

Phenomenology of Religious Experience IV: Religious Experience and Description

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Being and Time-less Faith: Juxtaposing Heideggerian Anxiety and Religious Experience

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Abstract: In Heidegger, fear reveals the thing to be feared in a fuller way than theory can. However, anxiety is distinct from fear, for while fear is directed towards a specific thing within the world, anxiety is anxious about existence itself, disclosing the totality of Being. A similar method could be applied to faith. Arguably, faith is a mood; a feeling of trust in the divine that can be phenomenologically consistent and overwhelming. However, faith is not necessarily directed towards a specific object within the world. One cannot point and say: “God is right there!” Indeed, attempts to do so through miracles, teleology or dialectics have been roundly critiqued by the Western tradition. But then what is this mood of faith disclosing if not something within the world? Perhaps, like anxiety, faith is not revealing an object within the world, but the world as a totality. Since God—at least the God central to much of the Judeo-Christian tradition—is not a being but Being itself (or in some formulations is actually ‘beyond being’), God therefore cannot be disclosed in the world as an object but has to be disclosed as that which is transcendentally beyond it. Such a conclusion does not simply flee the realm of the everyday, but derives from, and legitimates, basic descriptions of religious experience. Specifically, Judeo-Christian descriptions of (1) divine providence, (2) happiness/joy, (3) the eschatological ‘not yet’, and (4) Divine Hiddenness. This paper will argue that appropriating Heidegger’s phenomenological method in his discussions of fear/anxiety and applying them to Judeo-Christian descriptions of faith thus leads to a radically different ontology from that of Heidegger himself, offering a renewed basis for religion that contrasts the nothingness revealed by anxiety with the divinity revealed by faith, challenging us to weigh for ourselves which mood is more swaying.

Keywords: Heidegger; phenomenology of religion; anxiety; the mood of faith

Introduction

Heidegger’s embracement of mood is a possible way forward for a phenomenological theology. Moods are not subjective lenses laid over a more objective world, rather, mood un-conceals the world, disclosing the presence of things within it in a way that is more phenomenologically accurate than mere theory. Fear reveals the thing to be feared in a fuller way than theory can. However, anxiety is distinct from fear, for while fear is directed towards a specific thing within the world, anxiety is anxious about existence itself, disclosing the totality of being (which, in Heidegger’s case, is the temporality, mortality and nothingness at the centre of all). One would like to suggest that a similar phenomenological structure can be applied to

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faith (albeit, leading to drastically different metaphysical conclusions from Heidegger). Arguably, faith is a mood; a feeling of trust in the divine that can be phenomenologically consistent and at times overwhelming in its power. However, faith is not necessarily directed towards a specific object within the world. One cannot point and say: “I’ve found Him/Her. God is right there!” Indeed, attempts to do so through miracles, supernatural encounters, answered prayers, teleological design or historical dialectics have been roundly critiqued by the Western tradition. But then what is this mood of faith disclosing if not something within the world? Perhaps, like anxiety, the mood of faith is not revealing an object within the world, but the world as a totality. What if the mood of faith discloses a divine Being that is the primordial root of all beings? Since God—at least the God central to much of the Judeo-Christian tradition—is not *a being* but *Being* itself (or in some formulations is actually ‘beyond being’), God therefore cannot be disclosed in the world as an object but has to be disclosed as that which is transcendentally beyond it.¹ Since faith is a powerful mood that does not point to anything definitively tangible in the world, perhaps it is disclosing that which is greater than the world? (This need not imply that God cannot or has not disclosed Godself within the world—e.g., in the incarnation or theophanies—but merely that certain aspects of the mood of faith are not directed at, or limited to, something in the world.)²

Such a conclusion does not simply flee the realm of the everyday, but derives from, and legitimates, basic phenomenological descriptions of religious experience. This view of the mood of faith aligns well with common descriptions of multiple aspects of religious life: (1) with common religious descriptions of faith in divine providence, in spite of evidence to the contrary from all external signs in the world around them (e.g., faith that even though one has lost their home, family or business, that God is somehow still in control). With (2) religious descriptions of *happiness* being contingent on external circumstances while divine *joy* transcends ones’ earthly context (i.e., Lewis). With (3) an eschatological hope that is directed beyond the ‘now’ and towards the ‘not yet’. (4) Descriptions of the hiddenness of God from our earthly lives, as well as the possibility of our removal from earth in our own death. These aspects of religious experience—among many others—point to a divine that is not *a being* in the world but something more; not an object in existence but rather that which is at the root of existence. This paper will argue that appropriating Heidegger’s phenomenological structure of fear/anxiety and applying it to Judeo-Christian³ descriptions of faith thus leads to a radically different ontology from that of Heidegger himself, offering a renewed basis for religion that contrasts the nothingness revealed by Heideggerian anxiety with the divinity revealed by faith, challenging us to weigh for ourselves which mood is more swaying.

