metaphysics as science. Heidegger’s project of overcoming metaphysics is an attempt to recover an authentic form of metaphysics. For him, “The overcoming of metaphysics can only be represented out of metaphysics itself.”\(^{129}\) Heidegger’s fundamental ontology and existential phenomenology do not replace but upgrade metaphysics. Heidegger’s background comes from the Neo-Kantians. Heidegger did his doctoral examination under neo-Kantians, including Heinrich Rickert and Wilhelm Windelband, who share strong reaction against irrationalism and speculative naturalism and a conviction that philosophy could be a “science” only if it returned to the method and spirit of Kant. But Heidegger assumed that “Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* should not be seen along neo-Kantian lines as an epistemological inquiry into the logical preconditions for the natural sciences but should be understood instead as a metaphysical inquiry into the ontological

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\(^{127}\) Saju Chackalackal, *Unity of Knowing and Acting in Kant: A Paradigmatic Integration of the Theoretical and the Practical* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002), 36.


\(^{129}\) OM, 73.
preconditions for raising the question of being. In Heidegger’s view, *Critique of Pure Reason* not only shows that the goal of dogmatic metaphysics is untenable, but also that it is an attempt to develop the critical metaphysics. All through the *Critique*, Heidegger finds, contrary to the popular belief that Kant has purged metaphysics of its basic nature, Kant’s effort to establish a new method of metaphysics. For Heidegger, Kant’s point turns out to be compatible with, rather than opposed to, his own fundamental ontology. According to Heidegger, Kant’s task was to “investigate human being as the necessary foundation for understanding being as such.” It was this preparatory task – “the laying of the ground for metaphysics” – that Heidegger termed “fundamental ontology” and defines as “the metaphysics of human Dasein which is required for metaphysics to be made possible.” Kant never rejected metaphysics as such – only dogmatic metaphysics. Kant’s own approach is doing the work of metaphysics, a fact he acknowledges when he refers to it as “the metaphysics of metaphysics,” or “critical metaphysics.” Heidegger replaces Kant’s own indefinite vision of a metaphysics of metaphysic with fundamental ontology.

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132 KPM, 161/GA3, 229-30.

133 KPM, 1/GA3, 1.

In *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (1929), Heidegger revisits Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* and discusses it “in terms of the question of the possibility of ontological knowledge, seen as the laying of the foundation for metaphysics.”\(^{135}\) “The Neo-Kantians wanted to use Kant to overcome and bring about a renunciation of German idealism in general by use of the theory of knowledge. Therefore, they took Kant as working through the destruction of metaphysics in general. The return to Kant was guided by the need to find a philosophical foundation, that is, epistemology, for positivistic concept of science.”\(^{136}\) But Heidegger says in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, “The intention of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, there, remains fundamentally misunderstood, if it is interpreted as a ‘theory of experience’ or even as a theory of the positive sciences. The *Critique of Pure Reason* has nothing to do with a ‘theory of knowledge.’ If one generally could allow the interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a theory of knowledge, then that would be to say that it is not a theory of ontic knowledge (experience), but rather a theory of ontological knowledge.”\(^{137}\) For Heidegger, “‘Epistemology’ is the title for the increasing, essential powerlessness of modern metaphysics to know its essence and the ground of that essence.”\(^{138}\) He thinks that Kant’s major contribution to epistemology lies

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\(^{137}\) KPM, 11/GA3, 16-7.

\(^{138}\) OM, 89.
in helping to “clear the way and to indicate the basis for a fundamental ontology.”\textsuperscript{139} Heidegger says that “[In Kant] Ontology is called transcendental philosophy because it contains the conditions and first elements of all our knowledge a priori. Kant always stresses here that as transcendental philosophy ontology has to do with the knowledge of objects. This does not mean, as Neo-Kantianism interpreted it, epistemology…The interpretation of Kant’s \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} as epistemology completely misses the true meaning.”\textsuperscript{140}

The enormous effect of Kant’s work raised with a new urgency the traditional metaphysical issues that had featured so prominently in medieval metaphysics. It is not surprising, therefore, that Tillich and his contemporaries were inclined to re-examine the medieval tradition. Before he re-read Kant through Heidegger,\textsuperscript{141} Tillich considered Kant merely as the fulfillment of the Enlightenment that challenged the possibility of religious knowledge. He concludes that Kant is wrong when his refusal of metaphysics becomes an absolute one and “rejects metaphysics as such.”\textsuperscript{142} Tillich’s primary reason for organizing the sciences in \textit{The System of the Sciences} (1923) is to “find a legitimate place for theology after its decline in Western consciousness”\textsuperscript{143} by attempting to establish the epistemological basis for the possibility

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\textsuperscript{140} BPP, 128/GA24, 180-1.

\textsuperscript{141} EP, 97.

\textsuperscript{142} SS, 182.

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of theology. Tillich diagnoses that the decline is due to Kant’s closing off any experience of transcendence. He writes, “Kant’s critique of rational metaphysics still dominates the present situation in metaphysics. Today hardly anyone is demanding a revival of this obsolete form of metaphysics. The critical attitude toward all metaphysical endeavors is still in our blood.”\footnote{SS, 181.}

“Since Kant’s critique of reason, epistemology has achieved a dominant position in philosophy. Replacing the rational metaphysics that had been destroyed, epistemology attained the rank of a fundamental science. The prejudice developed that all real knowledge depends on the theory of knowledge.”\footnote{SS, 177.} Kant “has brought theology down from heaven to earth” and changed it into a regulative or normative science.”\footnote{OITC, 37.} Tillich explains that “When the Enlightenment made metaphysics a rational science, it completely abandoned the metaphysical attitude. It attempted to draw the Unconditioned down into the sphere of the conditioned, into the sphere of proof and disproof. But in this way, metaphysics was deprived of its object even before its work began. Kant’s critique merely drew the conclusion from this state of affairs.”\footnote{SS, 182.} But Tillich begins to reinterpret Kant under the influence of Heidegger. Tillich comes to regard Kant as an important contributor to existential ontology.\footnote{EP, 78.} *Systematic Theology* offers Tillich’s changed view of
Kant’s relation to the traditional metaphysics. “When an ontological tradition has become doubtful and the question arises whether the tools used in the creation of this tradition are responsible for its failure…This was the situation of…Kant with respect to the traditional metaphysics.”

Defending Kant, Tillich writes, “It is unfortunate that Kant often is interpreted only as an epistemological idealist and an ethical formalist – and consequently rejected. Kant is more than this. His doctrine of the categories is a doctrine of human finitude. His doctrine of the categorical imperative is a doctrine of the unconditional element in the depth of practical reason. His doctrine of the teleological principle in art and nature enlarges the concept of reason beyond its cognitive-technical sense toward what we have called “ontological reason.”

A decisive factor in this change is Tillich’s having come into contact with the work of Heidegger. Tillich recalls, “When existential philosophy was introduced into German, I came to a new understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology. Heidegger’s lectures at Marburg, the publication of his Sein und Zeit (Being and Time), and also his interpretation of Kant were significant in this connection.”

“Most important in this connection is Heidegger’s attempt to interpret Kant’s critical philosophy in terms of Existential philosophy, primarily in terms of human finitude. In his Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics (1929) he introduces the subject of his inquiry as Kant’s attempt to found metaphysics on the human, that is, the finite,

149 ST1, 71.

150 ST1, 82. The following chapter discusses Tillich’s concept of “ontological reason” that surpasses the purely cognitive interests of technical reason.

151 OB, 56.
character of reason." 

152 At the end of his days, Tillich accepts that Kant was a decisive influence on his thinking and the *Critique of Pure Reason* was a very apt description of his concept of the Unconditioned. 153 According John Heywood Thomas, Tillich “remained very much in thrall to Kant throughout his life’s work.”154 He recalls Tillich remarking during the last summer of his life, “Of course I am a Kantian.”155

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152 EP, 97.


CHAPTER SIX
EXISTENTIAL THEOLOGY

In response to Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, Tillich’s idea of the Unconditioned in which he locates the answer to the question of the ultimate meaning of existence evolves to include ontological relationship between the Unconditioned and the human existence as the conditioned. Tillich’s existential theology is an attempt to explain the unconditional Being itself as the ground and source of the ultimate meaning of human existence. It results from his correlation of theology and philosophy, and his choice of existentialism is indebted to Heidegger’s critical analysis of the relationship between philosophy and theology. Tillich’s distinction between existential theology and non-existential philosophy including traditional theology mirrors Heidegger’s distinction between fundamental ontology and other philosophical programs including traditional theology.

Positive Science and Theology

Husserl makes a primary distinction between a science of being in general and a science of beings in particular. The latter he terms “positive science” in that it has entities as its field of research, which he calls “positum.” Positive science rests on an ontological “posit,” a presupposition about what the entity it studies is. The given positum is a being that in a certain way is already disclosed and is grasped on a pre-scientific level prior to any theoretical
apprehending. “Every positive science rests upon a field of givenness or evidence that is presupposed but not investigated by the sciences themselves.”¹ “The universe of beings is the sphere from which the positive sciences of nature, history, space secure at any given time their domain of objects. Directed straight to beings, they take over in its totality the analysis of all that is.”² “Philosophy, however, lies in a wholly new dimension. It requires a wholly new point of departure and a wholly new method, a method that distinguishes it in principle from every “positive” science.”³ Philosophy touches on “the question which concerns all [positive sciences] in the same way, namely, the question of the meaning of the Being of their domains of Being.”⁴

Following quite closely Husserl in drawing a distinction between positive science, or ontic science, on the one hand, and ontological science as a fundamental science, on the other, Heidegger discerns that there is a basic difference between these positive sciences and ontology as the science of philosophy. “Ontic sciences in each case thematize a given entity that in a certain manner is always already disclosed prior to scientific disclosure. We call the sciences of entities as given – of a positum – positive sciences…Ontology, or the science of being, on the

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other hand, demands a fundamental shift of view: from entities to being.”⁵ “There are many things we designate as ‘being,’ and we do so in various senses.”⁶ Accordingly there are many “regional ontologies.” These regional ontologies are all grounded in a single common foundation, what Heidegger calls in Being and Time a “fundamental ontology.” Fundamental ontology is concerned with the question of Being itself, which is, Heidegger holds, the most fundamental question, “the question of metaphysics,”⁷ that human being can raise. Fundamental ontology endeavors to discover what, exactly, it means for something to be, or, in other words, to discover the fundamental structure of all that is. Fundamental ontology does not posit being for its question.⁸ In Being and Time, Heidegger speaks of “a destruction of the history of ontology, with the stated aim of retrieving the question of the meaning of being, which has been lost, or forgotten, in the metaphysical tradition.”⁹ In view of the history of metaphysics, Heidegger’s program implies that it is possible to carry on traditional metaphysics only as long as one does not think the “ontological difference,” the difference between being and entities, that is to say, as long as one does not grasp the thought that being is not any entity.¹⁰ Ontology in its genuine

⁵ PT, 41/GA9, 48.

⁶ BT, 26/SZ, 6.

⁷ OQB, 291/GA9, 213.

⁸ Albert Hofstadter, translator’s introduction to BPP, xxix.


¹⁰ ID, 113-4.
sense is a science of being itself, not even a science of an entity called Dasein. But “Being cannot be represented or brought forth in the manner of an object.”¹¹ Being is not even an object of cognition. Ontology does not posit Being as its subject matter. Therefore, ontology cannot be a positive science. Philosophies of the tradition including ontologies are positivistic in the strictest sense. For the philosophical tradition has understood being in terms of entities at their objective presence. “Being becomes a certain unchanging ground that gives identity and continuity to an otherwise ever-changing process of beings in their coming to be in passing away.”¹² As Herman Philipse notes, “philosophers of the tradition took a specific type of being as a paradigm in developing their general notion of being.”¹³ All implicitly hold to an analogous understanding of being in terms of the logical necessity for the identity of the objectively present entities.

Heidegger objects to this kind of conceptual generalization in ontology. Being is not an idea, but is existential. Being can only be experienced by being there. Therefore “Dasein” points to the fact of how the existential comprehension of being is fundamentally rooted in Dasein’s being. Dasein is not merely ontic in this sense. “Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished.”¹⁴ This aspect of Dasein’s existential


¹⁴ BT, 32/SZ, 12.
comprehension of being explains its quality which is ontically distinct from all other entities, though Dasein is an entity among many others in the world. Dasein is ontic, but “Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it *is* ontological.”\(^{15}\) Compared with other possible ontologies, the ontology of Dasein is fundamental for Dasein has an ontical primacy as compared to other beings. Heidegger insists that the foundation of ontology lies in and remains bound to Dasein. Heidegger’s investigation of being is a foundation that he calls fundamental ontology and of which he writes that it “must be sought in the existential analytic of human Being.”\(^{16}\) In other words, Dasein is “an ontical foundation” of ontological science.\(^{17}\) This implies that “ontology cannot be established in a purely ontological manner.”\(^{18}\) Being discloses itself only by way of Dasein. Being is given only if the understanding of being, hence the Dasein, exists. This is the only sense in which we can say that being “is.” “Something like ‘Being’ has been disclosed in the understanding-of-Being which belongs to existent Dasein as a way in which it understands.”\(^{19}\) Consequently, “The first task [of fundamental ontology] *is the demonstration of its ontical foundation and the characterization of this foundation itself.*”\(^{20}\) On the other hand,

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\(^{15}\) BT, 32/SZ, 12

\(^{16}\) BT, 34/SZ, 13

\(^{17}\) BPP, 19/GA24, 25-6.

\(^{18}\) BPP, 19/GA24, 25-6.

\(^{19}\) BT, 488/SZ, 437.

\(^{20}\) BPP, 20/GA24, 26-8. Heidegger’s emphasis.
Dasein as the ontical foundation of ontology is always my Dasein.  

“Because Dasein has in each case mineness [Jemeinigkeit], one must always use a personal pronoun when one addresses it: ‘I am,’ ‘you are.’”

To be exact, therefore, the question of being is the most fundamental question that we can raise for us to understand the ultimate meaning of our being there. As such, ontology has for its fundamental discipline the existential analytic of the Dasein. Although the ontological difference draws a sharp line of distinction between being itself and beings in particular, nevertheless, Dasein is the foundation of ontology. Ontology must start from and return to the Dasein. But it is not a positive science.

In Being and Time, Heidegger uses “existential analytic” and “ontological analytic” interchangeably with fundamental ontology, but they are not synonymous. Heidegger uses them interchangeably in that ontology is grounded in the existential analytic – The ontological is grounded in the existential “analysis,” although the existential is grounded in the ontological. Ontological analytic is a broader term, and existential analytic is a distinctive feature of Heidegger’s ontology.

Based on his distinction between positive science and non-positive ontology, Heidegger presents the lecture “Phänomenologie und Theologie” during the period that Being and Time was

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21 BT, 67/SZ, 41. Heidegger’s emphasis.

22 BT, 68/SZ, 42. Heidegger’s emphasis.

23 Albert Hofstadter, translator’s introduction to BPP, xxix.

first appearing in publication. In this lecture, he sets forth his views on the distinction and relationship between theology and ontology, “the relationship of two sciences.” In this lecture, which John D. Caputo interprets as “Heidegger’s farewell to Christian theology as a matter of explicit and personal concern,” Heidegger criticizes traditional Christian theology, which he thinks has been “corrupted by its assimilation into Greek metaphysical philosophy.” Heidegger classifies and criticizes theology as a positive science, which is to delimit theology to an ontic science. According to Heidegger, proper to the positive character of theology is that theology deals with an entity called “Christianness as something that allows Christianity to become an originally historical event…Thus we maintain that what is given for theology (its positum) is Christianness…What does “Christianness” mean? We call faith Christian.” Faith is “the essential constitutive element of Christianness,” and theology is “the science of faith.”

25 Heidegger dedicated the German edition of the publication of this lecture to Bultmann “in friendly remembrance of the Marburg years 1923-1928.”

26 PT, 40.


29 PT, 42.

30 PT, 43.

31 PT, 51.
Theology as the science of faith makes faith its object. “Faith itself is a theme for theology.”

Also the whole of entities uncovered by faith are the positum of theology. Thus theology “makes faith and that which is believed its object.” Theology is a positive science in that it deals with faith and what is revealed in it as its focus of theoretical objectification. Heidegger explains faith as a way of existence of human Dasein. Theology, then, is “a conceptual interpretation of Christian existence,” or “faithful existence.” This implies that “The object of theology is the all-inclusive relationship of God to man and of man to God.” Consequently, Heidegger confines theology to specifically confessional doctrine. Heidegger asserts for this reason that philosophy, as “the science,” or “absolute science,” of Being itself, differs

32 PT, 45. Heidegger notes that “Etymologically regarded, theo-logy means: science of God. But God is in no way the object of investigation in theology.” (48) Heidegger’s thinking seems to have gone through some transitions. Heidegger claimed earlier that theology is the science of God. But Heidegger maintains in Being and Time that theology is the science of “faith.” He writes, “Taken superficially, the term ‘phenomenology’ is formed like ‘theology,’ ‘biology,’ ‘sociology’ – names which may be translated as ‘science of God’…” BT, 50/SZ, 28.

33 PT, 45.

34 PT, 45.

35 PT, 46.

36 PT, 43.

37 PT, 47.

38 PT, 50.

39 PT, 48-9.

40 FCM, 1/GA29-30, 1.
“absolutely, not relatively,” from theology. \(^{41}\) Dogmatic theology of patristic tradition is closer to natural science than it is to philosophy in its genuine form. Heidegger says therefore that “there is no such thing as a Christian philosophy; that is an absolute “square circle.””\(^{42}\) Heidegger explains that theology has been fundamentally one of the sciences that attempts to answer the question, “Which being is the highest and in what way is it?”\(^{43}\) According to Heidegger, these questions have been answered by the traditional metaphysics which he calls “onto-theology.” The old theology is onto-theology, and onto-theology is inherently positivistically metaphysical. For Heidegger, onto-theology treats God as a being though it understands God as a supreme being. This is a natural outcome of its forgetting the ontological difference between being in general and beings in particular. In other words, onto-theology confuses being itself with a particular being. Onto-theology deprives the world of its mystery and gives us a God not worthy of worship. \(^{44}\) His criticism is that the God of onto-theology is not the God of religious faith: “…the cause as causa sui. This is the right name for the god of [onto-theological] philosophy. Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before the causa sui, man can neither fall to his knees in

\(^{41}\) PT, 41. Heidegger’s emphasis.

\(^{42}\) PT, 53.

\(^{43}\) KTB, 340/GA9, 277. Heidegger calls the first question “the question of God, the second, “the question of the divine.” Taken together, Heidegger writes, this dual “question of God and of the divine” is the theological question.

awe nor he play music and dance before this god.”  

It is a false idolatrous explication of the divinity, an idolatry from which the Judeo-Christian is not exempt. God of the traditional theism has in fact been “the god of Aristotle” that even “has nothing in common with the gods worshipped by the Greeks.” We “must abandon the God of the philosophers, God as *Causa sui*.” Heidegger thinks that the traditional Christian theism is a not genuine one. It is what Heidegger calls in 1928 the “ontic belief in God,” which is basically “godless.” Nietzsche’s word of the absence of God lies at the center of Heidegger’s interpretation of the traditional theology. Heidegger does not dispute that Nietzsche’s word against Christianity refers to the misunderstood Christian God of the Biblical revelation.

The early and widespread characterization of Heidegger as an existentialist occasioned a vigorous attack against him by Protestant theologians such as Karl Barth and several Catholic theologians as well. John Reynold Williams says that the most influential philosophical evaluation of the religious potential of Heidegger’s philosophy was offered by Sartre. Williams argues based on Sartre’s celebrated remark that identified Heidegger as among the existential

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45 OCM, 72.

46 GA66, 239.

47 “This is precisely what occurs in most cases when the philosopher speaks of God. So remote is this conception from the God most men have in mind that if, by some miracle, and contrary to the opinion of philosophers, God as thus defined should step down into the field of experience, none would recognize him.” Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Aurad and Cloudesley Brereton (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), 233-4.

