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# THE ART OF CHRISTIAN ATHEISM: FAITH AND PHILOSOPHY IN EARLY HEIDEGGER

James K. A. Smith

In his early work, Martin Heidegger argues for a rigorous methodological atheism in philosophy, which is not opposed to religious faith but only to the impact of faith when one is philosophizing. For the young Heidegger, the philosopher, even though possibly a religious person, must be an atheist when doing philosophy. Christian philosophy, then, is a round square. In this essay, I unpack Heidegger's methodological considerations and attempt to draw parallels with other traditions which argue for the possibility of a Christian philosophy but at root concede Heidegger's atheism. In conclusion, I propose that it is precisely Heidegger's work which points to the inescapability of and opens the door to religious philosophy.

Christian atheism is a little old now, rather *passé*, perhaps even modern (which, ironically, now means confined to the past—no longer contemporary). As John A.T. Robinson, Thomas J.J. Altizer and William Hamilton attempted to demonstrate, the God of theism—the God of metaphysics—is a false god, an idol which has nothing to do with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob or the God and Father of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>1</sup> This atheism does not concern the “existence” of God but rather the priority of Being and metaphysics when it comes to speaking of God. As Jean-Luc Marion has suggested, “God is, exists, and that is the least of things. At issue here is not the possibility of God's attaining to Being, but, quite the opposite, the possibility of Being's attaining to God.”<sup>2</sup> And in this regard, I too must confess that I am not a theist, that I am a Christian a-theist; but in so doing, I consider myself to be a good disciple, following the Galilean who knew nothing of theism, who was himself a good a-theist. (Nevertheless, a number of Christians persist in their theism, and a number of Christian philosophers continue to delude themselves by thinking that theistic philosophy is Christian.)

However, the idea of a Christian atheism is older than perhaps we have supposed. As I will attempt to show, a similar *yet distinct* notion is uncovered in the early lectures of Martin Heidegger from 1919-23, drawing on even earlier precedents. But Heidegger's Christian atheism is different than the death of God theologians: his Christian atheist is a philosopher, one who has a knack for being both a philosopher and a Christian, which means being both an atheist and yet religious.



Heidegger was not concerned about the idea of a theistic philosophy (which he would have seen as simply an instantiation of the Western metaphysical tradition), but rather about the very possibility of Christian philosophy, the possibility of a philosopher having faith when philosophizing. While the first form of Christian *a-theism* is marked by the refusal to equate the God of Abraham and the God of metaphysics, the Christian *atheism* of Heidegger is concerned with excluding faith from philosophy, keeping philosophy pure from such contaminations.

Now, while I would confess that I am a Christian a-theist, I would at the same time confess that I am a Christian philosopher. And so here I am (*me voici*), between South Bend and Freiburg, an a-theist Christian philosopher, soliciting the ire of both theists and atheists. In this paper, I won't be taking on the theists (which is always a rather hazardous project, opposing these ones with *theos* on their side); rather I will focus on Heidegger's critique. Rather than concluding with Heidegger that it is impossible for the philosopher to believe, I will propose that it is impossible for the philosopher *not* to believe, and that such a conclusion is one that is required by Heidegger's very own hermeneutic phenomenology.

#### *Philosophy, Atheism and Faith*

Though we will hear about Heidegger's insistence on atheism, the young Freiburg lecturer was by no means opposed to religion or faith. As Hugo Ott, Theodore Kisiel, and John van Buren have recently shown, it was precisely his Christian faith (first Catholic and then Protestant) which was the impetus for his early philosophical breakthroughs.<sup>3</sup> What is at stake, then, is the relationship between faith and philosophy, and it is here that Heidegger preaches atheism. For instance, in Wintersemester 1921/22, Heidegger insisted:

Questioningness [*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 factually 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 *a theistic*.<sup>4</sup>

Philosophy is radical questioning; but to really question—to push one's questioning to the brink of the abyss—one must be an atheist, for faith gives answers too soon. Even into the next decade, in 1935, Heidegger maintained this principle of methodological atheism, arguing that

