

Musing with Kierkegaard: Heidegger's *Besinnung*

GEORGE J. SEIDEL

Department of Philosophy, Saint Martin's College, Lacey, WA 98503-1297, USA
E-mail: gseidel@stmartin.edu

Abstract. The article deals with the recently published *Besinnung*, a work dating from 1938–1939, one among the “unpublished treatises” in Part III of Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe*. It follows the *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (1936–1938), taking up the same themes as that work, such as the last God, the first and the other beginning, etc. But whereas the earlier work, especially the notion of the last God, relates more to Schelling, this one muses on Kierkegaard. The article sets *Besinnung* within the context of related works of the same period, not only the *Beiträge* but also *Metaphysik und Nihilismus* and *Geschichte des Seyns*. However, *Besinnung* also breaks new ground, finding a deeper ontological distinction between *Seyn* and *Sein* as the basis for the earlier “ontological difference” between being and beings. The work is part and parcel with Heidegger's deconstructing of metaphysics, which he sees as really a freeing up of the beginning, as also the issue of onto-theology. Thus it is integral with Heidegger's program of getting God out of metaphysics and being out of theology. It is in virtue of the meaning he attaches to *Seyn* (Logos) in *Da-sein* that it is possible for him not only to retrieve the meaning of the other beginning, the en-owning (*Er-eignis*) of *Da-sein*, and with it the meaning of the first beginning (in the two senses the phrase has in this work), but also thereby to recover the forgotten meaning of being (*Sein*). The approach to *Seyn*, with Kierkegaard, is not through the thinking (*Denken*) that thinks being, which cannot really get beyond beings and/or the Supreme Being of metaphysics, but through a thinking, a musing, that thinks through to (*Er-denkt*) *Seyn*. The article concludes with some reflections on the significance of Heidegger as theo-logian.

Heidegger's *Besinnung* is set within Part III of the *Gesamtausgabe*, “unpublished treatises,” of which his *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* is the first in this series of works. The *Beiträge* dates from 1936–1938,¹ a work Heidegger's brother Fritz pronounced “unfinished.”² Indeed, it could hardly be otherwise, given the position Heidegger takes in the *Beiträge*, namely that “The period of the ‘system’ is over,”³ as also in terms of the view he takes regarding “metaphysics” in *Besinnung* and in other works from the same period.⁴ In *Besinnung*, dating from the years 1938–1939, Heidegger will continue with many of the same issues enunciated earlier in the *Beiträge*, among them the theme of the last God, which may appropriately be termed Heidegger's Christology.⁵

At the end of *Besinnung*, Heidegger looks back on the path his thought has taken. All along the way, he says, there has been a dialogue with Christianity, since he grew up rooted in a Catholic world in which the faith was practised. Though he notes that he was also exposed to Protestant Christianity when at Marburg. He insists that he is not so much interested in dogmatics or in articles of faith as in the question whether God goes before us or not, whether we experience this creative reality (*Besinnung*, 415; henceforth B, with page numbers in the text). The one and only question, in his view, is concerning the glory (*Herrlichkeit*) of *Da-sein*, as over against the current paralysis, and for the restoration of *Seyn* as future or the flight of the last God (B, 428).⁶ Although there are references to the events current in the Germany of the period in *Besinnung*,⁷ Heidegger would caution against a psychological or biographical interpretation of the work, as he also warns against such a reading of the *Beiträge* (B, 427), in which there are even more allusions to the events of the time.

In his work on *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, Theodore Kisiel points to Heidegger's "Theo-logical Beginnings," making note of Heidegger's description of himself, in a letter to Karl Löwith (19. VIII. 21), as "a Christian theo-*logian*."⁸ The emphasis is on the latter part of the word. Heidegger makes no claim to being a systematic theologian. Again, the time for systems is past. Heidegger is interested less in God and theology and more in the Logos, with the important sense this word has both in Greek thought as also in the prologue to John's gospel. In *Besinnung*, indeed, Heidegger continues to pursue this course of theo-*logical* reflection, above all in relation to Kierkegaard. During his Marburg years Heidegger tended to deemphasize Kierkegaard, since the Danish religious thinker was the rage in the theological circles there at the time.⁹ Nevertheless, he recognized that Kierkegaard could be exposed only theologically, albeit according to Heidegger's understanding of theology.¹⁰ Early on, in his lectures from 1929–1930, Heidegger had recognized the importance of Kierkegaard's notion of the moment (*Augenblick*) for theology,¹¹ and this theme surfaces in a significant fashion in *Besinnung*. Nevertheless, Heidegger should not be read as simply repeating the two sides to the meaning of moment in Kierkegaard. For the Danish religious thinker the moment is the highest Paradox – the infinite in the finite, the eternal in the temporal, God in time – and the moment is a decision for eternity,¹² the leap of faith relative to the Paradox on the part of the existing individual. In the appendix to *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, Heidegger has not only Kierkegaard's leap (of faith), as the way in which we reach the revelation of the truth, but also the leap forward (*Vorsprung*), which is the projection (*Entwurf*) of *Da-sein* as revelation of the truth.¹³ He goes on to say that *Da-sein* cannot be

mentioned here, since a “new” theory would be required in order to contextualize its meaning.¹⁴ That would come later. Even though, rather soon, he does speak of the “*Da*” of *Da-sein* as referring to the lit up clearing in which being as a whole resides, so that in this “there” *Sein* (the Logos) manifests itself among appearing things and, at the same time, draws back.¹⁵ In this work, he also indicates the meaning of *Besinnung*. *Be-sinnung* is going into the meaning (Sinn) of the events of history, “meaning” in this context signifying the realm that is opened up thereby, including everything belonging essentially to what occurred in and with the event.¹⁶

