

26891-Religion 447.001
Seminar: Heidegger & Religion
Spring 2009
MW 4-5:15 pm
Dane Smith Hall 126

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Description:

Martin Heidegger is arguably one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century. The breadth and relevance of his work have left virtually no academic discipline untouched. In this seminar we will explore the relationship between Heidegger's philosophy and his conception of theology and thereby come to an understanding of the connection between theology and philosophy in general.

Heidegger never denies his theological roots, but neither does he trace his philosophical thought back to his theological beginnings. His silence as a philosopher about theological questions is both part of his philosophical method and his way of showing respect to a discipline that was once his intellectual home and guided him into maturity with its social institutions and rural culture. How much of a theologian he remains and how much of a religious thinker he becomes as a philosopher is an open question to which not even he may know the answer, but which he would doubtlessly deem worthy of exploration, regardless of the perhaps "futile" outcome such an adventure may bring with it. Futility, however, Heidegger says, does not limit, but conditions philosophy. Hence we will study his philosophy and thereby detect theological traces, as we will also see the (more visible) imprints of his thought in the theological thinking of his time, notably that of Rudolf Bultmann. Thus, we will do what Heidegger teaches us to do, read and study him with the *Gelassenheit* necessary to find the religious traces at work in his thinking throughout his career. In order to judge his writings properly, we need to be clear about (1) what theology is and does in contrast and in relation to philosophy, and (2) how theology sees itself influenced by Heidegger's philosophy. A successful approach needs to come up with a working definition of "faith" in contrast to "reason" or what Heidegger simply calls "thinking" and "contemplation" in (his) opposition to "calculation". Theologians like Bultmann and Tillich will be helpful here.

Heidegger's way of dealing with questions, his slow, but serious and steady approach to them, is his religious expression of a philosophical virtue. The *Gelassenheit* to the things themselves is an appreciation and as such his apprehension of them. The philosophical comportment of this intellectual attitude, releasement and abandonment, is a religious heritage Heidegger maintained and carried over when he made the transition from theology to philosophy. In our investigations the perennial question of being will accompany us throughout the course of the seminar. Has Heidegger replaced the Christian god with being? Did Heidegger ever leave the Christian god behind when he moved to philosophy? Can (a) god ever enter an ontology, regardless of how fundamental it aspires to be? What is the relationship between ontology and divinity, theology and philosophy, god and being, if there is one at all? More specifically, is Heidegger a man of faith (if so, in what)? Are predications, such as atheism, polytheism, monotheism applicable at all when it comes to his philosophy? At the end of our seminar discussions we will understand better what Heidegger means when he says that "[w]ithout this theological departure and origin (*Herkunft*) I would have never reached the path of thinking. Origination (*Herkunft*), however, is and always remains destination (*Zukunft*)."

Requirements

This is a seminar. A seminar is not a lecture course. While I like to lecture I do not want students to rely on lectures exclusively. The focus of a seminar is discussion. The whole class is the forum that allows the event to happen. Hence, all are involved and share responsibility for the success of the classroom. I define "success" as a deepening understanding of Heidegger's thought through explication, namely through an articulated understanding as a constructive re-thinking of his ideas. Such success is critical and achieved through constructive engagement in class discussions based on assigned readings and other material relevant for the course. Participation will prove beneficial for a heightened understanding of the course material. Students who want to pass the course are asked to give at least one 15 minute presentation, at least one introductory summary (protocol) of a class session at the beginning of the following session, and write either two shorter papers (about 5 pages each) on assigned questions, or one term paper of about 10-pages based on work done during the semester. A draft of the term paper must be handed in at least three weeks (Monday, April 20) before the due date (Monday, May 12). Evaluation will be based on the presentation(s) and protocol(s) given in class (worth 20% each), the written work, (term paper 50%, shorter papers 25% each) as well as on class participation (e.g. discussion of 'Study Questions') and class attendance (10%).

Assignments cannot be handed in late unless you obtain permission prior to the due date. Substantial non-attendance will result in failure of the course.

Texts

- Karl Barth. *The Humanity of God*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960. **(optional)**
- Rudolf Bultmann *New Testament and Mythology*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989 (1984)). **(optional)**
- Martin Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?* (trans. William Kluback & Jean T. Wilde). New Haven, Conn.: College & University Press, 1956. **(optional)**
- Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2001. **(required)**
- Martin Heidegger, *Being & Time*, New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008 **(required)**
- Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966. **(required)**
- Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004 **(requ.)**
- Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. **(required)**
- Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000. **(required)**
- Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992. **(required)**
- Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*. Cambridge University Press, 2002. **(optional)**
- Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. **(optional)**
- Martin Heidegger, *Philosophical and Political Writings* (ed. Manfred Stassen). London: Continuum, 2003 **(optional)**
- Martin Heidegger, *Supplements. From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond* (ed. John van Buren). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002. **(optional)**
- John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965. **(optional)**
- John Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, London: Continuum, 1999. **(optional)**
- Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993. **(optional)**
- Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*. Cumberland, RI: Harvard University Press, 1999. **(optional)**
- Paul Tillich. *Dynamics of Faith*. New York: Perennial Classics, 2001 (1957). **(optional)**

Note: Most of these texts will be available on reserve in Zimmerman Library or on e-reserve.

