

# Heidegger's Gods

*Benjamin D. Crowe*

## Abstract

The notorious difficulty of Heidegger's post-Second World War discussions of 'the gods', along with scholarly disagreement about the import of those discussions, renders that body of work an unlikely place to look for a substantive theory of religion. The thesis of this article is that, contrary to these appearances, Heidegger's later works do contain clues for developing such a theory. Heidegger's concerns about the category of 'religion' are addressed, and two recent attempts to 'de-mythologize' Heidegger's 'gods' are examined and criticized. The paper concludes by outlining four substantial contributions that Heidegger's later work makes to a phenomenological account of religion.

**Keywords:** Heidegger; religion; phenomenology of religion  
de-mythologizing; gods; God

As one of the more difficult elements of an *œuvre* already notorious for its difficulties, Heidegger's later discussions of 'the gods' in his post-Second World War writings seem an unlikely place to find clues for developing a substantive theory of religion. It is not even obvious, as the course of recent commentary has shown, that Heidegger's 'gods' have anything to do with religion in the first place. At the same time, Heidegger re-started dialogues with theologians and philosophers of religion during that period, and his post-war work has been quite enthusiastically received in those circles. The aim of this article is to confront this ambiguous situation, and to argue for the claim that Heidegger's later discussions of 'the gods' actually do contain the *outlines* of a substantive theory of religion. It is important to emphasize the fact that Heidegger offers only *outlines* or *sketches* of a theory. A full-blown philosophical account of religion, worked out in comprehensive detail and scope (of the sort familiar from Kant, Schelling, and Hegel) is not to be expected from Heidegger. Thus, one must be content with provisional statements of views which, nevertheless, have substantive content. Despite its difficulties, Heidegger's later work can, in part, be viewed as a contribution to continuing attempts to articulate a *phenomenology* of religion. That is, Heidegger's talk of the 'gods' can be viewed as an

attempt to clarify the nature of religious life in the interests of both theoretical accuracy *and* possible existential commitment.

My discussion proceeds in four steps. First, I argue that Heidegger's reluctance regarding 'religion' as an explanatory category does not mitigate against the relevance of his later work for the phenomenology of religion. Second, I discuss the work of two recent commentators, James C. Edwards and Julian Young, both of whom offer readings of Heidegger's 'gods' according to which these obscure figures are best understood as lacking in religious significance. I argue that these 'de-mythologizing' readings founder on the rocks of Heidegger's own explicit statements. Third, I outline an answer to the question of who (or what) Heidegger's 'gods' actually might be. Finally, in the concluding section of the paper, I sketch the central contributions that Heidegger's later work makes to our understanding of religion.

### 1 The 'Gods' and 'Religion'

In lecture courses from the 1940s, and in other works from the 1950s and 1960s, Heidegger makes frequent, albeit brief, references to 'the gods'.<sup>1</sup> Most of these occur within the context of his reflections on ancient Greek culture. His famous 1935 essay 'The Origin of the Work of Art' anticipates much of what he says in these later writings.<sup>2</sup> In his discussion of the Greek temple from this essay, Heidegger reflects on how the temple makes the 'god' present to the people (G5 28–9/21–2). His lecture course on Parmenides, delivered in the winter of 1942–3, contains a sustained discussion of the Greek gods and of Greek myth. Essays published in the 1950s on Parmenides and Heraclitus recapitulate the substance of many of these discussions (G7 253, 281, 285). Besides these discussions of the Greek gods, Heidegger also examines the themes of the 'gods' and the 'holy' or 'sacred [*das Heilige*]' in Hölderlin's poetry. Indeed, most of his writings on Hölderlin, beginning with the lecture course for the winter of 1934–5, touch in some way on these themes. Finally, in addition to works dealing with Hölderlin and the Greeks, Heidegger also incorporates 'the gods' or 'godly ones [*die Göttlichen*]' into important post-war statements of his basic position like 'Das Ding', 'Bauen Wohnen Denken', and '... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch...'.<sup>3</sup>

At first glance, it seems obvious that religion is a central concern of the 'later' Heidegger, just as it was for the so-called 'young Heidegger'. In the period prior to the publication of *Being and Time* Heidegger was earnestly occupied with the development of a phenomenology of religion. Husserl encouraged these efforts in the years following the First World War, and Heidegger variously identifies himself during these years as a practitioner of the phenomenology of religion and as a 'Christian theo-logian'.<sup>3</sup> Despite some conceptual and stylistic shifts, it looks as though the Heidegger of the

1940s and 1950s is engaged in a similar project with his talk of 'the gods'. However, upon closer inspection, it would seem that this material cannot be so readily given a straightforwardly 'religious' interpretation. In fact, Heidegger explicitly rejects 'religion' as a suitable concept for understanding 'the gods'.

This move is first made in a 1942 lecture course, where Heidegger bitterly criticizes the application of the category of 'religion' to understanding Sophocles' *Antigone* (G53 119/95). A few years later, in the aborted lecture course for the winter term of 1944–5, Heidegger asserts that 'The Greeks had no "religion", because they were and still are those who are looked at [*Angeblickten*] by the gods' (G50 108). This reluctance to use 'religion' as a category is even more pronounced in a recently published text, 'Aufenthalte', which records Heidegger's impressions on the occasion of a 1962 visit to Greece. Reflecting on the temple of Aphaia on Aegina, Heidegger writes, 'The Greek relation to the divinity of the god and the gods was neither a faith nor a religion in the Roman sense of *religio*' (G75 241). A text that was composed after a subsequent visit to Greece also warns against understanding the Greek 'relation to the gods after the manner of Roman *religio*' and against talk of 'the "religiosity" of the Greeks and their "faith"' (G75 260). In a 1943 essay, Heidegger similarly warns against interpreting Hölderlin by using the category of 'religion': 'Let one not disfigure Hölderlin's poetry by "the religious element [*das Religiöse*]" of a "religion" which expresses the Roman interpretation of the relation between human beings and gods' (G4 114/136–7).

