developed in a way that is appropriate to the sense of the phenomena in question.

(2) It would be more germane to the subject matter of the book if Chapter III (Types of Mental Life) were placed at the beginning, and if Chapter I (Attitudes) and Chapter II (Worldviews) were also allowed to emerge, as it were, from out of the “vital forces” that are presented in Chapter III. Jaspers characterizes these attitudes and worldviews as “emanations” (189) of vital forces. It would be even more effective to organize Chapter III and “divide it up” into parts in such a way that Chapter I and Chapter II were taken up and contained right in the middle of it.

(3) It would be more in accordance with the way in which Jaspers actually proceeds in his book if the methodological expression “psychology of understanding” were specified as a “constructive psychology of understanding” (“constructive” is meant here in a positive sense as a formation of types that draws these types out of intuitive understanding, and which is enacted and developed in a manner that is always appropriate to such understanding). The problem of understanding has been left undissected in our critical observations because such questions remain unripe for discussion so long as the problem of the historical that was roughly indicated in our “comments” has not been laid hold of at its roots and lifted up into the center of philosophical problems. The same goes for the notion of “ideas as driving forces.”

Phenomenology and Theology

Translated by James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo

PREFACE

This little book contains a lecture and a letter.

The lecture “Phenomenology and Theology” was given on March 9, 1927, in Tübingen and was again delivered on February 14, 1928, in Marburg. The text presented here forms the content of the immediately reworked and improved second part of the Marburg lecture: “The Positivity of Theology and Its Relation to Phenomenology.” In the Introduction to Being and Time (1927) §7, pp. 27ff., one finds a discussion of the notion of phenomenology (as well as its relation to the positive sciences) that guides the presentation here.

The letter of March 11, 1964, gives some pointers to major aspects for a theological discussion concerning “The Problem of a Nonobjectifying Thinking and Speaking in Today’s Theology.” The discussion took place at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, on April 9–11, 1964.

These texts were published for the first time in Archives de Philosophie, vol. 32 (1969), pp. 356ff., with an accompanying French translation.

This little book might perhaps be able to occasion repeated reflection on the extent to which the Christianness of Christianity and its theology merit questioning; but also on the extent to which philosophy, in particular that presented here, merits questioning.

Almost one hundred years ago there appeared simultaneously (1873) two writings of two friends: the “first piece” of the Thoughts Out of Season of Friedrich Nietzsche, wherein “the glorious Holderlin” is mentioned; and the “little book” On the Christianness of Today’s Theology of Franz Overbeck, who established the world-denying expectation of the end as the basic characteristic of what is primordially Christian.
To say both writings are unseasonable also in today's changed world means: For the few who think among the countless who reckon, these writings intend and point toward that which itself perseveres before the inaccessible through speaking, questioning, and creating.


Freiburg im Breisgau, August 27, 1970

The popular understanding of the relationship between theology and philosophy is fond of opposing faith and knowledge, revelation and reason. Philosophy is that interpretation of the world and of life that is removed from revelation and free from faith. Theology, on the other hand, is the expression of the credal understanding of the world and of life – in our case a Christian understanding. Taken as such, philosophy and theology give expression to a tension and a struggle between two worldviews. This relationship is decided not by scientific argument but by the manner, the extent, and the strength of the conviction and the proclamation of the worldview.

We, however, see the problem of the relationship differently from the very start. It is for us rather a question about the relationship of two sciences.

But this question needs a more precise formulation. It is not a case of comparing the factual circumstances of two historically given sciences. And even if it were, it would be difficult to describe a unified state of affairs regarding the two sciences today in the midst of their divergent directions. To proceed on a course of comparison with respect to their factual relationship would yield no fundamental insight as to how Christian theology and philosophy are related to one another.

Thus what is needed as a basis for a fundamental discussion of the problem is an ideal construction of the ideas behind the two sciences. One can decide their possible relationship to one another from the possibilities they both have as sciences.

Posing the question like this, however, presupposes that we have established the idea of science in general, as well as how to characterize the modifications of this idea that are possible in principle. (We cannot enter into this problem here; it would have to be taken up in the prolegomena to our discussion.) We offer only as a guide the following formal definition of science: science is the founding disclosure, for the sheer sake of disclosure, of a self-contained region of beings, or of being. Every region of objects, according to its subject matter and the mode of being of its objects, has its own mode of possible disclosure, evidence, founding, and its own conceptual formation of the knowledge thus arising. It is evident from the idea of science as such – insofar as it is understood as a possibility of Dasein – that there are two basic possibilities of science: sciences of beings, of whatever is, or ontic sciences; and the science of being, the ontological science, philosophy.

