Surveying Heidegger
for Theology's Future

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When facing the long tradition of philosophy, Martin Heidegger understood that in the real world of human existence no one regularly wonders about an ideal triangle that must be presupposed when drawing a physical triangle (Plato). No one commonly sits by a fire and questions if the hands that one sees are one's own hands (Descartes). People normally do not ask questions about the pure act of consciousness (Husserl). What people really think about are average things, like what to do, what to eat, and what hammer from the toolbox will do the trick. These are everyday concerns. If philosophy is to address humanity deeply, it must address everyday concerns. Heidegger is certainly one of the most difficult philosophers to understand, and yet his subject matter is the typical experience of the everyday world. Everydayness (*Alltäglichkeit*) is the way questions of meaning become available to us,[1] and indeed, after all, it is the everyday living of human beings that fundamentally shapes the fate of the planet earth.

When seeking ways to reformulate and restate a future form of theology, one point of departure is the everyday experience of the world. If theology is to have a future and to make a difference, it too must be in the everyday. Yet, the enterprise of theology, like that of philosophy, has historically expounded structures, and more specifically metaphysics, and remained skeptical of the value of everyday experience. There are few philosophers better equipped than Heidegger to challenge theology in this way, and a survey of his main insights into the everyday can help identify path marks that theology might note when imagining its future.

Departing from Descartes

In Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, which is the genesis of Heideggerian thought, Descartes was a type of launching point. For Heidegger, Descartes was less significant but does mark what he called the second chapter in the history of the question of the "thing" (i.e., generally, the question of correspondence between perception and reality).[2] Plus, the critique of Descartes allowed

1. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 24–28, 38.
2. Heidegger, *What is a Thing?*, 108.

Heidegger to distinguish the question of the experience of everyday meaning from a mistaken imposition of technical meaning on things in the world.[3] The famous Cartesian axiom, *cogito ergo sum*, recalls a basic idea found in Augustine that extends to Aristotle,[4] though Descartes meant something slightly different. Descartes meant that being human is being a thinking subject. The human mind, which is the *res cogitans*, is to be distinguished from entities or *res extensa* in the world. The existence of entities can be doubted, but what cannot be doubted is the mind that doubts, for to doubt assumes that the mind is already present for the act. This proof for the existence of the thinking subject is really an Archimedean point in Descartes upon which he pivoted certain indisputable premises. Mathematics was one of those premises, but so was God, who exists as a kind of necessary guarantor of the reliability of the experienced world.[5] The certainty of human existence was to Descartes like a key that opened the door to parallel certainties in mathematics, physics, and religion.

Heidegger's main criticism of modernity rested on his critique of Descartes and on the way modernity was formed in the Cartesian presupposition that the world "out there" is subordinate to the thinking subject. The world as a spectrum of entities set before the thinking subject holds, through the reasoning of the subject, the value the subject gives it. In other words, to Heidegger, the world out there must have a technical consistency of being for it to be useful as epistemology to the thinking subject's perception. The world must be capable of mathematical expression or order to be useful to the perceiving subject. This act objectifies the natural order, out of a human-centric attitude, as things to be used and to be consumed. The world as a technical object is the world as a consumable entity. Heidegger called the world conceived as that which is for human consumption "standing reserve." The main problem for modernity is technology, because technology is not simply various techniques. Technology is the worldview of modernity. It is the normal, everyday way the world is there as standing reserve, is present at hand, is available for theoretical analysis, constructive projects, and repetitive uses.[6]

The Influence of Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche, for Heidegger, was part of the turn from Descartes's project of the thinking subject to the new task of being an authentic thinker. Recall that

3. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 128ff.
4. Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* says that to be conscious of thinking is to be conscious of existing.
5. Descartes, to us now odd, placed much emphasis on the pineal gland as that which mediated between the mind and the senses, but he always needed God to ensure the universe was mathematically sensible.
6. I am combining here a bit of the early Heidegger from *Being and Time* (the idea of present at hand) with the later Heidegger from *The Question Concerning Technology* (the idea of standing reserve). See Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*.