1 Anxiety in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger reveals the revelatory power of *Stimmung*, translated mood, or attunement (having both the sense of a human voice—*die Stimme*—and the tuning of a musical instrument—*die*

¹ There is a much larger debate about whether a God of Being is the problem of, or answer to, Onto-Theology. As such, one need not tie our argument specifically to a God of *Being*, but only to the far less drastic claim that God is not *a being* disclosable as an object in the world. For a critique of perceiving God as an object, see Zangwill, “The Myth of Religious Experience.” For an interesting thesis as well as helpful summary of multiple authors on Onto-Theology, see Schrijvers, “OntoTheological Turnings? Marion, Lacoste and Levinas on the Decentering of Modern Subjectivity,” 221–53. For deeper engagement with Heidegger’s onto-theological critique and the Thomist’s divine Being, see Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas*.

² Nor would it necessitate there be an uncrossable chasm between finite and infinite, for our very ability to experience Being as a totality presupposes such a crossing.

³ This narrowing-in to Judeo-Christian experience creates a manageable sample size. Similar parallels to those presented in this paper are, of course, found throughout the world’s many religions. This study is also further limited to four particular areas of religious life: divine providence, eschatological hope, religious joy, and divine hiddenness. These areas have been chosen because (1) they illustrate well our central thesis, (2) they flesh out a broadly coherent picture of religious life; a life full of joyful trust here and now in God’s plan but which also admits suffering and a sense of distance from God, leading to an eschatological hope in a future time. (3) These four areas represent foundational discussions in biblical, historical and contemporary theology, providing four mainstream pillars for our study. Thus, while these four areas by no means exhaust our subject, they nonetheless provide a legitimate starting point.

Stimmung). Dasein does not exist in some neutral, objective state to only then have mood lathered over it as a sickly-sweet syrup. Rather, Dasein is always in a mood, whether happy, angry, or sad, and even the seeming absence of such moods is merely the subtle presence of other ones, such as boredom or tranquility:

The fact that moods can be spoiled and change only means that Da-sein is always already in a mood. The often persistent, smooth, and pallid lack of mood, which must not be confused with a bad mood, is far from being nothing. Rather, in this Da-sein becomes tired of itself. Being has become manifest as a burden. One does not know why. And Da-sein cannot know why because the possibilities of disclosure belonging to cognition fall far short of the primordial disclosure of moods in which Da-sein is brought before its being as the there. Furthermore, an elevated mood can alleviate the manifest burden of being. This possibility of mood, too, discloses the burdensome character of Da-sein even when it alleviates that burden. Mood makes manifest “how one is and is coming along.” In this “how one is” being in a mood brings being to its “there.”⁴

This ever-presentness of mood hints at its inescapable fundamentality as an *existentiale* of Dasein, for just as reason can claim to have an emotional explanation to accompany all our moods, so too our ideas are always accompanied by a mood: “even the purest *θεωρία* has not left all moods behind...”⁵ In this, mood has the ability to reveal or conceal reality:

“Mere mood” discloses the there more primordially, but it also closes it off more stubbornly than any not-perceiving... Bad moods show this. In bad moods, Dasein becomes blind to itself, the surrounding world of heedfulness is veiled... Mood assails. It comes neither from “without” nor from “within,” but rises from being-in-the-world itself as a mode of that being. Mood has always already disclosed being-in-the-world as a whole and first makes possible directing oneself toward something.⁶

A bad mood can derail the mind and dull the senses. As such, many decry emotion as a distraction from reality, but Heidegger turns this on its head, arguing that reality can only be seen clearly if mood first allows it, submitting the realm of disclosure to the authoritative seal of mood.⁷ If mood is not on board, theory gets nowhere. In turn, mood reveals the world in ways that theory cannot. A generic anatomical description of spiders does not do justice to the reality of encountering one. Only the phenomenological mood of horror truly expresses the world that is experienced when we encounter a spider.⁸ The choice to favour theory over mood was indeed ‘a choice’, and we need not choose as many of our forebearers have done, when they rationalized away half the world of experience. Mood reveals the nature of things for us, reveals what matters to us. Without such mattering objects within the world would have no significance for us, and so we could not relate to or engage them at all, for things only present themselves to us already *mood-ed*. Mood thus has the power to disclose truth or to close down all disclosure. Heidegger’s phenomenology allows him to return to the phenomenon of mood, sitting in its disclosive power rather than reducing it to some allegedly more fundamental, rational structure. While understanding (*Verstehen*) and discourse (*Rede*) still have their place as avenues of being’s disclosure, they have no jurisdiction to adjudicate once and for all the disclosure of moods:

⁴ All translations taken from Heidegger and Stambaugh, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit*. Ibid., 126-127.

