Phenomenology of Religious Experience IV: Religious Experience and Description

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Reading in Phenomenology: Heidegger's Approach to Religious Experience in St. Paul and St. Augustine

Abstract: The importance of religious figures in Heidegger's early development has long been understood. Beginning especially in the *WS-1920*, with the *Phenomenology of Religious Life* lectures, figures such as Paul and Augustine played essential roles in his early attempt to move beyond the legacy of Cartesian thought. Despite appearing to secularize these accounts, Heidegger nonetheless implies that it is because of their religiosity, and not in spite of it, that they are of phenomenological interest. For this reason, the exact status of religious descriptions in his phenomenology has been a source of contention. My argument in this paper, is that this status is best understood by turning to Heidegger's early approach to phenomenological reading. This approach, I argue, is grounded in a performative model of language, exemplified in Destruction [*Destruktion*], and defines the limits within which he can engage with the religious character of historical texts.

If there is a core motif to Division 1 of *Being and Time,* then surely it is the attempt to reaffirm the concept of 'world' at the centre of human existence. As Heidegger implies in §13, the very purpose of the analytic in this respect, is to move away from the language of contemporary subjectivity, and to expose the "radically new... *categories of factical Dasein*".[1] This can only occur, as he says, in resisting entirely our inherited viewpoint, and beginning from (as opposed to working *to*) the indivisible concept of *being-in-the-world*. Anything less, would already be a fatal concession.[2] For phenomenology, the dominance of such inherited views is itself a philosophical question. In the case of world, Heidegger identifies this inheritance with a tradition that extends from the work of Descartes.[3] As he says in the *History of the Concept of Time,* "the most extreme counter-instance of the determination of the being of the entity as a world...is represented by Descartes".[4] The problem, as he explains, is not only his appropriation of scholastic and Greek presuppositions, but because in the "extreme way he raises the question of the being of the world, he prefigures all the problems which then emerge in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and elsewhere."[5] In 'passing over' the ontological status of worldliness, according to Heidegger, we inevitably commit ourselves to a concept of human existence reduced to objective presence. It is in Descartes as an historical nexus, accordingly, that the problematic aspects of our *own* relation to the question of being, find their expression in the context of modernity.

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1 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 36.
2 Heidegger, "Being and Time", 60.
3 The full extent of Heidegger's anti-Cartesianism in this respect is debated. For an interesting account of this question, see Shockey, "Heidegger's Descartes".
4 Heidegger, "History", 172.
5 Ibid.

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If these remarks give a certain polemical force to *Being and Time,* as reactionary to this historical movement, then they also offer a certain context in which to understand the lectures which lay its ground. Many commentators have already traced the relation between key ideas in *Being and Time,* and Heidegger's historical readings in the 1920s. Figures such as Aristotle, Augustine, Kierkegaard and Kant, play essential roles in the formation of many of its existential concepts. Insofar as these concepts are an attempt to move beyond (or in some sense *before*) this Cartesianism, the historicity of these influences plays a fundamental, if complicated role, in how Heidegger understands the task of phenomenology. This seems especially problematic in the case of religious figures. In the early 1920s, among the first sources Heidegger investigates are Paul and Augustine. The influence of both figures on *Being and Time* is well documented. Shortly after the above remark in *History of the Concept of Time,* Heidegger subverts this Cartesianism by appealing to an Augustinian notion of care [*Sorge*]. How this use of Augustine, or Paul, interacts with the religiosity of their accounts is unclear. More generally, how does Heidegger think philosophy can deal with expressions of ostensibly religious experience? My argument in this paper, is that this question is answered by returning to Heidegger's account of language in the early Freiburg years, the period of his *Religious Life* lectures. This account, I suggest, turns on a notion of performativity that he takes from Kierkegaard, and which circumscribes the limitations of phenomenological reading in general.

In section 1, I retrace the contours of Heidegger's reading of Paul and Augustine through his *Religious Life* lectures, beginning in the winter of 1920. Following a number of commentators, I lay out one key sense in which these figures serve his project of deconstructing Cartesianism. The common motif in both accounts, I argue, is a thematization of selfhood which subverts content-oriented readings of Christian faith. Especially in Augustine, this thematization furnishes Heidegger with a model of self-possession that becomes a paradigm for existential analysis. Accordingly, it is in these lectures, that Heidegger finds a model for the very tendency that comes to expression in the figure of Descartes. In section 2, I take up Ryan Coyne's account of *de-theologization* in Heidegger. While I agree with Coyne that Heidegger's approach to religious concepts is not strictly appropriative, I suggest the reason for this is instead grounded in his account of language. Insofar as phenomenological reading for Heidegger is essentially performative, this means that the insights he finds in Christianity are grounded in reflexive intuition. The reason that he turns to Paul and Augustine, I suggest, are that they are *methodologically* sympathetic to phenomenology, at least as he understands that term in the early 1920s. For this reason, it is not the comportment of religious figures that can be called into question; but the comportment implied by the idea of phenomenological reading. A failure to take seriously this performativity, I suggest, was a key part in Heidegger's critique of the scholarly literature on his own work.