for Nietzsche a truth-claim is also a power-claim. Whoever holds power and exercises power crafts the regimentation that we call truth.[7] Nietzsche aimed part of his remarkable critique at Christianity as that regiment that sought and seized power through the cultivation of resentment. Christianity created shame out of noble pride and then upheld weak humility as a virtue. The manipulation of resentment enabled a priestly class to seize social power and to maintain it as the class that held the means of forgiveness. This critique was part of Nietzsche's provocative idea that morality is decadent. Morality is a system that emerges not from human progress but from the gradual decline (decaying) and eventual defeat of ancient noble virtues. Decadence in Nietzsche is the act of decaying; decadence is nihilism.

Heidegger could find some substance for his critique of technology in Nietzsche. For Nietzsche, technology is a type of nihilism, since it reduces human acts to repetition or sameness, and this repetition of the same by anyone who uses technology decays nobility to weakness.[8] We have to translate "nobility" in Nietzsche to something like creativity and courage (for Nietzsche speaks of virtues), but his point remains. Technology relies on repetition.[9] Everyone who uses technology must do so in exactly the same way. People cannot uniquely use a bank machine, for example. The machine won't work unless it is used according to its design. The right buttons have to be pressed. Everyone must conform. Technology only works because it is made to operate consistently as a system. Every human operator must repeat the same functions. Technology requires human beings to copy each other and to conform to codes that reduce natural vitality to acts of repetition. We become like obedient sheep; we become part of a herd. There is nothing we do that is distinct from others doing the same thing.

Heidegger was influenced by Nietzsche and the way Nietzsche raised questions concerning technology. These questions consisted of three elements. First, Heidegger takes from Nietzsche the idea that truth is not a fixed category but something that depends on context, culture, experience, and power; second, he takes from Nietzsche a critical attitude toward technology; third, he takes from Nietzsche the idea of the herd,[10] that is, conformity, everydayness, and the one

7. Nietzsche never defines the will to power in a singular way, so occasionally one must pick and choose what Nietzsche means. An ambiguous term, "will to power" is sometimes related to self-governance and peace, and in other cases it is related to ambition and striving to dominate. The latter sense is often destructive, while the former sense can be a type of personal enlightenment. In my comments here and following, I am relying on Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*.

8. Here I rely on *the Genealogy of Morals* and *The Twilight of the Idols*, especially the latter's particular comments on and evaluations of Christianity.

9. In *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 18, Nietzsche calls this repetition "mechanical activity."

10. "Morality trains individuals to be a function of the herd. . . ." Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 174 (Book Three, Section 116).

or the "they." However, Heidegger does not just copy Nietzsche. Instead he combines Nietzsche with phenomenology, which, we will see, creates ontological phenomenology—the study of the experience of the meaning of Being.

Exposing Everyday Being

Under the direction of Husserl, Heidegger completed his major work *Being and Time*. It is a phenomenological analysis of the everyday experience of human beings as *Dasein*, as the opening to the question about the meaning of Being. *Dasein* is the being who is aware of Being: so, *Dasein* can open to display the question about Being. Much is made of the German word *Dasein* because it is an older and interesting German way to express existence, derived from "there" (*Da*) and "Being" (*Sein*). Heidegger did not invent the word, but he used it in a phenomenological way. *Dasein* is specifically the being who opens the question of Being.

Being, when capitalized, is the primordial ground of being. We can say that Being is the presupposition to the possibility of beings. So, Being allows everything to come into being, that is, into existence. But we cannot see Being; we can only experience Being through what already exists. Being is like the light that is necessary to see the world: we do not see light, but we see because of light. In the same way, we do not see Being, but we exist because there is Being.

On the other hand what does not exist does not have Being, which means it is no being or nothing. This is a rather obvious point. It is so obvious that it seems pointless. We assume in our everyday being the fact of Being. Existing because of Being and against nothing is the human condition. Heidegger suggests that even though these points seem initially pointless, human beings can only ask such questions because in Being humans are conscious of nothing. Only nothingness, which is a threat to all beings, makes the question of Being the most significant question.