⁵ Ibid., 130.

⁶ Ibid., 128-129.

⁷ While moods must in a sense be mastered in order to access their full disclosure, this does not negate the validity of moods as moods, for the mastering of one mood is done through utilizing another; e.g., one conquers inconsolable crying or fear through embracing a mood of peace and tranquility: “That a Da-sein factually can, should, and must master its mood with knowledge and will may signify a priority of will and cognition in certain possibilities of existing. But that must not mislead us into ontologically denying mood as a primordial kind of being of Da-sein in which it is disclosed to itself before all cognition and willing and beyond their scope of disclosure. Moreover, we never master a mood by being free of a mood, but always through a counter mood. The first essential onto logical characteristic of attunement is: Attunement discloses Da-sein in its thrownness initially and for the most part in the mode of an evasive turning away.” (128)

⁸ Or, as Michel Henry—continuing this defence of affect—writes, a description of pain is secondary to the disclosure of pain itself: “Pain itself teaches me about pain and not some kind of intentional consciousness that would aim at its presence ...” Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 25.

Existentially and ontologically there is not the slightest justification for minimizing the “evidence” of attunement by measuring it against the apodictic certainty of the theoretical cognition of something merely objectively present.⁹

Indeed, we must ontologically in principle leave the primary discovery of the world to “mere mood.” Pure beholding, even if it penetrated into the innermost core of the being of something objectively present, would never be able to discover anything like what is threatening.¹⁰

Thus, mood has the power to disclose things within the world and grounds the possibility of such a disclosure. But what Heidegger is seeking is not merely disclosure of something in the world but rather the world as a totality: “How is the totality of the structural whole that we pointed out to be determined existentially and ontologically?”¹¹ His unique answer is through the revelations of the mood of anxiety. However, to understand anxiety one must first understand the mood of fear. Fear is always directed at something within the world:

Fear about as being afraid of always equiprimordially discloses, whether privatively or positively, innerworldly beings in their possibility of being threatening and being-in with regard to its being threatened. Fear is a mode of attunement.¹²

Our interpretation of fear as attunement showed that what we fear is always a detrimental innerworldly being, approaching nearby from a definite region, which may remain absent... The only threat which can be “fearsome” and which is discovered in fear always comes from innerworldly beings.¹³

Fear is always directed at a being in the world; e.g., I run in fear from a bear, I hide in fear from my boss. The mood of fear reveals the nature of things in the world, their stature and might and trauma. But what about a mood like anxiety? Whereas fear is directed toward and discloses a specific being within the world (e.g., an approaching wolf, or an angry step-mother), Heidegger contends that anxiety is more vague, and is a general sense of dissatisfaction with the world as a whole:

How is what Angst is anxious about phenomenally differentiated from what fear is afraid of? What Angst is about is not an innerworldly being. Thus it essentially cannot be relevant. The threat does not have the character of a definite detrimentality which concerns what is threatened with a definite regard to a particular factual potentiality for being. What Angst is about is completely indefinite. This indefiniteness not only leaves factually undecided which innerworldly being is threatening us, but also means that innerworldly beings in general are not “relevant.” Nothing of that which is at hand and objectively present within the world, functions as what Angst is anxious about. The totality of relevance discovered within the world of things at hand and objectively present is completely without importance. It collapses. The world has the character of complete insignificance. In Angst we do not encounter this or that thing which, as threatening, could be relevant. Thus neither does Angst “see” a definite “there” and “over here” from which what is threatening approaches. The fact that what is threatening is nowhere characterizes what Angst is about. Angst “does not know” what it is about which it is anxious. But “nowhere” does not mean nothing; rather, region in general lies therein, and disclosedness of the world in general for essentially spatial being-in. Therefore, what is threatening cannot approach from a definite direction within nearness, it is already “there”-and yet nowhere. It is so near that it is oppressive and stifles one’s breath-and yet it is nowhere.¹⁴

Whereas fear is directed at a specific object, the anxious soul often finds themselves anxious even in the midst of pleasant circumstances, plagued by a general uneasiness that cannot be shaken off like a flea nor kicked away like a beast—i.e., that cannot be dealt with in the usual way one deals with things in the world. The crisis of meaning that anxiety awakens is similar to the breakdown of the hammer that causes one to catch sight of the overall project. Anxiety is thus not directed at something specific within the world, but the world as a totality. Anxiety is the primordial mood that most fully discloses the Being of Dasein’s world as a totality.