1 The Phenomenology of Religious Life

Heidegger's first sustained treatments of the history of philosophy begin in the winter semester of 1920, with the *Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion.*[6] The previous three semesters, beginning with the *KNS-1919,* were dedicated to largely methodological themes, including the outlines of hermeneutic phenomenology and its relation to the natural sciences. Although these themes never subside, the *Religious Life* lectures (especially *WS-1920* and *SS-1921*), show a marked shift toward Heidegger's reading of such questions in explicitly historical terms. As his letter to Karl Löwith from 1920 makes clear, Heidegger already saw the purpose of these lectures as a response to Cartesian philosophy.[7] In this respect the purpose of his readings, as he repeatedly states, are neither theological nor exegetical. Both of these approaches are guided by an object-conception of the historical that phenomenology disavows itself of. It is exactly along

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6 In this paper, I use the convention of abbreviating course titles by semester and year. This includes: KNS-1919, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*; WS-1919, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*; SS-1920, *Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression*; WS-1920, SS-1921, *Phenomenology of Religious Life*; WS-1921, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*; WS-1923, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*; WS-1925, *Logic: The Question of Truth*; SS-1925, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*; WS-1929, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics.*
7 Kisiel, "Genesis", 554.

such historical lines that he separates his approach in both lectures from that of Troeltsch, Harnack and Dilthey. As he puts it in 1920,

> If today's philosophy of history were our point of departure, and if we let that philosophy stipulate the problems, we would never escape this object-conception of the historical.[8]

The task of hermeneutics, by contrast, is "to gain a real and original relationship to history, which is to be explicated from out of our own historical situation and facticity […] Only thus can the possibility of a philosophy of religion be begun."[9] Heidegger's primary focus in the *WS-1920*, is Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, although he touches on *Galatians, 2 Thessalonians* and *1 Corinthians.* In particular, these lectures focus on Paul's remarks concerning the timeline of the παρουσία, or the second coming. In *1 Thessalonians 5,* Paul famously writes,

> Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "peace and safety", destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.[10]

According to Heidegger, what is philosophically decisive in this letter is not the dogmatic content of Paul's response, but rather, its experiential context. Paul does not answer the Thessalonians in the objective-sense of 'when', but rather problematizes the authentic 'how' of Christian living. In this sense, at least, what Paul offers is a certain model of anti-representationalism, one which subverts questions of content for self-thematization. As Heidegger says,

> Paul does not answer the question in worldly reasoning. He maintains a total distance from a cognitive treatment, but does not also, in that, claim that it is unknowable. [For Paul] what is decisive is how I comport myself to it in actual life. From *that* results the meaning of the "when?", time and the moment.[11]

The account in *1 Thessalonians* does not avoid the 'when' of the παρουσία. As Heidegger says, its meaning unravels into a reflexive injunction to live in readiness. If that injunction is not heard, then it's because the *futurity* of the παρουσία has been understood on the model of an innerworldly thing, i.e., its coming is a matter of indifference to our mode of encountering it. For Paul, however, eschatology calls for a radical turning away from the worldly, toward an anticipatory mode of living. That Christian life calls for this radicalisation, according to Heidegger, shows the very precariousness that belongs to its essence. Translating Paul's remark in *1 Corinthians 7,* that those who mourn should live "as if they do not", Heidegger writes,

> One is tempted to translate the ὡς μὴ by "as if", but that will not work. "As if" expresses an objective connection and suggests the view that the Christian should eliminate these relations to the surrounding world. This ὡς means, positively, a new sense is added. The μὴ concerns the complex of enactment of the Christian life.[12]

In contrast to those in *1 Thessalonians* who speak of "peace and safety", authentic Christianity is constituted by the ever-increasing anguish of its unavoidable, but problematic relation to the world. For Paul, the hallmark of the former's naivete in this respect, is misunderstanding the true meaning of the question of the "when". Properly understood, the παρουσία is not within the world (a question of content) but determines the very sense in which the world must be encountered in authentic Christian living (a question of enactment). Methodologically speaking, this motif of subverting content for enactment, is a dominant one in Heidegger's early work. It at least partly characterises his work on formal indication in the

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8 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 25
9 Ibid., 89.
10 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-3, NIV
11 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 69-70
12 Ibid., 86

very same semester.[13] More generally, however, in Paul's antagonism to content-oriented readings, it is hard not to hear a template for Heidegger's later critique of logo-centrism. In reflections from both the *Letter on Humanism* in 1946 and his preface for Richardson's 1963 text, Heidegger complains that his reader failed to understand the performative burden of his own writing.[14] A further example of this legacy, I suggest, can be seen in the *Contributions to Philosophy* between 1936-38. Reflecting on the interrogative style of philosophy which characterises his early work, Heidegger now speaks of a kind of preparatory readiness. Echoing *1 Thessalonians 5* in §125, a section titled *Beyng and time,* he writes,

> "Time" should become experienceable as the "ecstatic" playing field of the truth of beyng. Trans-position into the cleared region is supposed to ground the clearing itself as the open realm in which beyng gathers itself into its essence. Unlike something objectively present, such an essence cannot be proved; its essential occurrence must be expected to arrive like a jolt.[15]