48 OCM, 72.

49 MFL, 165/GA26, 211.
atheists that “[Sartre] was responsible for many of the atheistic interpretations of Heidegger.”\textsuperscript{50} The extensive use which Sartre made of Heidegger’s concepts in \textit{Being and Nothingness} served to support his declaration that Heidegger’s philosophy is thoroughly atheistic.\textsuperscript{51} As a result, Heidegger’s name has been linked to Sartre’s in many books on existentialism as an unrepentant atheist.\textsuperscript{52} One can simply characterize Heidegger’s philosophy as atheistic, since it appears to speak of nothing beyond being. According to Heidegger, being is finite in that it renders itself present as an object of human experience. In other words, being is in need of human being. For Heidegger, therefore, being cannot be identified with God. Cornelio Fabro in his history of modern atheism, \textit{God in Exile}, interprets the theistic latency of a philosophy according to its openness for divine transcendence. He judges the criticism of Heidegger by this criterion, saying that “the Heideggerian \textit{Sein selbst} (Being itself)…is atheistic in content, structure and position, inasmuch as it is the coming-to-presence of the finite by the instrumentality of a finite being condemned to a finite destiny like man’s.”\textsuperscript{53} The religious aspect of Heidegger’s philosophy has

\textsuperscript{50} John Reynold Williams, \textit{Martin Heidegger’s Philosophy of Religion} (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1979), 9.


\textsuperscript{53} Cornelio Fabro, \textit{God in Exile: A Study of the Internal Dynamic of Modern Atheism, From Its Roots in the Cartesian Cogito to the Present Day} (New York: Newman Press, 1968), 929. Fabro admits that Heidegger does not exclud all openness to God, but for all practical purposes God is foreign to and banished from his philosophy.
often been evaluated from a narrow and dogmatic standpoint and his concept of Being itself incompatible with the view of God described in the Scripture. For Tillich, however, the atheistic theological potentiality of Heidegger’s philosophy provides a fuller vision of the divine than offered by traditional religious understandings. Tillich finds in Heidegger’s discussion between philosophy and theology that philosophy, as Heidegger conceived it, is more authentically religious than traditional theology.

The Correlation of Theology and Philosophy

In The System of the Sciences (1923), Tillich notes that “The phenomenological school, in pursuing its logical realism, is to some extent moving toward a new ontology.” In his important essay, “Existential Philosophy: Its Historical Meaning (1944),” Tillich traces the history of existential philosophy from the nineteenth-century German theology to Heidegger, describing him as introducing “a new ontology.” This remark seems to be intended to justify his employment of the fundamental existential categories Heidegger had outlined in Being and Time. In the concluding paragraph of “The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion” (1946), Tillich sets forth his future project of correlating theology with the Heideggerian fundamental ontology and what he hopes it will accomplish: “The ontological approach to philosophy of religion as envisaged by Augustine and his followers, as reappearing in many forms in the history of

\[54^{54}\text{ SS, 182.}\]

\[55^{55}\text{ EP, 109-10.}\]
thought, if critically reinterpreted by us, is able to do for our time what it did in the past, both for
religion and culture: to overcome as far as it is possible by mere thought the fateful gap between
religion and culture, thus reconciling concerns which are not strange to each other but have been
estranged from each other.”

Tillich agrees with Heidegger that the nature of the methodology to be used to investigate
the ontological ground of human existence must be existential. Heidegger’s fundamental
ontology reveals that ontological reality precedes ontic reality logically, though not
chronologically. This priority enables a sense of transcendence and enables Tillich to explain it
without resort to any classical form of supernaturalism. Tillich believes that this immanently
transcendental Being itself as the ontological Ground of human existence is the domain of true
God, above the God of traditional theism. As did Heidegger, Tillich locates traditional theology
within a particular confessional tradition, in this case the Christian tradition, and rejects the
conservative view of the Scripture because it posits “a concept of supernaturally authoritative
revelation…this concept has been overcome by the wave of religious-historical insights and the
logical and religious criticism of the conception of supernaturalism.” This entails a complete
negation of conservative models of theology. “Theology is not the science of one particular

56 TT, 29.
57 OITC, 37.
58 For example, Tillich is critical of Barth for confining the source of theology to the Scripture. Tillich thinks that Barth’s emphasis on the supernatural – at the expense of the natural – promotes literalistic readings of the Scripture that do not adequately consider human influences. He says that the “total result…[is] that theology can be nothing but the exercise of a critical self-consciousness upon the content of the Christian pronouncement, in which the word of Scripture is the ultimate standard of
object among others, which we call God; the *Critique of Reason* put an end to this kind of science.” For Tillich, true, or authentic, theology begins only when one becomes aware of the divine depth in the finite world and symbolizes this depth. He argues that “theology is not a scientific presentation of a special complex of revelation.” In Tillich’s view, traditional theism’s attempt to speak of unsymbolically, that is, literally, of the Unconditioned is to commit blasphemy for it is an attempt to reach the unconditionality of the Unconditioned. “The unconditioned transcendent surpasses every possible conception of a being, including even the conception of a Supreme Being.” For Tillich, therefore, the fundamental problem of theology is its understanding of God as an entity, though it treats God as the outer most anchor in the causal chain of creation. “The God of theological theism is a being beside others and as such a part of the whole of reality.” Tillich sharply critiques such conception of God as a being. “It criticism.” TRT 108. In fact, Barth is more careful to account for the inclusion of the human possibility in the God-human relationship. Barth acknowledges that there is movement, in the event of revelation, from “below to above.” And human beings are active subjects – even “partners with God” – in relationship to this event. Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, vol. IV/2 of *Church Dogmatics*, ed. T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley (London: T & T Clark, 1989), 8. Rather, Barth criticized the theological method of Tillich “with the sardonic observation that it would work in paradise or in heaven, but not here below.” Robert Barron, *The Priority of Christ: Toward a Postliberal Catholicism* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 143.

59 OITC, 37.
60 OITC, 37.
61 RP, 798.
62 RV, 102.
63 CTB, 184.
transforms the infinity of God into a finiteness which is merely an extension of the categories of finitude.” 64 “If God is a being, He is subject to the categories of finitude...Even if He is called the “highest being” in the sense of the “most perfect” and the “most powerful” being, this situation is not changed.” 65 “Such concepts make us picture God as a thing with super-human qualities.” 66

For Tillich, as in Heidegger, to worship a being as God is superstitious idolatry. It is to “reduce Him to that small thing we knew and grasped of Him; and we make it an idol.” 67 “In face of an objectively existing God, atheism is right.” 68

Rejecting traditional theism, Tillich also draws a sharp distinction between philosophy and (authentic) theology and ascribes a separate function to each. As discussed above, for Tillich, philosophy must be fundamentally ontological. He agrees with Heidegger that “the meaning of being is man’s basic concern. It is the really human and philosophical question…Man, as the German philosopher Heidegger says, is that being which asks what being is.” 69 Theology, as Tillich understands it, is also an ontological inquiry in the broad sense. Its concern, however, is not with “the structure of being in itself,” but rather with “the meaning of being for us.” 70

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64 ST2, 6.

65 ST1, 235.

66 SF, 45.

67 YAA, 151.

68 IH, 46.

69 PaT, 85.

70 ST1, 22. My emphasis. PaT, 87. Tillich’s emphasis.
In other words, theology is concerned with the meaning of Being itself for the answer to the question of the ultimate meaning of our existence. This echoes Heidegger’s concern with Dasein which is always my own. The genuine theological question is the question of the meaning of “my existence.”  

Tillich writes, “Asking for the meaning of Being, theology asks for the ultimate ground and power and norm and aim of Being, as far as it is my being and carries me as the abyss and ground of my existence, it asks for the threatening and promising power over my existence, for the demanding and judging norm of my existence, for the fulfilling and rejecting aim of my existence.” The question of being is therefore ultimately an existential question. It is the perennial question of humankind about itself, and theology must take issue with it. Though Tillich says that the analysis of the human situation precedes existentialism, this is where the influence of Heidegger’s existentialism on his theological development is verified in very important ways. Tillich asserts that “Theology is necessarily existential” in the sense that it

71 IH, 30. It is absurd to say that my existence can have a meaning even if existence in general is meaningless. But it is not possible to conclude that existence in general is meaningless without explaining the meaninglessness of existence in particular. Kurt Baier, “The Meaning of Life,” in The Meaning of Life, ed. E. D. Klemke (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 115, argues otherwise: “People are disconcerted by the thought that life as such has no meaning…only because they very naturally think it entails that no individual life can have meaning either. They naturally assume that this life or that can have meaning only if life as such has meaning. But it should by now be clear that your life and mine may or may not have meaning (in one sense) even if life as such has none (in the other). Of course, it follows from this that your life may have meaning while mine has not.” But as Baier himself indicates, it is absurd to say that your life may have meaning in the ultimate sense while mine has not.

72 PaT, 88. Tillich’s emphasis.

73 Tillich often speaks of the influence of Heidegger upon the development of his own thinking. E.g., OB, 48, 56; AR; SG.

74 ST1, 23.
deals our existence, while ontology is not necessarily existential. This implies that existentialist philosophical thinking is essential correlate to theology – In Tillich, essential correlation differs from synthesis. The questions from which theology takes its rise are “existential questions.”\textsuperscript{75} “In no theological statement can the relation to us be omitted.”\textsuperscript{76} Conversely, non-existential theology is not genuine theology. Philosophy and theology are correlated in such a way that theology is grounded in the existential and ontological philosophy. Tillich distinguishes between “existential” and “existentialist.” “The former refers to a human attitude, the latter to a philosophical school. The opposite of existential is detached; the opposite of existentialist is essentialist. In existential thinking, the object is involved. In non-existential thinking, the object is detached. By its very nature, theology is existential.”\textsuperscript{77} But existentialism as a philosophical movement generally defines human existence by the attitude of involvement in the object. In this sense, Tillich’s theological attitude is essentially philosophical. Thus he says that “As a theologian I tried to remain a philosopher, and conversely so.”\textsuperscript{78} Tillich’s idea of correlation reflects the value of philosophy for his theology. He believed that the existential and ontological aspect of philosophy is indispensable to theology, because itformulates the questions that

\textsuperscript{75} ST1, 62.
\textsuperscript{76} PaT, 87.
\textsuperscript{77} ST2, 26.
\textsuperscript{78} IH, 40-1.
theology answers, and also because it provides the form that the theological answers must take.\textsuperscript{79} Tillich holds philosophy in high regard. He writes that “No theologian should be taken seriously as a theologian, even if he is a great Christian and a great scholar, if his work shows that he does not take philosophy seriously.”\textsuperscript{80} There is no possibility of conflict or synthesis between existential theology and non-existential philosophies including traditional ontology, for there is no common basis between the two on which to correlate with each other.\textsuperscript{81} This distinction between existential theology and non-existential philosophies clears up “the confusion…which causes one to question whether at a given moment Tillich is speaking as a philosopher or as a philosophical theologian.” Tillich is an existentialist philosophical theologian. The synthesis between theology and philosophy that Tillich rejects as “the dream of a Christian philosophy”\textsuperscript{82} is only a synthesis between existential theology and non-existential philosophy. Tillich’s existential theology is philosophical theology, and it is essentially Heideggerian. In Heidegger, the existential is grounded in the ontological. Tillich’s correlation of theology and philosophy is to take this further and suggest that the ontological in which the existential is grounded is itself grounded in the theological. This does not indicate a point at which Tillich differs from

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  \item \textsuperscript{79} Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E Olson, \textit{20th-Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age} (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 117.
  \item \textsuperscript{80} BR, 7-8.
  \item \textsuperscript{81} ST1, 26.
  \item \textsuperscript{82} ST1, 27.
\end{itemize}
Heidegger. Tillich theologizes Heidegger’s description of existential understanding of being, not against Heidegger but in place of Heidegger.

Tillich observes that the distinction has been made between atheistic and theistic existentialism. “Certainly there are existentialists who could be called “atheistic,” at least according to their intention; and there are others who can be called “theistic.”” In his defense of Heidegger, Tillich resists this manner of classification. Authentic existentialism has Being itself as its foundation. Heidegger is very cautious about identifying Being itself with God, but Tillich carefully identifies Being itself with God in a non-symbolic way. Thus Heidegger’s methodological atheism can be interpreted rather as a religious quest for God. In a sense, theists are mistaken in assuming that they know how to approach God. God cannot be known even partially because God cannot be divided. Atheists, who do not have God – no one has God as a matter of fact – can raise an authentic question of God. The atheistic quest for God is genuine one. “Only in this way philosophy stands honestly before God,” says Heidegger. As Herman Philipse points out, Heidegger’s distinction between philosophy and theology does “not coincide with a distinction between areligious thought and religious thought.” On the contrary, philosophy, insofar as it is authentically existential, is more religious than non-existential theology of the tradition. Thus Tillich says that “There is no atheistic or theistic existentialism.”

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83 PIZA, 246


85 ST2, 25.
“I do not believe that the ordinary distinction between atheistic and theistic existentialism makes any sense.”  

As Heidegger says, philosophy “can no more be theistic than it can be atheistic. This….is not because of any indifferent attitude but out of respect for the limits which have been set upon thought as thought….,”  

Tillich goes so far as to say concerning authentic existential philosophy that “There is no such thing as Religious Existentialism because there is only Religious Existentialism.”  

It is evident that, in search of the answer to the question of the meaning of existence and in his focus on the individual, Tillich’s particular interest in philosophy is directed toward the Heideggerian existentialism. Tillich acknowledges that “Existentialism in philosophy is represented more by Heidegger…than anybody else.”  

In Tillich’s view, liberating aspects of Heidegger’s philosophy can be seen as quite suggestive of improving those previously inadequate theological formulations. In other words, “Heidegger’s philosophy can be used with profit for the elucidation of the Christian faith in the twentieth century.”  

Of particular importance in this regard are his description of human existence, especially the concept of death.

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86 EAMA, 98.

87 LH, 267/GA9, 182.


89 CTB, 150.

90 John Reynold Williams, Martin Heidegger's Philosophy of Religion (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1979), 7.
therein, and his description of being as a gift to the human being, which implies that there is something even beyond Being itself. Tillich must have felt that Heidegger’s description of human existence better serve the rendition of the Biblical message than does the language of traditional theology. From the philosophical point of view, Heidegger’s concepts of “holy,” “divinity,” and “God” do not have religious connotation. From the Tillichian point of view, however, they are relevant for theology. Of the Heideggerian philosophy, Tillich wrote, “By its explanation of human existence it establishes a doctrine of man…closely related with the Christian interpretation of human existence…By means of these ideas…the border between theology and philosophy has been drawn more acutely than in my earlier philosophy of religion, without abandoning the mutual relation of comprehension.”

Transcendental Subjectivity

Heidegger’s existential analytic presents “an archaeology of human being,” a set of more fundamental layers of the existential illustration of human being. These layers serve as

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91 TB, 60.


93 IH, 40.

definitions of human being. As Lawrence E. Cahoone explains, Heidegger’s existential analytic can be reduced to two essential phases. The central theme of the first step is to disclose the state of Dasein, characterizing it as Being-in-the-world. The second step is the temporal interpretation of authentic Dasein’s existence.⁹⁵ As discussed above, Heidegger objects to anthropology that forgets the question of being, anthropology that fails to reflect on the ontological foundations of anthropology. Fundamental ontology based on existential analytic of Dasein is not a positive science, however. Anthropology in the conventional sense is a positive science in that it posits human beings without understanding “humanness of human beings.”⁹⁶ Heidegger was concerned about an anthropological misreading of the first step of his existential analytic of Dasein.⁹⁷ Following the publication of Being and Time, Heidegger repudiates the charge of anthropology in it by pointing out the distinction between human beings and Dasein made in Being and Time. He writes, “If the human being is only a human being on the ground of the Dasein in him, then the question concerning what is more original than a human being cannot be an anthropological

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⁹⁶ OWA, 59/GA5, 78.

⁹⁷ Heidegger and Husserl attacked and counterattacked each other over the issue of their philosophies as philosophical anthropology only. Husserl wrote on the title page of his copy of Being and Time, “Isn’t this anthropology?” Husserl’s critical remarks about Heidegger’s anthropological approach to philosophy in his copy of Being and Time are reproduced by Alwin Diemer, Edmund Husserl (Meisenheim: Hain, 1965), 19-21n. But in Heidegger’s Being and Time the transcendental-philosophy still runs parallel with the anthropology. Heidegger shows that the Existenzialien (the essential structures, or the structural characteristics, of human existence, such as being-in-the-world, caring-for, conscience, being-toward-death) can be regarded not only through transcendental philosophy but also in an anthropological sense.
For Heidegger, “the existential analytic of Dasein comes before any psychology or anthropology, and certainly before any biology.” He objects to the understanding of human being through the traditional anthropology in the ancient world and in Christian theology. He also objects to the modern anthropology that, Heidegger claims, stems from the Cartesian conception of the cogito, but never to anthropology as such. Nonetheless, Heidegger’s fundamental ontology is a new, or true, kind of anthropology that raises the question of humanness as such. Heidegger suggests that “the starting point for fundamental ontology is a fully worked out account of human understanding.”

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98 KPM, 161/GA3, 229-30.
99 BT, 71/SZ, 45.
100 BT, 74-5/SZ, 49.
101 BT, 71-2/SZ, 46.
102 Most modern philosophers were generally attacked by Heidegger as being merely philosophical anthropologists. Heidegger points out that the anthropological character of meaning is characteristic of modernity: “Today, then, anthropology is no longer just the name for a discipline, nor has it been such for some time. Instead, the word describes a fundamental tendency of man’s contemporary position with respect to himself and to the totality of beings. According to this fundamental position, something is only known and understood if it is given an anthropological explanation. Anthropology seeks not only the truth about human beings, but instead it now demands a decision as to what truth in general can mean.” KPM, 147/GA3, 209-10.
Being itself takes a position halfway between anthropology and pure ontology. It is “an anthropology as ontology and an ontology as anthropology.”

Existential analytic of Dasein as a new anthropological approach to humanness is an argument toward the development of a notion of Dasein designating transcendental subjectivity against subjectivism. Dasein is not an ego-subject. The ego-subject is in relation of opposition with its object as an entity is in relation with another entity. In this Kant differed not at all from Descartes. For both, the ego-subject was a conscious thing. This is a purely ontic interpretation of the subject. The existential analytic of Dasein shows that Dasein is not a mere entity among many others. Dasein is an ontic entity, but it has a unique comprehension of being. Dasein is “ontological” in this sense, and it is its ontic excellence. Existential analytic of Dasein does not introduce a subjectivism into ontology. Subjectivity of Dasein transcends a subject-object distinction. It signifies the destruction of the subject-object distinction of traditional metaphysics. Heidegger says that philosophy must “start from the ‘subject’ and return to the ‘subject’ in its ultimate questions, and yet for all that it may not pose its questions in a onesidedly subjectivistic manner.” Philosophy must start from the subject. This is the very conception of fundamental ontology. But this subject is not an ego-subject. Heidegger does not

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105 BT, 247/SZ, 203.

106 BT, 32/SZ, 12.

107 BPP, 155/GA24, 220-1.
think that the ego-subject is a fiction, but that the true subjectivity is more fundamental phenomenon. Heidegger does identify Dasein with a concept of subjectivity but it is not in the sense which is synonymous with “a common, subjectivistic concept of ‘subject.’” Existential analytic of Dasein has nothing to do with subjectivism, if subjectivism be understood to designate an interpretation that restricts itself to the purely ontic dimension of Dasein as a subject. Dasein “is not a subject in relation to an object but it is this relation itself” which is between subject and object.” As William J. Richardson explains, “This “between” is not derived from, and therefore subsequent to, the juxtaposition of subject and object, but is prior to the emergence of this relation, rendering it possible.” Dasein transcends selfhood, and “the selfhood of Dasein is founded on its transcendence.” Dasein’s transcendence is “the primordial constitution of the subjectivity of a subject.” In Heidegger’s terms, Dasein is “prior to the separation of epistemological subject and object.” Heidegger thinks that “the subject-object distinction, in the way we traditionally understood it, is foreign to Greek thought.” This point is central to

108 MFL, 195.


110 BPP, 300/GA 24, 425-27.

111 MFL, 165/GA26, 210-1. Heidegger’s emphasis.


Heidegger’s analysis of modernity: “Beings can be experienced as objects only where human beings have become subjects, those who experience their fundamental relation to beings as the objectification – understood as mastery – of what is encountered. For the Greeks, human beings are never subjects, and therefore non-human beings can never have the character of objects (things that stand-over-against).”¹¹⁴ Heidegger does not deny the relative validity of the subject-object schema. Heidegger writes, “What is more obvious than that a ‘subject’ is related to an ‘object’ and *vice versa*?” However, Heidegger also adds, “While this presupposition is unimpeachable in its facticity, this makes it indeed a baleful one, if its ontological necessity and especially its ontological meaning are to be left in the dark.”¹¹⁵ As a solution, Heidegger’s existential analytic develops a phenomenological notion of subjectivity. According to Heidegger, “A ‘commercium’ of the subject with a world does not get *created* for the first time by knowing, nor does it *arise* from some way in which the world acts upon a subject. Knowing is a mode of Dasein founded upon Being-in-the-world. Thus Being-in-the-world, as a basic state, must be *Interpreted beforehand.*”¹¹⁶ Dasein as the transcendental subject and world are equiprimordial. This means that the analysis of Dasein does not begin with the subject-object distinction of epistemology, which is the problem of subjectivism, but with its ontological basis, that is, “the

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¹¹⁴ ECP, 189.

