THE SACRALITY OF THE SECULAR

BRADLEY B. ONISHI

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Postmodern Philosophy of Religion

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To Brian and Blake
'Ohana No Ka Oi

INTRODUCTION

Philosophy's "Turn to Religion" and Secularities Beyond Secularism

DOES SECULARITY equate to disenchantment? What and how does philosophy of religion contribute to the academic study of religion? These two seemingly unrelated questions motivate this work. In regard to the former, I contend that the answer is "no," secularity does not necessarily equate to disenchantment, and in fact the equation of the two is myopic and outdated. In regard to the latter I maintain that one of the principal ways philosophers of religion contribute to the academic study of religion is by way of critical reflection on the category of the secular, including the articulation of non-secularist visions of secularity. In what follows, I arrive at the answer to the first question by responding to the second.

During the last three decades, Anglophone philosophers, theologians, and other scholars of religion have observed and analyzed European philosophy's "turn to religion," a designation meant to signify philosophy's surprising engagement with religion after a supposedly atheist or secular period from the Enlightenment to existentialism. During the same period, anthropologists and sociologists of religion have proclaimed the denouement of the secularization thesis, which from the early decades of the twentieth century to the 1980s both prescribed and described the demise of religion in modern societies.[1] How is the demise of the secularization thesis related to philosophy's “turn” to religion? Is it a coincidence that philosophy “turned” to religion just when scholars began to recognize religion’s persistent and complex influence on the global geopolitical stage? Additionally, has the “turn” to religion in continental philosophy led to alternative conceptions of secularity that might offer a pathway beyond both modern disenchantment and secularist dogmatism?

The foundational claim of this work is that philosophers in the continental tradition engaged religious phenomena as resources for more vibrantly and accurately conceiving of the secular in the first half of the twentieth century, well before the reprisals and reevaluations by sociologists and anthropologists of religion in the face of the unraveling of the secularization thesis (or theses), and well before the “turn” to religion on the part of philosophy during the 1980s and 1990s. The denouement of the secularization thesis and philosophy’s “turn” to religion should be understood as posterior to a philosophical tradition that had drawn upon religious phenomena in order to envision the secular more expansively decades before either of these intellectual movements took shape. In the case of philosophy’s “turn” to religion, this means that we should either consider that such a turn took place well before the 1980s and 1990s, or consider the notion that philosophy never genuinely disentangled from religion. It is more likely, rather, that philosophy’s engagement with religion became more apparent to the academy after the blinders of the secularization thesis slowly began to fade in the 1980s and 1990s.

More important than whether or not there was a “turn” to or away from religion is the fact that accurately identifying the structure and history of philosophy’s engagement with religious phenomena is crucial for understanding how contemporary philosophy of religion contributes to the academic study of religion. As I argue, we do an injustice to the history and scope of continental philosophy of religion if we construct a narrative limited to postmodern theologies or “Derrida and religion.” Continental philosophy of religion is more than a new form of natural theology or radical theology, and it transcends poststructuralism. By constructing such an exclusionary history, we not only tell an incomplete narrative concerning philosophy’s engagement with religion(s) during the last century, but we risk losing sight of how such an engagement has contributed to the academic study of religion.

Reconsidering the contours of philosophy's engagement with religion in the twentieth century enables detailed analysis of how this relationship has enabled philosophers of religion to reflect critically on the category of the secular. If, as I maintain, philosophy's entanglement with religious phenomena over the course of the twentieth century led, perhaps counterintuitively, to vibrant secular reconceptions of the secular in many cases prior to the denouement of the secularization thesis, then in a manner heretofore unconsidered one important way that philosophy of religion has contributed and continues to contribute to the academy study of religion is through critical analysis of the category of the secular and the related doctrine of secularism.

FROM SECULARISM TO SECULARITY

According to José Casanova, the secularization thesis contains three foundational components: the decline of religion, the privatization of religion, and the increased institutional differentiation of modern society (where distinct institutions constitute separate economic, social, religious, and other domains).[2] These components are found in the seminal literature of the secularization thesis. In *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), Peter Berger follows Max Weber by outlining how and why the Judaic and Christian traditions contributed to modern Western societies' process of secularization. He predicts that in the future Western cultures would become even more transparently void of religious influence. In *The Invisible Religion* (1967), Thomas Luckmann focused less on the societal and more on the individual, proclaiming that commitment to religious institutions would diminish drastically in favor of individual religious cosmos formed from varying religious and cultural phenomena. These are only two well-known examples of many works in which the demise of religion was predicted, prescribed, or both.

Secularization theses are now out of style and have been for some decades, even if scholars continue to debate the merits of their individual components.[3] One might take Berger et al.'s *The Desecularization of the World*, published in 1999, as a marker of how much changed from the 1960s to the end of the millennium: "My point is that the assumption that we live in a secularized world is false. The world today, with some exceptions, . . . is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more than ever."[4] Berger's infamous retraction reflects a broader recognition on the part of sociologists of religion of the dissonance between the ideology of secularism and the description of the supposed global process of secularization. As Jeffrey K. Hadden observed twenty-five years ago, until the 1980s and 1990s, "secularization theory ha[d] not been subjected to systematic scrutiny because it is a doctrine more than it is a theory."[5] It seems that secularization theorists wanted the world to be secular, so they described it as such or as becoming such, even if such descriptions were inaccurate or premature. Unsurprisingly, scrutiny of the secularization thesis revealed foundational problems:

> First, a critique of secularization theory itself uncovers a hodgepodge of loosely employed ideas rather than a systemic theory. Second, existing data simply do not support the theory. Third, the effervescence of new religious movements in the very locations where secularization appears to cut deeply into established institutional religion suggests that religion is perhaps truly ubiquitous in human cultures. Fourth, the number of countries in which religion is significantly entangled in reform, rebellion, and revolution is continually expanding. This reality challenges the assumption of secularization theory that would relegate religion to the private realm.[6]

In response to the vigorous persistence of religion in the contemporary context, including its ongoing influence in the public sphere, scholars have attempted to disentangle the ideology of secularism from the historical process of secularization. Religion's ongoing vitality has, in other words, led theorists to consider how to more accurately envision the secular and its relation to religion.

Some of the more insightful analyses have come from Talal Asad and William Connolly, who maintain that secularism is an ideology that adheres to the idea of a modern project of emancipation based on the strict regulation of religion in the public sphere (FS 15). By contrast, secularity, which consists of a variety of "concepts, practices, and sensibilities," is "conceptually prior" to the ideology of secularism

(FS 16). As such, it is not an ideology to enact, but a mode of comportment to the world. This means, among other things, that one can be secular without being a secularist. In *Formations of the Secular*, Asad engages the work of Margaret Canovan, who maintains that secularism is a "project to be realized," reliant upon a foundational myth. With help from Connolly, the myth of secularism can be outlined as follows: First, Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant maintained that the human being in its natural state is endowed with the capacity for reason, a certain type of disembodied, ahistorical reason, which is the transcendental ground of all authentic knowledge. Second, the capacity for such rationality has the potential to free human beings from the crutch of an external authority such as a transcendent God or other extraworldly forces. Third, for Kant the greatest danger is sectarianism, which leads to the violence and discord embodied in religious wars. Thus, the only type of acceptable religion is a universal religion of reason, or reasonable religion. Finally, Kant renders philosophies illegitimate that give any authority to sensibility, history, or texts (WS 30–33). Tradition and passion must be usurped by the authority of universal rationality.

The result is an ideology of secularism founded on the assumption that the project of modernity is to wean humanity from the irrational forms of external authority that have enslaved it to gods, kings, and tradition. On this reading, the human has the ability to resist historical, sensible, and traditional forms of authority and influence in order to execute a purely rational morality. This strict rationalism opens the pathway for a universal modern public sphere unpolluted by irrational elements such as faith, passion, and tradition. In the meantime, religion is set up as the irrational other of the rational secular, one admitted to the public sphere and the academy in very limited ways. As a doctrine that seeks to "emancipate" the human from the bonds of irrationality and faith in order to allow it to exist in its natural state of freedom, secularism, according to Asad, generates the category of "religion" in order to control its deployment (FS 184).

This means that according to the internal logic of secularism its adherents "must continually attack the darkness of the outside world that threatens to overwhelm that space" (FS 59), a darkness spread over the world through religious faith, visceral passions, nonrational philosophies, and experimental politics (WS 33). Asad summarizes it this way:

> One old argument about the need to separate religion from politics is that because the former essentially belongs to the domain of faith and passion, rational argument and interest-guided action can have no place in it. The secularist concedes that religious beliefs and sentiments might be acceptable at a personal and private level, but insists that organized religion, being founded on authority and constraint, has always posed a danger to the freedom of the self as well as to the freedom of others. That may be why some enlightened intellectuals are prepared to allow deprivatized religion entry into the public sphere for the purpose of addressing "the moral conscience" of its audience—but on condition that it leave its coercive powers outside the door and rely only on its powers of persuasion.
>
> (FS 186)

Of course, not all secularists are willing to admit that religion has even limited moral value for the public sphere. Richard Dawkins suggests that the goal should be to eradicate religion in order to free society from irrational elements that create sectarian strife and unnecessary violence: "If religion is a virus or parasite that exploits a set of cognitive by-products for its benefit, not ours, then we ought to rid ourselves of it."[7]

As Dawkins's statement illustrates, just as certain religious visions of the public sphere are prone to intolerance, secularism is often guided by a dogmatism based on the belief that its foundations are incontestable. In this sense, secularism is not qualitatively different from dogmatic religious myths of redemption, as Connolly points out:

> Several variants of secularism kill two birds with one stone: as they try to seal public life from religious orientations they also cast out a set of nontheistic orientations to reverence, ethics, and public life that deserve to be heard. These two effects follow from the secular conceit to provide a singular authoritative basis for public reason and/or public ethics that governs all reasonable citizens regardless of "personal" or "private" faith.
>
> (WS 5)

In fact, secularism is structurally parallel to religious fundamentalisms, since both provide their adherents with an uncontestable founding myth, which creates order, meaning, and truth in a world full of darkness and disorder. Like other fundamentalisms, secularist attempts to rid the public sphere of religious intrusions "induce blind spots" (WS 4) with respect to secularism's own assumptions, particularly the foundational belief that the human is a rational ego capable of mastering the world by calculative thinking. On this reading, religion is an irrational vestige from a premodern age that threatens to hold humanity in unenlightened bondage.

By replacing a transcendent God with a deified transcendental subject, human reason was imbued with ultimate authority, giving the transcendental subject the imperative to master the world.[8] However, as psychoanalysts, phenomenologists, social theorists, poststructuralists, gender and feminist theorists, and cognitive scientists have shown, such a vision of the human is untenable.[9] Rather than a self-evident ground of knowledge and reality, the autonomous, rational ego is now viewed as a modern construct. If it is the case that such a vision of the human is no longer tenable, then it follows that the doctrine of secularism is no longer tenable. As I analyze in chapter 1, calling into question the accuracy of the vision of the human as an autonomous, discrete, rational ego means calling into question the accuracy of secularism's foundational myth. In other words, secularism is an ideology founded on an inaccurate vision of the human as the "unshakable foundation of universally valid knowledge about nature and society" and driven by the "violence of universalizing reason itself" (FS 193). This means that criticisms of the transcendental ego, the ground on which the narrative of secularism unfolds, provide an opening to a pathway whereon alternative conceptions of the human and the world can inform renewed visions of the secular, or, in other words, open pathways to secularities beyond secularism.

One of the most interesting articulations of such a secularity has come from the political theorist William Connolly, who explains the comportment to the world of the secular person as follows: "I mean a philosophy of becoming in which the universe is not dependent on a higher power. It is reducible neither to mechanistic materialism, dualism, theo-teleology, nor the absent God of minimal theology" (WB 43). A secular person may not resist forms of belief, community, ritual, or practice comparable to, or at times indistinguishable from, a religious person. A secular person, however, would not consciously comport herself toward any divinity, power, person, or god. The secular starting point for interpreting the human, world, and cosmos is that this reality is the only reality. The human, world, and cosmos may be more spooky, uncertain, uncanny, or strange than good moderns, as Kosky calls them, might expect, but it is this universe, and not another, that bears such traits.

However, for Connolly, secularity does not equate to secularism. His secularity is by contrast an immanent naturalism "that projects an open temporal horizon exceeding human mastery and irreducible to both closed naturalism *and* radical transcendence" (WB 70). Through analyses of systems theory, quantum theory, and the works of Nietzsche and Deleuze, Connolly maintains that his secular vision of the human, world, and cosmos "does not fit neatly into either old enchanted world *or* the disenchanted world generated by the combined forces of nominalism, Calvinism, Newtonian science, and secularization" (WB 70). By resisting the dichotomy between religious enchantment and secular disenchantment, Connolly argues that the "world of becoming" he envisions

> can be enchanted in some ways, even if it does not express divine meanings that are partly revealed and partly hidden, and even if it is not a providential world. For a world of becoming is marked by surprising turns in time, uncanny experiences, and the possibility of human participation to some degree in larger processes of creativity that both include and surpass the human estate.
>
> (WB 70)

Connolly's vision of the human is fundamentally different from secularists such as Dawkins, because it does not include the belief that the human, the world, or the relationship between them are masterable by a mythological universal rationality. It is a secularity distinct from the dogmatism and disenchantment of secularism, one developed by way of critics of the transcendental ego such as Nietzsche and Deleuze.

An important aspect of such an enchanted secularity is its recognition of the need for faith even on the part of the nonreligious person: “We define the term ‘faith’ in a way that touches but does not correspond completely to some transcendent readings of it. Faith to us means a contestable element in belief that extends beyond indubitable experience or rational necessity, but permeates your engagement with the world” (WB 39). Given the devastating critique of the transcendent ego since the end of the nineteenth century, and in light of the shift from a Newtonian to a quantum age, Connolly argues that since the world remains ultimately unmasterable by human reason, all human accounts of it include elements of faith. Even if we are not all believers, for Connolly we are all necessarily faithful, a fact that “opens a window between us [Connolly] and some devotees of transcendence” that is mutually beneficial: “Such modes of articulation can also open each wager/faith to engagement with pertinent modes of evidence, inspiration, and argument from other faiths/creeds. . . . It also opens us to comparisons that highlight the comparative contestability of the stance we embrace” (WB 40). In sum, Connolly’s enchanted secularity eschews the dogmatism of secularism for an immanent-realism that recognizes the contestability of its claims and remains open to mutual criticism and enrichment with nonsecular “faiths.”

Overall, Connolly’s nonsecularist secularity is a theoretical reprisal of the secular after the denouement of the secularization thesis. His creative readings of diverse sources have enabled him to question the stark divide between the secular and the religious, and to open avenues for dialogue, comparison, and enrichment between them. While I have deep sympathies with Connolly’s view, it’s not new. In fact, such forms of secularity have been developed for over a century now in the continental philosophical tradition through ongoing engagement with religion. Whereas Connolly draws upon figures such as Deleuze and Nietzsche, who carried on complex if largely antithetical relationships with religion, I analyze the work of Heidegger, Bataille, Taylor, and other thinkers who directly engaged religious phenomena throughout the twentieth century in order to develop antecedents to the kind of enchanted secularity Connolly has developed in the new millennium. My analyses of their philosophies seek to demonstrate that continental philosophy's ongoing critique of the transcendental ego led to similar nonsecularist secularities well before the unraveling of the secularization thesis in the 1980s and 1990s and well before Connolly developed his enchanted secularity in the new millennium.

THE TURN TO RELIGION?

Connolly's work is largely an attempt to reconceive of the secular apart from secularism. As I explore in chapters 1 and 2, this project has been underway in the continental tradition since Heidegger's early Freiburg lectures. However, the development of an enchanted secularity in this tradition carries one important distinction from Connolly's—it has been built by direct engagement with religion, rather than a mere openness to it. One of the obstacles to drawing out the implications of this distinction has been the view that continental philosophy's engagement with religion dawned in the 1980s and 1990s when theologians and philosophers of religion began to notice the potential of poststructuralism for theological and religious reflection. However, philosophy's engagement with religion appears new only if one considers its import for theology, or if one wants to claim Derrida as the progenitor of such a turn. If one considers its significance more broadly, it is clear that philosophy's engagement with religion began much earlier than the last quarter of the twentieth century.

It is no coincidence that the secularization thesis had its heyday in the 1960s during a time when the atheist existentialisms of Camus and Sartre were at the height of their popularity and influence, and when Death of God theology emerged into the American consciousness.[10] Sociological preoccupation with secularization took hold in an era of philosophical secularism. After all, when sociologists were predicting the demise of religion, certain philosophers and theologians were either predicting or celebrating the death of God in order to reckon with human life in his absence.[11] From the 1960s to the early 1980s continental philosophy was associated with general hostility toward traditional religious belief, just as sociology of religion predicted, and often prescribed, the demise of religion in the modern world.

And even though Sartre's celebrity waned in the 1970s, Derrida replaced him as the en vogue French thinker by the 1980s, when his poststructuralism became an object of both derision and fandom in North American universities. Like Sartre's existentialism, it was assumed that Derrida's poststructuralism was antireligion, as Mark C. Taylor explains:

> At the time, the association of Derridean deconstruction with religion and theology was far from obvious. Most of Derrida's supporters saw no plausible connection between deconstruction and religion, and most of his opponents tended to understand deconstruction as a pernicious form of nihilism that threatened religious beliefs, moral values, and sociopolitical action.[12]

However, just as the tides of the secularization thesis changed dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s, so did the Anglophone perspective on the relationship between continental philosophy and religion.

As I analyze in detail in chapter 5, the 1980s led to a marked reversal of attitudes toward Derrida and religion after Mark Taylor began to see deconstruction as a potentially helpful strategy for reading sacred texts. This shift was emblematized in Taylor's *Erring* (1984), the first monograph dedicated to exploring the potential of Derrida's thought for religious studies. However, Hart's *Trespass of the Sign* (1988) and Caputo's *Radical Hermeneutics* (1988) shifted the focus from the study of religion to theology by demonstrating that Derridean deconstruction and approaches to *différance* could be allied with postmodern theologies. These seminal texts opened pathways for philosophers and theologians to draw upon twentieth-century continental philosophy as a resource for religious and theological reflection, giving birth to what is now called continental philosophy of religion. During these early years, many Anglophone thinkers, mainly theologians, marveled at the prospect that the supposedly secular traditions of postwar continental philosophy could be the vehicle for postmodern theologies through which one could resurrect the supposedly dead God by way of Paris, instead of Athens or Jerusalem. John Caputo's work and influence were especially crucial to the burgeoning of "postmodernism and religion" and to transforming Derrida from a thinker whose work resonated in certain ways with negative theologies to a kind of religious atheist.

This coincided with works dedicated to asking why and how philosophy had so suddenly and unexpectedly made a "turn to religion," with particular focus on apophatic theology.[13] The most influential of these is Hent de Vries's *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*, wherein de Vries considers how "the religious" resurfaces "in the most unexpected ways," most notably in Derrida's poststructuralism, which was once thought of as athetist.[14] Through analysis of the ambiguity of the *adieu/à dieu*, de Vries explores the inherent irreducibility, or religiosity, of thought:

> To demonstrate that the apparent entanglement of Derrida's writing in the *via negativa* is a being *on the way* (an *unterwegs* of sorts), not to language (*Sprache*), not to the essence of language, and not to writing, let alone to a science of writing, but, rather, to "God" (*à dieu*) or to what comes to substitute for this name for the totally other yet another totally other (an incommensurable, totally other "totally other").[15]

While de Vries's analysis of Derrida's work is challenging and important, on my reading he too strongly identifies philosophy's engagement with religion with Derrida's sustained interest in religion. The intense devotion shown to Derrida's work in the 1990s convinced many scholars either to separate previous continental thinkers, Heidegger especially, from religion and theology in order to illuminate the novel potential of Derrida's work, or to read pre-Derridean thinkers through an emphatically Derridean lens. I trace the history of religious/theological interpretations of Derrida in chapter 5, but for now it is important to point out that in retrospect it seems that the wonder instilled by the fact that Derrida's work might be supportive of new forms of theology convinced many that philosophy's engagement with religion began with Derridean deconstruction and poststructuralist texts resonant with negative theology. While Derrida's work may have been the opening of the path that led many to see how continental philosophy could be an ally of both theology and religious studies, and even if Derrida was the most influential philosopher to engage religion after the demise of the secularization thesis, it is strictly inaccurate to say that his work marks philosophy's renewed attention to religious phenomena.

Moreover, during the 1990s and the 2000s French Catholic phenomenology grew in popularity. Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, and Jean-Yves Lacoste gained wide readerships outside of France, and the translations of their work served to enlarge their influence in all corners of the Anglophone world. They moved way beyond the idea that postwar French thought could be a helpful ally for the study of religion, and their increased popularity led some to pronounce a new intimacy between philosophy and theology. Perhaps most influentially, Christina Gschwandtner argues in *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy* (2012) that the relationship between religion and philosophy developed on both sides of the Atlantic from the 1980s to the new millennium signifies a postmodern iteration of Christian apologetics—a *theologia naturalis* for a phenomenological age. According to Gschwandtner, both French and Anglophone thinkers have used the phenomenologies of Husserl, Heidegger, and Lévinas to accomplish the same goal as St. Thomas's Five Ways: to disclose theism's philosophical viability and the possibility of God's revelation. While for many this resurgence of the religious in the philosophical marked a welcome renewal of natural theology, for others it appeared to be a worrying conversion of secular philosophy to religious philosophy—a swift change from philosophy-engaging-religion to philosophical theology.[16]

Collectively, the attention to both poststructuralism and phenomenology has led to important work in both philosophy and theology. Rather than diminishing the significance of these bodies of work, my intent is to extend their reach by tending to the often-neglected nether side of the relationship between continental philosophy and religious phenomena, especially as it pertains the category of the secular. In the rush to "convert" Derrida and his contemporaries during the 1990s, and due to the seemingly omnipresent status of French phenomenology in the new millennium, the meaning of religious phenomena for the secular traditions of continental thought has been largely ignored. If, as Talal Asad has argued, little attention has been given to understanding the epistemic and ontological assumptions that compose the category of the secular, it is equally true that not enough time has been spent reflecting on what philosophy's engagement with religion means for nonsecularist visions of secularity (FS 21). That is, if we view the relationship between continental philosophy and religion(s) as a mutually beneficial engagement between two conversation partners, then, in addition to the overwhelming work put into understanding philosophy's relevance and meaning for various theologies, we must ask how and why religious phenomena have proved to be philosophical resources for thinkers who reexamine the secular philosophically. In terms of the question of the secular, perhaps the unlikely relationship between philosophy and religion, coupled with the demise of the secularization thesis, enabled the development of many different forms of postmodern religion and theology, but also shed new light on the development of nonsecularist secularities throughout the twentieth century and beyond.

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Turning analytical attention to this side of the relationship between philosophy and religious phenomena provides a historical and analytical framework for understanding how philosophy of religion contributes to the academic study of religion. Recently, scholars have reflected critically on the role of philosophy in the field of religious studies and the future of the field.[17] One of the common elements of these reflections has been the need to address the prevalent idea that philosophy of religion is in fact a thinly veiled form of theology allowed to exist illegitimately in departments of religious studies. In a set of publications, ominously titled *The Ends of Philosophy of Religion* (2013) and "The End of Philosophy of Religion?" (2014), Timothy Knepper argues that philosophy of religion, in both its analytic and its continental iterations, "has very little to offer" religious studies for two main reasons. First, it is unhelpful to the study of religion "due to the fact that the content of reflection in philosophy of religion is usually either a fictionalized and rarified theism or the latest critical notion of some continental philosopher, not the historical religions of the world in their localized complexity and comparative diversity."[18] Second, philosophy of religion is either explicitly or implicitly theological: "But it is also due to the fact that philosophy of religion can look more like philosophical theology—not a (relatively) religiously neutral examination of reason-giving in the religions of the world, but an overt apologetic for (or against) the reasonableness or value of some particular kind of religion."[19] In Knepper's view, both analytical and continental philosophy of religion—as they are currently practiced—are abstracted from lived religion and more often than not a form of theological apologetics, rather than a "neutral" evaluation of religious phenomena. Taken together, these failures mean that the field lacks any sense of diversity in terms of its content of study and rarely connects with religion in terms of how it is lived on the ground. In response, Knepper proposes that in addition to inquiring into as many religious traditions as possible and ensuring diversity of race, creed, and sex among the philosophical community, philosophy of religion ought to engage in three main tasks if it is to contribute meaningfully to religious studies: a neutral evaluation of religious truth-claims and reason-giving using formal logic and empirical science, comparison of religious reason-giving and truth-claims, and thick description of religious phenomena.

Knepper's assessment of the field is largely accurate, but also problematic. Knepper articulates something that many in religious studies have suspected for some time: philosophy of religion is, or at least seems to be, a kind of cryptotheology, a remnant from a time when religious studies was encapsulated by theology. In terms of continental philosophy of religion this conflation of theology and the academic study of religion was built into the field at its inception. A large contingent of scholars working in "continental philosophy of religion" would be more accurately identified as philosophical theologians whose work intends to defend, advance, or improve Christian (or Jewish) theology. However, because Knepper's analysis does not include a historical investigation of continental philosophy of religion's relationship to religious studies, he fails to see that there is a contingent of scholars of religion who have drawn upon continental philosophy in order to refine and critique the theories and methods of religious studies. Despite his deep criticism of what he perceives to be philosophy's lack of engagement with the historical religions, he conducted no historical research into the history of continental philosophy of religion in order to more fully understand the context and history from which and through which it has developed. Instead, Knepper limited his investigation to any monograph or edited collection with "philosophy of religion" in the title, the works of John D. Caputo, which he takes to be representative of the field, and a select list of journals.[20]

In the chapters that follow, I undertake a historically based analysis that aims to provide a more accurate understanding of continental philosophy of religion's contributions to and potential for the academic study of religion. Such analysis reveals that the field is founded on the unexpected resonances between the secular traditions of continental philosophy and religious subjectivities and cosmologies. At its heart, the field is the interpretation and exploration of this mutually beneficial relationship. During the past century, philosophers from Heidegger to Taylor have offered provocative and innovative interpretations of religious texts, which reverberate in and beyond their religious traditions. Conversely, these same philosophers have learned from religious phenomena, which have provided crucial insight into their secular visions of the human world. In this sense, continental philosophy of religion distinguishes itself from other forms of philosophy by taking the risk that religious phenomena can be viable philosophical resources. This understanding of philosophy of religion connects to the demise of the secularization thesis and philosophy's "turn" to religion, since some of the first nonsecularist secularities were developed through philosophical engagements with religion in the first half of the twentieth century and have been carried on by Anglophone philosophers of religion from the 1980s to the present.

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION: THEORY AND METHOD

In order to frame my analysis of the interconnected components of nonsecularist secularities, the academic study of religion, and philosophy of religion, I build on recent work by Jeffrey Kosky, Tyler Roberts, and Thomas Carlson.

In his work *Arts of Wonder*, published in 2013, Kosky explores new pathways of enchantment through religion and contemporary art that open vistas for seeing how continental philosophy of religion challenges the discourse of disenchantment. As I maintain throughout this work, the tradition of atheist philosophers engaging religious phenomena beginning with Heidegger and running through Bataille, Nancy, Derrida, and numerous others signifies, among other things, an engagement with religion that forges a distinct pathway beyond Weberian disenchantment, to which, as Kosky argues, secular life seems bound. Weber suggests that the secular is the realm in which one can learn how to master the world, but not one that provides a sense of meaning or significance to it. It is not just that the secular realm is void of an ultimate human purpose or mysterious forces. Weber goes further. The properly secular view, constituted by facts and void of mystery, renders human life and death meaningless. The only means of garnering meaning, significance, and profundity to life is through adherence to arbitrarily chosen values, which are rationally unjustifiable and logically incoherent in terms of their relation to one another. As the story goes, secularity entails the disenchantment of the world—the banishment of mystery in favor of calculability and determinability. The lack of mystery, however, means the impossibility of providing an account of the secular meaning of life.

Unsurprisingly, this philosophical vision is unsatisfying even for those who identify as secular. In response, Kosky pronounces his "disenchantment with modern disenchantment" and the need for a different approach:

> And yet, however empowering the project of disenchantment and demystification might be, many today have grown disenchanted with modern disenchantment and are seeking a new story to tell about it. They sense the lovelessness of the world fostered by the calculative thinking that dominates modern economic, scientific, and philosophical logic. They feel the absence of charm and

> wonder as deeply enervating. And they suspect another truth, one in which the world might come to light in a far more wonderful way.[21]

What draws me to Kosky's position is not only his dissatisfaction with disenchantment taken as an ineluctable fact of secular life, but also his belief that a " 'secular' response to its challenges can also be cultivated, without fleeing the modern condition."[22] Similarly to Connolly, for Kosky disenchantment with disenchantment does not mean refusing secularity; it means complicating our understanding of it in order to make such an understanding more expansive and vibrant, which is, or can be, carried out by way of encounter with religious phenomena. In this sense, Kosky's secularity is "enchanted," because he dispels the disenchantment of Weberian secularity, but not by converting to a religious worldview. Kosky walks a fine line, one on which I attempt to follow him by arguing for a renewed understanding of secularity via engagement with religious phenomena. Yet Kosky doesn't surpass Weber through a direct or unreflective conversion from the secular to the religious. The goal is not to simply transpose himself from secularity to theism in order to give life meaning. Rather, Kosky refutes the disenchantment of secularism by considering if secularity necessarily entails the banishment of mystery, and thus the banishment of meaning.

By taking such an approach, Kosky enacts what Tyler Roberts calls a model of "encounter," wherein the scholar of religion remakes and re-creates her account of the human, world, or cosmos through the religious phenomena he or she studies. In his monograph *Encountering Religion*, published in 2013, Roberts outlines a humanistic approach to the study of religion wherein "the researcher exposes his or her world, and therefore his or her questions, expectations, ideals, and analytical maps and models, to the world of the religious subject, with the idea that this encounter might transform the perspective of the researcher."[23] For Roberts, the humanities are more than the study of human beings for the sake of knowledge; they constitute a set of scholarly practices aimed at knowledge of life: "This constructive activity is also studied by social scientists, but in the humanities one studies it in terms of what Geoffrey Harpham describes as the 'distinctively human capacity to imagine, to interpret, and to represent human experience,' that is, in terms of reflective human grappling, intentionally, with what matters."[24] Following Roberts, I want to suggest that the oft-neglected side of the relationship between continental philosophy and religion, which consists of numerous secular thinkers engaging religious texts, figures, and events, can be read as a response to unsatisfying and inaccurate visions of secularity by way of engagement with religious phenomena. In this sense, philosophy's "turn" to religion is not a return to religion. Philosophy does not surrender to the authority of religion in order to have the meaning of life restored. Rather, in the cases of thinkers such as Kosky and Roberts religious phenomena reshape, enlarge, or deconstruct their secular visions of the human and the world. As a result of these encounters, philosophers concerned with religion can provide not only compelling interpretations of religious phenomena, but enlarged and enriched accounts of secularity. The goal is neither to explain the substance of religion nor to protect religion by positing an irreducible realm of the sacred. Rather, such encounters enable these thinkers to philosophize *with* religion, among other resources, as a means for inheriting, creating, and mediating visions of the human, world, and cosmos.[25]

THE APOPHATIC ANALOGY

Some worry that a model of encounter leads to "unwarranted extrapolation, generalization, abstraction, idealization, or formalization" wherein philosophy is infected by, and thus reduced to, theology, or in which philosophy extrapolates religious phenomena from their context into a universalist ethic.[26] This can lead, according to Hent de Vries, to "a generalization no less than a trivialization" of both religious phenomena and humanistic discourse.[27] How can philosophy encounter religion without either generalizing or trivializing itself or the religious phenomena that it engages?[28]

In response to this question, I employ what Thomas Carlson calls the "apophatic analogy" in his work *Indiscretion: Finitude and the Naming of God*, published in 1999. On Carlson's reading, the symbiotic relationship that has developed between continental thought and religious phenomena is best understood through the relation between two distinct but related modes of subjectivity. On the philosophical side, the subject after the death of God has undergone what he calls a "mortal wound," since the criticisms of metaphysics leveled by Nietzsche and Heidegger have revealed finitude as the constitutive horizon of the human self. Through a careful reading of *Being and Time*, Carlson argues that Heidegger envisions the human phenomenologically as ineluctably and definitively oriented toward its death, which confers upon Dasein a radical futurity, since the possibility that constitutes its Being is one that can never be actualized: "Dasein's possibility depends, precisely, on its essential incompletion—on the finally irreducible gap between that which Dasein actually is and that which it might at every moment yet be. Such a possibility is radical, for as long as Dasein *is*, its possibility can never be reduced entirely to present actuality or actual presence."[29] Death, the possibility that can never be actualized, that which determines the Being of Dasein, is thus the inaccessible phenomenon around which language, representation, and knowledge circle, but that they can never access. In this sense, death engenders the existence of Dasein through its insurmountable absence.

Carlson argues that an analogous orientation can be detected in the Pseudo-Dionysius's mystical theology. The endless play between positive and negative theology in Pseudo-Dionysius's theology constitutes an apophasis that orients the mystical subject toward a God who is never actually available to language, thought, or representation:

> To negate all beings in both thought and language, and in turn to negate those negations themselves, constitutes the doubly negative or hyper-negative path through which the soul might strain toward the ineffable and incomprehensible God who is no being among beings but who calls all beings to be. In this sense, the mystical path in Dionysius aims toward that without which thought and language are not possible which itself remains beyond any thought or language.[30]

On this reading, Dionysius avoids reducing God to a being among beings through the "hyper-negative path" of *unio mystica* on which the mystical subject directs itself toward God. God engenders the economies of thought, language, and representation by means of his overwhelming excess, an excess paradoxically manifest by his absence.

Thus, just as Heidegger's Dasein is oriented toward a possibility—death—that can never be actualized, Dionysius's mystical subject is oriented toward a God who, despite engendering the possibility of language, representation, and knowledge, always remains inaccessible to them. This, for Carlson, is the key to understanding the unlikely resonances between phenomenology and mystical theology:

> Death and mystical unknowing remain beyond experience in the precise sense that they mark a limit at which the thinking and speaking being who is capable of experience would be dissolved or undone as such. There where death would have "occurred," Dasein cannot be present to actualize, think, or express it. There where mystical union would be achieved, the soul is carried beyond its own being, thought, and language.[31]

Both the mortal and mystical subjects are oriented toward a constitutive phenomenon that remains always inaccessible to them. There can be no experience of unity or actualization with the God of mystical theology or the death of the mortal human because that would mean the dissolution of the subject who would undergo such an "experience." Carlson argues that both the Heideggerian Being-toward-death and the Dionysian Being-toward-God involve a term that "never becomes the content or object of a knowing experience."[32] Both God and death remain beyond the limits of language, thought, and representation as the "impossible," which engenders the possibility of all possibilities while remaining beyond their limits.

On Carlson's reading, this sets up an "apophatic analogy" wherein it is impossible to distinguish that which remains beyond knowledge, representation, and language—whether the God whose presence exceeds all signification or the death whose absence conditions the possibility of Dasein's possibilities: "The being of Dasein in relation to the possibility of its impossible death is analogous to the created soul's naming of the unnamable God with whom it would be unified in mystical unknowing."[33] For Carlson, even if Heidegger's approach to Dasein remains in many ways distinct from the Pseudo-Dionysius's discourse on the nature of God, the analogous logics between their approaches to the constitutive element of language and experience mean that the secular philosopher trying to understand the contours of human mortality may benefit from examining the mystic's reflections on the absence of God. This neither infects philosophy with theology nor attempts to abstract the particularity of certain religious phenomena from their context for intellectual exploitation. It rather encourages a kind of inter*faith* dialogue wherein the goal is to recognize resonant components of distinct faiths without reducing or converting one to the other.

Thus, the apophatic analogy can act as a methodological prism for philosophy of religion as a subdiscipline of religious studies. As Kosky and Connolly maintain, the secular must be reenvisioned from the masterable domain constituted by total human knowledge to a world beset by uncertainty, unknowability, and indeterminacy. Roberts argues that humanistic inquiry is modeled as an encounter between distinct but not wholly other discourses, texts, communities, and figures. Carlson's apophatic analogy ties the renewed visions of the secular offered by Kosky and Connolly to Roberts's model of encounter by suggesting that the unknowability constitutive of the mystics' and philosophers' respective conceptions of language, experience, and subjectivity is analogously parallel, which means there are resonances between their subjectivities, worlds, and cosmos. If, as Weber suggests, the human and the world are masterable, then the analogy is untenable from the start. But, if, as Heidegger and his heirs suggest, the human and world remain indeterminate, unpredictable, and ultimately unknowable, then the analogy holds the potential for a mutually beneficial encounter between them based on analogous, if not identical, logics.

Through this theoretical matrix, methodologically philosophers should see the potential for philosophizing with religion rather than against it without worrying that such an approach will reduce philosophy to religious thought or burden philosophy with the secularist mission of converting its conversation partners away from "irrational" religious beliefs. Instead, it will recognize that the resonant logics between certain aspects of the secular and certain religious phenomena, framed by a model of encounter, reveal a potentially analogous relation on the basis of which one might become more vibrantly secular—might gain the eyes to see what's really there—by engaging religious phenomena, texts, communities, rituals, and figures. If "every secular practice is accompanied by a religious shadow," as Charles Hirschkind suggests, then secular thinkers can learn how to meaningfully and vibrantly interpret the facticity of human life and the world in which it is found from certain forms of religiosity.[34] Instead of repeating "the secularist narrative of the progressive replacement of religious error by secular reason—what Asad calls the 'triumphalist narrative of secularism,' "[35] the secular scholar can open herself to the fact that, as Connolly argues, "engagement with pertinent modes of evidence, inspiration, and argument from other faiths/creeds" can enrich and transform her secular comportment to the world (WB 40).

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

In chapter 1 I explore Heidegger's early Freiburg lecture courses as criticisms of Weberian disenchantment. In his course from 1919, "The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview," Heidegger attempts to understand philosophy as a primordial mode of thought in relation to science's seemingly unassailable authority regarding the human and the world. Heidegger's principal interlocutors in the course are the Neo-Kantian philosophers whose work dominated the humanistic and social-scientific disciplines of early-twentieth-century Germany. These scholars informed Max Weber's understanding of secularity, including the division of nature as a realm of nomothetic laws and culture as the realm of subjective human values. I trace the shared origins of Heidegger's and Weber's visions of the human and the world in order to make the case that Heidegger's early courses on science, philosophy, and religion can be interpreted as an alternative to Weberian disenchantment.

In chapter 2, I argue that in the philosophy of religion courses in 1920–1921, which immediately follow "The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldviews," we can detect not only how and why

Heidegger's phenomenology provides an alternative vision of secularity, but how and why Heidegger philosophizes with religion. I examine how the early Heidegger employed something like Roberts's model of encounter by drawing upon Paul and Augustine in order to rethink the themes of transcendence, temporality, and worldhood. After he had articulated the untenability of Weberian secularism and disenchantment through his criticism of Neo-Kantianism, Heidegger engaged religious texts to reconceive the human and the world phenomenologically. His philosophy remained methodologically atheist, but his thinking was enlarged and enriched by these thinkers. In conclusion, I argue that while Heidegger's early work has received significant attention from theologically interested commentators, it should also be read as an early critique of the foundations of secularity and an opening for reimagining the secular beyond Weberian disenchantment.

Chapter 3 maintains that a similar model of encounter is manifest in one of Heidegger's earliest French readers, Georges Bataille, who was critical of Heidegger's philosophy, but who also attempted to reimagine secular life through encounters with religious phenomena. In light of Heidegger's influence on French existentialists in the 1940s, it is often forgotten that Heidegger's earliest French readers were thinkers such as Koyré, Kojève, and Bataille who turned explicitly to religious phenomena as resources for their ongoing philosophical projects. Bataille is particularly comparable to Heidegger because he was an atheist who attempted to think through the structure of subjectivity and the nature of the world after the death of God through engagement with theological and mystical traditions.

Bataille and his contemporaries enthusiastically appropriated Heidegger's phenomenology in the 1930s partly because it provided an anthropological and ontological vision of the human that took the death of God seriously by refusing to replace the dead deity with a deified human subject. That is to say, Heidegger's phenomenology, on this reading, displaced the Cartesian ego as the foundation upon which existence would be given ultimate sense and meaning. In place of this foundation, Heidegger's analysis offered an antifoundationalist vision of the human wherein Dasein is constituted by the irreducible horizon of finitude and shaped by its ineluctable relationship to its world. However, despite the enthusiastic welcome given to Heidegger's work in Paris during the years 1930 to 1933, certain thinkers, Bataille among them, became quickly dissatisfied with Heidegger's formulation of transcendence because it seemed to trap the human within the immanence of Being. If on one hand Heidegger's phenomenology displaced the foundational Cartesian ego by demonstrating Dasein's indistinguishability from world, on the other hand it did so at the cost of nullifying the possibility of Dasein's transcendence of Being.

On the whole, Bataille interpreted Heidegger's formulation of Dasein's relationship to its world as a reduction of Dasein to a function of Being. Bataille envisioned philosophy and some forms of theology as subordinating the human to various forms of knowledge, under which it is encapsulated in a calculated effort toward some future end. Knowledge, for Bataille, is a form of work, and work is essentially a concern for the future. If the human never surpasses its concern for the future, it never experiences a moment in and for itself—a moment free from subordination to its concern for its Being. If we take Bataille's reading of Hegel as an example, it is clear that Hegel was Bataille's primary philosophical target because Hegel believed his System reduced human thought and action to the service of the realization of Absolute Knowledge. On Bataille's understanding of Hegel, the human never exists freely and genuinely because every one of its actions and thoughts is recuperated into the service of Spirit's self-realization as *savoir absolu*. Bataille's reading of Heidegger followed similar lines. Bataille believed that if the human was limited to authentically taking up its possibilities in the world in the face of the irresolvable horizon of finitude, then the human would become a function of Being who lived only in anticipation of the issue of its own Being.

Bataille's criticism of Heidegger and engagement with religion are important to the narrative of religion and postmodernism because Bataille was one of the first post-Heideggerian atheists to reflect critically on secular life through engagement with religious phenomena. In other words, Bataille's heterology and theory of the sacred represent the developing significance of philosophy's engagement with religion for nonsecularist secularities. Bataille is critical of Heidegger, but nonetheless his work can be understood as an extension of Heidegger's philosophizing with religion, rather than against it. Like Heidegger, Bataille engages religious phenomena not in order to defend or advance any given religious tradition, but in order to reflect on the meaning of secular life.

If chapter 3 moves the story of philosophy's engagement with religion from Heidegger's early Freiburg lectures to interwar Paris, chapter 4 examines how Bataille's engagement with mysticism anticipates iconic moments in contemporary continental philosophy of religion. By focusing on Bataille's engagement with the Christian mystical traditions and his understanding of "the impossible," I demonstrate that Bataille's mystical atheism signifies a crucial development in continental philosophy's post-Heideggerian engagement with religion by arguing that Bataille's notion of sovereignty prefigures the contemporary debate between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion on the themes of the gift, the impossible, and death. The debate in 1997 between these two contemporary French thinkers at Villanova University is perhaps the most important event, at least in North America, concerning both the deep tensions and striking resonances between Heidegger's secular and theological heirs.

Bataille's interpretation of the impossible is interesting for the way he identifies it thanatologically in a manner similar to Derrida and Heidegger. Although Bataille diverges from both of them through his belief that it is possible for the human to experience the impossibility of death, he remains within the Heideggerian lineage by identifying death with the impossible. Yet, in a manner more similar to Marion's postmetaphysical theology, Bataille draws upon the thanatological movements of the mystical subject in order to explicate the dissolution of the self through its experience of the impossible. Bataille's engagement with mysticism was in some way an anticipation of, in Carlson's words, the "indiscretion" between "such a death" and "such a God" for the way he draws upon the mystic's desire to die while still living in order to formulate transcendence as sovereignty. In this regard, Bataille diverges from Derrida and aligns more closely to

Marion, whose phenomenology aims to demonstrate the possibility of "such a God" revealing himself in order to demonstrate the possibility of an experience of the impossible. His mystical turn is important to contemporary continental philosophy of religion because his *atheology* foreshadows iconic developments in post-Heideggerian phenomenology and both the tension and resonances between Heidegger's theological and secular heirs. In sum, Bataille's work reveals how secularity can and has become enchanted through encounter with religious phenomena and in ways analogous to, but not indistinct from, religious modes of subjectivity.

Chapter 5 takes up the story of religion and postmodernism across the Atlantic in North America. Through an analysis of Mark Taylor's, Kevin Hart's, and John Caputo's earliest readings of Derrida, I argue that there was an originary disjunction in how Anglophone scholars of religion and theologians approached Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian philosophy. On one hand, Hart and Caputo appropriated Derrida as a theological resource for cleansing theology from metaphysics, as in Hart's case, or for formulating a postmodern Derridean theology, as in Caputo's case. By contrast, as early as 1984 Mark Taylor focused on how deconstruction and other aspects of continental thought could provide the opening for approaching religion anew. Amid the attention given to Derrida's "religion" in the 1990s, and the subsequent proclamation of philosophy's turn to religion, the direction and purpose of Taylor's early work have been overshadowed. In the second part of the chapter, I explore Taylor's expansive philosophy of culture, focusing on his work in aesthetics and complexity theory in order to demonstrate how his work extends the structure of Heidegger's and Bataille's encounters with religious phenomena. Taylor's work is especially important when we consider continental philosophy of religion's contribution to religious studies. I maintain that Taylor has contributed to the academic study of religion through criticism of secularism and the formulation of creative and compelling visions of a nonsecularist secularity. In this sense, his work extends the type of work done by Heidegger and Bataille from the first decades of the twentieth century and provides at least one pathway for philosophy of religion's ongoing potential for the academic study of religion.

In the conclusion I examine the work of three of Taylor's former students—Thomas Carlson, Jeffrey Kosky, and Mary-Jane Rubenstein—all of whom have extended the model of philosophizing with religion, rather than against it, and have further developed the model of encounter operative in Heidegger's, Bataille's, and Taylor's philosophies of religion.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Page numbers from the originals are listed first, followed by page numbers from English translations.

MARTIN HEIDEGGER

BPPa	*Gesamtausgabe* 58: *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie (1919/20)*; *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* 1919/1920. Translated by Scott M. Campbell. New York: Continuum, 2012.
BPPb	*Gesamtausgabe* 24: *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*; *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.
BT	*Gesamtausgabe* 2: *Sein und Zeit*; *Being and Time*. Translated by Edward Robinson and John Macquarrie. Oxford: Blackwell, 1962.
DP	*Gesamtausgabe* 56/57: *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*; *Towards the Definitions of Philosophy*. Translated by Ted Sadler. New York: Continuum, 2008.
PRL	*Gesamtausgabe* 60: *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*; *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*. Translated by Matthias Frisch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

GEORGES BATAILLE

E	*Œuvres completes. Tome X*; *Erotism*. Translated by Mary Dalwood. San Francisco: City Lights, 1988.
G	*Œuvres completes. Tome V*; *Guilty*. Translated by Stuart Kendall. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011.
HE	*Œuvres completes. Tome VIII*; *History of Eroticism*, in *The Accursed Share*, vols. 2 and 3. Translated by Robert Hurley. San Francisco: Zone, 1993.
IE	*Œuvres completes. Tome V*; *Inner Experience*. Translated by Leslie Boldt. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.
S	*Œuvres completes. Tome VIII*; *Sovereignty*, in *The Accursed Share*, vols. 2 and 3. Translated by Robert Hurley. San Francisco: Zone, 1993.

OTHERS

AN	Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism That Is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
FS	Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, and Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
GE	Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927–1961*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007.
OSS	Max Weber, "Die 'Objektivität' sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*. Tubingen: Mohr, 1922; "Objectivity in the Social Sciences," in *On the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, translated by Edward Shils and Henry A. Finch. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1949.
SV	Max Weber, "Wissenschaft als Beruf," in *Schriften 1894–1922*. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 2002; "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber*, translated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. London: Routledge, 2009.
WB	William Connolly, *A World of Becoming*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.
WS	William Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

THE SACRALITY OF THE SECULAR

1

DIFFERENT WORLDS

Weber, Heidegger, and the Meaning of Life

WHAT IS *the meaning of life?* Is there a more trite question? Although seemingly more appropriate to campfire conversations at summer camp than to academic analysis, during the early twentieth century the question of life's meaning stood at the forefront of continental thought. In light of the advances in the theory of evolution, historicism, and biblical criticism, and then the catastrophe of World War I, philosophers, theologians, and historians sought to understand the meaning of modern life in a rapidly changing and, in the eyes of many, declining world. These were, after all, the decades in which philosophers first attempted to conceive of life's significance in a world shaken by the death of God—moments during which Logical Positivism threatened to reduce human life to logical components. In 1895 William James delivered an obscure but timely address titled "Is Life Worth Living?" and in the following years Wilhelm Dilthey formulated a "life-philosophy" that sought to reaffirm the importance of lived reality and immediate experience. However, neither James's address nor Dilthey's account did much in the eyes of many of their contemporaries to combat science and scientific philosophies on their terms. What was needed was a scientific approach to knowledge that recognized the validity of the scientific method, while accounting for the meaning and significance of subjective human experience and the particularities of history. It is from within this milieu that German Neo-Kantians, particularly in the southwest of the country, attempted to articulate a rational vision of the value of human life and culture. In different ways, Max Weber and Martin Heidegger appropriated and rejected core elements of the Southwestern School of Neo-Kantianism, and in the process they developed divergent accounts of secularity.

With the threat of spoiling the story, Max Weber's chilling wartime declaration of the disenchantment of the world encapsulates the failure of the Neo-Kantian quest to provide a rationally justifiable account of the value or meaning of human life. Weber's understanding of the human and the world was formed through a myriad of sources—too many to account for here—but the Neo-Kantian philosopher Heinrich Rickert, who, along with Wilhelm Windelband and Emil Lask, formed the Southwest (or Baden) School of Neo-Kantianism, was of particular importance to his intellectual formation. Rickert's ambition was to overcome the Kantian divide between the empirical domain of natural laws and transcendental values. For Rickert and his colleagues, the mechanics of natural laws would prove meaningless without the values that frame the significance of human life. Thus, distinguishing the universal set of values correspondent to the universal laws of the nomothetic domain was an enterprise in staving off a positivist reduction of the meaning of life to a scientific formula. Unfortunately, Rickert could not overcome the critical Neo-Kantian impasse between reason and meaning. In its strictest form, he concluded, the meaning of human life is irrational, since it cannot be empirically founded. By 1917, Weber draws a stark conclusion from this philosophical aporia in his influential address "Science as a Vocation": the life and death of the modern, secular human are meaningless precisely because they are irrational. The mastery of the world by calculative thinking incurs the expense of any rational justification of the meaning of human life and death. According to Weber, any meaning given to them is arbitrarily superimposed onto the world via religious, artistic, or other humanly constructed means. For Weber, the constitution of secular life by reason means that irrational forces—all forms of mystery—are banished from the world, and with them goes the grounding of life's meaning. Without mystery, life is relegated to mastery.