What to make of these puzzling pronouncements? It seems, after all, as if 'religion' is the natural category to use in any account of the Greek gods, or of any other gods for that matter. In rejecting a 'religious' interpretation of the 'gods', is Heidegger perhaps proposing that the gods be viewed naturalistically, as sociological phenomena? Is Heidegger, like his friend Rudolf Bultmann, interested in 'de-mythologizing' Greek religion? The answer to both of these questions has to be 'no'. In warning against a 'religious' interpretation of the Greek gods, Heidegger is not proposing either a sociological or a 'de-mythologizing' account. Instead, in keeping with his life-long commitment to the phenomenological war cry 'to the things themselves [*zu den Sache selbst*]', Heidegger is simply trying to warn against *assuming* the meaning of 'religion' in advance, and then imposing this assumed understanding on phenomena such as Greek mythology and temple cults.

This is the point that Heidegger is trying to make, however obscurely, in his frequent comments regarding the 'Roman' concept of religion. Just what this 'Roman' concept amounts to is never really clarified. However, as a glance at his writings from the 1930s and 1940s shows, 'Roman' culture, for Heidegger, is paradigmatic of a culture that submits everything to the demands of utility. 'Roman' religion, then, might be understood as a kind of *technology* designed to produce valuable outcomes through ritualized

commerce with the gods. Whether or not this is a fair representation of what Roman religion was actually like, or even if this represents a significant difference between Greek and Roman religion, Heidegger's overriding point is well taken. His claim is simply that the meaning of ancient Greek religious life should be allowed to emerge on its own terms rather than from the imposition of foreign categories.

Heidegger's worries about the category 'religion', however, run much deeper than this concern with avoiding confusion between different cultures. On his view, the term 'religion' carries the baggage of modern theories of culture. Both 'culture' and 'religion' are categories that, on his view, derive from the modern project of grounding culture in autonomous rationality. This is a claim that goes all the way back to Heidegger's earliest investigations in the phenomenology of religion. In lecture courses given at Freiburg after the First World War, Heidegger takes on Neo-Kantian theories of culture and of religion, and argues that these theories distort or deform the central phenomena of religious life by importing categories that are themselves derived from the normative concept of 'culture' articulated by Kant and German Idealism.<sup>4</sup> The fundamental idea underlying the concept of 'culture', on Heidegger's view, is the notion that meaning derives from human subjectivity. Applied to religion, this concept leads to the view that religion is simply another department of rule-governed human cultural activity. For Heidegger, this is an unwarranted assumption that winds up being retroactively applied to pre-modern religious phenomena such as Greek mythology. The nature of Greek religion, for which the gods are concrete realities that are independent of, and set limits upon, human activity is thereby obscured or covered over.<sup>5</sup> Heidegger makes the point this way in a 1942–3 lecture:

In this way again and again the most facile precept imposes itself, that these divine beings [*Götterwesen*] must be explained as a 'product of human beings' or more precisely of 'religious' human beings. As if this human being, even for a moment, could have been a human being without the relation of these divine beings to his own essence, i.e., without the abiding of this very relation in being itself.

(G54 162/109–10)

Heidegger's point is that phenomenological accuracy suffers when categories alien to the phenomena in question are uncritically applied. In this instance, what is most important is that 'the essence of the human being and of the divine beings as experienced by the Greeks' serve as the ultimate benchmark for a good interpretation of Greek religion (G54 163/110). In saying that the Greeks had no 'religion' while repeatedly examining the nature of the Greek gods Heidegger is trying to caution against taking

common assumptions entirely for granted. For example, he also warns against simply taking over the common conception of the Greek gods as 'personifications' of natural forces and of abstract concepts like 'justice' or 'truth' (G7 253). This is not, on his view, how the Greeks themselves experienced the gods. For a phenomenologist, this Greek experience is the measure against which any interpretation of Greek religion must be judged. Questioning the category of 'religion', as articulated, for example, in Neo-Kantian theories of culture, does not imply that phenomena like the gods, Greek myths, or religious practices should be evacuated of their traditional 'religious' valence. Instead, the point of Heidegger's warnings is that the actual content of 'religion' should be determined on the basis of an unprejudiced look at the phenomena, rather than by the assumptions that prevail in intellectual circles at a particular time.

## 2 'De-mythologizing' Heidegger's Gods

While Heidegger warns against the concept of 'religion' as such, he certainly does not want to evacuate 'the gods' of all of their traditional religious significance. Instead, he wants to articulate, in as unprejudiced a manner as possible, just what it is for something to have *religious* meaning. Unfortunately, as will be shown below, he never quite gets around to offering a fully worked-out account of this issue. Perhaps more worrying, however, is the fact that, in discussing Heidegger's writings on this topic, readers must inevitably *assume* some prior understanding of religion and religious meaning in order to identify the very subject matter at issue. It is safe to say that most readers of Heidegger will lack a fully articulated concept of religion and of religious meaning. What one assumes in advance, then, will be a more or less vague intimation of what is at issue, the sort of thing that Heidegger famously calls a 'pre-intention [*Vormeinung*]' in *Being and Time*. The presence of such a vague preliminary familiarity with a subject matter is simply indispensable to any interpretation.

Fortunately for us, however, Heidegger does give some indication of *his own* 'pre-intention' regarding religious meaning. In a famous passage on the so-called 'God of the philosophers', Heidegger writes that we 'can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god' (*ID* 72). The sense that one gets from this passage is that, for Heidegger, the divine is always something worthy of worship, indeed, something that *commands* worship. This is, of course, consonant with what most people would take to be a characteristic feature of religiously significant entities. In what follows, then, I will take 'traditional religious meaning' to connote something like 'worshipworthiness'.