Here, Heidegger seems takes on the figure of Paul himself. His injunction to philosophy is not to address the content of the question (being), but to comport ourselves to our own historical readiness. As he puts it, "in place of systematics and deduction , there now stands historical preparedness for the truth of beyng".[16] *Being and Time* on this view, and his hermeneutics of the 1920s, therefore "does not present an "ideal" or a "program" - Instead, it is the self-preparing beginning of the essential occurrence of beyng itself", a beginning whose material specifics are now contingent.[17] Heidegger's Pauline injunction in the *Contributions,* however, is to protect the historical viewpoint gained in that text, as a preparatory measure for the truth which arrives "like a jolt". The human subject "must be transformed into the builder and steward of that site."[18]

In Paul's account, the inauthentic Christian's error was to dwell on "what life brings them, [to] occupy themselves with whatever tasks of life."[19] They inauthentically stay at the level of the "*objective* determination" (the "when", the "what"), precisely because "they remain stuck in the worldly".[20] As Heidegger says, they find destruction in the παρουσία, because this mode of worldly living dispossesses them of their own self. As he writes,

> They cannot save themselves, because they do not have themselves, because they have forgotten their own self, because they do not have themselves in the clarity of authentic knowledge.[21]

This embryonic motif of self-possession in Paul, is arguably the central theme of the *Religious Life* lectures. As the model for *Being and Time,* however, it is Augustine, in *SS-1921,* who most prefigures the analytic of Dasein. In the language of his letter to Löwith, it is Augustine that allows Heidegger to "see [the cogito] *backwards*", to uproot its 'epistemological perversity'.[22] Augustine famously prefigures Descartes in precisely this argument. Concerning his own existence in book 11 of *On the City of God,* he writes,

> 'Suppose you are mistaken?' I reply, 'If I am mistaken, I exist'. A non-existent being cannot be mistaken; therefore I must exist, If I am mistaken.[23]

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13 cf. his later descriptions of formal indication in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics.* There he writes, "The meaning-content of these concepts does not directly intend or express what they refer to, but only gives an indication, a pointer to the fact that anyone who seeks to understand is called upon by this conceptual context to undertake a transformation of themselves into their Dasein." Heidegger, "Metaphysics", 297.
14 As he says in the Richardson preface, "The lesson of long experience leads me to surmise that such indications will not be taken as directions for the road of independent reflection on the matter pointed out which each must travel for himself. [Instead they] will gain notice as though they were an opinion I had expressed and will be propagated as such." Richardson, "Phenomenology to Thought", viii. See also, Heidegger, "Pathmarks", 271 and Richardson, "Phenomenology to Thought", xviii.
15 Heidegger, "Contributions", 190-191
16 Ibid., 191.
17 Ibid. As he says, "All "contents", "opinions", and "itineraries" within the particulars of the first attempt (*Being and Time*) are contingent and can disappear".
18 Ibid.
19 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 73-74.
20 Ibid., 74
21 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 72
22 Kisiel, "Genesis", 554.
23 Augustine, "City", 460

Descartes himself became aware of this passage only after the publication of the *Discourse on Method* in 1637. In his correspondence with Andreas Colvius (dated November 14th, 1640), he even acknowledges the fundamental difference between his position and that of Augustine. He writes,

> Today I have been to read [Augustine] at the library of this city, and I do indeed find that he makes use of [the *cogito*] to prove the certainty of our being... On the other hand, I use it to make it known that this *I* who is thinking is an *immaterial substance* and has nothing in it that is corporeal. These are two very different things.[24]

Somewhat ironically from a Heideggerian perspective, he adds that "[he is] still glad to have come together with Saint Augustine, if only to shut the mouths of the little minds who have tried to quibble with that principle".[25] As Descartes himself acknowledges, this *immaterial substance* is hardly a subtle difference. Insofar as it signals a particular ontological move, it sums up why Heidegger might see Augustine as an antidote to Cartesianism itself. His first approach to the *Confessions* in *SS-1921* is not obviously concerned with the self. Following the motif of the Paul lectures a year earlier, *Augustine and Neo-Platonism* traces two relational senses of interrogation in Augustine. This basic schema is laid out early in the lectures. In his first overview of the contents of Book 10, Heidegger writes,

> It is divided into forty-three small chapters; the serial order breaks down later and reunifies itself in a very different "How" – c.f. the (objectively) long excursus on *memoria* has a fundamental function![26]

Initially problematizing the idea of confession itself, the guiding question of Book 10 for Augustine is "what is it that I love, when I love [God]?".[27] As he says, "I asked the earth and it answered: "I am not He"; and all things that are in the earth made the same confession".[28] Tracing this through his account of *memoria,* the key moment for Heidegger occurs when Augustine shifts away from this search, and thematizes searching itself. Against more theoretical views that "makes [God], in cheap blasphemies, into an object of essential insights", the basic question for Augustine becomes the appropriate 'how' of experiencing God.[29] As he says in chapter xx, "*How* then Do I seek You, O Lord?...I shall seek You, that my soul may live."[30] Just as with Paul, the material question of '*what*' God is, shifts into the enactmental question of "authentic hearing, [the] *How* of the questioning posture, of the wanting-to-hear."[31] In this Pauline sense, the question unravels into a thematization of one's self. As Heidegger says,