Only minimal attention has been given to the relationship between Weber and Heidegger, even though Heidegger was also associated with the Southwest School of Neo-Kantians.[1] Rickert supervised his dissertation; Lask remained an explicit influence on his early work; and Heidegger engages Windelband in several of his early lecture courses. Unsurprisingly, his early Freiburg lectures (1919–1923) are largely reactions to the "philosophy of worldviews" and "philosophy of values" articulated by his first academic mentor and colleagues. Unlike Weber, however, Heidegger departed from the Neo-Kantians in favor of Husserl's phenomenology, something that disappointed Rickert. By 1919, the Southwest School had become his primary philosophical target. Much attention has been given to Heidegger's early criticism of Neo-Kantianism and its impact on the development of his phenomenological method during the 1920s.[2] However, very little attention has been given to how Heidegger's turn to phenomenology, and specifically his discovery of worldhood, signaled the emergence of an alternative account of the meaning of life developed by Weber in conjunction with the dominant Neo-Kantian philosophy of the time. Heidegger's alternative path enabled him to avoid Rickert's Neo-Kantian impasse and the rational cage of Weberian disenchantment in order to give a philosophically secular account of the meaning of human life and human worlds. In other words, it is possible to read Heidegger's early reflections on the inherent meaningfulness of "world" as an alternative to Weber's proclamation of the disenchantment of the world.[3]

BETWEEN THE REAL AND THE VALUABLE: WEBER'S KANTIANISM

In order to understand the depths of Weberian disenchantment, it is necessary to understand the philosophical contours of Weber's vision of the human and the world. Weber articulates such visions in several of his many texts, but never more clearly than in " 'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," which he wrote in 1904 as an explanation of the parameters by which he would work as the editor of the enormously influential *Archiv fur Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialoplitik*.

Weber's Kantianism emerges through his discussion of the limits and role of the sciences, particularly the social sciences. Like Kant, Weber interprets the human as a rational being who perceives and understands the world in terms of rational laws that govern the natural world. He separates objective knowledge of such laws—what he elsewhere calls "facts"—from values, which are subjective, particular, and unique. In this way, Weber follows the Southwest Neo-Kantians by positing the realm of nature as nomothetic and the cultural realm of values as idiographic. This means that the natural world is governed by universal, deterministic laws that can be discovered by the rational human, whereas in the cultural realm humans superimpose rationally unjustifiable values upon the natural world in order to give human life meaning and significance. This means clear parameters for the relationship between science and values: "An empirical science cannot tell anyone what he *should* do—but rather what he *can* do—and under certain circumstances—what he wishes to do" (OSS 151/54). In a manner consistent throughout his career, Weber argues that the sciences must never attempt to validate any particular values, because such validation remains beyond the scope of rational inquiry (OSS 157/60).

The inability to empirically verify the validity of values means that they are strictly unreal. Weber's interpretation of the unreality of values follows directly from Rickert, who argued in *Die Grenzen der Naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung*—a text dedicated to Weber—that values cannot be located in the empirical world:

> Values as such are never real. On the contrary, they hold validity. In other words, the values themselves cannot be real, but rather only the goods in which they are realized and in which we discover them. In the same way, the *meaning* reality acquires with reference to a value does not itself fall within the domain of real existence. On the contrary, it obtains it only in relation to a valid value. In this sense, the meaning itself is unreal.[4]

Benjamin Crowe highlights the ramifications of this position in his article on Rickert's theory of religion, published in 2010: "Meaning, on Rickert's view, derives from a connection between ahistorical, transcendental values, on the one hand, and historical realities, on the other. Thus, the problem of world-view is the problem of how value and reality can be made to fit together."[5] Essentially, Rickert opens a Kantian cleavage between ahistorical, transcendental values and empirical reality, of which the philosophical problem is how to close the gap between the transcendental and the empirical. By contrast to Weber, who claims his goal is to articulate the value-free, scientific goals and parameters of the social sciences, the Southwest Neo-Kantians have the philosophical goal of founding reality on an a priori set of timeless, universal transcendental values. Ideally, the ordered hierarchy of values would form a transhistorical, universal Weltanschauung.

However, the cleavage between transcendental values and empirical reality proved to be an impasse, since, as Crowe summarizes helpfully, Rickert's desire to uphold a barrier between the rational and the metaphysical contradicts the desire to unite values and reality—a desire that demands "leaving science behind and entering the domain of faith."[6] Values are not empirically verifiable, but according to Rickert and other Neo-Kantians, nonempirical entities cannot be rationally grounded, which means that values are strictly speaking a matter of faith, more akin to religion than science, and separated irrevocably from the realm of knowledge.

Weber imposes these strict limits on the social sciences because philosophically he believes that values are subjective, particular, and most importantly nonempirical. They are thus a matter of faith:

> Only on assumption of belief in the validity of values is the attempt to espouse value-judgments meaningful. However, to *judge* the *validity* of such values is a matter of *faith*. It may perhaps be a task for the speculative interpretation of life and the universe in quest of their meaning. But it certainly does not fall within the province of an empirical science in the sense in which it is to be practiced here. (OSS 152/55)

Weber articulates a position in the essay from 1904 that would carry through to "Science as a Vocation": the sciences are rooted in analysis of the observable world, because beyond such analysis no other type of rational validation is possible. This means that scientific knowledge, including social-scientific knowledge, is "an unconditionally valid type of knowledge," which signifies "the analytical ordering of empirical social reality" (OSS 160/63). Malcolm MacKinnon summarizes this lucidly in his article from 2001 on Weber's Kantianism: "Windelband and Rickert took Kant's advice, and so did Weber. Their mandate was to create a science that could quarter moral causality, and thereby establish Kant's distinction between the natural and the moral sciences. For his part, Weber claims that the sociocultural sciences must recognize the autonomy of the individual morality maker, which amounts to Kant's subjectivism and Weber's methodological individualism."[7] Hence, for Weber the idea of the sciences finding "generally valid ultimate value-judgments" is not only impossible; such a task is "meaningless" (OSS 154/57).[8]

EXCURSUS: NEO-WEBERIANS AND THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF RELIGION

One response to this reading of Weber might be to claim that Weber's stark rationalist approach to the meaning of human life in general, and religion more specifically, is outdated. One might argue that it is irrelevant to attack century-old secularisms in light of the more complex and enlightened approaches developed by contemporary scholars. This argument might be tenable if prevalent forms of Weber's secularism did not persist in the contemporary academy, particularly in the field of religious studies.

Donald Wiebe and Russell McCutcheon have become the two most influential proponents of a scientific study of religion that distances the academic study of religion from any subjective biases, religious motivations, or theological assertions. In the preface to *The Politics of Religious Studies*, Wiebe claims that the university is characterized by "a search for objective knowledge of the world," which proceeds according to "the political act of consciously attempting to exclude all values from scientific deliberation except the value called 'objective knowledge.' "[9] According to Wiebe, academic research can never concern itself with the "moral welfare" of the human race, since "the boundaries set by the ideal of scientific knowledge" exclude such concerns. In sum, knowledge in the true sense is defined by objectivity, and anything else is akin to faith, which has no rational legitimacy.

McCutcheon complements this approach by drawing a distinction between what he takes to be an illegitimate, "religious" approach to the study of religion and a legitimately scientific approach. He follows Weber by arguing that all "deeply personal feeling" developed through engagement with religious or humanist texts leads to "essential meanings and values, all of which is derived from experiences of God, the gods, the sacred, the wholly other, the numinous, or the *mysterium*."[10] McCutcheon's worst fear is that religious studies would continue to posit an unobservable sui generis realm of the sacred that forms the origin of religious phenomena. Ideally, McCutcheon argues, the academic study of religion would be a "cross disciplinary study of how human beliefs, behaviors, and institutions construct and contest enduring social identity-talk about gods and talk about mythic origins are but two strategies for doing this."[11] For McCutcheon and Wiebe, following Weber, social-scientific methods enable the scientific study of values, meanings, and identities without implicating the researcher in them. Anything beyond this should be considered an illegitimately "religious" approach: "the former constitutes the *religious* study of religion—itself a religious pursuit—whereas the latter constitutes the *academic* study of religion."[12] McCutcheon and Wiebe manifest the type of dogmatic secularism I discussed in the introduction, wherein the researcher is envisioned as a rational observer capable of extracting objective knowledge from the realm of human culture. As a result, they seek to delegitimize humanistic approaches by labeling them "religious."

However, as Tyler Roberts has argued, such a position rests on two highly contestable assumptions. First, along lines I discussed in the introduction, Wiebe and McCutcheon generate the category of religion based on their conception of the secular. But they do so without critically investigating the latter:

> If modern conceptions of "religion" emerge with, through, and against modern conceptions of the "secular," that is, if these concepts are mutually constitutive, and if we understand "secularism"

> to be a political and social project, then simply pointing out that in some way religion or theology infects the *secular* study of religion (or the public and political space) or arguing that the academic sphere should be secular is to invoke a host of presuppositions and categories that themselves need to be interrogated.[13]

This work is one attempt to interrogate the category of the secular, and thus to demonstrate the limitations and problems of Weber's, Wiebe's, and McCutcheon's vision of the secular/religious binary.

Second, McCutcheon and Wiebe assume that the university's mission is to search for universal objective knowledge of the world, an assumption that delegitimizes all humanistic forms of study, which seek to respond to human struggles, articulations, and experiences of meaning and meaninglessness:

> the humanities are the site in the academy where not only do we try to understand the immense diversity of ways that human beings have in the past and continue in the present to reflect on and represent themselves to themselves and others, but also we take up, inherit, and *respond* to these processes of reflection and representation and the processes of self-formation and social formation that they are bound to but that they also effect and enable.[14]

One goal of the humanities is to apply rigorous methods of hermeneutics, criticism, and other forms of textual and cultural study in order to analyze and account for what it means to be human.[15] On McCutcheon's, Wiebe's, and possibly Weber's reading, such a task would, along with the "religious" approach to religious studies, be excluded from the academy altogether—relegated to a realm of subjectivist, relativistic, arbitrary values, traditions, and rituals with no rational basis. One of the central tasks of this work is to explore how thinkers who identified as nonreligious drew upon religious sources in order to investigate meanings of human life, even if such analyses did not result in their conversion to any religious tradition. As an academic enterprise, my goal is to understand how these thinkers have reflected critically on secular visions of the human and the world in order to more expansively and constructively envision the contours of a secular approach to politics, ethics, economics, and so forth, and to respond to past representations and imaginings of them in order to more vibrantly and accurately represent ourselves. However, on the basis of the dualistic logic of Weber, Wiebe, and McCutcheon, such a task is more at home in a house of worship than in the modern university.

MASTERS OF THE MEANINGLESS: WEBERIAN DISENCHANTMENT

Weber's proclamation of the "disenchantment of the world" has experienced the unfortunate destiny of becoming an academic reference point so often repeated that it has lost its meaning, so to speak. More often referenced than analyzed, it is usually overlooked that Weber's notion of disenchantment is at heart a confession of resignation. Weber recognizes that humanity's emancipation from both God and nature entails the curse of isolation and meaninglessness, as Alexandre Koyré says in reference to the Newtonian universe:

> Thus the world of science—the real world—became estranged and utterly divorced from the world of life, which science has been unable to explain—not even to explain away by calling it "subjective." True, these worlds are everyday—and even more and more—connected by the *praxis*. Yet for *theory* they are divided by an abyss. Two worlds: this means two truths. Or no truth at all. This is the tragedy of the modern mind which "solved the riddle of the universe," but only to replace it by another riddle: the riddle of itself.[16]

In "Science as a Vocation," Weber admits that secular life is strictly meaningless because it is dominated by intellectualism, which dispels all mysterious and extraordinary forces. This intellectualism leads to mastery of all mysteries, but it does not and cannot provide a meaning or significance to such mastery. In response, Weber wavers between looking down on those who cannot face the harsh reality of the disenchanted world, and appealing to the passionate devotion, external calling, and suprarational inspiration needed to fulfill the vocation of a secular scientist. In one breath, Weber seems resigned to the iron cage of a world mastered by efficient causality at the cost of final causality. In the next, he seems to appeal to an irrational realm that is the source for the unreasonable devotion necessary to fulfill one's vocation. Through this expression of unresolved resignation in the face of secular life, Weber outlines a framework of disenchantment that relies strangely upon a sui generis, unobservable realm similar to the one McCutcheon fears is illegitimately, and theologically, posited by scholars of religion, one that cannot be studied, explained, or rationalized, but that nonetheless provides the passion, inspiration, and calling needed to devote one "religiously" to artistic, scientific, and other vocations. This means that in order to outline the stark reality of modern disenchantment, Weber is forced, in the end, to appeal to a sui generis realm that is irrational in the sense that it is not subject to rational inquiry, because it is distinct from the natural, nomothetic world.

According to Weber, the disenchantment of the world stems from the thoroughly modern idea that the world is a masterable totality. In many cases the modern does not actually know more about the world than the premodern, but, Weber claims, she trusts such knowledge is readily available:

> It means something else, namely, the knowledge or belief that if one but wished one could learn it at any time. Hence, it means that principally there are no mysterious or incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service. This is above all what intellectualization means.
>
> (SV 488/139)

There are important consequences of this intellectual belief. First, it means that the only sources of mystery are religious phenomena such as miracles and revelations. Any mystery originates either in the still yet incomplete knowledge of the masterable world, which will eventually be dispelled, or in the irrational belief in religious phenomena, as Weber explains: “Science ‘free from presuppositions,’ in the sense of a rejection of religious bonds, does not know of the ‘miracle’ and the ‘revelation.’ If it did, science would be unfaithful to its own ‘presuppositions.’ The believer knows both, miracle and revelation” (SV 499/147). The “presuppositions” of science lead to a second consequence of the Weberian disenchantment: science presumes all things are masterable, and the human can perceive and understand them in Newtonian terms: deterministic, predictable, and calculable.

As I have outlined earlier, for Weber values are more akin to religious doctrines than scientific knowledge because they cannot be rationally justified. Thus, they are akin to religious phenomena, and excluded from knowledge. In the address’s most infamous passage, Weber outlines the nature and function of this relationship: “The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the ‘disenchantment of the world.’ Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations” (SV 510/155).

It is important to notice how Weber’s description of the disenchantment of the world expands into a prescription of how the secular person ought to reckon with reality. In Weber’s view, religion, in all forms, signifies a refusal of the modern condition and an irrational belief held on to because of its promise of meaning and significance to the faithful. However, according to the secularism of “Science as a Vocation,” there is no rational justification for believing in the intrinsic meaning of human life or the world in which it unfolds. Such impositions signify, according to Weber, the qualitative difference between religions and science: “Every theology, including Hinduist theology, presupposes that the world must have a meaning, and the question is how to interpret this meaning so that it is intellectually conceivable” (SV 508/153). Weber argues that the scientific person must have the heroic will to proceed with the knowledge that her life and death have no meaning. By contrast, the person too weak for such a reckoning with reality can and should return to the premodern realm of faith: “To the person who cannot bear the fate of the times like a man, one must say: may he rather return silently, without the usual publicity build-up of renegades, but simply and plainly. The arms of the old churches are opened widely and compassionately for him" (SV 510–511/155). Science's inability to ground meaning rationally, coupled with religion's presupposition in the meaning of human life and the world it inhabits, means that "the tension between the value-spheres of 'science' and the sphere of 'the holy' is unbridgeable" (SV 509/154). Weber's disenchantment extends beyond the description of the development and domination of the scientific worldview. For those with the strength to bear it, Weber prescribes a secular worldview—a secularism—that includes a vision of the world as mysteryless and thus meaningless.

Weber's secularism traps thought in an iron cage of rationality. Properly understood, science excludes values from the public sphere, relegating human life to an irrevocable meaninglessness. In the meantime, it inserts a barrier that prevents reinstituting any form of mystery into secularity, as Prigogine and Stengers observe in their work *Order Out of Chaos*, published in 1984: "Life, destiny, freedom, and spontaneity thus became manifestations of a shadowy underworld impenetrable to reason. . . . By admitting only a subjective meaning for a set of experiences men believe to be significant, science runs the risk of transferring these into the realm of the irrational, bestowing upon them a formidable power."[17] Only very few individuals, and even them only for so long, can view the experiences of birth, death, love, friendship, culture, tradition, and other phenomena as transparently meaningless. Moreover, Weberian disenchantment erects an irreconcilable dualism between rationality and irrationality:

> Western thought has always oscillated between the world as an automaton and a theology in which God governs the universe. This is what Needham calls the "characteristic European schizophrenia." In fact, these visions are connected. An automaton needs an external god. Do we really have to make this tragic choice? Must we choose between science that leads to alienation and an anti-scientific metaphysical view of nature?[18]

In the second part of this chapter I argue that Heidegger's early Freiburg lectures open a third way between rational disenchantment and irrational meaning-making. However, before moving on to an analysis of Heidegger's early thought, we must note how Weber himself seems to draw upon the irrational in order to account for the possibility of rational mastery of the world.

We can summarize Weberian disenchantment in four related points. First, for Weber, values originate in the need to give meaning to human life. They are, however, strictly irrational because they do not originate in scientific observation or calculative thinking. Second, as superimpositions of sense onto a senseless existence, values normally express a desire for completion or resolution unavailable to the secular scientist committed to the infinite progress of knowledge. Third, in a manner feared by Wiebe and McCutcheon, Weber relegates values to the sui generis religious realm of the irrational, since they are not publicly justifiable. Associated with the "call" to a certain vocation, values are beyond reason, or revelatory. Finally, this leads to an incoherent and disenchanted polytheism that buttresses the rational pursuit of knowledge. One cannot reasonably justify *care* for some gods or values and not others, even if one needs the inspiration or intoxication that comes from them in order to fulfill one's scientific or artistic vocation.

Weber's account of the human and the world is deeply dissatisfying for a number of reasons. His Neo-Kantianism leads to an end point wherein meaning and significance are interpreted as irrational superimpositions on a meaningless world, but are needed to account for how and why scientists and others devote themselves so passionately to their secular endeavors. This dualism leads to a devastating aporia: the only means to give meaning to life are irrational; but the only way to explain why and how to devote oneself to knowledge is through the power of the irrational. In my view this end point is deeply troubling, because it forces us to conceive of the world as a nomothetic totality that rational inquiry can master, one void of mystery. In doing so, it accounts for meaning and significance as subjective, irrational, and arbitrary, but also as necessary and invaluable aspects of human life. This line of interpretation is furthered by Weberians such as Wiebe and McCutcheon, who argue that objective knowledge is the only appropriate endeavor for the modern academy, which, as I have noted, excludes not only revelation and miracle, but also humanistic forms of inquiry.

One of the enduring merits of continental philosophy of religion is the articulation of the meaning and significance of secular life, or life after the death of God, in an interspace between Weberian disenchantment and religious dogma. In the remainder of this chapter I explore the origins of this pathway in Heidegger's criticisms of Neo-Kantian philosophies of value.

BEYOND FACTS AND VALUES: HEIDEGGER'S WORLD

Heidegger was born in 1889, twenty-five years after Weber. When Weber outlined his methodological vision for the social sciences in 1904, Heidegger was still a few years from entering university. When Weber delivered "Science as a Vocation" in 1917, Heidegger was two years from the methodological breakthrough that would guide the development of his phenomenology during the 1920s. When he entered university, Heidegger was a devoted Catholic who praised the Church's antimodern theological and philosophical views, and who envisioned himself studying theology in preparation for an ecclesiastical vocation. However, during the years from 1912 to 1916 Heidegger underwent a transformation by way of a modern program of academic study. By the time he finished his dissertation on Duns Scotus in 1916, he occupied a kind of no-man's-land in terms of the contemporary philosophical landscape: he had come to reject the antimodernism of the Church, but he also eschewed what he took to be the dissatisfying Neo-Kantian vision of the human and the world.[19] By 1919, he wrote Father Englebert Krebs to inform the priest that he would officially leave the Catholic Church in order to answer another calling—the calling to a philosophical life: "I believe that I have the inner calling to philosophy and, through my research and teaching, to do what stands in my power for the sake of the eternal vocation of the inner man, and *to do it for this alone*, and so justify my existence [*Dasein*] and work ultimately before God."[20] Like Weber, Heidegger was convinced that he must answer his academic vocation without the security of religious belief. Like Weber, he interpreted his academic calling as a secular one.

Along these lines, Steven Galt Crowell has pointed out the striking similarities between the young Heidegger's view of philosophy, science, and knowledge and the elder Weber's stance in "Science as a Vocation": "With that, the young Heidegger finds himself in the situation to which the old Weber gave expression in the same year of 1919, the situation of questioning what it means to devote oneself, without the 'comfort' of an 'irrevocable worldview,' to the calling of science."[21] By departing from the Catholic faith Heidegger left a framework of belief in which values and meaning are given as presuppositions. He landed, in other words, in the modern situation whose aporias Weber outlined in his controversial address, which both of them in a sense inherited from Rickert and other Neo-Kantians. Yet, instead of choosing between Weberian disenchantment and antimodern religious faith, Heidegger sought an alternative path through which to account for the meaning and significance of secular life. As Galt Crowell points out, while the young Heidegger eschewed Catholicism, he also refused to succumb to Weber's resignation concerning the meaninglessness of secularity: "But while Weber is truly modern in his resignation—specifically, in his view that philosophy has nothing scientific to say about meaning—Heidegger draws a different conclusion from the demand for disenchanted scientific truthfulness."[22] According to Galt Crowell, Heidegger's rejection of Catholic antimodernism and Weber's disenchanted modernism made his position one of *anti*-anti-modernism, since he "rejects Weber's resignation and holds out hope that philosophy, as phenomenology, can recover 'scientific' access to meaning."[23]

In the remainder of this chapter, I argue that Heidegger's methodological breakthrough in 1919 is the opening of a pathway to an alternative account of the secular, one that leads to the possibility of breaking the spell of Weberian disenchantment. While it may be counterintuitive to look to Heidegger as a conduit of a secularity beyond secularism, I argue that his early Freiburg lectures can be read as a third way beyond the dissatisfying dichotomy between the meaninglessness of scientific knowledge and antimodern religious faith.

When viewed through this lens, Heidegger's courses "The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview" and "Phenomenology and the Transcendental Problem of Value" from 1919 appear to be direct reactions to the Rickertian aporia outlined earlier and the disenchanted vision of secularity Weber developed from it. Heidegger opens the former seminar by articulating the framework of his contemporary philosophical landscape. Beginning with the notion that the formation of a worldview is a "spiritual concern for everyone," including the factory worker, the rural peasant from the Black Forest, and the educated classes, Heidegger asserts that what distinguishes philosophy from other worldviews is the cultivation of "a higher autonomous worldview," which is free from "religious and other dogmas" (DP 7/6). Thus far, Heidegger's conception of the philosophical worldview mirrors Weber's conception of the disenchanted modern, since he recognizes the untenability of referring philosophically to transcendent beings or forces, but also the seemingly inherent need for humans to build worldviews that confer upon their lives and worlds a sense of meaning and significance.

The particular challenge of modern philosophy is that transcendent knowledge of supersensible realities, forces, and causes has become impossible. In other words, the world has become disenchanted, freed from extraordinary forces, and thus philosophy's account of the ultimate and universal meaning and significance of human life must now be construed without recourse to metaphysical powers, forces, or beings. By contrast, philosophy "receives a scientific foundation in critical epistemology upon whose fundamental insights the remaining philosophical disciplines—ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of religion—build" (DP 9/8). In order to account for the meaning and significance of human life, philosophy must adopt the dichotomy of facts and values imposed by the sciences if it is to be considered a valid modern academic discipline.

Heidegger departs from this philosophical framework when he questions whether or not philosophy is or should be the science of worldviews, and if its adoption of the scientific foundation prescribed by Neo-Kantian epistemology and ontology does not relegate it to the status of a derived, rather than primordial, science: "The genuinely unphilosophical character of worldview can emerge only when it is set over against philosophy, and then only through the methodological tools of philosophy itself" (DP 12/10). He reiterates this in the summer semester lecture course: "Rather, every kind of standpoint-philosophy will, through the ruthless radicalism of our problematic, prove to be pseudo-philosophy, and in such a way that we press forward into the genuinely primordial level of a genuine philosophical problematic and methodology" (DP 127/97). Conceived as the "critical science of value," philosophy is not a primordial science that can shed light on the meaning and significance of life. It is a derivative science that attempts to formulate the science of values using the same methodology as other sciences—by taking its particular realm of inquiry, in this case values, and validating them according to their correspondence to the natural world. In other words, within this framework philosophy must try to scientifically, or rationally, justify a universal hierarchy of values, as Rickert, Lask, and Windelband attempted to do.

Yet, in Heidegger's view, philosophy, as primordial science, should be able to articulate the origin and structure of the conditions of possibility for science. This is what we might now call a philosophy of science, but what Heidegger considered philosophy's task broadly conceived—to give an account for the origin, nature, and function of human knowing and experiencing as they pertain to all academic realms: "It must, therefore, also be here that the motive lies for returning from the particular science to primordial science. The latter will not be a science of separate object-domains, but of what is common to them all, the science not of a particular, but of universal beings" (DP 26/22–23). As S. J. McGrath, Peter Gordon, and other commentators have pointed out, Heidegger's interest in understanding the ontological unity of all beings originated in his dissertation on Duns Scotus and the theory of epistemological categories.[24]

In the lecture courses, Heidegger rearticulates that for Rickert and Windelband the natural sciences reckon with the nomothetic realm of nature, while the cultural sciences confront the idiographic realm of human culture. Along lines sketched by Weber before him, Heidegger recognizes that the division between the nomothetic and the idiographic creates a "preferred class" of knowledge: "True knowledge is distinguished by its particular value. This value is intelligible only because true knowledge in itself has the character of value" (DP 32/27).

In ways parallel to Weber, Heidegger recognizes how this approach creates a preferred class of knowledge that is conceived as the correspondence of a concept or axiom to reality, but that cannot rationally justify valuing this correspondence over all other values.

More importantly to Heidegger, by valuing "true" knowledge taken as correspondence, philosophy is left with the task of articulating the connection between value judgments and empirical reality. Yet, as Rickert and Weber realized before him, Heidegger observes the impossibility of such a task: "Just as natural laws of psychic thought-processes contain assertions about how we in fact—according to natural law—necessarily think, so do norms tell us how we *ought* to think, provided only that truth is the goal of our thought" (DP 35/29). How does one arrive at the truth of value judgments? How can values be "true" in the sense of their correspondence to empirical reality? They cannot be: "*The proof of the a priori validity of axioms cannot itself be carried out in an empirical way*. How then is philosophical method able to exclude everything individual, conditioned, historical and accidental? How can this unclouded axiomatic consciousness, which grounds the validity of axioms, be achieved?" (DP 36/30). Heidegger has arrived at the philosophical impasse that led Weber to disenchantment and resignation.

Heidegger articulates his own understanding of this philosophical impasse by observing that one cannot establish truth without the givenness of the objects that ought to conform to universal laws. On one hand, if values are not given or discovered in the empirical realm, then they cannot conform to a universal moral law. On the other hand, how would one identify a priori values without the aid of an external authority or force such as revelation? Heidegger points out that a being can be known in terms of its correspondence to a concept or ideal, but a moral ideal is unknowable in terms of scientific validity because it cannot be located in the empirical realm.[25] This means that the idea of identifying a priori norms that correspond to empirical reality is nothing more than "unscientific idle talk," or what Weber would call a matter of faith, rather than knowledge (DP 45/36).

IS TRUTH A VALUE? PHILOSOPHY IN WEBER'S IRON CAGE

Like Weber, Heidegger understands that the irreality of values leads to a seemingly inescapable iron cage wherein the only valid form of knowledge is a scientific knowledge that does not and cannot inquire into the meaning and significance of human life. As outlined earlier, Weber's "Science as a Vocation" signals his resignation concerning the separation of facts (or knowledge) and values, leaving the secular individual to garner meaning via adherence to any one of the disenchanted gods who battle for our irrational devotion. However, the young Heidegger would not give in to such resignation. He would forge a third way by questioning the very foundations of Weber's secularity, which he first undertakes by problematizing the relationships among truth, values, and validity.

In paragraph 11 of "The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview," Heidegger points out that the unquestioned value of science and Rickert's scientific philosophy is truth conceived as correspondence. What concerns Heidegger about this methodological presupposition is the assumption that value and value-taking or worth-taking are directly associated: "It is one thing to *declare something as a value*, another *to take something as a value* in a 'worth-taking.' The latter can be characterized as an originary phenomenon of origin, a constituting of life in and for itself. The former must be seen as derivative, as founded in the theoretical, and as itself a theoretical phenomenon dependent on lived life in itself" (DP 48/38). Heidegger's point is that the experience of value or worth, what he calls "meaning" in the summer semester course, is different from the theoretical value of truth. In Heidegger's mind, meaning arises from a direct lived-experience "that does something *to me*" (DP 49/39). In such experiences, "there is nothing theoretical; it has its own 'light,' spreads its own illumination: '*lumen gloriae*' " (DP 49/39). By contrast, the value of truth "remains so to speak outside," because it concerns a theoretical relationship between a concept, law, or ideal and an empirical object. Values, such as truth, are in this sense derived from lived-experience.

For Heidegger, the distinction between value and value-taking, or meaning, is the key to clawing out of the Weberian iron cage. The problem is the assumption that philosophy concerns the correlation between a valuing-subject and a priori values, which disregards the originary experience of meaning, or validity as he calls it here, from which values are derived: "To unravel the problem of validity, it is crucial to keep it separate from the phenomenon of value" (DP 50/40). As we shall see, Heidegger's point is that the experience of meaning or significance one has in relation to the world is neither a "position-taking" in terms of the adoption of a value nor an experience of truth in the sense of the correspondence of an ideal to an empirical object. In other words, Heidegger questions whether or not the very scientific framework upon which Rickert and other Neo-Kantians conceive of philosophy as the science of value does not pass over the originary realm of experience that conditions the possibility for scientific knowledge. Truth may be a value, but this is not self-evident. It "is justified, but only as a *result* of complicated philosophical and scientific research" (DP 51/41). Employing truth unquestioningly as the value of science, and then founding philosophy on a scientific foundation, means that not only must other values meet the criterion of correspondence on which truth operates, but no other avenues of meaning-making or meaning-locating are available to philosophy. Philosophy is trapped in Weber's iron cage, where science masters the world without being able to answer questions about life's meaning *and* renders all such questions invalid based on the unquestioned value of truth as correspondence. But "do value, and *practical* reason in the broadest sense, have genuine primacy, so that philosophy is the science of value?" (DP 51/41). In other words, is the correlation between value and object the departure point of philosophy?

Heidegger's way out of the iron cage is to reveal the pretheoretical realm that conditions its very possibility. Therefore, "this primacy of the theoretical must be broken, but not in order to proclaim the primacy of the practical, and not in order to introduce something that shows the problems from a new side, but because the theoretical itself and as such refers back to something pre-theoretical" (DP 59/47). By making the distinction between truth as *the* value that founds scientific knowledge and value-taking as the lived-experience of life in and for itself, Heidegger points to an unconsidered realm, or "world," that he believes grounds the possibility for the "theoretical" realm of the sciences.

WORLDHOOD, BEING, MEANING

Heidegger opens the second part of the war semester course with an ominous warning: "We are standing at the methodological cross-road which will decide on the very life or death of philosophy. We stand at an abyss: either into nothingness, that is, absolute reification, pure thingness, or we somehow leap into *another world*, more precisely, we manage for the first time to make the leap [*Sprung*] into the world as such" (DP 63/51). For Heidegger, finding a pathway beyond value and worldview philosophies is a matter of life and death for philosophy. It is a decisive moment, where philosophy will allow itself to be reduced to science, or where it will discover how to access the "world" that is the very possibility for scientific knowledge.

In the manner of a good phenomenologist, he begins with a concrete example by pointing to the lectern from which he lectures, claiming, in a way that anticipates the discussion of the hammer in the shop from *Being and Time*, that the lectern is first given not as an isolated object on a horizon of entities, but "out of an immediate environment [*Umwelt*]," which, rather than consisting of a totality of objects, "is primary and immediately given to me without any mental detours across thing-oriented apprehension" (DP 73/58). Heidegger makes the same point in 1919 that he would in 1927: the entity gives itself, or is given, as part of a world—a context always already full of meaning and significance. He says it this way in 1919: "Living in an environment, it signifies to me everywhere and always, everything has the character of world. It is everywhere the face that '*it worlds*' [*es weltet*] which is something different from 'it values' [*es wertet*]" (DP 73/58). For the first time, Heidegger argues that the theoretical approach of science and worldviews, wherein a transcendental subject judges objects according to the value of truth taken as correspondence, is a secondary or abstracted level of interpretation. It reflects the process of extracting entities from their context "without comprehending the process of every intensifying objectification as a process of de-vivification" (DP 91/71). Weber's secularism is blind to the dimension of the world, or the realm of the meaningful, due to the blinding light of scientific objectivity.

Heidegger's answer to Weberian disenchantment is neither based on values nor founded on religious belief. It is an alternative approach focused on the inherent meaningfulness of the lived environment in which the human is always already situated. In other words, when philosophy peels back the curtain of objectivity, and when it ceases explaining beings by other beings, it is possible for it to give birth to a description of the world from which all experience is possible: "In other words: these meaningful phenomena of environmental experience cannot be explained by destroying their essential character, by denying their real meaning in order to advance a theory" (DP 86/67). This leads to a clear explanation of why Heidegger departed from the Neo-Kantianism of Rickert for the phenomenological method of Husserl, even if soon thereafter he transformed Husserl's phenomenology. Heidegger recognizes in phenomenology the possibility of interpreting lived-experiences (*Erlebnisse*) that are experienced prior to their "de-vivification" (*Ent-lebnis*), or extraction from the world, through theoretical objectivity. The experience of "things" "is already de-vivification" (DP 89/70), since Heidegger characterizes "thingliness" as the framework in which the rational "I" can perceive entities from out of "the environment":

> Thingliness marks out a quite original sphere distilled out of the environmental; in this sphere, the "it worlds" has already been extinguished. The thing is merely there as such, i.e. it is real, it exists. Reality is therefore not an environmental characteristic, but lies in the essence of thingliness. It is a specifically theoretical characteristic. The meaningful is de-interpreted [*ent-deutet*] into this residue of being real. Experience of the environment is de-vivified into the residue of recognizing something as real. The historical "I" is de-historicized as a correlate of thinghood.
>
> (DP 89/70)

"Thingliness" is the result of the ego's abstraction of entities from the stream of experience. "De-vivification" signifies the extraction of beings from the world into an epistemological framework wherein they are given sense only in relation to another being, such as the transcendental ego. The "real" is thus not primordial; the real is a secondary epistemic category that results from a derivative layer of interpretation. Asking about the "reality" of a being is possible only after it has been extracted, and thus "de-vivified," from out of the living environment, or world.

Instead of abstracting entities from the stream of experience, the potential of phenomenology is to interpret them as they are experienced prior to de-vivification, and thus prior to their extraction into the subject/object dichotomy. Consequently, philosophy, as phenomenology, can gain access to the things themselves only if it proceeds on a pretheoretical and therefore non-de-vivified level.[26] Thus, Heidegger's goal is to understand the "formal objective something of knowability"—that which enables things to be knowable at all. Phenomenology is not a theory through which a subject explains objects; phenomenology is concerned with the givenness of beings in their ontological unity:

> The something as the experienceable as such is not anything radically theoreticized and de-vivified [*Entlebtes*], but is to be regarded rather as a moment of the essence of life in and for itself, which itself stands in a close relation with the character of the appropriating event of experiences as such. The formal objective something of knowability is first of all motivated from this pre-worldly [*vorweltlichen*] something of life.
>
> (DP 116/88)

All presuppositions, including that of the foundational nature of the rational ego, must be put aside in order to gain insight into "the essence of life in and for itself." If phenomenology can find the means to interpret the "pre-theoretical" meaning of the experienceable world, it will find a way beyond the dichotomy of objective facts and subjective values, and thus out of the iron cage of Weberian disenchantment.

THE INHERENT MEANINGFULNESS OF WORLD

In his next course, "The Basic Problems of Phenomenology 1919/1920," Heidegger picks up immediately where he left off by exploring how phenomenology can transition from "looking at" phenomena in the stream of experience to interpreting the components of the stream from within.[27] Heidegger makes progress in the problem of phenomenology's "eyes" by reflecting on the stream of experience itself, which he observes is a unified context of significations and meanings wherein we are somehow always encountering and are thereby "captivated," "disgusted," "delighted," and "nauseated," and our ways of taking-notice are somehow "accented with meaning" (BPPa 96/76). As in the earlier course, Heidegger describes the "world" of the "*es weltet*" by a "full pull of vital going along, streaming with, or letting oneself be carried away by factical life" (BPPa 100/80). The bare facticity of existence is characterized by an unstoppable flow—the world is not a set of extended objects, but rather is an unending stream of experience. Viewed as part of the stream, Heidegger's conception of the "looking" self, or the subject who objectifies the entities of the stream by de-vivifying them, is transformed into a self "blurred in the with-world," so that "I experience myself, encounter myself in all possible ways, but in such a way that I also experience other things: the clock on the desk, the underlines, the marginal notes in the scientific study" (BPPa 97/77). The self for whom "*es weltet*" is not a transcendental ego who is separated or removed from the world. Rather, it is blurred with the world, so that it is unidentifiable apart from the world. Thus, it is encountered only through the pull of factical life.

But the question remains: If existence is characterized by the stream and pull of the "*es weltet*," what is the meaning of "world"? Or, as Heidegger puts it: "What I experience there is factically real—exists. What is the meaning of this 'existence'?" (BPPa 104/82). In order to respond to this question, Heidegger argues that theoretical approaches to the concept of existence and epistemological proofs must be discarded in favor of a phenomenological interpretation of factical life. Meaning stems not from the correspondence of object to ideal, but insofar as "Insofar as I live factically in all of that which has been said; insofar as I am in one way or another occupied with it, in each case according to its content; insofar as I participate in it in such and such a way, everything that is experienced—in terms of content it may be as heterogeneous as ever—as *the same meaning of existence*" (BPPa 106/83). Meaning for the young Heidegger is now conceived as the inescapable participation in the pull of life, which is characterized by "horizons of occupation, sharing, application, and fate," on which "a wholly particular *context* of meaningfulnesses, which are continually permeating one another," blurs together (BPPa 105/83). Not yet concerned with Dasein's dispersion or fall into *Das Man*, here Heidegger returns philosophy to the everyday by asserting that meaning is immediately given in factical life, rather than won through philosophical argument. This means, contrary to Weber's value-relevant approach to culture, wherein certain cultural values are considered worthy of investigation, "Even the most trivial is meaningful, even the plainly trivial. Even that which is most worthless is meaningful" (BPPa 104/83).

For our purposes, it is important that the young Heidegger comes to an almost-immediate conclusion regarding the constitution of these horizons of meaningfulness that form the stream of factical life:

> The meaning of "existence" lies in factical life in the currently experienced, remembered, or expected meaningfulnesses, so that memory-wise, experience-wise, or expectation-wise, experiencing determined in such and such a way, actualizes itself in a full, concrete unity (opened situation). Also, where theoretical elements are invested in what is particularly experienced, these are there inclusively, entered into the temporally living meaningfuliness.
>
> (BPPa 106/84)

This is Heidegger's first attempt to explain the constitution of the "*es weltet*," or the composition of the stream of factical life. The "it worlds" stems from the flow of time—the remembrance, presence, and anticipation that form the basis of worldly involvement. The meaning of facticity, or the unavoidable involvement in the world that leaves one always "captivated," "disgusted," "delighted," "nauseated," and so on, is related to the irreducibility of temporality: "The continually open horizons of expectation even if not currently known—i.e. the remarkably prefiguring motivating tendencies from out of the somehow prefigured future—allow factical life in each case to become engrossed in what it experiences, which, as such, has the sense of meaningfulness" (BPPa 108/86). Meaning stems from the ineluctable involvement in the stream of factical life, which is pulled along by temporality. Time constitutes the flow of experience, conditioning the possibility of participation in the world and the inherent meaning of such participation for the worldly self.

THE SACRALITY OF THE EVERYDAY

Heidegger's discovery of "it worlds" and its temporal constitution reinserted a sense of irreducibility and indeterminacy in the human, in the world, and in the relationship between them that counters the nihilism of Weberian disenchantment. If for Weber life without mystery is relegated to mastery by calculative thinking, for Heidegger the world and the being he will eventually call Dasein are irreducible to mastery and thus the meaning of existence must be reexamined. In direct opposition to Rickert and Weber, Heidegger concludes that the world is not the nomothetic domain governed by determined laws and rules. Even if it is possible to extract such knowledge from the world through calculative thinking, "existence" worlds as "the indeterminacy of a particular context of meaningfulness" (BPPa 106/85). This meaningfulness stems neither from value nor from objectivity. Rather, it is a function of the irreducibility of temporality that constitutes the stream of experience, which renders factical life uncanny: "the pretheoretical something carries the highest potential uncanniness and the most complete uncanniness of life and indeed of its opaque, and yet still living, contexts of expectation" (BPPa 107/85). For Heidegger, there is a direct connection between the uncanniness of an immediately and always-given world and the meaning of such a world.

When phenomenology gains access to the stream of experience that characterizes facticity, it gains access to "something" that cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts by calculative thinking. The "*es weltet*" and the horizons of temporality that constitute it cannot be reduced by the theoretical gaze. Peeling back the de-vivified layer of objects reveals a temporal world characterized by what Mark C. Taylor calls "a certain excess that is both theoretically and practically unmasterable."[28] Heidegger goes so far in the course from 1919/1920 as to say that the world is the " 'something' in the *mysterium tremendum*" (BPPa 107/85), recalling Rudolph Otto's famous adage about the "Holy." In the face of Weberian disenchantment, Heidegger leads us toward the vision of the world itself, apart from divinity, as enchanted, or somehow sacred. Furthermore, in the face of contemporary Weberians such as Wiebe and McCutcheon, Heidegger argues that the irreducible realm is not set apart from the world—there is no strict division between sacred and profane that would cause scholars of religion to mark off a holy territory. Rather, when properly understood, the human, the world, and the relationship between them are constituted by an indeterminacy that resists objectification and mastery. In other words, Heidegger points to the sacrality of the secular in and through the meaningfulness of world.

2

PHILOSOPHIZING WITH RELIGION

Secular Reenchantment in the Early Heidegger

HEIDEGGER'S DISCOVERY of "*es weltet*" in 1919 opened up for him a different philosophical world, so to speak. His early analysis of worldhood indicated that the inherent meaningfulness of "existence," and the temporality that constitutes it, would be the keys to reformulating phenomenology as a primordial science in the face of the hegemony of the natural sciences and philosophies of worldview. During the last two decades, Heidegger scholars have observed the diverse set of resources Heidegger consulted during this period in order to develop his phenomenology in distinction from Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and Rickert's Weltanschauung philosophy. It is now well known that Paul, Augustine, Luther, and other theological figures were influential to Heidegger's thinking during the early years of the 1920s. The story is complicated, however, by the fact that Heidegger first articulated his doubts about Catholicism to his priest, Father Engelbert Krebs, in 1916. By 1919 he wrote to him to inform him that he would be leaving the Church in order to take up the vocation of philosophy. Recent Heidegger scholarship has demonstrated that the period from 1916 to 1927 was one of great turmoil for the young Heidegger, not least in part due to the exterior factors surrounding World War I, but also due to the fluidity among his philosophical, theological, and religious commitments. By the time the war ended, Heidegger had eschewed Catholicism, but remained intensely interested in Luther, mysticism, and early Christian thinkers, most notably Paul and Augustine.[1]

In response to the discovery of the intertwined philosophical and religious pathways Heidegger forged in the decade leading up to *Being and Time*, much attention has been given to the religious and theological significance of Heidegger's work during these years, especially the manner in which theological themes such as fallenness, dispersion, and calling are transposed into a phenomenological register in his magnum opus.[2] This attention mirrors the larger trend in post-Heideggerian philosophy of religion, which as I noted in the introduction has focused on the religious and theological significance of continental philosophy at the expense of analyzing the significance of philosophy's engagement with religion for secular visions of the human and the world. Heidegger's courses on Paul and Augustine in 1920–1921 have become well known among scholars interested in the development of Heidegger's early thought and the evolution of theological concepts in his philosophy. These texts have become prime examples of the theological influence on the young Heidegger's phenomenology, as well as proof that many of the key concepts in *Being and Time* have "theological" antecedents.

Given the enormous primary and secondary material related to Heidegger's pre–*Being and Time* decade, and in light of the overemphasis on theology in the history of post-Heideggerian philosophy of religion, my goal is neither to provide a comprehensive account of his development as a thinker, religious or otherwise, nor to reflect on what Heidegger's readings of Paul, Augustine, and other religious thinkers mean for Christian theology, including theological approaches to resisting ontotheology. Instead my goal is to point to a period in Heidegger's early thought where one finds the opening of the path that leads out of the iron cage of Weberian disenchantment toward the types of enchanted secularities articulated in the contemporary context by William Connolly, Mark C. Taylor, Jeffrey Kosky, and others. The question, on this reading, is not if Heidegger theologized philosophy by transposing Christian themes and concepts into philosophical registers. The question is how Heidegger's engagements with Christian religiosity enabled him to reflect on the themes of worldhood and temporality as the core elements of his philosophical account of the human and the world. I am interested, in other words, in how Heidegger philosophizes with religion in these courses in order to reconceptualize the meaning of existence in contrast to the nihilism of Weberian disenchantment.

THE "RELIGIOSITY" OF HEIDEGGER'S ATHEIST PHILOSOPHY

In his Freiburg course on Aristotle in 1921–1922, Heidegger is clear that the methodology of philosophy must be atheistic: "Philosophy, in its radical, self-posing questionability, must be a-theistic as a matter of principle. Precisely on account of its basic intention, philosophy must not presume to determine or possess God."[3] Heidegger's phenomenology during this period is characterized by analyses of human facticity meant to counter the Neo-Kantian rationalism of the time. As the hermeneutic of facticity, phenomenology could not begin with any theological insights that would "pollute" its methodology. Heidegger complained in 1918 in a letter to Karl Löwith that Husserl considered him to be a theologian rather than a philosopher.[4] However, in the same passage from the early Aristotle course Heidegger ambiguously says that "The more radical philosophy is, the more determinately is it on a path away from God; yet, precisely in the radicalization of the 'away,' it has its own difficult proximity to God."[5] This line of thinking coheres with Heidegger's comparison of factical life and its temporal constitution to the *mysterium tremendum* in the version of *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* from 1919/1920. At this point, he believes that his explorations into factical life will render new perspectives on temporality and transcendence, which would transform philosophical conceptions of the human's relationship to the world due to their resonance with certain types of unmasterability and excess often associated with the "sacred" or the "holy."

Yet, his goal is neither to prove the existence of God nor to legitimize religious belief. By contrast, the rediscovery of the temporally constituted "world" opens resonances with "religiosity" for methodologically atheist philosophy. In the course "The Metaphysical

Foundations of Logic" in 1928, Heidegger juxtaposes the notion of the divine to Dasein's understanding of Being:

> The problem of transcendence must be drawn back into the inquiry about temporality and freedom, and only from there can it be shown to what extent the understanding of being qua superior power [*Obermachtig*], qua holiness, belongs to transcendence itself as essentially ontologically different. The point is not to prove the divine ontically, in its "existence," but to clarify the origin of this understanding-of-being by means of the transcendence of Dasein, i.e., to clarify how this idea of being belongs to the understanding-of-being as such.[6]

In both *Being and Time* and the version of *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* from 1927 Heidegger argues that Dasein's understanding of Being is a function of temporality. Temporality, which constitutes the inherent living-from the past and anticipation of the future that Heidegger already analyzed in the version of "The Basic Problems of Phenomenology" from 1920, is the condition of possibility for Dasein's understanding of Being—that which carries Dasein beyond particular beings to the phenomenon of "*es weltet*," or worldhood. As I explore later, over the course of the 1920s Heidegger deconstructs Aristotle's concept of time in order to uncover the ecstatic nature of primordial temporality. Uncovering primordial temporality would explain the conditions of possibility for worldhood. Temporality constitutes Dasein, and temporality is the "original outside-itself itself," which means that Dasein, too, is always already outside itself. As the being constituted by temporality, Dasein is never present to itself, but is instead always stretched between the temporal ecstasies of having-become and anticipation of the future. As Heidegger says in *Being and Time*, this means that Dasein is a nullity, because it is never present to itself, nor can it ever see itself as it is. Strictly speaking, Dasein never "is," but rather exists ecstatically as pulled between the past and the future, which renders Dasein and Dasein's world uncanny, since neither of them are penetrable factically. The ecstatic nature of temporality means that Dasein and Dasein's world remain impenetrable on the most primordial levels.

What does Dasein's ecstatic Being have to do with philosophy's "difficult proximity to God" and how the notion of the "divine" belongs to the understanding-of-Being as such? As I argue later, one can interpret this as a reference to the uncanniness and unknowability of the temporally constituted world of Dasein and of Dasein itself. In a manner developed subsequently by a philosophical lineage including Bataille, Blanchot, Nancy, Derrida, Taylor, and others, Heidegger points to the resonances between the mysteriousness of the "holy" or "sacred" and the uncanniness and unknowability of the human and the world interpreted factically—that is, atheistically. In Heidegger's methodologically atheist philosophy, factical life is characterized by certain forms of impenetrability and uncertainty that stand directly opposed to Weber's vision of world as masterable totality. The world may be *Entzauberung*, or de-magiced, but this does not mean it is objectifiable or masterable, that is, demystified.

This leads to what Heidegger learned from Paul and Augustine, just two of the religious figures he engaged during the early Freiburg period, concerning temporality, selfhood, and transcendence.[7] Heidegger detected in Paul's epistles and Augustine's *Confessions* a comportment to unmasterable temporal and worldly horizons from which he developed more full phenomenological conceptions of worldhood and temporality. By 1927 Heidegger formulated a conception of temporality, which constitutes factical life, analogously to Paul's and Augustine's conception of the divine. In other words, he was able to use the lessons learned from their religiosities to more clearly formulate the temporal constitution of factical life. This leads his methodologically atheist philosophy to a place similar to the one Connolly articulates in a passage I quoted in the introduction, where secular life, or in Heidegger's case factical life, "can be enchanted in some ways, even if it does not express divine meanings that are partly revealed and partly hidden, and even if it is not a providential world" (WB 70). On this reading, Heidegger's courses on Paul and Augustine from 1920–1921 can be read as the seminal encounter with religion for twentieth-century continental philosophy, one that enabled Heidegger to more fully understand the themes of worldhood and temporality first explored in the courses in 1919–1920. This encounter is the first in a tradition that has enabled philosophy to articulate more vibrant and accurate visions of the secular in opposition to Weberian disenchantment and related forms of secularism.

In other words, these encounters represent the first realization of the apophatic analogy in the twentieth century, wherein Heidegger came to understand how the human lives factically in a world constituted by the ecstasies of temporality, stretched between its birth and death, anticipating an unknowable and inexperienceable event, just as the Christian lives from its conversion and toward the parousia, stretched ecstatically between a past and future that render the present never present.

PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY, RELIGION

Heidegger's philosophy of religion courses immediately follow the courses on the contours of phenomenology from 1919–1920, all three of which explicitly confront Neo-Kantian philosophies of worldview and values, and implicitly confront Weberian disenchantment. However, the significant attention given to the philosophy of religion courses from 1920–1921 in recent Heidegger scholarship threatens to disconnect them from their context. Given Heidegger's interest in early Christianity, mysticism, and Luther during this period, they are certainly not anomalies. But beyond fitting into the young Heidegger's interest in various Christianities during the early 1920s, the courses are a continuation of his critique of Neo-Kantianism. Even if Heidegger's analysis of Paul's religiosity and Augustine's enacted self appears distinct from his polemic against Weltanschauung philosophies, the courses are in fact an extension of, rather than a divergence from, this trajectory. Read within their context, they should not be viewed in isolation from the courses of 1919–1920, but instead should be understood as a further step in the development of Heidegger's philosophical alternative to philosophies of values and Weberian disenchantment.

