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Eschatology in a Secular Age: An Examination of the Use of Eschatology in the Philosophies of Heidegger, Berdyaev and Blumenberg

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Eschatology in a Secular Age:
An Examination of the Use of Eschatology in the Philosophies of
Heidegger, Berdyaev and Blumenberg

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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DEDICATION

There have been a number of people who have helped me reach this goal in life but I could not have accomplished this work without the encouragement of my friends and patient endurance of my family members. I am grateful for the encouragement and support by those who are no longer here to see this accomplishment, particularly to my father-in-law, Fred W. Smith, Jr., who was a continual inspiration for many years.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iv
Chapter One: Introduction	1
The Meaning of Eschatology	5
Eschatology and Teleology	7
Apocalypticism and Millennialism	8
Messianism and Parousia	12
Cyclical or Linear Time	12
Chapter Two: Eschatology in Western Thought	14
Eschatology of Babylon, Persia, and Greece	15
Jewish Eschatology	19
Pagan Eschatological Influences on Judaism and Christianity	21
Neo-Platonism and the Sibylline Oracles	23
Early Christian Eschatology to Constantine	26
Montanists and Manicheans	30
Origen, Cyprian and Lactantius	31
Augustine	37
Eschatology in the Middle Ages	41
Joachim of Fiore	44
Later Middle Ages and Renaissance	51
Renaissance Period	52
Protestant Eschatology	57
Luther and German Radical Movements	59
The <i>Theologia Germanica</i>	60
Radical Movements	63
Jacob Boehme and the German Pietists	64
Puritan and Radical English Millenarianism	68
The Rediscovery of Cyclical Time and Infinity	73
The Rise of a “Secular Eschatology”	80
The Rise of Postmillennialism	84
From Millennialism to Secular Progress	85
Eschatology in Romanticism and German Idealism	89
German Idealism	94
Marx and Nietzsche	97
Conclusion	99
Chapter Three: Heidegger’s Eschatology of Being	103

Early Theological Influences: Weiss, Schweitzer, and Overbeck	105
Early Philosophical Influences: Dilthey and Husserl	113
Eschatology in the Religion Lectures (1920-1921)	118
Phenomenological Explication and Complex of Enactment	122
The Proclamation of Revelation.....	126
The <i>Parousia</i>	128
Distress	131
The Antichrist.....	135
Heidegger’s Eschatological Critique of Jaspers, Spengler, and Husserl	138
Jaspers’ <i>Psychology of Worldviews</i>	138
Spengler’s <i>The Decline of the West</i>	142
Husserl’s Phenomenological Teleology	151
Eschatology in <i>Being and Time</i>	162
Conclusion.....	165
Chapter Four: Berdyaev’s Eschatological Metaphysics	174
Objectification of Being and the Overcoming of Dualism.....	176
Berdyaev’s Critique of Heidegger	180
From Cosmocentrism to Anthropocentrism	182
The Eschatological Contribution of Christianity and Its Failure.....	187
The Return to Jacob Boehme.....	193
The Kantian Revolution	198
The Problem in the Metaphysics of German Idealism.....	201
Berdyaev’s Existential Eschatology	212
The Age of the Spirit and Creative Newness	215
The “End of the World”	218
History as Prophetic Messianism	220
Conclusion.....	222
Chapter Five: Blumenberg’s Transformed Eschatology	224
The Debate over Secularization and Eschatology	224
Karl Löwith’s Secularization Thesis.....	228
Blumenberg’s Reply to Löwith’s Substantialist Ontology	235
Secularization by Eschatology	238
Secularization by Expropriation.....	240
Reoccupation Thesis.....	241
Progress as Ersatz Religion.....	243
Responses to Blumenberg’s Thesis	246
Voegelin’s Secularization Thesis	248
Talmon’s Political Messianism	249
Taylor’s Providential Deism	254
Conclusion.....	260
Chapter Six: The End of Eschatology	266
Bibliography	278

Appendices	291
Appendix A	291
Appendix B	291
Appendix C	292

ABSTRACT

The topic of eschatology is generally confined to the field of theology. However, the subject has influenced many other fields, such as politics and history. This dissertation examines the question why eschatology remained a topic of discussion within twentieth century philosophy. Concepts associated with eschatology, such as the end of time and the hope of a utopian age to come, remained largely background assumptions among intellectuals in the modern age. Martin Heidegger, Nicolai Berdyaev, and Hans Blumenberg, however, explicitly addressed the subject in their philosophies. The impetus of this study is Heidegger's statement, "Being itself is inherently eschatological," which indicates the centrality of the subject in his understanding of Being. This statement led to the question whether eschatology played a larger role in Western thought. It also raised the question concerning the relationship between eschatology and other philosophical subjects such as teleology. Because of the multitude of assumptions concerning the meaning of eschatology, Chapter One provides essential working definitions. In order to obtain a sufficient understanding of the topic and address the use of the term among the three philosophers, it was necessary to see how eschatology was understood and acted upon in Western thought. Chapter Two addresses the history of eschatology in the West and concludes that there are two general streams of eschatological thought that explains why it continued to remain a subject for

contemporary philosophers. Chapters Three through Five address how eschatology was used by Heidegger, Berdyaev, and Blumenberg respectively. Each utilized the subject in different ways: for Heidegger eschatology constitutes Dasein's existence. Futurity ("forward-directedness") is a condition Dasein as a totality. Dasein is "being-toward-the-end" or "toward-death." Berdyaev combines the eschatological tradition with philosophical achievements and offers an "eschatological metaphysics." He distinguishes eschatology from teleology arguing against teleology, noting that only a "personalist" eschatology can solve the problems of dualism and objectification. Blumenberg differs from Heidegger and Berdyaev by offering a negative evaluation of eschatological belief in the West contending that the modern secular age is the result of a failed eschatology. The conclusion of this work follows Charles Taylor's contention in *A Secular Age* that "our sense of where we are is crucially defined in part by a story of how we got there." The conclusion is that eschatology, throughout most of Western thought, functioned largely as a background assumption for understanding time and history. The transition from the linear concept of time to a cyclical concept defines in part the modern secular age. The notion of future time is an important and often neglected dimension of hermeneutic understanding. The continued influence of eschatological thought in Western history explains why the philosophers under consideration in this work address eschatology and signals that its influence upon philosophical thought is not likely to diminish in the future.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Among the tasks of the contemporary philosopher is understanding the age in which one lives. One example of that endeavor is Charles Taylor, who in his recent work, *A Secular Age*, explored the question, “What does it mean to say that we live in a secular age?” (2007). Taylor examines how the transition occurred from a world where God was central in everyday life five hundred years ago to a world where “God is Dead” to the everyday public space. One of the answers touched on by Taylor but not fully developed is the subject of eschatology. During the twentieth century, a few philosophers recognized the importance of eschatology in understanding the modern situation. For others, eschatology played a vital function in defining their philosophical positions. This work explores the use of eschatology in three twentieth century philosophers: Martin Heidegger, Nicolai Berdyaev, and Hans Blumenberg.