> The question '*where* I find God' has turned into a discussion of the conditions of experiencing God, and that comes to a head in the problem of *what I am myself* – such that, in the end, the same question still stands, but in a different form of enactment.[32]

In relation to Augustine's account of temptation, or *tentatio,* Heidegger argues against reading the *Confessions* as merely "psychological analyses" or as 'pedantic' moralising.[33] This is because *tentatio*, for Augustine, has enactmental significance. Much as with those in *1 Thessalonians* who do "not *have* [themselves]", temptation acts as a countermovement to the authentic self-possession demanded by the love and pure fear of God. In giving ourselves over to 'lust of the flesh' [*concupiscentia carnis*], 'desire of the eye' [*concupiscentia oculorum*], or especially for Heidegger, 'secular ambition' [*ambitio saeculi*], authentic selfhood is disavowed and becomes, in Augustine's terms, dispersed [*defluxio*] in the worldly.

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24 Descartes, "Philosophical Essays", 90-91

25 Ibid., 91.

26 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 128.

27 Augustine, "Confessions", 170.

28 Ibid.

29 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 150.

30 Augustine, "Confessions", 183.

31 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 150.

32 Ibid., 150. Second italics mine.

33 Ibid., 155.

The struggle of Christian living, is to perpetually strive for continence in the face of this movement. As he says,

> For "*in multa defluximus*" [we are scatted into the many], we are dissolving into the manifold and are absorbed in the dispersion. You [God] demand countermovement against the dispersion, against the falling apart of life.[34]

For Augustine, *continentia*, as self-possession, is never gained once and for all. But as with Paul, striving for it constitutes the pathos of Christian life. As he put it, "is not man's life upon earth trial without intermission?".[35] In this account of factical life concern, of the movement between continence and dispersion, Heidegger finds a key motif for the existential analysis of *Being and Time*. In spite of their secularisation, and their movement through his later historical readings, the concepts of falling, care, the they and authenticity have clear precedents in this Augustinian account.[36] As Dahlstrom points out, it moreover gives Heidegger a certain model of authentic resoluteness, one grounded in *continentia*.[37] As Heidegger qualifies the stance of Augustine's Christian,

> In this decisive hoping, the genuine effort at *continentia* is alive, an effort which does not reach its end. (Not "abstinence" which loses precisely the positive sense, but "containment", pulling back from *defluxio*, standing against it full of mistrust.)[38]

Returning to Cartesianism, what Augustine offers Heidegger is in this sense twofold: firstly, like Paul, he offers an account of selfhood which historically precedes the ontological commitments of modernity; but secondly, and more importantly, he gives Heidegger a reflexive account of why Dasein has tended toward understanding itself in terms of inner-worldly things, i.e., as objective presence. As he says in *Being and Time,* it is according to its very nature that "Dasein tends to understand its own being [*Sein*] in terms of *the* being [*Seienden*] to which it is essentially, continually, and most closely related – the "world"."[39] Because the very fact of existence tends towards worldly dispersion, the possibility of self-possession demands a counter-movement. This tendency is precisely what has characterised the tradition of Descartes, and it is the tendency that division 1 of *Being and Time* most seeks to remedy. In this sense, Augustine's account of facticity goes beyond offering Heidegger a catalogue of existential concepts; it gives him a methodological paradigm for understanding why those concepts are concealed by the essence of factical life itself.

The fundamental distinction here between Heidegger and Augustine, as Ryan Coyne suggests, is clearly their understanding of what constitutes redemption.[40] Whereas for Augustine, grace alone seems to remedy the dispersion of factical life, Heidegger's clear belief in the 1920s is that philosophy is the counter-ruinant force which draw us back to ourselves. Existential analysis, as Dahlstrom puts it, is in this sense confessional.[41] Even if this is the case, however, Heidegger does methodologically accept one key motif of Christian living: just as with Paul and Augustine, the task of self-possession can never reach its end. If phenomenology takes on a redemptive force, that is, then it can only define itself as an ever-renewed rejection of *defluxio*, one which cannot come to rest without reaffirming what it seeks to remedy. As he says in the scientific language of the *WS-1919*,

> Again, and again, the object-region of scientific philosophy must be sought anew; the entrances must always be newly opened. That does not lie in an accidental, historical, perhaps incomplete condition of philosophy, *but rather in it itself* – and this for many reasons, which likewise determine the complexity of the philosophical method.[42]

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34 Ibid., 151-152.
35 Augustine, "Confessions", 189.
36 In addition to these obvious shifts in context, a number of scholars have highlighted the key respects in which Heidegger diverges from Augustine here. In particular, see Coyne, "Heidegger's Confessions"; Dahlstrom, "Temptation"; and Engelland, "Augustinian Elements".
37 Dahlstrom, "Temptation", 258.
38 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 152.
39 Heidegger, "Being and Time", 15-16. As he adds in a footnote to this remark, this means "what is objectively present".
40 Coyne, "Heidegger's Confessions", 81.
41 Dahlstrom, "Temptation", 258.
42 Heidegger, "Basic Problems", 23.