Anyone for whom the Bible is divine revelation and truth has the answer to the question, "Why are there essents rather than nothing?" even before it is asked: everything that is, except God himself, has been created by Him....One who holds to such a

faith can in a way participate in the asking of our question, but he cannot really question without ceasing to be a believer and taking all of the consequences of such a step. He will only be able to act 'as if'...<sup>5</sup>

Faith and philosophy, according to Heidegger (who was only following in the footsteps of Paul and Martin Luther<sup>6</sup>), are "mortal enemies." In fact, "[f]aith is so absolutely the mortal enemy that philosophy does not even begin to want in any way to do battle with it."<sup>7</sup> "The philosopher does not believe,"<sup>8</sup> cannot believe, because faith is in radical opposition to the very nature of philosophy as questioning. If philosophy is going to "make factual life speak for itself" it must be "*fundamentally atheistic*."<sup>9</sup> That is why the idea of a 'Christian philosophy' is a "square circle" and a "round square."<sup>10</sup>

It may be a legitimate question to ask how much this opposing of faith and philosophy owes to Heidegger's unfortunate experiences as a "Catholic philosopher,"<sup>11</sup> for it was after these experiences that perhaps the earliest glimpse of this disjunction is uncovered. In a 1919 letter to his long-time mentor, Engelbert Krebs, the young Heidegger explains that he must give up his faith to fulfil his calling to be a philosopher. "The past two years," he begins,

in which I have sought to clarify my basic theological position, putting aside every special academic assignment in order to do so, have led me to conclusions for which, had I been constrained by extraphilosophical allegiances, I could not have guaranteed the necessary independence of conviction and doctrine.<sup>12</sup>

Philosophy cannot be contained by extra-philosophical allegiances, such as faith, and that is why good philosophers need to be atheists, at least when they are doing philosophy.

When Heidegger asserts that philosophy must be 'methodologically atheistic,' he is not simply saying that philosophy shouldn't be theistic, that it should not be tied to metaphysics (as I would agree); rather, his emphasis is that philosophy is not religious and cannot be such. The philosopher does not believe—period. It is not a debate about the object or content of faith, but rather the absence of faith in philosophy.

#### *Heidegger's Thomism?*

It seems to me that I have heard something like this before, not from an apostate but from a good Catholic. For is not this notion of a pure, faith-free philosophy a very Thomistic idea? Do we not hear similar rumblings from Paris in the thirteenth century? Did not the Angelic Doctor himself insist that philosophy is the domain of natural, unaided, human reason and that faith is left to theology?<sup>13</sup> Isn't Heidegger's philosophical atheism actually an indicator of his Thomism? While neither Thomas nor Thomists ever insisted on methodological atheism in philosophy, the understanding of the nature of philosophy in the

Thomist tradition betrays an interesting parallel with Heidegger. And this is true of both the “manual tradition” of Thomism and the neo-Thomism of Gilson and company, even though the Gilsonian tradition will insist on using the term “Christian philosophy.” Let me explain the analogy between these opposing schools before comparing both to early Heidegger.

A recent essay by Jude Dougherty is representative of a long tradition of Catholic philosophers. For Dougherty, the idea of a “Christian philosophy” is an oxymoron—like a square circle—because philosophy which is influenced by revelation is no longer (good) philosophy; that is, “philosophy must remain unalloyed if it is to be true philosophy. It must justify to its hearer every conclusion it reaches by the evidence it produces and the inferences it makes.”<sup>14</sup> Or as Joseph Owens expounds this tradition (commenting from a Gilsonian perspective):

Philosophy grounded its reasoning on naturally acceptable starting points. It could not make use of revealed truth as premises for demonstrations. In consequence it could not permit itself to be specified by anything that was given through divine revelation. In this traditional setting no philosophy seemed amenable to designation by the notion “Christian,” as many modern writers viewed the situation. Hence arose the stand that there can no more be a Christian philosophy than there could be a Christian mathematics or a Christian chemistry.<sup>15</sup>

While these philosophers are not atheists, neither are they Christians, when they philosophize. For both Dougherty and Heidegger, faith is excluded from philosophy. This does not, however, exclude God from philosophy, for Dougherty; rather, it is precisely the God of metaphysics—the god of theism—who appears in “true” philosophy.

