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Heidegger and Scripture: The Calling of Thinking in Our Abandonment

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Abstract: This paper seeks to perform an interdisciplinary reading of some scriptural passages in light of Heidegger's phenomenology generally and his discussion of thinking in particular. The paper treats one passage from Isaiah and two from the Gospels of Luke and John that highlight the human situation of signification (or meaning) and abandonment (or alienation). Using Heidegger's description of experience, which roots the logic and unfolding of meaning as expressing the structure of human existence, the paper proposes that the movement toward the divine that each of the scriptural passages embodies (albeit each in its own unique situation) moves us toward an essential insight—namely that the human being exists as a divine sign of care. As such a sign, humans exist not just as the *reception* of the calling but also as the very calling of thinking itself.

Keywords: phenomenology; Heidegger; Husserl; signification; Continental philosophy of religion; abandonment

“For I know their works and their thoughts, and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. From them I will send survivors to the nations....They shall bring your kindred from all the nations as an offering to the Lord”
(Isaiah 66:18-21)

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head’”
(Luke 9:58)

“Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’”
(John 20:17)

1 Introduction: Locating the argument and defining phenomenology

1.1 Locating the argument

How should a phenomenologist approach the reading of scriptural texts? This is the question that guides my meditation here on three passages—one from the Book of Isaiah, one from the Gospel of Luke, and one from the Gospel of John.

My answer to this question proceeds in four steps. First, I introduce here the way in which I understand phenomenology as such to involve a correlative, zig-zag movement between subject and object, between

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reader and text. In the second section, I outline a Heideggerian approach to the phenomenology of religion in particular by way of analyzing his discussion of abandonment from *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Third, I perform a phenomenological hermeneutics on three texts from scripture that detail three ways in which the divine (God or Jesus) relates to abandonment. And, fourth, I perform a reading of Heidegger's *What is Called Thinking* that opens out onto these same scriptural texts while arguing that what the phenomenology of religion becomes with Heidegger is a peculiar evolution of Husserl's noetic-noematic correlation—primarily by means of Heidegger's emphasis on the relation between *legein* and *noein*.

As I am employed by a religious institution, I want to state here at the start of this paper two things. First, I want to acknowledge that there is a great separation, in terms of time and, more importantly, of historical situation, between the book of Isaiah and the Gospels. Thus, putting these three scriptural selections together might seem, at best, odd (at worst, poorly justified), particularly from the point of view of many theologians. And this point of view has its validity. Phenomenology itself, historically, roots itself in a careful consideration of historicity. But this paper, while sensitive to the fact that these biblical texts are historical documents that demand careful unpacking, does not intend to lay out a historical-critical argument that would, for example, show the continuity or development of Isaiah within the Gospels.

Rather, this paper intends to perform a phenomenological meditation on the human condition of alienation, on the human process of signification, and on the possible interweaving of human and divine. To those ends, I *do* make some effort to situate my claims about Isaiah and the Gospels in terms of theological, historical scholarship on each scriptural selection. But my overall concern is *less* theological or historical than poetic and philosophical. I want to use these scriptures, in other words, as examples of what it means to feel or to be alienated along the route to the divine. My basic argument across the paper, therefore, is that phenomenology can read into and from these three scriptural sources important discoveries about possible Jewish and Christian relationships to divinity, a divinity that (at least in the person of Jesus, but perhaps also in the persons of those who came before Jesus but who also serve as signs of the divine) sees itself as concerned to use the structure of the human being to further divine visions of community.

Second, and related to this first claim about the poetic focus of this paper, I want to state up front that I do not believe that a phenomenology of religion is beholden to or expressive of any particular religion. A phenomenology of religion is not an apologetics. Rather, phenomenology as such, though it is certainly used and valued by a number of religious traditions, is essentially—by virtue of its status *as a method of description*—free.

1.2 Defining phenomenology as free movement

Having made these two initial claims, I now propose to look more closely at phenomenology itself, particularly with respect to its freedom. In part, phenomenology is free because it takes itself to be methodically, descriptively *creative*.¹ That is, phenomenology traces *new shapes* of lived experience by means of what the phenomenologists themselves, by themselves, find within lived experience, with texts.² Or, as one might also say, phenomenology makes explicit, perhaps for the first time, and independently of prejudices, what had heretofore remained stubbornly implicit or deftly concealed from view.

This freedom of phenomenology, as creative as it is, however, is not an unfettered freedom. Rather, phenomenology has a freedom, a creativity, that is rooted in answering to the phenomena, to the things,

¹ On this point, as to the way phenomenologists understand the creativity of phenomenology, see Merleau-Ponty: “we have to *create the concepts necessary to convey* the fact that bodily space may be given to me in an intention to take hold without being given in an intention to know” (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 119, my emphasis). See also Heidegger: “being can no longer be thought on the basis of beings but must be *inventively thought* from itself” (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 8, my emphasis). Description requires a redeployment of our linguistic relations.

² See Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*: “Philosophy *opens* experience but for that reason can precisely *not* ground history *immediately*” (31).

themselves. Phenomenology is not creation *ex nihilo* but takes as its starting point, and as the motor and ground for its creativity, the pre-existing, *given* relation between subject and object, between self and other.³

For Edmund Husserl, this starting point, *givenness*, requires phenomenology to make a rather complicated, always partial, zig-zag movement from the manner of givenness of the object to the manner of explicative action or perception of the perceiver (or from what Husserl called the *noema* to the *noesis*, respectively). Phenomenology is free, in other words, *because it moves*. It moves between the subject and the object, between divine and self, and thereby within the relationship that encompasses them both.⁴

Phenomenology does not sit still long enough to become trapped in any one utterance.⁵ Phenomenology is free because it is *always* located *between* creation and repetition, between subject and object.⁶ By virtue of its location, phenomenology must *answer to* both, at first in a back and forth motion...and later to the whole unity of lived experience by “swimming along with it” in short, creative bursts of rather bodily performance.⁷

Phenomenology is free, then, because its *essence* as movement is also rooted in *answerability*. As rooted in answerability, as guided or grounded outside itself, phenomenology is thereby, essentially, *justice*. In sum, by moving and by answering both to the things themselves and to its subjective act, phenomenology creates *purposively*, i.e., creates in order, finally, to *perform justice* to the things themselves *in their relationship with us*.

2 From Heidegger to hermeneutics

For Heidegger, *what* we are as *Da-sein* is temporality, the motion of *transition* itself.⁸ But we are this temporality, we are this transition in a peculiar way, i.e., as a motion *toward* Being by means of dwelling

³ See John Russon's *Human Experience*: “what our description of experience reveals instead is that the relation itself comes first, that is, it is from the primary relation—the act of experiencing—that subject and object come to be established, and not vice versa” (20).

⁴ From the first book of Husserl's *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology*: “A parallelism between noesis and noema is indeed the case, but it is such that one must describe the formations *on both sides* and in their essentially mutual correspondence” (Husserl, *Ideas*, 256). We move descriptively, in other words, from one to the other and back to the “correspondence.” There are three areas of description, then, and not only two.

⁵ See Eugen Fink's discussion of the limitations of the descriptive language of phenomenology in *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. See also Heidegger's discussion of description in *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*: “Words fail us; they do so originally and not just occasionally, whereby some discourse or assertion could indeed be carried out but is left unuttered.... Words do not yet come to speech at all, but it is *precisely in failing us* that they arrive at the first leap. *This failing is the event* as intimation and incursion of beyng” (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 30, my emphasis). For Heidegger, the failure of a phenomenological description, then, is essential to the possibility of allowing to come to light what remains concealed even in its experience as *concealed*.