Besinnung, as with the other works of this period, remains part and parcel of Heidegger’s destructuring of what he terms onto-theology. *Onto-Theo-Logik* looks upon God as merely the ground of the ontic, the reason or cause of being as a whole.¹⁷ This specifically Heideggerian program involves getting *Sein* out of theology and *Sein* (the Logos of *Da-sein*) out of metaphysics. This is the burden of the distinction he draws between *Sein* and *Sein*, which in the *Beiträge* he describes as a new sort of “ontological difference.” Though he insists that this new ontological difference provides the basis for, and was implied in, the earlier difference he drew between being (*Sein*) and beings (*Seienden*).¹⁸ *Sein* must be extricated from theology, he argues in *Metaphysik und Nihilismus* (henceforth MN, with page numbers in the text), because if it is not, then being itself gets missed (the forgetting of being) in favor of the notion of the Supreme Being (*das Seiendeste*, the most being of beings);¹⁹ which is but the “God” of metaphysics. Heidegger insists that there is no direct road leading from the *Sein* of things to *Sein*, since the viewpoint of the being of things is outside the momentous momentariness (*Augenblicklichkeit*) of *Da-sein*.²⁰ It is the truth of *Sein*, that which comes from the depths (*Abgrund*) as the event (*Ereignis*), as coming unto its own (*Er-eignung*), that leads to the overcoming of metaphysics and thus to the possibility of a rethinking of being (*Sein*). *Abgrund*, the depths, in Heidegger might best be understood as a “ground” for which there is no “why,” a ground for which no cause or reason (*Grund*) can be given.

The overcoming of metaphysics, then, derives from *Sein* (the Logos) itself, the questioning regarding the truth of *Sein*, as Heidegger says in *Metaphysik und Nihilismus* (MN, 8). Logos historical thinking (*Seinshistorisches Denken*) is going to throw an entirely different light upon metaphysics, as also upon the human being (MN, 13). Concerning this latter point Heidegger adds later that one day people will see that the point of *Being and Time* is not that of making the human being central to the philosophical project but, rather, the aim is to set the human being aside, as also its primacy in philosophy, so that *Sein* can come to be revealed, and *Da-sein* (MN, 90). Or, as he says still later,

Being and Time is not some more basic metaphysics. Yet, contained within it is an entirely different beginning concerning the revelation of *Sein*. Thus is it also a more original relation to the first beginning. The “destructuring” of metaphysics is really a return to its origins (MN, 125). Or, as he says in *Besinnung*, the *Destruktion* of metaphysics announced in *Being and Time* actually represents a freeing up of the beginning (B, 66). Freedom, he insists, is first really freedom only with the coming into its own of the Inbetween in the event, the coming unto its own as the “enowning” of *Da-sein* (MN, 31).²¹ (One may see how felicitous is the rendering of *Er-eignis* as “enowning” by the English translators of the *Beiträge*.²²) It is *Sein* as decision that is at the basis of the distinction between being and beings, the earlier ontological difference, since this free decision (*Entscheidung*) cuts out the distance (*Ent-scheidung*) between the divine and the human in this coming unto its own (*Er-eignung*).²³ This Inbetween is not grounded in God, nor in the human, as something alive and at hand, but in *Da-sein*. The Inbetween is the one and only and the only once (*Einzig-Einmalig*),²⁴ the passing by of the last God a unique event.²⁴ As the Inbetween between the human and the divine there occurs with *Da-sein* an *Ent-gegnung*, the en-counter of the divine and the human in the en-owning (*Er-eignung*), in the coming to own of the human by the divine.²⁶

The overcoming (*Überwindung*) of metaphysics is like a wind blowing (*Windung der Winde*), which is also a revelation (*Wesung*) of *Sein* (MN, 14–15). To the question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” metaphysics answers: Be-cause . . . (*Ursache*). The perspective of Logos historical thinking, on the other hand, would see the letting-be of beings as itself a revelation of *Sein*, a divine letting go (*Seinsverlassen*, MN, 19), since letting being be is *of Sein* (MN, 11). Again, *Sein* is not to be understood as cause or reason (MN, 21). That is but the “God” of metaphysics. For the German idealists, according to Heidegger, metaphysics is but “an empty foyer” for what is really important for them, namely special metaphysics, and more specifically: God.²⁷ Or as he says in *Besinnung*, there is no general and special metaphysics in Aristotle. This is a Christian demand (B, 390).

The truth of *Sein* is grounded in the *Sein* of truth (MN, 34).²⁸ However, going back to the first beginning is not simply a matter of going backwards (*zurück*) but of looking ahead into the pressing questioning of the unquestioned, namely the truth of *Sein* (MN, 39). The asking (*Erfragen*) of this question regarding the truth of *Sein*,²⁹ this asking itself owns up to (*er-eignet*) *Sein* (MN, 52). The God-man (Christus), says Heidegger, is implicitly the overcoming of metaphysics, as both world-friendly and inimical to the world; and the conflict between these two through the centuries, hidden in this conflict, is the overcoming of metaphysics (MN, 46). *Sein* (from the viewpoint of

beings!) is essentially from the depths (*Ab-grund*, MN, 65). Again, for Heidegger there is no route from the *Sein* of things to *Seyn*. “*Da-sein* exists in order to be itself, *insofar as it* is the grounding of the truth of *Seyn*, that is, comes unto its own” (*er-eignet*, MN, 66). In the first beginning, there is the revelation of the non-appearing *Seyn*; in the other beginning, the decision itself is, as the revelation of *Seyn*, from the depths (*Ab-grund*) of the Inbetween (MN, 78). The overcoming of metaphysics, then, is the freeing up of the first beginning in its origin-ality (*Anfänglichkeit*, MN, 85). What Heidegger seems to be saying here – the theme of the first beginning and the other beginning is particularly prominent in the *Beiträge* – is that once it is realized that it is through the Logos that all things came to be (the prologue to John’s gospel), then the viewpoint of metaphysics, God as supreme cause of the world, becomes simply otiose. Metaphysics is simply overcome in, and with, the realization (in both senses of that term) of that enowning (in both senses of that term).