Ultimately, Heidegger's account of religious meaning or significance must appeal to his concept of world. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger

famously argues that the equipmental meaning or ‘readiness-to-hand [*Zuhandenheit*]’ of familiar objects derives from a network of relations of instrumentality that constitutes the world of work. The latter is itself structured by some project that a person has assigned herself on the basis of an even more fundamental network of relations or world. Heidegger makes it clear that, for him, the religious world is, unlike the work-world, not primarily characterized by relations of instrumentality. This emerges, for example, in his exposition of Pauline Christianity, particularly in connection with Paul’s insistence that Christian discipleship is not instrumental for ‘peace and security’. It is even more evident, however, in Heidegger’s discussion of the Augustinian distinction between *uti* or to use (an attitude that makes sense because of relations of instrumentality) and *frui* or to enjoy (an attitude that makes sense because of relations with things that are intrinsically valuable). As in the case of instrumental meaning, Heidegger’s suggestion is that we look at recognizably religious attitudes and activities and uncover what it is that makes them intelligible to us as those specific sorts of attitudes and activities. Early on, he focuses on the attitude or feeling of ‘absolute dependence’, prominent in the work of both Schleiermacher and Adolf Reinach (G60 323). Another religious attitude that is important in his early studies of religion is that of viewing one’s life as a vocation or a calling (G60 332). Augustine’s examinations of ‘pure love’ or ‘chaste fear [*timor castus*]’ for God also figure large in Heidegger’s earliest forays into the phenomenology of religion. Eventually, Heidegger comes to hold that these attitudes and activities are best understood as relations to something that is a ‘superior power [*Übermacht*]’, something ‘awesome’ (G26 211/165; G4 63/85). Something has religious significance, then, if it is understood in terms of a network of relations ordered not to some project or interest, but rather to something incommensurably valuable, something that utterly transcends human interests, towards which the proper attitude is worship.

And so, when Heidegger discusses the ‘gods’ in famous essays like ‘Das Ding’ and ‘Bauen Wohnen Denken’, we might expect that he is talking in a religious way about religious matters. That is, he is discussing beings traditionally viewed as worthy of worship, as exemplifications of holiness. Yet, as more recent commentary has shown, this is not something that can be assumed without further ado. Indeed, two of the best interpreters of the ‘later Heidegger’ have offered rigorously argued readings of Heidegger’s ‘gods’ that purport to show that there is no religious significance to his talk. However, both of these interpretations, while illuminating in certain respects, ultimately go astray.

In a recent monograph, James C. Edwards offers a reading of ‘the godly ones [*die Göttlichen*]’ in Heidegger’s later works on which these figures are apparently devoid of religious meaning. Edwards’ interpretation aims at clarifying the difficult concept of the ‘fourfold [*Geviert*]’ in Heidegger’s essays from the 1950s. According to Edwards, the four elements of the

'fourfold' – earth, sky, godly ones, mortals – represent the 'conditions' that make a particular way of life possible.<sup>6</sup> He reads the 'godly ones', or the 'divinities' in his translation, as follows:

They are presences from another world, annunciators of a place of haleness and wholeness. The divinities are the reality both of human need for such weal and of our hope that it will someday be vouchsafed to us.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the mention of 'another world', Edwards' reading is clearly an attempt to 'de-mythologize' Heidegger's talk of 'the godly ones'. On Edwards' account, the latter symbolize or embody aspects of human experience. Indeed, he explicitly asserts that 'In spite of using the trope of theological language, it is clear that Heidegger is not identifying the divinities with the personified natural presences of religious belief.'<sup>8</sup> In calling Heidegger's usage a 'trope', Edwards clearly intends that we are not meant to understand 'the godly ones' in a literal sense as objects of religious devotion or the like. Indeed, Edwards' examples of 'divinities' include 'poems, paintings, [and] works of philosophy', none of which have much in common with 'gods' as traditionally understood.

Julian Young, in what is undoubtedly the best recent commentary on Heidegger's later work, offers a similarly 'de-mythologized' account of Heidegger's 'gods'. Young's reading differs from Edwards' in the details, though not in spirit. The crucial step in Young's interpretation comes in the following passage:

For Heidegger the gods are always closely associated with what he variously call [*sic*] the divine 'destinings' (QCT p. 34), 'laws' (HE p. 312) or 'edicts' (I p. 116). He says, for example, that Greek tragedy 'brought the presence of the gods, [i.e.] brought the dialogue of divine and human destinings to radiance' (QCT p. 34). In some sense, the gods *are* the 'divine destinings'.<sup>9</sup>

The precise sense in which the gods 'are' these 'laws', which Young takes to be constitutive of the 'fundamental *ethos*' of a historical people, is spelled out a bit later. The gods 'announce' these laws 'by being embodiments, incarnations or *exemplars* of the laws'.<sup>10</sup> As such, the 'gods' play the same role in Heidegger's later thought that 'heroes' (allegedly) do in *Being and Time*. In other words, the 'gods', like the earlier 'heroes', are charismatic exemplars of 'existence possibilities' that are embedded in the traditions of a particular culture. While in some religious traditions, including Christianity, it is certainly true that the 'gods' are to be imitated or emulated, it also seems true that, if this is all there is to the 'gods', then much of what has been traditionally taken to be characteristic of 'divinity'

– mystery, awesome power, worshipworthiness – has been wiped away by Young's Heidegger.

Both Edwards and Young, then, offer readings of Heidegger's 'gods' on which they are more or less evacuated of religious significance. Hence, these readings are certainly a challenge to one who, like me, wants to read Heidegger's later thought as a contribution to a theory of religion. However, this challenge is by no means insurmountable. To the contrary, the readings offered by Edwards and Young are faced with serious difficulties. Their denial of religious significance to Heidegger's 'gods' does too much violence to what Heidegger actually says.

Both Edwards and Young are, however, on solid ground when it comes to their general understanding of the 'fourfold', the conceptual framework within which Heidegger's later discussions of the 'gods' occur most frequently. The 'fourfold', as both Edwards and Young observe, is the later Heidegger's version of what he had called 'world' in *Being and Time*. That is, the 'fourfold' is a nexus of meaningful relations, or 'conditions' of meaning, that grounds the intelligibility of human practices and of the things with which human practices are engaged. A quick reading of the text in which Heidegger first introduces the 'fourfold', the 1949 version of 'Das Ding', bears this out, for Heidegger explicitly uses the concept of 'world' to help articulate his basic point (G79 12). The 'godly ones', as elements of the 'fourfold', play a central role in this nexus of meaning that comprises the 'horizon' or 'background' against which human experience in all its dimensions makes sense. In this much, I am in agreement with both Edwards and Young. Mortal dwelling 'in' the 'fourfold' is another way of describing what Heidegger calls 'being-in-the-world' in *Being and Time*.