But interestingly, even Gilson’s conception of the relationship between faith and philosophy retains in essence the heart of Heidegger’s critique. For while Gilson would insist on using the term “Christian philosophy,” faith remains *extrinsic* to philosophy. Faith only makes suggestions for research projects<sup>16</sup>; once that theme is taken up, the philosopher is engaged in an activity that is shielded from the influence of faith. Christian faith provides clues to “naturally knowable starting points” that are pursued by the philosopher (the most famous, of course, being Exodus 3:14), but once philosophy proper begins, Christian faith steps aside. “The result,” Owens concludes, “is that on such a basis an entire philosophy may be specified as Christian, even though nothing specifically Christian enters into its reasoning process....[T]he path itself remains extrinsic to the strictly philosophical discourse.”<sup>17</sup> In essence, this conception is in agreement with Heidegger insofar as philosophy proper remains untainted by faith.

I have detoured into the Thomist tradition in order to point out striking analogies with Heidegger and to suggest a source for Heidegger’s insistence on methodological atheism. Heidegger’s strong Catholic roots are well known by now, as well as his affinity with and interest in

Scholastic philosophy. In addition, his work on the *Habilitationschrift* was funded by a grant from the 'Constantin and Olga von Schaezler Foundation in honour of St. Thomas Aquinas,' which was secured by Heidegger's application in which he confessed: "The obedient undersigned intends to devote himself to the study of Christian philosophy and to embark on an academic career."<sup>18</sup> Ten years later, Heidegger would reject the notion of Christian philosophy as a "square circle" and rather insist on atheism. But was this such a momentous shift as some have assumed? As we have seen, the understanding of philosophy in the Thomist tradition is analogous, if not identical, to Heidegger's definition: both assert that faith remains extrinsic to philosophy *qua* philosophy. And this remains true despite the very different results of such similar methodologies. In the Thomist tradition, pure philosophy can still deliver God, the God of metaphysics, known by natural reason; as such, Thomism is a theism. For Heidegger, however, 'God' could never appear in philosophy, would never 'show' her/his face as a phenomenon; thus philosophy excludes not only faith but also God.

This conception of the relationship between faith and philosophy is not confined to neo-Scholastic Catholics; it can also be located in contemporary discussions, as seen, for instance, in the work of Jean-Luc Marion. A rigorous critic of metaphysics and its god, Marion has recently insisted on God outside/without Being (*sans l'être*). However, God still appears in his phenomenology as a phenomenon which saturates our intention and aim<sup>19</sup>—God still shows his face in philosophy as phenomenology. Nevertheless, the God of phenomenology must still be distinguished from the "God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" inasmuch as God appears only as a "possibility" in phenomenology. Phenomenology can identify the saturated phenomenon, but it is the role of faith to name such as God. "Reason—here philosophy in its phenomenological bearing"—must eventually yield to faith, to revealed theology. And one must be vigilant, Marion asserts, not to confuse phenomenology (reason) and revealed theology (faith).<sup>20</sup>

Finally, the same boundary may be found in a deconstructionist Catholic philosopher such as John Caputo. Though Caputo has no investments in Thomism (though the tradition is certainly part of his development), a similar framework seems to emerge in his work. Reflecting on the possibility of Christian philosophy today, Caputo is "struck by the openings that postmodern thinking creates for Christian philosophy today."<sup>21</sup> But again, the relationship between Christian faith and philosophy is extrinsic to the act of philosophizing. As Caputo defines the term, Christian philosophy means "thinking philosophically within the context and the framework of the New Testament...I suggest we hear the expression 'Christian philosophy' the way we hear expressions like 'Greek philosophy' or 'French philosophy,' as indicative of a certain style, a certain idiom..."<sup>22</sup> I think Gilson would agree: philosophy is philosophy, and faith has nothing to do with it, even though it may provide a style or idiom.