Metaphysics, the truth “of” beings, is the denial of the truth “of” *Seyn*, which denial comes from *Seyn*. *Seyn* denies itself in the first beginning (MN, 127). It does not appear. The overcoming of metaphysics also comes from *Seyn*, taking back the denial. The quiet of the first beginning is overcome with the ringing in with the other beginning.³⁰ In a much later piece, *Das Wesen des Nihilismus* (1946–1948), Heidegger puts the matter in even clearer terms: in metaphysics, *Seyn* remains unthought. This is, perhaps, the first thing that thinking needs to learn. The fact that *Seyn* is unthought means that the truth (*Unverborgenheit*, unconcealment) of things also remains unthought.³¹ After all, *Seyn* fails to appear. However, this is true of *Sein* as well.³² In metaphysics, the ontological difference is not thought; which means that neither is being thought.³³ Heidegger’s point is that if the distinction between *Sein* and *Seyn* is not made, then the distinction between *Sein* and *Seienden*, which finds its basis in the former, will not be made either; which means, further, that being gets forgotten. And there is no way for metaphysics, which is essentially conceptual thinking, to catch the initial revelation (*anfängliche Wesen*) of *Seyn*, and with it *Seyn*, which is hidden from metaphysical thinking (MN, 171–172). It is a thoroughly Catch-22 situation for metaphysical thinking. Metaphysics should think being, but it is unable to get beyond beings; and when it does, all it gets is a Supreme Being. It can get to the ontological difference between being and beings, and thus *Sein*, only if it can think through to *Seyn*, which it is unable to do. Logos historical thinking is non-conceptual. Thus, the essence of *Seyn*, as also *Sein*, is inexplicable, hidden from metaphysical thinking. For Kierkegaard the Paradox cannot be thought. For Heidegger it is the *Seyn*, the Logos of *Da-sein*, that cannot be thought; which means that being does not get thought either. Hence, “Nihilism.”

In his *Geschichte des Seyns*, which dates from the same period (1938–1940, henceforth: GS, with page numbers in the text), Heidegger reiterates some of the same themes present in the *Beiträge* and in *Metaphysik und Nihilismus*. This “history” (of *Seyn*) – and all Lordship (*Herrschaft*) resides in *Seyn* – is the revelation (*Wesung*) of the truth of being (GS, 20–21); which truth reveals itself (*west*) in the stillness of *Seyn*. This stillness is the nearness of the last God (GS, 214). *Da-sein* is the abrupt moment (*Jähe des Augenblicks*) of another beginning in the history of *Seyn* (GS, 24). As Heidegger says in *Besinnung*, the last God is *Seyn* breaking out from the depths in the midst of the world (B, 256). The desert becomes a place of decision (GS, 48), since it is here in the deserted place (*Verwüstung*) that the in-breaking denial takes place (GS, 93). The en-owning (*Er-eignung*), coming unto its own, is essentially a coming (GS, 60), which coming arises in the event as the revelation of *Seyn* (GS, 93). What above all comes in this coming is the *coming of the last God* (“Das Kommendste des Kommenden ist das *Kommen des letzten Gottes*,” GS, 97). The coming of what comes plays itself out in space and time (*Zeit-Spiel-Raumes*), for *Seyn* is not supra-spatial or supra-temporal but is the Inbetween arising from the depths (*ab-gründige Inzwischen*, GS, 108).³⁴ This Inbetween is “more” than a human being and “less” than God (GS, 118). The between is betwixt the beginnings, the first and the other beginning (GS, 163).

And where is the human being in all this? According to Heidegger, the relation to *Seyn* cannot be represented or experienced; the middle is nowhere, never just present at hand (*vorhanden*), but is first there in the human being’s en-owning in *Da-sein*. Human beings are unable to make this happen, but can only prepare for what supremely comes from afar and becomes nearest (*Kommendste des Kommenden aus der Ferne des Nächsten*, GS, 97). To the extent that human beings remain outside this preparation, they end up in a dead-end, unable to find their way back, back not to the point from which they came (*das Bisherige*) but to the beginning, from which Western civilization has all too often drawn back (GS, 115). The coming of this, the last God, is not to be thought of in temporal terms, but as the revelation of the coming unto its own. Such a coming (“*Kommen*”) does not come out of the future (*Zukunft*), as that which comes to one (*zu-kommen*); rather, it first provides the basis for such a future (GS, p 163). At the end of *Geschichte des Seyns*, Heidegger takes up the question regarding the coming of the last God in the midst of the war machinery of destruction. Where is God in all this? God? Ask *Seyn*, says Heidegger. And God answers in the stillness. The last God dispenses no consolations (GS, 211). Throughout the theo-logical reflections in the works of this period Heidegger cannot avoid the intrusions, the obtrusions, of the events

of the time and the *theo*-logical questions such events entail. *Dasein* is, and remains, a Being-in-the-world.