¹¹⁵ BT, 86/SZ, 59.

¹¹⁶ BT, 90/SZ, 62.
unity of the pretheoretical self-awareness of Dasein.”¹¹⁷ The “subject-object dualism” is a basic problem of modernity. Heidegger insisted that the scientific and philosophical deal of the detached observer was “an abstract derivation from the socially defined “anyone” self.”¹¹⁸ Modern nihilism and atheism are results of subjectivism, according to which the world including God seen as an object is subordinated by the human subject to a system which is based on the values which the human subject posits. In the subject-object process, the un-objectifiable divine reality is dismissed by the human subject, and the objectifiable divinity becomes subject to the human subject. The devaluing of the highest values that Nietzsche identifies as characteristic of nihilism is a consequence of subjectivism.¹¹⁹ The death of the concept of God is an assertion of modern subjectivism, and so also the completion and culmination of traditional metaphysics.

Tillich reaches the conclusion that objective thinking is not satisfactory for the question of the meaning of existence. This judgment is a point of departure for his entire ontological-existential enterprise. “Original or archetypal words have been robbed of their original power by our objective thinking, and the scientific conception of the world, and thus, have become subject to dissolution.”¹²⁰ Believing that objective thinking and the pursuit of an objectively existing


¹¹⁹ WN, 107.

¹²⁰ IH, 46.
God lead to an idolatry and to the complete loss of reality, Tillich develops “non-objectivating” existential theology which is neither objective nor subjective in its approach to the source of the meaning of existence.\textsuperscript{121} In order to avoid both poles of the antithesis, he is led to the “choice of psychological notions with a non-psychological connotation.”\textsuperscript{122} Tillich cites Heidegger’s work as the most radical example of this type of conceptuality. Existential theology starts from the human subject, therefore it necessarily involves psychological notions. But “at the same time they must not be merely subjective.” If theology maintains that immediate personal experience is the door to Being itself, “it is necessary for the concepts describing immediate experience to be at the same time descriptive of the structure of Being itself.”\textsuperscript{123} Thus those psychological notions are given non-psychological connotation. Tillich identifies the ontological foundation of human existence with the ultimate source of its meaning. Being itself is the ontological ground of existence as well as the ultimate source of the meaning of existence. Heidegger shows the ontological difference between Being itself and beings in particular including human existence. There is difference between the two, but not separation ontologically. Human existence as a finite conditioned phenomenon can be distinguished, differentiated, or estranged from its ontological foundation but it cannot be ontologically separated from it. This relationship of ontological union, or to use traditional terminology, consubstantiality, of “the ultimate source

\textsuperscript{121} EP, 94.

\textsuperscript{122} EP, 94.

\textsuperscript{123} EP, 94.
and meaning of existence” and “existence” is, Tillich claims, the basis of existential theology. Being itself is postulated as the ultimate source of the meaning of existence and as the ontological ground of existence. The ultimate source is postulated as ultimate in that it is unconditioned and so it can be the answer to the meaning of conditioned existence because the heart of the problem of existence, the reason for asking the question of its meaning, lies in its conditionedness. Being itself as the ultimate source cannot be ontologically separated from human existence and becomes objectified. For it would, then, become a being, losing its ultimacy. The ontological inseparability, or union, between Being itself and human existence implies that the ultimate source and meaning of human existence must be sought internally within human existence. In other words, Being itself as the ultimate source and meaning of existence internally transcends existence within existence. Existential theology opposes objectivism because Being itself cannot be objectified. On the other hand, existential theology is not a subjectivism either because its ultimate concern transcends the possibilities of human existentiality.

**Phenomenological Theology**

Heidegger declares that “Only phenomenology can offer rescue in philosophical need.”

The phenomenological project has to do with determining what the subject matter really is.

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124 PRL, 245.

Heidegger’s non-subjectivistic, non-objectifying approach to the being of Dasein sought an immediate access to understanding Being itself. Heidegger practices the phenomenological method particularly in re-examining the understanding and the question of Being.\textsuperscript{126} Phenomenology is a way of doing philosophy rather than a particular theory or program. This point is made clearly in \textit{Being and Time}: “Thus our treatise does not subscribe to a “standpoint” or represent any special “direction”; for phenomenology is nothing of either sort, nor can it become so as long as it understands itself. The expression “phenomenology” signifies primarily a \textit{methodological conception}. This expression does not characterize the \textit{what} of the objects of philosophical research as subject-matter, but rather the \textit{how} of that research.”\textsuperscript{127} Heidegger and Tillich are necessarily linked here because Tillich is dependent on Heidegger in his

\textsuperscript{126} It is in the name of a “more perfect phenomenology” that Heidegger criticizes Husserl. Hugh Rayment-Pickard, \textit{Impossible God: Derrida’s Theology, Transcending Boundaries in Philosophy and Theology} (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 74. Heidegger’s existential phenomenology radicalizes Husserl’s abstractive reduction, finding a deeper dimension than consciousness. According to Heidegger, consciousness is found to have a being which is not in any sense abstracted from its worldly environment. This being is Dasein, which is not “within-the-world” merely as a spectator, but as an entity which has its \textit{being “in the world.”} So the relationship of Dasein to the world contains the difference between Husserl and Heidegger. Husserl’s Dasein, or transcendental ego, stands opposite the world of things as subject to object whereas Heidegger’s Dasein is “within-the-world.” For Husserl the world is structurally separate from the ego. But for Heidegger, the world is an essential structure of Dasein. Heidegger is very emphatic that Dasein is not a subject: “Subject and object,” writes Heidegger, “do not coincide with Dasein and the world.” BT 87/SZ 60. Heidegger’s view of the world is often criticized as an internal phenomenon for this reason. But Heidegger says, in his discussion of the traditional problem of skepticism, that it is impossible even to frame the question of the existence of the external world: “The “problem of reality” in the sense of the question whether an external world is present-at-hand and whether such a world can be proved, turns out to be an impossible one…because the very entity which serves as its theme is one which, as it were, repudiates very such formulation of the question.” BT, 250/SZ, 206.

\textsuperscript{127} BT, 50/SZ, 27
phenomenological approach to Being itself as the divine ground of the ultimate meaning of existence.

For Tillich, Heidegger’s existential phenomenology is a whole new path as the attempt of understanding of the phenomenon of religion. In Systematic Theology, Tillich defends the importance of the Heideggerian phenomenology for theology, describing his own theology as phenomenological theology, and advances the Heideggerian exploration of Being itself as the possibility of absolute givenness.\(^{128}\) Tillich describes two inadequate methods of positivistic approach to the problem of religion in order to answer the question of the meaning of existence. “The first leads us to the authoritatively circumscribed, written church doctrines, in order to find in them norms that lend themselves to logical treatment. The second turns to the psychological, sociological, and historical processes in which religions is present and the subjects of religious devotion are intended.”\(^{129}\) Tillich thinks that the problem with conceiving of God in the positivistic way is that such attempts to secure our relation to God conceptually rather disconnects humanity from the real and immediate relation to God. Acknowledging Heidegger’s observation of the ontological difference and his non-dualistic but immanent ontology, Tillich writes that “The thinking of the Existential thinker is based on his immediate personal and inner experience. It is rooted in an interpretation of Being or Reality which does not identify Reality with ‘objective being.’ But it would be equally misleading to say that it identifies Reality with ‘subjective being,’ with ‘consciousness’ or feeling. Such a view would still leave the meaning of

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\(^{128}\) ST1, 43.

\(^{129}\) IH, 266.
‘subjective’ determined by its contrast with that of ‘objective’...It is trying to find a level on which the contrast between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ has not arisen.”

Tillich addresses “the ontological principle” of his existential theology that “Man is immediately aware of something unconditional which is the prius of the separation and interaction of subject and object, theoretically as well as practically.”

Rejecting both the old authoritative orthodoxy and the modern method of an approach through psychology and history of religions, he suggests a new way. For Tillich, the real basis of theology is neither the authority of the Church nor even the claim to some special access to what is beyond the world. Rather it is to be found in the immediacy of actual human existence. Immediate experience is not the content, or a datum, of a reflexive act of consciousness, for then it is no longer immediate experience. Immediate experience is “not so much a matter of content as an act of consciousness.” This is the method of “phenomenological intuition” that Tillich adopts from Heidegger and whereby he approaches Being itself as the ultimate holy reality in an immediate fashion. He writes, “It is the immediate approach through phenomenological intuition; it is the attempt to isolate and clarify in rational terms the content present in the religious act, through an immediate approach to it.” In this approach, he says, “we turn neither to the authorities nor to religious consciousness, but

130 Ep, 55-6.

131 TT, 22. Tillich’s emphasis.


133 BT, 187/SZ, 147; RV, 129.

134 IH, 267.
immediately to the whole of reality, and endeavor to uncover that level of reality which is intended by the religious act.”

Tillich’s method of phenomenological intuition insists that the real basis of theological thought is human existence itself. Theology is immediately directed toward Being itself, the unconditioned divine reality. In this way Tillich felt he could avoid the impasse into which he thought theology had been brought. He admits that Heidegger’s fundamental ontology of personal existence is right in maintaining that “immediate experience is the door to the creative source of Being,” and in emphasizing “human nature as the starting-point of the Existential ontology.” Heidegger’s analysis of human existence is Tillich’s understanding of the first task theology needs to undertake. As Tillich developed his correlation method of existential questions and theological answers, he appealed to Heidegger’s primordial discovery that human existence itself “is the door to the deeper level of reality, that in his own existence he has the only possible approach to existence itself.” Tillich refers for this statement to Heidegger’s concept of Dasein as the foundation of ontology. The door of human existence can be open only to the immediate experience of human existence. “The immediate experience of one’s own existing reveals something of the nature of existence generally.” The existential theology which Tillich develops can be described as a phenomenology of faith. There

135 RV, 129.
136 EP, 95.
137 ST1, 62.
138 ST1, 62n19.
139 ST1, 62.
is, for Tillich, no escape from this phenomenological method. On the subject of the relation of phenomenology to theology, Tillich ardently claims that “theology must apply the phenomenological approach to all its basic concepts.”

The ultimate object of Heidegger’s phenomenology is Being itself. “Phenomenology,” Heidegger writes, “is our way of access to the theme of ontology….Only as Phenomenology is ontology possible…‘Behind’ the phenomena of phenomenology there is essentially nothing else…Because phenomena, as understood phenomenologically, are never anything but what goes to make up Being…phenomenology is the science of the Being of entities – ontology.” Since being is the basic theme of philosophy for Heidegger and Tillich, therefore, “Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology.” Philosophy, ontology, phenomenology are inseparable, and one cannot properly do one without engaging in the other two. Heidegger’s phenomenology reveals Being itself which is hidden from the realm of finite, conditioned beings. That which “remains hidden in an egregious sense…is not just this entity or that but rather the Being of entities…” As such, phenomenology reveals Being itself which is, for Tillich, the

140 ST1, 106.
141 BT, 60/SZ, 35-6.
142 BT, 62/SZ, 38.
144 BT, 59/SZ, 35.
“hidden” divine reality. Heidegger’s “phenomenological conception of phenomenon” explains Tillich’s concept of Being itself as the Ground of being: “[Phenomenon] is something that proximally and for the most part does not show itself at all: it is something that lies hidden, in contrast to that which proximally and for the most part does show itself; but at the same time it is something that belongs to what thus shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground.”

**Technical Reason and Logicism**

Phenomenological description of the divine reality is important for Tillich in attempting to avoid the impasse between Christian idolatry and anti-Christian logicism. Tillich believed that Heidegger clears away the idols that obstruct our experience of true divinity. Heidegger’s critique of traditional theology explains Tillich’s radical departure from it. “It does not penetrate to the absolutely transcendent, to that which lies beyond even the most sacred from, whether it be called the church or state.” Hence the language of the traditional theology which fails to communicate the true meaning of the Gospel to the contemporary Christian faith did a disservice to theology. This is the practical reason why Tillich adopted the philosophical language of

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145 CTB, 187.
146 BT, 60/SZ, 35.
147 BT, 59/SZ, 35.
148 RS, 73.
Heidegger. Tillich felt the need to meet the thoughtful and sensitive readers coming from “outside the Christian circle.” “Therefore, I was obliged to seek a language which expresses in other terms the human experience to which the Biblical and ecclesiastical terminology point…I believe that this is generally the situation in which the Christian message has to be pronounced today.”

“A special characteristic of these three volumes,” wrote Tillich in Systematic Theology, “is the kind of language used in them and the way in which it is used.” “I have used a terminology which consciously deviates from the Biblical or ecclesiastical language. Without such deviation, I would not have deemed it worthwhile to develop a theological system for our period.” Heidegger’s existential phenomenology provided Tillich with a perfect tool for his theological task. On the other hand, Heidegger shows that ontological, existential, and phenomenological approach to the ultimate source and meaning of human existence does not confine reason to technical calculation and argumentative reasoning, which are the mere capacity for cognition, closely aligned to logic. Heidegger and Tillich challenges this so-called “technical reason” which contemporary logical positivism claims to be the exhaustive and only legitimate expression of human rationality. They emphasize that human reason is involved in

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149 SF, “Preface.”

150 ST3, 4.

151 ST2, viii.

152 ST1, 81-2.

many human activities beyond cognition. As Bernard Martin notes, while Tillich’s argument for
the classical concept of the broader range of human rationality which he terms “ontological” “is
comparable to the general protest against technical reason in almost all of the major existentialist
philosophers,” it is with (later) Heidegger, with his concept of transcendental logic as
ontological logic, that Tillich has the closet affinities.

The early twentieth century marked the end of modern philosophy, and its philosophical
situation includes the awareness of philosophy’s coming to an end as metaphysics and in
precisely the way that the formal theory of logic and mathematics proposes. Metaphysical
principles defining true reality cannot be proved. It is claimed therefore that they cannot have
any scientific character, for either they arise from an intuition or they come from so-called
immediate experience. In neither case do they admit scientific examination. Heidegger has,
from the beginning of his career, written and said much on logic. In his earliest writings
published between 1912 and 1916, Heidegger confronts the major current theories of logic. The
question of truth was a guiding element in the early Heidegger, predominantly “in questioning
the logical validity of the truth of a judgment.” It is certainly not correct to regard Heidegger

154 Bernard Martin, *The Existentialist Theology of Paul Tillich* (New Haven: College and
University Press, 1964), 188.

155 The logical positivists were the first noteworthy respondents to Heidegger’s allegedly anti-
logical stance, and they responded by accusing him of irrationalism.

156 This thesis has its most mature statement in Luwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-

157 Ben Vedder, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Religion: From God to gods* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne
University Press, 2007), 16.
as an irrationalist in that a survey of his writings from his doctoral and postdoctoral years at Freiburg to the publication of *Being and Time* reveals a continuous engagement with logical issues. But since his inaugural lecture at Freiburg in 1929 in which Heidegger delivered his most celebrated speech against “the reigning and never-challenged logic,” he has frequently been portrayed as an anti-logician. As he points out in the lecture, logic turns out to be inadequate in answering a more originary questioning. Strict adherence to logic and formal investigation will never be sufficient for answer to the question of being. It is not even sufficient


159 WIM, 85.

160 In the late twenties and early thirties, the philosophical scope and claim of symbolic logic grew considerably. Heidegger himself was chosen the victim of an attempt at making symbolic logic relevant to metaphysics. In 1931, Rudolf Carnap published “The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language,” in which he used a passage from Heidegger’s inaugural lecture *What is Metaphysics?* given at the University of Freiburg in 1929 to show the meaninglessness of speculative thought. “Let us now take a look at some examples of metaphysical pseudo-statements of a kind where the violation of logical syntax is especially obvious, though they accord with historical-grammatical syntax. We select a few sentences from that metaphysical school which at present exerts the strongest influence in Germany.” Rudolf Carnap, “The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language,” in *Logical Positivism*, trans. Arthur Pap, ed. A. J. Ayer (Glencoe, IL.: Free Press, 1959), 69. Heidegger seems to have anticipated Carnap’s critique. In the lecture, Heidegger explicitly admits that raising the question of nothingness violates the principle of noncontradiction. “The commonly cited ground rule of all thinking, the proposition that contradiction is to be avoided, universal “logic” itself, lays low this question.” WIM, 85. Heidegger’s inaugural lecture was given on 24 July 1929, and Carnap and Heidegger met during the international and interdisciplinary conference at Davos, Switzerland (from 17 March until 6 April 1929) and discussed philosophy. It can be assumed that Heidegger’s lecture is in part an implicit polemics against Carnap.
for asking the question correctly. Heidegger suggests that if logic “wants to be a form of scientific research, a philosophizing logic,” then what “should most concern it” is not further technical development, but the question of “the primary being of truth,” what it means to be true. Heidegger argues that we can make no progress at all in philosophical understanding without “a critical dismantling of traditional logic down to its hidden foundations” – “the metaphysical foundations of logic.” This is because logic can provide genuine insight into the way we represent the world in our thoughts only if we understand why it is that we human beings are constituted in such a way “as to be able to be thus governed by laws”; “How ‘is’ Dasein according to its essence so that such an obligation as that of being governed by logical laws can arise in and for Dasein?” For Heidegger, logic stands in need of a

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161 LQT, 9/GA21, 12.


163 MFL, 21/GA26, 27. Heidegger’s discussion of logic is connected to his critique of epistemology, which he undertakes in order to begin thinking about Being. Heidegger has a philosophy of logic that is a coherent part of his principal philosophical project, articulating the meaning of Being. But comparatively little has been written about Heidegger’s philosophy of logic. Although papers on Heidegger and logic have appeared in journals and anthologies, only three books have appeared in English that directly concern the subject: Thomas A. Fay, *Heidegger: The Critique of Logic* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977); David White, *Logic and Ontology in Heidegger* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985); Greg Shirley, *Heidegger and Logic: The Place of Lόgos in Being and Time* (London: Continuum, 2010). Fay and White do not discuss Heidegger’s account of logic in the *Being and Time*.

164 MFL, 19/GA26, 24.
philosophical foundation. Logic cannot ground itself, but requires something else for its foundation. Heidegger points out that “logistic” never gets beyond mathematics and to the core of the logical problem.  

“With this theory there arises for logic a new task of demarcation. In order to provide a solution to it, I think that the first thing that it is necessary to show is that Logistik does not at all pass beyond mathematics, and that it is unable to reach the truly logical problems. I see the weakness of Logistik in that it uses mathematical symbols and concepts (foremost the concept of a function), a use that conceals the meanings and meaning changes of judgments.”

Heidegger’s opposition to symbolic logic is based on the idea that “the use of formalization makes semantical studies impossible.” Heidegger maintains this view of symbolic logic even after Being and Time.

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165 BT, 202/SZ, 159. The German word that Heidegger almost exclusively uses for symbolic logic is “Logistik.” In Being and Time, “logistic” includes the new mathematical logic of Frege and Russell.

166 GA1, 42.


168 In his lecture course “Fundamental Questions of Metaphysics,” of 1935-36, he speaks of symbolic logic: “Every mathematical and symbolic logic places itself outside whatever realm of logic because for its very own purpose it must posit the λόγος, the proposition, as a mere connection of concepts which is basically inadequate.” WIT, 156/FD, 122. Also in the treatise “Recollection in Metaphysics” of 1941, Heidegger begins to assign symptomatic significance to the growing claim and prestige of symbolic logic. “The signal of the degrading of thinking is the upgrading of symbolic logic to the rank of true logic. Symbolic logic is the calculative organization of the unconditional ignorance regarding the essence of thinking provided that thinking, being thought essentially, is that creative knowledge of fundamental outlines which, in the care of the essence of truth, rises from being.” TEP 80/NII, 487.
Heidegger thinks that the dominance of logic has to be “broken” in order that we may raise anew the question of the meaning of truth. Heidegger does not claim that logic is to be eliminated from authentic philosophy, but merely that its requirements are insufficient to address the question of being. It does not follow from logic’s inadequacy for the task of fundamental ontology that the latter may be illogical. “Dasein’s understanding of being is pre-logical, but ontology, which is discourse about Dasein’s understanding of being, is still subject to the normative constraints of logic.” Heidegger is concerned with logic’s alleged role in the development of technicity, uncontrolled technology and its dehumanizing effects. Logic is the way the Cartesian subject objectifies nature and life in dealing with them in sciences – For Heidegger, science depends on technology and not conversely. Technology treats everything with objectivity. Such “Cartesian abstraction” cuts human being off from vital awareness of the

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169 WIM, 92/GA9, 14.