For Caputo, then, philosophy proper is shielded from faith; thus a philosopher can only say so much. Eventually philosophy meets its

match, its limit or horizon, and only faith can step beyond. For instance, in his commentary on Levinas, Caputo concludes that *philosophically* we cannot say who calls: *Il* or *il y a*. The one calling remains anonymous, and this anonymity is the horizon of faith.<sup>23</sup> Philosophically, we cannot say whether Nietzsche or Kierkegaard is right—such a decision lies beyond philosophy, and the realm of faith.<sup>24</sup> When I philosophize, I am an atheist, because philosophy is inevitably and necessarily ‘Greek,’ and by definition excludes the religious, the ‘Hebrew.’

Evidently, then, Heidegger’s notion of methodological atheism is a rather popular one, though it is never explicitly described as such by others.<sup>25</sup> As I have attempted to demonstrate, the relationship of faith and philosophy receives similar treatment in philosophers ranging from Gilson to Caputo. It may be safe to say, in fact, that very few disagree with Heidegger’s critique, including those that espouse a “Christian philosophy.”<sup>26</sup> For Heidegger would also concede that Christian philosophy may be a sociological category;<sup>27</sup> but when he discusses the impossibility of Christian philosophy, he refers to the unalloyed nature of philosophy which even good Thomists would agree on (though, it must be emphasized, their results are markedly different).

### *Demythologizing Heidegger*

But is philosophy so pure? Is not the notion of an autonomous philosophy precisely the demon that Heidegger’s own work was engaged in battling? Was it not Heidegger who insisted on the role of presuppositions and preunderstanding in philosophy? Is not this excising of faith from Dasein akin to the reduction to a transcendental-logical ego, the animal that Heidegger declared to be mythical? Can I stop believing when I philosophize? Do I?

It is here that I would like to propose that Heidegger, when discussing faith and philosophy, draws back from where the trajectory of his own thought would lead. The whole of Heidegger’s early work is bent on demonstrating that we are not disembodied egos, but rather human be-ings (*Dasein*) who are in the world, and who cannot extrapolate ourselves outside of that environment (*Umwelt*). We are *in-der-Welt-sein*, as embodied, historical, situated beings. We are here (*Da*), now, and such is a condition for my knowing anything. We cannot step outside of our skin or transcend our finitude. Hans-Georg Gadamer carried on this work in his philosophical hermeneutics, insisting that we cannot know apart from bias, despite all of the Enlightenment protests to the contrary. In fact, this Enlightenment critique of prejudice is itself a prejudice and must be owned up as such. We are effected by our history and tradition.<sup>28</sup>

Philosophy, then, is not a pure, unalloyed, transcendental science, though it is a theoretical discipline (*Wissenschaft*). But as Heidegger’s own work demonstrates, theory is not free from prejudice, from “extra-philosophical” influences—a point which has been demonstrated in a number of arenas since Heidegger: Thomas Kuhn, for instance, pointed to the paradigms or frameworks of belief which direct the sciences. Of

special interest here is the fact that throughout his landmark study, Kuhn uses the language of faith to describe the relationship between paradigms and science: words such as "conversion," "belief," and "commitment,"<sup>29</sup> signalling that there is a commitment which precedes theoretical work and *which makes that theoretical work possible*.<sup>30</sup>

