

RAJ SAMPATH

University of California, Santa Cruz

IN THE REVELATORY LIGHT OF THE CHIASMIC
ENTWINING:

(Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, Trans. Matthais Fritsch, Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004)

In the Introduction to *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger states that “time must be brought to light-and genuinely conceived-as the horizon for all understanding of Being.” The being, which poses the question of Being, is Dasein, and Dasein is interpreted as timing and timeliness. He then discusses the issues of phenomenon and logos in terms of a self-showing -- as in how time shows itself in its genuine and authentic sense so that the meaning of Being can be revealed. Dasein’s Being as care, which is grounded in the finite, existential, primordial temporalizing of time, relates to Being and ‘is’ a relation-occurrence of Being itself. And finally Being is ‘transcendens pure and simple.’ Our question concerns the bridge from Division II to the missing Division III of *Being and Time*.

Our hypothesis is that the movement from the Being of Dasein as Being-In-The-World (Division I) to Time and Death (Division II) ultimately leads to the problem of the Being of God’s Time Revealed. How do we appropriate (ereignen) the massive resources of twentieth century systematic theology and Heidegger’s

own attempt at a ‘phenomenology of religious life’ in his 1920-21 lectures on Paul, Augustine, Luther and Eckhart to open up the following issue: the ecstatic relation between Division II and our hypothetical reconstruction of Division III-- or a new ‘non-apophatic’ difference between the ontological difference (Being and beings) and the onto-theological difference (Being of beings and Being of God) in relation to what we are signaling as the Being of God’s Time Revealed? At stake are key moments in his *Phenomenology of Religious Life Lectures*, particularly on Pauline eschatology, or the problem of the ‘self-showing of the day’ (Zeichen of Zeit) and the event of the Parousia.

In the opening moments of the *Phenomenology of Religious Life* lectures, Heidegger reveals some of his key assumptions. He states that phenomenology is not simply the first ‘science of philosophy’ but philosophy itself.¹ Moreover, the philosophy of religion merely tends to brush over the

1 Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, Trans. Matthais Fritsch, Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004: 16.

deep questions and issues of theology², particularly since each theological structure carries within itself its own factual-existential structure of meaning. Finally, Catholic theology tends to spring from the purely Catholic understanding of Christianity, whereas recent Protestant theology continues to draw from the historical humanities and hermeneutics that analyzes the New Testament as a 'literary form' in relation to other world literary forms; moreover, it appropriates primarily the philosophical currents that underpin it³—say from German Idealism to the present.⁴ For Heidegger, the metaphysics of the philosophy of history, which underpins Hegel for example, has to be rejected particularly since it will only give rise to heightened religious-philosophical speculation.

One can push beyond Heidegger to draw some further conclusions. Heidegger realizes that the phenomenological method can be useful as a type of philosophical experience - attitudinal relation

to questioning something beyond objectivity or subjectivity--rather than a formal scientific conception of philosophy. If metaphysics underpins traditional philosophy prior to the fundamental primordial experience of factual questioning, which sustains the phenomenological method, then the relation between metaphysics (pre-Socratics to German Idealism) proper and theology has to be questioned when it comes to understanding primordial (Christian) religious life. Finally, if modern Protestant theology appropriated the fruits of nineteenth century breakthroughs such as historical hermeneutics and form criticism in opening undisclosed dimensions of the New Testament, then the philosophy of religion has to adapt itself against the grain of speculative-metaphysical-religious thinking. What is needed is a 'phenomenology' of religious life' understood as primordial Christian factual experience and living 'time' itself as the mode of that experience.⁵

To reiterate, Heidegger does not intend to engage in phenomenology as the purely scientific description of experience. He does not wish to drive the 'philosophy of religion' to new heights, which on the one hands sweeps over the subtle ontological and linguistic complexities of modern theological breakthroughs (particularly with the advent of historical hermeneutics and form criticism). On the other hand, when

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Whether Heidegger is justified in this simplistic dichotomy of Catholic and Protestant theology is not the issue. The work of Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Edward Schillebeeckx form formidable philosophical tradition in theology, which appropriates so many diverse intellectual dimensions. No doubt, we would be ill-advised to take Heidegger's assumption seriously even though he wrote his lectures on Paul prior to these systems taking root in twentieth century intellectual history. Moreover, many of them were influenced by Heidegger.