⁶ This occupation by the phenomenologist (or by *Da-sein*) of the space *between* is something that Heidegger develops in *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*: “the leap into the ‘between’ must be carried out instantly—in pursuit of the question of the truth of beyng. The ‘between’ of *Da-sein* overcomes the [‘separation’] not by slinging a bridge between beyng (beingness) and beings as if they were two objectively present riverbanks but by transforming together, into their simultaneity, both beyng and beings. The leap into the ‘between’ is what first reaches and opens *Da-sein* and does not occupy a ready-made standpoint” (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 13-14).

⁷ From the first book of Husserl's *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology*: “A mental process [*Erlebnis*] is, with respect to its essence, in flux [*ein Fluss*] which we, directing the reflective regard to it, can swim along after it, starting from the Now-point, while the stretches already covered are lost to our perception.... And my whole stream of mental processes [*Erlebnisstrom*] is, finally, a unity of mental processes [*eine Einheit des Erlebnisses*] which, of essential necessity, cannot be seized upon completely in a perceiving which ‘swims along with it’” (Husserl, *Ideas*, 97).

⁸ Peter Capretto cites and agrees with Mary-Jane Rubenstein on the significance of transition in Heidegger as the route into theology, which they both say Heidegger unfortunately abandons: “As Rubenstein interprets broadly, ‘Heidegger, it seems, has lost sight of his most profound insight: that truth takes place in the transitions, or encounters, between darkness (the cave, beings, hiddenness) and light (the “open,” being, unhiddenness) and vice versa.’ [Heidegger's claim of the] formal indication of theology by philosophy effects literally the negation of these transitions in *Dasein*'s structural totality, precluding us from the possibilities that are emblematic of the event of truth in Heidegger's fundamental ontology” (Capretto, “The Wonder,” 606-7). I disagree almost completely with Capretto's claim that Heidegger “has lost sight” of transition. On the contrary, almost the whole of Heidegger's work on the event (*Ereignis*) highlights the motion and necessity of transition.

within Being. We are the “being [Sein]” of our “there [da]” while at the same time dwelling or “being-there” with Being [Sein].

But if this is true, if our transition is a movement *toward* Being by means of dwelling *within* it, then we should be able to point out something important about Being. We should be able to point out that Being is that with which, even if in only a concealed manner, we have always been in contact. Even if we succeed in doing this, however, what more precisely does a recognition of this continuous contact with Being mean for us?

It means that, to some extent, we can come to experience ourselves as always already *abandoned* by Being in its concealment. We are abandoned since our dwelling with Being does not negate the necessity of moving *toward* it. It means, at the same time, that we can come to experience how we are not yet—how we are never--*completely* abandoned by or concealed from Being. Our continuous though concealed contact with Being means that we can always awaken ourselves methodically, descriptively, to the *meaning* of our *location* as drawing upon the *meaning* of our *movement*, and vice versa.⁹

As Matheson Russell points out faith for Heidegger truly is the process of attending to the structure of our existence as the possibility of entering into holiness:

In truth, the existential stratum itself is the essential content of faith; or, put more precisely, faith is nothing other than an *existential modality*. If we accept the thrust of Heidegger’s analysis, this implies that philosophy of religion must be at the most fundamental level a phenomenology of religion, a hermeneutic of its *singular* existential character. Only from such a phenomenological hermeneutic can the meaning or significance of discourse concerning God be properly surveyed, and thus only from this perspective can it be determined how theology as a discipline ought to be viewed and interpreted.¹⁰

It is as *this Da-sein*, the singular one who must exist her or his structure in this or that situation of faith—it is as *this* one that we are called to perform theology as a having to come to terms with abandonment and concealment. It is as confusedly participating, always already in Being, as *Da-sein*, that we can come to clarify the relation between the divine and ourselves.

Heidegger speaks quite explicitly about what I have just argued, namely that our transition and our abandonment, our existential structure, open us onto something like Being (and thus the divine) itself in his book on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

Can and should man *as transition* try to leap away from himself in order to leave behind himself as finite? Or is his essence not *abandonment itself*, in which alone what can be possessed becomes a possession?

The first and proper indication that you have understood something of what was essentially unspoken, but constantly at issue here, can only take *the form of awakening* in you *a will to do justice* to the work in its innermost demand—each for his part and according to his ability and measure.¹¹

We *are* transition and movement. And in this essence as transition we *are* and *experience* abandonment as productive, as urging us toward an “awakening” to act.

We actively abandon the things we experience or speak by virtue of our temporality. We move through and past them to other experiences, other speech acts. Things abandon us, as does Being itself, insofar as we continually fail to disclose Being adequately as the very event of experience and meaning. We are both abandoning and abandoned. We are the very situation of abandonment.

In fact, the two motions of abandonment (active and passive) are connected. We are left behind by Being in the very necessity of our having to leave behind each lived experience, each understanding that we come to, as an inadequate grasp of the ground of the whole situation (*Da-sein* as thrown, as with others) in

⁹ “These ‘contributions’ question along a way which is first paved by the *transition* to the other beginning, the one Western thought is now entering. This way brings the transition into the open realm of history and founds the transition as a possibly very long sojourn. In carrying out the transition, the other beginning of thought always remains something only surmised, though indeed something already decided” (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 6).

¹⁰ Russell, “Phenomenology and Theology,” 649, my emphasis.

¹¹ Heidegger, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, 149, my emphasis.

which we find ourselves. The problem of abandonment, therefore, appears abyssal and insoluble because it generates its own dual continuance.¹²

To forego attending to our abandonment as such and simply to “try to leap away” from ourselves, from our abandonment, toward the self-concealing Being or the divine would be ill advised for Heidegger.¹³ Believing that we could, in one ill-prepared move, install ourselves within a relation to an unconcealed, overpowering, absolute God who did *not* move or abandon us and who could thus end our structure as abandonment—this would be a harmful fiction. It would enact and perpetuate a misunderstanding of what our finitude, our life and death, presents of the divine for our own thinking.¹⁴

Rather, Heidegger calls us not to invent the divine out of our need but rather to pursue the hypothesis that our essence as temporal, as “transition,” is a rather long process of learning to stay within our “abandonment itself.” For Heidegger, it is our transitional structure *as* necessarily a process of abandonment that gives us the possibility of perceiving the divine on its own terms and “awakening” in ourselves a “will to do justice.”¹⁵

It is as accepting of ourselves as abandoned, as abandonment, that we can come closer to “possessing” a relation with or toward God by means of acting out of our own “ability.” As abandoned, we become able to do justice to experience, to Being. But we can do so only by means of the continuous “work” of taking our structure of abandonment as our phenomenological *clue* to the undecidability of the divine.¹⁶

In other words, for Heidegger it is not outside our finitude, not outside the work it takes to awaken ourselves to and reckon with our structure as abandonment, that we will find God. It is *within* them. Within the work of our finitude, time, and abandonment lies the possibility of seeing and wrestling with God.¹⁷

If we follow this Heideggerian path, if we work within our abandonment in order to allow it to show us a relationship with the divine, then perhaps like a dying Jesus on the cross, we can utter a psalm and come to terms with both the history and the novelty of our religious situation.¹⁸ Perhaps by dwelling within abandonment as the essence of *Da-sein* we can cry out toward the divine, can feel the pain and possibility

12 Heidegger talks about this being abandoned by the divine in *Contributions to Philosophy* as the way the divine “absconds”: “To be in the nearness of the god—even if this nearness is the most remote remoteness of the undecidability regarding the absconding or the advent of the gods—cannot be calculated in terms of “good fortune” or “misfortune” (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 12). Is the divine abandoning us or moving toward us? Absconding or adventing? The very inability we have to decide this question places us firmly in abandonment as our ownmost possibility for phenomenological work.