While there have been other philosophers who have addressed the subject, these three are selected because eschatology plays a critical role in their own philosophical positions. Heidegger’s statement, “Being itself is inherently eschatological,” triggered this investigation of eschatology in philosophy. The initial questions were what does it mean to say that Being is “inherently eschatological”? Why would Heidegger employ the term “eschatology” in the context of understanding Being? Heidegger, of course, was not speaking as a theologian, but as a philosopher. Why did he use this unusual term

common in theological circles? Prior to *Being and Time*, Heidegger formally addressed the subject in his “Religion Lectures” which serve as the primary source for my treatment of this subject (Heidegger 2004). For this reason, and for the fact that Heidegger was chronologically prior to the other two philosophers, his use of eschatology will be examined first beginning in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

The second philosopher to be considered is Nicolai Berdyaev. While the significance of Heidegger’s use of eschatology is not as explicit in his work, Berdyaev’s philosophy is unique in that he openly appeals to eschatology as definitive to his philosophy. This is seen particularly in his work *The Beginning and The End* (1952). His treatment of the subject is also important because he illustrates a particular kind of eschatological thinking that will be explained along the way in this work.

The third philosopher addressed in Chapter Five is Hans Blumenberg. In his *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, Blumenberg differs from the others by taking a negative view of eschatology and arguing that secularization is a legitimate response for the failed eschatology of Christianity (1966). His treatment of the subject includes discussion on the historical and political ramifications of eschatology prompted by his critique of Carl Schmitt and Karl Löwith’s theses. This chapter will explore the implications of eschatology for history, politics and secularization.

In the process of the study of eschatology in the works of these three twentieth century philosophers, the importance of understanding the history of the subject became evident along the way. In order to understand what each meant by “eschatology,” a broader understanding of its definition and significance in Western thought needed investigation. The problem was where in the course of history to start the investigation.

The beginning of the twentieth century was not sufficient—Blumenberg starts from the Renaissance, Berdyaev goes back to the Middle Ages, and Heidegger begins with the New Testament documents. Each philosopher demonstrates a familiarity with the subject historically.

Chapter Two is an historical overview of eschatology in Western thought. The purpose is not to merely provide a history, but to identify intellectual themes that are important in the transition from the pre-modern to modern/secular age. In order to understand how the term is used among the philosophers under consideration in this work, it is important to see how eschatological ideas have been, in Charles Taylor's words, "rearticulated" in its history. As Taylor has expressed, "our sense of where we are is crucially defined in part by a story of how we got there" (2007:29). The need for this investigation is to "recover previous formulations" concerning the present "thoughts, beliefs, assumptions, [and] actions" (1984:18).¹ The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to set forth a "genetic account" of eschatology. A certain way of viewing the future (the eschatological) has been for most of Western thought an "unquestionable background assumption." These assumptions about the future are embedded in how moderns think, act, and engage within the world. Few, even in the modern period would have challenged the idea, for example, that history was "going somewhere." How the modern age came to have these "inarticulate assumptions" about future time need to be unearthed in order to

¹ Taylor notes, for example, that Quine's "creative redescription" of his position are situated in the Cartesian epistemological model. In order to challenge Quine's position, Descartes' must be retrieved. In the case of Descartes one must go beyond to Aquinas and Aristotle to reinterpret his "creative destruction of the past." As Taylor puts it, "...if one wants to climb out of the epistemological prison, if one wants to be able to see this model no longer just as the contour map of the way things obviously are with the mind-in-world, but as one option among others, then a first step is to see it as something one could come to espouse out of a creative redescription, something one could give reasons for. And this you get by retrieving the foundational formulations" (2007:18).

understand the current discussion among the philosophers under consideration in this work.

Exploration in the study of eschatology and its use in contemporary philosophical discourse led to a conclusion of this work, that the phenomenon of Western eschatology plays an important hermeneutical function in understanding the modern world. This work approaches this subject on the premise that self-understanding requires a sense of the whole. This is accomplished by anticipating an “end” or in Heidegger’s words “Being-*toward*-the-end” where Dasein’s being is “determined by the fact that it is beyond itself in the directedness toward the final realization of its possibilities of existence” (Guignon 1983:92).² Understanding the present requires a stance toward the future as well as the past. In other words, *how* one views the future will in part determine *how* one views the present, and *how* one interprets the past is determined by one’s stance in regard to the future. This seems to hold true whether speaking individually or collectively.

As in the course of any philosophical study, questions give rise to additional topics. Such is the case when eschatology is considered. Among them is the relationship between teleology and eschatology, the concepts of progress and perfection, the ideas of eternity and infinity, and perhaps most important, cyclical and linear time. These subject will be considered only insofar as they relate to eschatology.

There are necessary limitations to this study. First, though the subject originates in theology, the focus here will not be religious in nature. There will not be any discussion on the particulars of a theological analysis, such as the afterlife, judgment, etc., nor comparisons made to the various eschatological theories common in religion. Second, there are other philosophers who have engaged the topic and could be studied for

² Also see Guignon 1983:56, 88,

their specific contribution. Some will only be mentioned in this work who have a point of contact with Heidegger, Berdyaev, and Blumenberg. Hopefully, this work would serve as a catalyst for additional analysis of these and other philosophers who have treated the subject. The conclusions of this project are in no way considered final, but are intended to open the way for further investigation on an enduring subject in Western thought. It may be useful as a prolegomena to define certain terms that will be pertinent to this investigation.

The Meaning of Eschatology

Eschatology is “the study of final things” or “discourse about the end” (McGrath 1994:465). The term originates from the Greek *eschatos* meaning *last, end, or final things* and was primarily applied to *space*, as in farthest or extreme in distance.

However, it is the aspect of *time* that is usually emphasized.³ The modern use of the term arose in a theological context. The most basic meaning is “the department of theological science concerned with the four last things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell.”

Eschatology as a theological term is first found in the English language in the mid-nineteenth century. The earliest example of its use is by George Bush in his work, *Anastasis* (1845) where he addresses “Scriptural Eschatology.” In 1858, J. Martineau wrote “The Eschatology of the Apocalypse and the Epistles” (Sykes 1976:353).