Ontic sciences in each case thematize a given being that in a certain manner is already disclosed prior to scientific disclosure. We call the sciences of beings as given – of a positum – positive sciences. Their characteristic feature lies in the fact that the objectification of whatever it is that they thematize is oriented directly toward beings, as a continuation of an already existing prescientific attitude toward such beings. Ontology, or the science of being, on the other hand, demands a fundamental shift of view: from beings to being. And this shift nevertheless keeps beings in view, but for a modified attitude. We shall not go into the question of the method of this shift here.

Within the circle of actual or possible sciences of beings – the positive sciences – there is between any two only a relative difference, based on the different relations that in each case orient a science to a specific region of beings. On the other hand, every positive science is absolutely, not relatively, different from philosophy. Our thesis, then, is that theology is a positive science, and as such, therefore, is absolutely different from philosophy.

Hence one must ask how theology is related to philosophy in the light of this absolute difference. It is immediately clear from the thesis that theology, as a positive science, is in principle closer to chemistry and mathematics than to philosophy. Put in this way, we have the most extreme formulation of the relationship between theology and philosophy – one that runs counter to the popular view. According to this popular view, each of the sciences [philosophy and theology], to a certain extent, has as its theme the same area: human life and the world. But they are guided by different points of view. The one proceeds from the principle of faith, the other from the principle of reason. However, our thesis is: Theology is a positive science and as such is absolutely different from philosophy.

The task of our discussion will be to characterize theology as a positive science and, on the basis of this characterization, to clarify its possible relationship to philosophy, which is absolutely different from it.
PATHMARKS

Note that we are considering theology here in the sense of Christian theology. This is not to say that Christian theology is the only theology. The most central question is whether, indeed, theology in general is a science. This question is deferred here, not because we wish to evade the problem, but only because that question cannot be asked meaningfully until the idea of theology has been clarified to a certain extent.

Before turning to the discussion proper, we wish to submit the following considerations. In accordance with our thesis, we are considering a positive science, and evidently one of a particular kind. Therefore a few remarks are in order about what constitutes the positive character of a science as such.

Proper to the positive character of a science is: first, that a being that in some way is already disclosed is to a certain extent come upon as a possible theme of theoretical objectification and inquiry; second, that this given positum is come upon in a definite prescientific manner of approaching and proceeding with that being. In this manner of procedure, the specific content of this region and the mode of being of the particular entity show themselves. That is, this disclosure is prior to any theoretical apprehending, although it is perhaps implicit and not thematically known. Third, it is proper to the positive character of a science that this prescientific comportment toward whatever is given (nature, history, economy, space, number) is also already illuminated and guided by an understanding of being—even if it be nonconceptual. The positive character can vary according to the substantive content of the entity, its mode of being, the manner in which it is prescientifically disclosed, and the manner in which this disclosedness belongs to it.

The question thus arises: Of what sort is the positive character of theology? Evidently this question must be answered before we can be in a position to determine its relation to philosophy. But setting down the positive character of theology will not yet sufficiently clarify its status as a science. We have not yet arrived at the full concept of theology as a science, but only at what is proper to it as a positive science. If thematizing is supposed to adjust the direction of inquiry, the manner of investigation, and the conceptuality to the particular positum in each case, it is more to the point here to identify the specific scientific character belonging to the specific positive character of theology. Therefore, only by identifying the positive and the scientific character of theology do we approach this discipline as a positive science and acquire the basis for characterizing its possible relationship to philosophy.

PHENOMENOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

Thus our consideration obtains a threefold division:

a) the positive character of theology;
b) the scientific character of theology;
c) the possible relation of theology, as a positive science, to philosophy.

a) THE POSITIVE CHARACTER OF THEOLOGY

A positive science is the founding disclosure of a being that is given and in some way already disclosed. The question arises: What is already given for theology? One might say: What is given for Christian theology is Christianity as something that has come about historically, witnessed by the history of religion and spirit and presently visible through its institutions, cults, communities, and groups as a widespread phenomenon in world history. Christianity: the given positum; and hence theology: the science of Christianity. That would evidently be an erroneous characterization of theology, for theology itself belongs to Christianity. Theology itself is something that everywhere in world history gives testimony to its intimate connection with Christianity itself as a whole. Evidently, then, theology cannot be the science of Christianity as something that has come about in world history, because it is a science that itself belongs to the history of Christianity, is carried along by that history, and in turn influences that history.