⁹ Heidegger and Stambaugh, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit*, 128.

¹⁰ Ibid., 130.

¹¹ Ibid., 169.

¹² Ibid., 133.

¹³ Ibid., 174.

¹⁴ Ibid., 174.

In turn, anxiety makes one see through the everyday trivialities and little victories that bring meaning to the *they*:

What Angst is anxious for is being-in-the-world itself. In Angst, the things at hand in the surrounding world sink away, and so do innerworldly beings in general. The “world” can offer nothing more, nor can the Mitda-sein of others.... In Angst one has an “uncanny” feeling. Here the peculiar indefiniteness of that which Dasein finds itself involved in with Angst initially finds expression: the nothing and nowhere. But uncanniness means at the same time not-being-at-home. In our first phenomenal indication of the fundamental constitution of Da-sein... being-in was defined as... being familiar with This characteristic of being-in was then made more concretely visible through the everyday publicness of the *they* which brings tranquillized self-assurance, “being-at-home” with all its obviousness, into the average everydayness of Da-sein. Angst, on the other hand, fetches Da-sein back out of its entangled absorption in the “world.” Everyday familiarity collapses. Da-sein is individuated, but as being-in-the-world. Being-in enters the existential “mode” of not-being-at home... Tranquillized, familiar being-in-the-world is a mode of the uncanniness of Da-sein, not the other way around. Not-being-at-home must be conceived existentially and ontologically as the more primordial phenomenon.¹⁵

Anxiety distances the individual from the world of significance, abstracting us from the worldly game. By relocating us outside of the meaningful world of the *they*, anxiety is actually freeing us from the world and the petty concerns that so easily concern its inhabitants. This anxious sense of alienation from humanity is, in fact, the hopeful first glimpse of the possibility of being authentically ourselves (“individuated”).

Anxiety tears us away from the *they* and from fear of things within world, pointing us beyond to the world as a totality:

In what Angst is about, the “it is nothing and nowhere” becomes manifest. The recalcitrance of the innerworldly nothing and nowhere means phenomenally that what Angst is about is the world as such. The utter insignificance which makes itself known in the nothing and nowhere does not signify the absence of world, but means that innerworldly beings in themselves are so completely unimportant that, on the basis of this insignificance of what is innerworldly, the world is all that obtrudes itself in its worldliness. What oppresses us is not this or that, nor is it everything objectively present together as a sum, but the possibility of things at hand in general, that is, the world itself. When Angst has quieted down, in our everyday way of talking we are accustomed to say “it was really nothing.” This way of talking, indeed, gets at what it was ontically. Everyday discourse aims at taking care of things at hand and talking about them. That about which Angst is anxious is none of the innerworldly things at hand. But this “none of the things at hand,” which is all that everyday, circumspect discourse understands, is not a total nothing. The nothing of handiness is based on the primordial “something,” on the world. The world, however, ontologically belongs essentially to the being of Da-sein as being-in-the-world. So if what Angst is about exposes nothing, that is, the world as such, this means that that about which Angst is anxious is being-in-the-world itself. Being anxious discloses, primordially and directly, the world as world. It is not the case that initially we deliberately look away from innerworldly beings and think only of the world about which Angst arises, but Angst as a mode of attunement first discloses the world as world.¹⁶

Since anxiety is not directed toward an object within the world, but toward the world of significance altogether, anxiety is in fact disclosing the totality of being, as well as the possibility of not-being. In other words, by temporarily alienating us from the world, anxiety reveals what it would be like to not be in the world at all, i.e., to die. As “soon as man comes to life he is at once old enough to die.”¹⁷ The immanent possibility of death is ever-present throughout all of life. While the *they* acknowledges this inevitability, it makes it vague, generalized and distant; death happens to us all, but far off and in the future (“The *they* is careful to distort this Angst into the fear of a future event.”¹⁸) The *they* suppresses its anxiety over death, “tranquilizing” and drowning it in a wave of “untroubled indifference.”¹⁹ The “*they* does not permit the courage to have Angst about death.”²⁰ But Heidegger believes it is only in death, or rather, in the anticipation of death, that one can be truly free and authentically oneself. Death reveals the possibility of

¹⁵ Ibid., 175-177.

¹⁶ Ibid., 175.

¹⁷ Ibid., 289.

¹⁸ Ibid., 235.

¹⁹ Ibid., 299.