13 Godzieba notes this here: “The critique of metaphysics and ontotheology in the light of the ontological difference is Heidegger’s way of clearing the decks, saying in effect that human reason’s attempts to use the idea of God to gain the highest metaphysical vantage-point and thus make the whole of being intelligible are rather betrayals of the divine God who is beyond ‘the God of philosophy’” (Godzieba, “Prolegomena,” 322).

14 “If the essential occurrence of being constitutes the event, however, then how near is the danger that being might refuse, and must refuse, to appropriate because humans become powerless to be *Da-sein* on account of the untrammelled force of their frenzy for the gigantic” (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 9). We must not look to a “gigantic” or a hurricane of a God. God occurs as the whisper within our own structure. It is as *Da-sein* that the event appropriates us.

15 “What is most familiar, however, and therefore most unknown, is the abandonment by being” (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 14). If we stay with this abandonment, we can come to see “the refusal as gift” (Ibid.) and thus “become the one who grounds and preserves the truth of being” (Ibid., 15).

16 “To question is to be liberated for what, while remaining concealed, is compelling” (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 10).

17 Istvan Feher notes that it is only as factual that Heidegger is interested in religious life at all: “Religious life does become a paradigm of life for Heidegger, on the one hand; but it is approached and viewed with an eye to factual life, as a concentration of it and wholly exempt from all other-worldly characters, on the other. It is the this-worldly living and enacting of faith, the way one becomes a Christian and lives it all the way through, that Heidegger is interested in and concentrates upon” (Feher, “Religion, Theology, and Philosophy,” 116).

18 The fact that Jesus utters a verse from Psalm 22 on the cross is important for the argument of this paper. For in that Psalm the crying question of abandonment, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me” (22:1), turns into a certain hope for the future: “Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it” (22:31). The abandonment is necessary, I would argue, to move toward the “people yet unborn.” And deliverance comes by way of attending to the fact that abandonment is heard: “Yet you are holy” (22:3); “Yet it was you who took me from the womb” (22:9). This “yet” is the movement of abandonment, without proof, toward a certain hope for the sake of the future. Temporality, abandonment—this is the motion toward the holy that is concealed and yet there too, with me, in my time of trial.

that our perpetual motion engenders, and can gradually, eventually, move toward and with the self-concealing, creative nature of the divine.¹⁹

With the person of Job, we can choose, perhaps without supportive friends, to do something other than leaping away from our abandonment. Rather, we can seek to *sacrifice* it, to *participate* by means of it, to *dwell within* it, and thus to open within abandonment the lighting up of the sacred: “The absconding of the gods must be experienced and endured. This endurance grounds the most remote closeness to the event. This event is the truth of being” (Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 24). In this way, in our not “leaping away” but enduring, we might gradually move *toward* the internal connection we bear to the divine and allow the connection, the event of our relationship as a concealed unity, to develop and to guide us.²⁰

The phenomenology of religion performed in this paper, then, which has been initiated by Husserl and Heidegger, thus roots itself in a two-fold description—a description *both* of our nature *and* of the nature of the irrevocably concealing yet revealing divine.²¹ In each movement of this two-fold description, the paper works to echo the “zigzag”²² of Husserl’s movement between our essential situation and our historical commitments, between ourselves and the divine we have come to hear, between passages from Heidegger’s *What is Called Thinking* and the Book of Isaiah and the Gospels of Luke and John.

3 Hermeneutics

3.1 Isaiah 66:18-21

In these verses, Isaiah is describing a God who knows the works and thoughts of all nations. In addition to knowing them, God also comes to gather the nations he knows. But the nations speak different languages, enact different works, and think different thoughts. How is God to gather together what is already divided in a persistent and self-defining way? How is God to gather in to God what prefers to gather itself unto itself? How can God gather what has apparently abandoned God to His own devices?

In fact, the preceding context of these verses in Isaiah is one of destruction. God *cannot* gather back to Himself what has abandoned God without destruction. God cannot gather without reminding people of their essence (and acts) of abandonment. And so Isaiah says that God will lay waste to many, many people. After the destruction, God’s gathering of the “survivors” will come from amidst the ruins, the dead bodies of those nations whom God kills. And they will forever be remnants both of unity and of abandonment.

Why must God lay waste to the nations outside Jerusalem, outside God’s holy gathering place, in order to gather them in? God must lay waste to those nations, and to many people within those nations, because they *resist* being gathered. They will resist because, presumably, they cannot envision being together with

¹⁹ “To be the seeker, preserver, steward, that is what is meant by care as the fundamental trait of Dasein.... Dasein, in turning, is appropriated to the *event* as the essence of being, and only in virtue of this origin as the grounding of time-space (‘primordial temporality’) can Da-sein become steadfast in order to *transform the plight of abandonment by being* into the necessity of creating as the restoring of beings” (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 16). *Dasein* transforms abandonment by moving, by leaning, into it.

²⁰ Heidegger notes that we can come to be “at the disposal of the gods” if and when we “belong to the most distant ones, those to whom the absconding of the gods in the gods farthest withdrawal is what is closest” (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 17).

²¹ See William Hackett who takes the thought of Yves Lacoste, by way of Heidegger, to be instrumental in relating philosophy and theology: “The eschatological thinking that I find proposed to us all by Jean-Yves Lacoste begins, and would never cease to begin or to return, I think, by trying to let appear on its own terms and with its own conditions, the presently inapparent truth that a man, Jesus of Nazareth, the bearer of a ‘fragment of history’, bears within— absolutely, universally, eschatologically—the meaning of the whole world, the meaning of God, and the meaning of ourselves between, a humanity that irreducibly, ‘paradoxically’, partakes of both” (Hackett, *What is Called Theological Thinking*, 665).

²² Husserl argues this in the *Crisis* here: “Thus we find ourselves in a sort of circle. The understanding of the beginnings is to be gained fully only by starting with science [in our case, our nature] as given in its present-day form, looking back at its development.... Thus we have no other choice than to proceed forward and backward in a zigzag pattern; the one must help the other in an interplay” (Husserl, *Crisis*, 58, my emphasis). Phenomenology in some sense, then, has *always* been a hermeneutics of the circle.

those in Jerusalem who do not share their nation, language or works. They will resist because they cannot see their own plight in their acts of abandoning God and other people.²³

It is in this context of destroyed resistance that Isaiah then describes a God who sets a sign. Not a word. But a sign. This sign expresses itself, I would argue, immediately as the saved, as the survivors or the fugitives who are sent out to the other nations.²⁴

God's sign, then, may well *be* a person or a group of people.²⁵ The sign may well *be* the survivor, the fugitive, the one who remembers, the one who has taken to heart what God's glory is even (and especially) as Gentile. In that case, the sign does not dwell with God, huddled in with Him for safety in Jerusalem. The sign moves outward, announcing the plight of abandonment and concealment as such by leaving Jerusalem for the world.²⁶

As a person or persons, the sign is set and sent out. The sign is God's sending out, as if for the first time, what has just been gathered in. In the sending out of the survivors, God is letting go of power and glory and anger and destruction. God is focused now on the attempt to re-gather, to expand the gathering. God is focused on announcing the explicit character of the human as transition, as abandonment toward God. We are to be gathered because we can also gather, gather "your kindred" or the brothers²⁷ "as an offering" to God where God dwells. We signify because we can become a sign. We are a sign of God because we are assignable by God—from within.