The work *Besinnung* opens with some poems by Heidegger. It must be remembered that for the Black Forest philosopher it is the poet who names the holy. Thus, one poem, "The Other Thinking," speaks of blessing, the divine and the human in one, being on the way to *Seyn* (B, 4). Another, entitled "*Da-sein*," says that *Da-sein* would be in order to bespeak, to sing of, *Seyn* (B, 10). Some of the same themes already noted in the works of this same period resurface in *Besinnung*: that of the enowning (*Er-eignis*, coming unto its own); that of a revelation come into its own (*Wesung der Ereigneten*) from the depths (*Ab-grund*), this occurring in the open, in a lightsome clearing (*Lichtung*), in which there is an en-counter (*Entgegnung*) with the earth and the human, in which encounter there is conflict. This coming does not itself appear in history in the ordinary sense of that word history; it is a "history" that cannot be written (*historielosen Geschichte*), an imageless Word (B, 22–23). After all, no one knows the other beginning of the history of *Seyn* (B, 59). Again, this is not the philosophical thinking that thinks being (B, 49–50). For *Seyn*, and thus also *Sein*, and hence the "ontological difference" as well, is veiled by beings (B, 58). Rather, it is a thinking, a musing, that remains ready for the Word of *Seyn*, an essential thinking that thinks *Seyn*, and moves within *Da-sein*; it is a leaping into the event, an inquiry of ultimate decisiveness (B, 42). Musing (*Besinnung*) transposes the human being into *Da-sein*, like a musical piece transposed from one key into another; granted, that the possibility for such musing itself arises from *Seyn*, since *Seyn* extends itself to the Word as that which reveals the enowning to each one (*je*) that is en-owned (B, 49).

In the decisive carrying out (*Aus-trags*) of this en-counter (*Entgegnung*) and conflict is the locus of the last God announced (B, 64). One may again hear echoes from Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*: the positing of the moment in faith relating to the moment that is the Paradox, this moment being decisive for eternity. For Kierkegaard, such a moment is truly historical (*Geschichtliche*), as distinguished from the merely historical (*historisch*). By the same token, according to Kierkegaard, in order for the Teacher to be able to give the condition (the *Bedingung* for the possibility of faith, that is, grace) the Teacher must be God, as, in order to put the human being in possession of the truth, he must also be human.³⁵ As Heidegger indicated earlier in the *Beiträge*, historical criticism (*Historie*) cannot get at the true history (*Geschichte*) of *Seyn*, the event; it is unable to get at the "Between" (*Zwischen*) of the true history of this encounter between the divine and the human.³⁶ Again, such "moments" are historical not in the sense of a history that can be written down,

but in the deeper historic sense of the en-owning, the appropriation of the human, the coming of *Seyn* into its own.

The *Seyn* that is the Inbetween come unto its own is not simply divine, human, worldly, or earthly, but all of the above (*doch Allem in Einem*, B, 83). Schelling also has the Christ as an intermediary, since Christ is outside God in virtue of his eternal humanity, outside and independent of the human in virtue of his divinity. For Schelling the Christ is neither, strictly speaking, divine nor human, but something in between.³⁷ Similarly for the Heidegger of the *Beiträge*, *Da-sein* is the between (*das Zwischen*) between the human and the divine.³⁸ Now while it is true that some versions of Gnosticism regard the Christ as a mere intermediate being, for Heidegger it is not the *being* of *Da-sein* that is betwixt heaven and earth, but its “*Da-*” that is in-between (B, 117). Whether this rather subtle distinction on Heidegger’s part is adequate to avoid the charge that his position is Gnostic – the notion of the Christ as an intermediate being – I not certain. At any rate, this appears to be the way he would attempt to obviate the problem.

More in relation to Kierkegaard and his notion of the moment, in the *Beiträge*, Heidegger speaks of the encounter between the divine and the human as occurring in the en-owning (*Er-eignung*). Similarly in *Besinnung*, he speaks of the en-counter (*Ent-gegnung*) of the divine and the human as taking place in the lightsome clearing (*Lichtung*) that is the truth of *Seyn*, which *Seyn* is itself the truth. Decision also occurs in relation to this enowning, in this moment (*Augenblick*), both on the part of the one come to stand within this light (*Inständigkeit*), as on the part of the one in whom there would be an owning up to that which one thus comes to be owned by (B, 84, 113). *Seyn* does not reveal itself to beings but opens itself up as from the depths (*lichtet so sich als den Ab-grund*, B. 92). Thus does it reveal itself as freedom, though freedom not in the sense of Schelling’s *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, which is metaphysics (B, 101). Metaphysics is the prop anthropomorphism employs to understand the divine, in this case reading the meaning of human freedom into the divine (B, 160; cf. also 159–163). Again, it is not really possible to think *Seyn*. With Kierkegaard, the Paradox can be known only negatively. Heidegger uses the word *Er-denken*, hyphenated, to indicate the way in which *Seyn* is mused, the way in which it is thought through to (B, 131 and note a).

One of the themes in *Besinnung*, as noted already in *Metaphysik und Nihilismus* and *Geschichte des Seyns*, is how metaphysics and speculative thinking are totally incapable to getting at *Seyn* (B, 211). At fault here is the mistranslation of Aristotle’s *energeia* into the Latin *actus*, *agere*, and its Christian interpretation through the ages. For this meant that Greek metaphysics became Christian. Indeed, this is true even of Nietzsche (B, 196).⁴⁰ For one thing, this

rendered being (*Sein*) opaque. This explains why Heidegger finds it necessary to go back beyond Plato and Aristotle (“metaphysics”) to the Pre-Socratics in order to retrieve a truer understanding of being. And because the speculative thinking of metaphysics, and its anthropomorphism, was transported into Christian theology, it became impossible for metaphysical speculative thinking to understand the meaning of the last God. This is why, in the *Beiträge*, Heidegger can speak of the view of the last God presented there as “Gegen den Christen.”⁴¹ The traditional Christian interpretation of Greek metaphysics not only rendered *Seyn*, but thereby also *Sein*, opaque.