170 Cf. Albert Borgmann, “Heidegger and Symbolic Logic,” in *Heidegger and the Quest for truth*, ed. Manfred Fringes (Chicago: Quadrangle Brooks, 1968), 139-62, argues that by *Being and Time* Heidegger has formulated a dismissal of logic. According to Borgmann, Heidegger only recognizes any significance for logic insofar as it is a problem to be solved, and so he explicitly seeks the elimination of logic. “To be sure, Heidegger grants to symbolic logic philosophical significance, but as a problem, not as a theory.” (141)


real. In the technological worldview of the modern West, it is not so much philosophy, but rather science as technological that has become the realm of revealing of the truth.\(^{174}\) The measure of the scientific-technological truth proceeds from “the representing, cognizing subject, by this subject and for this subject… Only what presents itself to our cognition, only what we encounter such that it is posed and posited in its reasons, counts as something with secure standing, that means, as an object. Only what stands in this manner is something of which we can, with certainty, say “it is.”\(^{175}\) As Heidegger points out, “This all leads to Max Planck’s thesis about being: “The real is what is measurable.”\(^{176}\) What precisely concerns Heidegger is not technology as such, but its “essence,” which Heidegger calls “technicity.” “What is dangerous is not technology. There is no demonry of technology…The essence of technology…is the danger.”\(^{177}\) The essence of technology is something other than technological. Heidegger states paradoxically, “the essence of technology is by no means anything technological.”\(^{178}\) “Just as the essence of art is not concerned with making artworks, so neither is technology concerned with

\(^{173}\) AWP, 169ff.

\(^{174}\) QCT, 12.

\(^{175}\) PR, 27.

\(^{176}\) FS, 53.

\(^{177}\) QCT, 28.

\(^{178}\) QCT, 4.
making and manipulating things.”179 The essence of technology is the fundamental stance in which every being is revealed to us as raw material for controlling domination. As such, the essence of technology is a way of thinking as a revelation of being, which is called “technological understanding” of being. Heidegger thinks that the technological understanding of being “presents a supreme danger because it prevents us from having a proper understanding of our own being.”180 The technological way of thinking of being does not understand works of art. For it is essentially logical. It cannot understand the essence of art. It only reveals us the works of art as “standing-reserve” awaiting use.181 The technological understanding of being is “a limiting way of experiencing the world.”182 The “greatest danger,” according to Heidegger, is that “The approaching tide of technological revolution…could so captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday become so accepted and practiced as the only way of thinking.”183 It is an objectifying thinking that excludes non-objectifiable reality of Being itself. The technological thinking forgets Being itself, therefore the human being loses the ultimate source and meaning of its existence. The being of everything as a part of standing-reserve awaiting use is degraded into a value.184 In this way, as discussed above, Heidegger sees in

180 QCT,
181 T, 37-8.
182 QCT,
183 DT, 56.
184 WN, 102-4.
Nietzsche’s philosophy the completion and summation of the essence of technology.

“Nietzsche’s overman might be said to be technological man par excellence.” Logic is the conceptual tool of overman’s “technical reason.”

Tillich’s conception of “technical reason” is identical with what Heidegger means by “technological thinking.” Tillich describes technical reason as “the capacity for reasoning.”

“The power of technical reason is its ability to analyze reality.” As the capacity for reasoning, “technical reason has an important function, even in systematic theology.”

“We should not despise technical reason. We all live from it. Theologians especially should not despise it if they wish to remain theologians.” Tillich thinks that “Technical reason always has an important function, even in systematic theology.” For “the analytic form of thought used in argumentation must be kept pure,” and “[the] goal of dialectical harmony is the aim of the


186 PR, 77.

187 ST1, 72-3.

188 AHCT, 330.

189 ST1, 73.

190 ST1, 73.

191 AHCT, 330.
The implication of Tillich’s discussion of technical reason is that, as such, it is not sensitivity to the existential aspects of reality. Tillich writes of technical reason, “No existential problem is involved in its use.” Tillich also does not deny the logical validity of technical reason, but it lacks “the depth dimension of reason.” As does Heidegger, Tillich especially refers to logical positivism, which attempts to reduce philosophy to “logical calculus,” as an extreme example of the use of technical reason. He views logical positivism as humble and arrogant. “The positivistic, empirical attitude can be both a human acknowledgement of man’s finitude and an arrogant dismissal of the question of the truth which concerns us ultimately. This attitude makes understandable also the dominant role logical positivism has played in the last decades within the American philosophical scene. It can be interpreted as another expression of the humility of philosophers who want to avoid the idealistic claim that man is able to participate cognitively in the essential structure of reality. But logical positivism can also be interpreted as the desire to escape problems which are relevant to human

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193 ST1, 74.

194 ST3 113.

195 ST1 19.

196 Tillich has been accused of not taking sufficient account of these major philosophical currents. No logical positivist is identified in his discussion of logical positivism. Cf. ST1, 19-20, 40, 86. John Heywood Thomas, *Paul Tillich: An Appraisal* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 180, observes that “In his wide knowledge of the traditions of philosophy there is one serious lack – he knows little or nothing about the kind of philosophy that has been done in the English-speaking world during the last thirty years. The result of this is that what he says about philosophy is very often outmoded.”
existence.” In his view, logical positivism made technical reason inhuman principle. “In some forms of logical positivism the philosopher even refuses to “understand” anything that transcends technical reason, thus making his philosophy completely irrelevant for questions of existential concern. Technical reason, however refined in logical and methodological respects, dehumanizes man.”

Tillich fears that, in the contemporary situation, technical reason has come into such a position of predominance that it threatens to reduce all of the functions of reason to itself and to become the sole function to be valued. “The public mind is so impregnated with its methodological demands and its astonishing results…A consequence of this attitude is a rapid decay of spiritual (not only of the Spiritual) life, an estrangement from nature, and, most dangerous of all, a dealing with human beings as with things.”

According to Tillich, technical reason is the foundation of the “pathologies” of modern society which is structured in a way that symbolizes the outlook of technological culture, while technological culture represents a great leap in human development. In *The Spiritual Situation in Our Technical Society*, Tillich discusses negative features of technological civilization in terms of the problem of technical reason. He names several spiritual problems in technical society, but in sum, the question of the ultimate meaning of existence disappears from the center

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197 CIP, 171-2.  
198 ST1, 73.  
199 ST1, 99.  
of human consciousness. This situation produces emptiness. Technical society transforms everything, including persons, into objects. Non-objectifiable reality is excluded. As such, the technical culture conceals Being itself from us. Tillich points out that dehumanization is present in the modern culture: “We are being culturally and psychologically conditioned to fit into a system dominated by monopolistic industrial and financial power. And beyond this, machine technology itself fosters trends toward standardization, impersonality, and the stifling of creative freedom.”

Tillich thinks that technical reason is reason that uses logics to accomplish its goals. Its capacity for reasoning is essentially a capacity for logic. Tillich suggests that theology should not concede its logical character in the face of either a philosophical or a scientific critique. Tillich explains one of the principles determining the rational character of theology as “logical rationality.” Therefore, “Theological dialectics does not violate the principle of logical rationality.” The theologian must follow the principles of meaningful discourse formulated by logic, for “dialectics follows the movement of thought or movement of reality through Yes and No, but it describes it in logically correct terms.” Tillich is concerned, however, with the logical positivistic claim that technical logic exhausts the methods of verification to test the objective truth – There is no such thing as subjective truth. In this way, logical positivism puts

201 WS, 4-5.
202 MW3, 522.
203 ST1, 56.
204 ST1, 56.
aside ontological issues. Tillich begins his *Systematic Theology* with a critique of technical reason, asking “whether the elimination of almost all traditional philosophical problems by logical positivism is a successful escape from ontology.”²⁰⁵ This placement of the discussion of technical logic at the beginning of his system parallels Heidegger’s preoccupation with the logical problems at the beginning of his philosophical career. Logical positivists attempt, says Tillich, to “take the question of Being away from philosophy and to surrender it to emotion and to poetic expression. Logical positivism presupposes that its prohibitions against philosophy and its rejection of all but a few preceding philosophers are not based on arbitrary preferences…[But] The hidden assumption is that Being itself cannot be approached cognitively except in those of its manifestations which are open to scientific analysis and verification.”²⁰⁶ In his autobiographical essay, Tillich explains how he was resisted by a logical positivist: “I once said to a logical positivist that I would like him to attend my lectures and to raise his finger if something is said that lacks rationality. He answered that he could not accept this task because he would have to raise his finger during the whole lecture. He meant that the material being discussed was not subject to strict canons of logic. I do not believe that this is so…”²⁰⁷ Tillich admits that “statements which have neither intrinsic evidence nor a way of being verified have no cognitive value.” This is an “important truth.”²⁰⁸ But logical positivism must not “make the

²⁰⁵ ST1, 20.
²⁰⁶ ST1, 231.
²⁰⁷ RIC, 375.
²⁰⁸ ST1, 102.
 experimental method of verification the exclusive pattern of all verification."  

The claim of logical positivism is not permissible that “truth” must be restricted to analytic statements or to experimentally confirmed propositions.

Technical reason yields “controlling knowledge” which makes possible the “technical control of nature,” the “psychological control of the person,” and the “organizational control of society.” Controlling knowledge is instrumental. “Detachment” or “estrangement” is determining element in controlling knowledge. “It unites subject and object for the sake of the control of the object by the subject. It transforms the object into a completely conditioned and calculable ‘thing.’ It deprives it of any subjective quality.” Both Heidegger and Tillich see every aspect of contemporary life, not only machine technology and science but also art, religion, and culture, as exhibiting clear marks of the controlling essence of technology. Like Heidegger, Tillich points out that the technical society, which has been devised for human

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209 ST1, 102.

210 MW1, 385. “Controlling knowledge is represented by the mathematical sciences and all other scientific endeavors insofar as they follow their method. The term “controlling” points to the intimate connection between scientific discovery and technical application.”

211 STB, 138.

212 ST1, 99.

213 ST1, 97.

liberation, “fell under the bondage of objects it itself had created.” That is, “Cognitive dehumanization has produced actual dehumanization.” Controlling knowledge tends toward objectification, that is, toward the reduction of the object of knowledge to a thing. Tragically “Man has become what controlling knowledge considers him to be, a thing among things.”

The human being becomes objectified and paradoxically subject to the destructive forces of an uncontrolled technical culture. “Man, for whom all this was invented as a means, becomes means himself in the service of means.” Tillich agrees with Heidegger that this was the fount of modern meaninglessness, which he calls the problem of nihilism, and suggests that Heidegger’s existentialism is “the most desperate attempt to escape the power of controlling knowledge and of the objectified world which technical reason has produced.”

Heidegger maintains that logic is the science of validity. For him, however, “the strict formalism of mathematical symbolism is insufficient to explain how the elements of judgment cohere…to make judgment possible.” Heidegger advocates a return to and a renewal of

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215 CTB, 138.
216 ST1, 99.
217 ST1, 99.
218 CTB, 138.
219 ST1, 100.
medieval logic by way of the advances of modern Husserlian and “transcendental logic,” which raises fundamental questions of the theory of knowledge and science. As Stanley Galt Crowell says, “The problem of truth requires a logical theory of the object, and if that theory is to be a true theory, its principles must apply to itself.” Logic itself therefore requires its own categories. “There must be a logic of logic” if logic is to clarify how knowledge of objects – including its own – is possible. The transcendental logic that Heidegger pursues is an ontological logic. Heidegger portrays it as a “logic of origins.” The ontological logic precedes the formal logic of judgments and “its first function is to produce the fundamental concepts or categories

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221 Husserl treats logic as a theory of science whose task is to make clear the genuine meaning of science. He attempts to explain the real meaning of formal logic. The method consists in “taking traditional logical forms and carrying them back to the living intention of the logicians, from which they arose as forms of meaning.” Marvin Farber, *The Foundation of Phenomenology: Edmund Husserl and the Quest for a Rigorous Science of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), 496. Thus the logician is oriented with respect to the pre-given sciences. In Husserl’s view, therefore, logic is considered fundamentally as transcendental. It is a transcendental logic that can answer the requirement of a final theory of science, providing the deepest and most universal theory of principles and norms of all sciences.

222 Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *Heidegger’s Concept of Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5, notes that “Heidegger does not himself use the term ‘transcendental logic’ to designate what he means by ‘logic,’ but the issues subsumed by him under ‘logic’ specifying the distinctive “reality” and “value” of logic, determining the categories, and elaborating the relation of an objectively logical sphere to a judging subject – make it clear that his understanding of logic is closer to what his contemporaries were dubbing “transcendental logic” than to anything else on the horizon of academic philosophy at the time.”


224 GA1, 288.

225 PIA, 21.
that articulate the ground of all of reality." Heidegger suggests that ontology must be approached by ontological logic which is capable of making the ontological difference between Being itself and beings in particular. Ontological logic deals with categories valid of objects a priori. The ontological logic brings us into the nearness of being that remains as the conceptually ungraspable. It is the logic of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology and existential phenomenology. Technological thinking is an objectifying, therefore subjectivistic, thinking. It is Heidegger’s judgment that we require non-objectifying ontological thinking of ontological reason to account for the “true reality and real truth” of human existence. It does not mean, however, that objectifying thinking is unnecessary. Heidegger sees that “it would be foolish to attack technology blindly. It would be shortsighted to condemn it as the work of the devil. We depend on technical devices; they even challenge us to ever greater advances.” We only need to see that “the drive to control everything is precisely what we do not control.” Heidegger says that the forgetting of Being is our “destiny,” and consequently the homelessness is the

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227 LH, 252.

228 GA1, 406.

229 DT, 53; G, 24.


231 TB, 9.
destiny of the world. Technological thinking is a legacy of the metaphysical past that has forgotten Being. In a way, then, the technological understanding of reality is our destiny. However, it is not our fate. Heidegger suggests that there is a way we can keep our technological devices and yet remain true to ourselves as thinkers of the ultimate reality: “We can affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste our nature.” Heidegger seeks to bring about a transformation in our sense of reality by calling attention to our sense of the ontological difference. If we can make this distinction not just as a matter of reflection but in our practices, then, we have stepped out of the technological understanding of being while we are engaged in a technological thinking.

Tillich’s discussion of the technical reason of positivistic scientism inherits Heidegger’s critique of the role of logic in the development of technicity. For Tillich, it is in technical reason that one is concerned with formal logic because of the need for correctness and clarity of interpretation and explanation. However, as Leslie Gordon Tait points out, logical positivism in its analysis of semantics has “overlooked the relation of signs, symbols and logical operations

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232 DT, 54; G, 24-5.


234 Stephen Toulmin in his book, The Uses of Argument (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), establishes that this notion of correctness with an analytic argument as a norm is in fact the stance of most contemporary logicians in regard to the definition of logic (see especially Chapter 4).
to reality.” It overlooks the fact that “[E]very epistemological assertion is implicitly ontological.” “Any inquiry into these relations necessarily embraces the structure of being and, consequently, is ontological.” For this reason, Tillich shows a negative attitude toward technical reason separated from its ontological basis. “If the logical positivists cared to look at their hidden ontological assumptions as inquisitively as they look at the “public” ontologies of the classical philosophers, they would no longer be able to reject the question of Being itself.” Tillich recognizes the capacity of reason or thinking to be open to the disclosure of Being itself. That is, he finds that another type of reason, which Heidegger thinks of as ontological, is at work, behind technical reason, in our awareness of the relationship among meanings and values. To answer the question of the ultimate meaning of human existence, technical reason requires ontological reason, and ontological reason demands reason to surpass the purely cognitive interests of technical reason. Technical reason cannot deal with meanings and values. Therefore, we can say that logical positivism is right in rejecting a God proved by technical reason. But “the human being understood solely in the light of technical reason is dehumanized.”

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236 ST1, 71.


238 ST1, 231.

As the early Heidegger did, Tillich observes that the ontological concept of reason was the dominant one in the classical philosophical tradition, and finds that it is a more adequate expression of the full range of human rationality.240 He stresses that “in most periods of human history they have been understood in just this interrelated way, but since the middle of the nineteenth century there has been a threat that technical reason would separate itself and attempt to replace ontological reason claiming to be the only legitimate form of reason and thought.”241 There is clearly a great debt to Heidegger in Tillich’s attempt to raise the question concerning technical reason as he seeks to show how technical reason circumscribes the human situation. Tillich explains ontological reason as “deeper rationality that grasps those elements of reality that cannot be reached by technical, controlling reason.”242 In other words, ontological reason points to the ultimate source and meaning of human existence. “Ontological reason can be defined as the structure of the mind which enables it to grasp and to shape reality.”243 There is an aspect of ontological reason that points beyond itself to that which is manifest in reason. This is described by Tillich as the “depth of reason.”244 This depth of reason “indicates the potential

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ST1, 72.

240 ST1, 72.


243 ST1, 72.

244 ST1, 79.
power of reason as a medium for the self-disclosure of being.”

According to Tillich, the depth of reason is the nature of reason that points to truth itself. Tillich maintains that ontological and technical reasons are essentially interdependent and inseparable. Hence they require each another. Technical reason cannot be rejected, or replaced by ontological reason. It is “adequate and meaningful only as an expression of ontological reason and as its companion.”

For Tillich, truth is established by two concepts of reason, “technical” and “ontological.” This means that “There is no danger in this situation as long as technical reason is the companion of ontological reason and ‘reasoning’ is used to fulfill the demands of reason.”

Thus Tillich finds the same solution as Heidegger to the danger of technicity. Reflecting on the fate of “the person in a technical society,” Tillich argues that humanity can resist the dehumanizing force of managerial and technological control only by “a partial nonparticipation in the objectifying structures of technical society.”

The non-participation is not the ultimate solution, however. It points to an existential theological thinking. “The person as person can preserve himself only by a partial nonparticipation...But he can withdraw even partially only if he has a place to which to

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246 ST1, 73.

247 ST1, 73.

248 PITS, 135.
withdraw. And this place is the New Reality to which the Christian message points, which transcends Christianity as well as non-Christianity.”

Tillich argues that if we attempt to provide a formal justification for formal logic as such, we need a meta-logical doctrine concerning the nature of logical truth. Tillich’s metalogic is a metaphysics of logic, and it corresponds Heidegger’s transcendental logic. Tillich thinks that ontological reason can show the essential structure of Being itself, though not explaining what Being itself is. Tillich introduces “metalogic” as a way of showing “the basic ontological structure” of Being, which is “the self-world polarity.” “The self having a world to which it belongs – this highly dialectical structure – logically and experientially precedes all other structures.” Metalogical reasoning breaks through the “finitude of reason” to the transcendental meaning of all existence, by contemplating unconditional content in conditional forms that is “the principal assumption of metalogic, the paradoxical imminence of the transcendent.” Tillich writes, “This is only possible, however, if being is not only conceived as

249 PITS, 135.
250 SS, 224-5.
251 ST1, 164.
252 ST1, 171.
253 ST1, 164.
254 ST1, 82.
a logical category but is also perceived as an actual living import. The approach to being proceeds through the aesthetic, ethical, social, religious functions as well as through the logical. For each of these functions being is something different, and yet in all these functions it is the same being that underlies them, the unconditionally real which gives import to all forms. The question is now that of making these [metalogical] approaches to being accessible to logical thinking, to find forms that, without losing their logical correctness, will grasp and give expression to the being that imbues the logical forms and that is apprehended in all these functions. We call this method “metalogical” by way of analogy to the word “metaphysical.”

The metalogical method is devised in order to intuit Being itself in its relation to beings in particular. Metalogic is indispensable if one is to apprehend the true meaning of existence. “Metalogic does not violate the autonomy of scientific form, yet metalogical knowledge is an act that creates a living relation to reality.” Tillich’s system is developed on the basis of metalogic.

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256 SS, 10.