²⁰ Ibid., 235.

our non-existence, of one day dying and no longer being adorned by all the status and aims of the they. The masses blindly chase that which they cannot take with them. Anxiously living in awareness of death thus frees one to be authentically themselves, rather than living out of an external framework grounded in the *they*:

the attunement which is able to hold open the constant and absolute threat to itself arising from the ownmost individualized being of Dasein is Angst. In Angst, Da-sein finds itself faced with the nothingness of the possible impossibility of its existence. Angst is anxious about the potentiality-of-being of the being thus determined, and thus discloses the most extreme possibility. Because the anticipation of Da-sein absolutely individualizes and lets it, in this individualizing of itself, become certain of the wholeness of its potentiality-of-being, the fundamental attunement of Angst belongs to this self-understanding of Da-sein in terms of its ground. Being-toward-death is essentially Angst... Anticipation reveals to Da-sein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility to be itself, primarily unsupported by concern taking care of things, but to be itself in passionate anxious freedom toward death which is free of the illusions of the they...²¹

This anticipatory, anxious mode of existence is what Heidegger calls *being-unto-death*. Therefore, while the mood of fear is directed towards a particular object in the world, anxiety reveals the deathly nothingness at the heart of Dasein's world as a totality.

2 The Mood of Faith

Heidegger's contrast between fear and anxiety is the hinge of much of his ontology, revealing Dasein's world as a totality (a world defined by nothingness, temporality and death). However, a similar contrast could be made in discussions of faith, leading to a very different picture of metaphysics and its possibility (a picture defined by meaning, eternity and life). While phenomenology has oft claimed metaphysical neutrality, one could argue, as Olga Louchakova-Schwartz summarizes, that

the presuppositionlessness of phenomenology means not an unequivocal elimination of all metaphysical assumptions, but rather, bringing in assumptions which preserve the givenness of experience relevant to the context of investigations.²²

In line with such thinking, we will here immerse ourselves in Judeo-Christian descriptions of (1) divine providence, (2) happiness/joy, (3) eschatological hope, and (4) divine hiddenness, in order to elucidate a mood of faith that—similar to anxiety—points beyond any particular *beings* in the world and toward a divinity at the root of all *Being*. While these four topics are common staples in theology, they are neither exhaustive nor exhausted here, and serve only as an illustrative sampling of the type of phenomenon we are describing.²³ They also hint at how description of the every-day can ascend to the Ancient of Days; how that which is wrought among beings can be fraught with Being, even when the particular experience points to no particular *beings* at all.

2.1 Divine Providence

The famous hymn *It Is Well With My Soul* has been sung daily throughout the world since its composition by Horatio Spafford in 1873. Spafford composed the song at a particularly telling moment in his life; telling both about the man as well as the religious spirit itself. Spafford lost his infant son as well as his entire business in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. His endeavours took a further hit in the economic downturn of 1873, after which he planned to relocate to Europe, sending his wife and four daughters ahead of him. Tragically, their ship collided with another vessel, and all four of his daughters were killed. On route to meet

²¹ Ibid., 245.

²² Louchakova-Schwartz, "Phenomenology and Theological Research," 640.

²³ For further justification of limiting our discussion to these four topics, see footnote 3.

his grieving wife, Spafford passed near where his daughters had perished, and it was in this moment that he penned these lyrics:

When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

It is well, (it is well),
With my soul, (with my soul)
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control...

Despite the world around him—“whatever my lot”—his mood of faith empowered him to trust in the divine plan (“It is well... with my soul.”) This faith was not directed at any object in the world—for the world had taken everything from him—but at the plans of a God who watches over the world. Echoing the same spirit, the unitarian Edwin Hubbell Chapin writes: “Under the shadow of earthly disappointment, all unconscious to ourselves, our Divine Redeemer is walking by our side.”²⁴ Such accounts are common throughout western—and many non-western—religions, and are as ancient as the story of Job, who lost all his worldly treasures yet refused to scorn God and die. Faith is commonly defined in precisely these terms, as faith despite the external world of objects around us, and so faith that is either an illusion—which would somewhat negate the disclosure of the mood—or faith that is pointing to something beyond the world. Such a mood is not simply reducible to happiness—for one is not happy that their circumstances are horrid—nor is it truly reducible to sadness, for it is tinged with too much hope. Yet nor is it easily reducible to hope either, for like fear, hope oft points at something in the world (e.g., I hope I will get a raise, I hope my child does well in school), but faith is not always directed at something in the world (and is often described as faith precisely because it does not).²⁵ Thus, such descriptions of faith cannot always be reduced to some other, more fundamental mood, nor to something in the world, and so rouses us to Dasein’s world as a totality, possibly disclosing—despite our particular circumstances and trials—a broader providential plan and planner.