5 Ibid. 57.

theology pushes beyond its limits by the force of speculative metaphysics, say the idealistic philosophy of Hegel, then it runs the risk of abandoning the very breakthroughs that offered a new glimpse of Christian experience experienced in terms of a finite, primordial temporal apprehension of the meaning of existence lodged within the secret textual convex of Christian truth. Christian truth is its future—where the secret of God's self-knowledge as Being-the-Truth is revealed wholly and finally as the meaning of man's being or existence (after the advent of Christianity the religion or the last two thousand years of history). This raises the question of what a 'phenomenology of religious life' even means, particularly when Heidegger states that primordial Christian religious life is factual experience, and factual experience means 'living time itself.' It raises the specter of Being-God-Time as an interrelational Event that is at once historic and transcendent.

Six years after these lectures, *Being and Time* would appear precisely as an existential analytic of factual life (Dasein), which will enable the reposing of the question of Being (against and through the history of all metaphysics and ontology) reinterpreted horizontally with a new, primordial, finite, ecstatic sense of time. It is not hard to imagine that the *Phenomenology of Religious Life* lectures of the 1920-21 time period is the 'onto-theological' precursor to what is named 'fundamental ontology'

in *Being and Time*. And fundamental ontology is not like any other 'regional' ontology-scientific, humanistic, or theological. Its claim is to a basic form of transcendence interrelated as a new finite sense of time and death, which is made possible by a radical individuation that prioritizes historical destruction as a clearing—an opening for the possibility of revealing the meaning of Being anew (namely unlike anything ever offered in the history of the West). The paradox in front of us is singular: how can the *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, which states that primordial Christian religiosity is factual, lived experience and factual life lives 'time itself,' be the 'onto-theological precursor' to *Being and Time*, which goes against any theology, and hence religion or metaphysics? Is there a phenomenological structure of a new theology buried beneath *Being and Time*, which is unbeknownst to Heidegger himself? The strange fate of Christianity and *Being and Time* is that they both posit the future as a fundamental type of renewal and 'new creation.' But such a creation has yet to occur even though its Event has already occurred: at the appointed time God sent the Son (religion) and 80 years ago *Being and Time* was published, yet the meaning of both have yet to be revealed. That is their common-link despite the tension, stress, and harshness that throbs in the heart of their linkage. Both are beyond our linear sense of time...

We do not intend a detailed comparison of the *Phenomenology*

of *Religious Life* and *Being and Time*. Rather, we want to ask whether a 'phenomenology of theology' is even possible when understanding a strange interrelation: how does a.) the *Phenomenology of Religious Life* (particularly on Pauline eschatology) relate to b.) the transition from Division II: Dasein and Temporality (i. Dasein's Possibility of Being-Whole, and Being-Towards-Death, ii. Dasein's Attestation of An Authentic Potentiality-For-Being, and Resoluteness, iii. Dasein's Authentic Potentiality-For-Being-A-Whole, and Temporality as the Ontological Meaning of Care, iv. Temporality and Everydayness, v. Temporality and Historicity, vi. Temporality and Within-Time-Ness as the Source of the Ordinary Conception of Time) to what we will name in place of the missing Division III: The Being of God's Time Revealed? Despite the foreclosure of the *Phenomenology of Religious Life* as neither a pure scientific phenomenology on the one hand nor a renewed religious-philosophical-metaphysical speculative creation on the other, and despite *Being and Time's* absolute dismissal of all previous ontologies, metaphysics and theology, how do we construct a new 'phenomenology of theology' precisely in what *Being and Time* never revealed, namely the missing Division III? We move from Being-in-the-World (Dasein) to Being vs. beings (ontological difference) to Time and Death (the absolute threshold of Division II) to the Being of beings vs. Being of God (onto-theological

difference) to what we call the Being of God's Time Revealed. We speak of a movement in, towards and as a fourth moment.⁶

Part II of the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Religion* is titled the "Phenomenological Explication of Concrete Religious Phenomena in Connection with the Letters of Paul." In some senses, we have to move backwards from *Being and Time* to this early lecture of 1920-21 precisely to leap forward in to the realm of what should have come after *Being and Time*, namely the missing division III. For us that means the *movement* of how we even understand the concept of time in relation to the problem of truth as revelation. We go from