The survivor or fugitive who has remained with God after being gathered in, after seeing the fury and the glory of God, is thereby sent out again without rest. The survivor is a metaphor. And, like a metaphor, in God's sending her out the survivor remains tied to her service to God's argument. It is in remaining true *as fugitive, as refugee* that the sign as metaphor both exceeds her location and remains with God.²⁸

This situation as sign, as metaphor, is no *Aufhebung* of her singularity, her history. To be sent as sign does not entail an experience of simple erasure for the survivor, if indeed *Aufhebung* has ever meant that. Rather, to be sent as sign is for the survivor to experience absolution, resolution, within her role. The sign says "I abandon myself to being a sign of my abandonment. I dwell within and *as* the trajectory of my former life, I bear the mark of my history—but I do so in order that others might join me and that there might be new, creative, and loving gathering." For why else but for others to join us would we ever engage in the acts of speaking, writing, and signifying?

Like a metaphor, like a speech act, like a text, the sign *enacts* what cannot be contextualized and expressed in simple argumentation. The sign has too much to say and too little time. The metaphor condenses. And it condenses because it moves. The movement of metaphor, of signification, is absolutely necessary since the situation of a relationship with God, or the dwelling of God on his own, cannot be

²³ Heidegger speaks at length of "a lack of a sense of plight" in *Contributions*. I believe it echoes here implicitly what the other nations in Isaiah are revealed to have failed to recognize: "In an age of infinite wants stemming from the concealed plight of a *lack of a sense of plight*, this question [the question of the meaning of Being] must necessarily seem the most useless idle talk" (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 11). The nations have not only abandoned God but also themselves to the abandonment of their own abandonment. They are doubly abandoned. And thus the destruction of God, Isaiah seems to say, is a way of returning the survivors to the sense of what finitude means—a propulsion toward transition and not toward nationalism.

²⁴ This is not the traditional interpretation. Most commentators describe the sign as something *other* than the sending out of the survivors. Oswalt notes that "most commentators (see Alexander and Barnes) up to the twentieth century agreed that some kind of miraculous event. As such it is the 'climax' of the signs in this book" (Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 688). But Oswalt too notes that it is uncertain what "sign" could be referring to, whether an event or a series of events (*ibid*).

²⁵ Eusebius connects Isaiah 66:19 to John 1:14: "he says his apostles will *bear a sign with them* and live among them. And what is this sign if not the saving sign of 'the glory of the only-begotten of God' that they fearlessly announced to all the nations" (Eusebius, *Commentary*, 319, my emphasis).

²⁶ "The awakening to this plight is the first dislodging of the human being into the *between* where confusion presses on and, in like measure, the god continues to abscond" (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 22). The sign is "appropriated" by God in order for God to continue to "abscond" or abandon even in the act of gathering. The sign points to the God who continually withdraws. The sign is a continual indication of the work within confusion.

²⁷ "The use of 'brothers' in place of 'children' (as seen elsewhere) is interesting here. Calvin argues that it is a reference to the Gentile 'brothers' of Jewish believers" (Oswalt, 688). See the commission of Mary in John 20:17 to the "brothers."

²⁸ "The event consigns god to the human being by assigning the human being to god. This consigning assignment is the appropriating event" (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 23).

adequately marked by one simple, static meaning. Thus, the sign is the one who cannot help the nations easily make sense of God but who seeks to do so—creatively—by means of moving into the intuition and sharing of others, whom the sign calls forth to witness that very movement.

A fugitive sign, an assigned survivor, then is not primarily linguistic. Rather, the survivor is a sign, enacts a sign, *as a continuously lived movement of experience back and forth toward God*. The fugitive sign cannot help but proclaim in her very arrival the context of her status as refugee, as remnant. And, with this status firmly expressed in the light of her countenance, this new sign is not already, not only, functioning in any of the languages that are to be gathered. For those languages have no word, no lived experience for this particular refugee—otherwise this sign would not need to be set by God. It would have always already been immediately available.

Rather, when those to-come understand the sign in her own singularity, then they too, who have remained outside Jerusalem, will also become singular signs, fugitives, survivors to one another. They too will pursue a transition, a tradition, back and forth from Jerusalem to the world, from the divine to the remnants who have not yet experienced the divine. To recognize the sign, even implicitly, is to be drawn into the realm of the refugee. It is to be unable to turn back, to be always on the road with a clear sense of one's plight.

The sign, then, is not a word, not a thing that the sign must say. The sign is not a command or an apologetics written by the finger of God or by a Patristic scholar and simply repeated by rote. The sign rather is this singular fugitive's *way of experiencing* being set and sent by God. The sign is the fugitive herself in her process of reckoning with her active (past) and passive (present) abandonment.

Receiving the sign marks the receiver as being like the survivor. Receiving the refugee will mean being able to take her to heart, becoming a gatherer like those already gathered. The sign, the fugitive, in being sent is set—like a metaphor—to correlate itself with, to pair itself with,²⁹ those who would receive it. But she does so only by announcing her new nature as the one each of us is already on the road toward and for. She performs her pairing with us only by way of demonstrating how her abandonment has come to generate this revealed-concealed relationship to the divine.

Within her tracing out of such a relation with the divine, within her expectant, pregnant correlation or pairing of the sign and those who would be gathered, there is presented another context—a context other than that of destruction and destructive sending forth. Those who with the fugitive or the survivor become signs and can receive them, God implies, are those (perhaps by adoption) whom he previously longs to “comfort” in Jerusalem as a mother comforts her children (Isaiah 66:13). The sign by marking her abandonment generates the hope, the expectation that God does not only abandon us to their abandonment. Rather, God comforts and gathers the remnants, those who remain, within the structure of a relation.

Yes, the fugitives are outcasts. They are cast out of their family and of their nation. But in being projected outward by the divine, the fugitives are simply following the path of the very structure of the family and of nationality.³⁰ And that path is a perpetual transition toward the divine itself by means of a significant questioning—*the questioning of the meaning of Being*, of the meaning of the divine.

Within the sign, God signifies, gathers, comforts—all three at once. By means of the fugitives, God's gathering is one that is multiple, mediated, and oriented towards the *margins*. Anyone who, as a refugee, lives at the margins can attest to how significant, how comforting it might be to be drawn within a structure of belonging, especially one beyond the automatic and exclusionary national or lingual acts of gathering. Anyone who is a refugee at the margins might well be prepared to receive the fugitive sign, to move beyond the centralized, linguistic and thoughtful capacities of those who remain ensconced in nations and languages and who are not yet the signs of God.

²⁹ See Husserl's description of pairing (*Paarung*) in his Fifth Meditation in *Cartesian Meditations*. See also my *Layers in Husserl's Phenomenology: On Meaning and Intersubjectivity* for an in-depth analysis of such phenomenological terms as pairing (*Paarung*), transition (*Übergang*) and awakening (*Weckung*).

³⁰ See John Russon's account of family, which I believe one could apply also to nationality: “the very nature of the family is that it opens us to an intersubjective horizon in which who we and our family members are is subject to redefinition” (Russon, *Human Experience*, 67).

God's unity, therefore, cannot remain centered in itself, at least for now. God's unity, at least for now, is neither in Jerusalem nor its immediate residents. God's unity is rather one that must emerge historically, through a movement to the margins and towards the future and within a promise of correlation or of taking-God-to-heart by those whom God addresses. The unity of God with humans is, finally, one which pairs and expands itself by means of its self-abandonment and transition to the future, when the word will be both given *and returned*.

3.2 Luke 9:58

A fox or a jackal makes a ditch or a hole in the earth for its home. Using its body, it carves out a place of some comfort and security where it can hide from predators, enjoy its food, and commune with its young. This animal lives within the earth as a kind of home.