The progression of the courses of 1919–1920 offers a contrast to the notion that the world is a totality of masterable objects. In its place, Heidegger offers a phenomenological analysis of lived-experience focused on the phenomenon of worldhood. At the end of

The Basic Problems of Phenomenology 1919/1920, however, Heidegger offers his first analysis of the temporal dimension of worldhood, which signifies a shift from criticizing scientific conceptions of space to criticizing objectified conceptions of time. In the course "Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion" from 1920 Heidegger argues that for Rickert, Weber, and other Neo-Kantians history is an object to be secured, or mastered, through a theory "about the sense of reality of the temporal" (PRL 46/31) formed through an idea of the extratemporal, or transcendental. Heidegger explicitly mentions Weber, maintaining that Weber's typological method reveals the "fundamental character of the theoretical attitude in its relation to history" (PRL 46/32) by turning history into "the object toward which I take a cognitive attitude" (PRL 48/34).[8] Just as Heidegger argued that the subject/object framework built from the Kantian transcendental ego is a derivative layer of interpretation extracted from factical life, he argues here that this approach to history is also derivative and devivifying. If Weber's belief in the masterability of the world relies on the idea that the extended world—space—is a masterable totality of objects, it relies equally on a concept of history, or time, as a similar masterable totality. On this reading, history is an objectified continuum on which each individual is only a pawn in the foregone conclusion of world-mastery.[9]

As Heidegger scholarship has demonstrated, Heidegger's discovery of the irreducibility of temporality coincided with his *Destruktion* of Western ontology, what eventually became his sweeping criticism of ontotheology.[10] He realized as early as 1920 that in order to offer a complete response to Neo-Kantianism, he would have to account more fully for the objectified conception of time. As I demonstrate later, Heidegger's engagement with Paul and Augustine enabled him to deconstruct philosophical and theological conceptions of time from Aristotle to Kant. Thus, in the introductory chapters of the first philosophy of religion course Heidegger forges the opening of this path by extending his critique of Neo-Kantianism to the phenomenon of history, or the "historical": "'Historical' means not only proceeding in time—that is to say, it is not only a characterization which befits a complex of objects. But in factical life experience and in the straightforward, attitudinal evolution of philosophy, the historical, in accordance with this view, obtains the character of a quality of an object changing in time" (PRL 34/23). The account given by Rickert, Weber, and others derives its sense of the historical from a de-vivified theoretical attitude that passes over or disregards the "*es weltet*," which constitutes factical life. Just as Heidegger argued that philosophy should derive meaning from its own methodology, rather than from the natural sciences, he maintains now that the notion of the historical must be conceived in terms of factical life (PRL 34/24). If history is an account of how beings change through time, and phenomenology is a hermeneutic of the temporally constituted stream of experience, then access to how beings change in time "must be grasped in the way we originally experience temporality in factical experience—entirely irrespective of all pure consciousness and all pure time" (PRL 65/44).

In place of the objectified historical method proposed by Weber, Troeltsch, Spengler, and others, Heidegger employs his now famous method of "formal indication," which is a "methodological use of a sense that becomes a guiding one for phenomenological explanation" (PRL 55/38). By contrast to the objectivation of history, formal indication is an exegesis of the structures and conditions that constitute facticity, as Burch explains: "Formal indication, then, is the 'counter-ruinant,' nonobjectifying, reflective method that accentuates life's own mode of self-awareness in order to articulate the meaning structures that make everyday experience possible."[11] In order to gain access to the historical, Heidegger argues that the phenomenologist must interrogate what is experienced, how it is experienced, and how the relational meanings of the factical situation cohere together, rather than approaching the historical text, figure, or event as an object to be dissected: "Thus the formalization arises out of the relational meaning of the pure attitudinal relation itself, not out of the 'what-content as such' " (PRL 58–59/40). By exploring the structures and conditions that comprise the relational matrix of the historical phenomenon, philosophy can open access to the lived-experience of the historical.

Heidegger employs this method in his study of Paul's epistles, wherein the goal is not to extract values and types that can enable the scholar to objectify the data as scientifically as possible.

Philosophically speaking, the goal of studying religious phenomena is not to gain "objective" knowledge about them. Rather, Heidegger wants to gain insight into the factical situation of the religious subject/community in order to understand their comportment to the world. His approach to Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians is a case in point. In the paragraph titled "Phenomenological Explication of the First Letter to the Thessalonians," Heidegger elucidates his notion of the phenomenological meaning of "situation." This notion would become central to his analysis of the ecstatico-temporal nature of worldhood and care in *Being and Time*.[12] In 1920, "situation" signifies the distinction between the geographical, social, and cultural spaces of Paul's life and his lived-experience of Christian religiosity, as Gosetti-Ferencei says in her article on the development of Heidegger's notion of world: "In terms of Paul's description of his religious experience, there is an indication, in both surrounding- and communal-worlds and their relation to the self-world, of the 'situation,' which Heidegger will later call *Wesenraum*, a sphere which, as in the later writings, is not reducible to a geographical specificity but an existential situation with its unique historicality."[13] Heidegger's analysis of Paul's "situation" signifies an attempt to understand Paul's history in terms of his "unique existential situation," rather than from the viewpoint of an objective onlooker. It is an examination of Paul's "historicity" that differs from both history taken as a set of objective facts and attempts to empathetically relive Paul's experiences. The goal is instead to understand the constitutive ground that determined Paul's lived-experience of temporality and thereby to understand his peculiar form of "historicity." Thus, when explicating Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, Heidegger explains his methodological concern as follows: "One difficulty is that we cannot at all, with our ideas, put ourselves in Paul's place. Such an attempt is misguided because what is crucial is not the material character of Paul's environment, but rather only his own situation [*Situation*]" (PRL 89/62). By taking seriously "what" is experienced by Paul and his community, Heidegger takes seriously their existential realities, such as God's revelation, which shape their particular factical situation. Even if Heidegger himself has not experienced the type of revelation that shaped Paul's religiosity, the enactment of formal indication means that Heidegger must consider how Paul's experience at Damascus shaped Paul's facticity.

Therefore, by exegeting Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, Heidegger's goal is not to understand comprehensively the social, political, and cultural conditions in which Paul was writing. If philosophy is to proceed according to an understanding of historicity developed from factical life, it must make a turn from this kind of analysis: "The turning-around from the object-historical [*Objektgeschichtlichen*] to the enactment-historical [*Vollzuggeschichtlichen*] lies in factical life experience itself. It is a turning around to the situation" (PRL 90/63). According to Heidegger, "situation," as a phenomenological term, is independent of a "historical period or epoch" (PRL 90/63). Phenomenology turns from an investigation into the historical objects that form the context of Paul's letter to an interpretation of his lived-experience of the situation—that is, the ground that constituted his existence rather than the objective facts of Paul's life and teaching.[14]

By investigating the ground of Paul's religiosity, Heidegger discovered a "living-toward" an irreducible and unanticipatable horizon that stood in stark contrast to the "de-vivified" experience of the transcendental ego. Paul's living-toward was constituted by his having-become a certain type of self—his having certain possibilities handed over to him from a past that was itself irreducible. As a result, Heidegger's analysis of Paul's lived-experience of factical life enabled him to further develop his phenomenological understanding of temporality and the self. As I shall demonstrate in the next section through an analysis of Heidegger's version of "The Basic Problems of Phenomenology" from 1927, Paul's religiosity provides Heidegger's phenomenology with a resource for the transformation of temporality from the derivative framework of the Kantian and Husserlian onlooker to Dasein's primordial lived-temporality.

On Heidegger's reading, Paul's Christian religiosity, both in how he lived it and in how he counseled others to do so, was not a "a cognitive question" (PRL 102/72). Paul's religious experience is prior to cognitive questions about dogmatics. To understand Paul as trying to construct a theological edifice from his experience on the road to Damascus or in anticipation of the eschaton is to entirely miss the point: "The dogma as detached content of doctrine in an objective, epistemological emphasis could never have been guiding for Christian religiosity. On the contrary, the genesis of dogma can only be understood from out of the enactment [*Vollzug*] of Christian life experience" (PRL 112/79). According to the methodology of formal indication, Heidegger is interested in the "How" of Paul's enactment of anticipation of the parousia.

Heidegger is particularly interested in how the factical realities of Paul's conversion experience and the impending parousia shape Paul's facticity. The question is not "When" it will happen, but how it causes a qualitative change in the experience and conception of temporality: " 'When' leads back to my comportment. How the parousia stands in my life, that refers back to the enactment of life itself. The meaning of the 'When,' of the time in which the Christian lives, has an entirely special character. Earlier we formally characterized: 'Christian religiosity lives temporality.' It is a time without its own order and demarcations" (PRL 104/73). The parousia cannot be anticipated, and thus the question of when it will happen is meaningless. What is meaningful for Paul is the "wakefulness" with which one lives at all times in anticipation of that which cannot be anticipated. Heidegger indicates that the organization of one's life by the parousia does not take one into the future, but instead, in language that will be employed in *Being and Time*, makes one futural.[15] The future arrives in the present to disrupt the notion that time is a linear, objectifiable entity on an already-set continuum.

Not only does Christian religiosity entail a facticity wherein the individual wakefully anticipates what cannot be anticipated, but Christian religiosity is a matter of perpetually enacting the possibilities given through the Christian's peculiar having-become. For Heidegger Christian religiosity does not mean extraction from the set of worldly relationships enjoyed before conversion: "The relational sense is not changed, and still less the content. Thus: the Christian does not step out of this world" (PRL 118–119/85). The effect is quite the opposite—the Christian is radically thrust back into the immanence of lived-temporality: "In Christian life experience, it arises from the sense of the surrounding world [*Umwelt*], that the world does not just happen to be there. It is no αδιάπορον [indifferent]. The significance of the world—also that of one's own world—is given and experienced in a peculiar way through the retrieval of the relational complexes in the authentic enactment" (PRL 122/87). After conversion, the Christian's set of worldly relationships is not objectively transformed. In the having-become of Christian religiosity, the existential significance of each relation is transformed within the same relational complexes experienced before conversion. The "form of the world" passes away into a different "world," one in which the Christian's matrix of relations is transformed by a peculiar lived-temporality. This facticity is not a matter of the Christian's will or intellect. It is not a matter of an active ego gaining mastery over itself or its world. The having-become of Christian conversion is a result of God's grace: "The Christian is conscious that this facticity cannot be won out of his own strength, but rather originates from God—the phenomenon of the effects of grace" (PRL 122/87). Thus, the Christian's anticipation of that which cannot be anticipated is a reckoning with the future that inherently and simultaneously involves a reckoning with its past. Anticipation and possibility are co-constitutive of its comportment to the world.

As a result of its simultaneous anticipation and having-become, the Christian is stretched out temporally between the past—being given the grace needed for the conversion to new life, which transforms the existential significance of its worldly relations—and the ever-coming parousia that disruptively arrives in each moment. Consequently, the Christian is thrust into the immanence of the relational complexes of her world without a secure foundation on which she can make sense of it or herself. This demands soberness and wakefulness in order to enact both the possibilities handed down by his conversion and the futural arrival of the parousia. The self is enacted immanently between the temporal ecstasies of having-become and always-coming. Christian religiosity lives temporality because the nature of the eschatological prevents her from objectifying time into an object to be grasped, and thus "de-vivified." This is why for Heidegger Christian religiosity stands in stark contrast to philosophers' attempts to construct a metaphysical worldview. According to Heidegger, a "Christian worldview" is a contradiction, since God provides no secure foothold for the human self. God is not a foundation, but an existentially unsettling force that disrupts every second of every moment of temporal life: "The Christian does not find in God a 'foothold' [*seinen Halt*] (Jaspers)" (PRL 122/87).

In terms of the import of Paul's religiosity for his phenomenological method, Heidegger finds in the mode of Christian facticity the key to understanding how lived-temporality enables a peculiar experience prior to the de-vivification of objectivity. The unanticipatable and unquantifiable nature of the parousia thrusts the Christian into a factical stream of experience in which one cannot understand time to be a linear object. Christian religiosity refuses the de-vivification effected by a theoretical reduction of the world to a set of objects, because that which constitutes its temporality cannot be reduced as such: "One cannot encounter this temporality in some sort of objective concept of time. The when is in no way objectively graspable" (PRL 104/73). Temporality, as it is experienced factically, is not an object that can be seen, nor is it an idea that can be grasped: "In talk without qualification of 'ideas,' one misrecognizes the fact that the eschatological is never primarily idea" (PRL 111/78). In this primal Christian religiosity, Heidegger suggests that we can glimpse first and foremost how factical life has a "character of significance" that is always prior to any "objective conception of time" (PRL 104/73).

Christianity's peculiar religiosity enabled Heidegger to understand and explain how phenomenology could gain access to factical life. As we shall see in Heidegger's analysis of Augustine's *Confessions*, the "present" of factical life is characterized by a never-being-present due to the conditions of mortal temporality. Accordingly, Heidegger's analysis of Paul's religiosity hints toward the formulation of an alternative conception of the self on the basis of temporality as the primordial ground of the self's existence. The Christian's lived-temporality, stretched between the having-become of conversion and the anticipation of the unanticipatable parousia, reveals a self that is a temporally stretched nullity, rather than a self that is given as a self-grounded foundation.

THE GROUND OF BEING: TIME, TEMPORALITY, TRANSCENDENCE

In the latter half of the course "The Basic Problems of Phenomenology" from 1927, where Heidegger provides a lengthy articulation of his own ontology in contrast to the Western ontological tradition from Aristotle to Kant, Heidegger's *Destruktion* of Western philosophy as ontotheology converges with the insight gained from his engagement with Paul.[16] Heidegger deploys his *Destruktion* through an analysis of time that aims to demonstrate how Western thought has made no real progress in this domain since Aristotle, and that indeed this conception implies an objectified understanding of time—what Heidegger calls "clock time."[17] The insight from Paul then becomes very clear when Heidegger explains that temporality, from which time is derived, cannot be understood as a being. It is rather the constitutive ground of existence, that which determines Dasein's possibilities in the world, including its relationships to other Dasein. Heidegger's analysis of Aristotle's treatment of time boils down to the Greek philosopher's understanding of time as a number, or, more specifically, as a being: "Time is a number. . . . But, here as Aristotle expressly stresses, the expression 'number' [*arithmos*] must be understood in the sense of *arithmoumenon*. Time is a number not in the sense of the number that numbers as such but of the number that is *numbered, counted*" (BPPb 338/239). On Heidegger's reading, Aristotle conceptualizes time as something that can be measured as a "gathering together [*Zusammennehmens*]" of the "sequence of nows [*Folge von Jetzt*]." Hence, time can be reduced to the sum of its parts (BPPb 361–362/239). While Aristotle obviously does not mention the use of a clock in his analysis, Heidegger insists that the former's analysis implies the common, everyday interpretation of time by way of a clock. The significance of the "numbering" of time is that each being is "measured by time" (BPPb 361/256). As we recall, the methodological obstacle Heidegger sought to overcome in the war semester course in 1919 on the methodology of philosophy was the "de-vivification" of experience by the gaze of the philosophical (including phenomenological) onlooker. Heidegger's analysis of time in Aristotle and the everyday comportment toward clock time signifies an important development toward working out this problem.

As Heidegger sees it, Aristotle's conception of time as a sequence of nows projects time as a continuum on which the self understands its lived-experience as a linear sequence. Dasein's "history" becomes objectified into a series of "nows" that can be measured. Dasein's future becomes an anticipatable map of the linear temporal road ahead. For Heidegger, the problem is that this objectification of time formulates time as a being: "As the Dasein encounters [*begegnet*] time, time gets interpreted also as something somehow extant [*Vorhandenes*], particularly if it reveals itself as being in a certain connection precisely with extant [*vorhanden*] nature. . . . The nows appear to be intratemporal. They come and go like beings; like extant entities they perish, becoming no longer extant" (BPPb 385/272). The subsequent interpretation of Dasein as a subject who cognitively apprehends objects corresponds directly to the conception of time as a sequence of measurable "nows"—a conception that understands time as a being. Accordingly, this conception of time is directly connected to Dasein's tendency "to understand itself primarily by way of things and to derive the concept of Being from the extant [*Vorhanden*]" (BPPb 385/272). Time taken as a being is thus intimately related to the de-vivification of the world and the self.

Heidegger's analysis of Aristotle's conception of time—a conception he claims has been implicitly appropriated philosophically since Aristotle and employed on an everyday basis through "clock time"—contains the answer to the question as to why philosophy, including phenomenology, could not avoid "de-vivifying" experience. In 1919 Heidegger lamented that philosophy extracts entities from the significance of Dasein's factical environment in order to theorize them—to turn them into abstracted "things" (DP 89/75).[18] By 1927, Heidegger realizes that the de-vivification of entities, and the inability to understand them within the flow of factical life, originated in the conception of time itself as a being. How could philosophy not "de-vivify" Dasein's experience of the world if it continued to "de-vivify" time itself?

In terms of my comparison of Heidegger and Weber in the previous chapter, it is important to point out that Heidegger's critique of Aristotle's concept of time as a linear sequence of nows applies directly to Weber's vision of temporal progress in "Science as a Vocation." According to Weber, the meaninglessness of modern secular life stems from the unending progression of the temporal continuum, on which progress is continually made, negating the discoveries and accomplishments of the past. For Weber, time is a being, a masterable being. Even if the process of mastery is unfinished, it is a foregone conclusion. History, like the world, is a masterable object. The human who finds herself in such a world, living according to such a temporality, finds her own historicity and facticity meaningless. If Heidegger first countered the philosophies of value by discovering the "*es weltet*," he completed his critique through a critical reevaluation of temporality. In essence, the difference between Heidegger's argument for the inherent meaningfulness of worldhood and Weberian disenchantment is a qualitatively different interpretation of time.

TEMPORALITY AND WORLDHOOD

In the version of *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* from 1927, we can see how Heidegger reformulates the Pauline structure of anticipation and having-been in a phenomenological mode: Dasein's possibilities—the world to which it submits and which it simultaneously projects—are a function of its having-become. Dasein does not leave its past behind in order to move along the continuum of its lifetime. Dasein cannot escape its past, because its past enables its future, and vice versa: "This having-been-ness, understood primarily, precisely does not mean that the Dasein no longer in fact is; just the contrary, the Dasein is precisely in fact what it was. . . . The Dasein can as little get rid of its (past as) bygoneness as escape its death. In every sense and in every case everything we have been is an essential determination of our existence" (BPPb 375/265). Dasein's inescapable submission to a world, and thus inescapable projection of possibilities, entails a perpetual reckoning with its having-been in world. Dasein is present as having-been and to-come.

Dasein is always simultaneously what-it-will-be and what-it-was. Consequently, its "present" is not a matter of existing as a being that is either ready-to-hand or merely present-to-hand: "The present in the existential sense is not the same as presence [*Anwesenheit*] or as extantness [*Vorhandenheit*]" (BPPb 376/266). For Dasein, the present includes the simultaneous arrival of the future and the having-been-ness of its past, which means it cannot be located on one point of the temporal continuum. As a result, Dasein's reckoning with the present is a matter of what Heidegger calls "enpresenting": "Only as enpresenting [*Gegenwartigendes*] is the Dasein futural and past (as having-been) in the particular sense. As expecting a possibility the Dasein is always in such a way that it comports itself enpresentingly [*gegenwartigend*] toward something at hand and keeps this extant entity as something present in its, the Dasein's, own present [*Gegenwart*]" (BPPb 376/266). Dasein's present is always a matter of comporting itself to entities through the anticipation of its own possibilities on account of its having-become. Thus, in terms of temporality, and in distinction from clock time, the present is not a matter of presence. The "present" is always constituted by a primordial temporal outside-of-self: "As determined by this toward, back-to, and with, temporality is *outside itself*. Time is carried away within itself as future, past, and present. As future, the Dasein is *carried away to* its past (has been) capacity-to-be; as past (having-been), it *is carried away to* its having-been-ness; and as enpresenting, it *is carried away to some* other being or beings" (BPPb 377/267).[19] In stark contrast to the interpretation of time as a sequence of nows plotted along a linear continuum, Heidegger argues that temporality is in fact beyond-itself within-itself: "as temporality, it is itself the original outside-itself, the εκστατικόν. For this character of carrying-away we employ the expression the ecstatic character of time" (BPPb 377/267). As that toward which Dasein is always already comporting itself, temporality enables the possibility of Dasein's possibilities via the worlding of the world. This means that Dasein never has its Being, even though its Being is always an issue for it. Temporality is the original outside-itself and thus Dasein's comportment toward it—even its authentic taking up of its possibilities in the world—will never result in an experience of unity, existential stasis, or rest.

This ontological formulation of temporality leads Heidegger to a radical ontological conclusion:

> Fundamentally it must be noted that if we define temporality as the original constitution of the Dasein and thus as the origin of the possibility of the understanding of Being, then Temporality as origin is necessarily richer and more pregnant than anything that may arise from it. This makes manifest a peculiar circumstance, which is

> relevant throughout the whole dimension of philosophy, namely, that within the ontological sphere the possible is higher than everything actual. All origination and all genesis in the field of the ontological is not growth and unfolding but degeneration, since everything arising arises, that is, in a certain way runs *away*, removes itself from the superior force of the source.
>
> (BPPb 438/308)

Following Pauline lines, Heidegger refuses to understand time as a series of nows pushed together on a continuum. Dasein's Being-possible means that Dasein *is* as the impossible search for that which makes it possible.

We have reached the point where the Weberian and Heideggerian views of the world diverge acutely. For Weber, the world has become disenchanted because it is only a matter of time before it is mastered by calculative thinking. Weber argues that the masterability of both time and space means not only that the self and the world are masterable, but also that existence is meaningless. By contrast, Heidegger argues, per engagement with Paul's religiosity, that the "world" in which the human finds itself is constituted by an ecstatic temporality, which renders both the world and the self as unmasterable by calculative thinking. When it comes to the most primordial levels of existence, temporality resists objectification and, by contrast, is characterized by an unmasterable excess. In other words, the world remains enchanted in the sense that it resists mastery, and in the sense that the self which is constituted by its temporality is always ecstatically pulled between the phenomena that constitute its past and the phenomena that constitute its future, which remain beyond knowledge and experience.

THE SELF AS THE SEARCH: AUGUSTINE'S CONFESSION

If Heidegger's course in 1920 centers on Paul's lived-experience of temporality, his course in 1921 investigates how Augustine's lived-experience of temporality transforms the Bishop of Hippo's conception of selfhood. By 1927 Heidegger would argue that Dasein is constituted by temporality, and this temporal constitution means that Dasein is always already carried away from itself. The self cannot found Dasein's Being or its constitution of other beings, because the self is never present—either to itself or to other beings—in order to found them. Rather, Dasein is a nullity that has no Being in-itself—a nothing that is perpetually given Being, but never has Being in-itself or for-itself. An analysis of his course from 1921 on Augustine reveals how the Bishop of Hippo's self-reflection in book 10 of *Confessions* enabled Heidegger to come to these key realizations regarding the structure of Dasein.

Before investigating these themes, it is necessary to first contextualize Augustine's role in Heidegger's philosophical development. Ryan Coyne has demonstrated convincingly the influential role Augustine played in "Heidegger's path" during the early Freiburg period:

> The early Heidegger invested Christian theological sources, Augustine as well as Paul, with a strictly ontological relevance. Read properly, Heidegger argued, these sources would yield an entirely new philosophical approach to subjectivity. Directly following "Augustine and Neoplatonism," Heidegger made good on this promise, as he drew heavily upon *Confessions* X in order to construct what he then called *factical life* or *factical being*, the conceptual precursor to *Dasein*. This strategy of repeating and "de-theologizing" Augustine would have lasting effects on Heidegger's work: many phenomena first described chiefly by means of paraphrasing the 1921 commentary on the *Confessions* would eventually find their way into *Being and Time*.[20]

Coyne's analysis demonstrates the important, if often partially concealed, influence Augustine had on Heidegger throughout the decade leading up to the publication of *Being and Time*. While Heidegger's engagement with Augustine was certainly not limited to the course from 1921, my analysis explores how Augustine's conception of selfhood enabled Heidegger to understand the structure of the factical self under the conditions of mortal temporality, that is, how

Augustine illuminated for Heidegger the fundamental absence of the self to itself.[21]

Heidegger's analysis of *Confessions* begins abruptly with book 10, which he suggests is easily distinguished from the first nine books: "In this respect, Book X can be easily demarcated from the other books, as Augustine here no longer relates his past, but rather tells what he is now" (PRL 177/128). Thus, it is a natural starting point for a phenomenological-historical analysis of Augustine's text. Heidegger is seeking neither to understand the biography of Augustine nor to understand the theologically dogmatic elements of *Confessions* in relation to Augustine's corpus as a whole.[22] Rather, just as he was concerned with how Paul enacted his anticipation of the parousia, Heidegger is interested in how Augustine enacts his self in and through his confession to God: "So Augustine wants to dare to confess himself. And he will only confess what he "knows" ["*wei*"] about himself. Augustine admits not knowing everything about himself. He wants to confess that too" (PRL 178/129–130). Heidegger notices that Augustine's confession does not commence with the question of who God is or where Augustine might find him—although this will come in due time—but with a question of the self. If Augustine is confessing that he does not know everything about himself, what does this mean for how the self is structured? "The primacy of the relational sense or of the sense of enactment is remarkable. What it is: this question leads to the How of having it. The situation of enactment, authentic existence" (PRL 195/143).

When it comes to Augustine's famous inventory of his memory, Heidegger notices that Augustine concluded that both God and himself (Augustine) are outside of his memory. That is, the self is not found as an object that Augustine "had." Instead it is something for which he searches: "That means, in searching for this something as God, I myself assume a completely different role. I am not only the one from whose place the search proceeds and who moves toward some place, or the one in whom the search takes place; but the enactment of the search itself is something of the self. What does it mean that I 'am'?" (PRL 192/141)[23] Heidegger sees in Augustine's enacted selfhood the same being-stretched he interpreted in Paul's lived-temporality. The self is neither a secure foundation nor even that to which the search hopes to arrive. The self is somehow defined by the enactment of the search for itself—the being-stretched between the enactment of the search and the hope for arrival at the destination it will never reach. Thus, Augustinian selfhood is somehow defined by being a nonplace between the place of the searcher and the terrain of the search. It is this "non-presence" that Heidegger wants to formulate phenomenologically (PRL 188/138).

The understanding of the self as the enactment of a search diverges radically from the model of selfhood as a given, certain, and rational ego upon which knowledge of objects in the world is founded. This is the self of factical life. Accordingly, Ryan Coyne argues that for the young Heidegger Augustine and Descartes represented diametrically opposed conceptions of the self:

> The opposition between Descartes and Augustine mirrors the disjunction between modern "epistemological" approaches to subjectivity and Heidegger's emerging hermeneutics of facticity, the latter being Heidegger's term for the interpretation of existence on its own terms. These two thinkers, Augustine and Descartes, often linked by historians of philosophy, represent for Heidegger diametrically opposed ways of construing what it might mean to have a self [*das Sichselbst-Haben*].[24]

One of Heidegger's goals during the early Freiburg period was to read the Cartesian cogito inversely in order to explicate the self not as a thinking-thing, but as an existentially thrown factical self.[25] By contrast to Descartes, Augustine cannot locate himself in the inventory of his memory, and thus he cannot represent himself to himself as either a grasped object or a rational subject:

> The knowledge of the uncertainty itself lies in darkness. I cannot just look at myself to see myself lying open before me. I am concealed to myself . . . unless experience reveals it, if the complex of experience, that is, the historical experiencing in its "expansion" (the experience oriented toward the self, existential experience), does not

> expose it. I can never appeal to a moment that is shut down, as it were, in which I supposedly penetrate myself. The next moment can make me fall, and expose me as someone entirely different. For this reason, insofar as the having-myself can be enacted at all, it is always in the pull away from and toward this life, a to and fro.
>
> (PRL 216–217/161)

The search for self leads paradoxically to the revelation that within the stream of factical life the self never has its Being. Strictly speaking, the self never "is": "Again, factical life is in the historical. The self [*Selbst*]—even if often only in a 'weak' manner—is taken into a historical experiencing [*historisches Erfahren*]. Basic motif: the historical in *cura* [concern] itself" (PRL 208/153). Indeed, as Coyne indicates, Augustinian care is characterized first and foremost by the noncoincidence of the finite self with itself: "This non-coincidence means not only that care is constituted as a situation of awaiting, one that is akin to Pauline eschatological temporality, wherein the question of the end toward which the Christian is striving is re-directed. . . . The Heideggerian figuration of Augustinian cura rests upon the discovery of the 'incurable' at the heart of finite being."[26] The self is permeated with care principally because it is incurable. In contrast to the self-assured and wholly active Cartesian ego, the Augustinian self passively receives the possibility of itself from outside of itself in each passing instant.

Therefore, as Heidegger will say along Augustinian lines in *Being and Time*, the self is a "lack" or a "nullity" that is always both surrendered to conditions of temporality and responsible for perpetually reckoning with the unyielding onslaught of futurity (BT 286/331). The factical self is not a foundation for the rational comprehension of the world; it is a nullity for which exhaustive knowledge of itself and its world is impossible. The self is not a transcendent ego who rationally categorizes a reducible world of objects; it is instead an enacted self who is always already beyond itself in the search for itself. This means that for Augustine the self is constantly "insecure," in light of its "devilish being-torn-apart"; it appears incurable under the conditions of mortal temporality (PRL 209/154). Since the self is neither an object to be had nor something that can be somehow gazed upon from within the stream of experience, it is impossible for the search for oneself to come to an end. Overall, Augustine's realization that he will never penetrate himself—uncover himself as a visible, securable entity—enabled Heidegger to understand that the conditions of temporality constitute the impossibility of the self's presence to itself.

POSSIBILITY AS FACTICITY/FACTICITY AS POSSIBILITY

Three themes in *Being and Time* that were first explored in the Augustine course are pertinent to my argument concerning Heidegger's enactment of the apophatic analogy: First, Dasein is not an object that can be seen or grasped. Second, Dasein is not a master of itself or its world, but is instead always enacting anticipated possibilities handed down from its past. Finally, neither object nor master, Dasein is an uncanny nullity who is itself as beyond itself.

In my analyses of Heidegger's engagement with Paul and his conception of temporality in the version of "The Basic Problems of Phenomenology" from 1927, I sketched out how Dasein's temporal constitution renders it "present" through anticipation of the future and its having-become. This leads Heidegger to the radical conclusion that ontologically speaking possibility is higher than actuality. In other words, Dasein's Being is as its possibilities according to the ecstatic givenness of temporality. However, as Heidegger says in section 50 of *Being and Time*, death is the "possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein" (BT 250/294). In Heidegger's famous analysis of Dasein's Being-toward-death, death constitutes Dasein's ownmost, nonrelational, and not-to-be-outstripped possibility, because death is the "measureless impossibility of Dasein" (BT 262/307), a possibility that "is as far as possible from anything actual" (BT 262/306–307). That which constitutes Dasein temporally, its death, is a possibility that cannot be actualized. This means that Dasein's "essence," the measureless impossibility of its possibility, "gives nothing to be actualized," no image with which Dasein can bring itself into accord, "nothing which Dasein, as actual, could itself be"

(BT 262/307). Dasein is a possibility, or set of possibilities, that can never be finally actualized.

When these passages are viewed in light of the course in 1921, the Augustinian elements of Heidegger's analysis are evident. Dasein cannot penetrate itself under the conditions of mortal temporality. Rather than seeking to confess to the God who is so intimate to the soul that the soul cannot locate Him, Dasein is grounded by the death which is so intimate to it that it cannot represent it, picture it, or accord itself with it. Consequently, just as Augustine's self could never penetrate itself by locating the God who made it possible, Dasein can never penetrate the "measureless impossibility" that constitutes its possibilities. Thus, Dasein is not an object that can be mastered. Dasein is a being constituted by the ecstatic givenness of temporality. On this reading, if Dasein is a being whose ownmost potentiality for Being cannot be mastered but instead remains always a "measureless impossibility" beyond experience, language, and knowledge, then Dasein is an unmasterable being whose possibilities resist objectification.

If Dasein is not an object to be grasped, it is also not a master of itself or its world. In section 58 of *Being and Time*, amid his analysis of the call and the theme of guilt, Heidegger argues that even if Dasein is itself the basis for its Being, it has been given the responsibility of its Being "*not through* itself but *to* itself" (BT 285/330). According to Heidegger, Dasein's thrownness means that it is handed over to its possibilities without being the basis, or foundation, of them: "And how is Dasein this thrown basis? Only in that it projects itself upon possibilities into which it has been thrown. The Self, which as such has to lay the basis for itself, can *never* get that basis into its power; and yet, as existing, it must take over Being-a-basis" (BT 284/330). Having-become passively in its thrownness, Dasein never has power over its Being "from the ground up" (BT 284/330). It is master neither of itself nor of the ecstasies of temporality that constitute the worldhood of the world. If Augustine's soul remains concealed from itself due to its inability to locate and grasp that which constitutes it, Heidegger's Dasein never has foundational power over the basis of itself, even if it "reposes in the weight of it, which is made manifest to it as a burden by Dasein's mood" (BT 284/330). Far from the master of itself and its world, Dasein is always already thrown into its having-become and its anticipation of its future possibilities.

Rather than self- and world-master, Dasein is a null basis of the possibilities it anticipates by way of its having-become: "Dasein is its basis existently—that is, in such a manner that it understands itself in terms of possibilities, and, as so understanding itself, is that entity which has been thrown" (BT 285/331). As itself, Dasein occupies a space where it is always beyond itself into the future that has been handed down to it by its past. Dasein's presence is a space of nonexistence where it is itself only as not itself: "In the structure of thrownness, as in that of projection, there lies essentially a nullity" (BT 285/331). Dasein is the being given over to itself as a void, one that enacts itself by projection of the possibilities conditioned by its thrownness into the world. As a thrown being that understands itself in terms of its possibilities, but whose ownmost potentiality for Being is a measureless impossibility, Dasein has no "ideal" to which it would attempt to bring its possibility into actuality. Dasein remains ineluctably a possible being, or a Being-possible, constituted by the measureless impossibility of its existence. Consequently, in itself Dasein is not. It is an uncanny interspace always stretched between the past it neither experienced nor chose and the future it can neither control nor know.

Just as Heidegger diverges from Weber's vision of the world as a masterable totality, he also resists Weber's conception of the human as a self-certain master of the world and of itself. If Weber's Neo-Kantianism led him to conclude that life is meaningless because values are strictly speaking irrational and thus unreal, Heidegger articulates a position wherein life is meaningful precisely because in itself the human is a nullity who can never master its own notness. The conditions of mortal temporality render life meaningful because they constitute a subject who is neither an object to be mastered nor a master of the world. By contrast, Dasein is a temporally ecstatic being whose possibilities remain uncertain, unknowable, and unpredictable in the face of the measureless impossibility, or unactualizable possibility, of its death. In the face of the endless continuum on which Weber's modern person finds herself as a replaceable component, whose life and death are always strictly meaningless, Heidegger envisions Dasein in terms of an ecstatic temporality wherein it is always already beyond itself both temporally and spatially.

HEIDEGGER, RELIGION, AND SECULAR REENCHANTMENT

Developed over the course of the decade leading up to *Being and Time*, Heidegger's philosophy of religion directly confronts Weber's Neo-Kantian assertion that the adoption of subjective and rationally unjustifiable values is the only means for humans to locate and develop the meaning of human life in an inherently meaningless world. In his early Freiburg courses on philosophy, science, and religion, Heidegger argues that the world is inherently meaningful for the human being even if it lacks an ultimate purpose or extraordinary forces. According to Heidegger, the human "world" is unmasterable by calculative thinking, and thus the secular "world" includes elements of unknowability and indeterminacy that reflect the type of mystery Weber and his heirs monolithically ascribe to the religious realm. Even if Heidegger's "world" is free from revelation, it is not free from mystery, or at least unknowability and indeterminacy, which means there are phenomenological pathways to understanding life's secular meaning—pathways covered over by the spell of Weberian disenchantment. But how meaningful is the meaningfulness of world? And why is the indeterminacy and irreducibility of world meaningful?

On my reading of Weber, the meaninglessness of human existence stems from the paradoxical situation of each individual as a replaceable component on a set of temporal and spatial continuums not yet characterized by absolute knowledge, yet anticipated nonetheless. Weber places the human on a Newtonian grid that is not yet fully mapped, but will be someday. Both the human and the world are reduced by the theoretical gaze to components of a masterable totality. Thus, not only is each human's contribution to progress an already-determined plot point on a soon-to-be-finished project, but the scientific modern must not only assume but hope that his achievements will soon be outstripped by further advancement on the project of absolute knowledge. When it comes to explaining why one might continue on such a disheartening path, Weber turns to a secularized polytheism, appealing to the irrational as the unexplainable inspiration for the Sisyphean scientific task.

By contrast, for Heidegger the meaning of existence stems from the phenomenon of care. As Coyne says, Heidegger discovered through his engagements with Paul and Augustine that the human is incurable, which is the condition of possibility for its inexhaustible care of and for itself and the world from which it is inseparable. As I have outlined in this chapter, for Heidegger the meaningfulness of world and thus the phenomenon of care are conditioned by temporality. Care is temporal, and therefore Dasein is always in the process of inheriting possibilities from the network of significations and relations into which it is thrown and anticipating the future through those possibilities. Rather than existing on a Newtonian grid comprising a masterable totality, Heidegger envisions Dasein as a never-finished project of inheritance and cultivation—one always irreducible to itself due to the ecstasies of temporality. Dasein is as beyond itself into the past from which it takes up the possibilities of itself and into the future whose possibilities it anticipates. Rather than fulfilling its fate or destiny, Dasein and its world are always at stake, because the condition of its possibility is its immeasureless impossibility, the possibility that can never be actualized—death.

As I attend to in my analysis of contemporary philosophy of religion in the final chapter and the conclusion, the meaningfulness of world stems from the ineluctable care of maintaining, reforming, and creating through the cultivating process of inheritance and anticipation. Robert Pogue Harrison, one of Heidegger's more insightful, if critical, commentators, points out that for Heidegger the human is less a Newtonian scientist filling in gaps on a soon-to-be-completed grid, and more a caretaker—or gardener—attending to the "self-ecstasy of matter."[27] Meaning stems from the never-complete task of attending to the order, significance, and relations of a garden whose past is the ongoing task of cultivation and whose future is always threatened by the possibility of its impossibility.[28] As Thomas Carlson maintains, the ecstasy of Dasein and its corresponding nullity—or lack of definition—generate an "endless or inexhaustible creative capacity" correspondent to "the ongoing creation of a world that itself remains irreducible to the comprehensible limits, to the principled origins and ends, of any totalizing representation or 'world picture.' "[29] In this sense, the uncertainty, unknowability, and indeterminacy that characterize the human, the world, and the relationship between them render existence meaningful because they constitute "an open work, an ongoing creation without fixed archetype or established place."[30] Since the work of taking up and anticipating oneself and world is incompletable—or incurable—it always matters: "What touches the essential of human inheritance is the freedom of a reception that is not automatic repetition, a retrieval of the past within the horizon of an unprogrammed and unprogrammable future, where we might anticipate—without foreseeing—the birth of possible worlds."[31] As the cultivator of such a world, there is always something at stake in human care precisely because of Dasein's incurability and world's indeterminacy.

This leads to an important question: Does Heidegger's account of worldhood and thus his account of the meaning of existence ignore science and criticism? Is Heideggerian secular enchantment a refusal of the modern condition? I attend to this question in detail in chapters 5 and the conclusion, but it is worth briefly addressing here. Despite the associations of Heidegger, particularly in works such as "The Question Concerning Technology" and "The Age of the World Picture," with a certain form of Ludditism and a thoroughgoing suspicion of modern science, on my reading his account of the inherent meaningfulness of worldhood and the human as incurable caretaker in fact aligns with various post-Newtonian scientific accounts of the human, world, and cosmos. Connolly summarizes this poignantly:

> In a world of becoming, emergent formations are often irreducible to patterns of efficient causality, purposive time, simple probability, or long cycles of recurrence. This occurs in part through periodic intersections between different force-fields, as neural, viral, bacterial, geological, climatic, species, electrical, chemical, and civilizational force-fields set on different tiers of chrono-time influence (or infect, disrupt, charge, energeize, invade, etc.) each other, in part through the periodic emergence of new and surprising capacities of *autopoieis*.
>
> (WB 71)

For Heidegger, the pretheoretical experience of worldhood carries the "highest potential uncanniness and the most complete uncanniness of life and indeed of its opaque, and yet still living, contexts of expectation," because it does not de-vivify the world into separate objects. As I argue in chapter 5 and the conclusion, it seems as if post-Newtonian approaches to complexity theory, quantum mechanics, and biology—approaches that Connolly claims constitute a "world of becoming"—support rather than eschew Heidegger's understanding of the meaningfulness of world. In other words, contemporary scientific approaches to time, space, and matter—the vanguards of secularity—confirm, rather than deny, the idea that the human, world, and cosmos remain in constitutive ways irreducible to the theoretical gaze and are thus pictured falsely when imagined as masterable totalities. Contrary to expectation, Heidegger's refusal of Weberian disenchantment does not require an abandonment of the modern condition, but in fact may represent a more promising pathway for aligning the continental philosophical tradition and contemporary scientific discourses.

Finally, in addition to providing a philosophical alternative to Weberian disenchantment, Heidegger's early engagements with Paul and Augustine signify an engagement with religion through which the philosopher gains philosophical insight. As I have demonstrated throughout the chapter, Heidegger's reading of early Christianity enables his deconstruction of Aristotelian temporality and the formulation of a new vision of the human and world. Heidegger's turn to religion enabled him to fill out his understanding of anticipation and memory from the previous courses in 1919–1920 in a way that was decisive for his later phenomenology. Heidegger's approach exemplifies the merit of continental philosophy of religion as it has developed in the century since his early Freiburg courses. Even if the secular philosophers see no reason to believe in the God of Paul or Augustine, or any other God/gods for that matter, this does not prevent her from enriching her philosophical vision of the human and the world by way of encounter with the practices and comportments of religious people. Such an engagement neither renders such work theological nor inherently trivializes or generalizes the religious phenomena in question. *These are the secularist assumptions often applied to philosophy of religion—that if one learns from religion, then one's thought is illegitimate in the modern university.*

The prevalence of these assumptions foregrounds the importance of Carlson's apophatic analogy for understanding how philosophers of religion can encounter religious phenomena in order to philosophize with religion, rather than against it, or in spite of it. In light of my analysis in this chapter, I contend that Heidegger's early Freiburg courses signify the first instance of the apophatic analogy at work in twentieth-century philosophy. As I explore in the following two chapters, Heidegger's phenomenology was transposed to Paris in the early 1930s to a group of scholars working at the intersections of philosophy, religious studies, and the sciences, which extended and developed his approach to philosophy of religion, even if many of his first inheritors became his most forceful critics.

3

EXCENDENCE AND HETEROLOGY

Religious and Secular in Interwar Paris

IN 1991 Dominique Janicaud published a highly contentious essay on what he termed the "theological turn" in French phenomenology. Janicaud's central complaint was that a tradition of religious phenomenologists including Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Lévinas, Jean-Luc Marion, and others had dismantled the core principles of phenomenology by asserting the possible phenomenality of that which exceeds experience. In Janicaud's eyes, the attempts by the Jewish Lévinas and the Catholic Marion to demonstrate the possibility of phenomena that are "otherwise than Being" signified the unwelcomed entrance of theology into the domain of philosophy.[1] More than anything, Janicaud's polemic brought into focus how Lévinas, Marion, and other Catholic phenomenologists such as Michel Henry and Jean-Louis Chrétien compose a group of thinkers who have sought to surpass the limits of Heidegger's phenomenology by focusing on phenomena that surpass or resist Being. As I outline in more detail in the following chapter, these critical heirs of Heidegger have, in different ways, tried to demonstrate philosophically the possibility of revelation, or the phenomenality of God. This movement has been mirrored (with natural divergences) in the Anglophone world by thinkers such as Richard Kearney, Merold Westphal, and John Caputo, who have drawn on various figures in the continental tradition in order to reformulate the possibility and legitimacy of belief in God in the contemporary context.[2] Thus, for more than a half-century continental philosophers of religion on both sides of the Atlantic have criticized and revised Heidegger's conceptions of worldhood, subjectivity, and transcendence in order to explore the possibility of the revelation of that which is beyond Being. As I outline in more detail in chapter 4, this has led to an emphasis in the field on the theological significance of Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian philosophy, including poststructuralism, causing both philosophers of religion and their critics to interpret the field as theologically motivated and constituted. Surprisingly, the philosophical tradition wherein God was pronounced dead (more than once) has become a rich *terroir* for the growth of new radical theologies and natural theologies to the point where one is now tempted to view the history of post-Heideggerian phenomenology and religion as a story of God's philosophical resurrection. However, continental philosophy of religion is more than a response to the God question. As I examined in the previous chapter, Heidegger's early engagements with religious phenomena enabled him to reconceive secular understanding of the human and the world in stark contrast to Weberian disenchantment. In this chapter I explore how one of his earliest readers—and vehement critics—extended this trajectory by challenging different but related philosophical visions of the human and world as masterable totalities void of mystery.

Ironically, for Georges Bataille it was Heidegger and the horizon of Being—not Weber and his iron cage of rationality—whose philosophy threatened the meaning and significance of the human condition. Like his contemporary and acquaintance Emmanuel Lévinas, Georges Bataille was part of the intellectual milieu that first welcomed Heidegger's phenomenology to France. After a brief period of enthusiasm for his work, both thinkers interpreted Heidegger's phenomenology as dangerously trapping the human in the immanence of Being. As I demonstrate later, whether justly or not, for Bataille Heidegger's phenomenology represented the type of iron cage Neo-Kantian philosophies of worldview—and the Weberian rationality derived therefrom—that Heidegger sought to counter in the decade leading up to the publication of *Being and Time*. Thus, like Lévinas, during the interwar period Bataille seeks to forge a pathway beyond the immanence of Being that he believes reduces the human to a functionary of knowledge in a world constituted by use-value and production. Unlike Lévinas, however, he does not forge this path by way of an otherworldly transcendence—by exploration of the revelation of phenomena from elsewhere. Rather, his "heterology" aims to show that the human remains indeterminate in the face of philosophies that seek to reduce it to knowledge and, like Heidegger, locates the meaning of human existence in the irreducibility of itself and its world.

Like Heidegger, Bataille is principally concerned with the reduction of the human to a function of knowledge in a world envisioned as a masterable totality. However, this did not lead him along a path back to the Catholic faith or to adopt other forms of religious belief. After leaving the Church as a young man, Bataille—more so than Heidegger—unequivocally identified as an atheist. Thus, even if Bataille was directly critical of Heidegger, on my reading his dissatisfaction with reductive philosophical systems and subsequent engagement with religious phenomena signify an extension of Heidegger's philosophy of religion and an attempt to formulate an "enchanted" secularity as a third way between theism and secularism.

At first glance it is not obvious that Heidegger had an important impact on Bataille, since, in comparison to his contemporaries Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Lévinas, Bataille seems to have been more concerned with figures such as Mauss, Nietzsche, and Hegel than Heidegger, who does not play a principal role in any of his major publications. Bataille's published corpus includes relatively few references to Heidegger, and thus in comparison to other influential thinkers from his generation, very little work has been devoted to the Heideggerian elements of Bataille's thought.[3] Yet, there is compelling evidence from Bataille's published and unpublished writings for the argument that beginning in the early 1930s Bataille was concerned with overcoming "Heideggerian transcendence" by way of the notion of "sovereignty." From 1933 to 1947 Bataille consistently criticized Heidegger's phenomenology as a type of professional philosophy that, like all philosophy, seeks to excise the heterogeneous from human thought and practice. For Bataille, the principal danger of Heidegger's vision of the human and the world was what he took to be the desire to eliminate that which resists knowledge and experience—or ordinary experience—in favor of a philosophical system based on mastery and even domination.

As I demonstrate later, given Bataille's participation in a certain milieu of French thinkers during the early 1930s, it is in fact not at all surprising that he would have been concerned with this aspect of Heidegger's phenomenology. In the first part of this chapter, I explore the first wave of Heidegger's French reception and the way it shaped the Parisian intellectual climate in which Bataille lived and worked. In the second part, I analyze the evidence from a variety of published and unpublished texts of Bataille's concern for and reaction to "Heideggerian transcendence." By exploring Bataille's heterology and Lévinas's excendence as parallel criticisms of Heideggerian phenomenology developed in the interwar period, it becomes clear that, at the same time that the figurehead of the "theological turn in French phenomenology" first explored the possibility of phenomena "otherwise than Being," a secular counterpart developed a parallel path of thinking in the service of a secularity beyond secularism.

MEANING BEYOND BEING

Bataille's work and life emblematize the cultural upheaval that plagued Europe from the beginning of the twentieth century until the end of World War II. Bataille and his mother left his syphilitic father to perish during the German invasion of his hometown of Reims during World War I. He entered the École de Chartres in 1918 after briefly considering becoming a member of the clergy. After training as a medieval librarian, and stints in Madrid and London, he settled in Paris as a librarian at the Bibliotèque nationale. During the interwar period he associated in some way or another with an astonishing number of intellectuals, writers, and artists. By 1923, Bataille had developed a close relationship with Alfred Métraux, who introduced him to the work of Mauss and other members of the French school of sociology. He also began to meet regularly with the Russian philosopher Lev Shestov, who stoked his interests in Nietzsche, Tolstoy, and Pascal. During the same period, Bataille formed a friendship with

Michel Leiris, with whom he would later found the Collège de Sociologie, and André Breton, the leader of the Surrealist movement, with whom he carried on a highly contentious relationship throughout the 1930s. He also developed an unlikely but intimate bond with Simone Weil, who figured in his novel *The Blue of Noon*.[4] During the early 1930s, Bataille attended lectures by Alexandre Koyré at the École Pratiques des Haut Études. After Koyré left for Egypt, Bataille became an auditor of Alexandre Kojève's Hegel seminar from 1933 to 1939, which he attended with Raymond Queneau, Emmanuel Lévinas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Lacan, Simone de Beauvoir, and others. In 1937 Bataille founded the Collège de Sociologie, an institution dedicated to the discipline of "sacred sociology," with Michel Leiris and Roger Caillois, the mission of which was to reinstitute the sacred in a modern context that appeared devoid of all ancient forms of sacrality. Guest lecturers included Alexandre Kojève and Walter Benjamin, among others.[5]

Perhaps more than any other French intellectual from the time, Bataille's life and work reveal an individual struggling to find a sense of meaning and significance amid the destitution of European life and culture after World War I. Stuart Kendall, one of his biographers and translators, summarizes this helpfully: "Bataille's entire life is characterized by his flight from solitude, both from the solitude of his isolation from others—his flight into their groups, communities, arms—and his flight from the solitude of the creature alone in the crowd, the ontological isolation of the insufficient being, man."[6] If Heidegger, the professor, often retreated to a solitary hut in order to think, Bataille, the medieval librarian, repeatedly tried to start and sustain secret societies and pseudoreligious communities in order to rectify his perceived isolation from others.