2 Language and Performativity

If religious figures take on such a prominent role for the early Heidegger, then the natural question is how their religiosity interferes with the use he makes of them. How are we to understand Heidegger's apparent sense of secularisation? In his excellent study of this relation to Paul and Augustine, *Heidegger's Confessions*, Ryan Coyne argues that this extensive use of religious concepts should not be understood on the model of 'appropriation'. Using an analogy with Freud's account of dream formation, Coyne argues that Heidegger's use of Augustinian 'care', is analogous to the use made of the 'day's residues' [*die Tagesreste*] by the unconscious in the formation of dreams.[43] These concepts, in other words, are not taken for their Augustinian meaning, *per se,* but for their suitability in subverting the metaphysical tradition whose horizon they partly constitute. This is the sense of Heidegger's *de-theologization* of Augustine. As he says,

> For Heidegger, then, Augustinian anthropology takes on the force generated by the critique of representational thinking. It is imbued with the power of the "No!" that Heidegger directs at substantialist accounts of the self from Aristotle forward, above all at Descartes. In return, this anthropology furnishes a quarry in which new existential categories may safely be extracted, as it represents a point of contact between the present and the tradition in which it stands.[44]

In this sense, Heidegger's concept of 'care', cannot be said to be 'taken' from Augustine, because its real meaning lies in the polemical reasons for which he situates an account of facticity within it. This interpretation, it seems to me, is convincing. Certainly in the case of Descartes, Heidegger's material choice of history is guided by the polemical sense of his philosophical reading of it. However, one small aspect overlooked by this account, I suggest, is how language functions for Heidegger in his early phenomenology. As part of his early resistance to traditional philosophy, Heidegger emphasises a performative model of philosophical language.[45] This model, however, not only applies to his own propositions, through formal indication [*formale Anzeige*], but grounds his understanding of historical reading, through destruction [*Destruktion*]. It is by looking to this performativity, I suggest, that the sense of his 'secularization' is best understood.

In his 1986 essay, *On the Beginning of Thought,* Hans-Georg Gadamer claimed that Heidegger's account of formal indication stemmed from his reading of *indirect communication* in Kierkegaard.[46] As Poul Lübcke has argued, indirect communication did not arise from Kierkegaard's view that there were inexpressible statements, necessarily, but was used when "we intend to produce a very specific perlocutionary act, namely, a decision".[47] What this model of language rests on, accordingly, is the necessity of performance. For Anti-Climacus in *Training in Christianity,* indirect communication takes the form of a contradiction. He writes,

> Indirect communication can be produced by the art of reduplicating the communication. This art consists in reducing oneself, the communicator, to nobody, something purely objective, and then incessantly composing qualitative opposites into unity. This is what some of the pseudonyms are accustomed to call "double reflection". An example of such indirect communication is, so to compose jest and earnest that the composition is a dialectical knot – and with this to be nobody. If anyone is to profit by this sort of communication, he must himself undo the knot for himself.[48]

To purposefully use contradiction, "to compose jest and earnest" together, is to present the reader with a "dialectical knot". As no meaning can be decided upon, the reader has no choice but to "undo the knot for himself". As Lübcke says, "he must *decide* for himself whether he wants to accept the one or the other

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43 Coyne, "Heidegger's Confessions", 113.

44 Ibid., 114.

45 For the debate on formal indication and its relation to performativity, see: Burch, "Existential Sources"; Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's method"; McManus, "The Provocation"; and for my own view, O'Rourke, "Heidegger on Expression".

46 Gadamer, "Hermeneutics", 241.

47 Lübcke, "Indirect Communication", 38.

48 Kierkegaard, "Training", 132-133.

side of the contradiction. It is the decision of the listener, which is the main thing".[49] In this way, the pseudonymous authorship of Kierkegaard's work can be understood as an indirect communication to elicit a decision in the reader. As Lübcke says, "we can read them all as though they were pressing the question: is it better to be a Christian or to live aesthetically?".[50] Crucially, what Anti-Climacus subverts is the fear that language will disburden the reader from their responsibility to decide. In phenomenological terms, it will disburden them from something like primary intuition. If Gadamer is correct, then this is exactly the sense in which Heidegger finds a precedent for formal indication. As he repeatedly states in the early Freiburg years, all hermeneutics can do is bring about phenomenological seeing. As he puts it in 1920, "philosophizing – as I understand its task – is only entitled to draw attention[...] If this annoys you and you become irritated about the presented nonsense, enough has been already achieved."[51] Or as he says in *WS-1919*, a year before the Paul lectures,

A continual renewal and revitalization [*Verlebendigung*] of seeing is necessary. In the progress of the consideration, the phenomenon must always be kept vital. – This demand seems trivial, but it is often violated by philosophy today. One cannot create "fundamental principles" with "devised thoughts." The objects of philosophy must be seen in their self-givenness. There are no proofs in phenomenology, since it is indeed constantly describing.[52]

For Heidegger, the death of hermeneutics would be its calcification into fixed concepts which draw us away from immediate experience. As he puts it in *On the Question of Being* in 1955, it's the fear that our insights "become fixed in propositional statements in which thinking dies out."[53] This is true, however, not only because of the conceptual baggage of those terms, but because of the objectifying tendency of any language in general. Like Kierkegaard, Heidegger's solution at the time of the *Religion Lectures*, turns on a notion of performativity. This is exactly what formal indication was meant to achieve. This mode of communication works in a Pauline sense, because it subverts questions of content for those of enactment. Its injunction to the reader, is to direct themselves toward the phenomenon. As he says in *WS-1921,*