A bird takes what is on the earth—sticks, abandoned string, a bit of wool stuck in a thorn bush—and crafts a place between the earth and the sky. A bird uses what is on top of the earth in order to fashion its own chance for rest, for security, and for procreation.

The “Son of Man” and/or the Son of God has no such place.³¹ He is abandoned to a restless motion. There is no place on the earth that the Son can build or mark out or carve out as his own. The earth does not hold him. There is no place of rest for the Son. He cannot lay his head there. Literally, from the Greek, he cannot “incline” his head to any place. He cannot even have the inclination to rest. There is no desire for a resting place, so obvious is it that the earth is not his home.

The fox or the bird rests in order to begin again the same practices the next day. Nesting birds and denning foxes arise refreshed in order to do it all over again. They again prowl, search, eat, flee, reproduce, care for young, and rest. They again live this generic life of their species. Theirs is one of many lives of foxes or birds. They rest one of many rests.

Their urgencies may at first appear local and specific—this predator hiding in that bush, this rainfall or wind or cold. But their urgencies are really generic. All foxes and birds share them, or ones just like them. Their natural place may at first appear local and specific, too—this home in this ditch or that tree. But their natural homes are really generic. All foxes and birds share these suburban resting places, or ones just like them.

The Son of Man, the Son of God,³² though, does not begin again and again the same practices. The Son does not simply plow the earth in furrows or gather string for a nest. The Son is not simply one of many, is not simply one of a species. The urgency felt by the Son of Man, the Son of God, his restless motion, is of a different order.

There is no home, no inclination toward rest, because the Son of Man, the Son of God is not fundamentally of the earth as one of many, not fundamentally forgetting what has happened before in favor of repeating the same again tomorrow. The Son cannot forget, and must continue anew, what only the Son as this singularity can accomplish. The Son must dwell in a new, creative manner on the earth, within a new nature that is all his own, without using the earth as a means for self-concealment.

³¹ I take seriously the origin of “Son of Man” from gnostic sources, such as the Book of Enoch. See *Enoch and the Messiah: Son of Man* edited by Gabriele Boccacini. If Enoch inaugurates “Son of Man” as a special character designation for himself, and if those who believe and who can reveal secrets like Enoch may, like him, receive “Son of Man” as a special designation themselves, then that helps my argument, I think. Like Enoch, insofar as we meditate on the mysteries of our own structure, we can come to share in the productive abandonment that Jesus faces in terms of his very nature and restlessness. However, as Sabino Chiala notes, although Enoch may have inaugurated the use of “Son of Man” as a character, to describe himself, it may be that Luke means to say that Jesus is the only Son of Man as Son of God: “by accentuating the Son of Man’s eschatological function, Luke makes *his* Son of Man one who will come first and foremost to put an end to history and inaugurate the kingdom” (Chiala, “The Son of Man,” 166).

³² Again, to emphasize, I use these appellations, Son of Man and Son of God, together not to imply the *duality* of Jesus’ nature but to imply the *unity* of his nature. As I read the Gospels, the divine in the person of Jesus is fully human in a way that accentuates the humanity of the divine and the divinity of the human. Thus, I am not making a historical point but rather a point about dwelling within the tensile unity that presents itself.

To enter into and share this new nature of the Son (which is apparently a possibility--otherwise why bring it up?), the would-be disciple must see her or his metaphorical kinship with the fox and the bird (again—why else use them as examples?). But the disciple must, by means of her or his animality, by means of the inadequacy of this metaphorical connection, leave a natural kinship with animals behind in favor of something that is far more urgent. We are to be animals on the road to a new nature.

To become a disciple of the Son of Man, the Son of God is to enter into the new nature, into a new metaphor, which is burning within our breast. We are to be a nature whereby we cannot rest because we are always living *into* this new nature, this one that is to-come, as rigorously our own. To share the nature of the Son is not to become one of many but finally to become, singularly, one's own *Da-sein*.

To be with the Son is thus to be a sign of the inability to relate easily and fully to other animals and other people. To be with the Son is to be engaged in metaphor, to speak of foxes and birds, without being able to accomplish what metaphor accomplishes.³³ The Son of Man, the Son of God is like us—he speaks, he thinks, he makes metaphors. But there is no easy way to describe what He is like. Even He cannot do it without effort.

To be with, to walk and talk as, the Son is thereby to take up the position and task of metaphor. It is to be without a guarantee for success. It is to be a restless transition that speaks of abandonment in a productive way. It is to be, remembering Isaiah and even Enoch, a sign.

3.3 John 20:17

When Mary is confronted by the angels at Jesus' tomb, confronted because she is weeping, she says “they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him” (20:13). This woman, who is on the margins of the city, at the edge of life and death, is looking for something that is not immediately apparent. Perhaps she feels abandoned. If she does feel that way, it is immediately comprehensible why she immediately attributes causality (“they have taken away”) without experiential evidence. Abandonment can lead us to say some things that contradict the very flow of lived experience.

In any case, this failure of Mary's to perceive correctly the absence of Jesus leads immediately to her failure to perceive his presence. He confronts her about her weeping—will no one let a grieving person grieve—and she aims her misperception directly towards Jesus. Perhaps he is a gardener, perhaps he has taken Jesus away. Again, in her grief, Mary's is not perhaps the best work of a phenomenologist. Prejudices enter her speech at precisely the moment when her experience of abandonment is sharpest.³⁴

This prejudice, this floundering within apparent abandonment, is something that Jesus counters simply by addressing her. And then in his address, in his simple act of naming her, Mary recognizes and embraces him.³⁵ She is no longer abandoned. He is here!³⁶

For some reason, however, her embrace and perhaps her relief almost immediately elicit this response: “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father” (20:17). What does it mean, the injunction not to “hold on” to Jesus?

It means, I think, that Mary initially happens to misperceive, to love in such a way as to prevent the movement to the margins, the restless transition, that the divine calls for. Jesus is always already on the

³³ See Allen Scult's attempt to bridge Heidegger and Scripture by means of several analogies. One useful reinder Scult offers is this: “Rather than intervening to make language safe for us, the task of poetry in the later Heidegger becomes to confront us with our alienation from language” (Scult, “Heidegger's Hermeneutics, 407).

³⁴ Thomas Aquinas (and Gregory) disagree: “As Gregory says, ‘This woman in erring did not err, when she thought that Christ was a gardener, for he planted the seeds of virtue in her heart by the strength of his love’ (Aquinas, *Commentary*, 2510).

³⁵ Thomas Aquinas notes the phenomenological logic of recognition: “Christ called her by her own name, Mary. This was like saying: Where were you looking? Recognize him who has recognized you” (Aquinas, *Commentary*, 2514).

³⁶ Mary thus becomes able to bear the absence and presence of the divine, simultaneously, in her disposition toward Jesus: “Disposition is the diffusion of the trembling of being as event in *Da-sein*. Diffusion: not mere vanishment and expiration, but just the opposite—preservation of the spark in the sense of the clearing of the ‘there’ according to the full fissure of being” (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 19).

way elsewhere. His enduring is, must be, a passing over into his move toward the margin. His externality is passing over into the mutual internality of all persons, his brothers and sister, in the divine.³⁷

Jesus is the self-objectification of the divine as the unifier of all those who would trace out his subjectivity, his embodied life, as a counter to their own experience of abandonment. And he is this self-objectification precisely as revealing and concealing, as both, at the same time.