However, the term was first used by German theologians during the seventeenth century. The Post-Reformation Lutheran theologian Johann Gerhard first used it in his *Loci Theologici* (1610-1622) in discussion of “last things.” The term was also used by Philipp Heinrich Friedlieb’s, *Dogmatics* (1644) and orthodox Lutheran theologian Abraham Calov’s *Systema locorum Theologicorum* (1677) where he addresses the “last things”

³ See “εσχάτος” in Liddell and Scott, 1976:699-700 and Kittle 1964:697-698.

(*extrema*) and applies it to the human person (microcosmos) and the world (macrocosmos). Theologically eschatology is the “set limit” imposed by God on human affairs. It was the “finale of dogmatics” and was viewed as a “movement towards God” (Sauter 1996:136-139).⁴

The scope of eschatology traditionally includes two general categories: *individual* or *personal* eschatology, and *general* or *cosmic* eschatology. *Individual* eschatology addresses questions of life after death, the relationship of body and soul, the possibility of consciousness after physical death, immortality, etc., while *general* eschatology entails the return of the Messiah, the resurrection and judgment, heaven and hell, etc.

Eschatology simply put is the “end of time.” Toward the end of the nineteenth century the term entailed any theory about the end of human life or the end of the world (Davis 2000: 254; Willis 1987). Hans Schwarz’s extends the definition of the term: “Eschatology also is determined by and determines our understanding or humanity of body and soul, and of value systems and worldviews” (2000:26). The general thrust, therefore, is that which pertains to the *future*. It is “talk about the end” but not merely the end of anything (Collins 2003:64). Wagar defines eschatology as that which “seeks and analyzes answers to the question of what will happen at the end—the end of time, the end of man, the end of civilization” (1982:6). Concepts of the future are “terminal images.” The idea of eschatology was born out of the desire of hope in a situation of tumult.

Sauter says of those who wrote eschatological works,

They were writing at a time when prospects were particularly gloomy, in the midst of religious wars and political and spiritual revolutions far wider-reaching

⁴ The last part of the *Dogmatics* is entitled *Eschatologia seu Florilegium theologicum exhibens locorum de morte, resurrectione mortuorum, extreme iudicio, consummatione seculi, inferno seu morte aeterna et denique vita eternal* (Stralsund, 1644). In 1677, Abraham Calov called the last section of his *Systema locorum Theologicorum*, “Eschatologia Sacra.”

than the upheaval of the Reformation period. Much appeared to be coming to an end, perhaps the very end of everything was near. In this mood of approaching catastrophe these theologians, by placing eschatology in a prominent position in their dogmatics, gave an indirect but nonetheless clear answer. They summoned their readers—theologians and, through them, congregations—back from escapism, whether of apocalyptic dreams or Utopian wishful thinking, and confronted them with God acting to judge and redeem. (1996:140)

In this work, the use of the terms “eschatologically,” “the eschatological,” or “idea of eschatology” refer to the manner of thinking about the future which anticipates an end either in the distant future or imminently as with apocalyptic expectation, or the expectation of an utopian existence.

Eschatology and Teleology

While the term eschatology has definite religious associations, teleology does not necessarily. Eschatology was introduced to the West through the biblical texts, teleology on the other hand originates with the Greeks. *Telos* had the primary meaning in Greek of “coming to pass,” “completion,” or “attainment,” and applied to either time or space (Liddle and Scott 1976:1772-1774). Teleology is likewise the “study of ends or final causes” especially as it applies to the “design or purpose in nature.”⁵ There was not unanimity of understanding the term among the Greek philosophers. The early Greek philosophers (Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, Diogenes of Apollonia) applied it to a general causal principle or *arche* governing all the cosmos (fire, *nous*). Plato made the distinction between works produced by *nous*, which was the principle factor by design (*techne*), and those of necessity (*anake*), which are identified with chance-nature (*Timaeus*, 47e; *Laws*, 888e). According to Aristotle, *telos* is essentially the Good and

⁵ “Eschatology” vol. 1, *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 23rd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

final cause of the cosmos, limiting *nous* to human *techne* (Peters 1967:191-192).⁶ His understanding of *telos* later prevailed in the natural law tradition (Percy and Thaxton 1994:100-110).

A central problem in understanding the terms is that they have been used synonymously. This has made any distinction very difficult and confusing.⁷ In some cases the differences are matters of degree, as seen in the phrases “metaphysical teleology” or “eschatological telos.” (Romanes 1904; Voegelin 1962:188). Both terms are clearly concerned with ends, goals, or purposes within human experience and within nature. Apart from these similarities, differences in nuance can be discerned. Teleology does not necessitate an absolute, total, final end. The idea of an *infinite* and eternal material universe is compatible with teleology, while eschatology stresses the finality of historical time and usually a radical and abrupt transformation from one kind of existence to another. Teleology is generally compatible with the notion of *immanent*, while eschatology stresses the *transcendent*. The nature of change and transition in teleology is generally gradual, involving a process, while in eschatology change is generally abrupt and immediate or apocalyptic. Teleology is associated with rational explanation; eschatology with faith or the “irrational.” What the second chapter will demonstrate is that the eschatological and teleological have had a concurrent relationship especially at certain times in the history of the West. An explanation of why the difference will be offered at the conclusion of the paper.

Apocalypticism and Millennialism

⁶ See *Phys.* 11, 195a; 198a, 199b; *Meta.* 1013b.

⁷ See Liddell and Scott entries on *εσχατος* and *τελος*.

Other terms associated with eschatology are *apocalypticism* (apocalyptic) and *millennialism*. Apocalypticism is a defining characteristic of the three Western monotheistic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The term is derived from *apokalupsis*, meaning “revelation.” According to the McGinn, Collins and Stein in the *Continuum History Of Apocalypticism*, “Apocalypticism, broadly described as the belief that God has revealed the imminent end of the ongoing struggle between good and evil in history” (McGinn, Collins and Stein 2003:ix). In the West, apocalypticism is connected to the complex of ideas associated with the New Testament Apocalypse (Book of Revelation). It is defined by the *imminent* end of history and the catastrophic events preceding the end of history (McGill et al. 2003:ix).

Apocalypticism is characterized by its manner of communication, drawing heavily on dramatic, traditional religious symbols used to express vivid expectation of a violent end to human history. The end of the world or age is preceded by conflict and the persecution of the faithful. Some of the key elements are the resurrection of the dead and the divine judgment, followed by the punishment of the wicked and the transformation of the cosmos in which the just live forever (Daley 2003:221-222).⁸ Abrams notes that in recent literary criticism “apocalypse” means any “sudden and visionary revelation, or any event of violent and large-scale destruction—or even anything which is very drastic” (1971:41).