257 SS, 225.
CHAPTER SEVEN

ONTOLOGY OF ANXIETY

Tillich’s theology begins with the question of the meaning of life. Tillich’s friend and Harvard colleague, James Luther Adams writes of him, “Always for Tillich religious concern must be a concern about the meaning of life for us in our total existence.”¹ The question of the meaning of life is fundamentally the question of the meaning of personal existence. Heidegger and Tillich are ultimately concerned, implicitly and explicitly, with this existential question. The question of the meaning of existence is raised because existence is experienced as a problem by human being. In their view, the root of the problem of existence lies in the finite conditionality of existence. As a solution, existentially unconditioned Being itself is postulated as the ultimate source and meaning of existence. Ontology is required, but Being itself is approachable only through the phenomenon of Dasein. Heidegger’s fundamental ontology returns us to the fundamental beginning that is the existential analytic of Dasein. Its method is phenomenological, for the immediate experience of phenomenological intuition is the entrance to the dimension of Being itself. Thinking and understanding of Being itself become possible by means of transcendental metalogic of ontological reason. This chapter discusses the heart of Tillich’s theological anthropology, the concept of finitude, in relation to Heidegger’s project of existential analysis of the being of Dasein. In Tillich, the question of Being is produced by the shock of

non-being. The shock of non-being is inescapable to human existence due to human finitude.

Tillich’s existential theology intends to be a saving theology that speaks to this human situation. What Tillich found to be of particular interest is Heidegger’s interpretative understanding of the structure of human finitude. The principle markers of this structure includes death, conscience, guilt, death, anxiety, and resolve.

**Authentic Existence as the Lost Dreaming Innocence**

Life asking the ultimate question is authentic. But the ultimate existential question is not raised autonomously. According to Heidegger, one is driven to the authenticity of life by the “call of conscience.” To be authentic, one should listen to “the voice of being” wherein Being itself is disclosed. The approach to Being that Heidegger takes in *Being and Time* starts with a characterization of human beings in their inauthenticity, or everydayness. Heidegger’s notions of authenticity and inauthenticity are ontological notions. They do not translate straightforwardly into ordinary moral categories, respectively as good and evil. Richard M. McDonough notes that “There is no more need to translate these categories into moral terms than there is to translate

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2 MH, 130.

3 BT, 134/SZ, 101.

4 PWIM, 234/GA9, 102.

concepts of life in general into moral terms.”⁶ In Heidegger’s view, there is no pre-existing, a
priori human nature that determines what we are. Instead, we are what we make of ourselves in
the course of living out our active lives. This is what it means to say that the “‘essence’ of Dasein
lies in its existence.”⁷ Heidegger observes that Dasein, in this world, is always “being-with-one-
another,” which means that “one belongs to the Others.”⁸ But “The ‘who’ [of the Others] is not
this one, not that one, not oneself [man selbst], not some people, and not the sum of them all. The
‘who’ is the neuter, the ‘they’ [das Man].”⁹ Heidegger says that the “they” is “a primordial
phenomenon [which] belongs to Dasein’s positive constitution.”¹⁰ The “they” is not “definite
others,”¹¹ or a numeral pronoun. It is not a measurable entity. It is impersonal, anonymous
public “one” while “any other can represent them [the others].”¹² Dasein, as Being-with-one-
another, “stands in subjection to others.”¹³ This means that our participation in such a social
context, which the “they” already defined before Dasein comes to it, is a fundamental dimension

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⁷ BT, 67/SZ, 42.
⁸ BT, 164/SZ, 126.
⁹ BT, 164/SZ, 126.
¹⁰ BT, 167/SZ, 129.
¹¹ BT, 164/SZ, 126.
¹² BT, 164/SZ, 126.
¹³ BT, 164/SZ, 126.
of our existence as humans. For this reason, our everyday actions make sense only because they exemplify the taken-for-granted patterns and norms of the shared life-world of the others. This involvement in public forms of life “threatens to level all decisions to the lowest common denominator of what is acceptable and well adjusted.”\(^{14}\) Consequently, it restricts “the possible options of choice to what lies within the range of the familiar, the attainable, the respectable – that which is fitting and proper.” Dasein is lost in the “they.” Heidegger asserts that “Everyone is the other, and no one is himself.”\(^{15}\) “Dasein, as a they-self, gets ‘lived’ by the commonsense ambiguity of that publicness.”\(^{16}\) Heidegger calls this inauthenticity the “falling” of Dasein.\(^ {17}\) Falling explains the division between authenticity and inauthenticity in Heidegger. Inauthentic Dasein “has fallen away from itself as an authentic potentiality for being its Self, and has fallen into the world.”\(^ {18}\) Dasein’s authentic potentiality for being its self is nothing but its potentiality for revealing Being itself through itself. Inauthentic Dasein is fallen Dasein, and in its everyday real life, no Dasein can claim to be authentic. Falling is everydayness of Dasein.


\(^{15}\) BT, 165/SZ, 128

\(^{16}\) BT, 345/SZ, 299.

\(^{17}\) BT, 219/SZ, 175.

\(^{18}\) BT, 220/SZ, 175.
Tillich’s concept of essence corresponds to Heidegger’s notion of Dasein’s authentic existence, and Tillich’s existence to Dasein’s inauthentic existence.\(^{19}\) Tillich understands essence as the principle of the unity of Dasein and Being itself. Tillich calls the unity with Being itself Dasein’s “essential perfection.”\(^{20}\) Existence is understood as the principle of the separation and distance of Dasein’s essential reality from Being itself in actual creation and so contains the elements of estrangement, sin, and guilt. The language Tillich employs to address the meaning of the Fall is the categories of essence and existence. For Tillich, the Fall is an event that essence and existence are separated under the conditions of existence. As in Heidegger, the Fall is a fall into the world. Creation is the Fall, that is, coincidently, from essence into existence.\(^{21}\) Tillich defends himself against the charge of making the Fall an ontological necessity by pointing out that the Fall is neither a “structural necessity”\(^{22}\) nor a “logical coincidence.”\(^{23}\) The Fall is “the actualization of the ontological freedom.”\(^{24}\) By this Tillich means that human essence proceeds into its existential distortion through the activation of the will against its essential humanity. Just

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\(^{19}\) ST1, 165.

\(^{20}\) ST1, 75.

\(^{21}\) ST2, 44.

\(^{22}\) ST1, 256.

\(^{23}\) ST2, 44.

\(^{24}\) ST1, 256.
as in Heidegger, the fallenness of the they-self’s inauthentic everydayness is not of a particular individual, Tillich also suggests that “There is no individual fall.”

According to Tillich, creation and fall, though distinguished, coincide, and the only kind of existence we know and experience is inauthentic one, fallen from the perfect state of essence. It has been argued that it is here that Tillich’s parallelism with Heidegger falls apart. Tillich emphasizes the unavoidable consequence of the fallen state of human existence, which is the true meaning of his statement about the coincidence of creation and the Fall that explains the paradoxical identity between the authenticity and inauthenticity of Dasein. As John Macquarrie says, “so far as any Dasein factically exists, it is also guilty.” But Heidegger seems to think that Dasein’s transition from the inauthentic to the authentic is always possible because of the voice of conscience. Even in one’s fallen condition, one can still hear the call of the authentic self because, as long as Dasein lives, authenticity and inauthenticity are possible ways of being for it. Authenticity seems to remain an ontological possibility in fallenness. However, the point of emphasis in Heidegger’s discussion of everydayness as an inauthentic, basic, mode of Dasein lies, from the methodologically atheistic philosophical point of view, in Dasein’s inability to direct itself to authentic possibilities because human beings are too deeply caught up in the they and cannot move themselves out of their inauthentic mode of being on their own. As does Tillich,

25 ST2, 32.


27 BT, 326/SZ, 281. Heidegger’s emphasis.
Heidegger emphasizes that authentic existence is “a factual ideal of Dasein.” Dasein always finds itself not in its authentic self, but in its inauthentic self, which Heidegger calls the “they-self.” Heidegger’s Dasein remains “selfsame,” and there exists only inauthentic they-self. There is no such thing as an interior soliloquy of the authentic self. Heidegger writes, “Authentic Being-one’s-Self does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the “they”; it is rather an existentiell modification of the “they’” – of the “they” as an essential existentielle.” The they-self is not merely an existentielle, but an “essential” existentielle. Heidegger thinks therefore that for Dasein, its being is always different from itself, in short, never coinciding with itself. According to Tillich, human being “decides for self-actualization, thus producing the end of dreaming innocence.” The lost dreaming innocence is Tillich’s Heideggerian interpretation of original sin. For Tillich, the dreaming innocence is not only lost, but has never existed. It is real, not a fiction. But all we experience about the human condition is its fallen existence. Heidegger says that “So neither

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28 BT, 358/SZ, 310.

29 BT, 168/SZ, 130.


31 BT, 168/SZ, 130. Heidegger’s emphasis.

32 Heidegger defines an existentielle as that which makes up Dasein’s ontological construction. For instance, understanding is one existentielle of Dasein. Heidegger’s existentielle is neither a substitute for Kant’s categories, nor a substitute for the classic discussion of universals. Cf. BT, 182-4/SZ, 143-4.

33 ST2, 33.
must we take the fallenness of Dasein as a ‘fall’ from a purer and higher ‘primal status.’ Not only do we lack any experience of this ontically, but ontologically we lack any possibilities or clues for Interpreting it.”

**Authentic Guilt and Transmoral Consciousness**

In Heidegger, the they-self is not merely fallen and inauthentic, but is thus meant to be overcome in authentic ways. Dasein remains inauthentic for as long as it is, but is not necessary for Dasein to have lost itself in everydayness and to live away from itself in falling into ‘they’s inauthenticity.’ The possibility of an authentic existence remains open for Dasein. This implies that inauthentic Dasein is responsible for being authentic. Dasein’s responsibility for itself is a strictly ontological notion, and Dasein cannot shift this burden to someone else. For Heidegger, being held responsible implies that Dasein’s having “not” responded. But this “not” is not something we do not, but something we are not. Dasein cannot be released from this responsibility by doing something. This “not” is the very being of Dasein as being-responsible. This “not” of responsibility is “formal,” or structural, so that Dasein never is its own self, never meets its responsibilities. The sense of irresponsibility constitutes guilt. Dasein does not incur guilt from something it does or fails to do, but rather it is guilty from the very fact that it is

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34 BT, 220/SZ, 176.

35 BT, 328-9/SZ, 283.

36 BT, 327-8/SZ, 282-3.
“there” at all. Thus Heidegger says that “Being guilty is not the result of a guilty act, but conversely, the act is possible only because of an original ‘being guilty.’” Dasein never has a “good conscience.” No Dasein is in an authentic mode. Heidegger says that the issue for Dasein is to “be ‘guilty’ authentically – ‘guilty’ in the way in which it is.” Heidegger wants us to have a “nevertheless” attitude – feel guilty, nevertheless be authentic. Therefore, for Heidegger, authenticity does not mean innocence. It is to become guilty by assuming responsibility for its own self. “Dasein is essentially guilty.” But Dasein “willfully misinterprets guilt, treating it as pertaining not to one’s entire being but rather to a specific

37 BT, 329/SZ, 284.

38 BT, 326/SZ, 281.

39 BT, 333/SZ, 287.

40 As Calvin O. Schrag, Existence and Freedom: Towards an Ontology of Human Finitude (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1961), 170, points out, it is in Heidegger that the distinction between inauthentic and authentic guilt becomes explicit, although the roots of this distinction go back to Kierkegaard. In the Postscript Kierkegaard elaborates what he considers lower and less genuine conceptions of guilt. He suggests that authentic guilt-consciousness is not a momentary event of temporary action carried out by the individual but is a constant feature of his or her existence. That is, once the person has broken through to the insight that he or she is guilty, the human being cannot return to the previous mode of existence. Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments, vol. 12.1 of Kierkegaard’s Writings, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 533.

41 BT, 353/SZ, 305.
deed.” In inauthentic consciousness, guilt appears as the violation of some moral rule, the failure to satisfy “manipulable rules and public norms.”

Heidegger demonstrates that the call of conscience evokes a sense of guilt. “The call,” writes Heidegger, “is precisely something we ourselves have neither planned nor prepared for nor willingly brought about. ‘It [Being]’ calls, against our expectations and even against our will.” For Heidegger, “the conscience issues a silent call of the self to the self to step into authenticity, that is, to assume responsibility for its own self and thus inevitably to become schuldig [guilty].” Heidegger strips guilt of its ethical content in favor of a more fundamental existential sense. He says that “Original guilt cannot be defined by morality, since morality already presupposes it for itself.” Following Heidegger, Tillich understands Dasein as guilty in a sense distinct from the theological concept of sin. As Gary Dorrien illustrates, “Tillich was fascinated by Heidegger’s vivid theorizing of the “thrown” character” of being-there (Dasein)

42 Julian Young, Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 86.

43 BT, 334/SZ, 288.

44 BT, 320/SZ, 275.


46 The idea of a fundamental, or primordial, guilt is not original to Heidegger. He ascribes it to Goethe: “The agent is, as Goethe also said, always unscrupulous [gewissenlos, lit. ‘conscienceless’]. I can only be really unscrupulous, when I have chosen wanting-to-have-a-conscience.” HCT, 319/PGZ, 441. There lies the fundamental and irreducible impotence or powerlessness of Dasein. Dasein can never overcome the finitude of thrownness.

47 BT, 286/SZ, 242.
and the perils that attend the self’s coming-to-awareness of its arbitrarily given (“thrown”) existence.” To exist for Tillich means to experience a loss of essentiality. He describes this state of human existence as “being thrown out of paradise,” “thrown into existence.” Like Heidegger, Tillich thinks that human being has the potential to transcend the limits of existence, although its dreaming innocence is lost. This potential has the signification of being guilty. This means that “guilt becomes an existential concept if it is the expression of one’s own deviation from what one essentially is and therefore ought to be. Guilt in this sense is connected with the anxiety of losing one’s true being.” As in Heidegger, Tillich conceives of responsibility and guilt as the ontological condition of human existence. Sin is not only necessary. It is sin that drives human beings into existence. He writes, “In the difficult steps of transition from potentiality to actuality, an awakening takes place. Experience, responsibility, and guilt are acquired, and the state of dreaming innocence is lost.” Heidegger states that a good conscience is not possible, and the task for Dasein is to become guilty authentically. In response, Tillich develops the idea of “transmoral conscience.” In his essay “The Transmoral


49 ST3, 54.

50 ST2, 131.

51 ST1, 191.

52 EARA, 281.

53 ST2, 34.
Conscience” he identifies himself with Heidegger concerning the interpretation of conscience and describes Heidegger’s view as follows: “Conscience summons us to ourselves, calling us back from the talk of the market and the conventional behavior of the masses. It has no special demands; it speaks to us in the “mode of silence.” It tells us only to act and to become guilty by acting, for every action is unscrupulous.”

In outlining his idea of “transmoral conscience”, he paraphrases Heidegger approvingly in the same essay: “The call of conscience has the character of the demand that man in his finitude actualize his genuine potentialities, and this means an appeal to become guilty.”

Tillich is at one with Heidegger in denying the possibility of a good conscience. “Only self-deception can give a good moral conscience, since it is impossible not to act and since every action implies guilt.” He agrees with Heidegger that “Existence as such is guilty.”

In Heidegger, Dasein is not only essentially guilty, but also essentially uncanny. Dasein exists as “as Being thrown into the world.” Dasein is “thrown Dasein.” Dasein as being-in-the-world finds itself uncomfortable. Heidegger interprets this feeling of uneasiness as the

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54 TC, 80.
55 TC, 80.
56 TC, 80.
57 TC, 80.
58 BT, 303/SZ, 259.
59 BT, 321/SZ, 276.
feeling of “uncanniness” which means “not-being-at-home.” Uncanniness is Dasein’s basic state and it belongs to Dasein’s essence. Heidegger avoids the question whether Dasein is created or not. For him, Dasein finds itself already in the world, feeling uncanny. At least, then, Dasein begins to exist from the moment it is thrown out of its home. This means that Dasein finds itself already in the world, feeling simultaneously uncanny and guilty. Put differently, uncanniness essentially belongs to thrownness and guilt. As such, Tillich’s doctrine of the coincidence of creation and the Fall corresponds to Heidegger’s analysis of the coincidence of Dasein’s birth and its essential guilt. Heidegger understands technology as bound up at the deepest level with our current uncanniness. Technology serves as a means to remove from humanity the feeling of uncanniness. But in the meantime, it created the illusion of limitless possibility, which worked to prevent humanity from asking “why” we live. Consequently, the initial desire for the transcendence of earthly limits is forgotten. It is at the very moment when humanity seems to be at home everywhere in the world that Heidegger sees the greatest danger of uncanniness. Describing this meaningless situation of the modern world, Heidegger writes, “Everything is functioning. This is exactly what is so uncanny, that everything is functioning and that the functioning drives us more and more to even further functioning.” It is for this reason that

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60 BT, 233/SZ, 188.


62 SI, 53.
Heidegger says that “It is precisely [machine-powered technology] and it alone that is the disturbing thing, that moves us to ask the question concerning technology as such.”

Tillich also investigates the paradoxical implications of technology as both a means to overcome the uncanniness of nature and the foundation of a new uncanniness produced by its growing independence from its human origins. Tillich observes that “Every human being can discern within his soul a feeling in relation to the world that one might call a “feeling of uncanniness” [Unheimlichen]. It is not as though we were continually encountering uncanny things. The so-called uncanny things are merely the changing symbols of a basic sense of uncanniness that humankind feels in relation to existence itself. Our existence, this existence that we in fact are, is what is characteristically uncanny for us. Uncanny, i.e., not homelike, not familiar, foreign and threatening is our situation in the world as such.”

Tillich interprets the “technical city” as a symbol of humanity’s attempt to escape the feeling of uncanniness and of humanity’s search for fulfillment through technological control. “While the technical city symbolizes the age of the fulfillment of the technical utopia of the Renaissance, it has also become “the symbol for the uncertainty that hangs over our age…As the technical structures develop an independent existence, a new element of uncanniness emerges in the midst of what is most well known. And this uncanny shadow of technology will grow to the same extent that the whole earth becomes the ‘technical city’ and the technical house…”

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63 QCT, 13-4.

64 TCS, 180.

65 TCS, 182.
become lifeless, and it induces lifelessness in us...[This new uncanniness], a kind of dread of the lifeless world, which serves us but which cannot speak as life speaks to life."  

Anxiety of Existential Death

Uncanniness is the experience of not being at home. Facticity belongs to this experience. Heidegger’s concern with “home” is best illuminated in his preoccupation with Friedrich Hölderlin’s poetry during the 1930s and early 1940s. Heidegger’s concern with Hölderlin is Dasein’s “return home.” In his essays on Hölderlin’s poetry, Heidegger uses a host of words to characterize Being itself, including “the Source,” “the Origin,” and “the Holy,” and comments that Dasein is at home in Being itself. Being itself is “the foundation of being-at-home.” A home is an Origin, Source, or Ground. Dasein attempts to “flee in the face of the not-at-home.” Dasein flees nowhere actually. Such attempt only makes Dasein feel better and inauthentic. The call of conscience “calls [Dasein] back” from it fleeing to the they, and toward “its ownmost potentiality-for-Being,” which is death. This means that Heidegger sees Dasein as uncanny

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66 TCS, 182-3.


68 GA4, 35, 38, 51, 64, 73, 74.

69 HH, 118.

70 BT, 322/SZ, 276.
because it is marked by death. Death is our “ownmost possibility”\(^{71}\) for the reason that we can represent other Daseins in performing many functions in life whereas “[n]o one can take the other’s dying away from him.” “By its very essence, death is in every case mine.”\(^{72}\) According to Heidegger, we are not ourselves, or inauthentic, as long as we live and behave according to rules or roles which are connected with substitutability. This possibility of substitutability breaks down at death.\(^{73}\) Anticipating death awakens Dasein to the authentic existence, and living in the experience of death makes our life authentic.\(^{74}\) In Heidegger, death has a positive function in that it is the link to authenticity by influencing Dasein’s interpretation of existence.\(^{75}\) For confronting death as our ownmost possibility allows us to acknowledge that our existence is the problem for us. Death discloses our existence as something for which we are responsible. Confronting death makes it clear to Dasein that “death is possible at any moment, and the essential contingency of

\(^{71}\) BT, 307/SZ, 263.

\(^{72}\) BT, 284/SZ, 240.


\(^{74}\) Heidegger’s idea of death as one’s own most possibility should not be interpreted to mean that the possibility of substitutability breaks down at one point only, namely, death. Herman Philipse points out that “death is not more mine in the sense of unsubstitutability than breathing, eating, or playing tennis,” for, for instance, “nobody can eat in my place.” Herman Philipse, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 360. But the point of Heidegger’s argument for the connection between death and substitutability is that the unsubstitutability only in the case of death overwhelms us in the experience of anxiety, in which the authentically anxious Dasein experiences death, only death, as its ownmost possibility.