HEIDEGGER GOES TO FRANCE (AGAIN)

In order to understand Bataille's reading of Heidegger, it is important to contextualize how Heidegger was first received in Paris during the early 1930s by a group of young and eventually prominent French thinkers, and why his philosophy was so important to the development of French thought during this period. While the predominant approach to Heidegger's French reception has been to focus on existentialist readings from the 1940s, recent studies have demonstrated the important manner in which Heidegger's work was first received in Paris at the end of the 1920s. As I explore later, transcendence proved to be one of the predominant themes of Heidegger's earliest French reception, because Heidegger's formulation of transcendence as Dasein's emergence into the world, rather than beyond it, signaled a new starting point for understanding the structure of the self, the world, and the relationship between them.

The history of Heidegger's French reception has garnered more than sufficient interest in recent years.[7] Until recently, the focus of the narrative has been on the existentialist readings of Heidegger after World War II. As Stefanos Geroulanos argues, Heidegger's reception in France during the 1930s is often conceived as a nascent, largely ill-conceived period of interpretation—a prelude to the main event of the 1940s (AN 67). In many ways this interpretation gives precedence to the enormously popular form of existentialism manifest in the thought of Jean-Paul Sartre, which of course attracted wide and deep attention to the existentialist movement as a whole, and therefore to the influence of Heidegger on contemporary philosophy both in Europe and in North America.[8] In David Pettigrew and François Raffoul's edited volume dedicated to how Heidegger's French reception has influenced contemporary philosophy, aside from one paper on Lévinas, one is led to believe that Heidegger's French reception began in 1945.[9] Tom Rockmore's *Heidegger and French Philosophy* devotes only a slim amount of space to French Heideggerianism before Beaufret's engagement with the "master thinker" in the 1940s.[10] Overall, this dominant version of the history relegates those scholars and thinkers involved in the Heideggerian reception of the 1930s to the periphery.

However, recent studies by Geroulanos and Kleinberg have convincingly demonstrated that Heidegger's earliest French reception was an era of creative appropriation of Heidegger's work by a group of eventually prominent intellectuals working in France, figures such as Kojève, Wahl, and Lévinas. In their respective treatments of Heidegger's earliest French reception, both authors argue that Heidegger's work was received as a foreign or *unheimlich* element into what had become a somewhat stale philosophical milieu in France. Similarly to the prewar philosophical climate of Germany, Neo-Kantian humanism had slowly but surely come to dominate the French scene at the turn of the century; by the end of the 1920s, it was the unquestioned and unrivaled philosophical framework.[11] In general, French Neo-Kantianism understood the development of rational humanism, in which the rational human being is understood both as the foundation and as the goal of philosophy, to exemplify the "telos of the modern West" (AN 44). Both scientists and philosophers continued to understand the human mind to be a transcendent, distinct, and rational entity, separate from the world. Neo-Kantian philosophers such as Léon Brunschvicq posited that "truth" is located in the rationality of the human mind, thereby limiting the world and other human beings to cognitive representations. While this position was developed in order to elevate the human being to its highest rational summit, one consequence was to separate the individual from the world in which it found itself and from relationships with other human beings (AN 46–47). As a result, by the end of the 1920s a younger generation of French thinkers was searching for an injection of new ideas that would return philosophy to the "concrete" matters of existence, death, and the other.[12] Further, they realized that contemporary philosophy must cohere with the changing state of science from a dualist understanding predicated on a model of subject/object to the model espoused by quantum physics wherein the scientific subject was understood as inherently involved in—and thus part of—the environment it was observing (AN 49).[13]

At the end of the 1920s, German phenomenology injected a novel ontological and epistemological framework into the French philosophical milieu because of its emphasis upon the participatory and everyday interaction of the human with the world. The earliest receptions of Heidegger's phenomenology in Paris focused on how his philosophy decentered the Kantian subject and analyzed the precognitive involvements of Dasein in the world in which it is always already thrown: "This first generation of readers never accepted Heidegger's thought as marking the limits of their philosophical horizon, but instead considered it as a ground for their thought and also as a kind of evolving argument they could engage with in dialogue, that is, one whose ends and arguments could be furthered or criticized" (AN 67). It is within this context that Bataille developed his criticism of Heidegger's analyses of worldhood, anxiety, and death.

The story of Heidegger's French reception begins in the late 1920s with Emmanuel Lévinas, a Lithuanian émigré who studied in Strasbourg from 1924 to 1928 and then moved to Freiburg in 1929 to study with Edmund Husserl.[14] As a doctoral student at Strasbourg, he became interested in Husserlian phenomenology for the way it returned philosophy to the quotidian, liberating thought from the dichotomy of idealism and rationalism (GE 27–29). He went to Germany in order to investigate firsthand how phenomenology could abolish the divide between self and world and further explain the relationship between human beings. Once in Freiburg, Lévinas became quite close to Husserl, despite it being the latter's last year of lecturing. After encouragement from Husserl, he remained in Freiburg during the next academic year in order to listen to the lectures of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's understanding of Dasein as a self-absent being who is always already in the world—even prior to intentionality in the Husserlian sense—signaled to Lévinas the kind of displacement of the foundational ego and radical return to the everyday aspects of human existence for which he was searching (GE 37–39). Lévinas soon became convinced that Heidegger had taken Husserl's phenomenology to its necessary next step: "I went to Freiburg because of Husserl, but discovered Heidegger."[15]

Lévinas's role as transposer of German phenomenology to the French milieu was first manifest at a meeting of French and German intellectuals on the neutral ground of Davos, Switzerland, in 1929. The subject of the summit was "What is man?" but, as Kleinberg explains, "the subtext was the tension between the deeply rooted neo-Kantian tradition embodied by Hermann Cohen and Cassirer, and the new existential phenomenology, which broke radically with Cartesian and Kantian traditions" (GE 40). The main event was the debate between Cassirer and Heidegger, one that unnerved and excited the young members of the French contingent. Lévinas would recall later that Heidegger's approach to Kant signaled the end of a certain kind of humanism and seemingly the beginning of a new epoch in philosophy.

Lévinas relocated to Paris in 1930 after finishing a dissertation titled *Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*. He had already written his first article on Husserl for a French journal, "Sur les Ideen de M. Husserl" for *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*. Once in Paris, Lévinas began working on the translation of *Méditations cartésiennes*, Husserl's lectures at the Sorbonne, a text not to be published in German until after Husserl's death. In 1932 he wrote the first article on Heidegger to appear in France, "Martin Heidegger et l'ontologie" for the *Revue Philosophique*.[16] Very soon after his arrival, Lévinas became acquainted with Jean Wahl and Gabriel Marcel. Lévinas's connections with Marcel and Wahl were important because they helped to foster the dissemination of his early texts on Husserl and Heidegger and also to connect Lévinas to a group of foreign intellectuals who would go on to infuse a set of new ideas into the French intellectual scene. Wahl was a respected, traditionally trained French intellectual who would soon be lecturing at the Sorbonne.[17] As I explore later, his work *Vers le concret*, published in 1932, included an important reading of *Being and Time*. Marcel was already an established thinker in France who held informal seminars, discussions, and lectures in his home with a varied group of French and non-French thinkers. The group that gathered at Marcel's home comprised émigrés similar to Lévinas, émigrés whose training and philosophical framework did not match the French context. It was here that Lévinas began to associate with a network of thinkers who would eventually effect the first wave of Heidegger's reception in Paris, a group that included Alexander Koyré and Alexander Kojève, both fellow Russian-speaking immigrants.

Koyré had studied with Husserl before Lévinas did, but more importantly he was an influential figure in Paris in the early 1930s, who was working on the periphery of the intellectual climate in order to help a new generation of scholars find their voice in the academy. He began teaching at the École Pratique des Haut Études (EPHE) in 1922 alongside figures such as Georges Dumézil and Marcel Mauss, and the institution created a chair in history of religions for him in 1932. The EPHE was a somewhat revolutionary institution in Paris because it provided a forum for both students and scholars outside of the rigid system of the École Normale Supérieure and Sorbonne to explore otherwise unaddressed topics—Koyré taught in the department of religious studies, not theology or philosophy—and to enjoy an informal classroom setting centered on dialogue between students and teachers (AN 57–58). Bataille, along with Henri Corbin (the first French translator of Heidegger), Raymond Queneau, and Jan Patoĉka, attended Koyré's lectures in the department of religious studies in 1931 and 1932—lectures on Jacob Boehme, Meister Eckhart, John Tauler, the Spanish mystics, and Hegel. It was here that the figure of Lévinas, steeped in and enthusiastic for Heidegger's work, entered an intellectual network of figures—both "teachers" and "students"—who would go on to use his work as a platform for introducing Heidegger into the French philosophical milieu.

Koyré is especially important to Lévinas and the group surrounding the EPHE because he was the editor of the important journal *Recherches philosophiques* from 1931 to 1937, which published articles on subjects ranging from quantum physics to mysticism and phenomenology, including the second French translation of an essay by Heidegger, "Vom Wesen des Grundes." ("Was ist Metaphysik" was translated by Henri Corbin and appeared in *Bifur* in 1931.) It is often forgotten that the second translation of Heidegger's work into French appeared alongside articles from Wahl, Bataille, and Lévinas in a journal edited and founded by a professor of religious studies. Kleinberg sums up its importance helpfully:

> Koyré wanted to expand phenomenological investigation into the fields of art, history, and science, while at the same time keeping his mind open to other possible modes of investigation. This allowed *Recherches philsophiques* to present an intersection of (principally but not exclusively) German and French thought. . . . *Recherches philosophiques* presented philosophical ideas and methodologies that were completely foreign to traditional French philosophers.
>
> (GE 58)

Recherches philosophiques gave young, lesser-known scholars, many of whom eventually became prominent intellectuals, a much needed platform for their work.

Overall, Koyré's friendship with Lévinas highlights the diverse intellectual milieu surrounding him and the EPHE at the time. Figures such as Alexandre Kojève, Georges Bataille, Jean Wahl, Eric Weil, Henri Corbin, Raymond Queneau, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty attended the lectures and published in the journal. Furthermore, the group of thinkers surrounding Marcel, Wahl, and Koyré enthusiastically read, translated, and appropriated Heidegger's philosophy during the period from 1930 to 1934, because it provided a new starting point for philosophy, in particular the theme of transcendence. Instead of beginning with the Cartesian and Kantian presupposition that the human is transcendentally distinct from the world in which it finds itself, Heidegger's phenomenology begins with the notion that Dasein is always already in a world full of significance and meaning. In this way, Heidegger's "On the Essence of Ground" "helped overturn the existing perception of the human being as transcending the world, so as to center on man's 'casting' of this world" (AN 52). Heidegger's phenomenology signaled to his earliest French readers the tearing of the idealistic veil between the human and the world for an understanding of the human as concretely and immediately instantiated within a world imbued with sense and meaning. According to Geroulanos, the translation of Dasein as "human reality" (*la realité humaine*) symbolizes the importance of Heidegger's phenomenology in French thought in the 1930s. While this translation has been heavily criticized and is no longer used, it signified "the codependence of the two terms—the impossibility of a reality pure of any human interaction and the lack of transcendental or absolute status for the human—human reality encompasses the push against idealism and the effort to explain the limitations of the human, its decentering and emptying out in reality" (AN 53). Heidegger's phenomenology thus provided his first French readers with the means for displacing the idealized Cartesian and Kantian ego with an understanding of the self as constituted by the world that precedes it.

The most important example of this early French reckoning with Heidegger's work is Jean Wahl's *Vers le concret* (1932). Along with Gabriel Marcel and Alexander Koyré, Wahl was an elder statesman in the group of thinkers who first translated and appropriated Heidegger's work in France. In 1937 Bataille published Wahl's article

"Nietzsche et la mort de Dieu" in the second issue of *Acéphale*.[18] Emmanuel Lévinas and Paul Ricoeur would later testify to the importance of Wahl's and Marcel's work for the development of the themes of otherness and transcendence in early-twentieth-century French thought.[19] In *Vers le concret*, Wahl says very early in the text that the importance of Heidegger's phenomenology lies in his connection of "the sentiment of individual existence, such as Kierkegaard had sensed it, to the sentiment of our existence in the midst of things, as this dawns today in philosophy" (AN 73–74). Throughout *Vers le concret*, the importance of Heidegger's phenomenology for Wahl is the explication of Dasein's "enchainment" to its world, since the human is not a foundation of knowledge, nor is it capable of ever separating itself from the world in which it exists. Instead, the human is thrown into a world of which it is not a foundation and in which it cannot find one. Transcendence, in this Heideggerian sense, is the human's inherent comportment toward beings—the taking-up of the issue of its own Being on account of its passive thrownness into existence.

Overall, Wahl's *Vers le concret* signifies an important reading of Heidegger's phenomenology and formulation of transcendence, since in Wahl's view, as Geroulanos says, "the human subject copes in the world and comports itself toward an object without having to consciously do something, without effort, and without having to overcome a certain radical separation" (AN 74). Wahl's appropriation of Heidegger's phenomenological approach to subjectivity and worldhood helped legitimize the significance and radicality of Heidegger's work to the younger scholars working in the circles surrounding the EPHE, *Recherches philosophiques*, and Marcel's Friday night seminars. Jean-Paul Sartre would say later that *Vers le concret* enjoyed "great success" among the emerging generation of thinkers because it "embarrassed idealism by discovering in the world paradoxes, ambiguities, conflicts, still unresolved."[20] Geroulanos helpfully summarizes the importance of the work:

> What *Vers le concret* did, however, was provide a manifesto that reflected the period's movement toward anti-idealism, a systematic joining of the phenomenological impetus and the epistemological

> attention of the younger philosophers (from Koyré through to Sartre), clearly delineating a human condition bound by (to use Heidegger's terminology) man's *thrownness* in the world, his inability to postulate himself as exceeding or contrasting to the world so as to fully understand or map out this world.
>
> (AN 74)

Vers le concret fulfilled the description of its title. Whereas younger thinkers such as Sartre, Camus, and Bataille would philosophize only through the concrete existence in which the human finds itself, Wahl's work enabled French thought to move *toward* such a "method." It signified a criticism of idealism and an appropriation of a novel understanding of the human and its relationship to the world by a respected French thinker, one that included a radical restructuring of transcendence.

In essence, Wahl's *Vers le concret* is a representation of the interest in Heidegger's phenomenology in Paris in the early 1930s. The same year that Wahl published *Vers le concret*, Koyré published a translation of "Vom Wesen des Grundes" in *Recherches philosophiques*. Thus, by 1932 the thinkers in Koyré's circle would have been familiar with "Was ist Metaphysik?," "Vom Wesen des Grundes," and *Sein und Zeit*, as well as Lévinas's articles on Heidegger and *Vers le concret*. For this group of thinkers, the most enticing aspect of Heidegger's thought was the notion that philosophy begins with Dasein's thrownness into the world. Instead of commencing with a transcendent ideal, Heidegger posits that transcendence is Dasein's comportment toward itself and other beings through its inherent understanding of its Being. Through his reformulation of transcendence, Heidegger offered a new starting point for philosophy by explicating a vision of the human as a foundationless being passively thrown into a world full of both meaning and meaninglessness, significance and paradox.

However, for this very reason by the mid-1930s these thinkers were ambivalent toward Heidegger's phenomenological understanding of the human's relationship to the world. Whereas they continued to appropriate the enchainment of the human to its world and its entanglement with the beings toward which it inherently comports itself as their philosophical starting point, they quickly came to loathe Dasein's ineluctable enchainment to its world. The problem for younger thinkers such as Bataille and Lévinas was that accepting the thrownness of the human into a world of which it was not a foundation and in which it could not find one meant that the human could also never surpass or escape the immanence of such a world. This concern was, at least in part, fueled by the unnerving news of Heidegger's involvement in the Nazi Party. Lévinas claimed that in 1933 Koyré informed him of Heidegger's participation in Hitlerism.[21] There are many other pieces of evidence that the French thinkers who initially welcomed Heidegger's work quickly became painfully aware of Heidegger's political actions by 1934.[22] Geroulanos summarizes the "sensitivity" of this group of scholars to Heidegger's politics: "It is not excessive to claim then that this sensitivity to the political question appears to have been common currency in the group surrounding Koyré and the 1931–37 journal *Recherches philosophiques*, the group whose former members shaped Heidegger's early reception and after 1945 came to share a highly critical approach to him."[23] As time went on this association became standard fare for the group surrounding the EPHE, and, as I explore later, Bataille himself attacked Heidegger on these grounds. Thus, although the group of scholars who first welcomed Heidegger's work into France never questioned the starting point of his phenomenology, and for that matter his understanding of the transcendence of Dasein into the world from which it is inseparable, by 1935 they began to criticize the "world-weariness" of the human entrapped in the immanence of Being.[24]

LÉVINAS: OVERCOMING HEIDEGGERIAN TRANSCENDENCE

This criticism is illustrated most forcefully in the work of Emmanuel Lévinas, who by 1935 transitioned from the figure most responsible for the migration of Heidegger's phenomenology to France to Heidegger's most important early critic. In 1935, Lévinas published "On Escape" ("De l'évasion") in *Recherches philosophiques*, marking a turning point in his relationship to the German phenomenologist. From that point forward, his work would carry the burden, as he says in his closing statement of the essay, of "getting out of Being by a new path."[25] This need to forge a pathway beyond Being was born from a deep dissatisfaction, seemingly fueled by Heidegger's political involvements, with Heidegger's formulation of transcendence. Lévinas begins the essay by praising the fact that contemporary thought has stopped trying to unite the human subject with "infinite being": "The insufficiency of the human condition has never been understood otherwise than as a limitation of being, without our ever having envisaged the meaning of 'finite being.' . . . And yet modern sensibility wrestles with problems that indicate, perhaps for the first time, the abandonment of this concern with transcendence."[26] Lévinas observes something that had become a prominent theme in early French readings of Heidegger: his phenomenology reorients philosophy from the goal of uniting the insufficient human with the infinite to the constitutive horizon of finitude. In Heidegger's phenomenology, temporality takes the place of the infinite as the horizon of Being. Yet one of the effects of the abandonment of the infinite for the temporal is that "temporal existence takes on the inexpressible flavor of the absolute."[27] There is no possibility of "interrupting" the "there is" (*il y a*) of Being: "The elementary truth *there is being*—a being that has value and weight—is revealed at a depth that measures its brutality and its seriousness. . . . What counts, then, in all this experience of being, is the discovery not of a new characteristic of our existence, but of its very fact, of the permanent quality itself of our presence."[28] Dissatisfyingly for Lévinas, when the infinite is eschewed for the horizon of temporality, temporality itself becomes the absolute.

This means that Dasein is relegated to a mode of Being where its "propensity toward the future" means it is always "out-ahead-of-oneself."[29] Due to the annulment of the infinite and the subsequent absoluteness of the finite, for Lévinas Heidegger's phenomenology condemns Dasein to the destiny—and immanence—of its Being: "The fulfillment of a destiny is the stigma of Being: the destination is not wholly traced out, but its fulfillment is fatal, inevitable."[30] In response to the seemingly unsurpassable horizon of Being, Lévinas argues that thought must find a way beyond Being, or, in other words, a means of escape:

> It is this category of getting out, assimilable neither to renovation nor to creation, that we must grasp in all its purity. It is an inimitable theme that invites us to get out of being. A quest for the way out, this is in no sense a nostalgia for death because death is not an exit, just as it is not a solution. The ground of this theme is constituted . . . by the need for *excendence*. Thus, to the need for escape, being appears not only as an obstacle that free thought would have to surmount, nor even as the rigidity that, by inviting us to routine, demands an effort toward originality; rather it appears as an imprisonment from which one must get out.[31]

In this first attempt to reach or think that which is "otherwise than Being," Lévinas has already outlined one of the major problems that would preoccupy the central figures of the "theological turn" in French phenomenology and philosophy's "turn to religion": How can phenomenology describe what resists phenomenality? How can thought surpass the horizon of Being without reverting to metaphysical modes of discourse?[32] Even if Lévinas does not provide an answer in "On Escape," he would work out his response to Heidegger and the question of Being throughout the rest of his lifetime. Nevertheless, "On Escape" reveals how Lévinas's desire for an *excendence* beyond Being signifies both an acceptance of Heidegger's phenomenological starting point and a desire to exceed the limits of his formulation of transcendence, as Geroulanos observes (AN 199).

The felt need to surpass Heideggerian transcendence was directly linked to the rise of Hitler and Heidegger's reported participation in National Socialism. By the mid-1930s the group surrounding the EPHE and *Recherches philosophiques* associated Heidegger's phenomenology with Hitler's Nazism, which signaled, in their view, the danger of reducing the human to the horizon of Being. In his "Note sur Hegel et Heidegger," published in 1936, Kojève bemoans the dangerous solipsism of Heidegger's Dasein.[33] In the same year, Henri Thielemons published a book review in *La nouvelle revue théologique* accusing Heidegger of developing a metaphysics of Nazism.[34] Most damaging, however, was Lévinas's article "Reflections on Hitlerism," published in 1934, which, in the author's words,

> stems from the conviction that the source of the bloody barbarism of National Socialism lies not in some contingent anomaly within human reasoning, nor in some accidental ideological misunder-standing. This article expresses the conviction that this source stems from the essential possibility of elemental Evil into which we can be led by logic and against which Western philosophy had not sufficiently insured itself. This possibility is inscribed within the ontology of a being concerned with being (*de l'être soucieux d'etre*)—a being, to use the Heideggerian expression, "*dem es in seinem Sein um dieses Sein selbst geht*." Such a possibility still threatens the subject correlative with being as gathering together and as dominating [*l'être-a'-reassembleret a-dominer*], that famous subject of transcendental idealism that before all else wishes to be free and thinks itself free.[35]

Thus, by the mid-1930s Lévinas and the group of thinkers who had helped him transpose Heidegger's phenomenology to France understood Heidegger's formulation of transcendence as both the platform from which thought should depart and the prison out of which it had to escape. Whether or not it is actually warranted to associate Heidegger's understanding of the relationships between Dasein, Being, and the phenomenon of death in *Being and Time* and other texts from the late 1920s with the barbaric ideology of Nazism is less important in this case than the fact that this group of scholars found it essential to forge a new path beyond Being in large part due to Heidegger's political involvements.

BATAILLE: OVERCOMING HEIDEGGERIAN TRANSCENDENCE

Georges Bataille and Emmanuel Lévinas were very different people. When Lévinas was writing Talmudic commentary, Bataille was scribbling notes in a diary from his bed in a brothel. When Lévinas was trying to make ethics, rather than ontology, the basis of Western philosophy, Bataille was reflecting on sacrifice and its function in human society. Despite these differences, their early reactions to Heidegger bear important resonances to each other. Like Lévinas, Bataille was concerned with overcoming Heideggerian transcendence in order to resist an image of the human as a mortal functionary of usefulness and knowledge. Furthermore, like his contemporary, Bataille associated Heidegger's political failures with the limits of his phenomenology and conclusions concerning the phenomenon of death. In terms of Dasein, for Bataille the phenomenon of death does not provide a means for surpassing the issue of its Being, but instead it offers only a means for authentically taking up its possibilities in the world. Consequently, on Bataille's reading Heidegger inscribes the impossibility of Dasein into the realm of its possibilities. In this way, Dasein's ownmost possibility—its impossibility—is inscribed into an economy of usefulness, preservation, and production. It becomes a means for mastering oneself and one's world. Hence, it seems that by the mid-1930s, despite their different concerns, temperaments, and "religious" contexts, both men were preoccupied with forging a pathway beyond the immanence of Being that they had come to associate with Heideggerian transcendence.

Sometime during the years from 1934 to 1937, Bataille wrote a draft of an essay titled "Critique of Heidegger: Philosophy of Fascism." The draft is written on the same paper and with the same pen as Bataille's notes from Kojève's Hegel course in 1934; the handwriting is also an exact match.[36] Thus, it is plausible that Bataille wrote the piece either during or very near the conclusion of Kojève's seminar in 1934, in which Kojève references Heidegger's phenomenology often in order to explicate Hegel's dialectical approach to history and knowledge. In the draft of his polemic against Heidegger, Bataille outlines a position that remained consistent in his published and unpublished writings until at least the years immediately following World War II. While the manuscript is unpolished, it does reveal Bataille's dissatisfaction with Heidegger's philosophy by the mid-1930s because of the way "Heideggerian transcendence" is associated with homogeneity, according to Bataille: "The world of homogeneity and the necessity of an exit. . . . The aspiration to something wholly other is stronger than the need to justify the will to flee."[37] For Bataille, homogeneity signifies the ordering of existence through "fabrication, rational consumption, and conservation of products."[38] While this ordering is completely necessary for both the individual and the species as a whole, Bataille believes that to reduce human existence to these ends is to reduce it to a cog in a machine. By contrast, heterology is the "aspiration to something wholly other"—an aspiration akin to what Lévinas calls the inimitable desire for escape—that signifies the impulse to counteract the reduction of existence to homogeneity by taking up those elements that are useless, irrational, and destructive in order to reveal the irreducibility of the human in relation to its world: "Heterology is opposed to any homogenous representation of the world,"[39] because it concerns "expenditures" that "have no end beyond themselves."[40] Heterogeneous expenditures, usually related to sacrifice, sexual activity, religious ritual, and festivals, confer upon the subject an "immediacy" that reveals its irreducibility to the homogeneous. They signify a temporary passage from the concern for the future—from the anticipation of one's possibilities—to an experience akin to one's own impossibility.

In his essay "The Labyrinth," written during the same time period as "Critique of Heidegger," Bataille recognizes in Heidegger's phenomenology the possibility of a mode of subjectivity wherein the dualism framed by Descartes's ego is eschewed for a mode of being that recognizes the insufficiency at the heart of the human being.[41] He praises Heidegger for opening the possibility of an alternative vision of the self's relationship to the world, a kind of "re-enchantment," as Geroulanos says, one I explored in the previous chapter.[42] However, in "Critique of Heidegger," Bataille is critical of Heidegger for closing the possibility of a heterogeneous escape from the world:

> From the immediate life that is imposed on me first of all as money, acquired, to be acquired, or expended in proportion to measurable acts, I do not retain here more than the form, which is to say the equivalence, established between products and signs, things, acts, and products. This general form is where the *ego* that I am inscribes itself in species and genres as a zoological or juridical equivalence. The *ego* is no longer anything more than a function of a given system,

> according to circumstances and even temporary inclinations, but maintaining fixed character: meaning that, without the sanction that results from the constant menace of misery, the system itself would be deprived of all *importance*.[43]

Though Bataille's thoughts are underdeveloped and opaque, he goes on to discuss the banal realities of factories, workshops, and offices from which "the most lusterless of men reduced to a function" desire to liberate themselves.[44] His comments on money and the systems of exchange related to acts, signs, and products point to the totality of the world in which the human finds itself—the structure of "significance" into which the human is thrown. Due to its concern for itself within this totalized economy of exchange, on Bataille's view, the human can be reduced to a "function" of the given system.

Thus, in line with the spirit of his early writings and the intellectual climate of the time, the essence of Bataille's early critique of Heidegger is his belief that the latter's phenomenology envisions the human as a master of itself and the world—the same criticism Heidegger leveled against Neo-Kantian philosophies of worldview and Weberian disenchantment a decade earlier: "Being outside, what the ego exists for. The impossibility of existing for oneself, which amounts to saying: dying (Heideggerian transcendence)."[45] The "impossibility of existing for oneself" refers to the perpetual anticipation of Being outlined in Heidegger's analysis of Dasein. For Bataille, the ongoing anticipation of self is associated with the reduction of the human to production, consumption, and survival, that is, with homogeneity. Consequently, Bataille is interested in revealing the human's fundamental indeterminacy in order to eschew what he takes to be the reductive impulses of philosophy in general and Heidegger's phenomenology in particular. Such a revelation, he believes, is possible through a reevaluation of the phenomenon of death: "there is the *outside of me* that the *ego* demands so as to live in the sense of dying."[46] In this regard, Geroulanos's suggestion that Bataille's work from this time period parallels that of Emmanuel Lévinas is very helpful:

> For Lévinas, Being, whose introduction "already looks like an escape," is the proper ground on which escape becomes possible and

> indeed necessary: it is only the coming to pass of Heidegger's thought that makes a genuine escape or "excendence" possible. Escape is at once a movement beyond Being *and* a consequence inherent in the basic structure of Being—which is precisely why it is virtually impossible to "achieve." In other words, it too demands (at least) a double movement: a philosophical paradigm shift into Heideggerian ontology and a recognition of this ontology as a prison. Bataille would agree: like excendence, his exit involves precisely the impossibility of an opening of the strictly speaking homogeneous to heterogeneity—to the sacred, etc.[47]

In this way, Bataille and Lévinas can be understood as heirs and critics of Heidegger's phenomenology who formulated parallel yet distinct criticisms of Heidegger from the mid-1930s. However, by contrast to Lévinas, whose escape signified not only a piercing of the immanence of Being, but the revelation of otherworldly phenomena, through his heterology Bataille insists upon an "opening" to learned ignorance concerning the human and its relationship to this world. In other words, by refusing to choose between otherworldly transcendence and reductive secularism, Bataille's secular reconception of the human and the world in response to Heidegger mirrors Heidegger's secular confrontation with Rickert and Weber and extends the lineage of nonsecularist secularities in the continental tradition.

By contrast to the unpolished and opaque "Critique of Heidegger," Bataille's article "Sacrifices," written sometime during the period from 1933 to 1936, provides a clear alternative to Heideggerian transcendence. Bataille begins the article by rehearsing key components of Heidegger's formulation of transcendence. He opens by explaining the conditions of "*le moi*'s" existence: "Me [*le moi*], I exist—suspended in a realized void—suspended from my own dread—different from all other being [*l'être*] and such that the various events that can reach all other being and not *me* throw me out of a total existence."[48] This short opening sentence contains three key Heideggerian components.

First, *le moi*'s existence is constituted by its suspension in the realized void which "demands" that the self exist as itself, and in fear of its own demise. Bataille's vision of the human passively emerging into existence without a choice recalls Heidegger's understanding of

Dasein's thrownness into the world that constitutes its *ek-sistence*. For both thinkers, the human is not an autonomous ego that constitutes the world, but instead is a passive self, thrown into a world already full of significance and meaning. Second, for Bataille the "infinite improbability of this coming into the world" signifies the self's irreplaceability.[49] The "unique moment" required for *le moi*'s birth, or emergence into the world, constitutes its singularity within the world. Whereas Heidegger explains the irreplaceability of Dasein through death, Bataille does so through birth. Despite this difference, for both of them each human being not only is thrown into existence without a choice, but as such has the existential responsibility for itself with no possibility of handing it off to anyone else. Finally, Bataille describes *le moi* as "different from all other Being." He elaborates on this further down the page: "the total improbability of my coming into the world poses in an imperative mode a total heterogeneity."[50] On Bataille's reading, the self's awareness of itself and its own death signifies its heterogeneity from "all other being." Just as Heidegger speaks of the ontological difference sinking into the ground of Dasein, by which he means Dasein's inherent understanding of Being and thus surpassing of beings for Being, Bataille envisions the human as heterogeneous from the world in which it has been thrown: "In other words, the *me*, as an impasse outside of 'that which exists'—and in which are found reunited, without any way out, all the extreme values of life—even though it is constituted in the presence of reality, does not belong in any way to this reality which it transcends."[51] In some sense, Bataille seems resigned to the human's ineluctable relationship to its world by referring to the "prison" that constitutes "the realized void in which it is suspended."[52] Yet, in another sense, he recognizes *le moi*'s transcendence from "that which exists" due to its thrownness from "all being." *Le moi* is simultaneously and paradoxically suspended in the world into which it has been thrown and ontologically distinct from all that exists.

However, whereas "Critique of Heidegger" provides only a glimpse into his dissatisfaction with Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's relationship to its world, "Sacrifices" provides an alternative to what Bataille perceives to be Heidegger's entrapment of the human in a system of knowledge not unlike Hegel's. Like Heidegger, Bataille conceives of death as the peculiar phenomenon through which the human enacts its ownmost possibilities. Yet, by contrast to Heidegger, Bataille does not propose an anticipation of death as the means by which the human can authentically take up its possibilities in the world; instead he proposes that "it is only at the boundary of death that laceration, which constitutes the very nature of the immensely free *me*, transcending 'that which exists,' is revealed with violence."[53] For Bataille, the limit experiences of the heterogeneous serve to imitate the dissolution of death, thereby revealing the self as ultimately inscrutable to itself. Instead of being "locked away due to practical activity and neutralized in the logical appearances of 'that which exists,'"[54] the limit experiences of the heterogeneous reveal how "the *me* accedes to its specificity and to its integral transcendence only in the form of the '*me* that dies.'"[55]

On Bataille's reading, it is only in the experience of death that the human frees itself from subordination to concern for its own Being. In contrast to Heidegger, who argues that Dasein never has its Being, Bataille proposes that in the ecstatic dispossession of experiencing one's own death, *le moi* experiences the "imperative completion and sovereignty of being" as it is thrown into the "unreal time of death."[56] While Bataille's reference to completion may seem to betray his later critique of Hegel and may cause one to suppose the accuracy of Derrida's famous criticism of Bataille's economy without reserve, what he means in this context by "imperative completion" is a freedom from a vision of itself as a functionary in a completable system.[57] The ultimate capacity of the being who is aware of itself and its own death is the ability to take up its Being to the point where in fleeting, ecstatic moments it no longer has its Being as concern—where it is dissolved into the pure immediacy of nothingness, and where "it abandons all applications in the world."[58] Thus, for Bataille, death is not the possibility of the self's impossibility. It is the impossible possibility wherein "a dominion of *me*, which must be represented as vertigo, infinitely raises itself up."[59] In ways that recall Heidegger's reading of Augustine, the true self is a luminous darkness—one indiscoverable to itself and irreducible to the theoretical gaze. As I explore in the following chapter, through his own engagement with the mystical traditions Bataille developed a vision of the human as indeterminate and unknowable as Heidegger's, even if Heidegger served as one of the principal targets of his criticism of "professorial" philosophy.

If Bataille's "Critique of Heidegger" is an unpolished text that provides an outline of Bataille's dissatisfaction with Heideggerian transcendence, and "Sacrifices" is a response to Heidegger's analysis of the human's relationship to its world, Bataille's most explicit references to the philosopher of Freiburg come in *Hegel dans le monde présent*, which was meant to be a book-length analysis of Kojève's famous Hegel seminar (1933–1939). The ambitious project, written sometime during the years from 1944 to 1947, was never finished, but the Fonds Bataille contains a lengthy text in corrected, typed form, clearly in the latter stages of preparation for publication. Selections were published as three separate articles: "From Existentialism to the Primacy of Economy," "Hegel, Death, Sacrifice," and "L'homme, temp, et histoire," the third yet to be translated into English.[60]

Bataille's goal is to summarize Kojève's reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, something none of the other auditors of the course had attempted, much less accomplished:

> The present publication does not replace the Introduction, but it has the merit of giving an orderly overview of a philosophy that is not new, but which places the thought of Hegel in an entirely new light, which alone today, I believe, has the power to reveal totally the human conscience, and which alone is no stranger to any dimension of the present world.[61]

Bataille's respect for both Kojève and Hegel is obvious. It is Hegel's philosophy, as it was interpreted by Kojève, that has the power to reveal human existence in its totality within the complexities of the contemporary world. He continues along these lines in one of the passages published in "Hegel, Death, Sacrifice": "The essential—and the original—characteristic of Hegelian philosophy is to describe the totality of what is; and, consequently, at the same time that it accounts for everything which appears before our eyes, to give an integrated account of the thought and language which express—and reveal—that appearance."[62] Bataille was obviously struck by the comprehensiveness of Hegel's system. As he says in an unpublished section, the

Phenomenology, or the "book of books," offers the definitive vision of the totality of existence. Its novelty lies in its ability not only to describe the world phenomenologically, but to appropriate all things into a comprehensive system.[63] However, Bataille's concern with Hegel's *Phenomenology* goes beyond its comprehensive vision of "that which is." Bataille is also concerned with Hegel's analysis of the phenomenon of death.

As the text progresses, Bataille develops a lengthy polemic directed at contemporary forms of existentialism, mainly the work of Sartre and his admirers, which aims to demonstrate that contemporary philosophy has added virtually nothing to Hegel's system. In contrast to his French contemporaries, according to Bataille, "*Seul Heidegger force l'admiration*."[64] He then makes a striking statement that clarifies his understanding of Heidegger's role in Kojève's interpretation of the theme of death in the *Phenomenology*: "But the representation Heidegger has given of death is near that of Hegel. 'Heidegger,' says Kojève, 'has reprised the Hegelian theme of death.' . . . And Kojève admits that it is not possible to understand the Phenomenology of Hegel, and Hegel in general, without Heidegger."[65] In Bataille's mind not only is Heidegger's treatment of death close to Hegel's, but one cannot understand Hegel's analysis of death apart from Heidegger. Bataille continues along these lines in an unpublished chapter titled "La position de Heidegger": "Not only did he know to reopen the vertiginous perspective of death in the representation of Being, but he knew to connect traditional religious thought (like Hegel, he studied theology) to that of the school of philosophy (associating it, like Hegel, to atheism)."[66] According to Bataille, Heidegger not only reopened the question of the relationship between Being and death, but also associates this question with religious experience, or what Bataille calls the sacred.

These comments reveal Bataille's sustained ambivalence for Heidegger's philosophy. On one hand, he finds Heidegger so important that he believes Kojève's interpretation of Hegel's thanatology depends in large part on his phenomenology. Furthermore, Bataille lauds the way Heidegger develops his phenomenology through engagement with religious phenomena, which enables him to drawout similarities in religious experience and the philosophical analysis of death. Nevertheless, just as he had done in the 1930s, Bataille criticizes Heidegger for limiting Dasein's relationship to its world to the anticipation of its death. In his early criticism of Heidegger, Bataille focused on what he took to be Heidegger's reduction of Dasein to a function of work and knowledge. In *Hegel dans le monde présent*, Bataille develops this position further by framing it in terms of the relationship between the sacred and the profane: "Nevertheless, if one puts, without prudence and without passion, the accent on the sacred, what Heidegger more generally calls the authentic, that we wanted to keep from emitting a judgment of value, it is the open door (as it was generally in history) to vulgar extravagance (the sacred and profane)."[67] By imagining Dasein as endlessly anticipating itself, Bataille believes Heidegger has reduced the heterogeneous phenomenon of death to the homogeneous, or has allowed the sacred to be reduced to the profane.[68] Death is not the heterogeneous phenomenon that resists representation and knowledge. Rather, for Bataille, in line with the approach to Dasein's anticipatory resolution of later critics of Heidegger, it is used as the means for a dangerous mode of self- and world-mastery.

On Bataille's reading, Heidegger felt no need to consider the heterogeneous realm of the sacred because his phenomenology was delimited by the scope of "professorial" philosophy, which means his analysis is guided by the desire to explicate the relationships between Dasein, the world, and death to a professional community of scholars. Thus, in Bataille's mind, Heidegger sought to understand these relationships philosophically, not existentially: "Decidedly, this life does not seem to be dominated by a terrible passion: what seems to have dominated Heidegger was without doubt the intellectual desire to reveal Being (Being and not existence) through discourse (through philosophical language)."[69] Bataille says something very similar in *Inner Experience*:

> Inner experience is a movement in which man contests himself in his entirety. Heidegger addresses himself to a community of men who refuse this contestation. He does it, but as this contestation is addressed to the scientific community, as a contestation, it is, in fact,

> a quite ugly, stunted gnome—too stylized to be a monster, embarrassed, if not ashamed of being so.
>
> (IE 431/179)

According to Bataille, philosophy has the goal of encapsulating existence into a comprehensive system, wherein each being plays a functional role. Thus, philosophy, according to its own disciplinary principles, must include every element of existence into a comprehensible system: "The interest of philosophy resides in the fact that, in opposition to science or common sense, it must positively envisage the waste products of intellectual appropriation."[70] By envisioning the inappropriable elements of existence into "a homogenous representation of the world," Bataille believes, philosophy's primary objective is "the establishment of the homogeneity of the world."[71] In way that ironically mirrors Heidegger's dissatisfaction with the Neo-Kantian philosophies of worldview prevalent in Germany during the first decades of the century, Bataille maintains that a professional philosopher such as Heidegger cannot address himself to a community of scientists by claiming that there are unknowable and uncertain aspects inaccessible to human knowledge. Such an approach is, in Bataille's mind, categorically excluded from the academy. In terms of the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane, Bataille believes Heidegger follows the impulses of philosophy by excising all interest in the sacred in order to provide an explanation of how the phenomenon of death functions in terms of Dasein's function in and potential mastery of its world. However, it is essential to notice that even if Heidegger, rather than Rickert and Weber, is the object of his criticism, like Heidegger, Bataille asserts that the irreducibility of the world to human mastery signifies its sacrality.

Bataille's problem with phenomenology on the whole has to do with its methodological parameters, which limit the understanding of death to what can be explained by philosophy. In his notes to *Guilty*, Bataille explains that his goal is to somehow access "the obscure region closed to phenomenology" because he wants to reveal the unknowable, constitutive limit of both thought and experience—that which resists the phenomenological horizon of *le moi*.[72] Thus, in response to what he takes to be Heidegger's reduction of death to the homogeneous realm, Bataille believes there is only one solution: "There is only one remedy: to formally oppose the authentic and the viable, to hold as authentic life only an intense consumption, lacking sense and rigorously useless."[73] This comment echoes Bataille's position from the 1930s. On his view, unless the human transcends its concern for Being through a dispossessing expenditure void of use or application in the world, it will remain enslaved to an image of itself and the world as reductive to the related economies of work and knowledge. As I explore in the next chapter, he engaged the mystical traditions in order to gain insight into combatting such an image and into how to reveal the indeterminacy and unknowability that constitute the human condition.

RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR PATHWAYS BEYOND BEING

By 1935 both Lévinas and Bataille were determined to find a pathway beyond what they perceived to be the Heideggerian prison of Being. Both men accepted the basis of Heidegger's phenomenological approach to the human and its relationship to world—Dasein's inherent comportment to beings through its understanding of Being. Both men agreed that the beginning point of thought is the human's thrownness into a world of which it is not a master and over which it cannot become one. However, they became convinced that Heidegger's analysis of the phenomenon of death threatened to entrap the human in the immanence of Being, leading potentially to a political ideology such as Nazism. The appropriation of this shared beginning point led to parallel quests to forge a path toward a different end. Without necessarily explaining the structure or origin of this capacity, at this early juncture in their respective intellectual journeys both men concluded that the human being cannot be reduced to a function of knowledge or use. They also agreed that unless thought finds a way to recognize or express that which resists representation and experience, it will enable, rather than prevent, a slide toward a "vulgar extravagance" with grave social and political consequences.

In response, Lévinas forged a path beyond Being by challenging the limits of Heidegger's phenomenology. Over the course of subsequent decades, Lévinas framed his formulation of post-Heideggerian transcendence through the alterity of the "face," which is an "epiphany" that "breaks with the world that can be common to us."[74] For Lévinas, the "face" is the phenomenon of that which resists inscription within the horizon of Being—the revelation of an otherness that transcends the subject's "world":

> But the relation is maintained without violence, in peace with this absolute alterity. The "resistance" of the other does not do violence to me, does not act negatively; it has a positive structure: ethical. The first revelation of the other, presupposed in all the other relations with him, does not consist in grasping him in his negative resistance and in circumventing him by ruse. I do not struggle with a faceless god, but I respond to his expression, to his revelation.[75]

Thus, the human transcends Being through its encounter with the nonphenomenal other, whose alterity from Being calls her to ethical responsibility. Because the face of the other is incommensurate with "a power exercised, be it enjoyment or knowledge," it founds the human self's responsibility for it, promoting its freedom by "arousing my goodness."[76] By appealing to the phenomenon of the face as the revelation of the other that breaks with the world Lévinas opens phenomenology to a sense of alterity that would later take shape in Marion's saturated phenomenon.[77] In response to Heidegger's enchainment of Dasein to the horizon of the world, Lévinas proposes a phenomenology that transcends the worldly horizon, and eventually Marion proposed his own phenomenology without horizon. Hence, we can see in Lévinas's early reaction to Heidegger the seeds of the theological turn in French phenomenology as it has played out over the last half-century.

While Bataille took a much different path "beyond Being," he too challenged the limits of Heidegger's phenomenology. But, instead of formulating a post-Heideggerian vision of transcendence through a phenomenological analysis of the other whose "face" resists phenomenality, and in this sense signifies a revelation from elsewhere (one rendered in conjunction with a certain iteration of Jewish monotheism), Bataille articulated his vision of post-Heideggerian transcendence through his "heterology," which seeks to reveal the irreducibility of the human and its world through limit experiences that, among other things, simulate the dissolution of death. In terms of the history of philosophy's engagement with religion, Bataille's criticism of Heidegger is important because it demonstrates that a secular, atheistic reaction to Heidegger developed alongside the earliest manifestations of the theological turn in French phenomenology. As I explore in the following chapter, Bataille developed an understanding of transcendence as "sovereignty" wherein the human transcends its concern for Being through an encounter with its own impossibility—an understanding that would anticipate both the tension and the resonances between Heidegger's and Lévinas's secular and religious heirs.

Viewed in this light, the story of religion and postmodernism is incomplete if it excludes the French philosophers and scholars of religion who first appropriated phenomenology in the 1930s, well before the rise of Sartre's existentialism and Ricoeur's hermeneutics. Due to the theological turn in French phenomenology and the rise of Anglophone poststructuralist philosophies of religion, the history of continental philosophy of religion is often told through religious figures, such as Lévinas and Marion, and figures deemed religious, such as Derrida.[78] During the last quarter-century, these thinkers have been influential for new radical theologies or postmodern natural theologies that have sought to demonstrate the plausibility of belief in God after the proclamation of his death. Yet, when the narrative focuses too heavily on the significance of post-Heideggerian philosophy for theology, the vibrant lineage of secular reconceptions of secularity developed in the continental philosophical tradition is overlooked.

Bataille's criticism of Heidegger and engagement with religion are important to the narrative of religion and postmodernism because they signify the first post-Heideggerian atheist who attempted to reflect critically on his understanding of secular life by way of engagement with religious phenomena. In other words, they represent the developing significance of philosophy's engagement with religion for the secular, rather than the religious side of the equation. As I explore in the following chapter, like Heidegger, Bataille engages religious phenomena not in order to defend or advance any given religious tradition, but to reflect on the meaning of secular life. Bataille's work is especially pertinent to the history of religion and postmodernism for the way his approach to the "impossible" anticipates central themes in the "theological turn in French phenomenology" and philosophy's "turn" to religion as they developed at the end of the century.

4

A PROPHET OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

Bataille's Mystical Turn and Continental Philosophy of Religion

IN CHAPTER 1 I analyzed the context and contours of Weberian disenchantment, paying particular attention to the connection between the banishment of mystery and the lack of meaning in Weber's interpretation of the modern condition. This revealed that Weber views time as a linear continuum on which all possibility will eventually be reduced to actuality. Weber conjoins this approach to time with a view of space as a representable grid—a determinate map void of uncertainty and unpredictability. Chapter 2 revealed how Heidegger's early phenomenology represents a secular counter to Weberian disenchantment based on the indeterminacy and unknowability of the human and the world, one based on fundamentally different approaches to time and space worked out through encounters with religious subjectivities and cosmologies.

In the previous chapter I continued the story of secular reconceptions of secularity by comparing Bataillean heterology to Lévinasian excendence, noting that just when the figurehead of the "theological turn in French phenomenology" broke ground on the path that would lead to the return of revelation and the God question to continental philosophy, his secular counterpart criticized Heideggerian phenomenology in order to resist reductive approaches to the human and the world in the face of philosophy's promise of absolute knowledge.

According to Bataille, in ways that echo Heidegger's conclusions concerning the nullity of Dasein and the unconquerable unknowability of itself to itself, certain phenomena have the ability to reveal what Carlson calls the "irreducible gap of unknowing" that *le moi* faces in regard to itself and world.[1] Thus, through his criticism of Heidegger, and in simultaneity with the first articulation of otherworldly transcendence in the theological turn, Bataille articulated his own secular response to the disenchantment of the world.

Just as I explored how Heidegger enacted something like Roberts's model of encounter by engaging Paul and Augustine in order to work out his secular approaches to temporality, worldhood, and sacrality, I now turn my attention to Bataille's engagement with the mystical traditions and what it meant for his own reckoning with what Kosky calls "disenchantment with disenchantment." During the last half-century, continental thinkers have engaged the Christian mystical traditions as resources for surpassing Heidegger's phenomenology. Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's worldhood continues to be a central point of discussion in contemporary phenomenology.[2] However, whereas Heidegger engaged Paul and Augustine in order to think through the irreducibility of worldhood, his critics and heirs connected to the theological turn have engaged the mystics in order to redraw the horizons on which phenomena show themselves and thereby challenge the limits of phenomenological possibility. One thinks especially of Jean-Luc Marion and Michel Henry, who through the themes of both immanence (Henry) and transcendence (Marion) have not only attempted to demonstrate the possibility of God's phenomenality, but, in the process, challenged Heidegger's articulation of the relationship of worldhood through readings of mystics such as Meister Eckhart (Henry) and the Pseudo-Dionysius (Marion).[3]

Unsurprisingly, Bataille turned to the mystics for different reasons, but ones whose distinction from Marion's, Henry's, and other post-Heideggerian thinkers' is in danger of being lost without careful attention to their motives and directions. In the introduction I asserted that Carlson's apophatic analogy can be a helpful methodological prism that brings Roberts's model of encounter to bear on renewed visions of the secular—visions that challenge the foundations of Weberian disenchantment. On my reading, Heidegger's readings of Paul and Augustine signify the first enactment of the apophatic analogy in twentieth-century continental philosophy and thus the first major example of the potential a model of encounter holds for philosophy of religion. Bataille's complex, often opaque readings of John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, and most of all Angela of Foligno are extensions of this approach, since for Bataille the unknowing, or nonknowledge, constitutive of both mysticism and what he calls "sovereignty" or "inner experience" is analogously parallel. Therefore, even amid his scathing criticisms of theology, Bataille learned from the mystics how to understand the drama of self-dissolution and the meaning of the unconquerable void—or nullity—revealed when one lives without the promise of completion or deliverance. In the process, he developed his secular reconception of secularity from "heterology" to what is perhaps the continental tradition's most influential mystical thanatology.

Beyond gaining insight into Bataille's enactment of the apophatic analogy, centering on his engagement with the mystics provides a context for explicating his approach to "the impossible," a predominant theme in post-Heideggerian thought. In light of my analysis of Heidegger's approach to worldhood, and the criticisms of it generated by his earliest French readers, it is not surprising that his heirs and critics would focus attention on "the impossible" as a way to challenge, extend, or revise Heidegger's rendering of Dasein as a being beholden to its possibilities, and one constituted by the possibility of its impossibility. One could go so far as to say that the way to the relationship between continental philosophy of religion and mysticism during the last half-century is through the debate about the nature and function of the "impossible," which arguably came to a crescendo in the meeting between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion at Villanova University in 1997, a debate that has now become an iconic example of the tension between Heidegger's secular and theological heirs. In light of this development, Bataille's articulation of the impossible by way of mystical language is a crucial link in the history of post-Heideggerian thought, especially the divergent, if often parallel, developments of secular and theological modes of discourse in continental philosophy of religion, a philosophical history to which I attend in the next chapter.