Indeed, no one would deny the 'godly ones' a central place in the 'fourfold'. Heidegger's most detailed discussions of this idea all incorporate these figures (G79 17; G7 152). The question, however, is whether or not Edwards and Young are correct in their 'de-mythologizing' interpretation of them. A look at what Heidegger says about how to treat 'myth', and at his concrete examples of 'godly ones', forces one to conclude that the answer to this question must be negative. First of all, in his lecture course for the summer of 1942, Heidegger criticizes contemporary views of 'myth', according to which it consists of poetic tropes that conceal a literal meaning (G53 139/111). On this venerable view, the philosopher is in the business of 'liberating the mythological poem from the mythical' and 'recasting its remaining content into the rigid grid and debris of empty concepts' (G53 139/111). As he puts it in a later essay on Parmenides, such a view fails to appreciate the nature of *mythos* as a way of disclosing reality (G7 253). Heidegger would, therefore, most likely resist attempts to read his talk of 'the gods' as a poetic or mythological 'trope', as a metaphor for something that can be explained away without any reference to 'religion'. This is not to say, of course, that Heidegger endorses the notion that the 'gods' are best

understood as supernatural persons. As I have already pointed out, on Heidegger's view, the latter position shares the same provenance as the project of 'de-mythologizing', i.e., modern attempts to 'explain' religious phenomena. Heidegger is suspicious of the reigning notions of 'the gods', and he is careful to point out that his own readings are always quite tentative (G75 241; G54 181/122).

That Heidegger does not want to evacuate 'the gods' or 'the godly ones' of religious significance is shown more clearly still by the concrete examples that he gives. Recall that, for Edwards, the examples of 'the divinities' are 'poems, paintings, works of philosophy' and the like. When we turn to what Heidegger actually says about what the 'godly ones' might be, things appear quite differently. When Heidegger issued a revised version of the essay 'Das Ding', he attached a letter that he had written to an inquiring student named Buchner. He evidently did so because he was of the opinion that this exchange clarified the difficult ideas presented in the essay. Most significant for my discussion are the three examples of 'the godly [*Göttlichen*]' that Heidegger gives: 'the godly in Greek culture [*Griechentum*], in prophetic Judaism [*Prophetisch-Jüdischen*], in the preaching of Jesus' (G7 185). The latter two, as instances of 'the godly', are scarcely intelligible apart from their religious significance. The first example, 'the godly in Greek culture', of course, reflects Heidegger's continuing interest in Greek mythology, and his attempts, beginning with 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in 1935, to understand the Greek 'world', of which religion was an essential component. This is, of course, not to say that what Heidegger understands by 'godly' is crystal clear. Indeed, the sheer existence of interpretations such as those of Edwards and Young demonstrates the vague, equivocal, and ambiguous nature of Heidegger's discussions. Still, it is striking that Heidegger's exemplars of the 'godly' are set within traditional religious contexts in which the divine is clearly understood as something awesome and transcendent and therefore worthy of worship. It would be difficult to conceive, for example, of a cogent account of prophetic Judaism in which 'poems' and 'paintings' are on a par with God. Heidegger's actual examples of 'the godly', then, seem to contradict the understanding of 'the godly' presented by Edwards and Young. Edwards, in fact, ignores this passage altogether. Young, on the other hand, quotes it in full, though he overlooks the problems it poses for his 'de-mythologized' reading of Heidegger's 'gods'.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1949 version of 'Das Ding', where Heidegger first introduces the concept of the 'fourfold', his famous description of the earthenware jug also presents problems for a 'de-mythologized' reading. When describing how the jug 'gathers' the 'godly ones', Heidegger clearly has in mind the way in which the jug can play a role in religious practices. He writes:

The gift of the poured stream [*Gusses*] is the drink [*Trunk*] for mortals.  
It quenches their thirst. It enlivens their leisure time. It brings joy to

their sociality. But the gift of the jug will also, from time to time, be dedicated for consecration [*zur Weihe*]. [...] The poured stream is the oblation [*Trank*] offered to the immortal gods.

(G79 11)

The jug, in this instance, ‘gathers’ the fourfold in that it features in a practice the meaning of which crucially depends on ‘the godly ones’. ‘Consecration [*Weihe*]’, a word also used by Heidegger in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ in connection with the dedication of a temple in ancient Greece, and used in ordinary German to refer to the crucial moment in the Mass, can hardly be understood *except* as a religious practice. Similarly, offering an ‘oblation’ from the jug to the ‘immortal gods’, a common theme in Greek poetry, is a practice that makes sense only as part of the overall sacrificial religious system of the Greeks. Heidegger’s example of how a thing ‘gathers’ the ‘fourfold’ from the later essay ‘Bauen Wohnen Denken’ has a similar religious valence. In this case, it is not a jug, but a bridge, that serves as Heidegger’s example of a ‘thing’. The bridge ‘gathers’ the ‘fourfold’ in ‘the figure of the saint of the bridge’ (G7 155).

In this same essay, when Heidegger discusses the relationship between ‘mortals’, i.e., human beings, and these ‘godly ones’, the most natural interpretation is that Heidegger is talking about a kind of authentic religiosity. The passage runs:

Mortals dwell in that they await the godly ones *as godly ones*. In hope they hold up to the godly ones what is un hoped for. They wait for the hints of their arrival and do not overlook the signs of their absence. They do not make gods for themselves and do not worship idols. In the very depth of misfortune they wait for the weal that has been withdrawn.

(G7 152, my italics)

Note how, in the first line of this passage, Heidegger adds the seemingly superfluous repetition ‘as godly ones’. This repetition is, however, far from insignificant. Heidegger is trying to make it clear that ‘mortals’ relate to ‘the godly ones’ precisely *as* ‘godly ones’, not as metaphors for the human experience or as social constructions. The latter interpretations of ‘gods’ and ‘godly ones’ are precisely those which, as I have shown in the previous section, Heidegger was at great pains to refute.