It was during the inter-Testamental biblical period that apocalyptic literature flourished among the Jews and lasted through the Roman period. Collins says that the

⁸ Other characteristics of apocalyptic include pseudepigraphic authorship, claims of authority based on revered ancient religious figure, revelatory, narrated in dream or vision, involve marvelous journey through ordered cosmos, a critique of political and religious structures considered evil, a call to deeper religious commitment, strict morals, an awaiting a resolution of the riddles, normally sectarian productions for a community of faith either beleaguered or marginalized.

“historical” type of apocalypse faded by the second century in both Judaism and Christianity, but reappeared during Medieval period when it was replaced by a “heavenly journey” theme which “reflect[ed] a world with little anticipation of revolutionary change but with a strong orientation toward another, heavenly world beyond this one” (Collins 2003:84). It is commonly held that apocalyptic literature arose during times of political and social upheaval. This may be the case but Collins suggests this view is limited arguing more generally that the works were born in a world “out of joint.” They looked to another world because of the unsatisfactory nature of the present world. Apocalyptic may not only be a response to crisis but may also have arisen to buttress power, as in the case of Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

Throughout history, there has been a reciprocal relationship between apocalypticism and political/social events. Real political and social concerns have fueled apocalypticism but have also been fueled by apocalyptic.⁹ Apocalypses were written generally to console and exhort the faithful. However, the consolation came from the realization that comfort cannot be fully realized in this life but in the one to come. “Apocalyptic hope is invariably hope deferred.” Following Jacques Ellul, apocalypticism according to Moshe Idel is the “unveiling of a collapsing reality” (Idel 2003:355). Idel, “Thus, the boundary situation of apocalypticism served as the arena for imagining present problems and/or solving them through religious imagination. Apocalyptic eschatology is dramatic, much more than spiritual salvation, or individual eschatology, which deals with psychological processes” (Idel 2003:366). There is also a positive dimension to apocalypticism. In explicit apocalypticisms “the ‘collapsing’ vision of reality is never

⁹ An example of this is in the medieval Christian’s desire to free Jerusalem was motivated by both political and eschatological imaginaries. For examples also among medieval Jews, see Moshe Idel, “Jewish Apocalypticism 670-1670” (2003:366).

detached from its more positive sequel dealing with the dramatic improvement that follows the collapse of the older order” (Idel 2003:355).

Apocalypticism has remained an enduring feature of Western religion for over two thousand years (Collins 2003:85-86). Frank Kermode in *The Sense of an Ending* views apocalypticism as the key to understanding most of mainstream modern literature which began in Renaissance literature. Modern’s have rejected the “naïve” apocalypticism of antiquity and replaced it with a “sophisticated” apocalypticism which provides a beginning and end and sense of moving through time (Wagar 1982:10).

The term “millennialism” (from the Latin *mille*) and the Greek equivalent (“chiliasm”) means “1000 years” and originates from an obscure passage the New Testament book of Revelation, chapter twenty.¹⁰ How one understood this chapter determined the position regarding the future millennium. According to Wagar, a “millennial vision” is a pre-heavenly utopia which sets forth a foretaste of eternal bliss before the end of history, an age of justice and peace (1982:6). In general, the millennium was understood either spiritually or materially, but it usually referred to a better age on earth.

In Christian theology, there are three views of the millennium. The “pre-millennial view” is apocalyptic. It maintains that earthly life will progressively become more evil. Prior to the end apocalyptic signs will occur and the Messiah is revealed and rules on earth for a thousand years. After the period of peace and prosperity evil manifests itself for a final time, at which point earthly existence is transformed into heavenly existence.

¹⁰ See Appendix A for the text.

The second view is “post-millennialism.” The post-millennialism holds that the world progressively improves with the advancement of the Christian gospel. As society gradually improves a thousand year period of blissful existence begins on earth. At the end of the thousand years, certain apocalyptic signs occur before the arrival of the Messiah. The third view is “amillennialism.” It holds that the millennium is “spiritual” in nature. This view is usually accredited to Augustine who believed that life experienced presently in the church is the millennium of Revelation 20. Historically this view maintained an end of earthly existence, preceded by apocalyptic signs.

Messianism and Parousia

A related term is “Messianism” which is the hope for a heaven-sent savior who will usher in the better age. Messianism is a distinct phenomenon, insofar as it focuses on specific savior figures (McGinn et al. 2003:ix). According to Idel, apocalypticism and Messianism are equivalent. Messianism is almost always associated with *imminent* apocalypticism. The messianic advent is often associated with “natural upheavals, religious conversions, bloody wars ushering in mass murder, the death of messianic figures, etc.” (Idel 2003:355). The term *parousia* is used by Heidegger and Berdyaev which means “appearance” or “coming.” In the New Testament it is applied to the eschatological second coming of Christ.

Cyclical or Linear Time

There are only two ways to understand historic time. Either time as cyclical or as coming to a final end (linear). Both cyclical and linear concepts relate to cosmic eschatological views. It is reasonable that cyclical time is the most primordial based on phenomenal human experience in nature. The cyclical conception is an extrapolation of

the rhythms found in nature; the cycle of the seasons, generations of animal and human life, and revolutions of the heavenly bodies. In pre-modern cultures the cycle was an indication of health directed by a divine order of things (Wagar 1982:34).¹¹ The cyclical view offered rebirth after destruction, and the hope of a normality or balance. The cyclical view, however, was fatalistic; humans were at the mercy of the forces of nature. Human effort counted less than in a linear view.

The linear concept of future time is believed to have originated in the Near East (Wagar 1982:43-44).¹² The linear concept offered a promise of final public judgment where good won over evil and every score was settled. With the linear concept the wheel of time stopped and a new order and existence was realized for humans, whether on earth or in heaven. The linear view provided more hopefulness and a militancy of spirit not characteristic of the cyclical (Wagar 1982:34-36). There is no question that the linear conception prevailed in the West. While linear time has been predominate, however, it does not mean that cyclical concepts were absent in Western thought.

¹¹ “The thought of such a major cycle, showing that earth and sky were no less mortal than a man or a leaf, was even a consolation, and a confirmation of the oneness and kinship of all being” (1982:34).

¹² Wagar, however, maintains that linear conceptions found among nomadic warrior-herdsmen and other pre-civilized cultures were the earliest. Examples given are found in Australia, East India, the Cargo Cults of Melanesia, Altaic Tatars of Central Asia (myth of Khan), and the Norse vision of Ragnarök. The debate is whether such groups were influenced by external sources.

CHAPTER TWO

ESCHATOLOGY IN WESTERN THOUGHT

For the past one hundred years, the subject of eschatology was critical to the philosophy of certain philosophers. Arguments for and against its importance for philosophy have been offered, yet the discussions have shown a limited understanding of the nature and scope of eschatology in general. Those philosophers who have addressed the subject reveal an understanding of eschatology limited to one tradition which goes back to the medieval period at the earliest.