SOVEREIGNTY AS SELF-LOSS

In the 1930s Bataille countered what he perceived to be Heidegger's entrapment of the human in the immanence of Being through the science of "heterology," which in his view could combat the false image of the human and the world as reducible to the related economies of anticipation and knowledge. For Bataille, philosophers, including Heidegger, make the mistake of attempting to explain all that is through knowledge, thereby reducing all phenomena—even the phenomenon of death—to homogeneous categories of thought. If Bataille's early attempt to counter the reductive tendencies of philosophy often lacked specific prescriptions for enacting the kind of unknowing that would dissolve the reductive image of the human and the world proffered by philosophers, scientists, and others, during the latter half of the 1940s Bataille filled out this approach in the three volumes of *The Accursed Share*. The first volume, *Consumption*, presents an economic theory developed around the principle that excess, rather than scarcity, governs economies of exchange. The second and third volumes, *The History of Eroticism* and *Sovereignty*, contain Bataille's most lucid anthropological and ontological analyses of the human condition, including his formulation of "sovereignty." Together, the three volumes of *The Accursed Share* represent the most comprehensive and coherent articulation of Bataille's thoroughly interdisciplinary approach to the question of the human being and the world, including theoretical responses to figures as diverse as Nietzsche, Mauss, and Lévi-Strauss, as well as anthropological studies of the ancient Aztecs, the Marshall Plan, and the function of sacrifice in human society.

In the second and third volumes Bataille echoes Heidegger's analyses of death and anxiety in *Being and Time* and "What Is Metaphysics?" by suggesting that what distinguishes the human being from other animals is its acute awareness of death: "What marks us so severely is the *knowledge* of death, which animals fear but do not *know*" (HE 266/82). In Bataille's view, while the animal fears immediate threats to its existence and instinctively avoids them, the human is marked by a conscious awareness of itself as a mortal being: "The consciousness of death is essentially self-consciousness" and thus death is the "precondition for conscious individualization" (S 266/218). However, in *The Accursed Share* and other later texts such as *Theory of Religion* and *Erotism* there is a tension in Bataille's conception of the genesis of this self-consciousness.

On one hand, he seems to think that the human's use of tools led to the self-consciousness that characterizes human existence. On this reading, the use of tools is the genesis of what Bataille calls "work," which is the general attempt to control and manipulate nature for the sake of the duration of human life:

> The positing of the object, which is not given in animality, is in the human use of tools; that is, if the tools as middle terms are adapted to the intended result—if their uses perfect them. Insofar as tools are developed with their end in view, consciousness posits them as objects, as interruptions in the indistinct continuity. The developed tool is the nascent form of the non-I.[4]

The anticipation of the future wrought by the use of tools introduces the anguish before death that characterizes the human being: "The being that work made consciously individual is the anguished being. Man is always more or less in a state of anguish, because he is always in a state of anticipation, an anticipation that must be called anticipation of oneself" (S 266/218). Here it is work that seems to create the anguished, human being who becomes aware of its death by way of its anticipation of the future.

At other times Bataille indicates that it is the fear of death, symbolized in burial rites and prohibitions against contact with corpses, that led to "work" and the elevation of the preservation of human life, both individually and collectively, to the highest value. In *Erotism*, he suggests that the taboo found in ancient societies against contact with corpses "coincided with the beginnings of work," since death "bears witness to a violence which destroys not one man alone but all men in the end" (E 47/44). In order to separate himself from the contagion and destiny of corpses, the human attempted to order the natural world in order to ensure its survival for as long as possible: "Man, identifying himself with work which reduced everything to order, thus cut himself off from violence which tended in the opposite direction" (E 48/45). On this reading, the awareness of death wrought by the dead corpse caused the transformation of the given world into a world of utility and production "useful" to the preservation of the human being.[5]

Bataille is never clear if work—the anticipation of the future—leads to anguish before death, or if anguish before death leads the human to attempt to preserve itself by way of work. Bataille himself recognizes the tension between the two readings, and he refuses to prioritize one or the other (HE 43–43/51). What is clear is that Bataille understands the human as constituted by its acute awareness of itself and mortality. The human is distinct from all other animals, since this awareness leads to a negation of the given order through a use of tools and other beings in service of the preservation of human life. However, this subordination holds the potential for reducing even the human to the logic of utility: "This is the basic principle: to subordinate is not only to alter the subordinated element but to be altered oneself. The tool changes nature and man at the same time: it subjugates nature to man, who makes and uses it, but it ties man to subjugated nature."[6] Hence, the human's use of tools for the sake of reckoning with its existence can lead to an image of the human as a vehicle for production:

> In efficacious activity man becomes the equivalent of a tool, which produces; he is like the thing the tool is, being itself a product. The implication of these facts is quite clear: the tool's meaning is given by the future, in what the tool will produce, in the future utilization of the product; like the tool, he who serves—who works—has the value of that which will be later, not of that which is.
>
> (S 266/218)

In Bataille's view, work reflects the drive for preservation, and thus it operates on the idea that the "duration" of one's life is the meaning of existence. It is above all a concern for the future that, among other things, prevents the worker from finding meaning in the present moment. Every action and thought is executed for the sake of the future. Therefore, if one's existence is reduced to work, one is reduced to servility to the future: "We may say, in other words, that it is *servile* to consider duration first, to employ the *present time* for the sake of the *future*, which is what we do when we work" (S 248/198). Even if the emergence of the human as the being acutely aware of itself by way of its acute awareness is indistinguishable from the ability to anticipate the future, to limit human existence to such anticipation is to envision it as an irrevocably alienated being (S 263/214).

As in earlier writings, Bataille is dissatisfied by the limitation of death to the "annihilation of Being" and the reduction of the sacred to authenticity, since these interpretations figure the human as an alienated being forced to conceive her true self as that which she never is: "It is insofar as we are subordinate beings, accepting the subordination of the thing that we die humanly. For to die humanly, in anguish, is to have the representation of death that enables the diving of oneself into a present and a future: to die humanly is to have of the future being, of the one who matters most in our eyes, the senseless idea that he is not" (S 267/215). On Bataille's reading, when the human is conceived of exclusively in terms of its anticipation of the future, as in Heidegger's phenomenology and Sartre's existentialism, it is relegated to a permanent alienation from itself by way of its anticipation of its true self. In terms of his earlier criticisms, Bataille's position has become more precise. His overall concern is that the limited interpretation of death as the "annihilation of being" reduces the human to anticipation, which leads to the illusion that "the one who matters most in our eyes" will arrive in the future—a future for which Heidegger's Dasein and Sartre's ego will never be present. More importantly, by envisioning the human in terms of anticipation of that which never arrives, Bataille believes Heidegger and his existentialist heirs fall into the trap of envisioning the human as a master self- and world-architect whose project is finished only in death. In pursuing this line of criticism, Bataille also combats the nihilism of Weber's iron cage: the human trapped on the continuum of perpetual progress is enslaved to the project of absolute knowledge, and in the meantime its existence is void of authentic meaning and significance.

In response, Bataille maintains that "privileged moments," wherein the self is saturated to the point of dissolution, moments akin to death, hold the potential for uncovering the unknowing constitutive of the human condition: "The miraculous moment when anticipation dissolves into NOTHING, detaching us from the ground on which we were groveling, in the concatenation of useful activity" (S 254/203). Bataille calls these moments the "miracle":

> It is the moment when we are relieved of anticipation, man's customary misery, of the anticipation that enslaves, that subordinates the present moment to some anticipated result. Precisely in the miracle, we are thrust from our anticipation of the future into the presence of the moment, of the moment illuminated by miraculous light, the light of the sovereignty of life delivered from its servitude.
>
> (S 257/207)

In divergence from Heidegger, Bataille believes that the miracle is an experience akin to death wherein the self and its anticipation of the future are dissolved. According to Bataille, this dissolution takes place in "privileged moments" where certain "objects of thought" dissolve the "thought that conceives them" and "thereby dissolves itself as thought" (S 254/203–204).

In anticipation of Jean-Luc Marion's saturated phenomenon, Bataille associates the miracle or the impossible with "decisive" phenomena that have the power to overwhelm *le moi* to the point of being "wonder-struck": "What is the meaning of art, architecture, music, painting, or poetry if not the anticipation of a suspended, wonder-struck moment, a miraculous moment?" (S 249/200). Bataille uses the example of happy tears to illustrate his point. He recounts having experiences where unexpected events or things would provoke an unanticipated and uncontrollable response of joyful sobs. Eventually, he concluded that tears of both happiness and sadness provoke the same reaction: "*Impossible, yet there it is*—what better way to cry out the feeling that death inspires in men? May we not say of death that in it, in a sense, we discover the negative analogue of a miracle, something we find all the harder to believe as death strikes down the one we love, the one who is close to us, something we could not believe, *if it, if death were not there*" (S 257/206–207). The realization that both sad and happy events provoke the same response leads Bataille to an important conclusion: the dissolution of knowledge effected by the miracle—regardless of the emotional charge of the phenomenon involved—is always akin to death: "Moreover, there is no reason at all for thinking that tears of happiness signify gratified expectations, because the object of these tears is itself unanticipated; like death, it is only, all of a sudden, the impossible coming true, becoming *that which is*" (S 257/210).

For Bataille, the dissolution wrought by thanatological phenomena signifies paradoxically the sovereignty of unknowing: "Consciousness of the moment is not truly such, is not sovereign, except in *unknowing*. Only by canceling, or at least neutralizing, every operation of knowledge within ourselves are we in the moment, without fleeing it. This is possible in the grip of strong emotions that shut off, interrupt, or override the flow of thought" (S 253–254/203). This dissolution signifies an experience of "sovereignty," because it is a temporary reprieve from anticipation of the future. For Bataille, the miracle is a phenomenon akin to death, even if it is not death as such—the "*impossible becoming true*, in the *reign of the moment*" (S 261/211). Thus, sovereignty is, paradoxically, an experience of self-loss, one that reveals how the human's capacity for work, anticipation, and knowledge is constituted by a profound and unconquerable unknowing. Human self-possession is always dispossession—and it is always akin to death. Heterology becomes thanatology, as Bataille outlines a view of the impossible as living to the point of death, "to die without ceasing to live" (E 235/240).

BEYOND "GOD" TO THE DIVINE: BATAILLE'S MYSTICAL THANATOLOGY

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that despite his criticism of Heidegger's phenomenology, Bataille's early heterology in fact extends the trajectory of Heidegger's nonsecularist secularity. Heidegger developed his approach through a significant engagement with Paul, Augustine, and other religious figures. In my view, his philosophy of religion is the first twentieth-century enactment of Carlson's apophatic analogy, according to which there are logical parallels in mystical discourses that envision God as unattainable by the language, knowledge, and experience He constitutes and the immeasurable possibility, or death, of the mortal subject, which remains beyond knowledge, representation, and language.

If Bataille's early work extends Heidegger's criticism of Weberian disenchantment even while directly criticizing Heidegger himself, Bataille's later work follows the path of Heidegger's philosophy of religion through engagement with the Christian mystical traditions. As with Heidegger, Bataille's relation with the mystical traditions is framed by a model of encounter, rather than conversion or secularist dogmatism. A medieval librarian by training, Bataille developed his thanatology through his reading of the mystics, most notably Angela of Foligno and John of the Cross. Viewed in light of the terms and frame of the apophatic analogy, it is natural that Bataille would detect resonances between his approach to sovereignty as self-loss and mystical dispossession; as Carlson says, "The incommensurability of (at least certain) mystical moments with the structures and categories of common experience—that is, the proximity of the mystical to 'the impossible'—can be precisely what leads to the openness, depth, and richness of language surrounding the mystical."[7] Despite his deep ambivalence toward Christianity, Bataille gained insight into the experience of the impossible through a proximity to the mystical, even if he remained a relentless critic of theology and an avowed atheist.

Before analyzing Bataille's reading of the mystical traditions, it will be helpful to outline his critique of Christianity, which follows similar lines to his critique of philosophy. In Bataille's view, if Heidegger and existentialist Heideggerians such as Sartre envision the human as the anticipation of her authentic self, Christianity reduces the human to anticipation of eternal salvation by conceiving of God as the crescendo of the human project: "Salvation is the summit of all possible project and the height of matters relating to projects" (IE 60/47). On this reading, Christianity's reduction of *le moi* to anticipation is a step worse than Heidegger's. Rather than centering the human on its possibilities within the world, on Bataille's reading Christianity focuses the believer on anticipation of the world to come, since salvation is "life put off infinitely" (IE 61/47). Thus, for Bataille the God of theology is an anthropomorphism that represents an attempt to relieve the anguish of the anticipation of death, concealing it under the guise of eternal permanence and security. Following Nietzsche, Bataille says in *Guilty* that God is an effect of wanting to capture "what is there" into an intellectual category, thereby rendering existence sensible and comprehensible (G 255/17). Bataille's criticism of philosophical reductionism applies equally to theological reductionism.

In a way eventually appropriated by Mark C. Taylor, Jeff Kosky, and other Anglophone philosophers of religion, he resists any discourse—whether secular or religious—that attempts to reduce all things, including death, to a comprehensive system of knowledge. As Kosky points out, by way of its reductive tendencies, theology is, or can often be, another pathway of disenchantment: "Importantly, then, modern disenchantment does not mean the disappearance of God or the neutralization of theology. . . . It is as if a certain form of enlightenment (the principle of rendering reason) shared a common structure of bringing things to light with a certain form of religion (the God who shines light on all things)."[8] If disenchantment stems from the banishment of mystery from the world, for Bataille (and Kosky) theology is as susceptible to it as philosophy if it falls into the temptation of reduction, intellectualization, and rationalization.

Bataille's criticism of theology extends to mystical theology. Despite the extreme limits to which the mystic goes in the quest for union with God, Bataille believes that certain forms of mystical discourse support, rather than subvert, the logic of anticipation. In *Inner Experience*, Bataille praises the Pseudo-Dionysius for saying that the intimate union between God and soul comes by negation of all difference between them. However, he immediately points out that Dionysius also says that God possesses dominion over all of creation and that all things are linked to him as their center: "But positive theology—founded on the revelation of the scriptures—is not in accord with this negative experience" (IE 16/4). On Bataille's reading, balancing the negative language of union with the positive theology of God's dominion and salvation means that Dionysius's mysticism operates within the economy of knowledge and thus anticipation. The negative moments of mystical language, in this case, are counterbalanced by the reassurance given through kataphatic representations of God and the promise of deliverance.

Therefore, Bataille worries that the mystical subject enters into the path of learned ignorance convinced that God is the resolution to human mortality, and thereby constructs a theological system as reductive as Hegel's dialectic or Heidegger's phenomenology. In a passage that bears resemblances to Meister Eckhart's admonishments to those who work for rewards from God, Bataille says that more often than not the ascetic undertakes the suffering of spiritual practice in anticipation of an eternal reward:

> Solitary ascetics pursue an end whose means is ecstasy—and ascetics work for their salvation like merchants buying and selling with profit in mind or like workers sweating for their wages. If workers or merchants had wealth for the asking, without worries about a future, without fearing death or destruction, they'd leave their workplace or business without further ado and seek out whatever dangerous pleasures presented themselves. As for ascetics: *by falling into common human misery*, they become possessed by a possibility of undertaking the lengthy work of deliverance.[9]

If the mystical path is one at the end of which the mystical subject will earn sanctity and salvation for its sacrifice, Bataille believes it reflects a mode of anticipation, rather than a pathway to sovereign unknowing.

In contrast to the logic of completion too often characteristic of theology and philosophy, Bataille developed what he called an *atheology* in three related texts he referred to as the *Atheological Summa*. Bataille calls the *Summa* a work of *atheology* because his goal is to explicate the "unbreathable void" opened when humanity lives "without a narcotic" (IE 10/xxxii). Living without a narcotic is to live without the illusion of deliverance from the conditions of mortal temporality. It is to confront, rather than conceal, the absolute impossibility of death and subsequently to live to the point of dying: "My notion is anthropomorphism torn apart. I don't want to reduce, to assimilate, the ensemble of what is to an existence paralyzed by servitude, but to the wild *impossibility* that I am, that cannot escape its limits, or stick to them. At this moment, the *Unwissenheit*—ecstatic, beloved ignorance—becomes the expression of a hopeless wisdom" (G 261/21).[10] If there is no answer to the question of human existence, thought runs up against an insurpassable limit. When metaphysics collapses, on Bataille's reading, neither theology nor philosophy can continue to aspire to a comprehensive understanding of "all which is." Apart from a metaphysical "narcotic" that gives sense and meaning to the totality of existence, the "philosophy of sciences" is, at its limit, "dissolved" (IE 21/9). As the logic of sovereignty, or self-loss, atheology counters the reductive logic of both philosophy and theology by confronting, rather than concealing, the "absence of God" (G 366/155). Rather than articulating the scope of human knowledge in relation to God, as St. Thomas endeavored to do, Bataille explores how thought is dissolved in the face of the absence of God, or absence of a First Principle, that constitutes it.

Bataille's interpretation of the absence of God was formed through two main sources: Friedrich Nietzsche and Maurice Blanchot. From Nietzsche, Bataille appropriated the idea that the death of God signifies freedom from the subjugation of life to a "unique and veritable" end that limits the range of human possibility.[11] The death of God is, in this sense, the collapse of the projected image of human existence—the disappearance of the heavenly representation that governed human thought and experience: "God is tied to the salvation of the soul—at the same time as to the other *relations on the imperfect to the perfect*. Now, in experience, the feeling that I have of the unknown about which I spoke is distrustfully hostile towards the idea of perfection (servitude itself, the 'must be')" (IE 16/4). God's death is the death of the human projection of a "perfect" concept that demands that human action and thought conform to it. In other words, it is the dissolution of the idea that the human is a possibility who must accord itself with an ideal actuality. Thus, in a Nietzschean sense Bataille's mystical thanatology is *a*theological because its goal is to surpass theology's anthropomorphic projection of a God that reduces life to anticipation through the illusory hope for salvation.[12] *Atheology*, in this sense, is uncompromisingly atheist and steadfastly secular.

Blanchot's influence on Bataille tends to what the absence of God, in the wake of his death, first experienced in the French Revolution and then announced by Nietzsche, means for human language, representation, and thought. Bataille met Blanchot in 1939 and during the early years of the 1940s the two men formed a close bond. Bataille understood his *Atheological Summa* as a "new theology" expressed in accordance with Blanchot's input on the nature of language and experience. As Kevin Hart has shown, the experience of the absence of God was an important theme in France from the time of the Enlightenment. Hart, following Pierre Klossowski, suggests that the severing of the head of Louis XVI in 1793—the representative of God on earth—marked the moment when the absence of God was first felt in France.[13] Soon thereafter, Enlightenment *philosophes* attempted to institute an atheist cult wherein Reason replaced the dead God. Furthermore, the turn to mysticism, although subtle and usually on the periphery, had been part of French intellectual culture since the beginning of the century. Certain members of Durkheim's French school of sociology, including Durkheim himself, were interested in mysticism as a communal and societal phenomenon. In addition, Bergson's experientialism was eminent in France during the first quarter of the century.

Bataille's and Blanchot's attempts to bring thought before the absence of God are both extensions and subversions of these traditions. Their "new theology" seeks to behead all forms of authority over human experience, including both Reason and God: "It seems to me that human thought had two terms: God and the feeling of the absence of God; but God was only the confusion of the SACRED (of the religious) and of REASON (of the utilitarian)" (G 240/4). In this way, Bataille and Blanchot subverted the Christian traditions' conceptions of God as a transcendent being and the Enlightenment cult of Reason by calling for the beheading of Reason as God and God as Reason in order to reopen the absence first felt by God's death. They want to, in this sense, reconfigure the divine as the ecstatic experience of the void that is God's absence, without replacing it. This means prioritizing the absence of any transcendental or transcendent First Principle that might conceal it. As Bataille says in *Inner Experience*, Blanchot taught him that the goal of his "mystical theology without a God" or "the new theology" "is negation of other values, other authorities," so that "experience, having a positive existence, becomes itself positively value *and authority*" (IE 19/7). For Bataille, perhaps more than Blanchot, whose work "focuses on the relations of experience and literature, experience and mystical writing,"[14] atheology seeks to rediscover the divine by beheading any form of discourse that would restrict human experience from recognizing the unknowable limit that constitutes all knowledge and experience.

Blanchot is so important to Bataille's thought because according to the latter the former is the only thinker who has articulated the authority of experience in terms of the atheological significance of the death of God. In order to introduce the section of *Inner Experience* that Bataille calls "The New Mystical Theology," he cites a long passage from Blanchot's *Thomas the Obscure* focused on Thomas's experience of mystical darkness: "His eye, useless for sight, took on extraordinary proportions, began to develop in an inordinate fashion and, dwelling on the horizon, allowed night to penetrate into its center in order to create for itself an iris" (IE 119/101). As Hart has argued, it seems that for Bataille the true significance of Blanchot's description lies in the entrance of night into the gaze of Thomas's sight, rendering "a tragic moment when this glance was regarded as the death of all image" (IE 120/102). Bataille finds this exemplary for the way it illustrates the death of language, representation, and thought through mystical blindness and nonknowledge. According to Bataille, Blanchot's account articulates how "writing exceeds all project and leads to the unknown; it involves the sacrifice of words and, in the same gesture, of the author himself. And so *Thomas l'obscur* is sacred speech."[15] On Bataille's reading, Blanchot understood that when thought is brought before the absence of God, not only is it eventually dissolved, rendered null by way of its encounter with the mortal horizon that constitutes human existence, but the dissolution itself is akin to religious experience. As Connor points out in his study on Bataille's mysticism, the nonknowledge that results from such a sacrifice seems to both precede and surpass all meaning and discourse: "For what Bataille glimpses in the mystical narrative, or rather hidden behind it—what would be there if the experience could be removed from the 'atmosphere of religions'—is an experience that promotes a profound questioning of meaning. In other words, he sees the opposite of what there is to see."[16] Instead of seeking "the coagulation of meaning" in order to "make sense out of the experience by situating it within a 'known horizon,'" Bataille's *atheology* seeks the "death of all image" in order to open a space for the experience of that which resists representation and language, the impossible.

In this sense, Bataille's atheology is a*theological* because without a metaphysical "narcotic," the dissolution of thought leads to an experience of self-dissolution akin to mystical dispossession: "At the limits of its development, thought that aspires to be 'put to death,' driven, by a leap, into a sphere of sacrifice and, just as an emotion increases up to the lacerating moment of a sob, its fullness carries it to the point where a whistling wind beat it down, where definitive contradiction reigns" (G 261/21). The absence of God means not only that human existence should not be reduced to anticipation of eternal salvation; it also signifies that thought cannot be unified, completed, or fulfilled through a metaphysical ground. This means, on Bataille's reading, that despite the largely unforeseeable possibilities of growth, development, and expansion in human thought, it is constituted by a constitutive unknowing. Death, which remains incomprehensible and insurmountable, is that which thought cannot surpass:

> The final point I want to make is that philosophy finds itself in an impasse; without discipline it could accomplish nothing and yet in that it cannot embrace the extremes of its subject, the extremes of the possible as I have called them, the outermost reaches of human life, it is doomed to failure. If it is to be fundamental even a philosophy of death must turn away from its subject.
>
> (E 253/259)

Recalling his early criticism of Heidegger, Bataille maintains that when philosophy approaches the phenomenon of death it must either reduce death to the realm of possibility, such as in Heidegger's phenomenology, or recognize the limit of its reach in the face of the impossible. In order to remain itself, philosophy must turn away from death at the risk of dissolving into nonknowledge or mystical unknowing, since, when thought reaches the end of its possibilities, it is dissolved, leaving a mystical space wherein "presence is no longer in any way distinct from an absence" (IE 17/5).

THE CRUCIFIXION AND THE SECULAR PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

The a*theological* aspect of Bataille's thought is key for understanding his encounter with Christian religiosity. As I explored in the first part of the chapter, Bataille believes that it is possible for *le moi* to experience phenomena that simulate death by annulling the anticipation of the future. This belief marks a divergence from Heidegger, whose phenomenology is an analysis of the ground of Dasein's possibility by way of the horizon of temporality. In Heidegger's view, death is the absolute impossibility of Dasein, and thus its ownmost possibility, one Dasein will never know or experience. Bataille, by contrast, developed a discourse of the impossible, which attempts to explain the extraordinary experience of living to the point of dying, or the assent of life to the point of death. Consequently, Bataille's engagement with the mystical traditions is centered on the "singular experience" of the impossible—an experience where *le moi* is dissolved in a manner that simulates its death.

This means that Heidegger and Bataille drew upon different aspects of the mystical traditions in order to address their distinct concerns. Whereas Heidegger looked to Paul and Augustine, among others, in order to understand Dasein as *possibility* through the themes of temporality, subjectivity, and transcendence, Bataille engaged mystics such as Angela of Foligno and John of the Cross in order to articulate *le moi*'s experience of the impossible. By contrast to Heidegger's interest in Paul's facticity and Augustinian subjectivity, Bataille's mystical turn is motivated by a desire to recount the impossible experience of dying while living: "I would like to be everything, therefore to communicate, to lose myself, however, to remain *ipse*" (IE 67/53). Bataille's mystical thanatology parallels the mystical quest for beloved ignorance or unknowing but without belief in a transcendent God who is the end of such a quest:

> I have of the divine an experience so mad that one will laugh at me if I speak of it. I enter into a dead end. There all possibilities are exhausted; the "possible" slips away and the impossible prevails. To face the impossible—exorbitant, indubitable—when nothing is

> possible any longer is in my eyes to have an experience of the divine; it is analogous to a torment.
>
> (IE 45/33)

In Bataille's *atheology*, the vertiginous experience of the impossible, one in which absence and presence become indistinguishable, is the divine itself.

Bataille's *atheology* thus bears a twofold significance. Similar to Nietzsche and Heidegger, Bataille reads the death of God as the collapse of belief in a unifying metaphysical principle that would give sense and meaning to existence as a whole. Bataille is particularly interested in how the death of God reveals that even philosophy must admit that it has no basis for positing an end to history—a completion of the unity between subject and object Hegel envisioned as the culmination of history. In this way, Bataille's *atheology* signifies an attempt to explain the conditions of human experience when the human confronts itself as a question with no reply (IE 48–49/36). However, in order to do so, Bataille reads the Crucifixion—the theological event of the death of God—as a model for the impossible. In this sense, the death of God, as the collapse of metaphysics, is the condition for the unconcealment of the experience of the impossible, or what Bataille refers to as the divine. On Bataille's reading, the Crucifixion does not symbolize the reconciliation of permanently discontinuous human beings to the immutable and eternal deity. Instead, the simultaneous death of the man Jesus and Christ, the second person of the Trinity, illustrates both the death of the metaphysical God and the experience of dissolution Bataille associates with the impossible.

Thus, despite his often-harsh criticism of Christianity, Bataille finds that Christianity has, in certain mystical moments, forgone belief in God as the anthropomorphic desire for completion and salvation for the vertiginous experience of the impossible. According to Bataille, in order to experience the impossible, one must "cease wanting to be everything," which signifies a hope for "completion and salvation" (IE 35/22). Bataille therefore imagines a scenario where one would conceive of such a desire as an obstacle to, rather than the experience of, the divine: "Let one imagine now a different and even opposite will where the will 'to become everything' would be regarded as an obstacle to that of losing oneself. . . . Where 'becoming everything' would be considered not only as the sin of man but of all that is possible, and even God!" (IE 35/22). On this reading, instead of anticipating redemption through God's saving grace, the experience of the divine would be associated with the desire "to lose oneself . . . and in no way to save oneself" (IE 35/22). With deliverance and completion eschewed, it is not surprising that Bataille focuses his attention on Good Friday, rather than Easter Sunday. One might even characterize his *atheology* as a secular theology of the cross and an antitheology of the Resurrection.

It is through the lens of the never-ending dark night of the soul that Bataille reads the sixteenth-century Spanish mystic John of the Cross: "According to St. John of the Cross, we must imitate in God (Jesus) the fall from grace, the agony, the moment of 'non-knowledge' of the '*lamma sabachtani*'; drunk to the lees, Christianity is absence of salvation, the despair of God" (IE 61/47).[17] On Bataille's reading, John encourages the Christian to imitate the lived-experience of Christ, one in which the absence of hope for salvation—rather than the anticipation of it—effected the moment of nonknowledge he associates with the impossible. Along these lines, in *On Nietzsche* Bataille says plainly that the Crucifixion was "desired by God," because, without it, both God and humans would have "persevered in their respective isolation."[18] At first glance, one might interpret this reading along traditional theological lines: Christ's death enabled the communion of God with sinful and mortal human beings. However, if we take into account Bataille's distinction between theology and *atheology*, it is possible to develop an alternative reading:

> The killing of Christ injures the being of God. It looks as if creatures couldn't communicate with their Creator except through a wound that lacerates integrity. The wound is intended and desired by God. The humans who did this are not less guilty. On the other hand—and this is not the least strange—the guilt is a wound lacerating the integrity of every guilty being.[19]

The killing of Christ "injures the being of God," for the way it signifies the collapse of the image of God as the fulfillment of human desire and knowledge. Amy Hollywood explains that in place of human projections, "Bataille subverts such conceptions of the divine and also shows how mystical experience itself deconstructs these cultural constructs."[20] In the Crucifixion, Bataille reads a transformation of the divine from the anticipation of eternal salvation to the experience of the impossible.

Thus, the deconstruction of God as the projection of human desire inflicts a "mortal wound," as Carlson calls it, on the "integrity" of the human. If God has been transformed from the Self-sufficient Guarantor of completion and salvation to a crucified human being who faced his impossibility in "a night of death wherein creatures and Creator bled together," then the conception of the divine has been altered radically from eternal salvation to the experience of self-dissolution.[21] Bataille formulates this transformation in the form of an *atheological* prayer:

> O God our father You who, in a night of despair, crucified Your son, who, in the night of butchery, as agony became impossible—to point of distraction—became the Impossible yourself and felt impossibility right to the point of horror—God of despair, give me that heart, Your heart, which fails, which exceeds all limits and tolerates no longer that You should be!
>
> (IE 47–48/35)

From the perspective of Christ's lived-experience, the Crucifixion was the encounter with his own impossibility. In this sense, the death of God is the death of the human conceived as anticipation of the future, or obsession with salvation. On the cross, "God," as human projection, gives way to the experience of the impossible as the divine, which has been revealed as the experience of the "absence of salvation" brought forth by the double significance of the death of God.

In a manner that recalls the mystical discourse of the Pseudo-Dionysius or Meister Eckhart, Bataille says that to speak of "God" is to speak of that which language cancels by its very reference to it:

> God is nothing if he is not a transcendence of God in every direction; in that of vulgar being, in that of horror and impurity; even in that of nothing at all in the last analysis. We cannot add to language

> without impunity the word which transcends words, the word God. As soon as we do so this self-transcending word vertiginously destroys its own limits.
>
> (E 262–263/269)

For Bataille, the divine is that which resists discursive inscription. To speak of God is to fall ineluctably into the idolatry of the theological "God." The matter of the divine is predominantly one of experience, not language. God, or at least the divine, remains only where language ceases: "If we deny God—and only then—are we virile. It is only beyond that, not in the abstractions of theologians, that the definition of the word God remains" (G 308/59). Bataille's *atheology* is in this way a mysticism of the death of God—or a mystical thanatology—that articulates the divine as the experience of self-dissolution embodied in the Crucifixion: "If I offer my life to life itself, to the life to be lived and the life to be lost (I don't like to say it: mystical experience), I open my eyes on a world wherein I have no meaning but wounded, lacerated, *sacrificed*, where the divinity, in the same way, is only laceration, execution, sacrifice" (G 282/39). The divine is the experience of the impossible, or the dissolution akin to death—an experience that not only resists linguistic representation, but combats the image of the human and the world as reductive to representation, use, or knowledge.

We can therefore summarize the difference between theology and *atheology* in terms of the structure of authority in the relationship between experience and language. Theology begins with God as a category of understanding and attunes experience to fit this category. This leads it, on Bataille's reading, to idolatrous anthropomorphic projection:

> Experience is, in fever and anguish, the putting into question (to the test) of that which a man knows of being. Should he in this fever have any apprehension whatsoever, he cannot say: "I have seen God, the absolute, or the depths of the universe"; he can only say "that which I have seen eludes understanding"—and God, the absolute, the depths of the universe, are nothing if they are not categories of understanding.
>
> (IE 16/4)

By contrast, *atheology* begins with only the idea that human existence is a question with no response—a condition with no cure:

> By *inner experience* I understand that which one usually calls *mystical experience*: the states of ecstasy, of rapture, at least of meditated emotion. But I am thinking less of *confessional* experience, to which one has had to adhere up to now, than of an experience laid bare, free of ties, even of an origin, of any confession whatsoever. This is why I don't like the word *mystical*. . . . Inner experience responds to the necessity in which I find myself—human existence with me—of challenging everything (of putting everything into question) without permissible rest.
>
> (IE 15/3)

The divine is thus the experience of the limit and transgression of human possibility. "To face the impossible," Bataille says, "is in my eyes to have an experience of the divine" (IE 45/33).

Bataille's engagement with Christian mysticism is focused on this experience. Despite the mystics' tendency to remain enchained to anthropomorphic projections of God based on the desire for completion and salvation, Bataille detects in certain mystical figures a pathway to the experience of the impossible. His interest in Christian mysticism centered on the deconstruction of theological conceptions of God and the experience of that which resists discursive representation, as Amy Hollywood points out: "The God of the mystics, Bataille suggests, is a God without aim, project, salvation, or knowledge—hence not God at all, at least as that concept is deployed within the mainstream of Christian theology and philosophy. Christian mystics experience the limit that undermines conceptions of the divine central to Western philosophical traditions."[22] Mystics such as Angela of Foligno enable him to extract a model for the experience of the impossible—a blueprint for living through the death of God as self-dissolution:

> I wanted experience to lead where it would, not to lead it to some end point given in advance. And I say at once that it leads to no harbor (but to a place of bewilderment, of nonsense). I wanted

> non-knowledge to be its principle—for this reason I have followed with a keener discipline a method in which Christians excelled (they engaged themselves as far along this route as dogma would permit).
>
> (IE 15/3)

The "method" that Bataille "followed with a keener discipline" was Angela's meditation on the Crucifixion.

In *Inner Experience*, Bataille extracts Angela's meditative pathway from its Christological focus and puts it into a generalized meditative method centered on the violent dissolution with, and of, an other. Bataille notes several times that despite his admiration for Angela's desire for death, she speaks as a slave enchained to an anthropomorphic projection of God.[23] However, despite this ambivalence Hollywood has persuasively argued that Bataille's reading of Angela's meditative practices played a key role in his understanding of the experience of the impossible. Notably, her Christocentric meditation, in Angela's view, transforms her from an observer of Christ's mutilation, into Christ's executioner, and finally into Christ himself. As Hollywood has shown, Bataille transforms Angela's participation in the Crucifixion into a general method of meditation for self-dissolution.

Hollywood points out that Bataille's description of meditative practice in *Inner Experience* relies on Angela's account in her twenty-sixth transformation:

> Without naming Angela here, Bataille relies on a distinction central to her account of the twenty-sixth transformation of the soul. After having emphasized the role of suffering in her experience and its relationship to Christ's incarnation and passion, Angela describes the movement from that object-centered and desirous loving relationship to the encounter with darkness in which she is made into nonlove and lies in the abyss.[24]

In this account, Angela's experience is transformed from loving reciprocity to blindness, from loving adoration characterized by the desire for mystical union to, as Bataille says, "a darkness in which there is no pretense of satisfaction or completion."[25] Bataille cites the following lines from Angela's book:

> When I see God, as in a ray of darkness, I do not have laughter on my lips—I have neither devotion, nor fervor, nor fervent love. My body or my soul do not tremble and my soul remains frozen instead of being carried by its ordinary movement. My soul sees a Nothingness and sees all things [*nihil videt et omnia videt*]; my body is asleep, I am speechless. And all of the favors, numerous and unspeakable, which God has extended to me, and all the words which he has spoken to me, . . . are, I perceive, so above this "good" encountered in such a great ray of darkness that I do not put my hope in them, that my hope does not rest in them.
>
> (IE 123/105)

Hollywood observes that both Franciscan and Beguine spiritualities from Angela's time surpassed remembrance of the Crucifixion as a sacrifice for humanity's sin and led to "identification with Christ himself."[26] Angela's identification with the dying Christ enables an "unmediated relationship" wherein the difference between the mystical subject and the meditative object—in this case the Crucifixion—is dissolved. This meditative practice is significant for Bataille, because it demonstrates how "The Christian easily dramatizes life" through an encounter with Christ, who transforms from "lover" to one leading the follower of Christ to torment, a "divine agony" (IE 65/51). The transition from union to darkness was one in which Angela went from meditating upon the Crucifixion to participating in it. Christ transforms from an other—perhaps an erotic other—to Nothingness. Angela loses consciousness of the subject/object divide in the experience of ecstatic torment—one about which Bataille cannot decide whether it is closer to death or the divine. As a result, the loving union she desired was transformed into a death-like dissolution wherein she was "speechless" and "asleep." Angela is neither in love with God nor hopeful that God will deliver her.

On Hollywood's reading, the importance of Angela's meditative practice for Bataille's *atheology* is that her identification with Christ reflects a desire to dissolve herself by way of an encounter with an other:

> She explains, however, that she sees the darkness in the eyes and face of Christ, suggesting a causal connection between her meditation and identification with the passion of Christ and her experience of the dissolution of self and other into ecstatic darkness. Similarly Bataille seeks to articulate the relationship between an ecstasy generated before an object and out of love for an other and that experience in the void.[27]

Bataille extracts the structure of Angela's meditative practice and puts it into a generalized, *atheological* form of meditation "before an object." According to Bataille, meditation upon an object such as the Crucifixion engenders the type of self-loss experienced by Angela because the object itself represents the dramatic self-loss of the meditating subject: "I will say this, be it obscure: the object in experience is at first the projection of a dramatic loss of self. It is the image of the subject. . . . In addition, the subject, the experience of which is in itself and from the beginning dramatic (is the loss of self), needs to objectify this dramatic character" (IE 137/117–118). Thus, as Hollywood observes, the object of meditation is a "dramatization of the self's dissolution."[28] The other provides a pathway for a dissolution akin to the self's own death. Just as Angela meditates upon the cross and consequently experiences something akin to death, Bataille can meditate upon certain images in order to experience a similar dissolution.

Hollywood takes Bataille's meditation upon the picture of a Chinese torture victim as the primary example of this practice:

> The young and seductive Chinese man of whom I have spoken, left to the work of the executioner—I loved him with a love in which the sadistic instinct played no part: he communicated his pain to me or perhaps the excessive nature of his pain, and it was precisely that which I was seeking, not so as to take pleasure in it, but in order to ruin in me that which is opposed to ruin.
>
> (IE 140/120)

In line with Hollywood's reading, Bataille himself describes his meditation upon the image of the torture victim as "recourse to a type of dramatization stripped to the bare essentials" (IE 139/105), which leads Hollywood to conclude that the cross has no special significance for Bataille as a meditational symbol, since what is important is not the content of the cross, but the image of suffering, "through which the subject experiences his or her own dissolution."[29] On her reading, Bataille sought other meditative objects, like the picture of the Chinese torture victim, in order to avoid the "theocentrism and Christocentrism" of Angela's experience.[30]

However, in light of the twofold significance of the death of God for Bataille's *atheology*, it is, on my reading, misleading to say that the image of the cross had no particular significance for Bataille's *atheology* or his related notion of sovereignty. We recall that Bataille believes that certain phenomena can induce the dissolution of the self—art, music, poetry—and all are simulations of death. One might conclude from this that the cross and Angela's meditation upon it do not play a unique role in Bataille's *atheology*. They are historical instances of the experience of the impossible engendered by certain phenomena. However, while I am indebted to Hollywood's analysis of Bataille's interpretation of Angela, I disagree that the content of the cross is no more important to his *atheology* than Mozart's Fifth Symphony or a dazzling sunset in the Loire valley. Bataille uses apophatic language to express the impossibility of articulating the divine discursively, commenting several times in the *Atheological Summa* that the experience of the impossible is one in which presence and absence, ecstasy and torment, death and the divine are indistinguishable. When these factors are considered in light of Bataille's reading of Angela, it is more plausible to conclude that the symbol of the cross does have particular *atheological* significance for the way it symbolizes the philosophical death of God as an anthropomorphic projection and the devotionally oriented death of God as a symbol of self-dissolution. The two are connected: God's death as conceptual idol reveals the human as a question with no response for whom the self-loss of sovereignty is the revelation of the unknowing constitutive of it.

In this context, the Crucifixion provides the topos for the collapse of human projection and the shattering of language, leading to an experience that resists linguistic expression, and one that is, thus, divine. Angela's meditation upon the cross transforms her from observer to executioner to coparticipant. In the process, her feelings of loving unity with Christ are transformed into an uncanny experience of mystical darkness. Bataille cites this passage: "Where I was, I was looking for love without finding it. I even lost that which I had up till that moment and I became nonlove" (G 251/14). By becoming Christ—the dying God—Angela's anthropomorphism shatters. Her hope for completion is dissolved when she herself is dissolved, so that she can, in the end, call out only to the "unknown Nothingness," just as Christ cried *lamma sabachtani*. Once the "God" who is a projection of the human desire for completion and salvation dies, a domain opens up wherein the divine can be understood as the transcendence of knowledge and anticipation rather than their fulfillment: "There is no longer a God in 'inaccessible death,' no longer a God in closed night; one no longer hears anything but *lamma sabachtani*." After Golgotha, the God who is the fulfillment of knowledge and desire collapses.

The significance of the Crucifixion for Bataille's *atheology* is important because it links his meditative practice with his deconstructive apophatic language, which stands in tension with Bataille's own interpretation of his engagement with the mystical traditions. According to Bataille, the mystical traditions provided him with a meditative practice wherein the meditative object effects the dissolution of the meditating subject. His meditation upon the image of the Chinese torture victim was in this sense a manifestation of a general meditative practice extracted from Angela's Christian spirituality. Yet this position ignores the fact that Bataille himself interprets the Crucifixion as both the death of God as metaphysical First Principle and the death of God as a human living through the possibility of its own impossibility.

As I have argued, for Bataille the human cannot be reduced to the anticipation of its future self by way of its worldly possibilities. Both Christianity's and phenomenology's conceptions of the human are unacceptable to him for this reason. One of the consequences of this line of thought is that God is nothing more than a projection of the human desire for a permanent and secure future: "What, at bottom, deprives man of the possibility of speaking of God, is that, in human thought, God necessarily conforms to man" (IE 120–121/102–103). By contrast to this approach, Bataille reenvisions the human as that being, acutely aware of itself and its mortality, who emerges as itself when it experiences its own dissolution. This reading is confirmed by Bataille's articulation of the logic of sacrifice: "Sacrifice itself and its participants are in some way identified with the victim. So, as the victim is being put to death, they lean over their own nothingness. At the same time they understand how their god is slipping into death."[31] In terms of identification, the Crucifixion provides a unique symbol because Christ is thought to be both God and human. The identification with Christ as the victim of sacrifice is thus an identification with the death of both God and the human. The slipping into death of the Christian God is the death of God as the human desire for completion and fulfillment and the birth of the human as the terrifying ecstasy of its own impossibility. Rather than being a prop for an anthropomorphic projection, the Crucifixion demonstrates how experience expands the understanding of God, rather than the reverse: "Experience thus opens a bit more every time the horizon of God (the wound); extends a bit more the limits of the heart, the limits of being; it destroys the depths of the heart, the depths of being, by unveiling them" (IE 122/103–104). And it is here, in the connection between experience and the divine, that the connection between Bataille's *atheological* reading of the cross and his mimesis of Angela's cruciform spirituality emerges. While it is true that Bataille wants to avoid Angela's Christocentrism, the Crucifixion provides him with a means for articulating how the death of God as anthropomorphic projection opens the space for the emergence of the divine as the experience of the impossible.

This is exemplified by Bataille's interpretation of St. Teresa's famous swoon. In an essay on mysticism and sensuality, Bataille opposes Catholic interpreters who understood Teresa's experience erotically by arguing that it should be read in terms of the impossible:

> The desire to go keeling helplessly over, that assails the innermost depths of every human being, is nevertheless different from the desire to die in that it is ambiguous. It may well be a desire to die, but it is at the same time a desire to live to the limits of the

> possible and the impossible with ever-increasing intensity. It is the desire to live while ceasing to live, or to die without ceasing to live, the desire of an extreme state that Saint Theresa has perhaps been the only [one] to depict strongly enough in words. "I die because I cannot die." But the death of not dying is precisely not death; it is the ultimate state of life.
>
> (E 235/240)

For Bataille, the mystical impulse is a thanatological impulse. Mystical experience is an experience akin to death:

> The object of contemplation becomes equal to *nothing* (Christians would say equal to God), and at the same time equal to the contemplating subject. There is no longer any difference between one thing and another in any respect; no distances can be located; the subject lost in the indistinct and illimitable presence of the universe and himself ceases to belong to the passing of time.
>
> (E 243–244/249)

In this sense, Angela provided Bataille a meditative model wherein the object of meditation leads to the dissolution of the meditating subject. Even if Bataille extracted Angela's method from its Christian framework, his articulation of the experience of the impossible was shaped by his reading of the Crucifixion and certain mystics' relationship to it. Just as Heidegger filled out his conceptions of temporality and worldhood through readings of Paul and Augustine, on my reading Bataille learned from John of the Cross, Angela of Foligno, and others how to understand the relationship between the limits of thought and limit experiences. Even if it does not rely on the symbol of the Crucifixion, in line with the apophatic analogy and Roberts's model of encounter, his engagement with Angela's Christocentric meditation and John's interpretation of the cross gave him the eyes to see—or not see—the logic of sovereignty as dispossession.

DEATH OR THE DIVINE? BATAILLE, DERRIDA, AND MARION

Contemporary French philosophy has focused significant attention on the theme of "the impossible" as it concerns the nature and limits of knowledge and experience. The dissatisfaction on the part of Lévinas and Bataille with Heidegger's limitation of Dasein to its possibilities was inherited and developed by a generation of thinkers who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s. On one side, poststructuralist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jean-Luc Nancy began to rethink the "mortal wound" to the modern subject. Among other things, the various manifestations of poststructuralism were reflections on the meaning of the death of God for the structure of subjectivity. This manner of reflection led them away from Sartres's ego to Bataille's *le moi* and Heidegger's Dasein. Derrida, Foucault, and their contemporaries read Sartre's existentialist humanism as an inversion of theism that did nothing to subvert the mode of subjectivity articulated in modern theology and philosophy. In this case, atheism did not provide a helpful resource for understanding the structure of the finite human subject: "Atheism changes nothing in this fundamental structure. Sartre's attempt is a remarkable example verifying Heidegger's proposition according to which 'all humanism remains metaphysical, metaphysics being the other name for onto-theology.' "[32] By contrast, Foucault found in Bataille's *le moi* a self ineluctably exposed to the limits of finitude, but one who discovers that such a finitude reveals an excessive desire—one that seeks to transgress the world that contains it: "The death of God does not restore us to a limited and positivistic world, but to a world exposed by the experience of its limits, made and unmade by that excess which transgresses it."[33] In Nancy's and Derrida's work, reflection upon the death of God, the structure of subjectivity, and the economies of desire, language, and representation led to significant reflection on temporality, transcendence, and faith in relation to the Christian theological traditions.[34]

During the same period a generation of Catholic philosophers—the flag bearers of the theological turn—that detected in the criticisms of metaphysics leveled by Nietzsche and Heidegger an opportunity to rearticulate the plausibility and coherency of belief in God emerged onto the French scene.[35] Always careful to demarcate phenomenology from theology, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, Jean-Louis Chrétien, and Jean-Yves Lacoste challenged the Husserlian and Heideggerian horizons of phenomenology in order to demonstrate the possibility of both extraordinary phenomena and corresponding experiences of such phenomena. One could summarize the early preoccupation of this group of thinkers through the title of one of Lacoste's later works: *La phénoménalité de Dieu*. Marion summarizes the decisive concern of this generation of Catholic phenomenologists in a particularly lucid passage from *Being Given*:

> The debate is summed up in a simple alternative: is it necessary to confine the possibility of the appearing of God to the uninterrogated and supposedly untouchable limits of one or the other figure of philosophy and phenomenology, or should we broaden phenomenological possibility to the measure of the possibility of manifestation demanded by the question of God?[36]

On Marion's reading, there should be no surprise that "one inquires after God's right to inscribe himself within phenomenality," but rather that "one should be stubborn . . . about denying him this right" and further that "one is no longer even surprised by this pigheaded refusal."[37] Thus, on one side, atheist philosophers have taken up the theme of the impossible in relation to Christian mysticism in order to better understand the subject after the death of God. On the other, a group of Catholic philosophers has drawn upon the Christian mystical traditions and phenomenology in order to rethink the plausibility and coherency of belief in God after the death of God. The encounter between these two groups emblematizes the complex elements and conversation partners that form the heart of continental philosophy of religion.

This all came to a crescendo in the debate between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion at Villanova University in 1997, where the two men laid out different conceptions of "the impossible" based on their respective readings of the limits of phenomenology, experience, and knowledge. The debate was significant for numerous reasons, one of which was the unveiling of the divergence between Derrida's atheist, poststructuralist thanatological reading and Marion's more theologically and phenomenologically oriented interpretation. During the debate, Marion and Derrida confronted shared themes from their respective texts from the 1980s and 1990s focused on the notion of the gift, which is taken to mean that which exceeds circulation within the economy of exchange. The gift, in this debate, can be thought of as the manifestation or phenomenality of the impossible. In his work *Donner la mort*, published in 1992 and translated as *The Gift of Death*, Derrida had already associated the gift with death in Heideggerian terms: "It is in being-towards-death that the self of the *Jemeinigkeit* is constituted, comes into its own, that is, comes to realize its unsubstitutability. The identity of the oneself is *given* by death, by the being-towards-death that the self of the *Jemeinigkeit* is constituted, comes into its own, that is, comes to realize its unsubstitutability."[38] For Derrida, following Heidegger, death is the impossible possibility that confers upon the self the condition of its irreplaceability. This means that the gift, figured in terms of death, is always desired but never experienced.

By contrast, during the debate in 1997 Marion put forward the idea that the gift requires a giver, an object given, and a receiver, but that it could be described without reference to two of the three, since the gift is governed by rules that "are completely different from those that are applied to the object or to the being."[39] Derrida's problem with Marion's understanding of the phenomenality of the gift is that it abolishes the "*als Struktur*" of phenomenology: "Now, if the event of the gift, for me, excludes the presence of the as such—of the giver, of the receiver, of the given thing, of the present thing, and of the intention—then what is left for the 'as such?' "[40] In Derrida's view, the gift cannot be described phenomenologically—cannot be known or experienced—because it exceeds the boundaries of a phenomenon:

> The virtual disagreement between us has to do with the fact that Jean-Luc Marion, after having left me on the curbstone, after having summarized me, says "he thinks the gift in the horizon of the economy." That, I would say, is wrong. So Marion would try to account phenomenologically for the gift (which, again, I distinguish

> from *Gegebenheit*). But I doubt that there is a possibility of a phenomenology of that gift. That is exactly my thesis.[41]

Derrida is not opposed to this definition of the gift; he is opposed to the belief in the possible phenomenality of the gift defined in this way. Thus, his interest is in what the *desire* for the impossible means for the conditions of possibility: "What I am interested in is the experience of the desire for the impossible. That is, the impossible as the condition of desire."[42] In Heideggerian terms, the gift, as the possible impossibility of the self, conditions all desire through its absence. The uncanny desire for the impossible is never satisfied, because if it were, the "oneself" who would receive such a gift, who would experience the impossible, would no longer exist, *or would be dissolved*. The possible phenomenality of the gift, in Derrida's mind, cancels the possibility of the receiver.