Traditional metaphysical approaches to God can only be without effect, since *Seyn* leaves no trace in beings (B, 202, 353). Indeed, the notion of God as creator is drawn from the world of beings (B, 236). This is but the glorification of the notion of causality, the transfiguration of the crudest of explanations (B, 240). According to this view of the first beginning, God is simply the absolute and infinite ground of being and the cause of beings (B, 242, as also 289–290). In the pre-history of the other beginning, there is *Seyn* as enowning; which is the grounding of the truth of *Seyn* and the preparation for the grounded (B, 242). This is the divine grounding of the last God (B, 244). Heidegger's theological point here seems to be that in the “all things” grounded in creation through the Word (the first beginning: *Physis*), that Word grounds itself in *Da-sein* (the other beginning: *Er-eignis*, B, 87) and thereby becomes a total self-grounding, self-created reality. Typical of the German idealists generally, in his reading of the prologue to John's gospel Heidegger draws a tight connection between creation and the incarnation.

The Freiburg philosopher must part company with Kierkegaard at this point. He cannot view the Paradox as the infinite in the finite or the eternal in time, as does Kierkegaard, since in his philosophy he has already demythologized the notions of infinity and eternity. Thus he says, “‘Eternal’ Gods *are* no Gods” (B, 253). As he says later in *Besinnung*, with *Da-sein* we are not speaking of (Christian) time and eternity (B, 328). Or as earlier in the *Beiträge*, he had insisted that with the enowning there is an intrusion of the most essential finitude of *Seyn*.⁴² In the question “Why something and not nothing?” only *Seyn* is strong enough to have need of that nothing (B, 267).⁴³ And Why? For *Seyn*'s sake.⁴⁴ No reason, says Heidegger, can be given for the revelation (*Wesung*) that is *Seyn*.⁴⁵ But behind this Why of beings is the What (B, 271), namely being. With this move, the history of the first beginning is hidden, and with it metaphysics (B, 272, 275). Being simply gets forgotten. And with the other beginning the question is not Why (*Cur Deus homo?*, for example) or What; rather, the question is How, how does *Seyn* reveal itself (*wie west das Seyn*)? And the answer is: as *Da-sein*. This answer is possible only in terms

of Logos historical thinking (*seynsgeschichtliche Denken*, 275). Philosophical thinking is, indeed, thinking (*Denken*); but ultimately it must get down to *what* it thinks through to (*er-denkt*), namely *Seyn* (B, 301). *Seyn* as event, *Da-sein*, as the revelation of its grounding in the truth, itself comes unto its own (*sich er-eignet*), which eventuating (*Ereignen*) constitutes the grounding of the first event (B, 310). Christian theologians, in taking redemption (justification?) in purely Roman and juridical terms, do not relate dogmatically to what they have to say about creation (B, 316–317). Heidegger's point here seems to be that, in failing to think through to the meaning of *Seyn* in *Da-sein*, Christian theologians failed to understand the meaning of the first beginning (creation), influenced, as they were, by the imposition of metaphysical thinking (causation) upon their theologizing.

It is the “*Da-*” of *Da-sein* that is the lighted clearing for every possible here and there, then and now, “in the moment in which he came” (*Im Augenblick, “da” er kam*). With Kierkegaard, this moment occurs in *Da-sein*, but also in those who ground themselves in this event. The Inbetween comes unto its own as the one who comes to own (*er-eignet*). This *Da-sein* is “human” only in the sense that it is the transformation (*Wesenswandel*) of the human: *Da-sein* in the human; the human in *Da-sein* (B, 321–322, and 322, note a). In this coming into his own (*Er-eignung*) there are those that distance themselves from this owning (*Ent-eignung*, B, 319). Again, there is no possible road to anthropomorphism here. Rather, what occurs here is a “special” sort of anthropology (B, 323–324). For the projection of *Seyn* alters the meaning of what is termed “human” (B, 326). In Heidegger's view, then, it is inappropriate to speak of the human being as simply made in the image and likeness of God. Rather, human being belongs to the unique one (*das Einigste*) in *Seyn*, the self as separated from selfishness and carried over (*übereignet*) into a new self (B, 328–330). The anthropology involved here is of a totally different sort.

The being question thereby also takes on a new meaning. In asking after the meaning of *Seyn* one asks beyond metaphysics (B, 338). Thinking historically in terms of *Seyn* (the Logos), this “being” question thinks through to (*Er-denkt*) the truth, in virtue of the fact that, first and foremost, it is attuned (“*ge-stimmt*”) to the voice (*Stimmung*) in its readiness to stand in the truth of *Seyn* and thus be brought to a knowledge of *Seyn* (B, 341). The “is” of “*Das Seyn ist*” is not, indeed, the same as the “is” of Parmenides' *estin gar einai* (For it is to be . . .), but is, rather, the enowning that has become the lightsome clearing of the Inbetween (B, 342–343).⁴⁶ The being question (*Seinsfrage*) and the question regarding the meaning of *Seyn* are two very different questions (B, 348). Aristotle's “theological” knowledge, first philosophy, knowledge through causes, is metaphysics, not theology, at least not in the Judeo-Christian sense

of the word (B, 373–374). In the first beginning, being appears, but not its meaning (*Wesung*, B, 349). This remains unasked (B, 352), indeed inaccessible (B, 364). The first beginning has two senses: the first beginning is Greek philosophy (the being question, the *Seinsfrage*). On the other hand, from the *Seynsfrage* point of view the first beginning is creation (B, 385). Again, there is no metaphysics of *Da-sein* (B, 386), for metaphysics has to do with causes and first principles, à la Aristotle. Whereas with the *Wesung des Seyns* such a search would be misplaced (B, 388). For the enowning is ground-less; no reason can be given for it (B, 351). With Kierkegaard it may be thought's highest passion to think what cannot be thought; nevertheless, such speculative thinking inevitably runs into something totally offensive to reason, namely the highest Paradox.⁴⁷