The work of Gadamer, Ricouer, Kuhn, and Polanyi—all of which points to the influence of 'extra-philosophical' commitments—is all dependent, directly or indirectly, on the insights of the early Heidegger as crystallized in *Being and Time*. And yet, it is precisely this young Heidegger who insists on excluding the influence of faith from philosophy. Do we not find at this juncture a vestige of Enlightenment rationalism in the work of this one who played such a pivotal role in its dismantlement?<sup>31</sup> Would not a more insistent hermeneutic phenomenology honor the role played by faith in *philosophizing*? Research in this century has demonstrated that philosophy (and all theory) is conditioned by previous commitments which not only provide starting points (as in the Gilsonian tradition), but make philosophy possible. Whether these previous commitments are described as worldviews (Jaspers), paradigms (Kuhn), final vocabularies (Rorty), prejudices (Gadamer), or forehavings (Heidegger), they all refer to beliefs which are constitutive of human knowing, and as such, philosophy.

Perhaps what theorists in this century have not yet appreciated is the religious nature of these commitments. Because of certain twists and turns in the history of Western philosophy (and Christianity) "faith" has been confined to largely 'institutional' commitments and reduced to something like 'propositional assent to' some doctrine. As such, faith became defined by its *content* or *object*. I am proposing a retrieval of a broader meaning of *pistis* (and *pisteuo*) as trust or commitment. The result of this broadening is two-fold: first, faith is no longer determined by the object or content of the commitment but rather *as the commitment itself*. Any fundamental, *grounding* commitment (which is not itself grounded) may be legitimately described as a faith, which is simply to say that *pistis* may be translated many ways. A second implication of this retrieval is the correlative broadening of the notion of "religion" as simply a commitment to and trust in something 'ultimate' which cannot be rationally proven, but rather stands at the beginning of all reason and theory.<sup>32</sup> That which is believed is not argued *to* but argued *from*. "If I have exhausted the justifications," Wittgenstein commented, "I have reached bedrock and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say, 'this is simply what I do.'"<sup>33</sup> For my purposes here, it is not primarily a question of *what* someone is trusting but *that* someone is committed before theory, before reason.

When Heidegger argues for methodological atheism when doing philosophy, he is really asserting that faith plays no role in philosophizing. But given that intention, must we not ask: Is atheism religiously neutral? Is the atheist without faith? Does not the atheist also have extra-philosophical commitments, beliefs which give the answer too soon, undoing the nature of philosophy as radical questioning? Does not this religiously neutral philosopher hang out with Descartes' bodiless cogito and rub

shoulders with Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological ego, in a mythical world of purity?

Could it be that faith is inescapable? It is this scandalous thesis which I think has not yet been fully grasped, though the path has been cleared in recent years by emergence of postmodernism. It is postmodernism, and (perhaps surprisingly) deconstruction in particular, which signals the religious character of philosophy, for as Alan Olson has proposed, "it may be that the deconstructive mood of postmodernity is *faith-inspired*—even *faith-obsessed* in an obscure sort of way."<sup>34</sup> Faith—commitment, trust—is that which makes theory (and philosophy) possible. Not that every philosopher will attend church or synagogue; but every philosopher will and must operate with an ultimate trust which makes philosophy possible. Philosophy is inescapably religious, but that is not to say that Athens is covertly Jerusalem, or that the 'Hebrew' necessarily infiltrates the 'Greek.' Greece, one must recall, had its own religion.

This is seen, for instance, in Derrida's insistent questioning of the question in *Of Spirit*, a work haunted by ghosts, in which we catch glimpse of a spectre (let us say, *l'esprit*) lurking beneath and behind Derrida's corpus, his body (of writings). This spirit is conjured up not at Endor but in a telling note: a note, offered as a *pledge*, on the origins of language as a promise. In a passage hovering between commentary and autobiography, he remarks:

It remains to find out whether this *Versprechen* is not the promise which, opening every speaking, makes possible the very question and therefore precedes it without belonging to it: the dissymmetry of an affirmation, of a *yes* before all opposition of *yes* and *no*....Language always, *before any question*, and in the very question, comes down to the promise. This would also be a promise of *spirit*.<sup>35</sup>