Is theology therefore a science that itself belongs to the history of Christianity in the way that every historical [historische] discipline is itself a historical [geschichtliche] appearance, namely, by representing the historical development of its consciousness of history? If this were the case, then we could characterize theology as the self-consciousness of Christianity as it appears in world history. However, theology does not belong to Christianity merely because, as something historical, the latter has a place in the general manifestations of culture. Rather, theology is a knowledge of that which initially makes possible something like Christianity as an event in world history. Theology is a conceptual knowing of that which first of all allows Christianity to become an originarily historical event, a knowing of that which we call Christianeness pure and simple. Thus we maintain that what is given for theology (its positum) is Christianeness. The latter decides the form of theology will take as the positive science that thematizes it. The question arises: what does “Christianeness” mean?

We call faith Christian. The essence of faith can formally be sketched as a way of existence of human Dasein that, according to its own testimony—its self belonging to this way of existence—arises not from Dasein or
Rather, faith is an appropriation of revelation that co-constitutes the Christian occurrence, that is, the mode of existence that specifies a factual Dasein's Christianess as a particular form of destiny. Faith is the believing-understanding mode of existing in the history revealed, i.e., occurring, with the Crucified.

The totality of this being that is disclosed by faith — in such a way, indeed, that faith itself belongs to the context of its disclosure — constitutes the character of the positum that theology finds before it. Presupposing that theology is enjoined on faith, out of faith, and for faith, and presupposing that science is a freely performed, conceptual disclosure and objectification, theology is constituted in thematizing faith and that which is disclosed through faith, that which is “revealed.” It is worthy of note that faith is not just the manner in which the positum objectified by theology is already disclosed and presented; faith itself is a theme for theology. And not only that. Insofar as theology is enjoined upon faith, it can find sufficient motivation for itself only in faith. If faith would totally oppose a conceptual interpretation, then theology would be a thoroughly inappropriate means of grasping its object, faith. It would lack something so essential that without this it could never become a science in the first place. The necessity of theology, therefore, can never be deduced from a purely rationally constructed system of sciences. Furthermore, faith not only motivates the intervention of an interpretive science of Christianess; at the same time, faith, as rebirth, is that history to whose occurrence theology itself, for its part, is supposed to contribute. Theology has a meaning and a legitimacy only if it functions as an ingredient of faith, of this particular kind of historical occurrence.

By attempting to elucidate this connection [between theology and faith], we are likewise showing how, through the specific positive character of theology, i.e., through the Christian occurrence disclosed in faith as faith, the scientific character of the science of faith is prefigured.

b) THE SCIENTIFIC CHARACTER OF THEOLOGY

Theology is the science of faith.

This says several things:

(1) Theology is the science of that which is disclosed in faith, of that which is believed. That which is believed in this case is not some coherent order of propositions about facts or occurrences which we simply agree to — which, although theoretically not self-evident, can be appropriated because we agree to them.
(2) Theology is accordingly the science of the very compartment of believing, of faithfulness—it in each case a revealed faithfulness, which cannot possibly be any other way. This means that faith, as the compartment of believing, is itself believed, itself belongs to that which is believed.

(3) Theology, furthermore, is the science of faith, not only insofar as it makes faith and that which is believed its object, but because it itself arises out of faith. It is the science that faith of itself motivates and justifies.

(4) Theology, finally, is the science of faith insofar as it not only makes faith its object and is motivated by faith, but because this objectification of faith itself, in accordance with what is objectified here, has no other purpose than to help cultivate faithfulness itself for its part.

Formally considered, then, faith as the existing relation to the Crucified is a mode of historical Dasein, of human existence, of historically being in a history that discloses itself only in and for faith. Therefore theology, as the science of faith, that is, of an intrinsically historical [geschichtlichen] mode of being, is to the very core a historical [historische] science. And indeed it is a unique sort of historical science in accord with the unique historicity involved in faith, i.e., with “the occurrence of revelation.”