In order to gain a clearer picture of the role that eschatology has played in Western thought it is necessary to see the large scope. The purpose of this chapter is to offer a more complete picture of the eschatological narrative that affected Western thought. Western eschatology originated in the Near East. From Hebrew thought came the linear view of historical time so commonly assumed in Western thought. It was through the influence of Christianity, however, that pagan Europe embraced this linear concept of time. What students of the subject often do not understand is that, while linear time has been the unconscious understanding of historical time, the elements from the pagan West, especially through Greek influence, were not completely extinguished in the Christian eschatological tradition.

What comes into view from a study of the history of eschatology is that there are two general eschatological views of the future. The earliest and most enduring in the

West is the view set forth by Augustine that combined an interpretation of the Jewish and Christian scriptures with a dispensational view of time that loosely originated in Persian thought. The Augustinian view became the standard Roman Catholic or Latin position from the early Middle Ages onward, but was also continued in the West through much of Protestant theology. During the Middle Ages, however, an alternative view arose. It received its impetus, not primarily from Oriental sources, but from Greek, particularly Alexandrian theology. This change began with Joachim of Fiore whose influential three-fold conception of historical time, provided an alternative understanding for European Christians, especially in German theology and philosophy. Both strains of eschatological thought affected and were affected by Enlightenment science, particularly in relation to the studies of astronomy, physics, and biology. Throughout this chapter the inter-relatedness of these eschatological developments with political action is highlighted. These developments in political action were important to the rise of modern revolutionary movements. This chapter ends by demonstrating the importance of eschatology on the idea of progress and the development of what might be labeled a “teleological eschatology” in German thought in the twentieth century.

Eschatology of Babylon, Persia, and Greece

The eschatological tradition of the West traces its roots to the apocalyptic literature in the Near East to the period of late third millennium Babylon BCE, which stands with Athens and Rome as the cultural ancestor of the West (Clifford 2003:7).¹ Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932) was the first to locate apocalyptic literature to the ancient

¹ See also Saggs 2000. Such a great city was Babylon that Alexander planned to make it the world capital. He began to rebuild the ziggurat (tower), but his death ended the project.

Babylonian “Combat myth” (*Gattung*),² whose themes included “primal time” (*Urzeit*), “end-time” (*Endzeit*), creation and new creation (Clifford 2003:3).³ These dramatic narratives were ancient Near Eastern way of thinking “philosophically” about the world.

Clifford notes,

Retelling one basic narrative in slightly different versions enabled ancients to reflect about the governance of the world and explain the course of history, especially the history of their own nation. Their era took for granted the existence and power of the gods and factored them into their reflection, as our era takes for granted and reckons with a different (and less ultimate) range of forces, for example, the power of ideas, of free trade, of energy resources. To do philosophy, theology, and political theory, modern thinkers employ the genre of the discursive essay rather than the narrative of the combat myth. Despite the differences, one should not forget that ancients and moderns share an interest in ultimate causes and both are intent on explaining the cosmos, the nature of evil, and the validity and the functions of basic institutions. Apocalyptic literature at bottom is not bizarre and opaque, but is rather a narrative way of reflecting about theology, philosophy, and history, and of inculcating a way of life. (2003:26)

Central to ancient Mesopotamian eschatological understanding was the interpretation of the movements of the astrological constellations. The practice of astrology in ancient Babylon goes back to 3000 BCE. The Babylonian “Dominion of the Zodiac” consisted of the number twelve, which represented their gods. Twelve divisions were assigned time values of one-thousand years each to form the Dominion of the

² See Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit and Endzeit: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 Ap Joh 12* where he argues that Genesis 1 and Revelation 12 are adaptations of traditions ultimately from Babylon. Gunkel argued that apocalyptic literature was rooted in The Combat Myth was the normal way of thinking about the world. Examples of Mesopotamian myths include Lugal-e, Anzu, and Enuma elish. Later discoveries (from 1929) of Ugartic, Sumerian and Akkadian texts have demonstrate a link, according to Clifford, to the Biblical apocalyptic literature. “Creation” accounts were not typically of the physical order, but what emerged from the victory of a successful God was a populated universe of organized human society in service to the gods and king.

³ “Prophetic” texts from Mesopotamia typically begin with the phrase “a prince shall arise” which are prophecies after the fact (*vaticinia ex eventu*). Clifford notes that passages from *Daniel*, *I Enoch*, and the *Sibylline Oracles* follow this style. The prophecies show that “the apocalypticists were anthologists, borrowing genres such as the post-factum prediction to demonstrate that the course of history was under God’s control and that in their day history as they knew it had come to an end and a new ages was about to dawn.” The most relevant themes from these early works which influence the later apocalyptic literature are cosmic threat and new creation.

Zodiac. The Zodiac was divided in two six-thousand year sections: the first division applied to the formation of the world; the second division to the duration of mankind. Much later, during the Hellenistic period, a Babylonian priest named Berossus, writing in Greek, popularized the Chaldean doctrine of the “Great Year” which claimed the cosmos was eternal, but was periodically destroyed and reconstructed every Great Year. The number of millennia varied according to the different accounts (Weber 2000:39).

In the first millennium BCE the dominant empires were the Neo-Assyrian empire (935-612 BCE) and its successor, the Persian empire (539-333 BCE) both complex and vast in extent (Clifford 2003:4-5). Among the ancient Iranians there were competing cosmologies. In Persia, Zoroasterianism had the longest influence (Baumgartner 1999:9).⁴ The oldest Avestan text, the *Gāthās*,⁵ Ahura Mazda is honored as “creator” of the universe. Creation is a long process where Good overcomes Evil. The purpose of the creation is to entrap and eliminate evil. This dualist creation myth can be traced back at least to the Achaemenian times (c. 500 BCE) (Hultgård 2003:34, 53-55).⁶

The Zoroastrians maintained a linear concept of time (Weber 2000:39). World history consisted of nine thousand year time periods grouped into three three-thousand

⁴ The religion of Persia was Zoroastrianism. The dates of the founder, Zoroaster (Greek for Zarathustra), are unknown, but Persian sources would locate him about 600 BC. According to tradition he was a priest in the archaic Persian religion. He abandoned it at age 20 because disillusioned with tenets and corruption of the priests. At age 30 he received a revelation from Ahura Mazda, “the wise lord” who was “the source of all truth and good, the creator of angels and the human race.” concerning the truth of the universe.