2.2 Religious Joy

Spafford’s titular lines declare “It is *well*... it is *well*... with my soul.” What is this wellness, which swells up within despite the hell that is without? This faithful wellness cannot simply be happiness, for one cannot imagine anything but tears astride Spafford’s face while he writes these lyrics. Now, CS Lewis has argued that there is, in faith, a wellness that is higher than happiness. While happiness is directed at pleasures in the world—at love, food, sex, a summer’s day—there is a joy that seems to inbreak from the outside, to miraculously disrupt earth like a bolt from heaven. Lewis writes:

I call it Joy... It is difficult to find words strong enough for the sensation which came over me; Milton’s “enormous bliss” of Eden (giving the full, ancient meaning to “enormous”) comes somewhere near it. It was a sensation, of course, of desire; but desire for what?...Before I knew what I desired, the desire itself was gone, the whole glimpse... withdrawn, the world turned commonplace again... I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and Pleasure... I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world.²⁶

²⁴ Quoted from Will, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 404.

²⁵ Of course, there are exceptions, with the American ‘Prosperity Gospel’ notable among them.

²⁶ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 22.

Lewis distinguishes sharply between earthly happiness and celestial joy, which one would not give up for “all the pleasures in the world.” While happiness and sadness are evoked by our success or failure to grasp something in the world, joy transcends the particularity of our rollercoaster circumstances.²⁷ Such description is also found to in the New Testament, when Paul and Silas are whipped and thrown in prison in Philippi, and yet sing songs to God throughout the night. (Acts 16:16-40) It is no coincidence that Paul’s later letter to the Philippians—written while he himself was in chains—is often referred to as the ‘book of joy’, despite Paul’s unfortunate circumstances on earth. Paul elsewhere writes that “The fruit of the Spirit is... joy.” (Gal.5:22). In this sense, while joy may be aroused while within the world, it does not take something in the world as its object, but the God who is at the root of the world as a totality. As Lewis writes:

If you want to get warm you must stand near the fire: if you want to be wet you must get into the water. If you want joy, power, peace, eternal life, you must get close to, or even into, the thing that has them. They are not a sort of prize which God could, if He chose, just hand out to anyone. They are a great fountain of energy and beauty spurting up at the very centre of reality. If you are close to it, the spray will wet you: if you are not, you will remain dry.²⁸

Joy is felt in closeness to the creator, disclosing that which is the root of the totality of creation (“the very centre of reality.”) Joy is the imminent stirring of the mood of faith, which erupts within us here and now for the God who is above and beyond the here and now. Lewis’ description of this phenomena has been widely recognized and adopted in mainstream Protestantism, with the distinction between joy and happiness becoming a regular trope in Christian circles. This widespread religious description of faith perfectly echoes our discussion, for happiness in the world mirrors the physical disclosure of fear, while joy points beyond particular objects and our happiness in possessing them, evoking an inescapable comparison to anxiety. Indeed, just as Heidegger declares fear to be anxiety that has “fallen to earth” and “fallen pray to the world,”²⁹ so too Lewis wonders “whether all [earthly] pleasures are not substitutes for joy?”³⁰

2.3 Eschatological Hope

Spafford’s lyrics culminate with clouds being rolled back, trumpets sounding and the Lord returning:

But Lord, ‘tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul.

And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
A song in the night, oh my soul!

This description perfectly captures the eschatological faith crucial to so much of religious experience (and which Jean-Yves Lacoste has also explored in depth, though in a different vein from what will be attempted here). While hope may be directed toward a particular object within the world, faith is often directed to the moment when this world passes away, and so the duality of hope and faith parallels the duality of fear and

²⁷ “All Joy reminds. It is never a possession, always a desire for something longer ago or further away or still ‘about to be.’” Ibid., 79.

²⁸ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 176.

²⁹ Heidegger and Stambaugh, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit*, 177.

³⁰ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 180. “Dance and game are frivolous, unimportant down here; for *down here* is not their natural place. Here, they are a moment’s rest from the life we were placed here to live. But in this world everything is upside down. That which, if it could be prolonged here, would be a truancy, is likest that which in a better country is the End of ends. Joy is the serious business of Heaven.” Ibid., 26.