Heidegger starts *Being and Time* with the charge that the question about the meaning of Being has been forgotten. Over time, philosophy and philosophers have grown so accustomed to the everyday use of beings that the tradition of use has calcified the radical sense of the meaning of Being. Heidegger expresses this sentiment and defines his challenge when he launches his great study with the claim that ". . . a dogma has been developed which not only declares the question about the meaning of Being to be superfluous, but sanctions its complete neglect."[11] The important question for philosophy is exposing Being, which means to deconstruct the ways in which the question about the meaning of Being is forgotten. But how can the question about Being be exposed?

First, it is important to note that Being is not an individual and that *Dasein* is not expressly a human being. Rather, the type of beings humans are is *Dasein*.

11. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 2.

Human beings are capable of raising the question about Being; this is what makes humanity "*Dasein*." In Heidegger's own words, humans are "entities" that can be denoted as *Dasein*, and thus "*Dasein*" is the entity in which "Being is an issue." Human beings as the entity of *Dasein* open the question about the meaning of Being through everyday life. So, in effect, Heidegger offers a phenomenology of everydayness. It is the fact of *Dasein* being there that opens Being as the question about the meaning of being-in-the-world. The Cartesian claim that "I think therefore I am" is reversed. For Heidegger, it is that "I am and therefore I think."

The thinking that *Dasein* does is a consequence of "thrownness." This particular expression of Heideggerian language denotes the condition of the existence of *Dasein* that human beings open. The condition of existence—the fact of being in time, of having to live somewhere, of being of some ethnic background, of needing food and some form of employment—is not something anyone can choose. You cannot choose your place of birth, your parents, or the economic circumstances into which you are born. Rather, the world is there as if you were thrown into it. You arrived in the already operating world of a culture and language that you have not chosen. Culture, language, and history are the worldliness of the world. They are always the variables that are at first invariable upon arrival in the world.

In Heidegger the world exists before the individual, and the world is what an individual is thrown into. But the world is cultural activity, and every culture is different from another. So, we are not in the world so much as in worlds. We are in the world of our family, of our nation, of our tradition, and of whatever profession we may choose to follow. As Heidegger examines the world, he breaks it down into different levels and different aspects of being as *Dasein*.[12] For example, there is the world of entertainment, the world of sports, the world of theater, the underworld, and so on. *Dasein* is defined by the various worlds in which it participates. The world is the constant activity of creating *Dasein* as everydayness. Indeed, Heidegger goes so far as to say that there is no difference between *Dasein* and the world. There is no barrier of separation that creates for *Dasein* an object called the world. Being-in-the-world can be better understood as being-involved-in-the-world. *Dasein* has no choice in the matter, for without a world there cannot be *Dasein*. This is entirely different from Descartes's thinking subject and, later, from Kant's autonomous subject, both for whom the world is passive. For *Dasein* the world is constantly the activity of being-with others and, as such, being in the everyday with others.[13]

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12. "The compound expression 'being-in-the-world' indicates in the very way we have coined it, that it stands for a unitary phenomenon. This primary datum must be seen as a whole. But while being-in-the-world cannot be broken into contents which may be pieced together, this does not prevent it from having several constitutive items in its structure." Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 78.

13. "So far as Dasein *is* at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being." Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 163.