\(^{75}\) Havi Carel, *Life and Death in Freud and Heidegger* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 139.
each individual life becomes apparent.”\textsuperscript{76} In the experience of anxiety in the face of death, we are forced to confront our own finitude. But inauthentic Dasein seeks to repress this finitude by “slinking away…from the uncanniness of its being.”\textsuperscript{77}

Authentic Dasein is an anxious Dasein that experiences its being-toward-death. Heidegger suggests that Dasein becomes inauthentic when it flees from its own being toward death. Conversely, Dasein becomes authentic by relating properly to its own death.\textsuperscript{78} But “The “They” does not permit us the courage for anxiety in the face of death.”\textsuperscript{79} Constantly concerned with measuring its acts against public criteria, an inauthentic life is entangled in its immediate concerns and drifts along with the taken-for-granted mundane activities of everydayness.\textsuperscript{80} Fleeing from death results in a loss of a sense of ending of Dasein, or Heidegger puts it, a sense of “the possible impossibility” of its existence.\textsuperscript{81} Dasein “admits that there is an empirical certainty that all humans die, but as long as it is not our turn, our own death does not really concern us most of the time. Heidegger stigmatizes this stoic and commonsensical attitude

\textsuperscript{76} Havi Carel, \textit{Life and Death in Freud and Heidegger} (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 84.

\textsuperscript{77} BT, 323/SZ, 278.

\textsuperscript{78} BT, 308/SZ, 263; BT, 310/SZ, 265; BT, 294/SZ, 250; BT, 305/SZ, 261.

\textsuperscript{79} BT, 298/SZ, 254. Heidegger’s emphasis.

\textsuperscript{80} BT, 222/SZ, 178.

\textsuperscript{81} BT, 310/SZ, 266.
toward death as inauthentic.”\textsuperscript{82} As Charles B. Guignon remarks, “Heidegger’s concept of authenticity is supposed to point to a way of life that is higher than that of average everydayness.”\textsuperscript{83} Authenticity lies in the affirmation of the inescapable truth of the human condition that what the future holds for any and every Dasein is death. A definition of authentic Dasein is therefore provided as “being-toward-death.” Our “being-toward-death” is constitutive of who we authentically are. This is the reason why Heidegger thinks that human “identity cannot be isolated from the temporal stream.”\textsuperscript{84} Existential death is different from “demise.”\textsuperscript{85} It does not indicate the event that ends Dasein’s physical life. Heidegger explains that death is not an event. It is not something that happens at the end of life. \textsuperscript{86} Death is not an event toward which one is moving. Heidegger makes a strict distinction between death and demise. “When Dasein dies – even when it dies authentically – it does not have do so with an experience of its factical demising, or in such an experience.”\textsuperscript{87} Heidegger claims that demise, the event that ends Dasein’s life, is not significant for the phenomenological investigation of death. “The event that


\textsuperscript{84} Peter Eli Gordon, \textit{Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 166.

\textsuperscript{85} BT, 291/SZ, 247.

\textsuperscript{86} BT, 284 294 301/SZ, 240, 250, 257

\textsuperscript{87} BT, 291/SZ, 247.
ends one’s life is phenomenologically opaque.”

The inability to experience our demise or that of others. Death, on the other hand, is, as Heidegger says, “a phenomenon of life” and is available for phenomenological investigation. Rather, death “is” only in being toward death. “Dasein is always already delivered onto its death.” That is, death is intelligible only as a certain sort of “being-toward.” Death is Dasein’s way to be – Dasein is constantly dying. Heidegger wants us to understand death as a possibility, that is, as a way of life.

Heidegger ontologizes anxiety of death. Anxiety of existential death is existential anxiety, which is different from “fear.” Heidegger’s analysis of anxiety expressly does not have “fear” of death as its subject. He makes a distinction between fear and anxiety in terms of their respective causes. Heidegger draws a contrast between the fear in “expecting” death (erwarfen) and the anxiety of “anticipating” it (vorlaufen), thereby distinguishing authentic being-toward-

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88 Havi Carel, Life and Death in Freud and Heidegger (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 77-8.
89 BT, 281-2, 291/SZ, 238-9, 247.
91 BT, 303/SZ, 259.
92 BT, 277, 289, 303/SZ, 234, 245, 259.
93 BT, 289, 294-5, 303/SZ, 245, 251, 259. Heidegger’s claim that death is a possibility can be contradicted by his claim that “death, as a possibility, gives Dasein nothing to be ‘actualized,’ nothing which Dasein…could itself be.” BT, 306/SZ, 262. To afford a way out of this contracted view that death is a possibility, or a way to be, in which Dasein is unable to be, William Blattner suggests that death in Being and Time means an anxiety attack. He interprets Heidegger’s concept “being towards death” as “being ready for an anxiety attack.” William Blattner, “The Concept of Death in Being and Time,” in Man and World 27, ed. Joseph Kockelmans and Calvin Schrag (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), 49.
94 BT, 230-1/SZ, 186.
death from mere expectation as a kind of projection of the understanding.\footnote{Freud was the pre-eminent explorer of the psychology of anxiety. It is also worth noting the parallel between Heidegger’s and Freud’s anxiety accounts, both of which distinguish between some form of fear (or phobia), as object-directed and anxiety, as too overwhelming to attach to a particular object. As Freud puts it, “in anxiety our fear is of being overwhelmed or annihilated,” so “what it is,” that is feared “cannot be specified.” Sigmund Freud, “The Ego and the Id,” in \textit{The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud}, vol. 19, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1974), 57.} This means, as he argues, that while anxiety and fear are “kindred phenomena,”\footnote{BT, 230/SZ, 185.} fear has a specific object and anxiety does not. He writes, “that in the face of which we fear is a detrimental entity within-the-world which comes from some definite region but is close by and is bringing itself close, and yet might stay away.”\footnote{BT, 230/SZ, 185.} On the other hand, “That in the face of which one has anxiety is not an entity within-the-world…That in the face of which one is anxious is completely indefinite…Accordingly, when something threatening brings itself close, anxiety does not ‘see’ any definite ‘here’ or ‘yonder’ from which it comes. That in the face of which one has anxiety is characterized by the fact that what threatens is nowhere.”\footnote{BT, 231/SZ, 186.} Heidegger goes on to say that the true “object of anxiety”\footnote{BT, 173/SZ, 134. Kierkegaard had already explicitly argued that anxiety, unlike fear, takes no object: “the object of anxiety is a nothing.” Søren Kierkegaard, \textit{The Concept of Anxiety}, trans. Reidar Thomte (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 77.} is the world as a whole.\footnote{BT, 231/SZ, 187.} Actually he means that the object of anxiety in anticipating death is our position and condition in this world. Shortly after that, he concludes that...
the object of anxiety, instead of being “the world,” is “being-in-the-world itself.” Therefore, Heidegger explains that “‘Nowhere’…does not signify nothing…that which threatens cannot bring itself close from a definite direction within what is close by; it is already ‘there,’ and yet nowhere; it is so close that it is oppressive and stifles one’s breath, and yet is nowhere.” Fear has its object, but anxiety is only caused without having a concrete object. Anxiety as a hidden potential is said to “underlie” fear, making it possible. But it is only fear that, according to Heidegger, we ordinarily experience. “‘Real’ anxiety is rare.” For Heidegger, existential anxiety is “not an indication of pathology.” It is not something that can, or should, be overcome. For it is a fundamental structure of the human condition. This means that the call of conscience calls Dasein back to itself which is inauthentic – In reality, there is only two modes of existence, living with an awareness of its inauthenticity and living without it. The call of conscience brings Dasein face to face with itself as thrown into a world in which it is not at home. Dasein is essentially uncanny and existentially anxious. The call of conscience, or the

102 BT, 231/SZ, 186.
103 BT, 234/SZ, 189.
104 BT, 234/SZ, 189.
105 BT, 234/SZ, 190.
breakthrough to authentic existence, Heidegger says, comes as a “shock.” Anxiety is the awareness of the shock of dying, or “existential death” as Dasein’s possibility of not really having any possibilities to be. Existential death is Dasein’s possible non-being. As such, anxiety of existential death renders manifest non-being, which in turn deepens Dasein’s understanding of Being itself. Heidegger explains: “Non-being is that which renders possible the manifestation of beings as such for the human Dasein.” Anxiety of existential death brings to light the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity, and it leads into the experience of the ontological difference. Anxious Dasein would not be forgetful of the ontological difference. From this anxious “mood” there arises the authentic existential question of the ultimate meaning of existence. It offers a point of departure in questioning the meaning of existence.

Tillich’s description of the human response to existential anxiety is significantly Heideggerian. For Tillich, Heidegger’s consideration of anxiety is enormously useful to redefine questions of human existence and theology. Bernard Martin notes, that “his entire cosmological view is colored by his acceptance of anxiety as man’s fundamental psychic experience” is

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107 BT, 316/SZ, 271.


109 WIM, 93/GA9, 15.

110 WIM, 95/GA9, 17.
clear.\textsuperscript{111} It is quite evident that Heidegger’s portrayal of the human condition supplies much of
the background for the three types of anxiety that Tillich delineates and describes in his \textit{Courage
To Be} – the anxiety of fate and death, the anxiety of guilt and condemnation, and the anxiety of
emptiness and meaninglessness. Tillich defines anxiety as “finitude in awareness.”\textsuperscript{112} Human
being becomes aware of its finitude through the experience of its possible non-being, and the
experience of possible non-being is made possible by anticipating one’s own death, that is,
through the experience of “having to die.” The problems of finitude, non-being, and death are the
key themes in most of Tillich’s works. “We philosophize because we are finite and because we
know that we are finite. We are a mixture of being and nonbeing, and we are aware of it. It is our
finitude…which drives us to search for ultimate reality.”\textsuperscript{113} It can be shown that what Tillich
suggests here is that we philosophize in the Heideggerian way. “Recent Existentialists, especially
Heidegger…have put nonbeing (\textit{Das Nichts, le néant}) in the center of their ontological
thought.”\textsuperscript{114} “Heidegger’s ‘annihilating nothingness’ describes man’s situation of being
threatened by nonbeing in an ultimately inescapable way, that is, by death. The anticipation of
nothingness at death gives human existence its existential character…problem of nonbeing is

\textsuperscript{111} Bernard Martin, \textit{The Existentialist Theology of Paul Tillich} (New Haven: College and
University Press, 1964), 111.

\textsuperscript{112} ST1, 191.

\textsuperscript{113} BL, 13-4.

\textsuperscript{114} CTB, 33.
inescapable. It is the problem of finitude.” Wilhem and Marion Pauck comment that it is probably because of “Paul Tillich’s lifelong dread of death” that finitude, non-being, and death lie at the heart of his thought. Theodor W. Adorno, who wrote his habilitation under Tillich, also recalls that Tillich’s intimate friends found it impossible to imagine that he might one day die. For Tillich, death represents the “absolutely unknown,” “the darkness in which there is no light at all,” “the real and ultimate object of fear from which all other fears derive their power,” “the anxiety of being eternally forgotten.” Death means for him parting, separation, isolation, and opposition. A month before his sixty-fifth birthday he remarked in a letter to his friend, “Inasmuch as I shall be sixty-five years old this year, and there are some signs that I am not in the forties any longer, the anticipation of death (Heidegger) becomes an increasingly prevalent occupation of mine.” To him, death was always a stranger to be unmasked. He says, “the anxiety of death overshadows all concrete anxieties and gives them their ultimate
As such, having to die is the ultimate reminder of our contingency. For Heidegger, ontology as the philosophy of life should recognize how life is connected with death, and include the phenomenon of death in its characterization of life. Likewise, Tillich’s question concerning the meaning of life is raised in response to the frightful presence of death. “The words for life first arose through the experience of death. In any case, the polarity of life and death has always colored the word “life.”” As in Heidegger, the anxious mood offers Tillich a point of departure in questioning the meaning of existence.

Tillich said in 1954, three years after the publication of the first volume of his *Systematic Theology*, that “Now I come to the basic question asked by Heidegger again and again, a question asked in many ways and asked differently by him in his different periods, but it is always the same question: Why is there something and not nothing?...The question...is not a logically answerable question so much as it is an outcry, the expression of shock. And this shock is the birthplace of all philosophical thinking; it is the philosophical shock of the individual who, for the first time, has encountered the possibility that there might be nothing.” Tillich further clarifies the point in stating that “the experience out of which philosophy is born…is the philosophical shock…What is the meaning of being? Why is there being and not-being? What is the structure in which every being participates? Questions like these…are essentially human, for

122 CTB, 43.

123 BT, 494/SZ, 249n6.

124 ST3, 11.

125 HJ, 17. Tillich’s emphasis.
man as the German philosopher Heidegger says, is that being which asks what being is. This question and the shock with which it takes hold of us is especially human. It is the foundation of humanism and the root of philosophy.\textsuperscript{126} Tillich’s \textit{Systematic Theology} begins a discussion on “Being and God” with the Heideggerian “shock.” Tillich understands the shock precisely as a “shock of possible non-being.”\textsuperscript{127} Being itself is disclosed through this experience of non-being. He writes that “The ontological question, the question of Being itself, arises in something like a “metaphysical shock” – the shock of possible non-being.”\textsuperscript{128} “Anxiety is the existential awareness of non-being.”\textsuperscript{129} The metaphysical shock is, precisely speaking, an “ontological shock”\textsuperscript{130} in which we become aware of the possibility that there might be nothing rather than something. At the center of Tillich’s thought, the presence of Being itself appears only through the shock of non-being. What is shocking is one’s awareness of one’s own possible non-being. The shock “points to a state of mind in which the mind is thrown out of its normal balance, shaken in its structure.”\textsuperscript{131} “One’s own possible non-being” means, of course, death. One’s

\textsuperscript{126} PaT, 85.
\textsuperscript{127} ST1, 163.
\textsuperscript{128} ST1, 163.
\textsuperscript{129} CTB, 35.
\textsuperscript{130} ST1, 113.
\textsuperscript{131} ST1, 113.
“encounter with nothingness” through its shocking awareness of its “moving towards death”¹³² is held by Tillich “to be the source of a basic anxiety which is universally, though not always consciously, present in human being and pervasive of its entire being.”¹³³ “If man is left to his “having to die,” the essential anxiety about non-being is transformed into the horror of death. Following Heidegger, Tillich understands death as “having to die.” “What is significant here is not the fear of death, that is, the moment of dying. It is anxiety about having to die which reveals the ontological character of time…This anxiety is potentially present in every moment. It permeates the whole of man’s being.”¹³⁴ Death is not an event taking place at the end of physical life. “Death is present in every life process from its beginning to its end.”¹³⁵ That is, as Heidegger has shown, death coincides with birth. “The conditions of life are also the conditions of death…The moment of our conception is the moment in which we begin not only to live but also to die.”¹³⁶ “Our having to die is a shaping force through our whole being of body and soul in every moment.”¹³⁷ Accordingly, anxiety of existential death is consciously and unconsciously

¹³² ST1, 190.


¹³⁴ ST1, 193.

¹³⁵ ST3, 53.

¹³⁶ ST3, 52-53.

¹³⁷ DD, 169-70.
effective in the whole process of living. Tillich says, “Like the beating of the heart, it is always present, although one is not always aware of it.”138 Only the dead are not anxious.

**Psychoanalytic Description of Anxiety**

Heidegger interprets anxiety as a “state-of-mind.”139 This psychological aspect is overlooked when philosophers think about human being. “They do not primarily preoccupy themselves with concrete experiences, but they rather allow themselves to build theories about human living in an abstract sense.”140 Heidegger’s existential analysis of anxiety has had extensive influence on contemporary psychology, as the works of R. D. Laing, Rollo May and Erich Fromm attest.141 Psychology inspired by Heidegger’s work opens up our view of the world, which is normally so closed and confined.142 It asks new ontological questions, rather than remaining based in the ontic problems that restrain a person’s being in the world. Unfortunately, however, few psychologists and psychotherapists have gone through the trouble of studying

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138 ST2, 67.

139 BT, 233.


142 Emmy van Deurzen, guest foreword to *Heidegger and the Question of Psychology: Zollikon and Beyond* by Mark Letteri (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), ix.
Heidegger in any detail, in spite of the recent flourishing of the existential therapies. The relation between Heidegger and psychology has long been a neglected theme until the publication of the so-called Zollikon Seminars in 1987, which records in detail Heidegger’s intensive engagement and interaction with a group of psychiatrists. Heidegger saw Freud’s metapsychological theory as a primary example of the misapplication of the scientific method specifically to human beings. Heidegger made it clear that he saw psychoanalysis as a major threat: “the view that psychology – which long ago turned into psychoanalysis – is taken in Switzerland and elsewhere as a substitute for philosophy (if not for religion)…” Heidegger considered Freud to be a representative of “modern science” which, he pointed out, was “based on the fact that the human being posits himself as an authoritative subject to whom everything which can be investigated becomes an object.” Heidegger stood in opposition to Freud.

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144 The Zollikon Seminars were a series of philosophical seminars delivered by Heidegger at the home of Swiss psychiatrist Medard Boss. Boss was an analysand of Freud and a student of Jung, and he developed “Daseinsanalytic” approach to the understanding of dreams after having met Heidegger. The topic of the seminars was Heidegger’s ontology and phenomenology as it pertained to the theory and practice of medicine, psychiatry and psychotherapy.


146 ZS, 310.

147 ZS, 94.
sharply criticizing him as an advocate of “the dictatorship of scientific thinking.” Medard Boss describes Heidegger’s feelings toward Freud: “…Heidegger never ceased shaking his head. He simply did not want to have to accept that such a highly intelligent and gifted man as Freud could produce such artificial, inhuman, indeed absurd and purely fictitious construction about Homo sapiens.” Heidegger points out that all of Freud’s metapsychological theory remains solely on the ontical level – the level of things. Heidegger maintains that Freud’s metapsychological inquiry is “oblivious to the genuinely ontological dimension of human existence.” Freud did not consider what must be presupposed for a human to “be.” As a result, “Freud’s metapsychological theory fails to advance an understanding of what it means to be psychoanalytical.”

It is well known that Tillich also actively worked with psychologists and psychoanalysts for many years. Tillich participated in organized discussion with the New York Psychology Group (NYPG), in which Tillich, along with Erich Fromm, was seen as a “natural leader” by the other members. Tillich’s “commitment to the issues of religion and health, pastoral

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148 ZS, 310.


151 Allison Stokes, Ministry After Freud (New York: Pilgrim: 1985), 120. Tillich and Fromm knew each other in Germany before the Nazi regime forced them to leave their native land.
psychology, theology and counseling can be discerned in his post NYPG publications.”152 Tillich believes that psychoanalysis can serve to “unmask hidden levels of reality” and assist one in accepting reality. 153 He claims that “Unmasking is painful and, in certain circumstances, destructive. But without this painful process the ultimate meaning of the Christian gospel cannot be perceived.”154 He suggests that the theologian should use psychoanalysis “for exposing the true condition of man as often as he can rather than propagating an idealism that smoothes over the ambiguities of existence.”155 In his later writings, Tillich “regards psychoanalysis an important auxiliary science in theology.”156 Tillich values psychoanalysis for having “rediscovered” the full depth and meaning of the theological concept of sin in the first place. He writes, “There can be no doubt that the growth of the two movements, existentialism and depth psychology, is of infinite value for theology. Both of them brought to theology something which it always should have known but which it had forgotten and covered up…the inner self-destructiveness of man in his estrangement from his essential being.”157 Tillich discerns that “There is a common root and intention in existentialism and psychoanalysis…The common root

152 Allison Stokes, Ministry After Freud (New York: Pilgrim: 1985), 118.

153 OB, 88.

154 OB, 88.

155 OB, 88.

156 Herman Westerink, Controversy and Challenge: The Reception of Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalysis in German and Dutch-Speaking Theology and Religious Studies (LIT Verlag, 2009), 85.

157 GW9, 313.
of existentialism and psychoanalysis is the protest against the increasing power of the philosophy of consciousness in modern industrial society.”\textsuperscript{158} Tillich particularly appreciates Freud’s discoveries of the depth of human estrangement and his elaboration on anxiety. “The existentialists allied themselves with Freud’s analysis of the unconscious in protest against a psychology of consciousness which had previously existed. Existentialism and psychotherapeutic psychology are natural allies and have always worked together. This rediscovery of the unconscious in man is of the highest importance for theology…It has placed the question of the human condition at the center of all theological thinking…In this light we can say that existentialism and Freud, together with his followers and friends, have become the providential allies of Christian theology in the twentieth century.”\textsuperscript{159} Evidently, “two important influences on Tillich’s account of anxiety, within which he takes up the concepts of guilt and courage, are the work of Heidegger and psychoanalytic theory.”\textsuperscript{160} But Tillich’s theological concept of anxiety is stronger affinity with Heidegger than with the account provided by psychoanalysis.