The note follows on the heels of this passage as an attempt to understand this unexpected visitation of (the) spirit. Here we are directed to an "originary allegiance" or "commitment" which precedes every questioning, before any distinction between yes and no; that is, one begins by *trusting* a promise, a commitment before the word, a "wordless word which we name the 'yes'."<sup>36</sup> That is why "[p]arole must *first* pray, address itself to us: put in us its trust, its confidence, depend on us, and even have *already* done it."<sup>37</sup> And this pledge, he continues, this 'already,' is essential because it reaches back to a moment of already-having-trusted, an older event, part of a past which never returns, and never 'was.' This analysis strikes at the very heart of the Heideggerian notion of methodological atheism by positing a commitment before the question, for it was precisely the radical "questioningness" [*Fraglichkeit*] of philosophy which he felt called for atheism in philosophy.

#### *Conclusion: Rounding the Square*

I have attempted to expound Heidegger's notion of "methodological

atheism" as well as its parallels and analogies in Thomistic systems, suggesting that the parallels are not merely coincidental but perhaps indicate a common source.

Deconstructively, I have argued that Heidegger's insistence on faith-free philosophy is impossible, given his own dismantling of the Enlightenment tradition and development of hermeneutical thought, as well as later contributions by Gadamer, Kuhn and Polanyi. Rather than agreeing that "the philosopher does not believe," I would assert that the philosopher can't help but believe. Derrida suggests the same in his *Memoirs of the Blind*. "Do you believe?" an interlocutor asks. "I don't know," someone responds, "one has to believe..."<sup>38</sup> It is inescapable: one must (*il faut*) be committed, give credence, have faith (*croire*). Constructively, this means that the circle is not so square after all. Rather than being mortal enemies (Heidegger), nor extrinsic to one another (Gilson, Caputo), faith and philosophy are inextricably linked, opening the door for the development of a Christian philosophy (and not only the possibility of a Christian philosophy, but the religious nature of philosophy itself). And it is precisely in the context of post-modern and deconstructionist discourse that an avenue is opened for such work, because it is in this context that the role of commitment in all theory is recognized.

Of course, I will continue to insist that Christian philosophy remain atheistic; not in the sense of being without faith, but in the sense of rejecting the idol of theism. And that is still a bit of an art.

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#### NOTES

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1. See John A.T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM Press, 1963); the representative volume by Thomas J.J. Altizer and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966); and more recently Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

2. Jean-Luc Marion, in the Preface to the English edition of *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991): xix-xx.

3. The now standard works on this period are Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, trans. Allan Blunden (New York: Basic Books, 1993): 41-129; Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's BEING AND TIME* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

4. Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretation zu Aristoteles: Einführung in die Phänomenologische Forschung*, GA 61, eds. Walter Bröcker

und Kate Bröcker-Otlmanns (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1985): 197.

5. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959): 7. John Caputo sees a discontinuity between this critique and those of the early Freiburg lectures, but I would suggest that both critiques of a Christian philosophy are rooted in Heidegger's understanding of philosophy as radical questioning. See Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993): 43, 174-178.

6. See John van Buren, "Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther," in *Reading Heidegger From the Start: Essays in His Earliest Thought*, eds. Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994): 159-174, where he points to the impact of Paul's discourse on the foolishness of faith to philosophy as well as Luther's *Destruktion* of Aristotelianism.

7. Martin Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology [1927]," in *The Piety of Thinking*, trans. and eds. James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976): 20.

8. Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time* [1924], German-English Edition, trans. William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992): 1.

9. Martin Heidegger, "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation [1922]," trans. Michael Baur, *Man and World* 25 (1992): 367.

10. "Phenomenology and Theology," p. 21; *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 7. These methodological assertions work themselves out in Heidegger's philosophy in a number of ways. One example is his adamant insistence that the analysis of fallenness "in principle has nothing to do with theology." See Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* [1925], trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985): 283.

11. See Ott, pp. 89-94, where he recounts how Heidegger was rejected for the Chair in Christian Philosophy in Freiburg in 1916.

