Preface

More than a century has elapsed since Nietzsche's proclamation of God's death cast its shadow over the provinces of both philosophy and theology. Among thinkers in the twentieth century, Martin Heidegger has grappled as profoundly as anyone with the implications of Nietzsche's thought. And yet, while theologians from Rudolf Bultmann to Karl Rahner have appropriated many of Heidegger's insights in order to develop their own religious perspectives, little progress has been made in distinguishing the ingredients in Heidegger's thinking which provide the fertile soil for those breakthroughs. My aim in the following is to rectify this deficiency by showing how philosophy and theology belong together in a movement of displacement which occurs in the turning (*Kehre*) to a post-metaphysical stance. This movement subordinates thought to language, and thereby restores religious meaning through the genesis of the most primordial linguistic gestures. In rejecting the metaphysical identification of being (*Sein*) with God, Heidegger does not simply take refuge in a "secularized theology." Rather, his philosophy of being safeguards a concern for the divine mystery by inviting thought to explore the limits of language, and seeking what is unique to the divinities as much in the modality of their absence (*Abwesenheit*) as their presence.[1]

In this turn toward postmodernity, however, we cannot do justice to religious concerns by remaining at the level of generalities. On the contrary, we can hope to reach the crux of controversy only by attending to the particular nuances of faith—the tension between orthodoxy and heterodoxy—and adjusting our discourse accordingly. A discourse which is as much partial to the weight of the example as to the concept must emerge, in such a way that the most profound ruptures in the philosophical landscape unfold by allocating space to the instance. As we attend to the crossroads which various examples help to delineate, we become more aware of the limits governing language. Though Heidegger has frequently alluded to an evocative saying (*Sagen*), and this practice provides the key to a non-representational religious discourse, the interface between his thought and contemporary theology is still to be examined.

The transition to a postmodern theology begins by tracing the historical roots of a crisis which originates with Kant. Indeed, Kant initiates the attempt to direct

thought from its boundaries, in a way which fosters skepticism toward religious issues as much as renews our faith in them. On the one hand, he resists the presumptuous tendency to posit the supreme being as an object, and, on the other, he leaves open the option to develop a discourse appropriate to the Divine by exemplifying the dual edge of a boundary. Kant brings us to the threshold of developing a new interpretive strategy, or addressing the medium of expression, to ponder the enigma and mystery surrounding the Divine.[2] When considered in terms of its Greek roots, this medium arises in the form of hermeneutics, as the messenger god, as the harbinger of the "between." But in the same breath we should not lose sight of hermeneutics' implicit tie to the theological tradition. For the "go between" can also emerge as the conduit for the "glad tidings," for the "good news" of the redeemer's appearance in human form as an emissary of the Divine. Within the religious tradition, we discover a threefold relation among the possibilities of: 1) conveying meaning through an intermediary or hermeneutics, 2) the self-deferring character of language as the medium of expression, and 3) the Christ-event as the emissary of the Divine occurs in and through the personal figure of the *logos*. The configuration of the *logos* in its threefold form in turn defines the crossover between philosophy and theology.

An historical footnote set off from the beginning marks the intersection of philosophy and religion and admits their later divergence. Specifically, the Hebrew experience of the "word" of God constitutes a narrative in its own right, the establishment of an oral tradition that precedes Greek thought. And yet it is only with the development of pre-Socratic philosophy in the figures of Parmenides and Heraclitus that *logos* becomes equated with the organizational principle of the universe as reflected in language. As if to make this ironic twist of history complete, the Christian identification of the redeemer with the Son finds the key to its lexicon in the Greek deployment of the *logos* as an "intermediary" between God and humanity. The strange intertwining between the Greek and Christian senses of the *logos*, as implicating simultaneously the uniqueness of the Christ-event and the enactment of an organizational principle of the cosmos, provides the vortext of differentiation for the early Heidegger's development of hermeneutics.[3]