On Young’s account of this passage, Heidegger is advocating a ‘conservation’ of existence possibilities already present in one’s cultural inheritance.<sup>12</sup> Heidegger is, no doubt, advocating the maintenance of traditional practices that challenge the dominance of technical rationality in the modern world.<sup>13</sup>

But *which* practices are these? They are *religious* practices, which are ways not merely of honouring one's tradition, but of honouring the godly ones precisely *as* godly ones. The mention of idolatry is instructive here. The prohibitions against idolatry in the Abrahamic religions stem largely from an insistence on the *transcendence* of the deity. All representations of the divine are rejected as *unworthy* of the dignity of such a transcendent being.

On Edwards' view, what Heidegger is trying to say in this passage is that people ought to recognize their inherent finitude, their need for wholeness or completion, and their inability to achieve this on their own.<sup>14</sup> There is no doubt that one of Heidegger's primary charges against modernity was the lack of humility and reverence, and the pervasive, almost Promethean, attempt to overcome human finitude through the titanic efforts of modern technology. Again, however, this cannot be *all* that Heidegger is trying to say in this passage. Indeed, he makes exactly this point in many places throughout his writings without making any mention of 'the godly ones' and the dangers of 'idolatry'. Heidegger's comments here are targeted specifically at the *religious* situation of modernity. This is a situation in which 'religion' is reduced to a private 'world-view' for the edification the individual, where theologians eclipse God as the centre of religious life, and where religious institutions compromise all too readily with dominant power-brokers.

The 'godly ones', who figure so importantly in the 'fourfold' as a way of conceiving of the 'world' or nexus of meaning that grounds human activities, are clearly understood by Heidegger as having religious significance. As his carefully chosen examples make clear, he is not using 'godly ones' or 'gods' as poetic or rhetorical tropes, or as metaphors for something that can be said equally well in another way. While there are, no doubt, many attractions to 'de-mythologizing' Heidegger's 'gods', doing so would do violence to what he actually says. Heidegger is, by his own account, trying to capture the central role played by 'the godly ones' and the religious practices that they figure in within a way of life that he is trying to advocate. This way of life is, for him, particularly embodied in the culture of the ancient Greeks. Rather than being a added adornment on an otherwise complete life, religion played a crucial role in shaping Greek culture as a whole.

In 'Aufenthalte', his travel journal from his trip to Greece in 1962, Heidegger repeatedly returns to this point. For example, he describes Olympia as 'the place where once the whole of Greece united in the hottest days of summer for the peaceful celebration of competition, where they celebrated their highest gods' (G75 221). The festivals at Olympia served to 'articulate' or manifest the essential contours of the 'world' of the ancient Greeks, as evidenced by the practice of dating events in 'Olympiads'. He makes similar points on the occasion of his visits to the temple of Zeus at Nemea and the shrine of Asclepius in Epidauros (G75 225–6). The Greek 'world' is most evident to Heidegger on the holy island of Delos, another place where great religious festivals were held in ancient times. He describes

the historical 'sojourn [*Auftenthalt*]' of the Greeks in terms that call to mind his earlier accounts of the 'fourfold'. The Greek 'world', including natural things and human practices, 'happens before the face of and in the service of the gods' (G75 233). At the temple of Poseidon in Attica, Heidegger describes how, for the Greeks, it is the 'invisible nearness of the godly ones' that 'consecrates all growth and every human work' (G75 238).

On Heidegger's account, the Greek 'world' was shaped by the presence or 'nearness' of the gods and by the practices that celebrated and commemorated them. The Greek world is a kind of model or paradigm for what Heidegger calls 'the fourfold' in the early 1950s. Crucial to both is that the meaning that things have and the practices of human beings concerned with these things are both shaped ahead of time by an explicitly *religious* dimension of meaning. Just as the practices of the ancient Greeks as a whole were always carried out 'before the face' of the gods, so too, a way of life opposed to the washed-out uniformity of technological society must once again take the 'godly ones' into account. If Heidegger's 'gods' are de-mythologized, then this crucial aspect of his later thought winds up being distorted and covered up.

### 3 Who Are Heidegger's Gods?

In one sense, the question posed by Julian Young, 'who are Heidegger's gods?', is answered by a look at the examples actually given by Heidegger: Athene, Zeus, Poseidon, YHWH, Jesus. The 'godly ones' are to be understood *as* 'godly ones', not as metaphors for some natural or human reality. Still, the actual nature of these 'godly ones' remains to be clarified. All that we can be certain of so far is a more or less vague, provisional notion of the divine as that which is worthy of worship. Once again, Heidegger gives us precious little to go on. But if, as I maintain, Heidegger does have a contribution to make to the theory of religion, more than concrete examples need to be provided. What is it to be a 'godly one' for Heidegger? What do the Zeus of Homer's hymns and the Father of Jesus' sermons have in common?

For an answer to this further question, we need to turn once again to Heidegger's essays from the 1950s. In 'Das Ding', we are told that 'The godly ones are the beckoning messengers of divinity [*Gottheit*]' (G7 180). A similar claim is made once more in 'Bauen Wohnen Denken', written a few years after 'Das Ding':

The godly ones are the beckoning messengers of divinity [*Gottheit*].  
Out of the holy sway of divinity, the god appears in his presence or  
withdraws into his concealment.