- the Being of time (as in 'what is time?' from the standpoint of pre-theoretical factual experience as Dasein) to
- the Time of being (the theological problem of the link between time's self-revelation and the self-revelation of God—from kairos, 'when the time was full, God sent the Son')

⁶ We have to note the eerie historical similarity of Kant's defense right after his publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which could be interpreted as divine dispensation testimonial even though he forever changed our approach to metaphysics, and the appearance of the 1927 lecture 'Phenomenology and Theology' after *Being and Time* was composed and submitted for publication. Kant's first *Critique* admits to incompleteness. *Being and Time* never offered a third Division.

- to the Parousia-the 'Great Day of the Lord' or Revelation when 'God is all in all'-or the Truth fully revealed.

It is the last that we call the Being of God's Time Revealed when understood ontologically as an *aufheben* of Christian scripture itself, which speaks of an end-time and Parousia. Thus we speak of four moments, and not three, which would otherwise end in an undisclosed notion/promise of the Parousia in the confines of faith. From a phenomenological reduction, we must posit an *aufheben* of faith, which is also a taking-the-place of religion as an event, and not simply that which comes after religion in the wake of Nietzsche's nihilistic proclamation of the 'death of god' or the death of religion. We could recast the moments of the progression phenomenologically, which would then challenge a stand-alone theological problem ensconced in faith, and instead ask about a 'phenomenology of theology' on Truth of Being-God as Time Revealed. God's Being is Time Revealed (over and against any human conception or intuition of time, which for Heidegger is the history of metaphysics), and taken as a whole that would constitute the Event of Truth Occurring (*Ereignen*). The four moments would then be:

a.) pure ontology—what is being?—to
b.) the being of time (a renewed metaphysical question posed towards the end of *Being and Time* –'if and how time has any being?') to

c.) the time of being (the problem of the onto-theological difference or the tension between theology's struggle to understand the relationship between God and Time and Heidegger's fundamental ontological struggle to understand the relation between Being and Time) to

d) what we name as the Being of God's Time Revealed.

The fourth moment is what we term the parousiological difference, which takes the onto-theological difference in to a new realm of complexity. But to open the fourth dimension, we must return to the two fundamental theses of Heidegger's commentary on the phenomenology of religious life, particularly his analysis of Paul.

Heidegger states: "As basic determinations we state two for now:

1. Primordial Christian religiosity is in primordial Christian life experience and is itself such.
2. Factual life experience is historical. Christian religiosity lives temporality as such."⁷

Primordial Christian religiosity is the state of the Christian religion in a prior state. The prior state of the Christian religion is what it is in its essence as a formative occurrence. Hence the essence of the Christian religion is equated with primordial Christian life experience, and that life

⁷ Ibid. 55.

experience is primordial in a way that supersedes received doctrine-as in what is the earliest or most original experience. Religiosity is this life experience, and not the ontological representation of the nature of God nor a belief system pointing towards God, i.e. Scholasticism. The factual life experience is historical (history occurring and not an object of the historical past). Christian religiosity lives temporality as such and therefore is not a being in time that comes and goes, i.e. linear sense of time. Rather, it is an ecstatic mystery. The primal Christian content of the religion for Paul 'is' (apostolic calling, warning the community, proclamation, doctrine, and problem of 'kairos'—fulfillment of time, and the parousia) living time in a unique and undisclosed way. The elements of the content 'lives temporality' as a renewed creation beyond being in time, namely an origin and end whereby the present remains in between. We have to inquire into the notion of living temporality as it relates to all the themes present in primordial Christian religiosity in which Paul's Galatians and Thessalonians are paramount. However, when recast in a phenomenological framework, the intention is to question and unlock new dimensions, which may be irreducible to the proclamation and message, which comprises Pauline doctrine. Living a new, wholly other mystery of time is living truth itself (Truth as the Being of God) in a new way, something which the West has only experienced in terms of the

commissioning of the Holy Spirit whose vehicle is the Church. Living life, birth, death and the resurrection in a new creation requires the supersession of those terms in their traditional theological linkages and the freedom of phenomenological disclosure to be the truth in its revelation. Linkage of Christian religiosity = factual life experience of primal Christianity as the experience of something 'original'/ break = historical = living temporality as such.