And when we ask after *Seyn*? In the beginning was the Word, God answers (B, 352). And we cannot sit around and wait for the answer to be figured out, but must just give in to the question (B, 359). In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard speaks ironically of the historical researcher looking into the truth of Christianity, who, at age 70, 14 days before his death, looks forward to the appearance of a new book which will throw light on one whole side of the question. This is to take matters merely in the sense of history (*historisch*), not in the genuinely historic (*geschichtlich*) sense.⁴⁸

For the same reason that one should not expect metaphysics to throw any light on the meaning of *Seyn*, neither should one expect *Seynsdenken* to solve metaphysical puzzles (B, 361). Again, in accordance with Heidegger's de-structuring of metaphysics, and with it onto-theology, it is necessary to make the distinction, the more basic ontological distinction, between *Seyn* and *Sein*. This means that, on the one hand, being must be gotten out of theology. Using any form of the verb "to be" of God is simply inappropriate. Very early on, from his reading of Meister Eckhart, Heidegger became convinced that *Sein*, as a finite predicate, cannot be used in relation to God.⁴⁹ This is why Heidegger substitutes some form of the verb *wesen* in speaking of *Seyn* or *Da-sein*.⁵⁰ On the other hand, God must be gotten out of metaphysics. What makes this possible is *Da-sein*, which throws an entirely different light not only on the first beginning that is creation, since it is in the revelation of the *Seyn* in that *Da* that the meaning of that first beginning comes to light, but also, by the same token, it throws light upon the first beginning that is philosophy. Regrettably, according to Heidegger, Christianity, in taking Greek metaphysical thinking unto itself, rendered itself incapable of grasping the special anthropology which is that of *Da-sein*. However, it also thereby made it impossible for it to think *Sein*. For in taking matters in terms of metaphysics it ended up with a Supreme Being as the cause of beings, and was thereby incapable of

making the distinction between being and beings. From that point on there was no way in which such speculative thinking could recognize *Sein*, which alone renders it possible to get to beings. According to Heidegger metaphysical thinking has everything backwards. It goes from beings to the Supreme Being through causal analysis, when it is possible to have beings only through *Sein*, which its speculative thinking has rendered impervious.

I had always been curious about the title of the earliest work in this series: *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*. According to my reading the work these do not appear to be contributions to philosophy at all. Rather, they seem to represent contributions to theology or, perhaps better, to *theo-logy*. For, when one looks at the first part of the title in terms of the subtitle, namely “From the [point of view of the] Event (*Ereignis*),” namely *Da-sein* and its *Sein*, then an entirely different light is thrown upon the work. It does make a genuine contribution to philosophy. For it becomes the basis for overcoming metaphysics and onto-theology, by providing the more basic ontological distinction between *Sein* and *Sein*, the thinking of the ontological difference between beings and being, and thus opens up the possibility for retrieving the meaning of being.

Much earlier, in the *Phenomenology of Religious Life* (1918–1919), Heidegger says that thus far theology has yet to find a basic theoretical stance from which it might approach the origin-ality of its subject because of its dependence upon philosophy as its theoretical basis.⁵¹ Whether the works Heidegger produced in this later period provide a more appropriate basis for theology must be left to theologians to decide. One difficulty is the unsystematic, not to say disordered, character of these works. Indeed, systems are passé, according to Heidegger. Further, he no longer has the phenomenological method to keep him honest. That is also “*vorbei*.” His later method of *Denken* is often very loosely structured, “musing” perhaps even more so.

Of course, one could simply say, how could it be otherwise? The possibility of any rational sort of approach to God had become impossible after Schelling’s positive philosophy with its emphasis on Will, and after Kierkegaard with his emphasis on existence (freedom). Heidegger would appear to readily accept this anti-Hegelian voluntarist stance. However, the situation, and Heidegger’s argument as we have seen, is considerably more complex. Indeed it may be true that the whole tendency of contemporary theology has been, following Feuerbach, that theology is anthropology. And if that is what theology essentially is, namely anthropology, then *theo-logy* is impossible. Enter Heidegger, the *theo-logian*. He argues that a new and different sort of anthropology is required, one based not upon metaphysics but on *Da-sein*. This is not simply the “anthropology” drawn from *Being and Time*, in which *Dasein*

is understood as relation to being (*Sein*). Mensch-*sein*, he says in the *Geschichte des Seyns*, is relation to *Seyn* (GS, 99). Thus, relative to Kierkegaard, Heidegger insists that freedom is exercised by *Da-sein* as well as by *Dasein*. With this move, he would hope to overcome the metaphysics that renders it impossible to understand not only the *Seyn* in the first beginning but, thereby, *Sein* as well.

The beginning of metaphysics, Heidegger says in *Besinnung*, is the first ending of the first beginning, the ending which is the beginning of the end, lasting way beyond the other beginning (B, 96). One can only look forward to the appearance of a new book in this series of works, *Über den Anfang* (1941), *Das Ereignis* (1941–1942), or *Die Stege des Anfangs* (1944), which will throw light on one whole side of the question regarding the meaning of these sundry “beginnings.”