(G7 152)

A few things need to be noted about these passages. First of all, they appear, virtually unaltered, in the 1949 Bremen lectures as well as in the published version from later on in the 1950s. This would indicate that Heidegger views what he has said in these passages as more or less settled aspects of his account of the 'godly ones'. Second, the term 'divinity [*Gottheit*]' is ambiguous. In German *Gottheit* could mean 'Godhead', as in Eckhart's Neo-Platonic account of divine nature as revealed in mystical experience. In this sense, *Gottheit* indicates transcendence of all conceptual determinations. At the same time, however, *Gottheit* might mean something like 'god-ness' or 'god-hood', a property in virtue of which something is a god. In the first usage, the term refers to a being. If it is taken in this way, the passages quoted above would seem to indicate that, for Heidegger, the 'godly ones' are 'messengers' of a particular being who remains hidden in inaccessible transcendence. The more likely sense, however, is more along the lines of the latter. Instead of 'the Godhead', *Gottheit* should be read as 'divinity', as the essence of being divine. This is the plain sense of a passage from an essay on Parmenides from the 1950s. Attacking what he takes to be superficial approaches to Greek religion, Heidegger writes:

One makes the conversation with Parmenides' path of thought too easy for oneself if one misses the mythical experience in the word of the thinker and objects that, in comparison to the unambiguously stamped 'divine persons', Hera, Athene, Demeter, Persephone, the goddess *Aletheia* is quite undefined and is an empty construction of thought. In making his reservation one talks as if one were in possession of a long-since secured knowledge of what the *divinity* [*Gottheit*] of the Greek gods is, such that it makes sense to talk about 'persons' here, as if the essence of truth were decided so that, in case it appears as a goddess, this could only be an abstract personification of a concept.

(G7 253, my italics)

The 'godly ones', then, are appearances or manifestations of what it means to be 'divine' or 'sacred'. They are concrete manifestations of the inexhaustibly rich reality of being divine.

Still, what it is to *be* divine is left obscure. The 'later' Heidegger does, however, give us a valuable clue in a 1951 essay on Hölderlin.

And what is this [that is intimate to human beings]? Everything in heaven, under heaven, and on the earth that radiates and blooms, resounds and puts forth scent, rises and comes forth, but also goes away and falls, that which cries and keeps silent, and also that which grows pale and darkens. Into what is thus intimate to human beings,

but foreign to God, the *unfamiliar* sends itself in order to remain sheltered in it *as unfamiliar*.

(G7 204, my italics)

The suggestion made in this passage is of the divine as ‘foreign’, as beyond the ken of the normal competence of human practices. This conception is strikingly parallel to Rudolf Otto’s conception of the ‘holy’ as ‘wholly other’. Here, it is important to recall that Heidegger enthusiastically received Otto’s work in 1917 and even worked on a review of it. In 1929, he reviewed Ernst Cassirer’s work on mythology, taking the opportunity to explain the core of religiosity as a sense of ‘mana’, of ‘holiness’ as ‘overwhelming power’ (G3 257–8; 267). This, of course, accords with what was described above as Heidegger’s ‘pre-intention’ regarding religious significance. By the 1950s at the latest, Heidegger had settled on a view of the ‘divinity [*Gottheit*]’ of the divine as awesome holiness that evokes humility and worship. It is difficult to see how things like poems, paintings, or social customs could properly be taken as exemplifying this essence. It is certainly true that Heidegger would welcome a *kind* of reverence for such things, of a sort conspicuously absent from a technologized world of meaningless ‘resources [*Bestand*]’. At most, however, such objects are only *analogous* to what is genuinely divine. However sublime such things might be, however mysterious even the objects of common life might be, they are scarcely worthy of *worship*.

In his discussions of the Greek gods, Heidegger again and again stresses how they show up in a quite literal and concrete sense.<sup>15</sup> Like his own hero Hölderlin, Heidegger looks to Pindar’s poetry as a particularly clear expression of Greek culture. In an essay called ‘Aletheia (Heraclitus, Fragment 16)’, Heidegger observes:

Pindar calls locales and mountains, meadows and river-banks, *zatheos* [most divine], especially when he wants to say that the gods, the shining ones who cast a glance [*Hereinblickenden*], often allowed themselves to be authentically seen here, that they came to presence in appearing. The locales are especially holy because they arise purely in letting the shining ones appear.

(G7 281)

Similarly, in ‘Auftenthalte’, Heidegger talks about how a temple like the Parthenon ‘announces [*bezeugt*] the presences of the god’ (G75 236). Heidegger’s interest in the ‘givenness’ of the divine in concrete experience goes all the way back to 1918–19, when he first began to conceive of the project of a phenomenology of religion. At that time, his examples were

medieval mystics like Bernard of Clairvaux and Theresa of Avila, as well as contemporaries who had undergone powerful experiences of conversion, such as his fellow phenomenologist Adolf Reinach. The point, however, is the same, regardless of the example used. For Heidegger, the divine can 'show up', quite literally, in the field of human experience.

As a phenomenologist, interested in penetrating the fog of received opinions to get at the 'thing itself' that is religion, Heidegger is also a committed pluralist about the 'godly ones'. That is, what it is to be divine, *Gottheit*, can show up in human experience in many different ways.<sup>16</sup> Heidegger's views in this regard are actually quite close to those of the young Schleiermacher, whom Heidegger had avidly read shortly after the First World War.<sup>17</sup> In his famous *Reden*, Schleiermacher maintains that the 'universe' can be 'intuited' in many ways, and that 'religion' resists being forced into a closed system.<sup>18</sup> For Schleiermacher, '[e]very original and new intuition of the universe' counts as a revelation.<sup>19</sup> These fundamental experiences, of course, are the seeds of more systematic developments of theology and Church polity. What interests both Heidegger and Schleiermacher, however, is the 'essence' of religion, the 'thing itself', viewed without prejudice.

#### 4 Heidegger's Contribution to the Phenomenology of Religion

Now that it has been established that the later Heidegger's talk of the 'gods' can indeed be read as a contribution to a theory of religion, what remains to be discussed is the specific elements of this contribution. Heidegger himself does not develop any of these, so far as one can tell, into a full-blown account of religion. Instead, each of them is best viewed as a sort of 'germ' of a more developed theory, or as an indication of what a more developed theory might look like. Moreover, though the present context does not permit an extensive elaboration of this claim, it is also true that Heidegger's earlier efforts in the phenomenology of religion contain exactly the same basic elements as does his later work. In the remainder of this article, I will describe four distinct elements of Heidegger's phenomenology of religion as these might bear upon the further development of his basic insights.