As conceptual interpretation of itself on the part of faithful existence, that is, as historical knowledge, theology aims solely at that transparency of the Christian occurrence that is revealed in, and delimited by, faithfulness itself. Thus the goal of this historical science is concrete Christian existence itself. Its goal is never a valid system of theological propositions about general states of affairs within one region of being that is present at hand among others. The transparency of faithfulness is an understanding of existence and as such can relate only to existing itself. Every theological statement and concept addresses itself in its very content to the faithfulness of the individual in the community; it does not do so subsequently, on the basis of some practical “application.” The specific content of the object of theology demands that the appropriate theological knowledge never take the form of some free-floating knowledge of arbitrary states of affairs. Likewise, the theological transparency and conceptual interpretation of faith cannot be gained through the science of theology, but solely through faith. Hence theology can permit the serious character of faithfulness as a “graciously bestowed” mode of existence to become a matter of conscience. Theology “can” perform this; i.e., it is capable of this, but it is only possibly that it may have this effect.

In summary, then, theology is a historical science, in accordance with the character of the positum objectified by it. It would seem that with this thesis we are denying the possibility and the necessity of a systematic as well as a practical theology. However, one should note that we did not say that there is only “historical theology,” to the exclusion of “systematic” and “practical” theology. Rather our thesis is: Theology as such is historical as a science, regardless of how it may be divided into various disciplines. And it is precisely this characterization that enables one to understand why and how theology originally divided into a systematic, a historical (in the narrower sense), and a practical discipline—not in addition, but in keeping with the specific unity of its theme. The philosophical understanding of a science is, after all, not achieved by merely latching on to its factual and contingent, pregiven structure and simply accepting the technical division of labor in order then to join the various disciplines together externally and subsume them under a “general” concept. Rather, a philosophical understanding requires that we question beyond the factically existing structure and ascertain whether and why this structure is demanded by the essence of the science in question and to what extent the factual organization corresponds to the idea of the science as determined by the character of its positum.

In reference to theology it thus becomes evident that, because it is a conceptual interpretation of Christian existence, the content of all its concepts is essentially related to the Christian occurrence as such. To grasp the substantive content and the specific mode of being of the Christian occurrence, and to grasp it solely as it is testified to in faith and for faith, is the task of systematic theology. If indeed faithfulness is testified to in the scriptures, systematic theology is in its essence New Testament theology. In other words, theology is not systematic in that it first breaks up the totality of the content of faith into a series of loci, in order then to reintegrate them within the framework of a system and subsequently to prove the validity of the system. It is systematic not by constructing a system, but on the contrary by avoiding a system, in the sense that it seeks solely to bring clearly to light the intrinsic σύντομος of the Christian occurrence as such, that is, to place the believer who understands conceptually into the history of revelation. The more historical theology is and the more immediately it brings to word and concept the historicity of faith, the more it is “systematic” and the less likely is it to become the slave of a system. The radicality with which one knows of this task and its methodological exigencies is the criterion for the scientific level of a systematic theology. Such a task will be more certainly and purely accomplished the more directly theology permits its concepts and conceptual schemes to be determined by the mode of being.
and the specific substantive content of that entity which it objectifies. The
more unequivocally theology disburdens itself of the application of some
philosophy and its system, the more philosophical is its own radical scientific
character.

On the other hand, the more systematic theology is in the way we have
designated, the more immediately does it found the necessity of historical the-
ology in the narrower sense of exegesis, church history, and history of dogma.
If these disciplines are to be genuine theology and not special areas of the
general, profane historical sciences, then they must permit themselves to
be guided in the choice of their object by systematic theology correctly
understood.

The Christian occurrence’s interpretation of itself as a historical occur-
rence also implies, however, that its own specific historicity is appropriated
ever anew, along with an understanding, arising from that historicity, of the
possibilities of a faithful existence [Dasein]. Now because theology, as
a systematic as well as a historical discipline, has for its primary object the
Christian occurrence in its Christianess and its historicity, and because
this occurrence specifies itself as a mode of existence of the believer, and
existing is action, πράξεις, theology in its essence has the character of a practical
science. As the science of the action of God on human beings who act in faith
it is already “innately” homiletical. And for this reason alone is it possible
for theology itself to constitute itself in its factual organization as practical
theology, as homiletics and catechetics, and not on account of contingent
requirements that demand, say, that it apply its theoretical propositions to
a practical sphere. Theology is systematic only when it is historical and practical.
It is historical only when it is systematic and practical. And it is practical only when
it is systematic and historical.