In prefiguring hermeneutic phenomenology, German idealists like Schelling and Hegel rekindle a concern for the relation between theology and philosophy. There are two factors associated with the rise of German idealism which permit this development. First, Schelling and Hegel provide the seeds for transforming modernity because they attain an historical perspective by initiating a dialogue with the origins of Greek thought. Indeed, this concern for antiquity brings to light the controversial trend in the development of modern thought as a whole, which introduces into the philosophical project a self-consciousness of its problematic relation to theology. Second, both Schelling and Hegel show that the *logos*, which provides the organizational principle of the universe, becomes explicit as the same

medium for ordering the stages of self-consciousness via the activity of language. The order that is embryonic in this self-gathering of language marks the joining of particular and universal in the same way which is epitomized in the "incarnation" as the concrete expression of the Divine in the human, of the Father in the Son (*logos*). The various correlations of opposite pairs define the doubling of our experience of the *logos* along an axis that joins possibility and actuality, immanence and transcendence, temporality and eternity.

Modernity does not close with German idealism, however. The potential which is ripe for its own transformation instead requires that two of its trailing figures, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, expose the tensions which accrue to the attempt to provide a comprehensive fusion of modernity and antiquity. Thus Nietzsche proclaims the death of God and diagnoses the ills of civilization that spring from a mixture of Platonism and Christianity. And Kierkegaard proceeds on an adjacent front to expose the foibles of religious institutions and to recover the core message of Christianity, the *kerygma*. Yet as apparently different as their voices are, the places which Nietzsche's and Kierkegaard's thought occupy at the crossroads between modernity and postmodernity are remarkably similar. Insofar as Heidegger is among the first to note the distribution among the epochs in the history of being, he emphasizes that the linkage of these two thinkers is far from accidental. Their linkage instead stands as a telling sign of the instability and potential for transformation which overshadows twentieth century philosophy and theology. We can prepare for this change, however, only by undergoing a transition to a postmetaphysical phase of thought, to the brink of the "other beginning" that harbors new possibilities for thinking.

The more that this return to "other beginning" emerges to govern Heidegger's thought, the more his project diverges from mainstream Christianity in its onto-theo-logical form. The attempt to develop a postmetaphysical theology moves in the direction of a mythic-poetic which interweaves ingredients of Hölderlin's poetry with elements of Greek tragedy. Yet the retrieval of Christianity seems to lag behind this effort to evolve a postmetaphysical theology, as if it is unable to be reconciled with a pluralistic mythic-poetic vision. Heidegger's thought cannot so easily embrace the central motifs of Christian dogma. Indeed, he remains staunchly opposed to how Christianity's theocentricism implies an anthropocentricism, which privileges "man" over all creatures due to the fact that "he" is created in "God's image." For Heidegger, secular humanism is just the flip side of Christian theocentricism, insofar as both conceal the importance of Dasein's rootedness (*Bödenstandigkeit*) on the earth.[4]

As a point of contrast, Hegel's philosophy can more easily accommodate such seminal beliefs as the trinity and the resurrection by including as its infrastructure a three-pronged dialectic of Absolute Spirit.[5] Hegel's "pneumatology" not only concurs with Christian dogma, but can even supply its explanatory metaphysical

framework. For Heidegger, however, the lexicon of spirit is almost taboo, since it harbors vestiges of the metaphysics of presence, of onto-theo-logy. Hence, he appeals to Nietzsche's Dionysian hero and to Hölderlin's "saving grace" of "homecoming," as if to discount the self-privileging of Christianity as the religion of preference in contrast to paganism. As Otto Pöggeler states, "The turn toward Nietzsche and Hölderlin, which Heidegger executed after *Sein und Zeit,* then had to face the question of whether Hölderlin's poetic mythical *theology* preserves what is Christian or whether it takes a counterposition."[6] We can ask this same question in a converse way: does Heidegger's emphasis on the history of being (*Seinsgeschichte*), of the impersonal act of its issuance from Greek origins, diverge irrevocably from the Christian portrait of salvation-history (*Heilsgeschichte*) as the divine offering of love?[7]