12. Letter of January 9, 1919, cited in Ott, p. 106.

13. *Summa Theologiae*, Ia.1.1.5.

14. Jude P. Dougherty, "Christian Philosophy: Sociological Category or Oxymoron?" in *The Monist: Christian Philosophy* 75.3 (July 1992): 287.

15. Joseph Owens, "The Need for Christian Philosophy," *Faith and Philosophy* 11.2 (April 1994): 168-169.

16. Plantinga makes a similar proposal in "Advice to Christian Philosophers," *Faith and Philosophy* 1 (1984): 254-256, 264.

17. Owens, "The Need," pp. 169-170.

18. In Ott, p. 77.

19. Jean-Luc Marion, "Le phénomène saturé," in J-L. Chretien, et. al., *Phénoménologie et Théologie* (Paris: Criterion, 1992): 79-128.

20. Jean-Luc Marion, "Metaphysics and Phenomenology: A Relief for Theology," trans. Thomas Carlson, in *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1994): 572-591, esp. pp. 589-591.

21. John D. Caputo, "Metanoetics: Elements of a Postmodern Christian Philosophy," lecture delivered March 18, 1994 at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto, Ontario. The same lecture was presented to the Society of Christian Philosophers, May 7, 1994 in Kansas City. I will refer to a typescript version. I suspect that much of this material will appear in a forthcoming book, tentatively titled *Sacred Anarchy*.

22. Caputo, "Metanoetics," p. 3.

23. John D. Caputo, *Against Ethics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993): 245. See also his more recent "Instants, Secrets and Singularities: Dealing Death in Kierkegaard and Derrida," in *Kierkegaard in*

*Post/Modernity*, eds. Martin J. Matustik and Merold Westphal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

24. John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), ch. 10. I have further explored this in my essay "Between Athens and Jerusalem, Freiburg and Rome: John Caputo as Christian Philosopher," *Paradigms* 10 (1995): 19-23.

25. Another example would be Ricoeur, who espouses a "methodological agnosticism" which is fundamentally the same. See Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 24-25. For a commentary, see Pamela Sue Anderson, "Agnosticism and Attestation: An Aporia Concerning the Other in Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another*," *Journal of Religion* 74.1 (January 1994): 65-76.

26. A caveat, however: in addition to examples considered below, one should note the distinct tradition stemming from Augustine which rejects this exclusive thesis, particularly as developed in the Franciscan tradition.

27. As does Dougherty, who correctly notes that "[i]n spite of his use of the word 'intrinsic', the Gilsonian thesis is one which may be designated a sociological perspective." Dougherty, "Christian Philosophy," p. 289.

28. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989): 277ff.

29. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970): e.g. pp. 19, 17, 113, 7, and 25.

30. This same theme is picked up in Polanyi's discussion of 'tacit knowledge.' See Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964) and *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966).

31. Merold Westphal has made a similar observation, noting that his insistence on methodological atheism is "a curious remnant in his thought of an Enlightenment rationalism whose chief opponent he purports to be." See Westphal, "Levinas and the Immediacy of the Face," *Faith and Philosophy* 10.4 (October 1993): 499n.4.

32. For a similar discussion along these lines, see Roy A. Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991): 9-93. The thesis that I am exploring was also suggested by Dutch phenomenologist Herman Dooyeweerd, operating from within the neo-Calvinian tradition of Abraham Kuyper. See Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, Vol. 1, trans. D.H. Freeman and William S. Young (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1953), especially the Prolegomena.

33. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), section 217.

34. Alan M. Olson, "Postmodernity and Faith," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58 (1990): 37.

35. Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Rachel Bowlby and Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989): 94.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 130. One is tempted to find an allusion in a certain wordless Word *who* was 'in the beginning' (John 1:1). One could perhaps even hear echoes of Paul: "For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes." (2 Cor. 1:19-20)

37. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

38. Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, trans. Pascale Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993): 129, emphasis added.