Films

Depending on demand and interest, one or two films (documentaries) on Heidegger may be screened either in class or outside regular class session.

Syllabus

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1 Introduction: Heidegger—The Man & Thinker		
Mon Jan. 19	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—No Class	
Wed Jan. 21	What is Theology? What is Philosophy? What is their connection? How to “teach”/”take” a Seminar	e-reserve
Week 2 Heidegger’s Homeland—Religious Roots		
Mon Jan. 26	A Visit to Meßkirch	Ott, 41-63, e-reserve
Wed Jan. 28	Contemplations on Land & Religion	Safranski, Ch. 1, 2; Ott, 64-105 e-reserve
Week 3 Early Writings in Defense of Catholicism—Heidegger’s Reflections on his Early Years		
Mon Feb. 2	All Souls Moods (1909), Abraham a Sankta Clara (1910), Poems (1910-1916)	e-reserve
Wed Feb. 4	My Way to Phenomenology (1963); The Pathway (1949); Why Do I Stay in the Provinces? (1934)	e-reserve
Week 4 Break with the System of Catholicism		
Mon Feb. 9	Conclusion: The Problem of Categories (1916); Letter to Father Engelbert Krebs (1919); Ott, 106-121	e-reserve
Wed Feb. 11	The Problem of Sin in Luther (1924); Ott, 122-129; Safranski, Ch. 6, 7	e-reserve
Week 5 Heidegger’s Dialogue with Paul: Winter Semester 1920-21		
Mon Feb. 16	<i>The Phenomenology of Religious Life: Factual Life & The Historical—Part I, Ch. 1, 3, 4</i>	
Wed Feb. 18	<i>The Phenomenology of Religious Life: Letter to the Galatians</i>	Part II, Ch. 1, 2
Week 6 Heidegger’s Dialogue with Paul ctd.		
Mon Feb. 23	<i>The Phenomenology of Religious Life: 1st & 2nd Letter to the Thessalonians—Part II, Ch. 3, 4</i>	
Wed Feb. 25	<i>The Phenomenology of Religious Life: Early Christian Life Experience—Part II, Ch. 5</i>	
Week 7 On the Way to <i>Being and Time</i> (1927): Life, Existence, Dasein		
Mon Mar. 2	The Concept of Time (1924), Lecture to the Marburg Theological Society	
Wed Mar. 4	“Introduction” to <i>Being and Time</i> & § 9	
Week 8 <i>Being & Time—What and Who is Dasein?</i>		
Mon Mar. 9	One’s Self, the They, (their) Disposition(s)	§§ 25-27, 28-38
Wed Mar. 11	Care & Anxiety	§§39-44
Week 9 March 16-20 Spring Break—No Class		
Week 10 <i>Being & Time: What and Who Dasein is (not)</i>		
Mon Mar. 23	Being-toward-Death	§§ 45-53
Wed Mar. 25	Call of Conscience	§§ 54-60
Week 11 Theology & Philosophy		
Rudolf Bultmann & Martin Heidegger		
Mon Mar. 30	Demythologizing the Gospel with the help of Heidegger: Bultmann, <i>New Testament and Mythology</i> , 1-43	e-reserve
Wed Apr. 1	Heidegger’s lecture “Phenomenology & Theology” (1927) (<i>Pathmarks</i>)	e-reserve

Week 12	Theology & Philosophy	
	Tillich's Faith & Heidegger's Gelassenheit	
Mon Apr. 6	<i>Dynamics of Faith</i> : "What Faith is" & "What Faith is not"	1-46, e-reserve
Wed Apr. 8	<i>Discourse on Thinking</i>	
Week 13	Poetry: The Piety of Art	
Mon Apr. 13	The Origin of the Work of Art (1935/36) in <i>Poetry, Language, Thought</i>	
Wed Apr. 15	The Origin of the Work of Art (also in <i>Off the Beaten Track</i>)	
Week 14	Poetry: The Piety of Thought	
Mon Apr. 20	Letter on Humanism (1946) in <i>Pathmarks</i>	e-reserve
Wed Apr. 22	Letter on Humanism	
Week 15	The Poet as Prophet	
Mon Apr. 27	"Hölderlin & the Essence of Poetry" (1936), <i>Elucidations</i> , 51-65	
	"The Poem" (1968), <i>Elucidations</i> , 209-219	
Wed Apr. 29	"Hölderlin's Earth & Heaven" (1959), <i>Elucidations</i> , 175-207	
Week 16	Final Thoughts?—Thinking Nietzsche's 'Dead God', 'The Last God' & living gods	
Mon May 4	"The Last God" (1936-38) in <i>Contributions to Philosophy</i>	e-reserve
	"The Word of Nietzsche 'God is dead'" (1943) in <i>Off the Beaten Track</i>	e-reserve
Wed May 6	Only a God Can Save Us: <i>Der Spiegel's</i> Interview (September 23, 1966)	e-reserve
Mon May 11	Term Paper/Last Paper Due	

A Note on Plagiarism

Identify outside sources used for your work. Failure to do so constitutes a case of plagiarism and will result in no credit for the assignment.