⁵ The *Gāthās* are allegedly the hymns of Zoroaster written in a complicated poetic style. This lends to the difficulty for modern interpreters for the worldview and rituals are still unknown. Binary distinctions are drawn on several levels, Truth and Lie, day and night, etc. see Hultgård 2003:49-51.

⁶ Plutarch illustrates the awareness among Greco-Roman writers familiarity of Iranian apocalyptic beliefs. He probably drew on Theopompus’ work written in the early fourth century B.C.E. The “Oracles of Hystapes” related to the Sibylline tradition were used against the Macedonian and Seleucid rule in western Asia, and later against the Romans. Lactantius (*Divine Institutions*) in the 4th century C.E. was familiar with the text, most likely through his being well versed in Greek and Roman literature. See discussion in Hultgård, 56f.

year units.⁷ The first six-thousand year period is a time of conflict between good and evil that climaxes in a world crisis ending in the appearance of Hushedar Mah who inaugurates a millennium of messianic peace. In the last tri-millennia history ends with the elimination of evil which includes a resurrection of the dead. The world is ultimately restored to its original perfection (Hultgård 2003:36).⁸ Zoroaster was to appear at the first thousand year period and the savior named Sosans ushers in the final age of eternal bliss. Mankind ignores Zoroaster's teaching and degenerates into total corruption over a period of 1000 years (Bernoulli in Jackson 1977:374-375).⁹ Three of Zoroaster's descendents appear at each of the 1000 years to reverse the success of the anti-Christ Angra Mainyu (Weber 2000:39). Truth begins to prevail each 1000 years until the end of the tri-millennium at which time all the dead rise, purified by walking through molten metal, and given immortality. Angra assembles his forces for the final showdown in a horrendous war. Angra is destroyed with fire along with his demons and the present

⁷ First period consisted of 3000 years. Angra Mainyu, the Zoroastrian antichrist, was locked away in bottomless pit of darkness. Toward the end of the period he escaped and introduced evil into the world. Ahura Mazda forced to make a truce with him which consisted of Ahura ruling 3000 years then Angra ruling another 3000 years afterward. The second 3000 year period is the rule of Ahura. He creates man and endowed man with free will to choose between good and evil. In the third 3000 year period which is the present era Angra took over and introduced natural evils like earthquakes, volcanoes. He took advantage of human free will to seduce mankind into doing evil.

⁸ The tradition of the twelve-thousand-year scheme was a later development from the Islamic period.

⁹ The version found in the Bahman Yasht pictures the millennium of Zoroaster as a time of historical decline. Zoroaster appears (symbolized by gold) but calamities the close of the millennium, and aged symbolized by mixed iron. (This idea of history declining from a golden age to an evil one is parallel in Hesiod's five succeeding races (genos) and the Indian belief of four world ages (see Hesiod, Works and days 109-201 and Māhabhārata III, 186-189). Toward the end of Zoroaster's millennium are apocalyptic signs. (see Bahman Yasht, Dēnkard book 7, and the Jāmāsp Namag.) Weber says that early Zoroastrians originally thought the world to end soon in a conflagration. When it did not come, they formulated a cosmic drama that consisted of 4 periods of 3000 years each (2000:39). Bernoulli notes that Zoroastrians believed in the continuance of life after death, and retribution after death, not just the individual but also the end of the world's history.

world. Ahura Mazda transforms the world, levels the mountains, fills valleys and humanity lives in united bliss (Baumgartner 1999:10).¹⁰

Jewish Eschatology

The concept of linear history received in the West would not have been realized except through the influence of the Hebrew writings. Because of the striking similarities between ancient Persian (Zoroastrian) and Judeo-Christian apocalyptic, the question is raised whether Zoroastrianism influenced Jewish eschatology. Richard Kyle argues that Zoroastrianism influenced Jewish eschatological views after the Babylonian exile (1998:28). John Collins says, though Hebrew eschatology has its roots in Mesopotamian combat myths and may be traced to Zoroaster, “a clearer line of transmission can be traced to the Hebrew prophets” and that the Hebrew prophets projected the conflicts in the combat myths into the future (Collins 2003:68). Baumgartner views Zoroastrianism as a possible influence but places more emphasis on the political experience of the Jews (1999:11).¹¹ There remain questions, however, concerning the antiquity of the texts (Hultgård 2003:49f.). During the early decades of the twentieth century, the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (William Bousset, Richard Reitzenstein, and Eduard Meyer) argued for a strong influence by Persian sources on Jewish and Christian eschatology. However, more recently others, such as Carsten Colpe, Norman Cohn, have argued that since the Iranian sources are of later date, it is possible that Hellenistic Jewish

¹⁰ Weber says in a footnote, “A French Protestant who traveled and traded in seventeenth-century Persia noted the Zoroastrian Apocalypse, when all mountains and minerals would be melted, ‘this world shall be leveled,’ and resurrected souls would behold and praise God.” (2000:245-246 note 11). Cf. *Les Six voyages de Jean-Baptiste Tavernier*, Paris, 1676.

¹¹ Baumgartner says, “The trauma of exile in Mesopotamia and the destruction the Temple, followed by the triumphant return and the Temple’s rebuilding, and perhaps Zoroastrian influence, encouraged a sense of history as the playing out of God’s will. From then on, the Jews had a keen sense of eschatology and also began to develop a doctrine of life after death.”

and Gnostic ideas influenced the Iranian literature. The debate continues as to which was predominately influential over the other.¹² Regardless of which is most original, the fact remains that linear eschatology was perpetuated by Jewish thought. Hebrew eschatology properly begins with the 8th century prophet Amos, with his concept of the “end” (Heb. *haqqeš*). This imagery of the end was significantly developed during the Babylonian Exile (586-539 BCE) and later in the rise of Christianity (Collins 2003:64).¹³

Collins argues that there is an “increased use of cosmic imagery to express the hope of a radical transformation of human affairs” (2003:68). The expected judgment was general and was used to “compensate for the powerlessness of Israel” and to “console” groups alienated from Jewish power structures. There were three phases of Hebrew eschatology: First, sixth and fifth century (BCE) Jewish restoration in Jerusalem under the Persians (a proto-apocalyptic period); Second, the Hellenistic period at the persecution by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (168-164 BCE) and Maccabean revolt; and third the rise of Christianity and the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Collins observes that in the move from the first to second phase, there are no examples of eschatology other than what was included in the Hebrew Scriptures. In the second phase, there was a shift toward the concern for history. This is reflected in the books of Daniel and Enoch. Collins argues this reflects the influence of Hellenism. “The books of Enoch and Daniel arise out of a cultural crisis precipitated by Hellenism and aggravated by the

¹² Hultgård concludes, “There was no direct and general borrowing of the Iranian apocalyptic eschatology as such by Judaism and Christianity. Instead, the influence exerted itself in an indirect way but was of no less importance. The encounter with Iranian religion produced the necessary stimulus for the full development of ideas that were slowly under way within Judaism” (Hultgård 2003:60). See Hultgård, 30ff for additional discussion on the debate.