But Mary is not easily thrown aside.³⁸ Instead, Mary is essential. She is, again, a survivor who is commissioned as a sign to the “brothers.” Her feeling of abandonment and her joy in relating to Jesus—both—are intended by Jesus to be described again, to be recounted.³⁹

Jesus reveals himself as the one who, while still bearing the nature and the marks of his relationship with his friends, must necessarily (and always) also be transferred elsewhere, who must be transitioning toward another movement, another nature. And he enjoins that to Mary in setting her a descriptive task of witnessing. Jesus reveals and enjoins the trajectory of subjectivity to be not simply within the actual person but within the larger relationship of subjectivity to itself by means of leaving behind, moving to the margins of perceptibility.

Jesus is the human and the divine bound together, in a dual movement, towards the margin. Neither Mary nor the “brothers” nor anyone else can bind Jesus into dogmatic certainty or into a simple animal or human embodiment. Each “simple explication,”⁴⁰ like the one Mary is enjoined to do on Jesus’ behalf, is an absolute beginning. It is a re-formation and creative redirection of perception. It is a reminder that perception, as intentional, as bound up with the other person (either Jesus or the brothers) in an intimate burst of recognition, does not codify, does not reify, does not make static, what we are to one another and what we are within ourselves.

Perception rather announces simultaneously the going of the divine, the coming of the divine, and the going of oneself as *Da-sein*—all these together—as the event that is always already happening. Perception announces the fugitives that are proceeding away, toward the margins.

We are at and in the things when we perceive. But just as much are we at and in the horizons that they refer to, that they bear within themselves. We are with the others for whom we exceed, for whom we move out of, ourselves. But by being with them we cannot but be reminded that we are temporal, that we are passing into and out of a togetherness that must each day be refashioned, relearned, resettled.

The simple explication is this: the one whom Mary embraces must never be co-opted into a system of recognition, of hermeneutics, that is finished once and for all. Rather, any utterance or action must be oriented towards a hermeneutics that always strives toward a teleological whole that remains defiantly open.

4 Inclining, signing, dwelling

Heidegger begins to talk about thinking in *What is Called Thinking* by saying “we are capable of doing only what we are inclined to do. And again, we truly incline only toward something that in turn inclines toward us.”⁴¹

³⁷ “So remote is the god that we are unable to decide whether he is moving toward or away from us” (Heidegger, *Contributions*, 20).

³⁸ Concerning Jesus’ injunction not to cling to or touch him, Thomas Aquinas rejects the idea that Mary is ‘just’ a woman: “It is no answer to say that Christ wanted to be touched by his disciples but not by the women” (Aquinas, *Commentary*, 2516). Rather, following Augustine, Aquinas notes that “touch is the last stage of knowledge” and that Jesus was trying to tell Mary “do not allow what you now believe of me to be the limit of your faith” (Aquinas, *Commentary*, 2517).

³⁹ Aquinas notes that Mary is enjoined to go to the brothers “because they are his brethren by having the *same nature*” (*Commentary*, 2519, my emphasis). Aquinas also affirms the value of Mary in her being commissioned by Jesus “she had the office of an apostle; indeed, she was an apostle to the apostles insofar as it was her task to announce our Lord’s resurrection to the disciples. Thus, just as it was a woman who was the first to announce the words of death, so it was a woman who would be the first to announce the words of life” (*Commentary*, 2519).

⁴⁰ See Husserl: “Every statement which does no more than confer expression on such data by simple explication and by means of significations precisely conforming to them is...actually an absolute beginning” (Husserl, *Ideas*, 44).

⁴¹ Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, 3.

This notion of “inclining” towards what “in turns inclines towards us” names what is most thought-provoking, names what in us inaugurates the desire, the inclination to think. And it is appropriate that thinking begins in inclining. For we are inclining, desiring, *before* we are aware of ourselves in that movement. Thinking begins neither in consciousness nor self-consciousness. Rather, our thoughtful lives have already been *on the way* toward that which inclines toward us. We think properly when we think as if to set up a holy meeting in which the divine to-come⁴² is what is most welcome.

That seems to be what Heidegger means when he talks about the role of memory in thinking: “Memory is the gathering [*Versammlung*] of thought.”⁴³ Like inclination, memory begins *before* the beginning of thinking. Memory too is neither consciousness nor self-consciousness. Rather, memory gathers what survives and sends them out as signs for further thinking. In memory, we are always already on the way toward thinking, always already immersed in the process of becoming attuned to our own previous attunement. Memory is the condition of thinking that is the very emergence of thinking.

When we focus on memory, we remember that we are not in control of our own inclination, even less of what has always already inclined itself towards us. We remember that we have been given to ourselves as on-the-way-toward. We remember that we are *thrown* toward that which is most thinkable. We remember that we *live* our memory *into* our thinking.

Or, to say that another way, it is *out of* and *as* memory, as memory surpassed and yet retained, that we discover that that which is most thinkable is the interplay between thinking and us, the mutual inclination, the mutual making-possible. In this sense, then, thought as inclining, as gathered memory, is a *gift*. Thought is a gift because it is given to us, as if from outside, and yet also from within, from the intimate sources of our (natural) desire and our temporality.⁴⁴

Thinking as this connection between inside and outside, between desire, temporality, consciousness and world—this thinking is also a gift because we become able to give thinking back threefold. We give back thinking in our inclining *towards* it as our source, *towards* ourselves, and *towards* whatever else might become involved in the conversation between ourselves and the source of that which inclines towards us. Thought is thus a gift because it makes *of us* a gift within our meeting, within its clearing and correlation with us: “Thought [*Das Bedachte*] has the gift of thinking back [*Andenken*], a gift given because we incline toward it [*weil wir es mögen*].”⁴⁵

We are engaged in a hermeneutics, then, whenever we think because we make things possible by thinking. We participate, as thinking, in a coming into being. We think back toward and onto ourselves, and *thereby* onto the source that has inclined itself toward us. We think-back. And thus we make possible the *correlative* appearance of what can now arise as thought *about* because all of ourselves—our desire, our temporality, and our lived experience—has been awakened to itself. We think back and thus correlate ourselves with what most calls for thinking; we deploy our nature toward what we now strive to recognize on its own terms, i.e., explicitly and with justice.

But our inclining, our making each other possible, does not guarantee a wonderful union between the thing to be thought and ourselves. In our making possible the thing to be thought about, it does not remain on its trajectory towards us. Rather, perhaps sadly and inexplicably, it turns away: “the thing itself that must be thought about turns away [*abwendet*] from man, has turned away long ago.”⁴⁶

⁴² See Jacques Derrida’s description of the to-come across his works. Especially relevant is his analysis of the story of Abraham and Isaac and of Gospel of Matthew in *The Gift of Death*. In both cases, in the risk that Abraham took with his family in order to live into his role as patriarch, and in the risk the reader takes with Matthew to believe in the to-come which is not properly an economy, what seems to be at issue is the interior nature of the human: “the essence of the heart, that is, there where the heart is what it must properly be, there where it properly takes place, in its correct *location*, that is the very thing that gives us food for thought” (Derrida, *Gift of Death*, 97).

⁴³ Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, 3.

⁴⁴ See Derrida’s thought on the gift in *Given Time*. There it is essential that we see that “for there to be a gift, not only must the donor or donee not perceive or receive the gift as such, have no consciousness of it, *no memory*, no recognition; he or she must also forget it right away” (Derrida, *Given Time*, 16).

⁴⁵ Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, 4.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 7.

In our thinking as thinking back, we see our limitation. We do not have the same power to draw it to us as it does to draw us to it. Its making us possible, its inclination, lies within our limit and our failure, even as newly self-revealed and self-unified, to dominate it. Its success in motivating our acts of desire and gathering lies in its act of abandoning us, in its turning away. We, both what most calls for thinking and we ourselves, make each other possible *only on the margins* of what we feel compelled to pursue as our correlation.