Marion disagrees with both Heidegger and Derrida on this point. In fact, if we can say in a general sense that Derrida remains close to Heidegger here, even if he is sharply critical of the German phenomenologist in other texts and on other issues, Marion's articulation of the gift as the experience of the impossible signifies the most influential post-Heideggerian development in phenomenology since Lévinas's "face," at least as it pertains to the relationship between phenomenology and religion. Through the notion of the saturated phenomenon, Marion has attempted to redraw the boundaries of phenomenology by proposing a phenomenology "without horizon."[43] By this he means phenomenology unhindered by the transcendental horizon of Husserl and, more importantly for our purposes, the horizon of Being set forth by Heidegger.[44] In Marion's view, Heidegger's phenomenology limits the phenomenality of beings to the horizon of Being. The horizon of Being is constituted by temporality and thus by the finitude of Dasein. Therefore, on Marion's reading, Heidegger's phenomenology limits the appearance of phenomena to Dasein's care for its Being.

Marion proposes that there are phenomena that give themselves in a way that surpasses the limits of any horizon. These "saturated phenomena" exceed the limitations of the human self's ability to intuit or comprehend them. Instead of being constituted by the human being, they constitute the subject through an overwhelming surplus of givenness. Thus, saturated phenomena are those that appear apart from any dependence or relation upon a human horizon, reconstituting the conditions of experience and knowledge in the process: "I must describe the characteristics of a phenomenon that, in contrast to the majority of phenomena, poor in intuition or defined by the ideal adequation of intuition to intention, would receive a surplus of intuition, therefore of givenness, over and above intention, the concept, and the intended."[45] When a saturated phenomenon gives itself to the subject, the subject is overwhelmed and bedazzled. Instead of constituting the phenomenon, the "I" is constituted by it, transformed from the constituting ego to the *adonnée*, or the gifted.

Through this experience unlike any other experience, the subject transfers from the nominative, active case to the passive, dative. Marion describes this "counter-experience" as "the possibility that surpasses the very conditions of possibility, the possibility of unconditioned possibility—in other words, the possibility of the impossible, the saturated phenomenon."[46] For Marion, the impossible is possible, and thus the phenomenon that constitutes the human self—whether taken as the mortal or mystical subject—can appear for it:

> The *interloqué* suffers a call so powerful and compelling that he must surrender (*s'y rendre*) to it, in the double sense of the French *s'y rendre*: being displaced and submitting to it. Thus he must renounce the autarchy of self-positing and self-actualizing. It is insofar as altered by the originary hearing that he acknowledges himself possibility identified. The pure and simple shock [*Anstoss*] of the summons identifies the I only by transforming it without delay into a *me* "*to whom*."[47]

On Marion's reading, the saturated phenomenon appears "as such" to the ego, transforming it into a summoned *me*. In this way, that which constitutes or founds the self is presented to the self, rather than constituting the subject through its absence, as in Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's Being-toward-death: "Receiving himself from the call that summons him, the gift is therefore open to an alterity, from which the Other can be lacking but who thus appears all the more. As surprise opens even onto the unknown or failing object, interlocution opens onto the indeterminate or anonymous Other."[48] Marion says something similar in the debate with Derrida: "Rather, there are many situations where phenomena appear as given, given, that is, without any cause or giver. When they appear to us as given, of course, we have to receive them, but this does not imply that we should claim God as the cause of what we receive."[49] In both *Being Given* and the transcript from the debate, Marion is clear that his phenomenology of givenness remains free of theological presuppositions, which he said would "ruin" his phenomenological project.[50] This means that within the limits of phenomenology—even a phenomenology without horizons has limits—the identity of the giver of the saturated phenomenon remains indeterminate. That is, the origin of the impossible remains unknown, or, in Carlson's term, indiscrete.[51]

This leads to the significance of Bataille's mystical thanatology for the history of the engagement between the mystical traditions and post-Heideggerian continental philosophy of religion. According to Carlson, the apophatic analogy consists of the distinct yet parallel orientation of Dasein's Being-toward-death and Dionysius's Being-toward-God. The final terms of both orientations elude knowledge and experience, despite constituting their conditions of possibility. In this way, an indiscretion arises between death and the divine, which constitutes the resonances between Heidegger's atheist philosophy and Dionysius's mystical theology.

If, as Carlson argues, Heidegger's mortal subject and Dionysius's mystical subject share an orientation toward an indeterminate final term that constitutes the possibility of knowledge and experience while remaining inaccessible to them, then Bataille's mysticism reflects the desire for the possibility of the impossible—the paradoxical experience of that which is beyond experience. This doesn't usurp Carlson's argument that death is never given "as such" to the mortal subject, because if it were, the subject would be *permanently* dissolved—there would be absolutely no subject left to experience such a dissolution. However, it does challenge the Heideggerian, Derridean, and Dionysian belief that language and experience circle around that which makes them possible without ever encountering them.

On Bataille's reading, while *le moi* cannot experience death as such, it is possible to have an experience of the "impossible," which is, in his mind, living to the point of death. The impossible effects a dissolution of the subject akin to the dissolution of Heideggerian death or Dionysian *unio mystica*. While Bataille's articulation may not change the core tenet of the apophatic analogy, which holds that both the mystical and mortal subjects endlessly desire that which always eludes them, its significance lies in the assertion that the human can have an experience where the anticipation of the future is temporarily annulled—where the concern for Being is dissolved.

Furthermore, even if Bataille was not a phenomenologist in the strict sense of the word, his articulation of the impossible parallels Marion's in interesting ways. First, both Marion and Bataille believe that it is possible for phenomena, both religious and otherwise, to overwhelm the human to the point of founding it. Bataille speaks of being born only through an experience akin to death. Marion articulates the structure of subjectivity in terms of the ego's response to an anonymous call that transforms it from the nominative I to the dative me. Second, for both thinkers these phenomena exceed the capacity of the human to constitute them. In terms of the horizons of the mortal human subject, they are impossible phenomena because they surpass the ability of the subject to apprehend them. If Marion sought to develop a phenomenology without horizon, Bataille sought to access the "obscure region closed to phenomenology" (G 542/213). Finally, and most importantly, both men believe that the experience of such phenomena demands reconsideration of the possibility of the phenomenality of the divine. Despite his vehement desire to keep philosophy and theology always separate, Marion is clear that his phenomenology opens the pathway for considering the plausibility of revelation—that which exceeds the horizons of knowledge and experience. For Bataille, recognizing the limits of philosophy and theology reveals the indeterminacy and unknowability of the human, without taking the unnecessary next step of connecting saturation to otherworldly transcendence. His secular *atheology* attests to something like Marion's notion of saturation without conjoining itself to revelation from elsewhere.

Certain commentators have noticed for some time now the parallels in Marion's theology and phenomenology, which have caused some to question whether or not Marion's theology informs his phenomenology. Others claim that this parallel provides a legitimate means for articulating the plausibility of belief in God after the proclamation of his death—phenomenology is, on this reading, a new natural theology.[52] However, in the introduction to the English version of *Distance and the Idol*, Carlson points out that it is just as possible that Marion's phenomenology informs his theology as it is that his theology informs his phenomenology:

> It could be well the case that one's conception of the possible is substantially and inevitably shaped by what one already takes to be actual—just as one's understanding of the actual would always already be framed by what one imagines to be possible. As Derrida argues of the founding and the founded in Heidegger, so here, perhaps, one could never be sure whether the possible is indebted to the actual or the actual to the possible; one would remain undecided as to which constitutes an example of which.[53]

Carlson's point is that there is a chance that Marion's phenomenology and theology symbiotically inform each other. While he recognizes that both Marion's phenomenology and theology seem to stand on their own, these parallels raise the question of the relationship between them.

I do not intend to enter the debate about the possible contamination of Marion's phenomenology by theological presuppositions. Instead, in closing, I want to suggest that Bataille recognizes the indiscretion between Being-toward-death and Being-toward-God more explicitly than either Marion or Derrida. In one sense, Bataille's formulation of the impossible operates thanatologically in a manner similar to Derrida and Heidegger. Although Bataille diverges from both of them through his belief that it is possible for the human to experience the impossibility of death, he remains within the Heideggerian lineage by identifying death with the impossible. In this sense, Bataille and Derrida share an understanding of the impossible as ineluctably related to the death of the self, as well as the belief that the gift—along with the discourse of the subject's desire for it—remains beyond the scope of phenomenology. However, Bataille's view differs significantly from Derrida's in the sense that Bataille believes that it is possible for the subject to experience the impossible. In this way, Bataille is closer to Marion than to Derrida.

In a manner more similar to Marion's postmetaphysical theology than Derrida's poststructuralism, Bataille draws upon the thanatological movements of the mystical subject in order to explicate the dissolution of the self through the experience of the impossible. Bataille's engagement with mysticism is in some way an anticipation of the "indiscretion" between "such a death" and "such a God" for the way he draws upon the mystics' desire to die while still living in order to formulate transcendence as sovereignty. Despite what one might gather would be his misgivings about being compared to Bataille, Marion's saturated phenomenon and counterexperience recall Bataille's formulation of the dissolution of the subject in the face of its own impossibility. In essence, both thinkers argue that the experience of the impossible becoming actual renders the subject dispossessed, overcome, and constituted by that which lies beyond its horizon of Being.

Bataille often associates such an experience with death, but he also at times associates it with the divine. Bataille recognizes that it is impossible to determine whether or not this experience is one of absence or presence. While his *atheology* seeks to bring thought before the absence of God, Bataille sees in the singular experience of God's absence an overwhelming plenitude, a nonabsent absence, as his friend Blanchot would say.[54] In some sense, the dissolution of thought he associates with the impossible—an experience that has considerable parallels with Marion's counterexperience—is at times articulated as an experience akin to death, at times articulated as an experience of the divine, and at times articulated as both. In this way, Bataille's articulation of the experience of the impossible embodies the indiscretion at the heart of the apophatic analogy, as well as the point of divergence between Marion and Derrida. If, as Carlson suggests, one's view of the actual may inform one's view of the possible and vice versa, or if we often see what we already believe is there, Bataille, contrary to Marion, remains open to the fact that what he sees—or does not see—in the experience of the impossible is undecidably death, the divine, neither, or both.

* * *

As I have argued throughout in the foregoing chapters, at least since the 1990s the theological has overshadowed the secular in continental philosophy of religion. Whereas chapters 1 and 2 sought to demonstrate the early significance of Heidegger's encounter with religion for breaking the spell of Weberian disenchantment, my analyses of Bataille's work in chapters 3 and 4 aim to demonstrate how one of Heidegger's earliest atheist French readers developed a criticism of him that parallels those of Lévinas and Marion, the two most influential figures in the theological turn and the history of continental philosophy of religion, because, like Heidegger, Bataille was an atheist who envisaged resonances between the irreducibility of the conditions of mortal temporality and certain forms of religiosity. Unlike Heidegger, he thought it was possible to experience something akin to death, thus anticipating in important ways Marion's saturated phenomenon.

Overall, Bataille's mystical thanatology is an important chapter in the story of continental philosophy of religion not only because Bataille anticipates key themes in the field, but also due to the fact that his work in these areas represents another example of a secular thinker trying to understand the meaning of secular life after the death of God. Unlike Weber, and similarly to Heidegger, Bataille concludes that the irreducibility of mortal temporality to calculation and objectivity comprises its inherent meaningfulness, even if the conditions of mortal temporality also include the ineluctable sorrow of death. Regardless of whether or not one agrees with either Bataille's analyses of the impossible or his habits of living, and even if Bataille was consistently critical of Heidegger, his thought represents a secularity sans secularism formed by thinking with religion, rather than against it—one that extends, rather than subverts, Heidegger's approach. In sum, if for Heidegger the order of the world constitutes an irreducible significance to life, for Bataille it is the disorder, or ecstasy, of experiencing life to the point of death that reveals its irreducibility to rational or mechanical reduction.

5

THE SACRALITY OF THE SECULAR

On the History and End of Philosophy of Religion

THE CENTRAL claim of this work is that philosophy's engagement with religious phenomena has enabled philosophers of religion to articulate nonsecularist secularities through a model of encounter with religious phenomena. In the first four chapters I have examined how analyses of the themes of transcendence, worldhood, and the limits of human experience, coupled with deep engagements with religious phenomena, enabled Heidegger and Bataille to formulate such secularities prior to the denouement of the secularization thesis and philosophy's supposed "turn" to religion in the 1980s and 1990s. A comprehensive account of this engagement would have to include analysis of other figures, such as Maurice Blanchot, Jean-Luc Nancy, Julia Kristeva, and Slavoj Žižek, who have engaged religion in similar or at least comparable ways.[1]

In lieu of such an account, in this final chapter I recount the history of what is normally taken to be philosophy's "turn to religion" in the Anglophone world by tracing the transposition of this tradition of philosophy of religion across the Atlantic to North America through the work of Mark C. Taylor, with reference to John D. Caputo and Kevin Hart. Along with Death of God theologians such as Thomas Altizer and William Hamilton, Taylor was among the first theologians and scholars of religion to notice the potential of continental philosophy for the study of religion. Like almost all of the North American scholars who figure prominently in this story, Taylor approached continental philosophy of religion from the opposite direction from his European counterparts. Whereas Heidegger, Bataille, Blanchot, Nancy, Derrida, and others approached religion as a counterintuitive but helpful philosophical resource for thinking through ethics, politics, and the sacred after the death of God, Taylor and like-minded colleagues have found in the secular, atheist traditions of Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian philosophy a surprising resource for investigating religious phenomena from a new direction. Rather than turning to religion as secular philosophers, they turned to philosophy as scholars of religion and Christian theologians.

However, as I have referenced throughout the first four chapters, and as I explore in depth later, the story of continental philosophy of religion in North America has been dominated by theological interpretations and appropriations of continental philosophy, which has convinced many that the field is a form of cryptotheology that has little to offer the academic study of religion. This reading ignores Taylor's work, along with Thomas Carlson's, Jeffrey Kosky's, Mary-Jane Rubenstein's, and Tyler Roberts's, among others. The central tenet of Taylor's interpretation of culture is that religion is present in vibrant ways where it seems most absent. As I explore later, one can see the direct correlation between Taylor's explorations into the religiosity of secular culture and the unexpected engagement with religion in the secular, atheist traditions of Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian continental philosophy. When examined closely, Taylor's work represents an extension of Heidegger's and Bataille's engagements with religion in the way Taylor engages both continental philosophy and religious phenomena as the basis for articulating a more complex, expansive, and in some limited sense enchanted vision of the secular.

I begin by tracing the history of continental philosophy of religion through three of its principal progenitors, Mark C. Taylor, Kevin Hart, and John Caputo, in order to disentangle Anglophone continental philosophy of religion from philosophical theology. While Hart and Caputo have drawn upon the continental tradition's resources for nonmetaphysical and radical theologies, Taylor employs them as a scholar of religion interested in illuminating "religious" dimensions of contemporary culture. In the second part of the chapter, I argue that Taylor's work in complexity theory and aesthetics represents the extension of the encounter between philosophy and religious phenomena staged by Heidegger and Bataille. This sets up the conclusion, where I maintain that the work of three contemporary scholars of religion exemplifies philosophy of religion's potential for critical reflection on the category of the secular and articulations of nonsecularist secularities.

THE ORIGINARY (DIS)JUNCTION

It has been thirty years since the publication of *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (1984). While a few biblical scholars and theologians had already begun to engage the work of Jacques Derrida when it appeared, as the first monograph on religion and deconstruction *Erring* was a landmark for the relationship between religion and postmodernism in the Anglophone world.[2] Even to those who did not agree with Taylor's reading of Derrida, *Erring* signaled that post-Heideggerian continental philosophy—particularly from France—might be a helpful, if unlikely, resource for understanding the structure and place of religion in the contemporary world. *Erring* marked a reversal of the general attitude toward post-Heideggerian continental thought and religion and theology.[3] It is often now forgotten that until the early 1980s, commentators from all sides—atheist critics, scholars of religion, and theologians—believed that Derrida's work in particular and post-Heideggerian philosophy in general were not only atheistic but actively hostile toward religion.[4] Thus, one of the lasting merits of *Erring*, along with Hart's *Trespass of the Sign* (1988), was to demonstrate that post-Heideggerian philosophy could be a helpful tool for religious or theological reflection in the contemporary context. That idea has transformed from a radical hypothesis—one startling to both fans and critics of religion—into a bustling industry. The interest in continental thought has expanded from Derrida to every domain of continental philosophy, so much so that it is sometimes forgotten that Derrida's work was the main catalyst for the development of the relationship between religion and postmodernism.

Soon after the publication of *Erring*, Taylor's role as the focal interpreter of Derrida shifted to Kevin Hart and John Caputo, who, in very different ways, sought to draw upon Derrida in order to reformulate Christian thought in the postmodern context. It is at this early juncture that we find the divergence between continental philosophy of religion and continental philosophical theology. While Taylor, Hart, and Caputo all drew upon Derrida as their principal philosophical resource, Caputo and Hart engaged Derrida for theological purposes, where Taylor did so in order to approach religious phenomena from a new perspective. I focus on these three figures not only because they were among the first to engage Derrida as a resource for religious reflection, but above all because they collectively represent the origins and development of the field(s). By analyzing them together I am able to draw out the ambiguity, productive at times and a hindrance at others, that has plagued the field(s) since their inception and thus to draw out the differences between continental philosophical theology and continental philosophy of religion.

This distinction necessitates working definitions of the terms. *Continental philosophical theology* draws upon the continental philosophical tradition in order to defend, improve, or advance Christian (or any other) theology.[5] While this does not prevent philosophical theologians from providing interpretations of continental texts and figures, it means that philosophical theology's ultimate purpose—perhaps among a number of purposes—is to somehow relate the Christian tradition to continental philosophy. Under this definition, both Hart and Caputo are philosophical theologians. Alternatively, *continental philosophy of religion* investigates the surprising resonances between the secular, atheist traditions of continental philosophy and various religious visions of the human, world, and cosmos.[6] While this does not prevent philosophers of religion from drawing upon constructive theological concepts from any number of religious traditions, it means that philosophy of religion's ultimate purpose—again, perhaps among many purposes—is to contribute to the academic study of religion, which is itself constituted by a heterogeneous set of practices, methodologies, and concepts.[7] While continental philosophy of religion may contribute to religious studies in varied ways, I maintain that its principal contribution has been its ongoing reflection on secularity and corresponding criticism of the doctrine of secularism.

KEVIN HART: DECONSTRUCTION AND APOPHATIC THEOLOGY

Kevin Hart was hard at work on *Trespass of the Sign* (1989) when Taylor's *Erring* appeared in 1984.[8] During his student years, Hart found an intuitive resonance with Karl Barth, who seemed to offer not only a robust theology of revelation but also the makings of a nonmetaphysical theology that would stand up to Heidegger's critique of metaphysics. In time, Hart became dissatisfied with Barth's lack of engagement with the secular world, but he remained convinced that there is an internal theological demand to examine and counter ontotheological impulses within theology itself. The void left by Barth was soon filled by the mystical traditions, particularly the Pseudo-Dionysius, on whom Hart focused his analysis. Thus, in a short span of time Hart came to a realization similar to those explored in the previous chapter: the mystical traditions seem to provide a pathway to a nonmetaphysical theology that not only stands up to Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, but also bears parallels to the major themes of post-Heideggerian continental philosophy: transcendence, the limits of knowledge, and the structure of human experience.

In *Trespass of the Sign*, Hart's desire to formulate a nonmetaphysical theology through engagement with continental philosophy explains his initial and sustained interest in Derrida. On Hart's reading, Derrida provides a way to "trace and circumscribe metaphysics within theology. So, deconstruction is not an attack against theology but an answer to the theological demand for a 'non-metaphysical theology.'"[9] Hart's reading of Derrida is theologically motivated. His purpose is not to confirm Derrida's thought in itself, but to forge a pathway to a nonmetaphysical theology through insights gleaned from deconstruction. Hart is not interested in Derrida because he provides a radical reformulation of the nature of religion or theology. Derrida's work is a tool that can help theology purify and protect itself from the ontotheological impulses that have plagued it since the tradition's inception. Thus, for Hart deconstruction is not an attack upon religious belief, but, as a "critique of theism," it is an attack aimed at "the use to which 'God' is put," but not one that makes any claim to the "reality of God."[10] In other words, even if at first glance religious belief may seem to be an obvious target for deconstruction, Hart argues, deconstruction has its eyes solely on the metaphysical instances that contaminate such belief. Deconstruction is not concerned with whether or not God exists, but with uncovering and attenuating the metaphysical presuppositions of any text, even sacred ones.

In *Trespass of the Sign*, Hart accomplishes his goal in a discussion of the difference between *theion* and *theos*, which he traces to Aristotle, who believed that metaphysics, as first philosophy, is the study of "being qua being."[11] Heidegger provided insight into Aristotle's formula by pointing out that metaphysics can be either a questioning of Being as such or a study of being as a whole. Aristotle calls the latter "theology" because, according to Hart, "the quest is for the ground of beings as a whole, and as this highest ground is known in Greek as the *theion*, this enterprise is to be called 'theology.'"[12] Therefore, it could be more accurately called *theiology*, since it is the study of being as a whole through the highest ground taken as *theion*. In this sense, Heidegger's and Derrida's criticisms of metaphysics are not, in Hart's mind, directed at the Christian tradition as such, but at *theiology*, wherever and however it may manifest itself. The criticism of metaphysics or ontotheology attacks a certain type of metaphysics that interprets Being through a highest being (*theion*). In "The God Effect," Hart argues that although Christian theology may often degenerate into this type of metaphysics, it is not properly theological: "Thus when Heidegger and Derrida talk of metaphysics as theology, or about the onto-theological constitution of metaphysics, they are making claims about philosophy's internal logic and historical destiny, not about its relations—historical or conceptual, overt or covert—with religion."[13] On Hart's reading, deconstruction is a helpful theological resource for the way it helps to uncover the *theiological* within the *theological*, and thus helps to rid theology of improper *theiological*—or what would be metaphysical—elements.

One can see how Hart's early reading of Derrida led him along a path that would include insightful studies of Lévinas, Blanchot, and Marion.[14] Of the three figures discussed here, Hart is the only one whose work relates intimately to the "theological turn in French phenomenology," as it was derisively labeled by Dominique Janicaud and propagated by Marion, Henry, Lacoste, and others.[15] More importantly, of the three Hart is the only one to draw upon deconstruction and continental thought who associates his work with orthodox Christianity. Rather than a theorist of religion or a philosopher of religion, Hart is a philosophical theologian who engages post-Heideggerian philosophy in order to defend, improve, and advance Christian theology.

In ways distinct from Caputo, in three of the essays in *Kingdoms of God* (2014), the first iteration of his systematic theology, Hart criticizes Derrida's late work on religion and ethics. In "Kingdoms of God," amid an analysis of Kant's and Derrida's philosophies of religion, Hart asserts that "Derrida abstracts the kingdom from particular messianisms; and like Kant, he affirms a universal structure, which he calls the messianic. Unlike Kant, Derrida does not enforce a sharp distinction between faith and reason: for him, reason works in tandem with a non-religious form of faith: *croyance rather than foi*."[16] Like Caputo, Derrida divests Christianity particularly, and religious traditions generally, of their particularities. In the case of Christianity, this means removing the historical messianism of Christ in order to outline an approach to religion, which is "a matter of ethics, not religion—or at least not religion understood by way of positive revelation."[17] Hart extends this criticism in "Four or Five Words in Derrida," where he notes that since according to Derrida the Other is every other, *tout autre est tout autre*, "ethics is formally unable to be distinguished from religion, and both are set in the register of justice, not the good."[18] In Derrida's thought, God is unrecognized as the Other, so that every other may retain the status as Other. This is unacceptable for Hart, since it means the dominance of the structural over the historical. General messianicity replaces the historical messianism of Christ, and therefore "Revelation would give way to ethics . . . which is to say it would yield to the undecidable relation between ethics and religion, what we might call *'léthique la religion.'* "[19] By leaving the structural for the thematic, or by comingling philosophy and theology, in Hart's view Derrida essentially repeats the theological mistake of the Social Gospel movement of the early the twentieth century, reducing the Kingdom of God from an "irreducibly strange" phenomenon to a universal kingdom of ethics.[20]

Since Hart's theological interest in deconstruction is structural, rather than thematic, it's not surprising that he would scrutinize Derrida and other philosophers for approaching revelation philosophically through a theory of religion, which, among other things, threatens the particularity of revelation by transforming it into a "religion without religion." As he outlines in "Phenomenology of the Christ," "Christian theology properly begins by considering the confession that Jesus is the Christ," and "Christianity's starting point is the relationship between Jesus and his Father, and this claim is not merely a bow to the authority of historical criticism but is rooted in regarding Jesus as the datum of revelation who is also . . . the genitive of revelation."[21] Overall, for Hart phenomenological theology, like all theology, takes as its starting point the revelation of God through Jesus, the datum of revelation.

Overall, Hart's work is a case in point of the distinct purposes of philosophical theology and philosophy of religion. After the "death of the author" articulated by Derrida and other poststructuralists, there is of course no reason that one could not formulate a reading of Hart's work that argued for his contributions to the academic study of religion, rather than Christian theology. However, Hart does explicitly identify the theological purposes for reading Derrida and other continental thinkers. His goal is to evaluate his own Christian faith for the benefit of the wider Christian community. This does not mean his work has not contributed greatly to the reception and interpretation of continental philosophy in the Anglophone world. Hart is a skilled and knowledgeable reader of the Western philosophical tradition who has helped transpose the work of numerous continental thinkers across the Atlantic. Above and beyond this, however, his work emblematizes how continental philosophy has proved to be a helpful resource for Christian philosophers interested in the themes of revelation, religious experience, and the nature of language.[22]

JOHN D. CAPUTO: SAINT JACQUES'S RELIGION WITHOUT RELIGION

If one asked about John Caputo during the early 1980s, one would have learned that he was a Catholic philosopher who had done creative work bringing Heidegger into conversation with mystical theology. Caputo underwent a conversion in the mid-1980s when writing *Radical Hermeneutics* (1988), which was supposed to be a Gadamerian argument against Derrida but ended up signaling his conversion to Derrida and deconstruction. In hindsight, Caputo's conversion to Derrida was a double-edged sword for the blossoming field of continental philosophy of religion. On one hand, he approached the theme of "Derrida and religion" with a convert's zeal, quickly finding ways to explore the limits of Derrida's academic and personal interests in religion. In addition, Caputo has become the representative figure for the subdiscipline of "Derrida and religion" by cohosting several conferences at Villanova University related in some significant way to Derrida's work, including the seminal roundtable discussion between Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion in 1997.[23] Most importantly, his *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* (1997) broke new ground in the field for the way it claimed not only that Derrida's work was useful for theological reflection, but that in fact deconstruction itself is structured like a religion. If Hart views Derrida's work as a theological tool, Caputo sees it as the passageway to a new kind of theology—a "religion without religion" or a "weak theology of the event."

This claim marked a new phase in continental philosophy of religion. More than just a resource for religious reflection, Caputo claimed that Derrida in fact "has religion," even if he "rightly passes for an atheist." One might make a comparison to what the elections of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush meant for the Religious Right. Whereas the former signaled the election of a friendly figure and helpful ally in the White House, the latter marked the installation of an unexpectedly zealous Evangelical president. In terms of the relationship between religion and postmodernism, Caputo's work seemed to suggest that, more than just a friendly ally, Derrida, the leftist, atheist French theorist who had caused so much division and controversy in universities and seminaries during the 1960s and 1970s, should be understood as the progenitor of a postmodern religion, albeit one suspicious of religious traditions. Above all, the appearance of *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* in 1997 meant that fifteen years after the publication of *Deconstruction and Theology* by a group of Death of God theologians, "God" had been resurrected through one of the figures thought to have put him in his grave.[24] This idea helped to attract a younger generation of thinkers to the idea that continental thought is the pathway to, rather than an enemy of, a new form of religion in the new millennium.

However, it also emblematizes the conflation of continental philosophy of religion and continental philosophical theology. In a response to Martin Hägglund in 2011 titled "The Return of Anti-Religion: From Radical Atheism to Radical Theology," Caputo describes his work as simultaneously inside and outside of religion.[25] By Caputo's own admission, he wants to deconstruct Christian theology, not defend, improve, or advance it. Thus, one might think that he was a philosopher of religion in the strict definition of the term, one who draws upon philosophy to surpass theological approaches to religion. Yet, when it comes to evaluating the structure and content of religion, it is clear that Caputo has not abandoned theological frameworks. His translation of Christianity into a "religion without religion" is really a translation of religion into a kind of universal Christian hope for democracy, peace, and justice, what Hart, speaking in reference to Derrida's rendering of religion, labels an "ethical kingdom of liberal theology." Thus, Caputo's work acts as a stopgap when it comes to the tasks of both philosophy of religion and philosophical theology, since it serves mainly a polemic, rather than irenic, function for the Christian tradition, and offers little constructive reflection on the nature and function of religion for religious studies. However, Caputo's enormous influence on the field has convinced many readers that his work represents the methodologies and purposes of philosophy of religion as a whole.[26] Several scholars have even attributed passages from Caputo to Derrida.

A helpful way to interpret Caputo's reading of Derrida is to ask how Caputo believes deconstruction is religious both in its structure and in its content. Caputo argues that deconstruction is structured like a religion by way of an analysis that emphasizes its hope for the future rather than its understanding of the past. In Derrida's early essays on writing and *différance*, he aimed to show that writing, including speech, is constituted by a nonrepresentable origin that can be traced within human thought but never represented, conceptualized, or known. The central claim of Caputo's religious reading of Derrida is that Derrida's work is less about the nonrepresentable origin and more about hope for the future, as he explains in *Prayers and Tears*:

> What we will not have understood is that deconstruction stirs with a passion for the impossible, *passion du lieu*, a passion for an impossible place, a passion to go precisely where you cannot go. Deconstruction is called forth in response to the unrepresentable, is large with expectation, astir with excess, provoked by the promise, impregnated by the impossible, hoping in a certain messianic promise of the impossible.[27]

For Caputo, even if Derrida's account of the structure of language excludes a transcendental signified that founds the meaning and significance of human thought, it does not preclude hope for the appearance of what is unrepresentable to thought—the impossible in-coming *to thought* of that which cannot be thought. However, such hope eschews belief in the determinate doctrines that specify who and what this "messiah" might be. It hopes in the messianic, but not for the messiah: "Deconstruction regularly, rhythmically repeats this religiousness, *sans* the concrete historical religions; it repeats nondogmatically the religious structure of experience, the category of the religious. It repeats the passion for the messianic promise and messianic expectation, *sans* the concrete blood of the other."[28] Yet, if deconstruction is structured like a religion, how can it avoid being a religion—after all, doesn't hope in a promise imply hope in a specific God, power, or other who might fulfill such a promise?

Caputo argues that Derrida forces us to leave theology behind in favor of religiosity without the rituals, doctrines, and histories of determinate religion.[29] Caputo doesn't want to save the name of God from itself, but wants to save the name of God by translating it into the indeterminate, unknowable, and unforeseeable *tout autre*, which strictly speaking does not exist, but which one hopes comes nonetheless: "Dreaming and desiring, praying and weeping, on the other hand are a passion for the beyond, *au-delà*, the *tout autre*, the impossible, the unimaginable, un-foreseeable, un-believable ab-solute surprise, which is absolved from the same."[30] In this sense, "deconstruction works continually to save the name of God, which is the name, or one of the names, of the *tout autre*."[31] Therefore, deconstruction, as a religion without a religion, does not hope in a God who exists. Rather, as Caputo articulates in "Apostles of the Impossible," it expects and promises the in-coming of that which cannot be re-presented because it was never present to thought in the first place: "For Derrida, we must not lose our faith in the impossible, which is also our hope, our love, our faith in the gift. The gift, *the* impossible, *viens, oui, oui*."[32] For Caputo, emptying religion of its determinate messianisms, historical particularities, and specific conceptions of the divine opens it up to the universal hope for the in-coming of the *tout autre* and thereby saves it.

However, Caputo seems to surpass the claim that deconstruction is structured like a religion when he suggests the types of things for which it hopes. In other words, Caputo seems to oscillate between the idea that deconstruction prays for the event of the *tout autre*, which is unknowable and unforeseeable and explaining what that event means for the present and the future: "The *impossible*, which we love and desire, is for Derrida a justice, indeed a democracy, to come."[33] In this passage he associates the *tout autre* with a democracy of the future, one that can be dreamed of but not manifest. In *Prayers and Tears*, he associates it with peace and justice: "The concrete messianisms have always meant war, while the meaning of the messianic is, or should be, *shalom, pax*."[34] Finally, as a Christian, or a Christian atheist, Caputo believes that translating the concrete messianisms into a universal messianicity provides a pathway to "another Christianity,"[35] wherein the Kingdom of God "means the kingdom where God is the element, the horizon, the medium, the setting, the place, the context, the open or clearing in which the relationship with the *tout autre*, and the relationship with the world, is played out, where the relation with the other is relieved of its obsessive accusatory tone."[36] As far as he has come, Caputo cannot give up the idea that Christianity's hope for the Kingdom of God remains universal to human longing—in fact, in his view it is built into the structure of human experience. Thus, even though in one instance he seems to have left religion for a religion without religion that repudiates the foundations of monotheistic belief, in the next he espouses a hope that resembles both in structure and in content the hope for a Kingdom of God characterized by equality, justice, and hospitality—one to which the likes of Walter Rauschenbusch or Gustavo Gutierrez would not object. With this in mind, it is no coincidence that he invokes the spirit of Schleiermacher by interpreting his religious reading of Derrida as an announcement to the "cultured despisers of religion" that Derrida, the most cultured and learned among them, was in fact a religious man.

On my reading, Caputo's work emblematizes the ambiguity between philosophy of religion and philosophical theology within continental philosophy of religion. Unlike Hart, he doesn't claim to use Derridean deconstruction as a theological tool. Rather, Derrida provides him the pathway to deconstruct theology in order to formulate a new form of religiosity. From a theological point of view, Caputo's "religious" reading of Derrida voids religious traditions of the specific doctrines, rituals, and histories that shape their praxis. J. Aaron Simmons and Stephen Minister have argued in their work *Reexamining Deconstruction and Determinate Religion: Toward a Religion with Religion*, published in 2012, that the price of a Derridean religion has been too high.[37] It is one thing to answer the cultured despisers of religion, but another to do so by compromising the very heart of the tradition itself. By depriving Christianity, and religion in general, of its doctrinal, historical, and ritual particularity Caputo's work, unlike Hart's, offers little more for philosophical theology than a deconstruction of Christianity and a translation of religion into a religiosity of hope. In this sense, Caputo is a philosophical theologian who uses Derrida to translate the determinate forms of monotheistic religions into a universal hope for the impossible. Yet Caputo's translation of Christianity into a religion without religion sets up philosophy of religion as a field constituted by the Christian hope for the Kingdom of God. If we take Caputo as the exemplar of continental philosophy of religion, it is also right to say that philosophy of religion is more at home in a divinity school than a department of religious studies.

MARK C. TAYLOR: A/THEOLOGY AND THE SACRALITY OF MORTAL LIFE

Taylor began his career studying Hegel and Kierkegaard, figures who have continued to influence his work in the new millennium. However, in the late 1970s he, along with a group of Death of God theologians, began to see a potential resource for the study of religion in the work of Jacques Derrida, which led to his contribution in the early edited volume *Deconstruction and Theology*. By the time he published *Erring* nearly two years later, Taylor had transitioned from radical theology to approaching religion atheologically. Taylor's engagement with Derrida in *Erring* is therefore distinct from Hart's and Caputo's because for him deconstruction, what he labels "the hermeneutic of the death of God,"[38] is the lever through "which the entire inherited order can be creatively disorganized."[39] Taylor engages Derrida in order to formulate the sacrality of life *after* the death of God. In contrast to Caputo, Taylor doesn't want to somehow resurrect God from the dead by denying his existence. Like Hart, he is wary of metaphysics, or ontotheology, but his goal is not to protect theology from *theiology*. Instead, Taylor proposes that Derridean deconstruction provides a means for approaching religion nonmetaphysically, but also nontheistically. His goal, in other words, is to approach religious phenomena without the lens of a metaphysical foundation or totalizing center, but also apart from any notion of revelation: "The task of thinking at the end of theology is to think and rethink the tear of time. In this tear and as this tear we might be able to think the sacred anew."[40] While *Erring* attempts to explain the helpfulness of Derrida's work to a skeptical audience, Taylor's conception of temporality as the key for reconceiving the sacrality of life after the death of God echoes loudly Heidegger's early approaches to worldhood.

We recall that in contradistinction to Weberian disenchantment, Heidegger associated the irreducibility of the temporal world, or the "*es weltet*," with the *mysterium tremendum*. Taylor's early reading of Derrida proceeds along similar lines. In *Erring*, Taylor argues that deconstruction demonstrates the untenability of belief in any "transcendental signified," including God, who has been the traditional name for the foundation that anchors language and provides the "locus of truth that is supposed to stabilize all meaningful words."[41] Therefore, the death of God signifies the untenability of theorizing religion by reference to a transcendental signified. However, the deity's throne cannot be simply replaced by a deified human if scholars of religion are to approach religious phenomena nontheologically. Taylor follows Derrida and Heidegger by arguing that humanist atheism inverts the logic of theism, but fails to subvert it, which means that even if the atheist eschews belief in God, she adheres to the type of theologic endemic to theism through adherence to the model of the human as transcendental ego: "This reversal of divinity and humanity is the distinctive mark of humanistic atheism. Instead of simply denying the reality of God, the humanistic atheist transfers the attributes of the divine subject to the human self."[42] Hence, both theism and humanist atheism are theological because they rely upon a transcendental signified to anchor language, found truth, and provide an origin and end to mortal life, as Thomas Carlson explains along Taylorian lines in his work *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude and Creation of the Human*, published in 2008:

> Many in the field of religious studies often think themselves to depart from theology when, in fact, their assumption that world is, in the first place, to be thought as "worldview" or as "picture"—which means as a representation formed, measured, and ostensibly comprehended by the human subject—may well be the assumption of a distinctively modern, Western metaphysics of the human subject that itself extends a Christian theology, or ontotheology, of the Creator God.[43]

For Taylor and Carlson, if scholars of religion want to approach religious phenomena posttheologically, they must escape the binaries between religion/secularism and insider/outsider. As I argued in the introduction, the doctrine of secularism relies upon a mythological vision of the human as an autonomous rational ego that has the ability to master itself and the world through calculative thinking. Such a vision reverses belief in an omnipotent God who reigns over creation, yet, as Taylor points out in his early work, such an approach extends, rather than subverts, the logic of the theism it opposes.

Thus, following Heidegger, Blanchot, and Derrida, Taylor argues that the pathway to this approach opens through a reconception of the conditions of mortal temporality. For Taylor, since "there is no transcendental signified to anchor the activity of signification," "the idea of origin or absolute beginning is a theological notion that arises from a human need that can never be totally fulfilled."[44] Writing, speech, and thought are not responses to a re-presentable origin—responsive words corresponding to the original revelation of the Word. Instead, following Derrida, Taylor argues that human thought bears the trace of a nonrepresentable origin. Writing inscribes the disappearance of the transcendental signified because writing is an unending play of differences wherein each word "retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a future element. This trace relates no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and it constitutes what is called the present by this very relation to what it is not, to what it is absolutely not."[45]

Constituted by a nonrepresentable origin and a future that never arrives, the human is ineluctably subject to the conditions of temporality:

> Always hurrying to grasp the fleeting here and now, representation can only re-present a presence/absence that never is and never can be fully realized. Since representation invariably opens the gap it seeks to close, it is always "tied to the work of spacing." Spacing, however, "is" the index of an irreducible outside, and at the same time the index of a *movement*, of a displacement which indicates an irreducible alterity. Inasmuch as all presentation is representation, the subject's struggle to secure identity and establish a proper name *inevitably* fails.[46]

On Taylor's reading, temporality precludes absolute presence, or what is often considered "identity." All presentation is "actually re-presentation" and thus there is no identity without repetition and anticipation. The human attempts to present itself to itself by re-presenting an origin for which it was not present, and thus one that is non-representable, as he explains in *Tears*: "When nothing is original, all, as well as *the* all, is secondary. If, however, all is secondary, something is always missing and everything is always lacking. That which is always missing is a past that is 'infinitely past' because it was never present in the first place. What has not been present cannot be re-presented."[47] Furthermore, the human attempts to anticipate itself in its complete form in the future, but the conditions of mortal temporality preclude that too.

In *Erring*, Taylor concludes that the horizon of temporality structures an ecstatic self-transcendence that constitutes the human self: "There is always difference *within* identity and absence *within* presence. Through an unexpected inversion, repetition and re-presentation turn out to involve a 'de-presentation' that disrupts presence and dislocates the present."[48] In this sense, the very conditions that enable the creation of the human foreclose the possibility of its fulfillment. Since the re-presentation of the origin and the arrival at the future are impossible, the presence of the subject to itself—or the closure of the difference that enables identity—is also impossible: "Repeatedly slipping through the holes in the system within which it must, nevertheless, be registered, such thought is perpetually transitory and forever nomadic."[49] To close the circle by either end would be to foreclose the difference that conditions the possibility of mortal life in the first place: "The erring nomad neither looks back to an absolute beginning nor ahead to an ultimate end."[50] In other words, the temporal-spatial horizons that constitute the human and the world render both of them resistant to mastery. In ways reminiscent of Heidegger's early reflections on time, Taylor argues that temporality renders the human and the world unmasterable.

The question remains as to how and why mortal life can be considered sacred when there is no resolution to the mortal wound inflicted by temporality. In *Erring* and *Tears* Taylor associates the sacred with the exteriority inextricable from the interiority of the subject, that which constitutes temporal life by preventing it from ever existing in and for itself: "The absence that is always 'present,' the outside that is always 'inside,' is '*death* itself.' The living present is always marked by death, is the uncanninness that forever haunts 'presence.' "[51] Drawing upon Taylor's analysis, Thomas Carlson has argued that death is inexhaustibly generous for the way it generates an excess that renders the human unmasterable and unknowable to itself.[52] In a similar vein, Taylor argues in *Tears* that the sacred is the unmasterable excess rendered by mortal temporality—a nonabsent absence that renders mortal life inherently uncertain, unmasterable, and ultimately unknowable: “Never present without ever being absent, the Holy is, in Blanchot’s apt phrase, a ‘nonabsent absence.’ As such, the ‘Holy’ always implies a certain excess that is both theoretically and practically unmasterable.”[53] The conditions of mortal temporality mean, then, that the human is constituted by that which can never be grasped, mastered, or controlled. To exist humanly is to be irrevocably exposed to the conditions of mortal temporality, and this exposure means that life is never reducible to an iron cage of possibility, knowledge, or anticipation.

Recalling both Heidegger’s phenomenology and Bataille’s mystical atheism, Taylor’s reading of the sacrality of secular life marks his acute divergence from Caputo’s “religion without religion” and “weak theology.” Whereas Caputo interprets the sacred as the impossible to-come, Taylor does not await the impossible coming of the *tout autre*. Instead, he suggests in *Tears* that the *tout autre* is indistinct from mortal life as its very condition:

> Irreducibly ex-orbitant, the Holy eternally returns to interrupt the circulation of knowledge and to disrupt every form of reciprocal exchange. To hear the “inhuman,” “anonymous,” “uncanny” murmur of the Holy is to become open to that which cannot be conceived, grasped, mastered, or controlled. To be “released” or “drawn” into the un-dis-closable openness of this rending of difference is to overcome nihilism by no longer “giving a negative reading to that which is.”[54]

In ways later developed in Carlson’s apophatic analogy, on Taylor’s reading death itself figures as the *tout autre*, engendering an unknowablity, unpredictability, and uncertainty in the human and the world as a constitutive nonabsent absence. The event of death, which is strictly unpredictable, is unknowable, and resists experience, is the foreclosure of the *difference* that constitutes mortal life:

> This difference should not be confused with the presence of any specific difference. Heideggerian *Differenz*, which is the condition of the possibility of all presence and every present, is not a presence, and hence can never be properly present. Yet neither is it simply absent. What neither philosophy nor theology has thought (because neither can think such an "unheard-of" thought without ceasing to be itself) is that which lies *between* presence and absence, identity and difference, being and nonbeing. Neither representable in nor masterable by traditional philosophical and theological categories, this margin is the trace of a different difference and an other other.[55]

We can see finally why Taylor believes that the death of God opens a new space for religious reflection. On his reading, both philosophy and theology have concealed the constitutive difference endemic to mortal temporality through adherence to a transcendental signified that secures language, knowledge, and experience in a locus of truth. In this sense the death of God signifies above all the opportunity to rethink the sacrality of life apart from an ontotheological foundation in a way that draws upon, rather than flees from, the difference constitutive of the conditions of mortal temporality. Most importantly, Taylor's analysis suggests that the human condition includes inherently an excentricity, transcendence, and alterity that mean that, even apart from religious beliefs, the human is indeterminate and unknowable to itself in a way that counters Weberian disenchantment and secularist visions of secularity.

TAYLOR'S NONSECULARIST SECULARITY

During the last twenty-five years Taylor has expanded this approach through an array of interdisciplinary works. However, in the eyes of many colleagues and critics Taylor abandoned the study of religion sometime in the late 1980s and early 1990s in order to develop a philosophy of culture through studies of world economies, popular culture, science, and aesthetics.[56] However, Taylor claims in his work *After God*, published in 2007, that in fact he never left religion, but instead has attempted to locate religious phenomena in the cultural cracks and crevices where we least expect to find them, thus expanding the "scope and significance" of the study of religion in the process.[57] In Taylor's mind, religion is "most influential where it is least obvious" and thus it is impossible to understand secularity apart from religion.[58] In one sense, it is accurate to say that Taylor has eschewed explicit and direct analyses of religious ritual, doctrine, community, and history in favor of studies that unveil the complex logics of various cultural domains. However, in another sense, Taylor is not inaccurate or duplicitous in saying that his work has always been concerned with religion even when it appeared to be exclusively focused on the secular. When his work is viewed in light of the history of philosophy's engagement with religion over the course of the twentieth century, it is most accurate to say that Taylor's enduring preoccupation has been to identify secular logics and phenomena characterized by uncertainty, unpredictability, unknowability, and indeterminacy—characteristics that according to the doctrine of secularism should be quarantined in the religious realm. With Connolly, we might say Taylor has tried to forge a vision of secularity that fits neither in the religious nor in the secularist categories, but that "projects an open temporal horizon exceeding human mastery and irreducible to both closed naturalism *and* radical transcendence" (WB 70). As I argue in the introduction, Connolly maintains that his secular vision of the human, world, and cosmos "does not fit neatly into either old enchanted world *or* the disenchanted world generated by the combined forces of nominalism, Calvinism, Newtonian science, and secularization" (WB 70). In this light, it is not that Taylor abandoned the religious completely. Rather, by trying to find it in places least expected, he has attempted to reveal the inherently "religious" characteristics of secularity in opposition to modern disenchantment, but without converting the secular to the religious.

ON THE COMPLEXITY OF WORLDHOOD

In *The Moment of Complexity*, published in 2002, and *After God*, Taylor analyzes contemporary approaches to systems theory, complexity, and quantum physics in order to construct a scientifically and philosophically viable vision of both human and nonhuman systems. As a study of the structure of the complex networks that constitute the cosmos on both micro and macro levels, the work is an extension of Taylor's early analysis of Heideggerian worldhood and temporality. We recall from chapter 1 that for Heidegger, world is "a wholly particular *context* of meaningfulnesses, which are continually permeating one another," and which blur together (BPPa 105/83). If Weber's belief in the masterability of the world relies on the idea that the extended world—space—is a masterable totality of objects, it relies equally on a concept of history, or time, as a similar masterable totality. On this reading, history is an objectified continuum on which each individual is only a pawn in the unending march of progress. In the face of the endless continuum on which Weber's modern person finds herself as a replaceable component, Heidegger envisions Dasein in terms of an ecstatic temporality wherein it is always already beyond itself both temporally and spatially. Dasein's ecstatic mode of Being does not provide a cycle through which its life might be completed, but it does offer a sense of meaning through its incurability and incompletion and the unavoidable existential-relational matrix of worldhood. Taylor takes a similar approach in *The Moment of Complexity* and *After God*, albeit in a post-Newtonian vein, since he begins from the now standard premise that the Newtonian vision of the world and cosmos as "governed by immutable universal laws that make natural processes potentially transparent and predictable" is no longer tenable.[59] If neither human nor nonhuman systems are closed, deterministic, reversible, inherently stable, or reducible to the sum of their parts, what does this mean for visions of secularity?

Taylor follows the biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela and the social theorist Nikolas Luhmann by arguing that, rather than reducible-to-the-sum-of-their-parts Newtonian machines, human and nonhuman systems are more accurately characterized as autopoietic networks, which are "machines" that "produce their components, which, in turn, produce the machines producing the components," operating thus on a self-generating feedback loop that produces a dynamism greater than the sum of its parts.[60] In essence, as Maturana and Varela articulate, autopoietic machines, systems, and organisms are "unities whose organization is defined by a particular network of processes," not by the components or their relations to one another.[61] This means that neither the components nor the logic of the network has sense apart from the relational whole of the network, and neither could arise, or exist, separately.

However, such systems can never totalize their operation in order to free themselves from the environment in which they exist, meaning that they cannot work so efficiently that they become self-sufficient organisms closed off from other systems. Rather, as Luhmann says, "They constitute and maintain themselves by creating and maintaining a difference from their environment, and they use their boundaries to regulate this difference."[62] The regulation of the boundary between the system and the environment enables the systems' internal self-referentiality, but also maintains their openness to that which lies outside the system: "Every system is embedded in multiple networks that provide streams of data that must be processed. For a system to function effectively, it must be able to identify regularities, patterns, and redundancies in surrounding flows."[63] This means that complex systems must be able to modify themselves according to external circumstances by anticipating "surrounding activities in a way that guides responsive action."[64] Thus, they operate neither on a logic of distinct self-sufficiency nor on the basis of indistinction from surrounding systems, but are always distinct from *and* open to their environment.

Taylor draws on Gödel and Derrida in order to explicate the logic of autopoietic systems' simultaneous distinction from and openness to that which lies outside of them. Since complex systems must take in new information in order to "continue and evolve,"[65] the boundary is paradoxically the "condition of possibility of the system, but it is also the condition of the impossibility of its closure and completion. Irreducibly liminal, it is neither inside nor outside the system."[66] This means that each system is structured by an "outside" that constitutes its "inside," rendering it ineluctably open, if also distinct from other organisms or systems: "With the exposure of the opening *in the midst* of binary structures as well as autopoietic and dialectical systems, it becomes possible to imagine different structures and systems that are neither closed nor stable. Always open and forever subject to chance, such systems emerge at the edge of order and operate far from equilibrium."[67] Similar to Dasein's death, that which conditions the possibility of such systems is categorically inassimilable to them.