anxiety. The eschaton is not merely described as a rearranging of the earth into a more pleasant pattern (though it often includes such rearranging; first becoming last, etc) but as the meeting of heaven and earth, when the higher realm that exists above creation enters in; “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6) Were it merely a rearranging of beings, then the emotion would not be faith but hope, for it takes the reconfiguration of worldly objects *as its object*. Instead, this heavenly kingdom of God is often experienced and described as Being itself, from which the lower realms merely emanate (e.g., Plotinus) or participate in (e.g., Aquinas). In this light, the mood of faith would be disclosing an eschatological vision of the totality and fullness of *Being*, rather than merely the rearranging of finite *beings* into a more pleasant pattern. In longing for what ‘ought’ to be, one is longing for the Goodness of Being itself to unite with what ‘Is’. Moral instincts could then be reclaimed as eschatological, for one’s instincts about how things ‘ought’ to be do not disclose the world as it currently ‘is’, and so must be disclosing either a future society or Being as a totality. Perhaps the former is correct, and these instincts are just prophetically disclosing a more advanced human society that is to come within finite history. Yet their disclosure is often accompanied by a *sigh* and a debilitating sense that they could never be practically manifested by the human race, even given many years and future technology. So then what are these moral instincts disclosing? Perhaps, in line with the mood of faith, the moral instinct is disclosing heaven itself, when all things are made right, and the Goodness of divine *Being* is wed to finite *beings*. This may also allow us to reclaim a long-desecrated phenomenon of human experience: denial. The denial one experiences when a loved one perishes or something goes wrong in the world around us—a denial which is often written off as a stage of grief to be ‘gotten over’—may actually be disclosing a celestial reality that is to come (i.e., the world that ‘ought’ to be). Denial would then only be negative when—like fear—it is aimed at an object in the world (e.g., pretending someone is alive when they are not), while its positive disclosive power is revealed when it points to the divine reality that is the root of all beings (e.g., admitting someone is genuinely gone from this earth, but having faith they will nonetheless be found again in the kingdom of God). When things go wrong denial would seem to be an automatic reminder that this is not all there is, as if God had infused the promise of heaven into every failing on earth. Denial would then be useless for revealing what ‘is’ in the world, but essential for reminding us what ‘ought’ to be, birthing an eschatological longing and hope that aligns with common descriptions of the mood of faith.³¹

2.4 Divine Hiddenness

As powerful as the mood of faith may be for Spafford and others, even those so empowered oft find themselves wondering about God’s absence in the world, both in traumatic events and in general. The seeming hiddenness of God has been described by atheists (e.g., Russell asking God ‘why he took such pains to hide himself?’) and even by Christ himself (“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Matt. 27:46). Indeed, much of the history of Western thought seems to have been the evacuation of God from the world; e.g., Darwin removed the divine from nature, Marx slapped the Spirit out of history, Nietzsche gutted morality of its divine parentage. It has become increasingly difficult to point at something in the world and cry “God is right there! This is the proof!” and those that do so are soon accused of ‘God of the Gaps’ thinking (or of simply being ridiculous). Yet this experience of the hiddenness of God is precisely what the mood of faith appropriates and reclaims as its own. The fact that faith encounters a phenomenon that does not necessarily correlate to another ‘something’ in the world suggests it may be disclosing that which is beyond, and at the root of, the world.³² Lewis writes:

³¹ One could say that when it is aimed at earth it is denial, but when aimed at heaven it is affirmation; affirmation of the deeper realm of Being that was, and is, and is to come.

³² Arguably, faith that was directed toward a specific object within the world would not be faith, but idolatry. This could create a threefold description of this phenomenon, wherein hope is directed properly at the world, faith is directed properly at God, and idolatry is when something in the world is approached improperly as if it were God. Idolatry is the mood of faith in its fallen state: when our hope, trust and joy is misdirected onto the physical world, perverting the original mood and twisting it into an idolatrous happiness or pleasure.

Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world... If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death...³³

It is fascinating that Lewis here links this absence from the world with death, for Spafford's hymn also echoes such an embrace of death: "No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life/Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul." Arguably, the being-unto-death of Heideggerian anxiety works just as well with various descriptions of the mood of faith. Faith, in reflecting upon the ever-lasting, beckons one also reflect upon the contrasting finitude of earthly possessions as well as the fleetingness of their own flesh (i.e., that one will themselves soon be absent and hidden from the earth). As the apostle John writes:

For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not from the Father but from the world. The world is passing away along with its desires... (1 John 2:17)

Just as God is seemingly absent from the world, faith also reveals what it would be like to be absent from the present earth, not merely disclosing but encasing that disclosure with a longing unto death. Saint Paul writes in Philippians 1:21, "to die is gain... I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far..." This is not merely a vague sense of mortality but an active and daily living-unto-death, as described by Jesus of Nazareth (whose three-year ministry was littered with constant references to his coming demise):

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Matthew 6:19)

This not only parallels anxiety's being-unto-death, but Heidegger's accompanying authenticity and freedom from the *they*. For in focusing upon the ever-lasting, one sees through the trivialities of the secular world,³⁴ seeing how the earthly rat-race the *they* runs will soon fade away, freeing us to live in a different way from the masses who are enslaved to such things. As the writer of Ecclesiastes states:

I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. ⁶I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well—the delights of a man's heart. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me... Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun... For the wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have already come when both have been forgotten. Like the fool, the wise too must die! (Ecclesiastes 2:4-16)

Saint Paul further echoes the sentiment, for while earthly status, flesh and law will pass away, grace-filled communion with Christ shall continue for evermore:

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting

³³ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 136-137.