The definitory content [of a philosophical concept] is such that it refers to the "how" of a genuine encounter.[54]

For these same reasons of objectification, however, performativity is also key to Heidegger's understanding of phenomenological reading, i.e., destruction. This is why he separates his account of destruction in the *Religious Life* lectures from that of Troeltsch, Dilthey and Harnack by appealing to the concept of historical enactment.[55] The challenge in destructively understanding Paul, for example, is to avoid reducing his account to something in the objective-historical sense, a temptation which is exacerbated by the objectifying qualities of Paul's language. As Heidegger says, it is the "difficulty of putting-oneself-into-another's-place, which cannot be supplanted by fantasizing-oneself-into or "vicarious understanding"; what is required is authentic enactment."[56]An obvious precondition to this, is a certain reorientation in how phenomenology understands the *function* of historical language. Whereas the object-historical approaches of Dilthey, Harnack and Troeltsch occlude the phenomenon they aim at, by virtue of their theoretical standpoint, destruction aims at the *pre*-theoretical, by viewing historical language only as the means to its own experiential grounding.[57] For Heidegger, at least in the early Freiburg lectures, this is the essence of hermeneutics. As he puts it in 1922,

[Phenomenology] sees itself directed to the task of loosening up the reigning state of traditional interpretation today with respect to its hidden motives and its unexpressed tendencies and modes of interpreting so that it can, *by way of a*

49 Lübcke, "Indirect Communication", 33.
50 Ibid., 36.
51 Heidegger, "Intuition and Expression", 145.
52 Heidegger, "Basic Problems", 165.
53 Heidegger, "Pathmarks", 310. cf., Heidegger, "Metaphysics", 298.
54 Heidegger, "Aristotle", 27.
55 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 125.
56 Ibid., 70.
57 See Heidegger, "Religious Life", 59. cf. his remarks in the previous semester, Heidegger, "Intuition and Expression", 25.

deconstructive regress, penetrate into the original motivational sources of these explications. Hermeneutics carries out its tasks only on the path of destruction.[58]

If Heidegger's concept of reading, then, is also guided by a notion of performativity, then the obvious question becomes: why was he drawn to figures such as Paul and Augustine, when the religious dimension of these accounts presents a performative challenge? I argue that there are at least three solutions to this question. The first of these, and the most obvious, is that these sources explicitly influence the metaphysical tradition that Heidegger is deconstructing. As he describes it in his lectures on Augustine in *SS-1921*,

> Neo-Platonism and Augustine will not become an arbitrary case, but in the study their historicity [*Historizität*] is precisely to be raised into its own, *as something in whose peculiar dimension of effect* [*Wirkungsdimension*] *we are standing today*. History hits us, and we are history itself; and precisely in our not seeing this today...[and] in continuing to think and construct on this opinion culture and philosophies and systems, history gives us, every hour, the heaviest blow.[59]

It is because Augustinianism constitutes the horizon of our *own* thinking, that it becomes a relevant object of destructive reading. In this sense, any engagement with an historical account such as Augustine, is in its proper sense, a reflexive engagement with our own historical facticity. As he says in *WS-1923*,

> [Destruction] has a positive character by virtue of directing itself at the present within which the destruction is carried out, by virtue of living in the very research that accomplishes the destruction; living in it in such a way that the critique of the historical is nothing other than the critique of the present.[60]

This is why Heidegger insists that destruction is not an add-on to the phenomenological method, as its approach to history for example, but is "co-enacted in every phenomenological basic posture".[61] On this view, early Christian sources are important targets for destruction, because they especially determine certain aspects of our own horizon. A more esoteric target, conversely, would lack a deconstructive force against the metaphysical tradition Heidegger is targeting. Of course, this doesn't mean that Heidegger should attribute anything positive to Augustine himself. Many historical trends influence modernity, and yet the positive aspect of their destruction in the 1920s is staked on their rejection. This leads, I think, to a second reason that he is interested in early Christianity. As Coyne correctly points out, Heidegger believes that certain domains of experience are first historically disclosed in early Christianity. In *WS-1919*, the *Basic Problems of Phenomenology,* he explicitly states that the early church is an historical paradigm in this respect.[62] Later, in the *WS-1920*, it is the dominance of eschatology in the early church, that creates the experiential context for Paul's remarks on the παρουσία.

On the face of it, it is difficult to separate Heidegger's remarks here from the objective-historical approach he critiques in figures such as Troeltsch. It seems that he is "viewing the object [e.g., Paul] as placed in a historical complex of order objectively posited".[63] In addressing this material question, however, he does so by appealing to an experiential context which is recoverable in destruction. To destructively read Paul, that is, is to see for oneself a certain thematization of temporality, from out of which the epistles conceptually define authentic Christian life; in Augustine, what we find is a thematization of selfhood which unsettles our own notion of subjectivity. Temporality and selfhood, in other words, are not the historical backdrop for their religiosity, but an experiential theme in which this religiosity becomes manifest. For this reason, it is *because* of their faith that Paul and Augustine are of interest to Heidegger, even if the contents of Christian belief (such as the risen Christ) are not.