##### 1 *Phenomenological Realism*

At the outset of this paper, I referred to Heidegger's criticisms of the Neo-Kantian and Nietzschean theories of religion. Both types of theory can be characterized as *anti-realist* in orientation. That is, like a number of other theories that have been offered over the years, Heidegger's targets maintain that religious meaning can be exhaustively explained as a product of human psychology and human sociality. The 'gods', on such a view, are 'products' of the endlessly creative imagination of human beings. More to the point, on this view, things matter in a religious way because of our interests: religious

meaning is a species of instrumental meaning. Heidegger resolutely rejects this claim. Instead, he adopts a viewpoint that might be called ‘phenomenological realism’. First of all, this position is *phenomenological* because, as far as one can tell, it is not based upon religious or metaphysical commitments, but rather upon Heidegger’s continuing efforts to uncover the underlying pattern or structure of different religious ways of life – notably Christian and Greek ways of life. This is not to say that Heidegger had no such commitments, or that he was indifferent to the relation between his work and the commitments of traditional religion. Indeed, all signs are that the opposite is the case. Still, Heidegger always insists, from very early on, that his work is *distinct* from disciplines like doctrinal theology. Second, Heidegger’s position is *realist* in that he holds that religious meaning is *given* or *discovered* rather than *created*; that is, it is prior to human interests. Heidegger makes this point, for example, in his 1936 essay on Hölderlin, where he says that ‘the gods can come to expression only if they themselves address us and place us under their claim’ (G4 40/58). A similar comment can be found in the 1944–5 lecture course, where Heidegger questions Nietzsche’s claim that the ‘gods’ are the products of a ‘religious talent’:

[W]hat might a ‘religious talent’ be, if it is not already, as ‘religious’, related to the divine, if it is not already addressed by the divine through a God and so first of all becomes ‘religious’ through this address.

(G50 108)

## 2 *Religious Experience*

An element of Heidegger’s thought that is closely related to his phenomenological realism is his interest in determining the way in which the divine is ‘given’ in religious experience. In his discussions of the Greek gods, he makes it clear that these are not abstractions, but concrete realities with a palpable, almost tactile presence. A marginal note to the letter appended to the later version of ‘Das Ding’ points to this concern (G7 185). The passage on Pindar quoted in the preceding section also indicates that, for Heidegger, the divine is or can be concretely ‘given’. This interest in religious experience is, of course, one of the main characteristics of phenomenological approaches to the philosophy of religion. At the same time, it anticipates recent work in the epistemology of religious belief.<sup>20</sup> Those who adopt Heidegger’s approach as a starting point for their own research in the philosophy of religion should first of all thematize the ‘givenness’ of the divine in human experience prior to working out the metaphysics and epistemology of religious belief. It also opens up for closer examination a whole range of phenomena, such as mysticism,

Eucharistic liturgy, 'charismatic' experiences, and the kinship between religious and aesthetic experiences.

### 3 *Being-in-the-World*

Among Heidegger's most influential ideas is that human existence is best conceived of as 'being-in-the-world'. This means, roughly, that human beings pre-cognitively 'inhabit' a nexus of meaning or 'world' which constitutes the horizon or background against which things appear 'as' such-and-such. This 'world' is tacitly or unthematically 'understood' in advance. At the same time, it is not an abstract entity, but is concretely given. This latter point represents Heidegger's adaptation of Husserl's concept of 'categorical intuition' from the *Logical Investigations*.<sup>21</sup> This tacit understanding of 'world' is articulated in diverse human practices. While 'being-in-the-world' is most closely associated with *Being and Time* (1927), later essays like 'Das Ding' and 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' describe a substantively identical conception. In these later texts, Heidegger uses the term 'fourfold [*Geviert*]', rather than 'world', to describe the nexus of meaning. Religion, on a Heideggerian account, can be described as a way of being-in-the-world. Indeed, in 'Letter on Humanism', Heidegger refers back to an earlier (1929) essay, in which he suggests that 'being-in-the-world' forms the keystone of a new conception of religion (G9 351/266). On this conception, the 'gods' or 'godly ones' comprise an integral element of the world, a kind of 'religious a priori' that shapes in advance the way things are tacitly understood. Being religious is a matter of understanding things in advance as related to the 'gods', so that they can show up as sacred, as 'creation', etc. Experience, for a religious person, is structured in advance by religious meaning. The tacit understanding of this meaning is 'lived out' in religious practices as diverse as worship, everyday encounters with things, and theological reflection.<sup>22</sup>

### 4 *Normative Essence*

The goal of the phenomenology of religion is to outline, as clearly and comprehensively as possible, an account of the essential features of religion. Such an account is, of course, meant to answer 'theoretical' questions about the structure and motives of religious experience. At the same time, however, in its Heideggerian mould, the phenomenology of religion is supposed to discover the vital core of religion in order to ground the criticism of expressions of the religious impulse. The tone of Heidegger's brief remarks about mortal 'dwelling' in 'Bauen Wohnen Denken', quoted above, clearly points in this direction. Here again, Schleiermacher's *On Religion* is a good parallel. On the basis of an account of the essence of religion, Schleiermacher goes on to criticize what he views as extraneous and ungentle accretions onto this essence. The dangers of institutionalization,

over-intellectualization, and excessive compromise with the dominant culture are all exposed and critiqued, and the account of the essence of religion provides the normative standard for this project. For Heidegger, too, the results of his phenomenology of religion are meant to comprise a paradigm or 'repeatable possibility' that relativizes contingent manifestations of the religious impulse that prevail at a particular time. In the case of Christianity, he dubs this paradigm 'Christianness [*Christlichkeit*]', and maintains a Kierkegaard-inspired distinction between 'Christianness' and 'Christendom' (G16 416). In a preface written in 1970 for the publication of his 1927 lecture 'Phenomenology and Theology', Heidegger appeals to this distinction in order to articulate the import of the latter. The aim of articulating 'Christianness' is to bring Christendom and Christian theology under critical scrutiny (G9 45/39).<sup>23</sup> In the end, Heidegger argues that it must be left for theologians, who are in the business of interpreting and sustaining faith, to decide whether his phenomenology of religion might bear fruit (G54 248/166). What Heidegger is ultimately offering is a paradigm of the essence of religion that might point to a radical alternative to the contemporary crisis of religion.