All of these characteristics essentially hang together. The contemporary
controversies in theology can turn into a genuine exchange and fruitful
communication only if the problem of theology as a science is followed back
to the central question that derives from considering theology as a positive
science: What is the ground of the specific unity and necessary plurality of
the systematic, historical, and practical disciplines of theology?

We can add a few clarifications to this sketchy outline of the character
of theology by showing what theology is not.

Etymologically regarded, theology means: science of God. But God is
in no way the object of investigation in theology, as, for example, animals are
the theme of zoology. Theology is not speculative knowledge of God. And
we hit upon the concept of theology no better when we expand the theme and
say: The object of theology is the all-inclusive relationship of God to
man and of man to God. In that case theology would be the philosophy or
the history of religion, in short, Religionswissenschaft. Even less is it the
psychology of religion, i.e., the science of man and his religious states and
experiences, the analysis of which is supposed to lead ultimately to the
discovery of God in man. One could, however, admit that theology does
not coincide in general with speculative knowledge of God, the scientific
study of religion, or the psychology of religion— and still want to stress that
theology represents a special case of the philosophy and history of religion,
etc., namely, the philosophical, historical, and psychological science of the
Christian religion.

Yet it is clear from what we have said that systematic theology is not a
form of the philosophy of religion applied to the Christian religion. Nor
is church history a history of religion limited to the Christian religion. In
all such interpretations of theology the idea of this science is abandoned
from the very beginning. That is, it is not conceived with regard to the
specific positive character of theology, but rather is arrived at by way of a
deduction and specialization of nontheological sciences—philosophy, his-
tory, and psychology—sciences that, indeed, are quite heterogeneous to
one another. Of course, to determine where the limits of the scientific
character of theology lie, i.e., to determine how far the specific exigencies
of faithfulness itself can and do press for conceptual transparency and still
remain faithful, is both a difficult and a central problem. It is tied most
closely to the question about the original ground of the unity of the three
disciplines of theology.

In no case may we delimit the scientific character of theology by using
an other science as the guiding standard of evidence for its mode of proof
or as the measure of rigor of its conceptuality. In accord with the positum
of theology (which is essentially disclosed only in faith), not only is the
access to its object unique, but the evidence for the demonstration of its
propositions is quite special. The conceptuality proper to theology can
grow only out of theology itself. There is certainly no need for it to borrow
from other sciences in order to augment and secure its proofs. Nor indeed
can it attempt to substantiate or justify the evidence of faith by drawing on
knowledge gained from other sciences. Rather, theology itself is founded pri-
marily by faith, even though its statements and procedures of proof formally
derive from free operations of reason.

Likewise, the shortcomings of the nontheological sciences with respect
to what faith reveals is no proof of the legitimacy of faith. One can allow
“faithless” science to run up against and be shattered by faith only if one
already faithfully holds fast to the truth of faith. But faith misconceives
itself if it then thinks that it is first proven right or even thereby fortified when the other sciences shatter against it. The substantive legitimacy of all theological knowledge is grounded in faith itself, originates out of faith, and leaps back into faith.

On the grounds of its specific positive character and the form of knowing which this determines, we can now say that theology is a fully autonomous ontic science. The question now arises: How is this positive science, with its specific positive and scientific character, related to philosophy?

c) THE RELATION OF THEOLOGY, AS A POSITIVE SCIENCE, TO PHILOSOPHY

If faith does not need philosophy, the science of faith as a positive science does. And here again we must distinguish: The positive science of faith does not need philosophy for the founding and primary disclosure of its positum, Christianess, which founds itself in its own manner. The positive science of faith needs philosophy only in regard to its scientific character, and even then only in a uniquely restricted, though basic, way.

As a science theology places itself under the claim that its concepts show and are appropriate to the being that it has undertaken to interpret. But is it not the case that that which is to be interpreted in theological concepts is precisely that which is disclosed only through, for, and in faith? Is not that which is supposed to be grasped conceptually here something essentially inconceivable, and consequently something whose content is not to be fathomed, and whose legitimacy is not to be founded, by purely rational means?