This becomes even clearer when we consider that, similarly to Heidegger's Dasein, such systems are subject to the conditions of temporality, and thus they are historical. Drawing on the work of Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, Taylor argues that the laws of thermodynamics mean that systems and structures that once seemed reversible, unchanging, and repeatable are in fact irreversible and thus unrepeatable. According to the mathematician Norbert Wiener, as entropy increases, systems "tend naturally to deteriorate and lose their distinctiveness, to move from the least to the most probable state, from a state of organization and differentiation in which distinctions and forms exist, to a state of chaos and sameness."[68] This means that systems represent "islands" of negentropy, which "designate the temporary reversal of this process, which occurs when differentiated structures and systems emerge in the midst of disorder."[69] In essence, negentropy is the forestalling of the dissipation or dissolution of systems, or worlds, into chaos or indistinct homogeneity. It is the ek-stasis of a self-organized complex system in the face of inevitable entropy, or death. Therefore, systems must continually battle the stable equilibrium that closes them off from their environment but that also threatens to spell their death and the disequilibrium that threatens to dissolve their autopoietic order, or meaning, altogether. Thus, the systems that constitute human and nonhuman life reflect a temporal imbalance wherein they are always exposed to the disorder of chaos, which threatens dissolution, or death, but which is its condition of possibility.

This openness means that the growth, change, and direction of these systems are never predictable or certain: "Uncertainty, in other words, is not a result of ignorance or the partiality of human knowledge, but is a characteristic of the world itself."[70] This is where the conditions of temporality play a key role for envisioning the sacrality of the secular. The irreversibility of the temporality that governs such systems, combined with their unpredictable and uncertain negentropic adaptations, means that these systems "must 'anticipate' the future as well as 'learn' from the past."[71] Similarly to the relation between Dasein and its world, Taylor argues, complex systems are both distinct from and blurred together with their environment, and that their historicity plays a defining factor in their ongoing resistance of disorder, or death.

It is in this light that Taylor approaches the inherent "religiosity" of the secular in ways that echo Heidegger's association of the *mysterium tremendum* with the "*es weltet*." According to Taylor, "the Infinite is an emergent self-organizing network of networks that extends from the natural and social to the technological and cultural dimensions of life."[72] Taylor's reference to the Infinite is not an affirmation of belief in a nonmaterial, extraworldly force or entity, but rather recognition of the fact that the unchanging condition of life is the "creative interplay in which identity and difference are codependent and coevolve."[73] In other words, that which conditions the possibility of order and meaning is also the impossibility of attaining permanence or rest—the possibility of every system is conditioned by its eventual impossibility:

> To be exposed to the unexpected is to be open to the chance of life—and of death. This opening is the space-time of the desire that does not seek satisfaction but cultivates the dissatisfaction that issues in endless restlessness. Satisfaction is entropic—it is the equilibrium that brings everything to a halt; dissatisfaction is negentropic—it is the disequilibrium that keeps everything in motion. Restlessness need not always lead to the melancholy of unhappy consciousness that wallows in interminable mourning but can engender the vitality that in-forms creativity. The dissatisfaction with satisfaction and satisfaction with dissatisfaction mark the end that brings everything to a close. What the apocalyptic imagination in all of its guises regards as life eternal is eternal death. Eternal life is the endless restlessness of a creative process that is the Infinite.[74]

In ways resonant with Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's mortal temporality, for Taylor the meaning of such human and nonhuman systems consists not in reaching a final point of equilibrium, but in the fragile resistance of disorder through the inherent openness to the outside that conditions both its possibility and its impossibility.

In sum, Taylor's analyses of complexity theory and quantum cosmologies render a post-Newtonian, post-Heideggerian vision of worldhood. Taylor confirms Heidegger's analysis of the "*es weltet*" through reflection on the irreversibility of time. The cosmos itself is temporal, irreplaceable, and irreducible, because, as Heidegger observes concerning human worlds, it is conditioned by that which remains always inassimilable and constituted by the ecstasies of temporality. In this sense, Taylor's analysis is a scientific confirmation of Heideggerian worldhood. In another sense, it is a confirmation that even the scientific—or what Heidegger calls the theoretical—level of analysis yields a vision of the human, the world, and the relationship between them as irreducible, and thus the opposite of Weberian disenchantment. It is an "enchanted secularity" in the way Kosky and Connolly define the term—one that uses religious terminology, frameworks, and texts in order to uncover the various, and surprising, logics of the secular.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

One of the key components of my analysis of Heidegger's early Freiburg lectures in chapters 1 and 2 was a reflection on the meaning of secular life. I argued that Heidegger's engagement with religion enabled him to formulate a more full understanding of worldhood as the ineluctably meaningful flow of experience, wherein Dasein is always already drawn into a world. By contrast to Weber, Heidegger proposes that human worlds are meaningful precisely because they are conditioned by an unknowable beginning and an unanticipatable, unavoidable, and unknowable end. The temporal flow of experience renders even the most trivial worldly elements as meaningful. Just as Taylor extends Heidegger's analysis of worldhood through his analysis of systems theory, he extends his reflection on the meaning of life in his work on aesthetics. According to Taylor, art has the potential to reveal how the self-organizing process inherent in nonhuman systems becomes aware of itself as human creativity: "If art is *poiesis*, the world is a work of art. 'The theory of poetry is [therefore] the theory of life.'

In human beings, this creative process becomes aware of itself. But that awareness is always incomplete and hence must forever be refigured."[75] Figuring and refiguring the world artistically is a mimicking of the autopoietic organization and reorganization of nonhuman systems and organisms, and this creative process reflects the meaning of human worlds. In Taylor's view, art is the expression of the human awareness of and participation in the perpetual creation of order from disorder, the temporary resistance of disorder, which emblematizes the fragile beauty of negentropic organization conditioned by openness to that which will eventually dissolve it. Additionally, such creation illuminates the fact that human knowledge and vision cannot assimilate everything. Art is a reflection of order, but it also reveals to human consciousness the reality that it cannot organize or assimilate all things. All figuring leads to refiguring. Contrary to common perceptions and Weberian disenchantment, there is always an excess irreducible to human vision.

Taylor's aesthetics also connects interestingly with Bataille's approach to the impossible. Bataille figures the impossible in terms of an extraordinary experience that lies at the indiscretion of death and the divine. As I argued in the previous chapter, his reading of the impossible resonates with Marion's in the sense that both of them believe it is possible to have an experience that rewrites the conditions of experience—an experience of the impossible. Marion's focus on phenomena that invert the gaze of phenomenological vision is part of a recurrent theme in contemporary French philosophy, especially for religious thinkers interested in demonstrating the possibility of revelation phenomenologically. Whereas Marion figures this experience as revelation, Bataille locates it as the point where the mystical, erotic, and thanatological become, in Carlson's words, indiscrete. In this sense, Bataille's reflections on the impossible represent an alternative account of what Marion labels the experience, or nonexperience, of saturation. I contend that Taylor's aesthetics, as well as the aesthetics of Jeffrey Kosky, his former student, represents a continuation of Bataille's secular reflection on experiences that overwhelm or saturate human consciousness. While neither of them emphasizes the extraordinary and the ecstatic in the way that Bataille does, they both place emphasis on the themes of seeing and light that signify the ongoing attempt to articulate an alternative account of saturation focused less on the possibility of God's revelation and more on the irreducibility and indeterminacy of the factical world.

In place of a comprehensive analysis of either Taylor's or Kosky's aesthetics, I focus on their respective reflections on the work of James Turrell, whose medium is light itself, and who has been described thus as a sculptor of light.[76] Taylor and Kosky (whose work I attend to more extensively in the conclusion) contend that artists such as Turrell remind us that vision is complex, since it is determined by what light we allow to shine, or, better, our choice of how and where to attend to the light that illuminates our worlds. Paying critical attention to vision reveals first the inability to assimilate the light itself, and second the inability to assimilate all that upon which it shines. Thus, for Kosky and Taylor exploring the intersection of aesthetics and religion does not render belief in deities or otherworldly forces. It does not even affirm belief in the spiritual. Both thinkers would say, I think, that their interest in the aesthetic is not in how it creates or reveals to them another world, but in how such attention reveals the irreducibility and mystery of this one. It holds, in other words, the potential for not allowing the immeasurability of the world to fall into oblivion. One of the critical insights gained by such analysis is the idea that disenchantment is not an accurate reflection of the secular, but a conscious way of seeing the world that excludes and forgets key elements of reality. In response, both men call for a cultivation of vision, or what I call a secular practice of contemplation, that holds open the possibility, as Kosky says, of keeping separate "what modern disenchantment often connects—seeing from controlling, touching from mastering, and perhaps therefore knowing from manipulating."[77]

In *Refiguring the Spiritual* Taylor recounts his visit to Roden Crater, which Turrell considers his life's work. The crater is near Flagstaff, Arizona, and it is, as Taylor says, "as wide as Manhattan and as high as the City's [New York's] tallest skyscrapers."[78] An imperfectly round formation strutting out from the surrounding desert, Roden Crater is a formidable natural formation:

> The initial stage of the project involved sculpting the bowl of the crater, an ellipse measuring one thousand feet by eight hundred feet,

> to make the rim perfectly level. This required moving 1.35 million cubic yards of dirt and cinders which engineers used to reinforce weak spots along the side of the cone. At the current stage of development the centerpiece of the work is the "Alpha Tunnel," whose entrance is marked by the easternmost fumarole. The color of the door and entryway to the tunnel matches the rusty red of the volcanic sand and cinders. Passing through the vestibule, we enter a dimly lit, round, domed room in which everything is black and white. . . . On the far side of the room the opening to the tunnel appears like a black hole drawing everything and everybody into its dark interior. As we approach the opening, it gradually becomes clear that there is light at the end of the tunnel. The 849-foot passageway inclines upward at an eight-degree angle. At the far end of the keyhole-shaped tunnel, a black circle surrounded by white light comes into focus.[79]

At the end of the tunnel is not a wall, but a room, where, as Taylor recounts, "everything suddenly changed—what I had thought was a black circle on a wall was actually a twenty-nine-foot elliptical opening in the ceiling revealing a brilliant blue sky."[80] Turrell has sculpted the light so it appears dark, or as darkness, from one end of tunnel.

However, Turrell refuses to consider such sculpting an illusion. It is, by contrast, the revelation of "the paradoxical revelation reality reveals,"[81] or the "revelation of light itself."[82] His work does not express the longing for a different world, but insists that the world in which we always find ourselves is full of light we rarely receive. For Taylor, such revelations remind us that the type of light we expose ourselves to shapes both our worlds and our ability to see; as Simon Ings says: "Retinas are sculpted by the kind of light they are exposed to. Blurred light encourages visual abilities that do not rely on clearer images: areas devoted to the detection of movement, and to providing good all-round vision in dim light."[83] This means that seeing the world is far from a simple endeavor. We form, or figure, worlds through the type of light we allow to shape our vision: "It is not so much that vision *takes* time—rather, vision, slowly cultivated, *gives* the time and place that form the worlds in which we dwell. As ancient myths and rituals teach, and Turrell understands, vision is an endless quest."[84] Taylor suggests that just as mystics employ ascetic practices in order to possibly receive the light of revelation, Turrell's work "combines artistic practice and scientific experiment to create a transformative experience by turning vision back on itself in order to see seeing."[85] Vision is an endless quest because it is impossible to see everything; every vision "exposes a crack in the mirror of reflection,"[86] which reflects the incompletion of all human knowing and the irreducible indeterminacy of the world.

* * *

Since the publication of *Erring* over three decades ago, Anglophone approaches to continental philosophy and religion have gone through numerous phases. In the first instance, Taylor's desire to approach religion anew through the poststructuralism of Derrida and other continental thinkers signaled a new attitude to the potential of the relationship between religion and philosophy in the Anglophone world. However, this perspective was supplanted by philosophical theologians who detected in these philosophical traditions a resource for postmetaphysical, phenomenological, and poststructuralist theologies. During the 1990s and the early part of the 2000s, optimism about the theological potential of what became known as "religion and postmodernism" drew many to the intersection of theology and continental philosophy. However, as Derrida's work diminished in popularity during the last decade, and as social-scientific and scientific approaches to religious studies have taken hold, the optimism for continental philosophy's contribution to academic study of religion has faded. This has led some to conclude that philosophy is useless to religious studies, or, worse, a hidden theological enterprise threatening to take the field back to the colonial hold Protestantism held over the study of religion for so long.

My reflections on Taylor's work have sought to foreground the original impetus for the relationship between religion and continental philosophy in the Anglophone world. When comparing Taylor to two theological contemporaries in Hart and Caputo, it becomes clear that philosophical theology and philosophy of religion can be—and are—distinct, even if they often overlap and cross-seminate. In the conclusion I briefly explore the work of three of Taylor's students who have, in different ways, extended his approach to secularity, philosophy, and religion, and have thus demonstrated how and where philosophy of religion can—and does—contribute to the academic study of religion.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary Philosophy of Religion and Religious Studies—Three Examples

IN THE opening lines of this work, I presented two questions: Does secularity equate to disenchantment? What and how does philosophy of religion contribute to the academic study of religion? My goal has been to attend to the first question by responding to the second. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the disentanglement of philosophical theology from philosophy of religion foregrounds the contribution to the academic study of religion in terms of the field's reflections on the category of the secular and articulation of nonsecularist secularities. In light of the historical analysis conducted in the foregoing chapters, such a contribution is an extension of, rather than a divergence from, the ongoing encounters between religious phenomena and philosophy in the twentieth century. Like Heidegger and Bataille, Mark C. Taylor counters the prevalent notion that secularity equates to disenchantment, and demonstrates how the equation of the two reflects inaccurate and outdated approaches to secularity. If Talal Asad, José Casanova, Charles Taylor, and others have remapped the place and role of religion amid the secular institutions of the modern world, Taylor engages science studies, aesthetics, and religious phenomena in order to articulate more expansive and vibrant philosophical accounts of secularity. In the process, he contends that nonsecularist secularities resonate in important ways with religious subjectivities and cosmologies, and thus open up new possibilities for the relationship between the secular and the religious in the contemporary context.

I close my study by turning to three thinkers—all former students of Taylor—who have extended, and in some cases transformed, his approach to philosophy of religion through their own interdisciplinary analyses of secularity. In their own ways, Thomas Carlson, Mary-Jane Rubenstein, and Jeffrey Kosky have developed the methodological potential for philosophizing with religion rather than against it, without worrying that such an approach reduces philosophy to theology or trying to convert the latter to the former. They have, in other words, employed something like Roberts's model of encounter in order to rethink aspects of the secular through engagement with religious phenomena.

MYSTICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE POSTHUMAN

After studying with Taylor at Williams College, Carlson completed his doctorate at the University of Chicago under the tutelage of Bernard McGinn, among others. However, before starting graduate school he spent a year in Paris translating Jean-Luc Marion's *Dieu sans l'être*. Carlson's role as Marion's first Anglophone translator has tempted commentators to associate him with the "theological turn" and the philosophical theology associated with it. However, despite the influence of Marion on his work, Carlson's *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude and the Creation of the Human*, published in 2008, bears the imprint of Taylor in the way it investigates a particular domain of the secular—in this case technoculture—in order to foreground its unexpectedly "enchanted" characteristics, as well as the imprint of McGinn, the most influential Anglophone scholar of Christian mysticism of his generation.

Carlson draws on Taylor's analyses of complex systems and networks in order to give a "posthuman" account of subjectivity and worldhood. Following N. Katherine Hayles, whose pioneering work foregrounds the dynamic and formative relationship between humans and technoscientific culture, Carlson maintains that in contrast to the "discrete, self-possessed, and self-governing" liberal subject, the posthuman is "an indeterminate, irreducibly relational, and endlessly adaptive figure."[1] If we recall from the introduction that the critique of secularism is at its core a critique of the liberal subject, it's natural that posthuman discourse broadly conceived is also a postsecularist, or nonsecularist, discourse that reveals pathways for the development of nonsecularist secularities. By recognizing that the discrete ego is not only a myth but a myth that holds back expansive and vibrant accounts of the human and its relationship to the world, posthuman discourse opens the possibility for a "richer, more flexible, and more adaptive understanding of our place within the world."[2] It is, in other words, an account of subjectivity after the demise of the (liberal) subject, and in this way an account of secularity after the myth of such a subject's transcendental, transhistorical rationality and discretion.

In order to develop such an account, Carlson forms his analysis using Taylor's analysis of complex, autopoietic systems. We recall from the foregoing chapter that Taylor draws on Gödel and Derrida to outline the contours of complex systems' simultaneous distinction from and openness to that which lies outside of them. Such systems operate with boundaries that paradoxically constitute their possibility, but that also prevent their closure or completion—boundaries neither inside nor outside the system but always indiscretely both. Carlson summarizes what this means for the structure of human subjectivity: "Likewise, to the degree that the human subject thinks and acts increasingly by means of technological prosthetics that extend 'subjective' faculties outward into the 'objective' world, even as the outward also moves inward, that subject can no longer be defined according to its stable delimitation from an objective world 'out there.' "[3] As with all complex systems, self-sufficiency and completion are impossible by the very conditions of the system's possibility—the limit is constitutive yet inassimilable.

Consequently, the posthuman subject envisioned through Taylor's (and Hayles's) approaches to complex systems and network theory "think[s] and act[s] by means of systems not fully accessible to the comprehension or control of conscious subjectivity."[4] If complex systems are nontotalizing, operating according to feedback loops in which the components produce the system that in turn produces the components, and if such systems involve permeable membranes that cause the distinctions of "inside" and "outside" to blur, then the human, in its relation to its environment and the machines that it creates, operates on the basis of an "irreducible gap of unknowing," since "distributed networks of intelligence and agency think and act through me as much as I through them, and with effects that can seem mystical."[5] In line with the philosophical lineage recounted in the foregoing chapters, envisioning the human subject as a complex system intertwined ineluctably with its environment, and with the technoscientific networks it creates, counters Weber's assumptions regarding the role of the human as world-master and the world as masterable.

In its place, Carlson offers a vision of the human as constituted by a "creative capacity . . . that proves to be creative in just the measure that it does not ground, comprehend, or master itself."[6] In contrast to Weber, as well as influential Western philosophical and theological anthropologies, Carlson maintains that the human imagined as complex system is thus one defined by the possibility for creation and self-creation, because, like all complex systems, it is "in a fundamental condition of need—the need to engage in the endless multiplication of images and forms and ways of being human, within a dynamic that can never exhaust the indeterminate, or infinite, possibility that very need opens and sustains."[7] Complex systems are agents of negentropy, battling perpetually against the disequilibrium threatening to dissolve them. As such, they manifest a vulnerable temporal imbalance, because they are always exposed to the threat of disorder, but such exposure—or openness—conditions their very possibility.

Humans are no different. Carlson suggests that in human terms the need to battle entropy and maintain the fragile sense of meaning and order characteristic of complex systems is manifest in the relationship between human "totipotence" and "neoteny." Following the contemporary French theorist Michel Serres, Carlson maintains that the human's lack of definition and defined place—its native homelessness—means it has the "infinite capacity," or totipotence, to "create and recreate both its world and itself."[8] The need for such creation and re-creation stems from human "neoteny," which points to its incomplete formation and lack of specialization at birth, and thus "lifelong dependence on sociality and all it entails—starting with language and education and all the various other technological extensions and information systems that enable, even as they require, something like the transmission or tradition of sociality over time."[9] In light of its native homelessness, sociality is the vehicle through which the complex system of the human wards off entropy.

Carlson's vision of the human as a world-builder stems directly from influential voices from the study of religion broadly and secularity specifically. In *The Sacred Canopy*, a work seminal to the secularization thesis, Peter Berger maintains that the human enters into the process of world-building because it is "curiously 'unfinished' at birth" and thus undertakes the unfinishable but necessary project of maintaining a social world that orders its existence.[10] Berger uses his understanding of the human as a rational world-builder to argue that the world is becoming less religious precisely because humans increasingly exclude reference to world-maintaining otherworldly forces and powers. Along Weberian lines, Berger argues that the world is increasingly less religious precisely because it has become disenchanted. Human worlds decreasingly include characteristics such as unpredictability, unknowability, and irreducibility; thus they increasingly lack reference to otherworldly powers or forces.

However, as I indicated in the introduction, the description of the world population as less religious, ore more secular, has proved inaccurate. More importantly, the secularist prescription for the exclusion of irrational forces from the public sphere, most notably religion, has been challenged by "enchanted" secularities that recognize the complexity of living in a quantum world. In line with the philosophies of religion outlined by Heidegger and Bataille, theorists such as William Connolly identify their secularities as "faiths," which demand the assertion of contestable assumptions and doctrines. By recognizing the human's inherent unknowability of itself to itself, and the complex relation to the world such unknowing sets up, Carlson's reflections on subjectivity, worldhood, and technoculture fall into the category of the latter, which leads him to an important conclusion about the study of religion and its approaches to subjectivity and human world-building:

"If world is not, however, to be captured as view or picture—if world is more that which we inhabit as the open structure and temporality of a possibility that escapes, even as it enables, all representation—then the field of religious studies might well benefit by thinking the creative human as indiscrete image, and world as place and time of that image."[11] In ways that echo loudly of Heidegger's criticism of philosophy of worldviews, Carlson argues that if the human is not self- or world-master, and if the world itself remains irreducible to the theoretical gaze, then it is necessary to rethink sociological and anthropological lenses used to study them.

In a way that builds upon his use of the apophatic analogy in his first book, *Indiscretion*, and moreover demonstrates how training in religious studies can enable one to philosophize better, Carlson sets up an encounter between the networked posthuman and a mystical tradition running from Gregory of Nyssa to John Scotus Eriugena to Nichola of Cusa in order to rethink the nature and structure of subjectivity and worldhood:

> If our technological humanity today seems to exercise a creative capacity that threatens human definition, in ways that recall the mystical, perhaps with the mystics we can rethink such indefinition as the ground of creation itself; and perhaps we can see in the technopoetic human, as the mystics saw in God, what Victor Hugo saw in Shakespeare when, as Borges reminds us, "he compared him to the ocean, which is the seedbed of all possible forms."[12]

Just as Carlson looked to the analogous relation between the Dionysius's mystical subject and Heidegger's Dasein in order to draw out the logic and contours of subjectivity after the death of God in *Indiscretion*, in *The Indiscrete Image* he looks to the analogical resonances between a mystical tradition based on God's thoroughgoing immanence in a world he is perpetually creating—and through which he creates himself—and the self-creating and re-creating subject of posthuman discourse to illuminate the logic and contours of the technological human's relationship to world.

Carlson explains how his prior work on Dionysian mysticism extends to his juxtaposition of later mystics and technoculture:

> As I'll show in what follows, all of this entails, within the mystical tradition of Dionysian lineage, a notion of world as infinite and incomprehensible (and hence irreducible to world-picture) and a related definition of the human as indefinable (and thus resistant to the aspirations of self-knowledge and self-determination characteristic of modernity's representational subject). Both this notion of world and this definition of the human entail a theological thinking that foregrounds the incomprehensible immanence of a God who, like the world where he embodies himself, proves infinite, and who, like the human created in his image, proves creative, or even self-creative, in and through that world and on the ground of darkness and unknowing.[13]

On Carlson's reading, Dionysius's heirs develop the vision of God as self-creative in and through the world on the basis of his unknowing. In this tradition, both God and the human, who is a theological simulacrum of him based on the doctrine of the *imago dei*, create in imitation of nothing. In other words, their respective creations are not based on foregoing models or images, but instead originate from the constitutive unknowing that makes them possible. In the process, the doctrines of creation ex nihilo and the *imago dei* are transformed: "Here, Eriugena's apophatic anthropology complements his apophatic theology: neither God nor the human subject created in his image can comprehend *what* they themselves are—even as they achieve, through their own self-creative self-expression, an awareness *that* they are."[14] Instead of a metaphysical framework in which the human attempts to align itself with its divine model, the Self-Same God or Divine Subject, Carlson detects in this tradition an anthropology of human creation and self-creation based on God's own self-creation in and through creation: "Cusa allows for intellectual and technological innovation beyond mimesis, insofar as imitation of God is imitation of the incomprehensible One who himself does not imitate. Human creation without prior model is itself, for Cusa, participation in divine creativity; innovation beyond mimesis is itself imitation of the divine creativity."[15] The mystical subject embedded within such a mystical theology is, in ways resonant with the posthuman subject, "open ended" and "creative" in the sense that it "endlessly, but never exhaustively" seeks to actualize itself.[16] In ways resonant with Taylor, the native homelessness of the human means an endless quest of self- and world-knowledge. Along lines sketched by Taylor, the native homelessness of the human means an endless quest of self- and world-knowledge and the inexhaustible—and negentropic—task of creation and self-creation.

Carlson recognizes that such a vision of the human runs contrary to Weberian disenchantment, which envisions "infinite progress" as "fundamental to modern rationality." By contrast, the mystical and posthuman subjects find "creative freedom in their indefinition or infinitude," which are conditioned by the very limits that remain unknowable to them:

> As creatively active within the infinitely dynamic tissue that constitutes and exceeds the self, this relational self lives and moves always by means of a vision or knowledge that implies blindness and unknowing. It's knowing and doing will never exhaust the tissue of the real, but as productively participant in the tissue, such knowing and doing imply an infinite responsibility.[17]

Carlson outlines something here that recalls both Heidegger's analysis of worldhood and Bataille's mystical thanatology. In Heideggerian terms, Carlson concludes that human world-building is always conducted on the basis of unknowing, rather than rational mastery. The inexhaustible, negentropic task of self- and world-creation undertaken by the posthuman stands in stark contrast to the nihilist self- and world-mastery of Weber's rational self.

Furthermore, Carlson situates the responsibility of the posthuman between the transcendence of the otherworldly "icon," terminology indebted to Lévinas and his analysis of the otherness of the "face," and the "idol," which recalls the iron cage of rationality, in which the human—like the world—is reduced to "representations, calculation, and management."[18] We recall that Bataille's divergence from what he perceived to be Heidegger's reduction of the human to knowledge paralleled Lévinas's. Both men sought to envision the human otherwise than as the functionary of rationality. However, whereas Lévinas instituted the focus on otherworldly transcendence that would come to characterize the theological turn in French phenomenology, Bataille turned to the mystics in order to work out a vision of the human as unavoidably worldly—or secular—and yet constituted by an unknowable limit. Carlson follows Bataille by refusing to associate the posthuman with the otherworldliness of the Lévinasian icon or the *reductio* of the Weberian idol. Instead, like both Heidegger and Bataille, he articulates a nonsecularist secularity through an alternative vision of the human—one ineluctably tied to the world it can neither master nor escape:

> The task, I think, is to see the incomprehensibility of the human as a function of its inextricable ties, both moral and natal, with the world—and to see that world, itself no more captured or conquered by picture than is the human, as one in which and for which love opens rather than closes possibility and its temporality. We need, in other words, to "become a question" to ourselves, affirmatively, by asking ourselves "into" the world, and we need to think the birth of world as emerging from a love of it.[19]

In outlining such a vision of the human, Carlson extends the lineage of philosophers who have turned to religion in order to rethink secularity. His account of the posthuman is enriched and expanded by his intricate reading of certain Christian mystics. However, in countering the secularism inherent to Weberian disenchantment and its various heirs, he refuses the path of a philosophical theology centered on transcendence from the world. Instead, he envisions the human as an "indiscrete image," a question—but not an answer—to itself, one entangled ineluctably with a world that refuses its mastery.

UNEXPECTED WONDER

A former student of Taylor's, Mary-Jane Rubenstein is one of the most influential young philosophers working in religious studies. Her work unfolds along comparable lines to Taylor's in the sense that she juxtaposes the religious and the secular in a way that uncovers the unexpected resonances between them, thereby disrupting common perceptions of secularity.

In her first work, *Strange Wonder* (2011), Rubenstein follows the Socrates of Plato's *Theaetetus* by adhering to the notion that philosophy begins with and is sustained by wonder.[20] Wonder signals the philosopher's "inability to ground himself in the ordinary as he reaches toward the extraordinary; it indicates, in fact, that the skyward reach has rendered uncanny the very ground on which the philosopher stands."[21] In this way, wonder "threatens to disable the sort of mastery one expects of philosophers"[22] because it is an admission that the human, the world, and the cosmos are in some way unmasterable, unknowable, or indeterminate. However, rather than conceiving of the philosophical task as the extinguishing of wonder, Rubenstein argues that philosophy itself is nourished and sustained through it:

> To the extent that thinking remains with wonder, it is not inimical to all propositions, but rather keeps propositions provisional, open-ended, and incomplete. This is because wonder wonders at the strangeness of the most familiar: at that which, *within the possibilities of determinate thinking*, still remains indeterminate, unthinkable, and impossible. Wonder wonders, therefore, at the opening in which all determinate thinking takes place.[23]

Following Heidegger's criticism of technological modernity—a discourse both Taylor and Carlson also attend to—Rubenstein observes that modernity and most specifically modern philosophy and science attempt to "ration, rein in, to delimit" wonder in the name of the rational mastery of all things.[24] Similarly to Taylor, Rubenstein then draws upon various figures from the continental tradition in order to demonstrate how Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian philosophies have provided a critical referendum on modern disenchantment and reopened the idea that philosophy itself is constituted by an inextinguishable wonder that opposes, rather than accords with, the idea that the world, including the human, is masterable by calculative thinking.

Rubenstein applies this approach to the study of contemporary cosmology in her second work, *Worlds Without End* (2014), which juxtaposes ancient philosophical and theological visions of the multiverse with contemporary scientific accounts of the origins of the universe and other worlds. In one view, *Worlds Without End* is a narrative account of the idea of a "multiverse" that begins with the ancient Greeks, progresses through medieval Christians, takes shape scientifically in early modern Europe, and then develops as we know it today during the twentieth century.

Rubenstein's exhaustive analysis investigates the different religious and historical iterations of the multiverse throughout history. Strictly speaking, the idea of the multiverse points to the hypothesis that "our whole universe—from our perspective, all that *is*—might be just a negligible part of a vast, perhaps infinite, 'multiverse.'"[25] The tension Rubenstein explores through her juxtaposition of both premodern and modern religious and philosophical accounts of the multiverse and contemporary scientific approaches lies between the central scientific practices of "observability, testability, and simplicity" and the seemingly metaphysical claims—made by scientists, not shamans or priests—about "an infinite number of worlds actually existing outside space and time."[26] Hence, Rubenstein's analysis is an application of the philosophical vision outlined in *Strange Wonder*. By exploring the resonances between the premodern and the contemporary, as well as the secular and the religious, she is able to draw out aspects of secular discourse hidden by the favoring of rationality over mystery.

Worlds Without End centers on the irony that in order to deny the hypothesis of a Creator God, the most scientifically advanced cosmologies of the twenty-first century "display a remarkable faith in what St. Paul would call 'things hoped for' and 'things not seen' (Hebrews 11:1)."[27] Multiverse cosmologies demand adherence to contestable assumptions about the nature of the universe and our ability to understand its origins and expanse, as well as our place in it. In the process, they put forth what amounts to a vision of secularity drastically different from the determinism of the Newtonian universe or the disenchantment of Weber's cosmos. In the end, as Alan Lightman argues, contemporary scientific theories of the universe maintain that the "basic properties of our universe are accidental and uncalculable," while asking us to "believe in the existence of many other universes" even if "we have no conceivable way of observing these universes and cannot prove their existence. Thus, to explain what we see in the world . . . we must believe in what we cannot prove."[28] Rubenstein is able to illuminate the implications of these cosmologies for visions of secularity only because she has so thoroughly developed their religious counterparts alongside them.

Resisting the crudity of claiming that contemporary theories of the multiverse are simple degenerations into theology, she highlights the complex balancing act secular discourses perform when on one hand they vehemently refuse the label "religious" and yet on the other argue for the incalculability and unknowability of the world:

> The point of this journey has simply been to show that every multiverse hypothesis opens in one way or another onto uncannily metaphysical—even theological—terrain. Each scenario requires us to assent to worlds, gods, or generative principles that remain, in the words of an old English hymn, "in light inaccessible hid from our eyes."[29]

This does not mean, in Rubenstein's view, a conversion of science to theology. Her goal is not to reveal science as some sort of cryptotheology and to revel in its conceptual and methodological demise. Her argument is not about the return of religion. Rather, Rubenstein lingers in the tense spaces between theology and science, the religious and the secular, the physical and the metaphysical in order to demonstrate the impossibility of clear demarcations and the limits of knowledge. This leads to an important conclusion:

> If science can be regarded as the self-overcoming of a particular form of religion, might multiverse cosmologies be something like the self-overcoming of *science?* Might they mark the end of the fantasy that "science" has wrested itself free from "religion," "objectivity" free from subjectivity, and matter free from meaning? After all, we have seen each of these multiverse cosmologies open onto metaphysics and mythology not in moments of lapse or weakness, but precisely where they are scientifically most compelling.[30]

Thus, Rubenstein's winding account of the history of the multiverse leads her back to the philosophical vision outlined in *Strange Wonder*.

The secular itself, considered both philosophically and scientifically, is marked, in ways both resonant and even entangled with "enchanted" or "religious" visions of the human, world, and cosmos:

> Tuned in to the background noise of many-world cosmologies—of their failure to disentangle physics from metaphysics, religion from science—one can pick up the faint but unmistakable signals of an ontology that entangles the one and the many; of an "order" constituted, dismantled, and renewed by ever-rolling chaos; of a "truth" that remains provisional, multiple, and perspectival.[31]

Like Taylor, Rubenstein juxtaposes the religious and the secular not only to draw out the resonances between them, but to reflect on the nature of secularity and secular discourses. While her work questions whether or not scientific accounts of the cosmos might be resonant with the religious visions they often vehemently oppose, her goal is not to defend or advance a religious cosmology. Rather, through the staging of an encounter between the secular and the religious, her work illuminates how scientific discourses open onto the metaphysical unexpectedly and draws out this opening's resonances with religious cosmologies.

By doing so, she reminds us that philosophy's engagement with religion does not demand a refusal of science or criticism. We recall from chapter 2 the concern that Heidegger's phenomenological account of Dasein and the "*es weltet*" might mean a refusal to engage scientific and technological discourses. However, Rubenstein's work reveals how contemporary discourses affirm rather than deny a vision of the cosmos as irreducible to the theoretical gaze and thus pictured falsely when imagined as a masterable totality. On my reading, Rubenstein's work supports the fact that perhaps unexpectedly the secular, philosophical refusal of Weberian disenchantment does not require an abandonment of the modern condition, but in fact may represent a more promising pathway for understanding how science opens onto metaphysics in unanticipated and still misunderstood ways.

SEEING IN THE DARK

In the previous chapters I outlined the divergence between some of Heidegger's secular and religious heirs through an analysis of the debate in 1997 between Derrida and Marion at Villanova University. For Marion, the possibility of the gift rests on the possibility of a phenomenology without horizon, in which certain phenomena saturate intuition to the point of overcoming the active "I," and thereby transforming it into a dative witness. In Marion's view, the saturated phenomenon is the truest form of phenomena, because it appears for itself, from itself, by itself. Saturated phenomena appear without dependence on the active "I," rendering experience and knowledge reconstituted in the process. In one view, this is an extension of Heidegger's early attempt to account for the indeterminacy and irreducibility of the world. Marion and Heidegger are both post-Kantian phenomenologists concerned with articulating more expansive and compelling visions of the human and the world than their philosophical predecessor.

Marion diverges from Heidegger through his exploration of the possibility of revelation, which "concentrates the four types of saturated phenomena," thus saturating saturation. Recalling the debate with Derrida, he describes it as the paradox of paradoxes or the "possibility of impossibility."[32] In an infamous passage from *Being Given* Marion states, however, that from a phenomenological perspective revelation must remain within the horizon of possibility, and resist the temptation of claiming to witness to its actuality:

> Nevertheless, the phenomenon of revelation remains a mere possibility. I am going to describe it without presupposing its actuality, and yet all the while propose a precise figure for it. I will say only: if an actual revelation must, can, or could have been given in phenomenal apparition, it could have, can, or will be able to do so only by giving itself according to the type of the paradox par excellence—such as I will describe it. Phenomenology cannot decide itself if a revelation can or should ever give itself, but it (and it alone) can determine that, in case it does, such a phenomenon of revelation should assume the figure of the paradox of paradoxes.[33]

Even if Marion bars himself from witnessing to revelation—at least as a philosopher—by demonstrating the possibility of impossibility, he has opened the space for a phenomenon from elsewhere, "a transcendent authority that is outside of experience."[34]

Marion recently clarified his understanding of the relationship between his phenomenology of revelation and his theology of revelation in *Revelation and Givenness* (2016). Marion has always claimed that his phenomenology does not rest on any theological presupposition. According to him, saturated phenomena, and more specifically the phenomenon of revelation, are strictly phenomenological. Contrary to the claims of Janicaud, they are thus not a matter of an illegitimate introduction of theology into philosophy. Yet Marion has not refrained from exploring their theological implications, as David Jasper and Ramona Fotiade point out when they say that *Revelation and Givenness* "arises from an initial reappraisal of the tension between 'natural theology' and the 'revealed knowledge of God' or *sacra doctrina*."[35]

In line with his previous claims, Marion argues that it is not possible to witness to revelation through pure reason, even if one can conceive of its possibility philosophically.[36] This puts him on the side of theologians such as Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar, who argue that revelation belongs to the domain of faith, not science or philosophy, and thus cannot be attained through natural reason. In a manner that recalls St. Augustine and the Augustinian medieval mystic and theologian William of St. Thierry, Marion claims that one is first seduced by revelation on the basis of love, not reason. Love "acts first on the will, which then makes the reason choose to see what it would otherwise not will to see."[37] Recalling his early *The Idol and Distance* and the apophaticism outlined therein, Marion believes that love's transformation of the will enables a different kind of vision, enabling one to receive, or see, phenomena that would otherwise go unnoticed: "no one can see that which is uncovered [*apokalypsis*] unless he believes it; but no one can believe if he does not will it, and *no one can will unless he loves what he believes and wills to will*."[38] Clearly for Marion revelation is available only to those whose will has been converted, which means *l'incroyant* cannot receive it. This electionism seems like an affront to philosophy, but it is a paradox Marion is sure he has confronted and overcome through the phenomenon of revelation. In philosophical terms, not receiving the saturated phenomenon doesn't mean it isn't there. If the subject has yet to be converted to a witness, the problem is with the receiver, not the givenness of the phenomena or the phenomena themselves.

Marion's phenomenology is conjoined to a robust theology of revelation. The impetus for transgressing Kant's rationalism and Heidegger's phenomenology was the possibility of defending the plausibility of revelation in a philosophical context seemingly antithetical to religious belief. In other words, philosophical secularism led Marion to a radical phenomenology of revelation and a complex, sometimes paradoxical account of its relationship to the theology of revelation. However, there is a way to read saturation as a way out of Weber's iron cage. If one accepts the possibility of saturation without making the leap to the possibility—if not actuality—of revelation, Marion's phenomenology could be deployed in the service of a secularity sans secularism.

As I referenced in the foregoing chapter, Jeffrey Kosky, another former student of Taylor's and one of Marion's translators, realizes this potential in his award-winning *Arts of Wonder*, in which he interprets the secularities implicit in works of art, which, in his words, "make places where we might encounter mystery and wonder, hopes for redemption and revelation, transcendence and creation" with religious phenomena. In doing so, Kosky counters Weberian disenchantment by following Heidegger's account of the "*es weltet*." Kosky's familiarity with Marion's work equips him with a helpful lens for interpreting the extraordinary phenomena he encounters in the various works of art, leading to an account of secular saturation.

Like Taylor, Kosky turns to James Turrell as a resource for outlining an enchanted secularity. Turrell is a "sculptor of light," whose work seeks not to illuminate certain objects, but to bring to visibility the invisible light often unseen or forgotten or passed over. In "James Turrell, Works with Light," Kosky devotes attention to James Turrell's *Pleiades*, an exhibition at Pittsburgh's Mattress Factory, which he describes in this way:

> You approach the gallery through an inclined corridor so dark that you are virtually without sight. At the top of the ramp, you sit

> in a chair and face blackness. After your eyes adjust, an amorphous sphere of grey-white, or perhaps red, begins to appear, more a presence than an object. As you look harder, the form becomes smaller. You turn away for a moment and back again. It grows and glimmers. But the source of light itself is constant and still.[39]

When I visited *Pleiades* in 2010, the darkness of the corridor was overwhelming. Not only is there no light guiding one through the tunnel to the gallery, even when one arrives it appears there is nothing to see; as Kosky says: "You gaze intently, but see at first only the flicking afterimages generated by your own retina continuing to fire as a lingering effect of the light from the world you just left."[40] However, after waiting in the dark, disoriented both spatially and temporally, one's eyes adjust, and floating objects appear—not solid objects, but sculptures of light; as Kosky describes:

> If you dwell patiently in this dark, deserted place, waiting long enough for the physical and sensory activity inside you to switch off or fall quiet, the retinal afterimages fade away. Then, a light or a shadow might rise or fall in the darkness, a slowly dawning or fading cloud of color pulsing dimly on the edge of existence, hardly anything at all. When your eyes have been opened by the darkness, the slow rising of a dim light begins to grow on you—a light that is even dimmer than the residue left inside you by the bright world whose past you carried.[41]

By entering into the darkness, not only does one come to understand the act of seeing and indeterminacy and complexity of light, but one begins to understand seeing and knowing, or vision and knowledge, differently. Recalling Marion's belief that saturated phenomena can "convert" the subject, Kosky comes to believe that detecting this light is possible only if one embraces the "unproven, uncertain experience of this beautiful almost nothing."[42] He admits being embarrassed when trying to communicate his vision of that which is not an object and which transgresses the limit of ordinary experience—that which many secular people would refuse categorically. Yet, Kosky asserts, Turrell's light sculpture is not an illusion or the result of deception, but a revelation of the invisible light that so often escapes us—the manifestation of the inapparent.[43]

Kosky's reflection on *Pleiades* takes place in the context of sustained reflection on Weberian disenchantment and the potential of developing an enchanted secularity through engagement with contemporary works of art and religious phenomena. In *Arts of Wonder* Kosky maintains that disenchantment correlates to a picture wherein a brusque, overpowering source of light illuminates everything on the Earth, "opening a world in which objects appear distinctly," and thus opening "a way of human being that can advance with certainty."[44] The underlying assumption in this picture of modern disenchantment is that "rational investigation can secure on solid grounds the order of the cosmos so that we can be certain of where things stand."[45] Echoing Heidegger's reactions to Neo-Kantianism, *Arts of Wonder* correlates disenchantment's quest to exclude all mystery from the world with the meaninglessness of secular life. Consequently, he turns to contemporary works of art and religious texts and practices to uncover the "mystery, and wonder, hope for redemption and revelation, transcendence and creation" that exist in the world, or as the world.[46] In order to convert the gaze, Kosky argues, one must be willing to attend to the often unphenomenalized light—not the neon light of Weberian disenchantment that falsely promises to master the world, but the light "we most often forget in our everyday fascination with the objects it makes visible."[47]

In other words, attending to such light means having the discipline and willingness to engage in both "the science of perception" and "the art of meditation," as Jay Michaelson says aptly,[48] in order to see what at first glance seems illusory or mythical:

> It is my decision to wait here in the dark, to wait on them and for them, my observance, countering my negligence, that lets them consist in anything at all. Let them appeal to me, I tell myself against the advice of those clear-thinking, stable friends and relatives, but it's not so easy in a disenchanted world to let things be appealing and to admit the appeal even of appealing things.[49]

As with Marion, for Kosky the saturation of vision is possible only if one waits in the dark. We must put ourselves in a place to receive the oft-hidden light. When received, such light transforms our vision, saturating it to the point of blindness, and thereby effecting bewilderment and bedazzlement, and reconstituting the subject from a dominating subject to a witness of the invisible. One is drawn out of the brusque light of secularism, relieved of the illusion of self- and world-mastery, and brought into the "intimacy of being invaded" by a world akin to a lover "whose revelation it cannot see clearly and distinctly in the dark."[50]

In ways similar to Carlson, Kosky likens light revealed in *Pleiades* to a mystical universe.[51] For Kosky, the "revelation of light without prior light"[52] and "mysterious presence" "enact the paradoxes of theological vision as described by certain of the religious, especially those often called mystical theologians."[53] Moreover, he observes that for the Pseudo-Dionysius, "the cosmos appears to the human being both as divine light to see (the universe is a theophany of light revealing God, who is an invisible light) and light that must be unseen precisely because this light veils the dark light of the transcendently absent divine light."[54] In the Dionysian vision, one often neglects the light that conditions all things by seeing only the things it illuminates. Yet, beyond the illumination of things is the dark, divine light, or light itself. In Kosky's view, the Pseudo-Dionysius, like Marion after him, outlines a paradoxical approach to vision, in which the human occupies a position "where it is all seeing in a totally brilliant universe of light, yet sees nothing clearly or distinctly."[55] Contrary to the mastery of Weber's disenchanted subject, mystical vision is never complete or clear, but it's not for lack of light, but because of its excess.

Similar to the Dionysian mystical cosmos, Turrell's light sculptures present "light that is itself a revelation," but it does not "ensure their ultimate availability for the eye, mind, or hand that seeks to lay hold of what is revealed or presented before it."[56] Viewing what appears at first to be an indiscrete, floating red box, but that then changes color, and that refuses objectivity because it consists of light rather than durable material, Kosky concludes it is a "mysterious presence, the in itself of the light that stays itself by shining, saturates it and is indistinct from it."[57] He concludes that the experience transforms him—uprooting him from "our anchor in the solid and stable, the certain and secure, the objective. Such experiences save us by saving the invisible from oblivion, as if our fates were joined to that of the invisible."[58] Thus, in his mind, *Pleiades* uncovers the complexity of vision, and proves Taylor's point that seeing is an "endless quest."[59] In this sense, the practice of contemplation is secularly salvific, saving us not through divine redemption, but by dispelling the illusory vision of the world as a masterable totality void of mystery.

In line with Turrell's approach, Kosky maintains that the formation and durability of an enchanted secularity rest on our willingness to attend to a world—the *real* world—that resists reduction. In other words, we must prevent our vision from contracting if we want to see accurately:

> The power of objectivity to compel corresponding action, Turrell implies, is a myth, one meant to deny the enormity of our responsibility for letting things fall into oblivion or saving them from oblivion. I must remain observant and not neglect the things that appeal to me if their evidence, however great or small, is to count. This burden on my observance is all the greater the more fragile the appearances are, the quieter their appeal; the claim of their tenuous existence is ever so precarious and not likely to count for very much unless I take it into account.[60]

Kosky's analysis of *Pleiades* maps on to Marion's outline of saturated phenomena, whose "excess renders it irregardable and difficult to master,"[61] "incommensurable not measurable (immense), unmeasured,"[62] and "free from any analogy with already seen, objectified, comprehended experience."[63] The saturation resulting from Turrell's sculpture of light is in Kosky's view just one example of phenomena that saturate the gaze, rendering one unable to see or know all that presents itself, and yet somehow giving one the eyes to see what's *really there.*[64]

However, unlike Marion's work, Kosky's analysis approaches saturation without conjoining itself to either a philosophy or a theology of revelation, and in this sense his enchanted secularity is a fruitful example of the potential and limits of Marion's approach to saturation. Following Kosky's analysis, we can say that saturation is a universally accessible, first-person experience available without reference to phenomena “from elsewhere.” He makes no claims to the otherworldly, nor is his goal to counter Weberian disenchantment by accounting for the divine philosophically. Contrary to Marion, he does not conclude that saturation is an indication of divine revelation. Instead, he demonstrates that through the patience and willingness to put oneself in the position to experience saturation—an experience that renders a vision of these phenomena as irreducible and unmasterable—one comes away with a vision of *this world* as irreducible, indeterminate, and ultimately unknowable.

THE BEGINNING, AND END, OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

One of the principal challenges currently facing philosophy of religion is the question surrounding its usefulness for the study of religion. In only the past few years, works by Thomas Lewis, Ryan Coyne, and Noreen Kawajha, in addition to recent contributions by Nicholas Trakakis, Kevin Schillbrak, Timothy Knepper, and others, have approached this question from the perspectives of history, ethics, and philosophy. One hopes for the continued reflection on the nature and function of philosophy of religion, especially as it concerns the context of the academic study of religion writ large, and dialogue among its ranks. In this vein, my aim has been to demonstrate that one of the ongoing contributions of philosophy of religion to religious studies has been sustained reflection on secularity. Such reflection has disrupted the border between the religious and the secular and called upon theorists to rethink the indiscretion of each domain. Moreover, the disruption of these categories has included the problematization of the philosophical core of the category of the secular, including influential accounts of it by Max Weber and his heirs. The century-long practice of philosophizing with religion, rather than against it, provides clear evidence that secularity should not be equated with disenchantment. Rather than a form of cryptotheology, this tradition is a resource for the articulation of nonsecularist secularities, all the more relevant given the vigorous discussions surrounding postsecularity within the contemporary study of religion.

However, as critics have pointed out, it is true that philosophy of religion remains dominated by scholars of Christianity, even if there have been significant contributions from scholars working in a diverse set of religious traditions from around the globe. And, as in all sectors of the academy, philosophy in particular, there is a pressing need for more gender and racial diversity among its practitioners. In methodological terms, it remains to be seen how far the apophatic analogy and the model of encounter might carry philosophy of religion beyond the Abrahamic religions in general and the mystical traditions specifically. These are questions and issues that must be faced head-on by the field if it is to do justice to the themes, communities, and phenomena it claims to engage. In the meantime, my hope is that the foregoing analysis has demonstrated that philosophy of religion has—and should have—a place in the big tent of the academic study of religion. My hope is that outlining the end of philosophy of religion as a complex encounter with religious phenomena will help to persuade both critics and philosophers that we stand at the beginning, rather than the end, of its life in religious studies.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION: PHILOSOPHY'S "TURN TO RELIGION" AND SECULARITIES BEYOND SECULARISM

1. While there is no uniform "secularization thesis," but rather multiple theses concerning secularization, I use the term as shorthand for the three main components of secularization theses: the eventual decline, privatization, and individualization of religion, as outlined in José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), chap. 1.
2. Ibid.
3. See David Martin, *On Secularization: Towards A Revised General Theory* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005).
4. Peter L. Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 2.
5. Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Desacralizing the Secularization Theory," in *Secularization and Fundamentalism Reconsidered*, ed. Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson D. Shupe (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 4.
6. Ibid., 13.
7. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 295.
8. For a helpful analysis of this line of criticism, see Thomas A. Carlson, *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude and Creation of the Human* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), chaps. 1 and 2.
9. For only a few of many works on the subject, see Rei Terada, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion After the "Death of the Subject"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Antonio Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious*

Brain (New York: Pantheon, 2010); Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Mark C. Taylor, *The Moment of Complexity: Emerging Network Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

10. Death of God theology captured the attention of many confessional and nonconfessional academics from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. See Thomas J. Altizer and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966).
11. In a well-known cultural touchstone concerning the death of God, *Time* magazine asked "Is God Dead?" on its cover from April 8, 1966.
12. Taylor, *The Moment of Complexity*, 7.
13. See, for example, Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, eds., *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Robert P. Scharlemann and David E. Klemm, eds., *Negation and Theology* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992); Harold G. Coward and Toby Foshay, eds., *Derrida and Negative Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).
14. Hent de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 5.
15. Ibid., 27.
16. For two of the most influential examples, see Dominique Janicaud et al., *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000); Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).
17. See Clayton Crockett, B. Keith Putt, and Jeffrey W. Robbins, eds., *The Future of Continental Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); Kevin Schilbrack, *Philosophy and the Study of Religions: A Manifesto* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2014); Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, eds., *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern: New Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010).
18. Knepper, *Ends of Philosophy of Religion: Telos and Terminus* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 9.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 49n2–5.
21. Jeffrey L. Kosky, *Arts of Wonder: Enchanting Secularity—Walter De Maria, Diller + Scofidio, James Turrell, Andy Goldsworthy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), xii.
22. Ibid., xiii.
23. Tyler Roberts, *Encountering Religion: Responsibility and Criticism After Secularism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 107.
24. Ibid., 89–90.