The problem for *Dasein* then becomes the problem of being-with others in the world. This problem is compounded by everyday experience, for the everyday hides the question of Being from *Dasein*. The world of the everyday operates as the "one" or the "they." This is Nietzsche's "herd" instinct. The "one" is experienced in *Dasein* as the sense of "should" that characterizes the moral condition the world has given to *Dasein*. One should be someone or should do something or should feel a certain way: this sense of ought to do or be creates around *Dasein* specific openings to Being of which *Dasein* remains largely unaware. One should pay one's taxes. They say you need experience. One must work for a living. These kinds of everyday sayings, even while often true, express the condition of the usual that has conditioned *Dasein* to forget. *Dasein* forgets the question about the meaning of Being because *Dasein* must make sense of being-in-the-world according to the "one" and the "they" of the world *Dasein* is in.[14]

Since each person is constituted by the one, there is no real thing called human nature. Instead, there is a social creation called human nature. Social creations give to *Dasein* three basic forms of being in the world. The first is the sense of should, which is called undifferentiated being; the second is the revolt against the sense of should, which is inauthentic being; and the third is resoluteness toward death, which is authentic being. These categories are helpful but not meant to be taken literally. They are Heidegger's way of identifying openings to Being that occur in *Dasein*'s everyday world, but the everyday world is life as Heidegger knew it in Germany and life known in the modern Western experience. So, such expressions are not attempts at universal categories. They are rather phenomenal experiences of the everyday that are open to *Dasein* as the question about the meaning of Being. They remind us of Nietzsche's three main metaphors of the camel, the lion, and the child.[15]

Dasein can be in the world "undifferentiated." This is the usual story of a life lived automatically without second thoughts. Perhaps you grew up in a family of doctors. As a young person there is the expectation that you too will be a doctor, like your grandfather was and your mother and aunt are. You are expected to carry on the tradition. The expectation may never be mentioned; it is just there as the condition. Living "undifferentiated" means that the condition covers the question of the meaning of Being with automatic and everyday habits. Types, expectations, and goals predefine life and take from life its radical relationship to Being.

It is possible, though, to decide not to be a doctor. The opening that human experience gives to *Dasein* is an opening to the choice of difference. An individ-

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14. The "one" in German is *Das Man*; "one says" is *Man sagt*. The French can use a similar construction with "*on dit*." In English, while we can say "one says," it often works better to translate the expression in the plural as, "they say."

15. In Nietzsche, the camel is burdened with the sense of the "should," the lion revolts against this sense, and the child is the liberated image of the playful and wise being.

ual can defy expectations. Let us say that you decide to be a teacher, not a doctor. Being a doctor was the expectation but not a personal choice. To be a teacher now seems like authenticity because an individual has made an independent choice. Even though you were thrown into the world where the expectation was that one is to be a doctor, with much conscious effort the expectation of the one was rejected. However, what happens is that the expectations associated with being a doctor are now transferred to expectations involved in being a teacher. It is still necessary to do what one does, or should do, to become a teacher. The course is hard, and the eyes of "they" are all around you as you try to do what one should do. This is not authenticity. It is rather another example of nihilism, where a free decision must conform to the everyday world. The form of the world of the one has been substituted by another form of the world of the one. Every profession holds in its pursuit what one is supposed to do. In the larger picture, you are a cog in an indifferent economic wheel. You have liberated yourself from the undifferentiated only to find yourself still "inauthentic."

With the intrepid realization of being inauthentic comes the unavoidable confrontation with anxiety. Anxiety comes about because there is no way for *Dasein* to experience the world outside of the one. No matter what we do, we have to do what one does. This condition of discovering the inevitable one is more or less a re-encounter of *Dasein* with its state of thrownness. Every attempt to be authentic consists of fleeing or leaping away from the present in search of the new only to end up, ironically, in another tranquilized state of being part of the one. This sense of no escape is called anxiety, a face-to-face confrontation with nothingness. Anxiety comes about with the abject realization that while always being caught up in the one, *Dasein*'s final truth is nothingness.[16] *Dasein* is always caught in temporality. The authentic opening to Being for *Dasein* is the certainty of its ending, its finitude, its death. One can avoid anxiety and throw oneself back, fall back, into the everyday world. After all, in the face of anxiety, "inauthenticity" looks good. At least it is stable and the expectations are clear. There is no problem solved here, but there is the sweetness of forgetting.[17]