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58 Heidegger, "Supplements", 124.
59 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 124. Italics mine.
60 Heidegger, "Introduction", 88.
61 As he puts it, "The phenomenological destruction is, by way of contrast, not only a merely secondary and convenient, more easily manageable methodological means for more limited purposes, but is one of the fundamental elements of the phenomenological posture, that is, it belongs to it as such and is to be co-enacted in every phenomenological basic posture". Heidegger, "Intuition and Expression", 26.
62 Heidegger, "Basic Problems", 47.
63 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 120.

This latter facts leads I think into the most significant reason for which Heidegger is drawn to Paul and Augustine. Because even if early Christianity thematizes self-possession, and these sources are historically significant, attributing a phenomenological insight either to Augustine or Paul does not necessarily follow. In this respect, the positive aspect of Heidegger's readings in the 1920s appears to vary. In his first engagement with Kant in *WS-1925*, for example, he takes up his reading on the basis that Kant thematizes time in the context of truth. As he says, "we come to see that Kant is the only philosopher who even suspected that the understanding of being and its characteristics is connected with time."[64] And while Kant was the first to describe the relation between time and cognition, Heidegger is clear that the specific sense in which he understands temporality is derivative. Just as he remarked in the *Religious Life* lectures, it obscures the real sense of the problem. As he says,

> But [Kant's] very conception of time blocked him from achieving a fundamental understanding of the problem- that is, blocked him from asking the question at all. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant did not attain the appropriate basis for synthesizing the schematism of the concepts of the understanding (where time is really the fundamental concept) with the basic function of consciousness, transcendental apperception.[65]

Heidegger grounds this Kantian tension squarely in his derivative account of time. And yet Kant's thematization of that concept, is Heidegger's justification for moving to him in a course that begins with Aristotelian logic. My point here is not to question the substantial aspect of Heidegger's reading of Kant. After all, he critiques Augustine for taking on a Neo-Platonic axiology. The point, however, is that neither historical influence nor thematization, fully accounts for the positive insight Heidegger ascribes to his choice of historical source. In every case, he is drawn to an historical impulse whose thread he is attempting to follow. The question is, what is that impulse in the *Religious Life* lectures? The clearest answer to this question, I suggest, is found in how Heidegger discusses the *relational* quality of Paul and Augustine. As he repeatedly points out,

> It is noticeable *how little* Paul alleges *theoretically* or *dogmatically*; even in the letter to the Romans. The situation is not of the sort of theoretical proof.[66]

And later in the same text,

> In Pauline gospel, the proper *object of the proclamation is already Jesus himself as Messiah*...Here the essential teachings of Paul are found, but they are and remain entwined with the How, with life; they are not concerned with a specifically theoretical teaching.[67]

This relational sense is also the key motif in what he finds in both accounts: firstly, in Paul's shift from the '*when*' of the παρουσία, to the '*how*' of Christian life; and secondly, in Augustine's movement from the question of '*what*' God is, to the '*how*' of self-comportment. It is impossible to separate these remarks from Heidegger's work on theoretical comportment in the same period, specifically in its countermovement to phenomenology. While Aristotelian (and Augustinian) concepts define *Being and Time,* that terminology has a somewhat awkward relation to his language of the 'theoretical' during the 1920s. As Denis McManus points out, this latter terminology seems to arise out of Heidegger's sympathy with an anti-theological tradition exemplified in figures such as Paul.[68] His complex relation to Luther in these years, moreover, is largely mediated by his belief that he was aware of the same problem.[69] In contrast to those anti-theological

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64 Heidegger, "Logic", 163.

65 Ibid., 163.

66 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 79.

67 Ibid., 83. See also Heidegger's remarks in *WS-1919* on the relational quality of Augustine's dictum, *inquietum cor nostrum*. Heidegger, "Basic Problems", 48.

68 McManus, "Heidegger", 145.

69 For an account of this in relation to Luther's commentary on Romans 1:20, see Stanley, "Heidegger on Luther".

figures, what the *theological* signifies for Heidegger is a dependence on theoretical comportment. As he puts it in the *Philosophical Foundations of Medieval Mysticism* in 1918,

> Sharply divorce the problem of theology and that of religiosity. In theology one must take care to note its constant dependency on philosophy and on the situation of the respective theoretical consciousness in general. Theology has heretofore found no original theoretical basic posture that corresponds to the originality of its object.[70]

This is why phenomenology, in Heidegger's view, is the appropriate basis for approaching religiosity. As he describes it in the *KNS-1919*, correctly understood, phenomenology is the science of the pre-theoretical.[71] Taken in that relational context, the real significance of Paul and Augustine is clear. Their account, as *anti*-theological, comes to expression without making "the all-determining step *into the theoretical*", that step which, according to Heidegger in 1920, defines the stance of the natural sciences.[72] In this sense, Heidegger is drawn to them not because of their conceptual content, *per se,* but because they methodologically resonate with his earliest vision of phenomenology. In the *History of the Concept of Time,* Heidegger summarizes Descartes' failure to understand 'world', precisely in committing to this fatal step. As he says,