Tillich is in line with Heidegger in criticizing Freud for not thinking through the distinction between essential (authentic existence) and existential (inauthentic existence). Tillich says that “Freud…was unclear, namely, he was not able to distinguish man’s essential and

\textsuperscript{158} TSEP, 114.

\textsuperscript{159} IH, 540-1.

\textsuperscript{160} Courtney, S. Wilder, “Existentialism and Exegesis: Being and the Bible in Bultmann and Tillich” (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 2008), 134.
existential nature.” Freud did not see that his description of human nature is adequate for man only in his existential predication but not in his essential nature.” Freud was not able to point out the “basic anxiety” of human existence, that “he might not be!” Freud did not go beyond the realm of Dasein’s inauthentic existence. Tillich follows Heidegger in comprehending the basic anxiety not as pathological, but as existential. Freud misunderstood the distinction between pathological and existential anxiety. Pathological anxiety underlies Dasein’s inauthentic existence, but existential anxiety is the heart of authentic existence. Heidegger, Freud, and Tillich are equally clear that anxiety has “a quality of indefiniteness and lack of object,” “the negation of every object.” But Tillich believes that his own analysis concerning the difference between existential and pathological anxiety points toward the Heideggerian principle that existential anxiety is the structural anxiety and cannot be eliminated, while pathological anxiety is primarily an object of medical healing or psychotherapy. Tillich suggests that “Only in the light of an ontological understanding of human nature can the body of material provided by

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161 TSEP, 119.
162 ST2, 54.
163 CTB, 65.
164 ST1, 196.
166 CTB, 45.
psychology and sociology be organized into a consistent and comprehensive theory of anxiety.”

God in the Age of Anxiety

Heidegger says that that we live in “the epoch of Being,” a situation in which “Being withdrew itself as Being.” By “epoch,” Heidegger means “holding back.” The epoch of Being is not an era or age of Being, but a situation of the absence of Being. As discussed above, the epoch of Being is presently determined and characterized by modern technology – It is not correct to say that Heidegger views modern technology as the present epoch of Being. Heidegger thinks that Being itself has been hidden from the beginning of its history. Furthermore, Being conceals itself more and more. Nevertheless, Being has never been completely hidden throughout the history of Being because beings cannot become manifest without the “light of Being.” Hence, the history of Being is also a revelation of Being. Illuminating beings, Being

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167 CTB, 65.
168 T, 44.
169 SG, 97.
170 TB, 9/SD, 9. The word “epoch” has a specific technical sense in Heidegger’s thought. Heidegger explains that “To hold back is, in Greek, eōpche. Hence we speak of the epochs of the destiny of Being. Epoch does not mean here a span of time in occurrence, but rather the fundamental characteristic of sending, the actual holding-back of itself in favor of the discernability of the gift, that is of Being with regard to the grounding of beings.”
reveals itself in its very concealment. But “The unconcealment of beings, the brightness granted them [by Being], obscures the light of Being,” for “as it reveals itself in beings, Being withdraws.” Heidegger says that the epoch of Being is intended by Being itself. Being refuses itself to us. Being turns away from us. Being has abandoned us so that we live in abandonment by Being and are homeless. The history of Being began with forgetfulness of and by Being. Consequently, Being is hidden and our life is meaningless. Heidegger says that Being is an abyss, and is a mystery to us. According to Heidegger, however, an entirely new epoch of Being, a new situation of our understanding of and relation to Being, will come about in which the meaning of Being itself and the relationship between Being itself and human being undergoes a profound modification. For this Heidegger proposes the cultivation of

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171 GA5, 336, 244; LH, 255-6/GA9, 166.
172 GA5, 26.
173 GA5, 196, 244, 311.
174 VA, 126, 128; WCT, 7/GA8, 4-5.
175 LH, 258/GA9, 169.
176 GA5, 243.
177 GA5, 104, 143, 310; VA 89; NII, 26.
179 Sprache, 148; VA, 29.
“meditative thinking” that prepares us for the coming of another epoch of Being. Meditative thinking has the character of openness to what is given. It is philosophical thinking which, properly carried out, leads to one’s “openness to the mystery.” Heidegger states that “Philosophy will be able to bring out no direct change in the present condition of the world. This applies…to all merely human thought and endeavor. Only a God can save us. The sole possibility that remains is to prepare the attitude – through thought and poetry – for the appearance of the God.” This idea of Heidegger’s hidden God becomes the philosophical foundation of Tillich’s post-monotheistic theology of the God above God. Heidegger illustrates the coming of the new epoch of Being as Being’s “turning (Kehre),” which is the unconcealment of the concealment of Being. That is, the turning is a turning “toward nowhere except into Being itself.” This does not mean that concealment ceases. Turning is Being’s coming to presence as concealment and unconcealment. The turning will begin with our experience of the hiddenness of Being, with the experience of the ontological difference

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180 T, 41.
181 DT, 55.
182 SI, 279ff.
183 T, 41.
184 T, 44.
185 T, 41.
between Being and beings. And it “comes to pass suddenly.”\textsuperscript{186} Heidegger anticipates that Being appears suddenly in its own “light” or “clearing.”\textsuperscript{187} “In this turning, the clearing belonging to the essence of Being suddenly clears itself and lights up,”\textsuperscript{188} and Being is disclosed in thinking. Heidegger calls this event a “leap (Sprung) of thinking.”\textsuperscript{189} In this leap, thinking experiences that it does nothing but respond to a call of Being which at the same time becomes manifest as such only in this response.\textsuperscript{190} Tillich interprets the returning Being itself as the hidden divine reality. Tillich must have thought that “thinking” in the sense of the later Heidegger is an analogue of the search for God in faith. His assumption is confirmed by the positive ways in which Heidegger characterizes his concept of thinking. Thinking is essentially “asking,” “questioning,” and “wondering,” and Heidegger calls such questioning a “piety of thinking.”\textsuperscript{191} In thinking, something becomes manifest which “manifests itself while it hides itself at the same time,” this is, Being.\textsuperscript{192} Thinking is a way toward that which is worthy of our quest,\textsuperscript{193} and “Most

\textsuperscript{186} T, 44.

\textsuperscript{187} LH, 248/GA9, 157.

\textsuperscript{188} T, 44.

\textsuperscript{189} CTP, 167/GA65, 235-7.

\textsuperscript{190} CTP, 169/GA65, 238-40.

\textsuperscript{191} VA, 40.

\textsuperscript{192} VA, 128.

\textsuperscript{193} VA, 128.
Thinkworthy” is Being. Heidegger says that the quest for Being is the ultimate aim of our existence. The “leap of thinking” brings us into our “belonging to Being.” Being is not a product of thinking. Rather thinking is grasped by Being, which Heidegger calls an “event of Being.” When thinking is grasped by Being, thinking finds itself being there for the first time. Grasped by Being, humans are there, experience the ontological difference between Being and beings, face the fact of death, fall into the anxiety of finitude, feel uncanny and guilty, philosophize, and think. Those experiences are “an essential trait of Being itself.” Dasein is summoned by the call of conscience to the authentic acceptance of the truth of Dasein in facing its possible non-being (its finitude and being-toward-death). The call of conscience requires that we do not run away from recognizing our finitude, and accept it as an inescapable condition. Heidegger’s conception of “the authentic acceptance” is exemplified in his discussion of

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194 VA, 79ff.

195 CTP, 13/GA65, 17.


197 CTP, 286-7/GA65, 407; NII, 29, 356-7; GA10, 209; WIP, 21-3.

198 Heidegger introduces ontological difference in the opening pages of Basic Problems of Phenomenology in the following way: “We must be able to bring out clearly the difference between being and beings in order to make something like being the theme for enquiry. This distinction is not arbitrary; rather it is the one by which the theme of ontology and thus of philosophy itself is first of all attained. It is a distinction which is first and foremost constitutive for ontology. We call it the ontological difference – the differentiation between being and beings. Only by making the distinction – krinein in Greek – not between one being and another being but between being and beings do we first enter the field of philosophical research.” BPP, 17/GA24, 22-3.

199 HH, 78.
Sophocles’ *Antigone*. Antigone represents an authentic Dasein. Heidegger contends that, instead of turning away from the uncanny, Antigone accepts it and thereby becomes homely. In her appropriation of death and non-being, Antigone knows herself as belonging to Being.

Tillich interprets the epoch of Being as the age of anxiety. There is no notion of an “age of anxiety” in Heidegger. He did not hold that the existential-ontological situation portrayed in *Being and Time* is peculiar to modern humanity. When Tillich writes that “Today it has become almost a truism to call our time an “age of anxiety,” he does not mean that anxiety is a new historical phenomenon. Tillich only describes the recovery of the meaning of anxiety as one of the achievements of the twentieth century. Like Heidegger, Tillich thinks that anxiety is a universal characteristic of the human existence. He argues that anxiety is “an ontological quality…Anxiety is always present, although often latent.” By “the age of anxiety,” Tillich only means that the twentieth century witnesses the rise of existentialism among intellectuals,

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200 A major part of Heidegger’s 1942 lecture course on Hölderlin’s hymn *Der Ister* is devoted to *Antigone*. According to Heidegger, HH, 118, Sophocles’ drama focuses on the Greek concept of Being, where Being signifies “the foundation of being-at-home.” Heidegger’s earlier discussion of Antigone can be found in IM, 156-76/GA40, 112.


202 CTB, 35.

203 Cf. F. Forrester Church, preface to *The Essential Tillich: An Anthology of the Writings of Paul Tillich*, ed. by F. Forrester Church (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), xiii.

204 ST1, 191. “The recovery of the meaning of anxiety through the combined endeavors of existential philosophy, depth psychology, neurology, and the arts is one of the achievements of the twentieth century.”

205 ST1, 191.
and it characterizes the religious situation of the twentieth century. Tillich and Heidegger share the same point of departure, that the transformation in our understanding of Being itself takes place in a sudden switch. The possibility of such a sudden switch is not exclusive to the twentieth century. A person is suddenly faced with the possibility of non-being, that is of passing away into nothingness. It is “the ‘shock’ which grasps the mind when it encounters the threat of non-being.” In other words, “The threat of non-being, grasping the mind, produces the ‘ontological shock’ in which the negative side of the mystery of being – its abysmal element – is experienced.” This shows that the problem of human existence entails the problem of non-being. But, as Heidegger explains, this non-being is not non-being in general, but the non-being of Dasein. Non-being is always only understood authentically as the non-being of a given Dasein. For Tillich, being-toward-death as the essential nature of Dasein implies that the finitude of human existence is due to a mixture of its being and non-being. Such a mixture is the fundamental ontological structure of the created world. For this reason, Heidegger understands Being and non-being to be one. “Non-being…reveals itself as belonging to the Being of beings.” Tillich expresses this in his own words as follows: “Being is essentially related to

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206 ACHT, 410.
207 ST1, 110.
208 ST1, 113.
209 ST1, 189.
210 WIM, 94/GA9, 17.
211 WIM, 95/GA9, 17-8.
non-being…There can be no world unless there is a dialectical participation of non-being in Being.”

Tillich thinks that Heidegger took a right path to search for an answer to the problem of human finitude. Tillich writes, “[Heidegger] attempts to penetrate into the ultimate structure of Being. Man, for Heidegger, is the doorway to the mystery of Being, and he enters into this path with all the powers of his great philosophical mind. But man is not himself the theme or the subject at the center of this inquiry. At the center is Being and nothing but Being.”

Tillich believes that Being itself overcomes non-being. Logically speaking, it does not follow from this that Being itself is the answer to the ultimate question, the question of the ultimate meaning of existence. But Tillich explains that, when Being itself grasps us, Being itself can be experienced as the power that enables us to resist non-being in the form of existential anxiety. In Tillich, the state of being grasped by the power of Being itself is defined as “faith.” Therefore faith is not a “human attitude” or capability but a movement of Being itself toward the human, where the human can do nothing but stand still. Faith is existential experience in and through which one’s basic connection with Being itself is disclosed. Revelation is nothing but an event in

212 ST1, 202, 208.

213 HJ, 16.

214 ST1, 246.

215 MH, 172.

216 GW12, 223.
which a person is grasped by Being itself and, as a result, is “ultimately concerned” about Being itself. “Revelation is first of all the experience in which an ultimate concern grasps the human mind.” Revelation, for Tillich, refers to a quality of experience. Understood in this manner, revelation is not the negation of reason. Instead, revelation is “the state of mind in which reason is beyond itself.” “Revelation is reason” being grasped by the power that transcends it. The Scripture, in this analysis, is a medium of revelation. It is not itself revelation. To equate the two is to distort the meaning of revelation.

Heidegger states that Being is “transcendens.” He writes, “Being, as the basic theme of philosophy, is no genus of an entity; yet it pertains to every entity. Its “universal” is to be sought higher up. Being and the structure of being lie beyond every entity and every possible character that an entity may possess. Being is the transcendens pure and simple…Every disclosure of Being as the transcendens is transcendental knowledge. Phenomenological truth (the disclosure of Being) is veritas transcendentalis.” According to Heidegger, as long as humanity encounters everything within the framework of technology, the world is without salvation and all traces of the Holy are wiped out because technological frame of mind does

\[\text{\textsuperscript{217} DF, 1.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{218} DF, 90.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{219} ST1, 112.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{220} ACHT, 193.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{221} BT, 62/SZ, 38. Heidegger’s emphasis.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{222} GA5, 272.}\]
not admit of a notion of transcendence. Heidegger’s understanding of Being itself as transcendental reality indicates an important religious implication.

Tillich fully appropriates Heidegger’s understanding of Being itself. He states that “God is Being itself.” It has been said that Tillich’s statement that God is Being itself is rejected by Heidegger. Heidegger remarks that were he to write a theology the word “Being” would not appear in it. But Tillich does not go beyond Heidegger in his understanding of God. Tillich’s statement, “God is Being itself,” does not exhaust the divine reality. Tillich warns us that “To speak unsymbolically about Being itself is untrue.” The statement, “God is Being itself,” can only mean that God is the symbol of Being itself. Tillich says that “God is the fundamental symbol for what concerns us ultimately.” As illustrated above, according to Tillich, what concerns us ultimately is Being itself. Tillich is correct to say that “The statement that God is Being itself is non-symbolic statement” when it means that God is the symbol for

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223 G, 24-5.

224 ST1, 243; ST2, 250.


226 TCB, 175.

227 DF, 46.

228 ST1, 238.
Being itself. Hence, God is Being itself and this does not apply conversely.\textsuperscript{229} When Tillich says that the statement “God is Being itself” is a non-symbolic statement, and later that it is “both non-symbolic and symbolic,”\textsuperscript{230} Tillich overemphasizes Heidegger’s view of the revelatory power of language as the “house of being.” Tillich laments the situation in which some philosophy deprives us of the power of language in expressing theological matters. “Let me quote a word of Heidegger against it. For him language is the “house of being.” as he says, being habitat, so to speak, in the human language. When Being makes itself manifest it makes itself manifest through the word.”\textsuperscript{231} For Heidegger, however, language is not as powerful as Tillich envisages. Heidegger would think that even describing divine reality symbolically is misleading.

Heidegger and Tillich share a sense of holiness brought by Being itself, or of divine presence in Being itself. Tillich’s view of the proper relation that human being might establish with Being itself again echoes Heidegger’s reading of Antigone, according to which Antigone understands that that against which nothing can be done is the utter strangeness of human being in the world and accepts the necessity of the tragic drama of being human.\textsuperscript{232} For Tillich, Being itself “justifies man through grace and accepts him.”\textsuperscript{233} It does not mean that Being itself “stand

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{230} ST2, 10.
\item\textsuperscript{231} MSU, 103.
\item\textsuperscript{232} HH, 144ff.
\item\textsuperscript{233} ST1, 287.
\end{itemize}
Rather, it is his interpretation of Heidegger’s doctrine that Dasein’s way of being is “existence,” to stand toward Being itself, and “the Dasein in man…is the essence that belongs to Being itself.” For Heidegger, Being itself is Dasein’s inner Being, its ontological Ground. We essentially belong to Being itself even in the midst of existential despair and anxiety. Tillich follows Heidegger in his understanding of the ontological relation between Being itself and human beings, and claims that human beings belong to Being itself. He pictures human’s belonging to Being itself as such being always already accepted by Being itself. Under the conditions of existence, we experience uncanniness as “estrangement from the Ground of our being.” “We cannot escape, however,” for “we are bound to it [Being itself] for all eternity, just as we are bound to ourselves.” Tillich assures us that “Man is never cut off from the Ground of being, not even in the state of condemnation.” Here lies a resolution for our existential anxiety, the answer the question of the ultimate meaning of existence. By accepting our acceptance, we can affirm our own being in spite of those tragic elements of our

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234 ST1, 288.
235 BPP, 28/GA24, 36-7.
236 N4, 218.
237 ST1, 191.
238 YAA, 159.
239 YAA, 159.
240 ST2, 78.
existence. According to Tillich, “accepting our acceptance” means the “state in which a being is aware of its possible non-being” by means of the “in spite of” of self-affirmation. Accepting acceptance is to response to the call of Being itself. As Heidegger says, “Readiness for anxiety is a Yes to the urgent call to fulfill the highest claim, a claim that is made upon the human essence alone. Of all beings, only the human being, called upon by the voice of Being, experiences the wonder of all wonders.” Tillich’s admonition, “Simply accept the fact that you are accepted,” is his summary of the Gospel message of God’s grace in the Heideggerian language. “If that [accepting our acceptance] happens to us, we experience grace.” Heidegger uses the terms authentic and inauthentic to describe human beings in the relationship of their responsibility to the call of Being. The authentic existence requires that we do not run away from recognizing our finitude but accept it as an inescapable condition. As discussed above, Tillich translates authentic being into “the essential state” of human existence, “what he essentially is,” or “essential man,” which is equivalent to Jesus as the Christ in Tillich. “New Being” which Jesus as the Christ represents is Tillich’s restatement of Heidegger’s authentic existence.

241 CTB, 35, 172.
242 PWIM, 234/GA9, 103.
243 YAA, 162.
244 YAA, 162.
245 ST1, 56.
246 ST2, 51.
247 ST2, 94.
For Tillich, the Christ is the Bearer of the New Being. This means that as the New Being, Jesus Christ needs not be “God” in the traditional sense of the term. The heart of Tillich’s Christology is Heideggerian. Schleiermacher also contributed to Tillich’s formulation of the concept of the New Being. In both Tillich and Schleiermacher, Christ is the bearer of a new reality. Schleiermacher’s view of Jesus as the original image of what human being essentially is, is logically equivalent to Tillich’s formulation. But, as John Charles Cooper points, Schleiermacher’s elucidation of Christian doctrine is devoid of ontology. Tillich took “essence” as seriously as “existence.” It must be noted that Tillich has maintained that Schleiermacher is not a direct influence on his Christology. Tillich says that he differs from Schleiermacher in that for him Christ exemplifies the New Being under the conditions of existence, and yet Schleiermacher’s Jesus as the original image represents the idealistic transcendence of true humanity over existence.

Heidegger connects “courage” with the capacity to withstand the existential anxiety at the heart of Dasein. Along with finitude, courage, or “resoluteness,” is a key term in the first half of *Being and Time*. Nowhere are Tillich’s Heideggerian debts more evident than in his work *The Courage To Be*. Heidegger is directly referenced only a few times in it, but his intellectual

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250 ST2, 150

251 RDI, 143.
influence pervades the entire text. Throughout the text, Tillich translates Heidegger’s description of existence in *Being and Time*. There is a striking similarity between the two works. Heidegger writes, “The lucid courage for essential anxiety assures us the enigmatic possibility of experiencing Being… What would all courage be if it did not find its permanent counterpart in the experience of essential anxiety? To the degree that we degrade such essential anxiety, together with the relationship of Being to humans that is cleared within it, we denigrate the essence of courage… In the abyss of horror, courage recognizes the scarcely broached realm of Being from whose clearing every being first returns to what it is and can be.”

For Heidegger, authentic existence is the way of “death-accepting courage.” Therefore, courage is the ultimate locus of authenticity. Dasein comes to itself, to an awareness of its inauthenticity and homelessness, when it faces its mortality with courage. In other words, authentic existence is an “anticipatory resoluteness” in the face of this finality. We should neither have “cowardly fear” of death nor wait for death passively, but have the courage to exist in the awareness of our

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252 PWIM, 234/GA9, 103.