The only way for a human being to be an authentic opening for *Dasein* is to face nothingness. Heidegger called the opening of *Dasein* to nothingness the consciousness of Being-toward-death. Though this may sound macabre, it is the definition of authenticity, because everybody must die. Every person grows old, gets sick, and dies. *Dasein* is really always Being-toward-death. This is its primordiality, its authentic condition of existence. But once *Dasein* grasps this as its authentic way to be open to the meaning of Being, the relationship with the world changes. Once *Dasein* grasps death as its own, it can also grasp life as its

16. One can hear, here, the echoes of Jean-Paul Sartre's great play, "No Exit," and his major philosophical work, *Being and Nothingness*.
17. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 296–311, 389–400.

own. In place of anxiety turning *Dasein* back to forgetfulness, anxiety can be the first step of Being-toward-death along the road to care. *Dasein* enters the world authentically when Being-toward-death liberates *Dasein* to care about being with the world. So, now the everyday is no longer the everyday of forgetfulness. It is the everyday of authentic possibility for the being who is a Being-toward-death. The authentic is the possible world, the poetic world that does not exist for but dwells with *Dasein*, that is part of *Dasein*'s actual Being-in-the-world, that is *Dasein*'s care.

Heidegger viewed language as *Dasein*'s particular way of expressing Being-in-the-world. He called language the house of Being.[18] But what did he mean? He thought that if we get back to the primordial setting of a word, we will reach that place where the word and the experience of the world are one and the same. Words as signs of primordial experience no longer carry the rust from centuries of use but instead recapture the primordiality of *Dasein*. To Heidegger, moving back to the origin of words was virtually a sacred act, because, to him, it is an attempt to arrive at the memory of care. In the significant essay, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," Heidegger pointed out the relationship between the German word *bauen*, which is to build, and the old German word *buan*, which is to dwell. Further, Heidegger pointed to the common relation of these words to *bin* (*Ich bin*, "I am"). So the relationship between being, dwelling, and building was to him evident.

Heidegger pointed out that the word to build relates to the experience of building in order to dwell in and to be with. The modern world forgets that to build is to dwell. Heidegger said, "The essence of building is letting dwell."[19] Dwelling is the care of building, but the modern technical attitude does not build in order to dwell. It builds in order to provide for consumption. Hence, language houses being because it houses the memory of care, but equally language can be the forgetting of being because it shifts the experience of Being (the memory of dwelling) to the functions of technology (the activity of forgetfulness).

Once Heidegger united care with language, it is understandable why he felt that at this point philosophy had done its job and should be let go. Philosophy can bring us to the promise of authentic being, but it cannot deliver on the promise. Deliverance comes through "dwelling" and "waiting" to dwell; these are not part of the deliberations that define philosophy. Dwelling and waiting cannot really be described, because once they are, they become fixed again as the inauthentic attempt to grasp and to hold technical knowledge (*Scientia*, or what one should know). To the contrary, dwelling and waiting are acts of wisdom, and wisdom is about being in Being rather than describing the problems of a being. To be in Being requires a different language, which is the language

18. Heidegger, "Letters on Humanism," 254.
19. Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," 337.

of care, and this comes forward in the poetic. Poetic expression is the passing expression of wisdom; it is wisdom as it dwells with us and travels past us. It expresses the moment, and it waits upon moments to come. Heidegger upheld Friedrich Hölderlin as a prime example of the poetic waiting upon the disclosure of Being. "Fateless the Heavenly breathe Like an unweaned infant asleep" is a line from a Hölderlin poem,[20] and we can see how Heidegger could be attracted to such verses that contrast and invoke waiting in the temporal, dwelling here, and letting go. Working out life in its details is like a technical regard of life that seeks to control it, but the poetic nature of life at last arises. There is no plan. There is dwelling in the now. But what about the after-now, someone will say. To Heidegger the poetic regard meant that if the now is fully taken care of, there is no after-now to worry over.