³⁴ In the New Testament alone there are dozens of passages that, in a way quite similar to Heidegger's, suggest we are homeless upon the earth: "I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh..." (1 Peter 2:11-12) "For we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come." (Hebrews 13:14) "But our citizenship is in heaven..." (Philippians 3:20) "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" (James 4:4) "For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world." (1 John 2:16) "Do not love the world or the things in the world." (1 John 2:15-17) "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:26) "But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one." (Hebrews 11:16) "Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world."" (John 18:36)

the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him... I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death... (Philippians 3:4-11)

The things and status that define the *they* cease to define us, for ‘you cannot take it with you’ to heaven, and so the shackles of earth are suddenly loosed. One need not play the game that everyone else is playing. Thus, in disclosing the ever-lasting, the mood of faith contrasts the dying flesh of earth—which we will soon be *absent* from—freeing one from the trivialities of the secular rat-race that consume and distract the *they* from preparing for their imminent demise. The hiddenness of God points to the Being who is above, and at the root of, all beings. In focusing on this heavenly Being the mood of faith thus tears us away from earthly flesh and beckons us unto death, a death that distinguishes us from the masses who continue on as if the party shall last forever. Now, the Heideggerian might retort that this is not being-unto-death but rather the denial of death through resurrection and heaven; *fleeing in the face of death*.³⁵ However, death is essential to both accounts (the Christian account even has death as its very symbol), and it is only the final destination of death that is disagreed upon, which simply comes back to Heidegger’s vastly different ontology from what is being presented here. Further, the religious account can actually embrace and appropriate this accusation of denying death, for—as previously argued—the phenomenon of denial may actually point beyond the world of beings to Being itself, disclosing a deeper realm in which death does not have the final word.

3 Conclusion

In conclusion, juxtaposing Heideggerian anxiety with the mood of faith leads to a radically different ontology from Heidegger himself, escaping the fleeting nothingness of death and replacing it with the celestial fullness of divine Being. This juxtaposition arises out of and legitimates various aspects of Judeo-Christian description, particularly regarding divine providence, joy, eschatological hope and the hiddenness of God. This mood of faith cannot simply be reduced to happiness, sadness nor hope, but beats on as its own beast. Like anxiety, it leads to a sense of being-unto-death, freeing us from the quotidian qualms and earthly vices of the *they*. The noted failure of faith to disclose the details of objects in the world (e.g., when a little boy prays in vain for a family member to live, or when religious tradition fails to disclose scientific ‘facts’) may suggest it is disclosing that which is beyond, and at the root of, the world. Faith is, indeed, “assurance of what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1) While some might simply dismiss such faith as a naïve refuge of the unsophisticated, the phenomenologist must take seriously descriptions of this phenomenon of faith that imposes itself upon a large portion of the human race, both globally and historically. Many mortals, both now and throughout time, have felt the mood of faith bear down upon them despite their trials and circumstances, suggesting that perhaps what this mood is disclosing is not just another being in the world, but the God who is at the root of Being as a totality.

35 The Heideggerian might equally question if such faith is disclosive of heaven, or instead of Dasein’s own longing for meaning and eternal life; i.e., does the mood of faith disclose Being itself or merely the being of Dasein? However, such a Cartesian dichotomy of subject and object is precisely what the Heideggerian is supposed to have transcended, as well as transcending the subjectivization of mood (in contrast to an allegedly objective reason), both of which problematic dichotomies seem to re-arise if one begins uncritically dismissing the phenomenon of mood as disclosive only of the subject. Further, the accusation could perhaps be turned back upon the Heideggerian themselves, for as Vallicella argued, if Dasein is being-in-the-world then where does Dasein end and the world begin? If there is a problem of where Dasein ends and the divine Being of faith begins, then the underlying problem is not inherent to religion, but to Heidegger himself (and arguably to phenomenology as a whole, for, as Vallicella argues, once the noumenal thing-in-itself is abandoned for phenomenon, the line between perceiver and perceived is opened to potential blurring). See Vallicella, “The Problem of Being in the Early Heidegger,” 388–406; “Heidegger’s Reduction of Being to Truth,” 156–176; “Kant, Heidegger, and the Problem of the Thing in Itself,” 35–43. For responses to Vallicella, see Smith, “Reply to Vallicella,” 231–235. See also Zimmerman, “On Vallicella’s Critique of Heidegger,” 75–100.

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