Thinking in this sense, then, is eschatological. It is not that we correlate *immediately* with what calls for thinking and then find that our task is over. Rather, we are empowered and yet deferred thinkers. And, as deferred, we are failures, though not absolute ones, failures that cannot be immediately in sync with what calls for faith. The most we can do is ever to prepare for the leap toward what is most meaningful in its appearance, toward we are most called to be *within* what we are.

We pursue what correlates with us as it withdraws, as it abandons us. And thus we see that the withdrawal of what most calls for thinking calls all the more: “But—withdrawing is not nothing. Withdrawal is an event.”⁴⁷

In our desire to pursue our own thinking and to pursue our thinking of ourselves into that which must be thought, we see that something happens to and within our time. There “is an event.” And we are changed: “As we are drawing toward what withdraws, we ourselves are *pointers* pointing toward it.”⁴⁸

We become the sign, as the survivor does in the passage from Isaiah, *as we pursue what withdraws*. We become the sign for which its own interpretation is precisely at issue *for itself*. We become fugitives, pointing toward the region of withdrawal, toward the margins as though a phenomenologist pointing toward the limits of what appears: “As he draws toward what withdraws, man is a sign...[who] points, not so much at what draws away as *into* the withdrawal. The sign stays *without interpretation*.”⁴⁹

To become the sign is to experience a change—a change from a kind of elation at being one of the few who can think, from a stance of the welcome of correlation, to a depression, to a recognition of our dispersal within a process of abandonment, of semiotics, that we do not control. When we function as a sign, we mutely point. And we thereby feel the air dispel from our lungs. We realize that it is the *method* of correlation, not its achievement, *not simply the object by itself*, not what we say in any one moment—it is the method that drives us on.

In becoming the sign, we thus come to feel alienated within our signifying achievement. And we realize that what this role as sign means is to perceive by means of having to talk through what occurs before we are ready to describe it: “To perceive implies, in ascending order: to welcome and take in; to accept and take in the encounter; to take up face to face; to undertake and see through—and this means to talk through.”⁵⁰ For the sign who exists with itself *as sign*, there is no end to thinking, or to phenomenology, or to hermeneutics. Or, rather, there is only the *telos* of “resolute”⁵¹ reconciliation with the task to be achieved; there is only the resolution to play our part in the “interplay.”

As ones who think toward what most calls for thinking, we talk through and thus we externalize, through language, the anxiety of our all too-brief encounter with what calls for thinking. We experience anxiety because we do *not* fully encounter that which calls. And yet, anxious though our existence as sign is, we commit to see it through to the end, to the end that we are, to the death that we have always already been. So we talk through, with others, having become a sign.

As signs of the divine givenness, we are neither foxes nor birds. Rather, we are at best reverential wanderers, who in our turning away from home and earth and family are turned towards what is to-come in our nature: “But the highest and most lasting gift given to us is always our essential nature, with which we are gifted in such a way that we are what we are only through it. That is why we owe thanks for this

⁴⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁸ Ibid., my emphasis.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 11, my emphasis.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 61.

⁵¹ See *Being and Time*: “Resolute coming back to thrownness involves *handing oneself over* to traditional possibilities, although not necessarily *as* traditional ones” (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 365). This notion of our resoluteness as *Dasein* is essential to understanding how temporality, for Heidegger, is the very essence of being.

endowment, first and unceasingly.”⁵² If Jesus is telling us what his (and our) nature is, by means of foxes and birds, then it is only to begin to call us to think about what calls for thinking. And the first step there is to think through, to be thankful for, our own nature.

We walk not just because we are made for walking but also because we are not made simply to walk or to rest. We walk out, we talk through, and thus we think through, our frustration, our sadness, our elation, and our fatigue. We walk ahead into the person we will yet be by walking and through walking and yet not simply within walking.

We dwell here certainly, where we are given to live. And yet our dwelling, this givenness of California or Rhode Island, is only the initial place by which we come to terms with where we are meant to move, the trajectory of consciousness which is a dwelling that is neither correlated nor simply creative: “The home and dwelling of mortals has its own natural site. But its situation is not determined first by the pathless places on earth. It is marked out and opened by something of another order. From there, the dwelling of mortals receives its measure.”⁵³ We do not have dens. Our home is “something of another order.”

We cannot listen ahead without first having an established place. We cannot be called from nowhere. Dwelling is necessary at first, then. We start out perhaps as indiscriminately correlated with foxes and birds. But we must move through that part of the nature that we have in common with foxes and birds in order to see our acts of dwelling as a route into a new vision.

We must learn to listen peripatetically. For we have always already become a wandering people. And wandering is listening toward, reading and writing toward, what might be found when we and the divine cross over to another place, a place that neither of us has dwelled in before.

5 Community and duality: *legein* and *noein*

For Heidegger, thinking comes together for us as two movements, *legein* and *noein*. *Legein* is the act by which what is given comes to appear on its own terms: “This making to appear and letting lie before us is, in Greek thought, the essence of [*legein*] and [*logos*].”⁵⁴ *Legein* is our allowing something to have its appearance, our reverence for its manner of givenness and appearance.

Noein, by contrast with *Legein*, is the taking up of what is given and taking it within our project of correlation with our inclinations. *Noein* is an activity of perception and “as perceiving, include[s] also the active trait of undertaking something.”⁵⁵ This noetic undertaking something, or activity, is in contrast to letting lie. It is, in reference to the perceived, “to take it up specifically and do something with it.”⁵⁶ Or it is “to take it to heart....Taking to heart is: to keep at heart.”⁵⁷

Legein and *noein* thus seem to be quite different. We have a *passive* synthesis of reverence in *legein*. We have an *active* synthesis of explication in *noein*. But they work together for Heidegger: “both, in their community, constitute that from which the nature of thinking first begins to emerge in one of its basic characteristics.”⁵⁸ Together, *legein* and *noein*, as we deploy them, point towards what most calls for thinking.

Legein though is perhaps not even a *passive* synthesis. It is not really our doing at all. For when we let lie, when we let be, we allow something, some situation, to set itself up: “What is set up is released into the freedom of its station, and is not the effect of our doing and thus dependent on us.”⁵⁹ A discipline is required here in letting lie.

As committed to *legein*, we are committed to a discipline of inaction, of passivity, of disconnection from that which is setting itself up. A survivor who gathers others toward God on God’s behalf, a disciple who

⁵² Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, 142.

⁵³ Ibid., 191.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 202.

⁵⁵ Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, 203.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 197.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 201.

wants to follow Jesus, must first allow God or Jesus to be released to a station that enacts *itself* and thus enacts its demands on us beyond our acts of affordance. When we let lie, we do not desire God to remain passive, waiting for us to find him. Rather we afford him the opportunity to enact his station as movement, as transition. It is when we afford him that capacity to move, to challenge, that we can take him to heart.

For Heidegger “*legein* precedes *noein*”⁶⁰ insofar as the letting lie before us precedes taking it to heart. But *legein* never rests. It is not dispersed in *noein*. Rather, “*legein* also surpasses *noein*, in that it once again gathers, and keeps and safeguards in the gathering, whatever *noein* takes to heart.”⁶¹ What we allow God or Jesus to do certainly becomes what we allow him to mean to us when we take him to heart as this moving station. But what the divine means in our taking him to heart is the continuation of our listening ahead.

