

CHAPTER FIVE

The Quest of Analogical Thinking

Heidegger frequently quotes Angelius Sigelius's statement that the "rose is without why?"¹ In *The Principle of Reason*, Heidegger appeals to this aphorism in order to circumscribe the limits of the principle of sufficient reason. He outlines the transformation whereby that principle no longer defines the subordination of grounded to ground, but instead prefigures the movement of stepping back into the difference between being and beings, into the priority of that difference.² As he suggests, that principle must undergo a two thousand year incubation in order that the evoking of these new relations, the "crossing over" of a metaphysical emphasis by an alternative configuration of sense, can occur.³ This "crossing over" redefines the philosophical landscape so as to shift the precedence from what has occupied thought to what has remained unthought. The fixity of metaphysical terms gives way to "polyvalent words" like *Satz*, which denotes not only the conventional meaning of "principle" or "statement," but also a richer sense of "movement."⁴ Such transpositions of meanings prompt thought to undergo a "leap." Thus, the "why?" is placed in abeyance as a receding ground from which thought "leaps" in the direction of an *Abgrund*, an abyss.⁵

This carefully crafted formulation of the "leap" seems to have little in common with any religious counterpart, for example, Kierkegaard.⁶ Indeed, while Kierkegaard emphasizes the infusion of passion that precedes the "leap" of faith, he acknowledges the specific testimonial of the revealed word. The word speaks of the paradox whereby divine love meets with human suffering. Christianity also harbors its own incubation, which permits an apologist like Kierkegaard to show how its incongruities speak to the deeper enigmas of human existence. As Ricoeur indicates, human existence calls itself into question when it hangs on the precipice of disaster, when it is abandoned without any recourse for consolation.⁷ In the figure of the redeemer or Christ who assumes human form, suffering suggests our descent into the abyss in order to be reached by the exaltation of God's love. In Schelling's terminology, this point of convergence is the "deepest abyss and the highest heaven."⁸ At the extremity of deprivation and suffering, the religious apologist can summon all the mythic connotations of the fall and sin in order to seek a limit to the "why" in a parallel manner to Heidegger.

But can these two seemingly divergent paths, one Greco-Germanic, the other Judaeo-Christian, ever meet at a single intersection? This is a question which has not been properly formulated by those scholars who have been overzealous either to draw out the theological implications of Heidegger's thought or to appropriate it for the purposes of developing an existentialist theology. By contrast, theologians like Thomas O'Meara have come closer to appreciating the hiatus posed in the above query,⁹ and Heidegger's foremost student, Karl Rahner, has taken an important step in modifying phenomenological ontology in order to re-examine the Christian experience of God.¹⁰ With a more explicitly philosophical slant, I aim to re-establish the import of the above question at the crossroads between contemporary theological studies and Heidegger scholarship. The clue which will allow us to traverse this crossroad is Heidegger's early emphasis on the *Deus absconditus*, the "hidden God." This notion of the "hidden God"—as marking a long tradition from Eckhart to Otto to Barth—points as much to the mystery couched in human suffering as to the dual play of presence and absence, which animates the inquiry into being.

Two issues immediately emerge into the forefront. First, we must consider how the concern for the hidden God implies an enriched understanding of the analogical relation of the *logos*. Second, we must establish how the attempt to address the divine essence poses a challenge to Heidegger's thought: namely, the need to consider eternity as a counterpoint to the influx of ecstatic temporality which supplies the limits for being's disclosure. Once again, Heidegger's lectures on Schelling will provide the focus for this investigation by developing the affinities between language and the divine "word," the sheltering of being's truth in its mystery and the radiance of love from the depths of God's hiddenness. Such an inquiry steps back from the mystical imagery pervading Heidegger's later thought in order to delineate the dynamic "logic" of analogy by which he juxtaposes religious motifs with their ontological corollaries—the divine *logos*/life, eternity/the "moment of vision" (*Augenblick*).