Heidegger reiterates: "we have posited the following starting points for the sake of the determination of primordial Christian religiosity:

- 1.) Primordial Christian religiosity is in factual life experience. Postscript: It is such experience itself.
2. Factual life experience is historical. Postscript: Christian experience lives time itself ('to live' understood as the *verbum transitivum*)."⁸

We are back to the question of primal Christian religion = factual life experience. Factual life experience 'lives time itself.' Therefore primal Christian religion lives time itself. (Contrast that with post-Nicean council on dogmatic Christian religion and its instantiation of belief in the 'Holy Trinity' for example.) This means that that which depicts a unique God (the Christian God) lives time itself in the primal experience (Jesus to Paul prior to the Synoptics). Living time

⁸ Ibid. 57.

and not being in time is parallel to the religion's theological problem—of 'the hour' as in Jesus's temporalization—'For this is the hour for which I was sent.' It is the temporalization of being in transcendence-infinity, which must pass through death even as it conquers it, but the passage means that death is complete and raised to a higher order of experience, and not an exponential progression—i.e. death of death. Paul's primal Christian experience living temporality relates to the kairological problem of time in the Gospels—or the unique temporalization of Jesus's Being: that is Being in the Christ is Being in God's Death as the Gift of Life. Fast forward, Dasein is that Being of which the question of the meaning of Being (Truth) is of utmost concern, Dasein is its relationship to Being (transcendens), and time is the horizon for understanding Being. Care is Grounded in the Temporalizing of Time, and Death completes Dasein's Being as opposed to negating it. We must lay out the conceptual structure of primal Christian religiosity = factual lived experience = living time itself and compare it with the basic ontological structures of *Being and Time*. It is easy to differentiate Dasein from secular man. But how do we compare Dasein with both the primal Christian factual life experience (primal Christian religiosity in its essence) with living time itself AND the hypostatic temporalization of Jesus's Being (from the pre-existence to the time fulfilled in the sending of

the Son to the hour of death). We have the time of Paul, the time of Jesus and the time of Dasein—each of which have their own complex categories of explication. By illuminating the differences and interrelating them, we can trace the pattern of the new parousiological difference between the dogmatic representation of the Christian God in religion and the Being of God in something wholly Other: the Being of God is the Being of Time Revealed. This anticipates the problem of Antichrist and the meaning of time spoken at the end of Heidegger's lectures on Paul in the *Phenomenology of Religious Life*—something, which threatens to overcome the history of Christian religious content.⁹

The proof of the equation primal Christian religion = factual life experience = historical = living temporality itself 'occurs' in 'phenomenological experience.' Phenomenology comes to englobe the alterior, threatening, futurist dimension posited within Christianity as its own necessity for completion while completing emptying out the dogmatic content of the religion. What this event means in general remains to be seen: for *either* the 'completion' of Christianity from outside its domain *or* the equation of phenomenological experience with primal Christian experience as the whole decision on the fate of the onto-theological constitution of Western metaphysics. Either way, the genius

9 Ibid. 110.

of the West (as opposed to non-West) is to posit truth logically but then posit the requirement of its alteration in the process of its revelation onto-theologically.¹⁰ Phenomenological experience as living temporality as such takes the place of the Jesuological event or the secret of his inner-messianic consciousness—or that eternally hidden dimension: what was the relation between God and Jesus prior to the formation of Christianity as a religion? Christianity posits Jesus Christ as the Truth; we posit Jesus as the wholly other Truth of Christianity Revealed. This

inversion moves from the meaning of Being-Truth (the Christian God as we have received Him in terms of Faith, Love and Sacrifice) to the ‘meaning of time’ itself.¹¹ In a radical individuation, this would require a supersession of the metaphysics of time and being (Greek philosophy) and the religion of being-God by way of a metaphysically-saturated Event (dogmatic Christianity) to something other. And yet the other would have to be other to the fundamentally incomplete ontology of *Being and Time*.

10 Ibid. 17: “But the proof of God is not originally Christian, but rather depends upon the connection between Christianity and Greek philosophy.”

11 Ibid. 44: “Our way takes its point of departure from factual life, from which the meaning of time is won.”