25. It is important to note that the type of "encounter" Roberts proposes and that I am sketching here can be interpreted as an attempt at "reenchantment." I am hesitant to use this term, however, because it now bears a wide array of connotations. If what I outline in this work is a form of what Kosky and Connolly call "enchanted secularity," the emphasis is on "secularity" rather than on the "enchantment." By referencing enchantment or reenchantment I do not analyze how and why religious devotion, new religious movements, or alternative forms of spirituality have either remained surprisingly intact in the modern context or emerged vigorously on a global scale. My interest is not in enchantment as the persistence of belief in mystery despite secularity. My interest is in enchantment as part of a more expansive vision of the secular.
26. de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*, 185.
27. Ibid., 243. My principal analysis concerns only Heidegger's work up to 1927, and thus I do not challenge de Vries's reading of Heidegger's later work.
28. Ibid., 241.
29. Thomas A. Carlson, *Indiscretion: Finitude and the Naming of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 244.
30. Ibid., 245–246.
31. Ibid., 247.
32. Ibid., 254.
33. Ibid.
34. Charles Hirschkind, "Is There a Secular Body?," *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 4 (November 2011): 643.
35. Ibid.

1. DIFFERENT WORLDS: WEBER, HEIDEGGER, AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

1. See Steven Galt Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning: Paths Toward Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001).
2. For a helpful guide to this literature, see the essays in Tom Rockmore, ed., *Heidegger, German Idealism, and Neo-Kantianism* (Amherst: Humanity, 2000).
3. My claim is not that Heidegger intentionally set out to rebut Weber's position. I argue, instead, that due to the Neo-Kantian origins of their conceptions of the human and the world, Heidegger's phenomenology is an alternative account to Weber's, one formulated in reaction to their shared philosophical origins.
4. Heinrich Rickert, *Die Grenzen der Naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung: Eine Logische Einleitung in die Historischen Wissenschaften* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1929), 536. Translated in abridged form as *The Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science: A Logical Introduction to the Historical Sciences*, trans. Guy Oakes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 141.

5. Benjamin Crowe, "Faith and Value: Heinrich Rickert's Theory of Religion," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71, no. 4 (October 2010): 632.
6. Ibid., 633.
7. Malcolm H. MacKinnon, "Max Weber's Disenchantment: Lineages of Kant and Channing," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 1, no. 3 (November 2001): 335.
8. Gabriel de La Luz points out the ramifications of this position: "For Kant, as well as for Weber then, there is such a thing as cognitive objectivity. Partial to Kant's devastating critique of traditional metaphysics, Weber embraces the individual's actions and relation to the world as the sole source for knowledge. Thus any speculative musings on the nature of God or ultimate values should be expunged from the domains of science and rational inquiry." Gabriel de La Luz, "Max Weber's Theoretical Paradox: Modernity's Challenge to Autonomy," *Revistas de Ciencias Sociales* 21 (2009): 100.
9. Donald Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies* (London: Palgrave, 2000), xi.
10. Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 16.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Tyler Roberts, *Encountering Religion: Responsibility and Criticism After Secularism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 45.
14. Ibid., 105.
15. Ibid., 90.
16. Cited in Ilya I. Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature* (New York: Bantam, 1984), 36.
17. Ibid., 6.
18. Ibid., 7.
19. For two thorough and influential studies of Heidegger's pre–*Being and Time* life and work, see John Van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Theodore J. Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time"* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).
20. In Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1993), 106–107. Translated in Martin Heidegger, *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to "Being and Time" and Beyond*, ed. John van Buren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 70.
21. Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning*, 158.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. S. J. McGrath, *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy: Phenomenology for the Godforsaken* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), chaps. 4 and 5; Peter Eli Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 63.
25. The ideal manifestly has a content; it has substantive determinations. It is, however, an ideal, not a factual content but an ought relation. This ought character

stands over against every Being as the moment of ideality and supraempirical validity. Therefore, in the meaning of teleological method, something essentially more and essentially different is presupposed: *the givenness of the ought*, such that the absolute ought becomes *primordial objectivity*. How does an ought give itself at all, what is its subject-correlate (DP 44–45/36)?

26. "This science of the origin [*Wissenschaft vom Ursprung*] is such that not only does it not need to make presuppositions, but, because it is not theory, it cannot make them: it is prior to or beyond the sphere where talk of presuppositions makes sense" (DP 96–97/75).
27. Two of Heidegger's courses are titled *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, both translated as *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, one from 1919/1920 (GA 58) and one from 1927 (GA 24). The course from 1927 is better known than the 1919/1920 course, which was translated into English only in 2013. Hereafter, I use the abbreviations BPPa to designate the course from 1919/1920 and BPPb to designate the course from 1927.
28. Mark C. Taylor, *Tears* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 106.

2. PHILOSOPHIZING WITH RELIGION: SECULAR REENCHANTMENT IN THE EARLY HEIDEGGER

1. See S. J. McGrath, *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy: Phenomenology for the Godforsaken* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013); John Van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Theodore J. Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time"* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995); Christian Sommer, *Heidegger, Aristote, Luther: Les sources aristotéliciennes et néotestamentaires d'Etre et temps* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2005); Ryan Coyne, *Heidegger's Confessions: The Remains of Saint Augustine in "Being and Time" and Beyond* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).
2. Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001) is perhaps the most influential work in this category for the way it forged a path for the blossoming of the "theological" turn in French phenomenology. However, there are several other comparable works. In the tradition of his Oxonian predecessor, John MacQuarrie, the cotranslator of *Being and Time* and the author of one of the first "Heideggerian" theologies (*An Existentialist Theology* [New York: Penguin, 1973]), George Pattison's large volume *God and Being: An Enquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) uses Heidegger's reopening of the question of Being as a guide for reconsidering the relationship between God and Being, a theme that has received a large amount of attention in recent years. Pattison takes a careful and sometimes critical approach to recent French and Anglophone studies that have tried to demonstrate the possibility of surpassing ontotheology by demonstrating that God is without or otherwise than Being. For Pattison, the goal is not so much

to surpass ontotheology in light of Heidegger's criticism, but for theology to be aware of its tendencies and temptations. Sonia Sikka's study *Forms of Transcendence: Heidegger and Medieval Mystical Theology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997) operates in a similar vein by exploring Heidegger's analysis of the ontological difference alongside four mystical thinkers: Bonaventure, Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, and Jan van Ruusbroec. See also Jean Greisch, *L'arbre de vie et l'arbre du savoir* (Paris: Cerf, 2000).

3. Heidegger, GA 61:197; *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 148.
4. Kisiel, *Genesis of "Being and Time*," 151.
5. Heidegger, GA 61:197; *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, 148.
6. Heidegger, GA 26:211; *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 165n9. It is worth mentioning that in the same note Heidegger argues that one function of philosophy's reinclusion of "holiness" or sacrality into its vision of the human and the world is to undermine the rampant "phony religiosity" of his time: "The above is purposely not dealt with in the lectures, because precisely here and now, with the enormously phony religiosity, the dialectical illusion is especially great. 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?"
7. During the last two decades, the publication of Heidegger's early Freiburg lecture courses has revealed the astonishing breadth of his thought during the decade before the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927. Hence, even a brief overview of all of Heidegger's interlocutors from 1916 to 1927 would be an extensive task. During the period from 1916 to 1927, Heidegger either wrote or lectured on Paul, Meister Eckhart, Duns Scotus, Emmanuel Kant, Martin Luther, Augustine, Aristotle, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, Edmund Husserl, and Ernst Troeltsch, and was influenced by Rudolph Bultmann and Hans Overbeck, among numerous others. Only Heidegger's readings of figures who contributed significantly to the development of Heidegger's understanding of the themes of "world," anxiety, and temporality are analyzed in this chapter, namely, Aristotle, Paul, and Augustine.

   One of Heidegger's means of destructing Aristotle was the work of the young Martin Luther. In *Heidegger, Aristote, Luther: Les sources aristotéliciennes et néo-testamentaires d'ëtre et Temps*, Christian Sommer has demonstrated convincingly that Heidegger read Luther's theology of the cross in conjunction with Paul's letters in a way that enabled Heidegger to understand how anxiety about the unanticipatable end of Dasein's existence can lead to authentic modes of Being-in-the-world. In this chapter, I examine Heidegger's engagement with Paul instead of Luther because of its continuity with the courses from 1919–1920.

Analyzing Heidegger's early courses on Paul and Augustine allows for a chronological approach to the development of Heidegger's phenomenology during the early Freiburg period. This approach does not mean to discount Luther's importance for Heidegger, especially given the paper he gave in Rudolph Bultmann's seminar on Luther's understanding of sin, among other references. Exploring Paul's influence on Heidegger provides the opportunity to examine Heidegger's thinking near the time of the war semester course in 1919, in which his methodological break from the Southwest Neo-Kantians is first articulated.

8. Heidegger connects Weber's typological method to his objectivation of history: "The *first* mode requires the typology in order to refer the historical to the absolutely valid world (ideas)—history is 'ideographical' [ίδιο νε γράφειν] (Windelband), it works with 'ideal types' (Max Weber)" (PRL 44/30).
9. "Rickert says that the human individual is, in his singularity, nothing other than what he achieved for the values of culture. With this, the concept of the individual is grasped purely Platonically" (PRL 50/34).
10. Heidegger's criticism of ontotheology has become a touchstone for contemporary philosophy of religion concerned with demonstrating the plausibility and legitimacy of belief in God in the contemporary context. See GA 11; *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).
11. Matthew I. Burch, "The Existential Sources of Phenomenology: Heidegger on Formal Indication," *European Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 2 (June 2013): 264–265.
12. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, sections 63 and 64.
13. Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, "The Poetics of World: Origins of Poetic Theory in Heidegger's *Phenomenology of Religious Life*," in *A Companion to Heidegger's "Phenomenology of Religious Life*," ed. S. J. McGrath and Andrzej Wiercinski, 239–262 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 249.
14. Heidegger's interest is not in the ontic conditions of Paul's letter, but the relational unity that enabled the experience of himself and the community of Thessalonians as religious selves: "We grasp situation purely formally as unity of a diversity [*Einheit einer Mannigfaltigkeit*]. What makes up its unity remains indeterminate—but the situation is not a homogeneous field of relations: the situational structure does not run in one or more dimensions, but rather entirely otherwise. Already the starting point of a phenomenological study as having the manner of an order and the attempt to a material description fails because of the phenomenon itself. One must return ever again to the point of departure. The departure is to be taken from the having-relation of that which is 'like an I.' [*Man muß immer wieder zu Ansatzpunkt zurückkommen. Von der Habesbeziehung des Ichlichen ist der Ausgang zu nehmen*]" (PRL 90/63). The "situation" is not simply a set of relations among beings, but the relational whole that enables the relation networks of beings as a whole. As he indicates in the appendix to his course on Aristotle from 1921–1922, Heidegger was trying to unfold the

components of facticity in order to gain an understanding of the "decisive basic situation [*entschiedende Grundsituation*]" of the human self in regard to its factical existence.

15. See section 68 of *Being and Time*.
16. In his introduction to his translation of the version of *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* from 1927, Albert Hofstadter helpfully summarizes the lectures' content and significance: "The first division of the projected part two of *Being and Time*, on Kant's doctrine of schematism and time, as first stage of a problematic of Temporality, was published by Heidegger separately in the book *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. The second division, on the ontological foundation of Descartes's '*cogito sum*' receives extended treatment in *Basic Problems*, but in a new form. Heidegger now takes Kant rather than Descartes before him, or Hegel after him, as the most suitable representative of the problem. . . . Since the chapter on the distinction of *res extensa* and *res cogitans* is preceded by a chapter on the medieval distinction, derived from Aristotle, between *essentia* and *existentia*, we are actually given more than had previously been projected in the original design as far as the history of ontology is concerned, for the extremely important topic of essence and existence as articulation of being has been brought into the picture. This medieval distinction is 'destroyed' and the path opened for a more assured notion of the articulation of being. In this respect *Basic Problems* overpasses the limits of Heidegger's stated plan for *Being and Time*, incorporating more of the destruction of traditional ontology than originally envisaged. The third division of part 2 of *Being and Time* was to have contained a discussion of Aristotle's treatise on time as discriminant of the phenomenal basis and limits of ancient ontology. That discussion also appears in *Basic Problems*. . . . Thus two of the three divisions planned for part 2 of *Being and Time* receive extended coverage in *Basic Problems*, which does not have to contain the other (first) division since it is published separately. Furthermore, as the preface to *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* explains, its essentials had already been given in a lecture course during the winter semester of 1925–1926. . . . If, then, we leave aside the topic of Kant's schematism and the time, the remainder of the plan for *Being and Time* is carried out in *Basic Problems*" (BPPb, xvi–xvii).
17. Heidegger makes the same claim in sections 5 and 6 of *Being and Time*. Furthermore, Heidegger's analysis of Aristotle's conception of time in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* is an expanded version of the analysis of "ordinary time" in section 81 of *Being and Time*.
18. "The thing is merely there as such, i.e. it is real, it exists. Reality is therefore not an environmental characteristic, but lies in the essence of thingliness. It is a specifically theoretical characteristic. The meaningful is de-interpreted [*ent-deutet*] into this residue of being real. Experience of the environment is de-vivified into the residue of recognizing something as real."

19. "Sofern die Zeitlichkeit durch dieses Auf-zu, das Zurck-zu, und das Bei bestimmt ist, ist sie außer sich. Die Zeit ist in sich selbst als Zukunft, gewesenheit und Gegenwart entreckt. Als zuknftes ist das Dasein zu seinem gewesenen Seinkennen, als gewesenes zu seiner gewesenheit, als gegenwartigendes zu anderem Seienden entrekt."
20. Ryan Coyne, "The Figure of Augustine in Heidegger's Path," *Journal of Religion* 91, no. 3 (July 2011): 367.
21. A comprehensive analysis of Heidegger's relationship to Augustine is impossible here. For a comprehensive analysis of Augustine's role in the development of Heidegger's philosophy, see Coyne, *Heidegger's Confessions*.
22. Jean-Luc Marion has recently undertaken a systematic phenomenological interpretation of Augustine's *Confessions* in *Au lieu de soi: L'approche de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008). Translated as *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).
23. "D.h. Im suchen dieses Etwas als Gott komme ich selbst dabei in eine ganz andere Rolle. Ich bin nicht nur der, von dem das Suchen ausgeht und irgendwo sich hinbewegt, oder in dem das Suchen geschieht, sondern der Vollzug des Suchens selbst ist estwas von dem selbst. Was heißt ich 'bin'?"
24. Coyne, "Augustine," 371.
25. Ibid., 369. It is worth quoting a lengthy passage from the article where Coyne situates the place of Descartes in the young Heidegger's thought: "The critique of Cartesian subjectivity and the retrieval of Augustinian thought were initially linked for Heidegger. They were flip sides of the same coin. The earliest references attest to this. On September 13, 1920, for example, Heidegger wrote to the young Karl Löwith, offering him some advice on preparing for Heidegger's upcoming Winter Semester (hereafter WS) 1920 practicum on Descartes' *Meditationes de prima philosophia*. Here it is striking to see that shortly before his lectures on Paul's Epistles Heidegger placed both his reading of Descartes as well as his phenomenology of religious life in the service of a single aim—namely, that of 'reversing' the Cartesian *cogito sum*: 'For the "*cogito*," *all of Christian philosophy* comes into question for me, since I want to see it *backwards*, look at it *in verso*, so to speak. It is only important that you know something of the other metaphysical treatises and the *Regulae*, so that the perversity of [Descartes'] epistemological resolution can be studied.' Elsewhere, Heidegger made much of Descartes' alleged 'perversion' of the ego." The letter Coyne cites is quoted in Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time*," 554n10.
26. Ryan David Coyne, *The End of Care: Augustine and the Development Of Heidegger's Philosophy* (PhD diss., Divinity School, University of Chicago, 2008), 152.
27. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 33.
28. Ibid.

29. Thomas A. Carlson, *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude and Creation of the Human* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 3.
30. Ibid., 23.
31. Ibid., 203.

3. EXCENDENCE AND HETEROLOGY: RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR IN INTERWAR PARIS

1. Jocelyn Benoist calls it the "Levinasian turn" in French phenomenology. Benoist, *L'idée de phénoménologie* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2001). Janicaud's later work *La phénoménologie éclatée* (Paris: Éditions de l'Éclat, 1999) focuses on Marion and Henry.
2. See Merold Westphal, ed., *Postmodern Philosophy and Christian Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001); Westphal, *Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Richard Kearney, *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); John D. Caputo, *The Insistence of God: A Theology of Perhaps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).
3. For the most important juxtaposition of Heidegger and Bataille by a French thinker, see Jean-Luc Nancy, *La communauté désoeuvrée* (Paris: C. Bourgois, 2004), translated as Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). See also Rebecca Comay, "Gifts Without Presents: Economies of 'Experience' in Bataille and Heidegger," *Yale French Studies* 78 (1990); and John Lechte, "Thinking the (Ecstatic) Essential: Heidegger After Bataille," *Thesis Eleven* 52, no. 1 (1998).
4. See Alexander Irwin, *Saints of the Impossible: Bataille, Weil, and the Politics of the Sacred* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).
5. For an exhaustive account of Bataille's life and work, see Michel Surya, *Georges Bataille: An Intellectual Biography*, trans. Kryzstof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson (London: Verso, 2002).
6. Stuart Kendall, *Georges Bataille* (London: Reaktion, 2007), 21.
7. See Dominique Janicaud, *Heidegger en France*, 2 vols. (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001); Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927–1961* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Tom Rockmore, *Heidegger and French Philosophy: Humanism, Antihumanism, and Being* (London: Routledge, 1995); David Pettigrew and François Raffoul, eds., *French Interpretations of Heidegger: An Exceptional Reception* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008); Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism That Is Not Humanist Emerges in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

8. See Janicaud, *Heidegger*, vol. 1.
9. See Pettigrew and Raffoul, *French Interpretations of Heidegger*.
10. See Rockmore, *Heidegger*, chaps. 4–7.
11. See ibid., 40–58.
12. This is exemplified in Jean Wahl, *Vers le concret* (Paris: Librarie Philosophique, 1932).
13. "The complementarity principle holds that it is impossible to provide adequate calculations of the movement and actions of electrons without using both *wave* and *particle* computations with particle ones. But for Bachelard, Kojève, Koyré, and other contemporaries, the philosophical novelty of quanta rested with the uncertainty principle and its development beyond the claims of complementarity. *Uncertainty* holds that in the study of electrons, the physicist cannot concurrently determine both their location and speed but will *necessarily* err on either of these computations. To locate and gauge the moving electron, the physicist needs to shoot photons at it, photons whose energy necessarily impacts the electron's movement and speed. Consequently, the observer/physicist becomes involved in the experiment, but *also* becomes incapable of predicting what the electron under observation will do next with this newly acquired energy. This result of this is that the determinist foundation of post-Newtonian physics—that such a movement must be fully observable—can no longer be sustained."
14. Husserl was already widely known as the father of philosophical phenomenology. Lévinas was interested in his work for the way in which it opened the question of ontology in a manner that the Neo-Kantian philosophy did not.
15. Cited in Peter Eli Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 101. See also François Poirié, *Emmanuel Lévinas: Qui etes vous?* (Paris: La Manufacture 1990), 78. As these sources indicate, there is debate over how positive Lévinas was about Heidegger, and Lévinas's daughter claims that by 1929 one could see the tendencies in the German philosopher that would lead to his later political failures.
16. Emmanuel Lévinas, "Martin Heidegger et l'ontologie," *Revue Philosophique* (May-June 1932).
17. Jean Wahl began lecturing at the Sorbonne in 1936, but he was exiled to the United States during World War II. He wrote the first book on Hegel in France the twentieth century, which, among other things, dispels the myth that Kojève introduced Hegel to French thought. It was essentially Wahl who did so in his book *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris, 1929).
18. Jean Wahl, "Nietzsche et la mort de Dieu (notes sur le Nietzsche de Jaspers)," *Acéphale* 2 (January 1937): 22–24.
19. Emmanuel Lévinas, Paul Ricoeur, and Xavier Tilliette, *Jean Wahl and Gabriel Marcel* (Paris: Éditions-Beauchesne, 1976).

20. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Random House, 1968), 19.
21. Emmanuel Lévinas, "Comme un consentement à l'horrible," *Le nouvel observateur*, January 22, 1988, 82; translated in *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (Winter 1989): 485. Cited in Stefanos Geroulanos, "The Anthropology of Exit: Bataille on Heidegger and Fascism," *October* 177 (Summer 2006): 7.
22. For a careful record of these indications see Geroulanos, "Anthropology of Exit," 7–9.
23. Ibid., 8.
24. Emmanuel Lévinas, *On Escape*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 52.
25. Ibid., 73.
26. Ibid., 51.
27. Ibid., 52.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., 54.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., 54–55.
32. Ibid., 73.
33. Alexandre Kojève, "Note sur Hegel et Heidegger," *Rue Descartes* 7 (June 1993): 40.
34. Geroulanos, "Anthropology of Exit," 8.
35. Emmanuel Lévinas, "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism," trans. Sean Hand, *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 1 (Autumn 1990): 63.
36. I examined these documents in person from September to November 2010, and July 2017. See BNF Fonds Bataille, Boites 4 and 13.
37. Georges Bataille, "Critique of Heidegger: Philosophy of Fascism," trans. Stefanos Geroulanos, *October 117* (Summer 2006): 26.
38. Bataille, "Le valuer d'usage de D.A.F. Sade," in *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 2:62; "The Use-Value of D.A.F. de Sade," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1985), 97. The theme of homogeneity preoccupied Bataille's work from 1929 to 1936.
39. Bataille, "Le valuer d'usage de D.A.F. Sade," 61; "The Use-Value of D.A.F. de Sade," 97. Bataille's heterology is opposed to the "representation" of the world in a manner reminiscent of Heidegger's criticisms of technology. See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (San Francisco: Harper, 1982), 115–154.
40. Bataille, "La notion de dépense," in *Œuvres complètes*, 1:305; "The Notion of Expenditure," in *Visions of Excess*, 118.
41. Bataille, "Le labryinthe," in *Œuvres complètes*, 1:434–435; "The Labyrinth," in *Visions of Excess*, 172–173.
42. Geroulanos, "Anthropology of Exit," 16.
43. Bataille, "Critique of Heidegger," 28–29.

44. Ibid., 29–31.
45. Ibid., 27.
46. Ibid.
47. Geroulanos, "Anthropology of Exit," 23.
48. Bataille, "Sacrifices," in *Œuvres complètes*, 1:89; "Sacrifices," in *Visions of Excess*, 130.
49. Bataille, "Sacrifices," 89; "Sacrifices," 130.
50. Bataille, "Sacrifices," 89–90; "Sacrifices," 130.
51. Bataille, "Sacrifices," 91; "Sacrifices," 131.
52. Bataille, "Sacrifices," 90; "Sacrifices," 131.
53. Bataille, "Sacrifices," 91; "Sacrifices," 132.
54. Bataille, "Sacrifices," 91; "Sacrifices," 132.
55. Bataille, "Sacrifices," 91–92; "Sacrifices," 132.
56. Bataille, "Sacrifices," 92; "Sacrifices," 132.
57. See Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism Without Reserve," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), 317–350.
58. Bataille, "Sacrifices," 93; "Sacrifices," 133.
59. Bataille, "Sacrifices," 92; "Sacrifices," 132.
60. "De l'existentialisme au primat de l'économie," in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 11; translated as "From Existentialism to the Primacy of Economy" (1947), in Jill Robbins, *Altered Reading: Lévinas and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 161. "Hegel, Mort, Sacrifice" first appeared in *Deucalion* 1955, and was later published in English as "Hegel, Death, Sacrifice," trans. Jonathan Strauss, *Yale French Studies* 78 (1990), *On Bataille*, 9–28; "Hegel, l'Homme, l'Histoire," in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 11. In the following pages I have cited the English translations where possible. In the instances of untranslated portions of the text, I have cited the original document from the BNF Fonds Bataille. In these cases, all translations are my own.
61. See BNF Fonds Bataille, Boites 2, 3, and 4. BNF Fonds Bataille, Boite 4, XII. "La présente publication ne saurait se substituer à l'Introduction, mais elle a le mérite de donner en ordre un aperçu d'une philosophie qui n'est pas nouvelle, qui toutefois placant sous un jour absolument nouveau la pensée de Hegel, qui a seule aujourd'hui, je la crois le pouvoir de révéler totalement l'homme à la conscience et qui seule n'est étrangère à aucun coté du monde présent."
62. Bataille, "Hegel, Death, Sacrifice," 11.
63. BNF Fonds Bataille, Boite 2, IV: "L'extrême simplicité et la continuelle ampleur de vue, le terre-à-terre précise, la violence et l'extrême nudité des aperçus envahissaient l'espirit par renversement. Ce qui nous stupéfiait avait exactement ce sens: la parole de Kojève d'emblée, situait le mouvement de nos pensées, si souvent occupées d'objets concrets et familiers, dans le mouvement global de ce-qui-est, de ce qui relève en principe des mots vides, ou des mots qui vident le tête.

"En un sens Kojève n'exposait pas de philosophie personnelle, mais celle de Hegel, celle que donne, ou implique, en particulier la *Phénoménologie de l'Esprit*. Pratiquement, ce livre, dont il est possible de dire avec un souci de précision qu'il est le livre des livres, demeura plus d'un siècle inconnu. Je pense, je veux savoir ce que je suis, ce qui m'étonne: dans cette mesure il n'est pas de livre qui ait un intérêt comparable pour moi, car il est le seul a répondre totalement au problème, total que j'énonce: la seul à placer la question où elle doit l'être, en un mouvement continuel de la situation (donnée matériellement, dans les humbles limites de l' 'être': l'être n'est pas donné pas son autonomie, mais dans un dépendance qui en limite le sens, jamais ce n'est l'être et même jamais ce n'est l'Homme) à cette hauteur détachée qui est à l'extrême opposé de l'être. Dans ce terre-à-terre de la description, le mouvement intelligible de l'Histoire, de la mort, de l'angoisse dans l'Histoire, pourchassait dans ses retranchements l'esprit qui avait eu peur d'une réalité trop forte."

64. BNF Fonds Bataille, Boite 4.33. "Only Heidegger compels admiration."
65. BNF Fonds Bataille Boite 4.30: "Mais la représentation que Heidegger a donnée de l'être mortel est voisin de celle de Hegel. 'Heidegger,' dit Kojève, 'a repris les thèmes hegeliens de la mort.' . . . Et Kojève admet que l'on n'aurait pu, sans Heidegger, comprendre la Phénoménologie de Hegel,—que généralement l'on n'aurait pu comprendre Hegel."
66. BNF Fonds Bataille, Boite 4.33: "Non seulement il sut réouvrit dans la représentation de l'être, la perspective vertigineuse de la mort, mais à l'expérience religieuse traditionnelle (comme Hegel, il étudia la théologie), il sut lier celle de la philosophie d'école (le associant comme Hegel, à l'athéisme)."
67. BNF Fonds Bataille, Boite 4.33–4.34: "Toutefois, si l'on met, sans prudence et sans passion, l'accent sur le sacré, ce que Heidegger nomme plus généralement l'authentique, voulût-on se garder 'd'émettre un jugement de valeur,' c'est la porte ouverte (comme elle le fut communément dans l'histoire) à la vulgaire extravagance: (c'est le sacré et le profane)."
68. On Bataille's reading, this dissolution of the heterogeneous into the homogeneous opens the door to "vulgar extravagance," which seems to be a reference to Heidegger's involvement in German National Socialism. By the mid-1930s, news of Heidegger's participation in the Nazi Party had spread throughout the Parisian intellectual community, and thus by the 1940s many of those thinkers who had first read, translated, and appropriated Heidegger's work into their own had become heavily critical of it.
69. BNF Fonds Bataille, 4.34: "Décidément, cette vie ne semble pas dominée par une terrible passion: ce qui semble avoir dominé Heidegger fut sans doute le désir intellectuel de révéler l'être (l'être non l'existence) par le discours (par le langage philosophique)." In the following paragraph, Bataille elaborates on this thought: "On vit mal chez Heidegger ce qui répondait à la passion de Kierkegaard, folle et criée de l'authentique en lui est 'conscience de l'authentique,'

ou le nostalgie de rares moments authentiques, que suit un vie d'études professorales, adonnés à la connaissance de l'authentique."

70. Bataille, "Le valuer d'usage de D.A.F. Sade," 61; "The Use-Value of D.A.F. de Sade," 96.
71. Bataille, "Le valuer d'usage de D.A.F. Sade," 61; "The Use-Value of D.A.F. de Sade," 96.
72. Bataille, *Le coupable* in *Œuvres complètes*, 5:542; *Guilty*, trans. Stuart Kendall (New York: State University of New York Press, 2011), 213.
73. BNF Fonds Bataille, Boite 4.34: "il est un seul remède: opposer formellement l'authentique et le viable, ne tenir pour vie authentique qu'une consumation intense, privée de sens et rigoureusement inutile."
74. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 194.
75. Ibid., 197.
76. Ibid., 198 and 200.
77. I attend to this in the following chapter.
78. I attend to the history of interpretation regarding Derrida's work in chapters 4 and 5.

4. A PROPHET OF THE IMPOSSIBLE: BATAILLE'S MYSTICAL TURN AND CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

1. Thomas A. Carlson, *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude and Creation of the Human* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 18.
2. For two recent examples, see Claude Romano, *L'événement et monde* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), translated as *Event and World*, trans. Shane Mackinlay (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), and Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Expérience et absolu* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), translated as *Experience and the Absolute*, trans. Mark Raftery (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), which represent the ongoing importance of Heidegger's analysis of worldhood for contemporary continental thought. Both works undertake a fresh analysis of this relationship from a general dissatisfaction with Heidegger's articulation of it.
3. Michel Henry, *L'essence de la manifestation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), translated as *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973); Jean-Luc Marion, *L'idole et la distance: Cinq études* (Paris: B. Grasset, 1977), translated as *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).
4. Bataille, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 7:297; *Theory of Religion*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: Zone, 1992), 27.
5. Although Bataille does not figure in his analysis, Robert Pogue Harrison's understanding of burial in *The Dominion of the Dead* (Chicago: University of

Chicago Press, 2005) is a similar attempt to reorient the Heideggerian conception of Being-toward-death to include the human act of burial.

6. Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, 7:305; *Theory of Religion*, 41.
7. Carlson, *The Indiscrete Image*, 257.
8. Jeffrey L. Kosky, *Arts of Wonder: Enchanting Secularity—Walter De Maria, Diller + Scofidio, James Turrell, Andy Goldsworthy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 5.
9. Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, 6:56; *On Nietzsche*, trans. Bruce Boone (St. Paul: Paragon House, 1992), 35.
10. In his discussion of the contours of the "new theology" developed by Bataille and Blanchot during the early 1940s, Kevin Hart points out that Bataille would have been familiar with both Thomas's theology, given his medieval training and devout Catholic faith as a young man, and with the various forms of Thomisms swirling about early-twentieth-century France, given his short time training for the clergy. However, as Hart says, Bataille's *Atheological Summa* is a displacement of the idea of a transcendent God, who, in the Thomism to which he had been exposed, was the confusion of reason and the sacred: "Bataille was not at all interested in retrieving an authentic Thomist teaching, but he was intent on displacing and parodying the Thomism to which he had been exposed." Kevin Hart, *The Dark Gaze: Maurice Blanchot and the Sacred* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 41.
11. Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, 6:12; *On Nietzsche*, xx.
12. The surpassing of the God of theology is for Bataille also a surpassing of the divinization of reason effected by the Western philosophical tradition, most notably for Bataille in Hegel. In this way, Bataille's criticism of theology parallels certain components of Heidegger's *Destruktion* and later criticism of ontotheology.
13. Hart, *The Dark Gaze*, 3–4.
14. Ibid., 36.
15. Ibid., 25.
16. Peter Tracey Connor, *Georges Bataille and the Mysticism of Sin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 55.
17. Elsewhere Bataille says: "Christianity attains glory by escaping what is (humanly) glorious. It must first conceive of protecting that which is substantial, compared to the fragility of things in this world: the sacrifice of God then becomes possible and its necessity is immediately at stake. Understood in this way Christianity is the adequate expression of the human condition: humanity only attains sacrificial glory when unencumbered by the malaises in which instability left it" (G 259/19).
18. Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, 6:43; *On Nietzsche*, 18.
19. Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, 6:43; *On Nietzsche*, 18.
20. Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 72.

21. Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, 6:43; *On Nietzsche*, 18.
22. Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*, 67.
23. "We break with Christianity on the point of exuberance. Angela of Foligno attained and described it, but without knowing it" (G 259/20).
24. Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*, 69.
25. Ibid., 68.
26. Ibid. 71.
27. Ibid., 70.
28. Ibid., 71.
29. Ibid., 73.
30. Ibid.
31. Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, 6:45; *On Nietzsche*, 21.
32. Jacques Derrida, "The Ends of Man," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 30, no. 1 (September 1969): 36. In an attempt to distance himself from this reading of Heidegger, Derrida summarizes aptly the way Sartre appropriated Heidegger's phenomenology into an humanist existentialism: "After the war, under the name existentialism, either Christian or atheistic, and conjointly with a fundamentally Christian personalism, the dominant school of thought in France professed to be essentially humanistic. Even if one does not wish to summarize Sartre's thought in the slogan 'existentialism is a humanism,' one has to acknowledge that in *Being and Nothingness* . . . the major concept, the theme in the last analysis, the irreducible horizon and origin, is what is then called 'human-reality.' This, as we know, is a translation of Heidegger's 'Dasein.' A terrible translation in many ways, but all the more significant. That this translation which was proposed by Corbin was adopted, that it was dominant through the authority of Sartre, leads one to give much thought to the reading or non-reading of Heidegger at that time and to the interest that existed in reading him or in not reading him in this way. . . . Not only is existentialism a humanism, but the ground and horizon of what Sartre then called his 'phenomenological ontology' (this is the subtitle of *Being and Nothingness*) remains the unity of human-reality. In so far as it describes the structures of human-reality, phenomenological ontology is a philosophical anthropology. Whatever decisive breaks from classical anthropologies may be indicated in this Hegelian-Husserlian-Heideggerian anthropology, there is no interruption in a metaphysical familiarity which so naturally relates the *we* of the philosopher to 'we-men,' to the *we* of the total horizon of humanity." Jacques Derrida, "The Ends of Man," 34–35.
33. Michel Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," in *Language, Counter Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 30.
34. See Jacques Derrida, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Derrida, *Sauf le nom* (Paris: Galilee, 1993), translated as *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Derrida,

Circumfession (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Jean-Luc Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure: A Deconstruction of Christianity*, trans. Bettina Bergo, Gabriel Malenfant, and Michael B. Smith (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008); Nancy, *Adoration: The Deconstruction of Christianity II*, trans. John McKeane (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); Nancy, *Noli Me Tangere: On the Raising of the Body* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

35. This was marked most decisively by the publication of Jean-Luc Marion's *L'idole et la distance*.
36. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 242.
37. Ibid., 243.
38. Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 44.
39. Jean-Luc Marion, "On the Gift," in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, ed. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 62. This is a roundtable discussion and I list the person speaking as the author.
40. Derrida, "On the Gift," 65.
41. Ibid., 60.
42. Ibid., 72.
43. Marion, "On the Gift," 66.
44. See Jean-Luc Marion, *Reduction and Givenness*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998).
45. Ibid., 199.
46. Ibid., 218.
47. Ibid., 268.
48. Ibid., 269.
49. Marion, "On the Gift," 70.
50. Ibid.
51. As I outline in the following chapter, according to Marion, phenomenology can attest to the possibility of revelation, but not its actuality: "Nevertheless the phenomenon of revelation remains a mere possibility. I am going to describe it without presupposing its actuality, and all the while propose a precise figure for it. Phenomenology cannot decide itself if a revelation can or should ever give itself, but it (and it alone) can determine that, in case it does, such a phenomenon of revelation should assume the figure of the paradox of paradoxes." Marion, *Being Given*, 235.
52. Christina Gschwandtner has developed a reading along these lines. See Gschwandtner, *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).
53. Thomas A. Carlson, translator's introduction to Jean-Luc Marion, *Distance and the Idol*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), xxxi.
54. See Mark C. Taylor, *Tears* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 106.

5. THE SACRALITY OF THE SECULAR: ON THE HISTORY AND END OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

1. Jean-Luc Nancy is especially important to the lineage of thinkers who have engaged religion in order to more vibrantly and accurately envision the secular, especially because he has done so through an explicit appropriation of both Heidegger and Bataille; see *La communauté désoeuvrée* (Paris: C. Bourgois, 2004), translated as Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). While I do not attend to his work, important work has been done to demonstrate how his "deconstruction of Christianity" informs his secular ontology, politics, and ethics. See Ignass Devisch et al., eds. *Re-Treating Religion: Deconstructing Christianity with Jean-Luc Nancy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); Christopher Watkin, *Difficult Atheism: Post-Theological Thinking in Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy and Quentin Meillassoux* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013); Peter Gratton and Marie-Eve Morin, eds., *Jean-Luc Nancy and Plural Thinking: Expositions of World, Ontology, Politics, and Sense* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012).
2. For early theological explorations of Derrida's work, see Thomas Altizer et al., *Deconstruction and Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1982); and Robert Detweiler, ed., *Semeia 23: Derrida and Biblical Studies* (1982).
3. In 1966, a group of French theorists was invited to the Johns Hopkins University as part of an inaugural event at the newly founded Johns Hopkins Humanities Center. The symposium was organized around the theme of "structuralism," and some of Europe's most prominent theorists participated, including Jean Hyppolite and Claude Lévi-Strauss. The proceedings were edited into a volume by Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato published as *The Structuralist Controversy* (1972). Derrida was the junior member of the French contingent, but his now famous paper "Structure, Sign and Play" instantly turned him into a figure of fascination for American humanists and social scientists because of the way he called into question the division between the humanities and social sciences, as well as radically problematized the history of philosophy as metaphysics. In his work *French Theory*, published in 2008, François Cusset has demonstrated how this "event" marked the beginning of Derrida's divisive fame in North America, at a level that Derrida would never achieve in France. From 1966 to 1980 Derrida was the most discussed and most controversial figure in critical theory within North American universities, especially in departments of English, comparative literature, and history.
4. For example, the summer 1981 issue of the prominent journal *Diacritics* was devoted to elements of Kant and Hegel in Derrida's work under the title "The Ghost of Theology." In many ways, the assumption that French philosophy would be hostile toward religion was natural for the time. In the United States the idea of contemporary French philosophy was associated with existentialism and Jean-Paul Sartre's humanist atheism. Furthermore, just as in France,

the intellectual climate of the 1960s and early 1970s was populated by Marxist critics, who understood religion and theology to be shackles from which the university should free itself, rather than a legitimate academic discourse. In the minds of American philosophers and theologians, structuralism and post-structuralism, like existentialism before them, were atheist movements that not only eschewed transcendence and alterity, but were antagonistic toward religion and theology.

5. For the most lucid and honest explanation of this approach see the introduction to the edition from 2000 of Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology, and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).
6. Philosophy of religion has been historically a subdiscipline within Christian theology. However, in a way similar to religious studies' emergence from Christianity, philosophy of religion has also emerged from within the Christian tradition into a space where thinkers approach religion philosophically from a secular point of view. This emergence bears the same problems as the academic study of religion generally, namely, the problem of extricating religious studies from Christian categories and concepts. However, these difficulties should not prevent trying to disentangle *Christian* philosophy of religion, what I am calling philosophical theology, which seeks to defend, improve, and advance Christian theology by way of philosophical concepts and arguments, and philosophy of religion, which attempts to contribute to the academic study of religion by way of a myriad of sources, including theology and religious phenomena. The lines, as I have noted, are and will remain blurry, but blurred lines do not mean indistinguishability, which is to say that even if there is overlap between the two, it is worth trying to locate points of divergence between them.
7. As a discipline, religious studies itself is perpetually engaged in an identity crisis, given the uniqueness of its subject matter and the myriad of methodologies used in the field. This crisis has been deepened in recent years by scholars who have demonstrated that the very discourses of "world religions" and the "history of religions" developed from European Christian missionary and imperial endeavors, as Tomoko Masuzawa argues in her work *The Invention of World Religions*, published in 2005: "There is no ideological disjuncture between the theological discourse of tradition Christendom and the world religions discourse of today's multicultural world. On the contrary, we have good reason to suspect that the discourse of world religions came into being precisely as a makeshift solution to the particular predicament that confounded European Christianity at the end of the nineteenth century, that is to say, as a covert way out of the profound conceptual difficulty confronting Europe and its imperial subject-position." Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or How European Pluralism Was Preserved in Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

2008), 327. The origins and identity of the field are issues scholars from various perspectives must continue to confront. However, I do not believe that the problematization of the origins and identity of religious studies as a discipline means that we should not attempt to draw a meaningful distinction between it and theology. If we wait to make such a distinction once the boundaries of religious studies have been neatly and permanently drawn, we shall never begin. By contrast, given these issues, the task of distinguishing philosophy of religion from philosophical theology is all the more pertinent.

8. Hart, *Trespass of the Sign*, xviii.
9. Ibid., xxxv.
10. Ibid., 27.
11. Ibid., 77.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 282.
14. See Kevin Hart, *The Exorbitant: Emmanuel Levinas Between Jews and Christians* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010); Hart, *The Dark Gaze: Maurice Blanchot and the Sacred* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Hart, editor's introduction to Jean-Luc Marion, *Jean-Luc Marion: The Essential Writings*, ed. Kevin Hart (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), editor's introduction.
15. One might be surprised that I have chosen not to analyze the work of Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, or other French thinkers who have contributed substantially to the fields of philosophy of religion and philosophical theology. My goal in this chapter is to explore the historical development and methodological ends of these fields as they relate to the academic study of religion in North America. Thus, my analysis focuses on three American figures, rather than their French counterparts. As I mention earlier, Marion's work is especially difficult to classify. He maintains that his phenomenology operates without theological interference, and yet his readers have noticed for some time now how nicely his phenomenological works such as *Being Given* map onto his earlier theological texts such as *The Idol and Distance*. See Kevin Hart's introduction to *Jean-Luc Marion: The Essential Writings*, and Thomas A. Carlson's translator's introduction to Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).
16. Kevin Hart, *Kingdoms of God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 190.
17. Ibid., 191.
18. Ibid., 229.
19. Ibid., 235.
20. Ibid., 189–190.
21. Ibid., 139.

22. Another recent example along these lines is Catherine Keller's *Cloud of the Impossible*. To my knowledge, Keller is the first theologian or scholar of religion to provide a significant analysis of Karen Barad's agential realism. Since its publication in 2007, Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway* has proved to be a landmark study at the intersection of science studies and feminist theory. Keller's analysis of Barad's work is insightful and rigorous. I find it helpful for my own understanding of Barad's theory and its implications for how we conceive of the structure of human subjectivity in relation to the world. However, Keller herself is clear in the conclusion of her analysis—and throughout the entire book—that she is reading Barad in order to evaluate certain components of Christian theology. Her intention is neither to reshape the theories and methods of religious studies nor to more accurately envision the secular according to a critical analysis of Barad's agential realism, but to analyze her own Christian tradition through Barad's work.
23. This roundtable was published in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism* (1999). Like this roundtable, the other conferences were published by Indiana University Press and coedited by Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon: *Questioning God* (2001, edited with Mark Dooley); *Augustine and Postmodernism: Confessions and Circumfession* (2005); *Transcendence and Beyond: A Postmodern Inquiry* (2007).
24. See Altizer et al., *Deconstruction and Theology*.
25. John D. Caputo, "The Return of Anti-Religion: From Radical Atheism to Radical Theology," *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 11, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 33.
26. Caputo offered what many took to be the definitive interpretation of Derrida's engagement with religion in *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* and "Apostles of the Impossible: On God and the Gift in Derrida and Marion." That is, Caputo came to be seen by those on the outside of the field and by students just entering the field as the authority on Derrida's religion. During the 1990s Caputo's work became so synonymous with Derrida and religion that several commentators mistakenly cited him when attempting to rehearse Derrida's position. For example, James K. A. Smith quotes Caputo when offering a critique of Derrida's approach to hope, and Michael Horton mistakenly attaches Caputo's words to Derrida in an article on eschatology and Nietzsche. I am indebted to David Newheiser for this insight. David Newheiser, *Hope in the Unforeseeable God* (PhD diss., Divinity School, University of Chicago, 2012), 93.
27. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), xix.
28. Ibid., xxi.
29. Ibid., 287.

30. Ibid., 73.
31. Ibid., 202.
32. Ibid., 205.
33. Ibid., 200.
34. Ibid., 190.
35. Ibid., 222.
36. Ibid., 228.
37. J. Aaron Simmons and Stephen Minister, eds., *Reexamining Deconstruction and Determinate Religion: Toward a Religion With Religion* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2012).
38. Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 6.
39. Ibid., 10.
40. Ibid., 85.
41. Ibid., 105.
42. Ibid.
43. Thomas A. Carlson, *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude and Creation of the Human* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 210.
44. Taylor, *Erring*, 16.
45. Ibid., 107. Taylor is citing Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 142–143.
46. Taylor, *Erring*, 48.
47. Taylor, *Tears* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 81.
48. Taylor, *Erring*, 49.
49. Ibid., 11.
50. Ibid., 13.
51. Taylor, *Tears*, 81.
52. Thomas A. Carlson, *Indiscretion: Finitude and the Naming of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). This thought is developed throughout the work, but most forcefully explained in chapters three and six and the conclusion.
53. Taylor, *Tears*, 106.
54. Ibid., 119.
55. Ibid., 78.
56. See, among others, Taylor, *About Religion: Economies of Faith in Virtual Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Taylor, *Confidence Games: Money and Markets in a World Without Redemption* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Taylor, *Refiguring the Spiritual: Beuys, Barney, Turrell, Goldsworthy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Taylor, *Rewiring the Real: In Conversation with William Gaddis, Richard Powers, Mark Danielewski, and Don DeLillo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).
57. Mark C. Taylor, *After God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), xiv.
58. Ibid., xiii.

59. Taylor, *The Moment of Complexity: Emerging Network Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 78.
60. Ibid., 90.
61. Cited in Taylor, *After God*, 320.
62. Taylor, *Moment of Complexity*, 91.
63. Taylor, *After God*, 13.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., 321.
66. Taylor, *Moment of Complexity*, 94.
67. Ibid., 97.
68. Ibid., 119.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid., 115.
71. Ibid., 168.
72. Taylor, *After God*, 346.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid., 346.
76. Elaine A. King, "Into the Light: A Conversation with James Turrell," *Sculpture* 21, no. 9 (November 2002).
77. Taylor, *Refiguring the Spiritual*, 124.
78. Ibid., 106.
79. Ibid., 108–109.
80. Ibid., 111.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid. 112.
83. Cited in ibid., 131.
84. Ibid., 117.
85. Ibid., 104.
86. Ibid., 143.

CONCLUSION: CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES—THREE EXAMPLES

1. Thomas A. Carlson, *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude and Creation of the Human* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 15.
2. Ibid., 16.
3. Ibid., 17.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 18–19.
6. Ibid., 23.
7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., 21.
9. Ibid., 27.
10. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Element of Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor, 1967), 4.
11. Carlson, *The Indiscrete Image*, 210.
12. Ibid., 35.
13. Ibid., 75.
14. Ibid., 91.
15. Ibid., 107.
16. Ibid., 96.
17. Ibid., 116–117.
18. Ibid., 208.
19. Ibid., 215.
20. Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder: The Closing of Metaphysics and the Opening of Awe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 3.
21. Ibid., 4.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 8.
24. Ibid., 14.
25. Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Worlds Without End: The Many Lives of the Multiverse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 1.
26. Ibid., 7.
27. Ibid., 212.
28. Ibid., 214.
29. Ibid., 220.
30. Ibid., 234.
31. Ibid., 236.
32. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 236.
33. Ibid., 235.
34. Jean-Luc Marion, "The Possible and the Revealed," in *The Visible and the Revealed* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 2.
35. David Jasper and Ramona Fotiade, "Jean-Luc Marion: A Reflection," foreword to Jean-Luc Marion, *Revelation and Givenness*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), v.
36. Marion, *Revelation and Givenness*, 32.
37. Ibid., 41.
38. Ibid., 45.
39. James Turrell, *Pleiades* (1983), Mattress Factory Museum, www.mattress.org/archive/index.php/Detail/collections/563.
40. Jeffrey L. Kosky, *Arts of Wonder: Enchanting Secularity—Walter De Maria, Diller + Scofidio, James Turrell, Andy Goldsworthy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 94.

41. Ibid., 95.
42. Ibid., 96.
43. Ibid., 94.
44. Ibid., 91.
45. Ibid., 7.
46. Ibid., xiii.
47. Ibid., 94.
48. Jay Michaelson, "The Art of Enlightenment," *Zeek: A Jewish Journal of Thought and Culture*, www.zeek.net/art_03043.shtml.
49. Kosky, *Arts of Wonder*, 100.
50. Ibid., 97.
51. Marion also undertakes an extensive analysis of the mysticism of the Pseudo-Dionysius in his early *The Idol and Distance*. Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).
52. Kosky, *Arts of Wonder*, 99.
53. Ibid., 101.
54. Ibid., 104.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid., 106.
59. Mark C. Taylor, *Refiguring the Spiritual: Beuys, Barney, Turrell, Goldsworthy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 117.
60. Kosky, *Arts of Wonder*, 106.
61. Marion, *Being Given*, 215.
62. Ibid., 200.
63. Ibid., 212.
64. In the last chapter, Kosky argues that the enchantment he outlines by way of encounter with artistic spaces is confirmed, rather than refuted, by post-Newtonian science, particularly contemporary approaches to complex systems: "Even as his increasing mass of knowledge means the loss of omniscience, the scientific man loses the privileged position from which he becomes master of the causal process and must admit other causes besides the efficient cause, causes over which he has little or no control. The more perfectly one might know the world of probabilities and the more mastery one might gain over the world of statistics, the less one can predict what will actually happen next, for, as Prigogine reminds us, the world as a statistical or probabilistic phenomenon is one in which the cause of what actually happens remains absent. This absent cause in excess of the reason or law is what Prigogine calls the event: 'We need not only *laws*, but also *events* that bring an element of radical novelty to the description of nature.'

Uncertainty and eventfulness is thus woven into the fabric of the processes responsible for something emerging into being. The often-used phrase ‘objective nature’ proves an untenable contradiction when uncertainty and approximation, defying objectivity, belong intrinsically to the nature of things.” Ibid., 162.

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