¹³ For the prophet Amos, the end was of the end of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The later prophets used this terminology into a cosmic judgment. C.f. Amos 8:18-20; Is.13:9-13.

persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes” (Collins 2003:77).¹⁴ It was during this time period that “apocalyptic literature” arose in Palestine.

Of all the Hebrew eschatological works, the most significant apocalyptic text to influence the West was the Book of Daniel. This work chronicles the life of Daniel during the Babylonian and Medo-Persian reigns and is purported to have been written by one of the royal families of Judaism.¹⁵ According to the text, Daniel was brought to Babylon from Jerusalem after the destruction of the city (586 BCE) and was instructed in the “literature and language of the Chaldeans” (i.e., Chaldean astrology). Daniel contains the most explicit expression of linear time as he prophetically foretells of kingdoms to come before the “end time” (Heb., *‘et qeš*, Dan.11:35, 40). Daniel, along with other apocalyptic works, would have a monumental impact on Western thought into the modern period. Before continuing on the Judeo-Christian impact, it is important to highlight pagan contributions during the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

Pagan Eschatological Influences on Judaism and Christianity

While Judeo-Christian eschatology dominated through most of the history of the West, it was not without pagan eschatological contributions. Throughout most of Western history Greek or pagan conceptions of cosmic time coexisted with Judeo-Christian ideas. The early Greek philosophers, Anaxagoras, Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Democritus held to a view of cosmic destruction most likely originating in myths of

¹⁴ Antiochus IV “Epiphanes” (c. 215 BCE – 164 BCE) was a Seleucid king who ruled Israel from 175 BCE to his death. See Collins, 73. “In the heat of the Maccabean crisis the interest shifts from the mysteries of the cosmos to those of history, and the sense of imminent expectation becomes greater.”

¹⁵ The ancient Jewish historian Josephus says Nebuchadnezzar took “some of the most noble of the Jews...kinsmen of Zedekiah.” *Antiquities of the Jews* (10.10.1-2).

Homer and Hesiod (Wagar 1982:37-39).¹⁶ A widely held belief was the idea of a previous Golden age, an age which according to belief might still exist in an unknown place or return again in the future. Plato and Aristotle held there were cycles of birth and rebirth of civilizations.¹⁷ Their belief was likely based on the traditions of the world destroyed by a deluge, and of remnants of past great civilizations such as Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations. In the *Timaeus* (28b) Plato says the world had beginning and he looked forward to a “Great Year” (39d). At the close of the *Republic* he addressed both individual and cosmic eschatology and argues for the immortality of the soul (*Republic* X). The just soul who endures to the end will receive from the gods great rewards. Based on the testimony of Er’s near death experience, there is an afterlife where a judgment occurs in the ‘pilgrimage of a thousand years’ (Jowett 1892:325-338). Plato’s vision of the just state would play an important part in the eschatological vision of later Christian thinkers.

During the time of the Roman Empire, the notion of cyclical time prevailed, but there were differing views concerning the future on earth. Virgil wrote concerning a millennial age in which life would become nearly divine (Kyle 1998:28).¹⁸ Epicureans and Stoics had a less optimistic view of the future. Lucretius viewed his own age as one of decay, using the analogy that the world was like fruit that ripens and then decays (Wagar 1982:37). The Stoics held the world would be destroyed by fire that would

¹⁶ However, it is also possible that the early philosophers were influenced by Near Eastern wisdom. Berossus of Chaldaea, for example, translated ancient Babylonian texts into Greek (third century B.C. E.) and taught the idea of the “Great Year.” According to Berossus, the world is periodically destroyed and renewed by a cosmic flood (during the “Great Winter”) and cosmic fire (during the “Great Summer”). See Wagar 1982: 39f for discussion on relationships to Hindu and other Eastern eschatologies.

¹⁷ Plato, *Laws* iii.656, 676-9; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, xi.21.

¹⁸ Virgil said, “The great march of centuries begins anew. The maiden returns, Saturn is king again. A new race descends from on high” (*Eclogues*, iv.5).

purify the world by eliminating evil, afterward the world would be reborn, and future inhabitants would be wiser (Kyle 1998:28).¹⁹ Natural occurrences, such as the eruption of Mount Vesuvius (79 CE) were seen as a signal of the coming cosmic conflagration (Weber 2008:38).²⁰ It is important to note that the notion of progress was absent in pagan thought.

Two significant influences on Christian eschatology into the Middle Ages were Neo-Platonism and the Sibylline Oracles. Though very different in their nature, Neo-Platonism and the Sibylline Oracles would affect the Christian understanding of eschatology. Neo-Platonism would influence the theological understanding of eschatology from the medieval period into the Modern age especially in the German tradition, while the Sibylline Oracles influenced political expectations connected with eschatology.

Neo-Platonism and the Sibylline Oracles

According to Abrams, Neo-Platonism influenced Christianity in three categories: First, the personal God in Christianity becomes an impersonal first principle or absolute. Second, evil is defined as a separation from unity. The fall of man is a falling away from the One to a position of remoteness and alienation from the source. Sin becomes self-centeredness. Third, death is a state of division from the One (1971:151-152).²¹ According to Abrams (1971:153),

¹⁹ Seneca, who died in 65 CE, expected a final conflagration to obliterate the creation. He said “All we see and admire today will burn in the universal fire that ushers in a new, just, happy world.”

²⁰ Seneca had said, “A single day will bury the human race, and devour whatever fortune has long favored, whatever has been raised high, all fame, all beauty, the great empires of man” (as quoted by Wagar 1982:37).

²¹ Abrams states, “the Neoplatonic circle of emanation and return manifested itself most widely in the concept of *circuitus spiritualis*, a power current of “love,” or cohesive and sustaining supernatural

Elements of the Neoplatonic world view were incorporated into the doctrinal categories of many bulwarks of Western orthodoxy, including Augustine, Aquinas, and Dante. In these writers, however, by virtue of their firm distinction between the literal and allegorical meanings of Scripture, Neoplatonism was limited to the status of a metaphysical superstructure upon a creed which remained fixed in the literal story.