Notes

1. *Gesamtausgabe* 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1989). Very special thanks are due to J. and K. Byron for their assistance in checking the typescript and page proofs.
2. *Besinnung*, *Gesamtausgabe* 66 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1997), 429. In *Die Geschichte des Seyns*, *Gesamtausgabe* 69 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1998), 5, Heidegger speaks of the *Beiträge* as a framework, not a completed structure.
3. *Beiträge*, 5.
4. *Metaphysik und Nihilismus*, *Gesamtausgabe* 67 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1999), dating from 1938–1939, and *Die Geschichte des Seyns*, which dates from 1938–1940.
5. Cf. G.J. Seidel, “A Key to Heidegger’s *Beiträge*,” *Gregorianum* 76/2 (1995): 363–372; as also by the same author “Heidegger’s Last God and the Schelling Connection,” *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 55 (1999): 85–98.
6. There is a background in German idealism for the choice of words that Heidegger uses in this, and other works, of the same period. Fichte gives a Christological meaning to *Daseyn*, determinate being or actual existence, as distinguished from *Seyn*, absolute being. Thus, in his exegesis of the prologue to John’s gospel, in *Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben, oder auch die Religionslehre*, he says, “. . . the consciousness of being (*Seyn*), the Is relative to being, is immediately *Daseyn*.” *Fichte’s sämtliche Werke*, I. H. Fichte, ed. (Berlin: Veit, 1845), V, 439–441; the Logos is the image of the absolute being (*Wesen*) in the actual world (V, 526). Fichte gets this distinction between *Seyn* and *Daseyn* from Schelling; cf. *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie* (1795), *Schellings Werke*, M. Schröter, ed. (München: Beck, 1958), I, 133–134. Cf. Seidel, “Heidegger’s Last God and the Schelling Connection,” n. 26. Heidegger will use this older spelling of *Seyn* (with an epsilon) to refer to the Logos, distinguishing it from being (*Sein*, with an iota). He will use the hyphenated *Da-sein* to refer to the Christ, to distinguish this from the *Dasein* of *Being and Time*, which is essentially relation to *Sein*. *Da-sein* in Heidegger’s *Beiträge* and in *Besinnung* is “the last God” (*der letzte Gott*), the Christ, as it is in Schelling as well (*Schellings Werke*, III, 452). Indeed, according to Heidegger, Schelling provides the most profound picture of Spirit in German metaphysics (B, 264).

7. For example, he refers to Kitsch (Nazi “art”?) not as bad art but as symbol-rich propaganda (B, 31). He also takes a then recent statement by Hitler, deconstructing it with a series of questions (B, 122). Such criticisms of the Fuehrer, for obvious reasons, were not meant for publication, certainly not at the time. Or the statement made at the end of *Besinnung*, namely that the overcoming of the powers that be is possible only with the other beginning (B, 400), may also be meant to refer to then current events.
8. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 71–115, esp. 78, while at the same time indicating, in a letter to Pfarrer Krebs (1919), that he found the system of Catholicism problematic and unacceptable, though not Christianity and metaphysics (these, however, in a new sense), *Genesis*, 74.
9. *Genesis*, 316.
10. “Kierkegaard can be truly exposed *only* theologically (as I understand theology and will develop in the Winter Semester)” (*Genesis*, 150), which, at the time, he did not do.
11. *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik, Gesamtausgabe* 29/30 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1983), 225.
12. Sören Kierkegaard, *Philosophische Brocken: De Omnibus Dubitandum est*, trans. E. Hirsch (Düsseldorf: Diederichs, 1952), 35, 55. “This man is, at the same time, God”; but God and man are different; hence, the Paradox. When the moment is posited, the Paradox, which is also the moment, is there (48–49).
13. *Grundfragen der Philosophie, Gesamtausgabe* 45 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1984), 208 (lectures from 1937–1938). In this work, Kierkegaard is numbered among the “watchers” for the revelation of *Seyn* (190).
14. *Grundfragen*, 193–194.
15. *Grundfragen*, 213. “Das Seiende ist, aber das Sein des Seienden und die Wahrheit des Seyns und damit das Seyn der Wahrheit ist ihm *verweigert*” (185). And with this *Lichtung* in the midst of beings, he asks rhetorically, should there not also be the self-hiding of *Seyn*? (189).
16. *Grundfragen*, 35–36. Needless to say, this sort of “historical” *Besinnung* is basically different from any historical treatment. Again, Heidegger’s fundamental distinction, following Kierkegaard, between *Geschichte* and *Historie*.
17. “Die onto-theologische Verfassung der Metaphysik,” *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), 51.
18. “. . . *das Seiende* is grounded in the *Wesung des Seyns* and has its origin therein” (*Beiträge*, 465). In *Hegel: Die Negativität, Gesamtausgabe* 68 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1993), dating from the same period as *Besinnung* and *Metaphysik und Nihilismus*, Heidegger says that *Sein* is the thrown; the thrower is *Da-sein* (15). One may suspect that this is the “All things came into being through him [the Word]” of the Prologue to the gospel of John (1:3). This interest in the fourth gospel should not be surprising. When at Marburg, on Saturday afternoons during 1924, Heidegger read the gospel of John, along with Friedrich Gogarten and his friend Rudolf Bultmann, in the period before the latter produced his famous commentary on the gospel. Cf. Otto Pöggeler, *Neue Wege mit Heidegger* (Freiburg/München: Karl Alber, 1992), 404, 467.
19. *Beiträge*, 472.
20. *Beiträge*, 75.
21. In a seminar from 1939, *Vom Wesen der Sprache*, Heidegger says, “Freedom is not the ‘condition of the possibility’ of words, but in itself belongs to the one who comes into his own—the ‘Word,’ the silence of *Seyn*” (*Gesamtausgabe* 85 [Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1999], 76).