THE HIDDEN GOD AND THE DIVINE ESSENCE

I. *The Mystery of Logos and the Question of the Last God*

Any attempt to consider the divine essence (*Wesen*) or way of presencing always seems to wrestle with a paradox, namely, that our medium of conveyance or language proceeds by placing limits, and yet God's sanctity appears to escape any such boundaries of determination. From the *via negativa* of Medieval mystics to the deconstructionist strategies of contemporary philosophy, there have been repeated efforts to identify the ineffable at the threshold of speech, to hover at these boundaries without transgressing them.¹¹ The greater that we as speakers

acknowledge our dependence on language, the greater is the chance that we can become more receptive to our proximity (and hence distance) from the place of the Sacred. Heidegger himself stands as a signpost at the crossroads of this journey, insofar as he marks the distinctive maneuver whereby we speak due to our relation to language, or that language speaks (*der Sprache spricht*) through us.¹² Needless to say, this approach to the Sacred will not necessarily yield the ingredients for a theological doctrine. But we need not assume that Dasein's religious experience should be organized systematically. As Heidegger remarks in echoing Kierkegaard, there can be "no system for Dasein."¹³ This anti-systematic emphasis suggests the key point of divergence between Heidegger and Schelling, and directs the former into the uncharted territory of addressing the "last god."

In discussing the last god in *Beiträge*, Heidegger gives perhaps his most explicit clues to the strategy he would employ to consider the Divine according to an otherness which we experience as finite beings due to our thrownness into *language*.¹⁴ We sense the overwhelming power of the *logos* by fathoming the depths of silence. But that silence also involves co-responding to the word in which the Divine shelters its nature and allocates for it a place of sanctity at the limit of language, i.e., through the medium of this ineffability. In his inquiry from *Beiträge*, which grows out of the fertile soil of his 1936 lectures on Schelling, Heidegger brings Eckhart's mystical sense of the silence residing in the godhead to its full glory. Yet Heidegger is not simply a mystic, insofar as he accepts the mandate of a new "logic" of thought which lies in a more radical attunement to language, that is, in "making silent" (*Sigetik*).¹⁵ In *Beiträge*, the key element of this attunement is "reservedness" as the "refusal" which gives by withholding. "Refusal is the highest nobility of gifting and the basic thrust of self-sheltering-concealing, revelation [*Offenbarkeit*] of which makes up the originary essential sway of the truth of being. Only thus does being become estranging itself, the stillness of the passing of the last god."¹⁶

According to this new logic, we do not uphold a dogmatics of the divine essence through a preset creed, but rather a *topographics* of the Sacred, the assignment of the place of the wholly other, the safeguarding of its mystery. Perhaps Heidegger most appropriately describes this "sanctuary" when he introduces Part VII of *Beiträge*, "The Last God," with the inscription "The wholly other over against gods who have been, especially over against the Christian God."¹⁷ In alluding to the last god, Heidegger is adamant about simply rewriting the Christian notion of the Divine in a new way. The last god instead arises as a marker to delineate the twofold movement of being's withdrawal and historical recollection. Indeed, the last god is not another name for God, but through a double gesture marks the transition from the end of metaphysics to the other beginning.¹⁸ Insofar as this end resides in Nietzsche's declaration "*Gott ist tot*," we must also distinguish the last god from the negative determination of that nihilistic event.

As Heidegger remarks in the opening section (253) on the last god, "The last is that which not only needs the longest forerunnership but also itself *is*: not the ceasing, but the deepest beginning, which reaches out the furthest and catches up with itself with the greatest difficulty."¹⁹ By harboring the tension of presence/absence, the last god prepares the way for any divine epiphany, safeguarding the otherness of the wholly other in contrast to human finitude. Accordingly, any appearance of the Divine precedes from the preservation of its mystery. The last god marks the sheltering dimension that prepares for the "it gives," in such a way that mystery can distinguish the "law" of being's manifestation. As such, the last god exhibits being's "commandment" to finitude, which reciprocally provides for the self-sheltering dimension out of which the experience of what is wholly other, of the Sacred, becomes possible. To be sure, any ontological ties remain a handicap as well as an asset. For ontological inquiry cannot only direct attention away from the divine through its exaggerated skepticism, but can also mask itself as a form of gnosticism which competes with theology.