Nevertheless, something can very well be inconceivable and never primarily disclosed through reason without thereby excluding a conceptual grasp of itself. On the contrary: if its inconceivability as such is indeed to be disclosed properly, it can only be by way of the appropriate conceptual interpretation – and that means pushing such interpretation to its very limits. Otherwise the inconceivability remains, as it were, mute. Yet this interpretation of faithful existence is the task of theology. And so, why philosophy? Whatever is discloses itself only on the grounds of a preliminary (although not explicitly known), preconceptual understanding of what and how such a being is. Every ontic interpretation operates on the basis, at first and for the most part concealed, of an ontology. But can such things as the cross, sin, etc., which manifestly belong to the ontological context of Christianess, be understood specifically as to what they are and how they are, except through faith? How does one ontologically disclose the what (the essence) and the how (the mode of being) underlying these fundamental concepts that are constitutive of Christianess? Is faith to become the criterion of knowledge for an ontological-philosophical explication? Are not the basic theological concepts completely withdrawn from philosophical-ontological reflection?

Of course one should not lose sight here of something essential: the explication of basic concepts, insofar as it proceeds correctly, is never accomplished by explicating and defining isolated concepts with reference to themselves alone and then operating with them here and there as if they were playing chips. Rather, all such explication must take pains to envision and hold constantly in view in its original totality the primary, self-contained ontological context to which all the basic concepts refer. What does this mean for the explication of basic theological concepts?

We characterized faith as the essential constitutive element of Christianess: faith is rebirth. Though faith does not bring itself about, and though what is revealed in faith can never be founded by way of a rational knowing as exercised by autonomously functioning reason, nevertheless the sense of the Christian occurrence as rebirth is that Dasein's prefaithful, i.e., unbelieving, existence is sublated [aufgehoben] therein. Sublated does not mean done away with, but raised up, kept, and preserved in the new creation. One's pre-Christian existence is indeed existentially, ontically, overcome in faith. But this existentiell overcoming of one's pre-Christian existence (which belongs to faith as rebirth) means precisely that one's overcome pre-Christian Dasein is existentially, ontologically included within faithful existence. To overcome does not mean to dispose of, but to have at one's disposal in a new way. Hence we can say that precisely because all basic theological concepts, considered in their full regional context, include a content that is indeed existentially powerless, i.e., ontically sublated, they are ontologically determined by a content that is pre-Christian and that can thus be grasped purely rationally. All theological concepts necessarily contain that understanding of being that is constitutive of human Dasein as such, insofar as it exists at all. Thus, for example, sin is manifest only in faith, and only the believer can factically exist as a sinner. But if sin, which is the counterphenomenon to faith as rebirth and hence a phenomenon of existence, is to be interpreted in theological concepts, then the content of the concept itself, and not just any philosophical preference of the theologian, calls for a return to the concept of guilt. But guilt is an original ontological determination of the existence of Dasein. The more originally and appropriately the basic constitution of Dasein is brought to light in a genuine ontological manner and the more originally, for example, the
concept of guilt is grasped, the more clearly it can function as a guide for the theological explication of sin.

But if one takes the ontological concept of guilt as a guide, then it seems that it is primarily philosophy that decides about theological concepts. And, then, is not theology being led on the leash by philosophy? Not at all. For sin, in its essence, is not to be deduced rationally from the concept of guilt. Even less so should or can the basic fact of sin be rationally demonstrated, in whatever manner, by way of this orientation to the ontological concept of guilt. Not even the factual possibility of sin is in the least bit evidenced in this way. Only one thing is accomplished by this orientation; but that one thing is indispensable for theology as a science: The theological concept of sin as a concept of existence acquires that correction (i.e., co-direction) that is necessary for it insofar as the concept of existence has pre-Christian content. But the primary direction (derivation), the source of its Christian content, is given only by faith. Therefore ontology functions only as a corrective to the ontic, and in particular pre-Christian, content of basic theological concepts.

Here one must note, however, that this correction does not find anything, in the way, for example, that the basic concepts of physics acquire from an ontology of nature their original foundation, the demonstration of all their inner possibilities, and hence their higher truth. Rather, this correction is only formally indicative; that is to say, the ontological concept of guilt as such is never a theme of theology. Also the concept of sin is not simply built upon the ontological concept of guilt. Nevertheless, the latter is determinative in one respect, in that it formally indicates the ontological character of that region of being in which the concept of sin as a concept of existence must necessarily maintain itself.