22. *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999). "He came unto his own (*Eigentum*), but his own received him not" (John 1:11).
23. *Hegel: Die Negativität*, 43.
24. *Hegel: Die Negativität*, 44. Or in the *Beiträge* (411), Heidegger speaks of the last God as something totally different, as absolutely unique (*einzigste Einzigkeit*).
25. *Grundfragen*, 90.
26. *Beiträge*, 263, 311, 477.
27. *Hegel: Die Negativität*, 53.
28. Given Heidegger's animadversions toward technology, it may seem surprising that he would consider modern technology as the "truth" of *Seyn*. However, this is because the "truth" that technology is "God" is revealed as untrue (MN, 37). The fact that Hitler could argue, in *Mein Kampf* (München: Hanser, 1935), that *Technik* and a triumphant German industry is possible only with a strong German state (160–161, 164), throws an entirely different light upon Heidegger's position relative to technology, as also upon all the nasty things he has to say about *Machenschaft* in *Beiträge*.
29. Perhaps, this is the question "Whom do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Mt 16:13).
30. "Die Überwindung der Vorklang des anderen Anfangs" (MN, 99). The word *Vorklang* does not exist in ordinary German. *Klang* is the clang of a bell; a *Vorklang* would be the unheard cling before the awaited clang.
31. *Gesamtausgabe* 67 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1999), 217–218. In his article "Negative theology in Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie*," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 48 (2000): 139–156, D. R. Law rightly concludes that Heidegger does not employ negative theology relative to the meaning of God or the last God. This would represent simply metaphysical thinking. But as the author did not have available works after the *Beiträge*, he was unable to distinguish between the different kinds of thinking involved in approaching the God of metaphysics (the Supreme Being), *Seyn* (the Logos) and *Da-sein* (the last God).
32. Law, 219, 244.
33. Law, 265.
34. God is not to be identified with *Seyn*; rather, *Seyn* reveals itself temporal-spatially (*zeit-räumlich*) as the Between; which Inbetween is not grounded in God, nor in the human, as something living and at hand, but instead in *Da-sein* (*Beiträge*, 263).
35. *Philosophische Brocken*, 55, 59.
36. *Beiträge*, 494, 479.
37. *Schellings Werke*, VI, 617, as also, 577–578.
38. *Beiträge*, 311. *Seyn* is the "in between" between the divine and the human (470–471). *Seyn* is the Between in the midst of beings and the Gods, and, from that perspective, incomparable, "needed" by the latter, hidden from the former (244).
39. *Beiträge*, 477.
40. Indeed, in *Das Wesen des Nihilismus*, Heidegger says that Nietzsche's *ewige Wiederkehr*, the eternal return, is theology (MN, 215). According to Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche the "God" that is dead is Plato's world of ideas. "God" may be dead, but the *Übermensch* lives! (181).
41. The subtitle to the section on "The Last God" says that this notion is "quite other than those that have been [proposed], particularly the Christian one" (*Beiträge*, 403). Cf. Françoise Dastur, "Le 'dieu extrême' de la phénoménologie. Husserl et Heidegger," *Archives de Philosophie* 63 (2000): 195–204. She maintains, rightly I think, that Heidegger's last God

- is not the God of morality but that of revelation. Similarly, Éric Gaziaux, "Pour une approche heideggérienne du Sacré," *Revue théologique de Louvain* 31 (2000): 530.
42. *Beiträge*, 410. In *Hegel: Die Negativität*, he says that *Seyn* in its unique reality is the finitude of *Seyn* (15).
 43. In Hegel, for example, *Sein* is in opposition to becoming, indeed its essence; *Seyn* is the same as nothing (B, 282), from the perspective of Hegelian subjectivity (284). This is the meaning of "negativity" in Hegel, which is the same as Plato's *mç on* (293). "Nothing is the first and highest gift of *Seyn*. . . . the lightsome clearing of the original leap as from the ground (*Lichtung des Ur-sprungs als Ab-grund*), the revelation of the need of a ground" (295).
 44. "*um des Seyns willen*" (B, 269). "Um Gottes willen!" is a cry from the depths, heard in a situation of fear or dread, used in relation to Christ it has a more benign sense.
 45. *Beiträge*, 509.
 46. Earlier, referring to Parmenides, Heidegger says: "Seyn und Lichtung ist dasselbe; so lautet der anfängliche Spruch des Parmenides im anderen Anfang" (B, 313). "*Seyn*" here may refer to the unnamed Goddess who reveals the way of truth to Parmenides. The "other beginning" mentioned here may be the other first beginning, namely that of metaphysics.
 47. Cf. *Philosophische Brocken*, 35. Again, for Heidegger it is not *Da-sein* that does not get thought; it can be thought through to only with Logos historical thinking. Rather, it is the *Seyn*, the Logos of *Da-sein*, that does not get thought, and with it *Sein*.
 48. Sören Kierkegaard, *Abschliessende Unwissenschaftliche Nachschrift zu den Philosophischen Brocken*, tr. H. M. Junghans (Düsseldorf: Diederichs, 1957), 19.
 49. Pöggeler, *Neue Wege mit Heidegger*, 387.
 50. According to Grimm's *Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, vol. 14, 507 ff., the German verb *wesen*, as in *leben und weben*, *da sein*, has the meaning of being active, showing or revealing itself; the indogermanic root *ues-* means *verweilen* (stay, linger), *wohnen* (dwell); related also to *bheu* (am, are), Cf. the Greek *physis*. Sixteenth and seventeenth century religious authors use the word in relation to God, perhaps, because its connection with life is prominent.
 51. *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, 310.