Avoiding and Retrieving Theology from Heidegger

Heidegger was an astounding philosopher but not necessarily a very wise one. On the political front, his yearning for simplicity and for the "dwelling" in being from times past reveal a type of waning or longing for purity and simplicity. The sense of "authentic" can take the form of this yearning, and that is a mistake. Authenticity is not about purity, simplicity, or a life absent of stress. Authenticity, too, when taken as a lost ideal can be a form of forgetting. It can re-imagine human experience in isolating and harmful ways; it can lead us to ideals where we forget that difference and multiplicity, fluidity and stress are all part of the game. To be a Being-toward-death means to be a being fully in life, in the now, with all the complications that come with it. Heidegger can truly inspire the celebration of life, but he can also hide a certain realism or genuineness inside his often troubling and somewhat compulsive idea of authenticity. To take Heidegger seriously we have also to admit to, in order to avoid, this deceptive side of his thinking in which he fools himself. Heidegger managed to believe that virtue related to authenticity was the professed future promise of the German people, and he found that promise expressed in the Nazi Party that appointed him Rector at the University of Freiburg in 1933. He left that position one year later. To his credit, he referred to his support of the regime as his big blunder. Yet, he never commented further, and this silence has left a legacy of suspicion about his philosophy and his personality.

It is important to mention Heidegger's blunder because it is important to avoid in his philosophy a certain idolatry of authenticity. His proclivity for the "authentic" life translated into his German ideal of rustic simplicity, dietary purity, and, as some of my German friends joke, authentic *Lederhosen*. Heidegger consequently was tempted to reduce authenticity to primal feelings of nation-

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20. Hölderlin, *Hyperion's Song of Destiny*.

alism, and this blunder has to be named. Inasmuch as theology, in its history, has gotten pressed against nationalism such that a particular interpretation of a religion and the politics of a particular nation are at times hard to distinguish, it is important to recognize that the task of theology is not a defensive task. Theology is about the "away from here," as Robert Funk once said, referring to a Franz Kafka parable. It is about the here and now that is not here but perpetually promises to be "here," or the potential of here, if the vision is trusted. The here of theology is the promise of the potential that is presently away from here; theology loses its vitality when this "away from here" is deconstructed into the forms of nationalism, which are petty and which "decay" its care.

Heidegger can lead theology to nationalism, but he can also lead theology away from here. In his concept of Being-toward-death and of waiting and dwelling, he opens himself to the question concerning the value of theology in a post-theistic, if not post-theological, age. Heidegger's thought continues to challenge theology with the question about its meaning and its task. There are certainly at least two significant re-imagined forms of theology that Heidegger inspires and that can be retrieved from him as tasks for theology in a post-theological age.

In the critique of technology lies the first key task. Technology, as described above, is a form of forgetfulness, because its function is repetition. For Heidegger, machinery represented technology, but for us it is computers and the digital age. The same effect exists in both cases. Machines like computer processes or other functions in digital media are programmed to repeat an operation over and over again. It is possible to program some sophistication and contextual sensitivity into technical operations, but, of course, the point of doing so is to facilitate ease of repetition. Theology can be a form of technology, that is, of repetition, and maybe it is even correct to charge that the doctrinal history of theology is technology unfolded in a metaphysical way. This makes theology the ironic subject of forgetting about theology. That is to say, theology, as Foucault might say, has long centered itself on the training and the repetition of a worldview.[21] Through its doctrinal history, theology has sought to name the problem of human nature and re-invest dogmatic solutions in hierarchical orders and ritual practices. To put this in a plain way, theology, as the systemic expression of beliefs, practices repetition through doctrine. The doctrinal history of, for example, soteriology expresses itself in universally repeated confessions. The Nicene Creed, accepted across denominations of the Christian tradition, repeats over the ages and in every generation the accepted technology of salvation: that Jesus was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, that for our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried, and

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21. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault united training with repetition, which further inspired ideas leading to the history of sexuality and technologies of the self.

that on the third day he rose from the dead. Translations of the Latin can vary, but the practice of repetition creates a worldview for the Christian religion and, as Heidegger would be inclined to point out, also creates a great, multi-national form of forgetting.