In thus formally indicating the ontological region, there lies the directive not to calculate philosophically the specific theological content of the concept but rather to allow it to arise out of, and to present itself within, the specific existential dimension of faith thereby indicated. Thus, formally indicating the ontological concept does not serve to bind but, on the contrary, to release and point to the specific, i.e., credal source of the disclosure of theological concepts. The function of ontology here is not to direct, but only, in “co-directing,” to correct.

Philosophy is the formally indicative ontological corrective of the ontic and, in particular, of the pre-Christian content of basic theological concepts.

But it is not of the essence of philosophy, and it can never be established by philosophy itself or for its own purpose, that it must have such a corrective function for theology. On the other hand, it can be shown that philosophy, as the free questioning of purely self-reliant Dasein, does of its essence have the task of directing all other nontheological, positive sciences with respect to their ontological foundation. As ontology, philosophy does provide the possibility of being employed by theology as a corrective, in the sense we have discussed, if indeed theology is to be factual with respect to the facticity of faith. The demand, however, that it must be so employed is not made by philosophy as such but rather by theology, insofar as it understands itself to be a science. In summary, then, the precise formulation is:

Philosophy is the possible, formally indicative ontological corrective of the ontic and, in particular, of the pre-Christian content of basic theological concepts. But philosophy can be what it is without functioning factically as this corrective.

This peculiar relationship does not exclude but rather includes the fact that faith, as a specific possibility of existence, is in its innermost core the mortal enemy of the form of existence that is an essential part of philosophy and that is factually ever-changing.4 Faith is so absolutely the mortal enemy that philosophy does not even begin to want in any way to do battle with it. This existentiell opposition between faithfulness and the free appropriation of one’s whole Dasein is not first brought about by the sciences of theology and philosophy but is prior to them. Furthermore, it is precisely this opposition that must bear the possibility of a community of the sciences of theology and philosophy, if indeed they are to communicate in a genuine way, free from illusions and weak attempts at mediation. Accordingly, there is no such thing as a Christian philosophy; that is an absolute “square circle.” On the other hand, there is likewise no such thing as a neo-Kantian, or axiological, or phenomenological theology, just as there is no phenomenological mathematics. Phenomenology is always only the name for the procedure of ontology, a procedure that essentially distinguishes itself from that of all other, positive sciences.

It is true that someone engaged in research can master, in addition to his own positive science, phenomenology as well, or at least follow its steps and investigations. But philosophical knowledge can become genuinely relevant and fertile for his own positive science only when, within the problematic that stems from such positive deliberation on the ontic correlations in his field, he comes upon the basic concepts of his science and, furthermore, questions the suitability of traditional fundamental concepts with respect to those beings that are the theme of his science. Then, proceeding from the demands of his science and from the horizon of his
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own scientific inquiry, which lies, so to speak, on the frontiers of his basic concepts, he can search back for the original ontological constitution of those beings that are to remain and become anew the object of his science. The questions that arise in this way methodically thrust beyond themselves insofar as that about which they are asking is accessible and determinable only ontologically. To be sure, scientific communication between researchers in the positive sciences and philosophy cannot be tied down to definite rules, especially since the clarity, certainty, and originality of critiques by scientists of the foundations of their own positive sciences change as often and are as varied as the stage reached and maintained by philosophy at any point in clarifying its own essence. This communication becomes and remains genuine, lively, and fruitful only when the respective positive-ontic and transcendental-ontological inquiries are guided by an instinct for the issues and by the certainty of scientific good sense, and when all the questions about dominance, preeminence, and validity of the sciences recede behind the inner necessities of the scientific problem itself.

APPENDIX

The Theological Discussion of “The Problem of a Nonobjectifying Thinking and Speaking in Today’s Theology” – Some Pointers to Its Major Aspects

Freiburg im Breisgau, March 11, 1964

What is it that is worth questioning in this problem? As far as I see, there are three themes that must be thought through.

(1) Above all else one must determine what theology, as a mode of thinking and speaking, is to place in discussion. That is the Christian faith, and what is believed therein. Only if this is kept clearly in view can one inquire how thinking and speaking are to be formulated so that together they correspond to the proper sense and claim of faith and thus avoid projecting into faith ideas that are alien to it.

(2) Prior to a discussion of nonobjectifying thinking and speaking, it is ineluctable that one state what is intended by objectifying thinking and speaking. Here the question arises whether or not all thinking and speaking are objectifying by their very nature.

Should it prove evident that thinking and speaking are by no means in themselves already objectifying, then this leads to a third theme.