*University of Utah, Salt Lake City, USA*

### Notes

- 1 References to Heidegger's works are given in parentheses in the body of text, using the following abbreviations. Where applicable, the pagination of the relevant English translation has been provided, after that of the original German.

- G3 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 3: *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1991).
- G4 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 4: *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1981)/Keith Holler (trans.) *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000).
- G5 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 5: *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997)/Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (eds) *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- G7 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 7: *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000).
- G9 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 9: *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976)/William McNeill (ed.) *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- G16 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 16: *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000).
- G26 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 26: *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978)/Michael Heim (trans.) *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

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- G39 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 39: *Hölderlins Hymnen 'Germanien' und 'Der Rhein'* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980).
- G50 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 50: *1. Nietzches Metaphysik; 2. Einleitung in die Philosophie: Denken und Dichten* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1990).
- G53 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 53: *Hölderlins Hymne 'Der Ister'* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1984)/William McNeill and Julia Davis (trans.) *Hölderlin's Hymn 'The Ister'* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
- G54 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 54: *Parmenides* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982)/André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (trans.) *Parmenides* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).
- G56/57 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 56/57: *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1987)/Ted Sadler (trans.) *Towards the Definition of Philosophy* (London: Athlone Press, 2000).
- G75 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 75: *Zu Hölderlin; Griechenlandreisen* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000).
- G79 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 79: *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994).
- G87 Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 87: *Nietzsche: Seminare 1937 und 1944* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004).
- HB Martin Heidegger/Elisabeth Blochmann, *Briefwechsel 1918–1969* (Marbach am Neckar: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 1989).
- HL 'Drei Brief Martin Heideggers an Karl Löwith', in Dietrich Papenfuss and Otto Pöggeler (eds) *Zur philosophischen Aktualität Heideggers, Vol. 2: Im Gespräch der Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1990), pp. 27–39.
- ID *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

- 2 In my opinion, the best recent interpretation of this essay is Hubert Dreyfus' 'Heidegger's Ontology of Art', in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (eds) *A Companion to Heidegger* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 407–19. See also Julian Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 5–68.
- 3 Thomas Sheehan relates the details of Husserl's interest in this phase of Heidegger's work in his classic study 'Heidegger's "Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion", 1920–1921', *The Personalist*, 60 (3) (1979), pp. 312–24. For Heidegger's self-identification as a phenomenologist of religion, see his 1 May 1919 letter to Elisabeth Blochmann (HB 16). For his profession of being a 'Christian theologian', see his letter to Karl Löwith from 19 August 1921 (HL 29). For an analysis of the latter, see Theodore Kisiel, 'War der frühe Heidegger tatsächlich ein "christlicher Theologe"?', in Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert (ed.) *Philosophie und Poesie: Otto Pöggeler zum 60. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1988), pp. 59–75.
- 4 For Heidegger's analysis of the concept of 'culture' and its history, see G56/57 110/129, 132–3/112–13. A good discussion of Heidegger's general worries about the philosophy of culture can be found in Jeffrey A. Barash, 'Heidegger's Ontological "Destruction" of Western Intellectual Traditions', in Theodore Kisiel and John Van Buren (eds) *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in his Earliest Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), pp. 111–22.

- 5 Heidegger is also critical of Nietzsche's concept of the 'God-forming instinct' as a similar misapplication of distinctively *modern* conceptual categories to pre-modern or anti-modern phenomena (G87 7; G50 108).
- 6 James C. Edwards, *The Plain Sense of Things: The Fate of Religion in an Age of Normal Nihilism* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1997), p. 167.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Julian Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 95.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 97. On Young's view, this passage is primarily about the fact that the 'existence possibilities' of our culture no longer have the requisite kind of charismatic authority to motivate human action.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 113–14.
- 13 For this aspect of Heidegger's proposal, see Mark A. Wrathall, 'Between Earth and Sky: Heidegger on Life after the Death of God', in Mark A. Wrathall (ed.) *Religion after Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 69–87.
- 14 Edwards, *The Plain Sense*, p. 172.
- 15 For this aspect of Heidegger's later accounts of religion, see Richard M. Capobianco, 'Heidegger and the Gods: On the Appropriation of a Religious Tradition', *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 62 (1988), pp. 183–8.
- 16 For a slightly different reading of Heidegger's usage of the plural 'gods' in *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, see Jeff Owen Prudhomme, 'The Passing-By of the Ultimate God: The Theological Assessment of Modernity in Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie*', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 61 (3) (1993), pp. 443–54, especially p. 449.
- 17 *Pace* John Van Buren, who maintains that Heidegger's later discussions of the 'gods' constitute a betrayal of the Schleiermacher-inspired liberal Protestantism of the 'young Heidegger'. See Van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 386.
- 18 Compare this with the following passage from Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, quoted by Heidegger in his 1934–5 lecture course (G39 21): 'The wise man loves Beauty herself, eternal, all-embracing; the people love her children, the gods, who appear to them in multifarious forms.' See Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 3, ed. Friedrich Beissner (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1958), p. 83.
- 19 Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, ed. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 49.
- 20 See William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
- 21 For an excellent discussion of Heidegger's reception of Husserl's notion of 'categorical intuition', see Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *Heidegger's Concept of Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 74–103.
- 22 This part of Heidegger's thought bears a certain resemblance to contemporary Wittgensteinian accounts of religion, such as that of D. Z. Phillips. See, for example, his essay 'Faith, Skepticism, and Religious Understanding', in R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman (eds) *Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 81–91. A more recent statement of Phillips' basic position is *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

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- 23 A similar point is made in the 1946 essay 'Nietzsche's Word: God is Dead': 'a confrontation with Christianity is by no means an absolute battle against what is Christian, no more than a critique of theology is a critique of the faith for which theology is supposed to be the interpretation' (G5 219–20/164).

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