The theological point here lies in the struggle to define theology anew, apart from its historic technology, as the critique of worldviews. This means to liberate theology from its history of systematic expression. A system is something that repeats with little sympathy for nuance and with very much apathy for change. Theology from the time it became part of the imperial Roman system has constricted its definition to repeated doctrines and multi-volumed dogmatics. What Heidegger inspires, or can inspire, is an interruptive theology, a theology that moves beyond the technology of belief and sets its value on the natural dynamics of human experience. If we imagine a theology like that, it is not simply a non- or anti-technology theology; it is something like a theology-toward-death.

This, then, is the second aspect of Heidegger's thought that involves re-imagining theology as the subject-toward-death. This does not immediately sound enticing, because theology, one would hope, is supposed to be about new life. But theology understood as the subject-toward-death proposes an interesting shift in the traditional horizon. Traditional theology holds that its purpose is found in the pronouncement of life; in Christianity, the resurrection is the first confession after the death of Jesus. The resurrection is intimately linked to the eschatological content of the proclamation. The Apostle Paul relays the earliest confession in the fourfold dictum that Christ died, was buried, was raised, and appeared (1 Cor 15:3–4); even further, the appearances promise a return, for the Lord will come down from heaven with a loud trumpet and the dead in Christ shall rise first (1 Thess 4:16). The words of Paul reflect emerging Christ confessions and aim the principal directive of emerging Christian theology, which is the proclamation of life. How can theology then be conceived, in the Heideggarian sense, as the proclamation of the subject-toward-death?

The challenge is to conceive theology as the announcement of death, which is the announcement about waking up in the present, to the absolute moment of creativity. This is far different from the warnings, the visions, and the prophetic announcements of Paul, of the main biblical tradition, and of the usual theological customs. The act of being present is the poetic rather than gospel act, though we may wish to concede that the gospel properly speaking is poetry, however narrative its nature. Such liberty in theology comes about when Christian salvation technology finally concedes to Being-toward-death. Such a concession should not be confused with a death wish. Being-toward-death is an implosion of the actual present into the consciousness of Being with and Being now. This implosion into the present, into Being with and Being now, opens theology as the subject that dwells, in the parabolic sense, "away from here." Theology is, paradoxically, radically and simultaneously "here-with" the present as the

subject-toward-death that is "away from here." The eschatological temptation of the tradition, which is the temptation to fall into everyday salvation technology, is redirected in the subject toward death to the now that is away from here. To put this in plain language, theology conceived as the subject toward death promises no "end of the day" and no "at the last"; it carries in its struggles no "return" and no "all in all." Theology as the subject toward death holds its voice in the struggle that calls out the altered location in the now—dwelling not in a future but in a moment—a place that is here but not here, present but promised, available right here but available away from here. The critical task of theology as the subject toward death is the engagement of the alternative now right now.

Theology, in its historic and technical expression, practiced the project of the future as the repetition of an eschatological event. We mean here that theology comprehended redemption as an act from the past to be repeated in the future. Redemption is the once and future David in Judaism and the once and future Christ in Christianity. Such a form makes the project of theology a metaphysical attempt to convert human hope into an image of theological technology. Indeed, the critique of technology is exactly this: the destruction of vitality in the name of the projected same. This nihilistic history of salvation technology heralds, as both Nietzsche and Heidegger feared, the transference of nihilism from technology onto nature. Theology is now in the era where its own nihilistic project of salvation has transferred itself from metaphysics to practices of fundamentalist repetition and deadly intolerance.

To conceive theology as the subject-toward-death is a radical and even mysterious option for a subject that is used to relying on technologies of salvation founded upon eschatology and apocalypticism, but the future of humanity might well rest in a change to the value of theology. The Being-toward-death is a natural human being. Such a being knows its destiny is an unavoidably surety of nature, but this consciousness opens the now radical to freedom, choice, responsibility, and care. Theology can and maybe needs to hear these words such that its future is that of the subject toward death, which liberates the now from technology and delivers it to the promise of the here that is away from here.

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