> It is thus in Descartes that we see most clearly and simply that a whole chain of presuppositions deviates from the true phenomenon of the world...[it] is also already evident that the being of the world...cannot even be obtained by a theoretical reconstruction which goes from the *res extensa* back to the sensory thing and then to the value-laden thing, but that by doing so the specific theoretical objectification is retained and the analysis is led astray even further. The world would remain *deprived of its worldhood*...[since we] would first have to disregard every specifically theoretical objectification.[73]

The crucial question for fundamental ontology, as he concludes in that text, is "how can something be said about the structure of worldhood so that we first of all disregard all theory and particularly this extreme objectification?".[74] What this task presupposes is a *pre*-theoretical account of human existence, exactly the aim of phenomenology, and at least partially what he sees in Paul and Augustine. In short, what Heidegger finds in the *Religious Life* lectures, are not only historical sources which are anti-Cartesian, but sources which are sympathetic with the methodological constraints implied by the project of phenomenology.

Returning to the question of de-theologization, I suggest that this is the historical impulse that Heidegger sees as a remedy to his Cartesian inheritance. It is because Paul and Augustine maintain that comportment which characterizes phenomenology, that their accounts offer a way into the phenomenality of time and selfhood. For this reason, the meaning of Augustine's anthropology in Heidegger's work, goes beyond its merely polemical force as a rejection of substantialist accounts. In fact, he has methodological reasons to genuinely ascribe its novelty to Augustine of Hippo. In spite of this, Coyne I think is correct in saying that Heidegger's notion of care is not a result of 'appropriation'. Because the very act of reading the *Confessions* implies performativity, whatever it meaningfully discloses must in the end be reflexively *seen*. Heidegger describes 'care' not because Augustine argues for it, but because enactmentally understanding him discloses 'care' as his *own* existential constitution. Accordingly, the existential concept of *Sorge* that appears in *Being and Time,* has its basis not in the *Confessions,* but in that "revitalization of seeing" which grounds phenomenology as pre-theoretical science, i.e., in intuition.[75] What this means for the religiosity of Christian texts is crucial. Because if destruction is ultimately reflexive, then it is not the faith of Paul or Augustine that can be called into question, but the comportment of their enactmental reader, i.e., of philosophy. In this limited sense, Heidegger's reading of the *Confessions* does not secularize that text. Rather, it is experienced from within a secular comportment that for Heidegger, at least, defines the essence

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70 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 235-236.

71 Heidegger, "Definition".

72 Ibid., 68

73 Heidegger, "History", 184.

74 Ibid., 185.

75 Heidegger, "Basic Problems", 165.

of philosophy itself. Whether or not *this* needs to be case, is a much more difficult question to answer. As he puts it in the *WS-1921*,

> My comportment in philosophizing is not religious even if as a philosopher I can also be a religious person. "The art resides precisely in that": to philosophize and, in so doing, to be genuinely religious; i.e., to take up factically one's worldly, historiological-historical task in philosophy, in action and in a concrete word of action, though not in religious ideology and fantasy...Philosophy, in its radical, self-posing questionability, must be *a-theistic* as a matter of principle.[76]

3 Concluding Remarks

The performative challenge implied by religious texts seems to show a certain limit to phenomenological understanding. After all, neither Paul nor Augustine would accept a reading of their accounts which suspends the veracity of Christian belief. If there is a central motif to the *Religious Life* lectures, however, then it is an attempt to move beyond the concept of faith as an epistemic claim, and toward the experiential context of the believing life itself. Something like this non-epistemic view of religious faith was perhaps best expressed by Wittgenstein. As he says in *Culture and Value* in 1937,

> Historical proof (the historical proof-game) is irrelevant to belief. This message (the Gospels) is seized on by men believingly (i.e. lovingly). *That* is the certainty characterising this particular acceptance-as-true, not something else.[77]

In his approach to historical reading, Heidegger's work shifts away from the content-questions of this 'message', in thematising the enactmental question of the believing life. The stance demanded by this mode of reading is atheistic, according to Heidegger, because this is the very comportment that defines existential analysis. In this sense, at least, de-theologization is not distinct from any other mode of destructive reading. The purpose of turning to Paul and Augustine, after all, is not to present a "comprehensive image of [their] "life and work"", as for example, this paper is aiming to do.[78] As his letter to Löwith makes clear, the *Religious Life* lectures have a clear purpose in the project that leads to *Being and Time*. His critique of the scholarly literature in this respect, was its failure to understand the performative burden implied by that same project. If we are to take Heidegger seriously here, it would mean to understand his account not as taking up historical or religious arguments, but as an extension of his phenomenological seeing and description, an extension which signals a task to see for ourselves. To ignore this performativity, conversely, to treat his accounts as "though they were an opinion [he] had expressed", would be to understand Heidegger on the model of the object-historical he disregards.[79] To do this would be to leave phenomenology behind. As he warns his listeners who tire of formal indication in *WS-1920* (echoing his later remarks to Richardson), he gives his reading of religious life "under the presupposition that [we] will misunderstand the entire study from beginning to end".[80]

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76 Heidegger, "Aristotle", 148.
77 Wittgenstein, "Culture", 32.
78 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 122.
79 Richardson, "Phenomenology to Thought", viii.
80 Heidegger, "Religious Life", 45.

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