To avoid either of these extremes, we can look for guidance via the intermediary role of *mimesis*, which enables us to appreciate the trace of myth in the effort to establish more nuanced patterns of speech. Indeed, *mimesis* marks the transferral of the creative possibilities of myth to the signifying powers of language, so that speaking and acting, word and deed, converge within a larger matrix. Such is the case in the story of *Genesis*, which equates God with *logos* and attributes a creative power to the "word." In this way, the *logos* points to a principle inherent to God, the way of coordinating the intricacies of its relations and possibilities. But in another respect, the *logos* also suggests the manner of address proper to the Sacred, the soliciting of an audience whose response must display a proportionate reverence for God's majesty. This mode of address, however, still retains its tie with the deeper nexus of creativity. The creativity of the word is first and foremost an act of consecration, of transmitting its ineluctable power to whomever is brought into proximity with it, i.e., the Sacred. Hölderlin grasps the unique efficacy of the word when he states: "But that which remains, is established by the poets."²⁰ In this event of naming to which the poet bears witness resides the possibility of distinguishing between speaking and listening, the assignment of limits through the self-gathering and dispersion of *logos*.

In its unique manner of differentiation, *logos* establishes the parameters for cultivating meanings according to the most primeval of all gestures. The creative power of these gestures introduces new gradations and valences of meanings. In preserving its own originaive power, *logos* unfolds through the cooperation of a human counterpart, who emerges as an incarnated site for disseminating those gestures which measure the gulf between the divine message and its followers. Indeed, the sublimity of *logos* only becomes concrete by reserving for itself an accompanying locus in the earthly realm, in order to radiate forth the majesty and

conciliatory character of its power. As we have seen, Heidegger distinguishes this factual locus by emphasizing the call of conscience. In its uniquely beckoning way, God as *logos* reveals its essence according to a nexus of relationships, which permits interaction only by allocating a distinctive place proper to each relata, i.e., greater and lesser, commissioner and responder, consecrator and recipient. Like the voice of conscience, the inaugural event of naming may also take a more personal form in soliciting Dasein's proper relation to the holy, in calling *my* name.²¹

For Heidegger, the fact that this self-differentiating movement culminates in locating a concrete site implies that the word issues forth through the parallel constellation of a world. He describes this ontological process of reciprocation, in which word and world are conjoined as *Ereignis*, the event of appropriation. First and foremost, the word emulates *Ereignis* as the power of bringing into one's own, of "enownment." In this way, original speech, i.e., the poetic word, becomes the haven of unconcealment, and thereby rapturously transports the poet into the gulf which allows otherness to spring forth—as harboring the relation between the Divine and human, the celestial and the earthly, God and self. This event is a mutual granting and receiving in which the diverse ways of appearing can unfold in relation to the historical situation of human beings. A trace of absence lingers in whatever becomes present, a withdrawal which in its wake draws forth a shelter (*Bergung*), a protective shroud of a mystery. As emissaries of *logos*, we are drawn toward this mystery, that is, in finding in language our proper abode to dwell. Through its own self-effacement and manner of exacting our guardianship over it, language provides the occasion for a shelter. Indeed, the self-gathering of language solicits from us a complementary role to exhibit stewardship over the ambivalent character of the appearing.

Thus, the word reserves for what is withdrawn a different kind of emphasis, a subtlety of accent which resounds by shifting the array of conventional connotations and allowing what at first seems unsayable to be spoken. To the extent that the divine nature recedes into this unspoken realm, it appears through the diverse forms of manifestation that correspond to the subtlest intimations of language. How do we understand language as not only pertaining to "being," but also as marking the matrix of determinations through which the Divine can reveal itself in its grandeur? Indeed, in posing this question, we arrive through the back door of Schelling's original insight that God reclaims the unity of its nature by showing how it encompasses the diversity of manifestations exemplified throughout all creation.

II. *Love and Logos*

In appropriating Schelling's positive philosophy, Heidegger provides the occasion to address the chief motifs of Christianity which would otherwise be precluded by

Heidegger and the Quest for the Sacred
From Thought to the Sanctuary of Faith
Schalow, F.

2001, XIX, 207 p. 1 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-1-4020-0036-2