But what if the privileging of Christianity were more an outgrowth of a modern "will to truth" and less an inescapable feature in pronouncing the "glad tidings?" Nietzsche suggests as much.[8] If this were the case, then we could proceed to the juncture of choosing between two alternatives. First, we could attempt to extract elements of Heidegger's thinking which might reasonably support Christian orthodoxy. Second, we could welcome the development of heterodoxy that could include: 1) elements of Hellenic thought, including Greek tragedy, 2) their transformation into a mythic-poetic thought at the threshold of postmodernity (Hölderlin) and 3) the inception of a new *ethos* which allows Christianity as the renewal of the Christ-event to unfold on the historical stage of the world-play of *aletheia*. If this were possible, we would no longer have to remain confined to an atheistic side of Heidegger's ontology, which commits the "sin" of false exclusivity, i.e., of foreclosing the prospect of a philosophical Christianity.[9] Like Kierkegaard previously, however, we must rewrite Christianity in terms of the uniqueness of the "Christ-event," implying in the process a sharp disjunction with "Christendom." This maneuver of "rewriting" does not mechanically implement a deconstructionist tactic, but instead cultivates a subtler attunement to the *logos* as the key to radicalizing Heidegger's hermeneutical method.

The transformation of hermeneutics will prove crucial in mapping out the juncture of crossover between philosophy and theology, the unique "topographics" of the Divine. Indeed, we can negotiate all the turns of this historical labyrinth and witness the birth of a non-representational language only by paying special attention to method. Once again what we mean by method must be elicited in the course of the inquiry itself. As Heidegger recognized in his earliest deployment of hermeneutics, a method entails much more than a procedure or technique, and in its original Greek sense suggests a form of *praxis* proper to journeying along a way. Yet the equation of method with a way of discovery remains too vague when we also consider the personal, lived event of transformation which religious traditions emphasize, e.g., spiritual exercises as the source of enlightenment and

illumination. The speculative, spiritual, and the ethical all form sides in implementing a method, which joins the divergent ways of philosophical and theological inquiry.

If the development of Heidegger's thought is any evidence, a singular vision of method is difficult to maintain; for hermeneutics originates by overlapping interpretive strategies found in both philosophy and theology. In other words, there is no puritanical strain of hermeneutics. Rather, it arises as if through an alchemy of heterogenous ingredients, from Schleiermacher to Dilthey in the late 19th century and then to the search for concreteness in Lask and Husserl in the 20th century. The fact that Heidegger reaped the benefits of this peculiar alchemy is mitigated by an important historical consideration.[10] Specifically, in the early 1920s when he pioneered his brand of hermeneutic phenomenology, Heidegger entered into dialogue with his colleague at Marburg, Ruldolf Bultmann. Bultmann had undertaken the arduous task of refining hermeneutics as a pretext for interpreting biblical scripture.

Rather than viewing methodology as a static procedure preset in advance, we must construe it as arising from and returning into its own originative possibility. In this regard, we distinguish three aspects in the development of method which uncover its own character of innovation and creativity. First, method attends to the intimations of the *logos* by accenting its heterogenous element, i.e, the manner of attunement (*Stimmung*) versus any rational structures. Second, in its theological modality, method brings its discourse to bear on a given example, so as to allow the weight of that example to mark a distinctive locus of intelligibility. Third, in its philosophical modality, method aims at a special economy that accommodates all the twists of inquiry and marks the place of its genesis within the wider horizon of tradition as a whole. One outstanding example is the way in which hermeneutic phenomenology knits together a systematic concern for a phenomenon, e.g., being-in-the-world with the historical constellation of a question, the question of being. The economy brings the topography of investigation to the forefront, and thus makes explicit the limits that guide this inquiry. Fourth, in the "turning" whereby thought becomes subordinate to language, methodological tactics yield to the inquirer's direct participation in the event of truth as *aletheia*. The *logos* of phenomenology, the act of letting be seen, defers in favor of the unconcealing-concealing occurrence of truth, or what shows itself. The *transformation of phenomenology* in this way becomes significant not only for philosophy, but for the subsequent development of theology as well. Accordingly, the *logos* of the God ceases to be a representational portrait of something transcendent, and instead, by unfolding in harmony with the advent of truth, distinguishes a meditative response to the divine mystery, to the wholly other.

Insofar as truth transpires historically, its dynamism comes to fruition through a power which displaces all tactics and strategies, namely, imagination. As the