254 BT, 344/SZ, 298.

255 BT, 353/SZ, 305.

256 BT, 310, 298/SZ, 266, 254.
finitude. Courage is not for our preparation for the final letting go in death. Authentic existence is not fatalistic about its finitude. Rather, “Courage is able to withstand the nothing.”

As Tillich searches for the answer to question of the ultimate meaning of existence, toward the end of *The Courage To Be*, he turns to Heidegger. Tillich suggests that the solution to the ultimate question can be found in Heidegger’s notion of courage. “Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit* describes the courage of despair in philosophically exact terms.” Tillich notes that no other thinker until Heidegger had grasped its true importance. “Meaninglessness in all its aspects can be faced only by those who resolutely take the anxiety of finitude and guilt upon themselves. There is no room, no criterion for what is right and wrong. Resoluteness makes right what shall be right. One of Heidegger’s historical functions was to carry through the existentialist analysis of the courage to be as oneself more fully than anyone else and, historically speaking, more destructively.” Tillich’s most direct answer to the problem of death is also “courage” in the Heideggerian sense. He concludes, “The anticipation of nothingness at death gives human existence its existential character…In existentialism there is no way of conquering this threat. The only way of dealing it lies in the courage of taking it upon one’s self: courage!”

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257 PWIM, 234/GA9, 103.

258 CTB, 148.

259 CTB, 149.

260 ST1, 189.
Tillich is ultimately concerned to answer the question of the ultimate meaning of human existence. My research has shown that Tillich and Heidegger share important religious convictions concerning this ultimate question. The old method of authority, which appeals to the sacred Scripture or church doctrines, breaks down under the weight of the ultimate existential question of ultimate reality because unavoidable conflicts arise between dogmatic materials and scientific treatment, with the result that authority is undermined by science. Seeing that concrete notions of God end up as being idolatrous, ¹ Tillich calls for transcending theism through an appeal to the God above God of theism. In Tillich’s view, Heidegger does not preclude but rather supports an authentic search for God and a genuine philosophical theism. ² Tillich is convinced by what he has discovered within Heidegger’s work, that theology and philosophy share the same object of concern. “There is both in the doctrine of revelation and in philosophy a point at

¹ As Iain D. Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 35, points out, the conclusion suggested by Heidegger’s critique of Kant on ontotheology is that “the real problem with the ontological proof is not that it might be invalid but, rather, that it reflects and reinforces a phenomenologically misguided and historically disastrous approach to thinking about humanity’s relation to “the divine.””

² Tillich was not alone in having discovered the religious potential of Heidegger’s work. Cf. Karl Löwith, *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, ed. Richard Wolin, trans. Gary Steiner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 133, saw Heidegger as primarily a religious thinker, offering a post-Christian alternative to theism: “The basis that serves as the background for everything said by Heidegger, and that permits many to take notice and listen attentively, is something unsaid: the religious motive, which has surely detached itself from Christian faith, but which precisely on account of its dogmatically unattached indeterminacy appeals all the more to those who are no longer faithful Christians but who nonetheless would like to be religious.”
which the two are one.” Tillich came to a different understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology as a result of his contact with Heidegger. He modifies his earlier dialectical method of “questioning” and “answering” so as to accommodate his new understanding. The method of correlation is one consequence of that new understanding affected by the Heideggerian thinking. In his 1927 lecture “Phenomenology and Theology,” Heidegger asserts that theology is a positive science with a thematized area of inquiry. It is his contention that theology as a positive science of God is “absolutely different from philosophy,” which has become synonymous with the definition of fundamental ontology in *Being and Time*. But Heidegger has certain reservations in describing theology as a science. He comments in the same lecture that “The most central question is whether, indeed, theology in general is a science.” Put differently, is theology a science at all, and does it have to be? This question is raised almost in passing in the lecture, but it does not appear innocent. But Heidegger says that “This question is deferred here.” Heidegger implies that a new approach to the divine has to be sought, even though he does not indicate such new way explicitly as “theology.” This becomes clearer through his later writings. Thus whereas in “Phenomenology and Theology” Heidegger seems to seek to delimit theology to an ontic science, Heidegger suggests in his later essays a kind of

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3 GW1, 299.

4 PT, 41.

5 The lecture “Phenomenology and Theology” was given March 9. *Being and Time* was published in April 8.

6 PT, 42.
theology which might move beyond the question of the God of the Hebrew and Christian faith in light of his view of the ontological difference, in which Tillich’s use of Heidegger to shift our understanding of God as a being to Being itself is rooted. It should be noted that “Phenomenology and Theology” was first published as late as 1969. This suggests that Heidegger’s understanding of this matter has not changed since the period in which he composed Being and Time. Tillich must have recognized that one of the threads which united Heidegger’s thought is theological, though in a new sense.

Tillich agrees with Heidegger’s position that the question of Being is the most fundamental question of philosophy. Herman Philipse points out that “We still do not know why, according to Heidegger, the question of being is the most fundamental question man can raise.”

The same question can be posed of Tillich’s statement that we cannot be ultimately concerned about what is not the ultimate. According to Tillich, we can be ultimately concerned only about what is ultimate. The clearest expression of this point is as follows: “The ultimate concern is concern about what is experienced as ultimate.” Tillich does not explain why humans are ultimately concerned only about the ultimate reality. Heidegger’s ultimate question and Tillich’s ultimate concern are psychologically grounded. As Tillich says, the more we acknowledge our existence as finite and estranged, the stronger our ultimate concern about being and meaning, our


9 DF, 9.
longing for participation in the divine life. Their question and concern grow out of such existential mood of anxiety that they share. Having experienced the anxiety of finitude, particularly of being-toward-death, they look at the ontological conditions of human existence. What makes the existential finiteness problematic is the threat of non-being. It is this threat of non-being that connects Being to the thought of Heidegger and Tillich. It also points out why there is more emphasis, in their philosophical and theological projects, on the being of the self than on the being of the external world. The threat of non-being lets Being itself be the source and force of proper thinking for Heidegger and Tillich. In Tillich’s view, Heidegger brilliantly describes how this existential mood reveals the way in which we are attuned to Being itself. Heidegger’s fundamental question and Tillich’s ultimate concern are directed toward the same object, Being itself, for this psychological reason.

Driven by the objectives of answering the ultimate question of the meaning of existence, Heidegger pursues a different path than that of the traditional theology and of the traditional metaphysics. Tillich saw in Heidegger the basis for a new theological formulation of Being itself for the Christian faith. Heidegger needs to bear some responsibility for the entertainment of such a move. Plainly enough, Heidegger’s notion of Being put Tillich on the path to a viable ont- theology. In his *Letter on Humanism*, as Calvin O. Schrag points out, he does invite the reader to consider a rather direct connection between the truth of Being and the question about the

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10 ST1, 177; ST3, 405.

11 Tillich writes, “In every conscious being, life is aware of its exhaustibility; it dimly feels that it must come to an end, and the symptoms of its exhaustion not only make it conscious of this fact but also awaken a longing for it [life].” ST3, 57.
meaning of God. Heidegger writes, “Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy is the essence of divinity to be thought. Only in the light of the essence of divinity can it be thought or said what the word “God” is to signify.” Given such a close alignment of the question of Being and the question about the signifying power of the word “God,” we can justifiably expect a positive response from Heidegger to Tillich’s assessment of his lecture as a “good sermon.” Heidegger notes with respect to the text referred to above that “what is being discussed there is the God of the poet, not the revealed God.” This resonates with Heidegger’s occasional remarks that were he to write a theology the word “Being” would not appear. This implies that the God of the poet, for Heidegger, is even beyond “Being-Itself.” Therefore, it may seem that Heidegger and Tillich differ from each other in their discussion of God. It should be noted, however, that, for Tillich, Being itself is only the most concrete dimension of “the Unconditioned transcendent.” The concreteness of Being itself expresses the point at which the transcendental divine and the finite actualities of human condition meet. The “boundary line” is the conditionality of Being itself. It is in this sense, that Being is finite for Heidegger. Heidegger’s Being is not the same as Hegel’s Absolute. Being is


13 LH, 267/GA9, 182.

not supratemporal but historical and finite. Heidegger thinks that Being “needs” Dasein\(^\text{15}\) as the “there” of its manifestation, as its “shepherd.”\(^\text{16}\) Its manifestations are in time. Being is not transcendental in this sense. Being is just out there, not over there. “Being is always and everywhere,” says Heidegger.\(^\text{17}\) The question, “Why is there something, rather than nothing?” is not about Being itself, but about its “truth” which transcends Being itself. Heidegger remarks, therefore, that “Primordial transcendence and the understanding of Being are one and the same.”\(^\text{18}\) This basic structure of the Heidegger’s ontological cosmology that the existential is grounded in the ontological developed into Tillich’s system in which the ontological is in turn fundamentally grounded in the theological.

The Heidegger’s existential analytic effects a transition in Tillich from life-philosophical interests to those of a more existential focus. Tillich’s method of correlation is an existential method. As J. Heywood Thomas points out, “the method of correlation is a matter of being an ‘existential’ theology.”\(^\text{19}\) Both poles of the correlation are existential. Theology must be necessarily existential in order to answer the “existential question.”\(^\text{20}\) Traditional theology is unable to answer the existential question because it is not itself existential. The other pole is,

\(^{15}\) GA5, 343; TK, 38; CTP, 177/GA65, 251.  
\(^{16}\) VS, 108-9.  
\(^{17}\) OCM, 61.  
\(^{18}\) MFL, 141/GA26, 177-8.  
\(^{20}\) ST1, 60.
precisely speaking, “existential theological” answers, not simply theological answers. Tillich creatively appropriates Heidegger’s project of fundamental ontology, which grounds the existential in the ontological, as his “correlating method” that correlates the two existential poles of the correlation. As a result, the nature of existential theology’s answers to the existential question are ontological, and they entail Being itself. This fundamental ontological answer is not a final answer to the question of the ultimate meaning of existence. This ultimate question asks the “meaning,” or “truth,” of Being itself. Being itself is the lowest dimension of the truth of Being, which Heidegger calls the “vicinity,” or “nearness,” of God’s being. He refers to Hölderlin’s poetry, whose terminology he considers is holy. Hölderlin speaks of a “flight of gods” who have kept themselves far away from human beings as long as humans were neither inclined to live near to them nor capable of doing so. Our task is “to prepare for a stay in their vicinity.” The goal of this preparation is “the surrounding area of the locality in which the God of the gods appears.” The vicinity of the God is the farthest point fundamental ontological thinking of Being can reach, and it is the nearest point of the Unconditioned transcendent which is the ultimate reality.

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21 GA17, 311-4; GA65, 11-2.


23 GA65, 11-2.

24 GA4, 195.
Tillich declares that religious knowledge is knowledge of ultimate reality that answers the ultimate question.\textsuperscript{25} Theology is “not primarily the unfolding of a tradition; it is rather a turning towards reality.”\textsuperscript{26} Theology must find a new approach to ultimate reality. Tillich thinks that Heidegger’s philosophy exhibits better attitude than do traditional theologians. Tillich’s attempt to discover anew the powerful experiences of reality that lay behind the traditional religious symbols – now so largely powerless – is in many ways similar in purpose to Heidegger’s attempt to discern the original experiences from which the leading conceptions of philosophy have been created. Ultimate reality is “the transcendental foundation”\textsuperscript{27} of the ontological difference. Heidegger’s consideration of primordial transcendence is an essential element of his meditations on the question of Being. It is in fundamental ontology’s directedness towards transcendence that Heidegger believes fundamental ontology will find its fulfillment. The foundation of ontology is the “truth” of Being.\textsuperscript{28} The truth of Being as ultimate reality is the “transcendence” of Being.\textsuperscript{29} Heidegger’s ultimate question is not of Being itself in terms of the ontological difference, but of the truth of Being. As Heidegger came to see it, the truth of Being is not Being itself but points to

\textsuperscript{25} RV, 58.

\textsuperscript{26} RV, 58.


\textsuperscript{28} IWIM, 289/GA9, 209.

\textsuperscript{29} IWIM, 289/GA9, 209.
the mystery of the process of Being’s self-giving being to beings.\textsuperscript{30} The truth of Being discloses the “Ground” of being, which is Tillich’s ultimate concern. The Ground of being is, for Tillich, “the truth which is of ultimate concern, the truth of being as being, the truth which is present in the final revelation.”\textsuperscript{31} As in Heidegger, the “fundamental ontology” is not sufficient for the purpose of satisfying Tillich’s ultimate concern about the transcendence of Being.\textsuperscript{32} The question of the transcendental truth of Being shows clearly the limits of fundamental ontology. Fundamental ontology only “recalls” the truth of Being. As Heidegger says, the attempt to grasp the truth of Being “has already left the realm of all ontology with its very first step.”\textsuperscript{33} The ultimate reality as the ultimate source and meaning of human existence lies beyond the scope of fundamental ontology. The beyondness of the truth of Being explains why Heidegger speaks of the need to think “over and beyond” the fundamental ontology, to think of the truth of Being in a way that is “no longer” ontological.\textsuperscript{34} He proposes an alternative way of approaching the mystery of Being. The new way transcending fundamental ontology of Being for dealing with the mystery of Being is a meditative attitude of openness toward the possible reception of the divine

\textsuperscript{30} LH, 254-5/GA9, 165.
\textsuperscript{31} ST1, 149.
\textsuperscript{32} IWIM, 288/GA9, 209.
\textsuperscript{33} IWIM, 289/GA9, 219.
\textsuperscript{34} VS, 104.
reality, if any.\footnote{Some commentators maintain that Heidegger abandoned the project of fundamental ontology as set forth in \textit{Being and Time}. See, for example, Herman Philipse, \textit{Heidegger’s Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 170; Hubert L. Dreyfus, \textit{Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I} (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 133. It does not seem to be true, however. It is only such that the new way of approaching the mystery of Being became more important for him. Late in life, however, Heidegger would confirm that all along, the fundamental ontology of Being was aimed at thinking of the truth of Being. In an open letter written six weeks before his death in 1976, which is one of his very last statements, Heidegger clearly and emphatically identifies the question of Being as the fundamental question of his lifetime of thinking, then he distinguishes between the problem of the ontological difference as the core concern for ontological questioning and the problem of the truth of Being as his own proper concern which the fundamental ontology has not been capable of addressing. LHC 1-4. Ontology remains necessary for Heidegger. In reply to a question as to whether he had changed his position, Heidegger answered: “The former position was only pause on the way.” \textit{Sprache}, 98.} Heidegger entitles his own endeavor to go beyond the fundamental ontology simply “thinking.” For Heidegger, the meditative thinking is not a faculty of the mind that formulates or articulates a concept about the truth of Being. He explicitly rejects the suggestion that thinking produces the truth of Being. Rather he argues that thinking is where the mysterious truth of Being takes place.\footnote{PWIM, 105/GA9, 236.} Heidegger thinks that the beyondness of Being is not something that “thinking” can grasp autonomously. It is in this sense that Heidegger describes the truth of Being as an event of Being. Heidegger’s meditative thinking implies that he wants to keep the question of God undecided. In the final analysis, Heidegger’s way of thinking retains a sense of wonder about the mystery called God. But the mystery of Being is ineffable. Heidegger says that the existence of God cannot, without blasphemy, be proved, any more than we can prove causality.\footnote{N1, 366/N2, 106.} Being has been forgotten, but Being itself cannot be thought of as if it is an object of thought. The beyondness of Being, the mysterious truth of Being is far beyond thinking. This does not
mean that Heidegger rejects the possibility of an encounter with the true God. For Heidegger, this can take place on the level of faith. As John Macquarrie points out, Heidegger’s understanding of theology is committed to “the new theology…to confine itself to a hermeneutic of faith.” Therefore, he wants to avoid every prematurity with regard to the question of the possible revelation of the divine reality. The thinking for the truth of Being require waiting, “even a life long.” Heidegger characterizes his thinking in an interview in 1948 as a “waiting for God.” He advises that we should humbly wait for God. We can only wait for the truth of ultimate reality staying in the vicinity of Being in hoping that we and the true God correspond to Being which is the boundary between the human and the divine. Waiting is not an absence of thought, but an openness for the truth of Being, coupled with resignation concerning worldly matters. In waiting, we should rest in the act of resigning. As soon as we represent what we are waiting for, says Heidegger, we are not waiting anymore. Therefore “In waiting we leave open


39 VA, 133.

40 Stefan Schimanski, “On Meeting a Philosopher,” *Partisan Review* 15, no. 4 (April 1948): 511. The three lecture courses on Höderlin, which was his search for the way to a new, more essential, primordial kind of thinking, at the University of Freiburg (HH, Winter Semester, 1934-5; GA52, Winter Semester, 1941-2; and Hölderlins Hymne “Der Ister,” Summer Semester, 1942) contribute to the understanding of the nature of the openness of his thought on the idea of God.

41 OCM, 51/ID, 54-5.

42 HH, 174.

43 BPP, 18/GA, 24
what we are waiting for,” so that we may relate directly to what transcends us. According to Heidegger, “Through an illumination of transcendence we first achieve an adequate concept of Dasein, with respect to which it can now be asked how the relationship of Dasein to God is ontologically ordered.”

Heidegger’s “thinking” open up for Tillich a radical possibility of developing a new theology, a possible post-theological way of thinking about the God above God. Tillich says, “the later Heidegger’s mystical interpretation of Being is something new.” Tillich reformulates Heidegger’s concept of thinking of Being to offer a new vision of the Christian experience of God. Tillich agrees with Heidegger that theology, as a science of God, is impossible in the truest sense because of an element of ultimate indeterminacy in the Unconditioned transcendent. Hence, Tillich describes his theology as theonomous “philosophy.” Tillich’s notion of “theonomy” can be traced to Heidegger’s “thinking.” Theonomy is such an important concept in his understanding of the relation of existential question and existential theological answers. According to Tillich, “Theonomy is a turning toward the Unconditioned for the sake of the Unconditioned.” Theonomy (divine law) is “the uncreated divine light in the human soul” and

44 DT, 68.
45 LH, 267/GA9, 181.
46 HJ, 24.
47 ST1, 108.
48 SS, 203.
49 AHCT, 185.
it “implies our own personal experience of the presence of the divine Spirit within us.”\textsuperscript{50} Just as Heidegger’s thinking transcends fundamental ontology without abandoning it, so does Tillich’s theonomous philosophy transcend autonomous philosophy while affirming it. Tillich writes, “Theonomy is in contrast to heteronomy an imbuing of autonomous forms with transcendent import. It originates not through the renunciation of autonomy, as does, for example, the Roman Catholic idea of authority, but only through the deepening of autonomy in itself to the point where it transcends itself.”\textsuperscript{51} In other words, theonomy is an autonomy that “is aware of its divine Ground.”\textsuperscript{52} In a “personal word,”\textsuperscript{53} Tillich explains, “Theonomous philosophy does not mean the decision for a particular philosophy that would be appropriate to faith. Such a [philosophy] does not exist. Rather, theonomy means the making visible of the inner transcendence of each last [or, ultimate] – and not only last – philosophical concept, and with that, the making visible of the inner transcendence of Being itself…It [theonomous philosophy]…must demonstrate the positive and negative starting point for the breakthrough of transcendence in world and culture under consideration of every philosophy.”\textsuperscript{54} It is not very difficult to see in the task of Tillich’s theonomous philosophy which shows the “inner

\textsuperscript{50} AHCT, 322.

\textsuperscript{51} Theonomie, 1128-9.

\textsuperscript{52} AHCT, 323.

\textsuperscript{53} GW12, 223.

\textsuperscript{54} GW12, 223.
transcendence of Being itself” a parallel to the task of Heidegger’s “thinking.” And it is not coincidental that Tillich characterizes his theology with concepts deeply rooted in Heidegger’s thought.

Searching for the answer to the question of the ultimate meaning of human existence, Tillich and Heidegger traveled side by side, so far as the main aspects of a philosophico-anthropological approach to the Unconditioned transcendent go. Theology taught us who we are. Metaphysics explained what we are. Heidegger’s fundamental ontology showed how we are by means of existential phenomenology. But the question “Why am I?” remained unanswered. Their journey is incomplete, but the shore is visible in their consciousness. Both Heidegger and Tillich were existentialists in that they were ultimately concerned about the meaning of human existence. Their ultimate concern was neither ontological nor theological, but existential. They were anxious men. Existentialism, Tillich says, is the “good luck of Christian theology.”55 There is no God but ultimate divine reality, and Heidegger and Tillich were its prophets.

55 ST2, 27.


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