We never let lie, we never listen ahead, once and for all. We can return to the same text every year and hear something different. *Legein* is what allows what has been taken to heart to continue moving within our own sphere, to continue coming to birth. *Legein* is what prevents mastery and paralysis, mechanization and dogmatism. *Legein* is the motor of ongoing hermeneutics and what allows phenomenology always to be being-toward and never finalized.

In fact, Heidegger argues, *legein* and *noein* are such that “each enters into the other.”⁶² This means that each of them has already begun to do what is proper to it so that the other can do what is proper to itself: “both by virtue of their conjunction achieve what later and only for a short time is specifically called *aletheuein*: to disclose and keep disclosed what is unconcealed.”⁶³ As what we are, then, we let lie and take to heart “for a short time” at the *same* time. We have moments, then, where we “keep disclosed what is unconcealed.” And yet that “short time” passes. *Legein* and *noein* “enter into” each other; they also pass out of each other. The call is to practice the disciplines of unconcealment and disclosure—for as long as possible.

Their togetherness in the moment is fragile and unpredictable. Heidegger explicitly admits that their “conjunction...does not rest upon itself.”⁶⁴ Thinking itself does not rest on either one taken by itself or on their togetherness. Something *else* is giving the community of *legein* and *noein* within and to us, in the things to be undertaken, in the text before which we have reverence.

In his description of their evanescent and dependent “conjunction,” Heidegger argues that thinking is not in any sense an act of control: “Thinking, then, is not a grasping, neither the grasp of what lies before us, nor an attack upon it....Thinking is not a grasping or prehending.”⁶⁵ Thinking is the back and forth motion, the systole and diastole, of letting lie and taking to heart. We never take something to heart once and for all. We only have moments of togetherness that we do not give to ourselves, that we may often fail to recognize.

The necessary twofold of Being, the twofold of *legein* and *noein* that is not overcome in their “community” is what I would like to follow up with in the last section of this paper. The “twofoldness,” just like their community, does not come from either the *legein* or the *noein* or them together. Something else proposes the duality and the community as a duality.

In Heidegger’s deployment of *legein* and *noein*, we have returned to a Husserlian understanding of phenomenology. *Legein*, or letting lie, is a noematic unity of subject and object. *Noein* is a noetic one. Both are streams of unity. Each has a noetic-noematic structure of its own. But their emphases, one passive and noematic, the other active and noetic, are important, correlative echoes of Husserlian analysis and push us toward experience itself as a more sophisticated situation.

The mutual correspondence and community of *legein* and *noein* return us to a more sophisticated justice and answerability. We cannot take to heart, we cannot be just, to a text that we have not afforded the opportunity to lay there. We cannot take to heart what does not incline toward us. And so we reckon not only with consciousness in Heidegger’s phenomenology but also with desire.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 208.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 208.

⁶³ Ibid., 209.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 210.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 211.

6 Conclusion: Jesus as interruption and transition—The hitchhiking to and from

Many years ago, I was a student in a course in New Testament theology taught by a Rabbi. In that course, the Rabbi told us a story about how he picked up a hitchhiker along an interstate in one of the southern United States. As he took him in, he was convinced--a Rabbi, absolutely convinced--that this hitchhiker was Jesus. He said this in all seriousness to us mostly Catholic undergraduate students at a Catholic university.

But my Rabbinic professor emphasized that taking in Jesus the hitchhiker did not incline him to become a Christian. Nevertheless, I thought to myself at the time, this Rabbi came years later to a Catholic university to teach undergraduates New Testament theology. This was not the norm. Something occurred on that road and on that trip.

Many years after that course, something occurs to me, now, as I remember the story. No doubt in large part because of that course with the Rabbi, I no longer read Isaiah as evidently foretelling Jesus as the suffering servant. It is almost as if I have picked up the Rabbi on the road and we are going on a long trip together, being careful not to read too much into one another but rather to allow what happens to happen on its own terms.

Knowing this, I try to be careful here in this paper and in this concluding section. For despite my reluctance to see Isaiah as simply indicating Christian motifs, I do see Mary and Jesus as each resonating with the survivor, the fugitive, the sign mentioned in Isaiah 66. And it is because of these resonances that I see Jesus in particular as an interruption and a transition (both!) between our acts of *legein* and *noein*.

For me, across these three selections from scripture, what gathers itself to my attention is the fact that, like the sign commissioned by God, Jesus calls attention, for a moment, to both motions (the letting lie and the taking to heart). And he does so by challenging each one on its own terms and by creating the opportunity for us to experience their togetherness once they have been separated for us, perhaps in the pain of losing sight, momentarily, of their possible unity.

In Isaiah, as I read it, God had attempted to let Jerusalem lie. God had looked upon Jerusalem, trying to let its station come home to it. But the situation of Jerusalem, at the time Isaiah was writing at least, had deteriorated. It had become heedless of divine words, had been invaded with a multiplicity of linguistic clues, cultural icons, and nationalities and deployed only violence and distraction. There was a lack of reverence and, we might say, of phenomenology in Jerusalem. Their relationship with God was, at best, suspended.

What was needed was an action, an interruption of the Jews' intransigent abandonment of the sacred that would ensure that Jerusalem saw a sign that put them back onto the road towards a more meaningful relation with the divine. What was needed was a sign that made the very community of *legein* and *noein* an issue, a possibility, a mourning, and a promise.

So God sent a sign. A survivor. And the gathering of the nations began.

There is something similar, though no doubt very different, happening in the Gospels. As I read the Gospels, I cannot help but hear, even with the Rabbi in my ears, how God abandoned Jesus there, along and toward the path of his own death, in order to open the way for Jerusalem to take him up. God sent Jesus to be the echo of Psalm 22, to be the hitchhiker on the Road to Emmaus, and to be the image of the Good Samaritan, the foreigner, the fugitive, and the refugee who would help an anonymous, suffering Jew along a dangerous road with no other motivation than that of a shared suffering, vulnerability and marginalization.

As the Son of Man abandoned to a life of transition, perhaps of hitchhiking, Jesus would be a divine interruption, a new neighbor who inserts himself, or who is commissioned to travel, between our acts of *legein* and *noein*. As transitional, as marginal, as refugee, Jesus would *thereby call for* the community, the neighborhood, of *legein* and *noein*.

Jesus withdraws, ultimately, from Mary, from us. He seems to abandon her and us. But does Jesus have a choice? It would seem not. For it is in his being compelled to move that Jesus is creative, that he can disappear from Emmaus in order to appear behind the locked door of the upper room. And he must be creative, for otherwise, if he were not, we would certainly refuse him.

So Jesus calls us to think about him by absconding. And thus, in addressing us, in calling us to him by *departing* from us, he creates the space *in our nature*⁶⁶ in order for us to become part of his nature. He withdraws in order more effectively to call us toward and to share with us the interruption and wandering from *legein* to *noein*.

He withdraws, he abandons, in order to awaken the hope of their “conjunction,” in order to send Mary to the “brothers” as a sign, a survivor. God, Jesus, Being—he or she abandons or absconds in order for us to take up our own restlessness, our own concealment to ourselves, Being’s concealment to us. God absconds from us in our abandonment in order that we come to seize the temporality of this moment, to act silently, within anxiety and trembling, and to move like the sign *between legein* and *noein* in the hopes of performing some great transition toward a community to-come.

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⁶⁶ See Peter Capretto’s description of Heidegger’s claim that theology is subordinate to the ontological discoveries of theology: “Through the orientation of Christianness, theology may gain a glimpse of Dasein’s structural totality across its regional context, not merely in the ontic but also in its ontological constitution. Once it sees this, however, theology realizes that its theological and Christian concepts are grounded in ontological content, which is prior to any distinctly Christian concept” (Capretto, “The Wonder,” 603).