Proclus (5th century CE) offered a theory of procession and *epistrophe* [return to the source] as a *circular* movement of events; the smaller circles of emanation return to their secondary principles and are comprehended with the single great circle of all things. There is a departure from their primal unity, subdivision, and a re-convergence. Abrams calls this the “great circle” within the circle, the end is its beginning. In the end, all return to divine unity. This circular conception was more radically and comprehensively applied to the understanding of time and history. It was temporalized and given a specific historical beginning and end. “That is, the eternal circulation become single circle, which begins in unity and perfection and then, in a given span of time, moves around and down into division and evil and around and back up again to unity and perfection, and there it stops” (Abrams 1971:152). This is applied not only to world and all mankind, but to the life of each redeemed soul.

While it is true that that Neo-Platonism differs from the concept of Christian *Heilsgeschichte*, it does have an impact on understanding future eschatological time.²² Attempts will be made to join the linear concept of time in Christianity with Neo-Platonic

energy, which flows ceaselessly from God down through the successive levels of ever remoter being and circles back to God....” (151-152).

²² Abrams says, “Taken overall, however, Neoplatonism, with its abstract and impersonal first principle and unending circling of procession and *epistrophe*, is radically alien to the Christian *Heilsgeschichte*, with its personal God and its plot, which occurs in time and only once for all time, and begins with a creation, moves through a fall, incarnation, passion, and second coming, and comes to an end in an apocalypse” (1971:150-151).

monism.²³ This importance will be noted in the chapter on Berdyaev's eschatology in this work.

The *Sibylline Oracles* likewise played an important role in the history of eschatological discussion and expectation (Bartlett 1985:35).²⁴ This collection of pseudepigraphal writings in the apocalyptic style were written over an extended period. The group of writings known as the Sibylline Oracles were inspired by the pagan myth, but were also productions of both Jews and later Christians.²⁵ These writings gained popularity over this period of time not only among Jews and Christians but pagans intellectuals as well (Bartlett 1985:35).²⁶ The Oracles were accredited to Sibyls, inspired female prophetesses most likely modeled on the "pythonesses" at Delphi. Originally, it was a proper name as attested by Heraclitus, Aristophanes, Plato and Aristotle (Bartlett 1985:36).²⁷

²³ Abrams also notes the influence in later Christian thought: "This "world scheme . . . exerted a profound attraction upon both Hebrew and Christian theologians, and it altered in many ways and to various degrees the creeds drawn from Scriptural revelation" (1971:150-151).

²⁴ *Day of wrath and doom impending,
David's word with Sibyl's blending,
Heaven and earth in ashes ending.*

From the hymn *Dies Irae* in the fourth century "Mass for the Dead." Translated by T. W. Irons, *English Hymnal*, no. 351, in Bartlett 1985:35.

²⁵ The collection of fifteen predominately Jewish and Christian writings were gradually produced over an extended period of time, between the second century B.C.E. and the fourth century C.E. Not all have survived. Three of the fifteen (Ix, x and xv) are completely lost and others consist in fragments.

²⁶ Virgil (*Aeneid*, vi.45f) probably used an early Jewish oracle in his announcement of the golden age of Augustus.

²⁷ The Sibyl was always portrayed as old women with great predictive power. She probably originated in Asia Minor, but was later connected with Delphi. Later, there were several sibyls from Greece, Italy, Egypt Persia and Babylon. A number of the early pagan oracles were stored by Augustus in the temple of Apollo on the Palatine hill. Heraclitus, according to Plutarch (*On the Pythian Oracles*, 6.397a) said the inspired Sibyl's voice reached "a thousand years."

“Sibyllism” originated in Alexandria about the same time “apocalyptic” began in Palestine. Ancient Jews became acquainted with the Sibyl myth and referred to her as “a prophethess of the high God” (Bartlett 1985:36-37). The Babylonian Sibyl, the third book and oldest in the collection (c. 140 BCE), is of importance to the Jewish eschatological tradition (Davies and Finkelstein 1984:487). It probably originated in Alexandria during the second century CE by Hellenistic Jews interested in Greek myth and written for a Greek audience (Davies and Finkelstein 1984:488). The early sections of this work call the Greeks to repentance from idolatry and before the end of the age, signs would occur prior to an age of peace and prosperity. After the series of future kingdoms, the Jewish God was to reign in the final period of time.²⁸

Judaism at large rejected the Sibylline Oracles because of its identification with paganism, but the works remained significantly important in the eschatology of later Christian writers (Davies and Finkelstein 1984:489).²⁹ The Oracles provided interpretative understanding of the Biblical texts and led in part to the idea of progress during the Modern period.

Early Christian Eschatology to Constantine

In the early centuries of Christianity, there were three sources of the eschatological inspiration—the New Testament writings and Jewish Apocalyptic sources centered in Palestine, eastern eschatological traditions from Mesopotamia, and Greek influences especially centered in Alexandria, Egypt. The most important eschatological influence on Western thought came through the Christian Scriptures. The New

²⁸ See Appendix B.

²⁹ A number of allusions and references are made by Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Lactantius who quotes extensively from the Oracles, along with Augustine (Bartlett 1985: 35).

Testament Gospels open with the proclamation of the imminent manifestation of the “Kingdom of God” (Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17) and end with the Apocalypse of John in the vision of a “new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1ff). Early Christian theologians debated the nature of the Kingdom of God. Was the kingdom to be an earthly political kingdom (cf. Rev. 20) or was it essentially a spiritual kingdom (cf. John 18:33-37; Luke 17:20-21)? This debate is seen even in the New Testament letters. The Apostle Paul discussed the nature of the Kingdom and addressed specific questions concerning both personal and cosmic eschatology.³⁰

After the first generation of believers, one of the challenges for the faithful was the delay in Christ’s promised coming. The explanation for the delay was that time was needed for the Gospel to be proclaimed throughout the whole world.³¹ The future resurrection, as pictured in Christ’s resurrection, was decisive, but its function was not chronologically imminent. Oscar Cullman later explained this as the “already, and not yet” eschatology (1950:84, 145). By 200 CE, the theologians began to formulate a doctrine of universal history. Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170-c. 236 CE), who held that Christ was to return about 550 CE, set forth in his *Chronica* the framework for a universally history used for centuries afterward in which he fuses “the providential destinies of Rome and the Christian religion into a single impressive proof of divine control over history.” Later Eusebius said that the “two great powers sprung up fully...out of one stream” (Hultgård 1985:59-60). It is at this time is the beginning of a positive union of eschatology with political history.

³⁰ I and II Thessalonians; I Corinthians 15: 12-58.

³¹ See Tertullian, *Apologia* 32, 39.

Eschatological expectations had been heightened by two factors: first, the persecutions by the state against the Christians which endured from the middle of the first century to the reign of Constantine, and second, the delay of the coming (*parousia*) of Jesus. A number of apocalyptic writings arose throughout the first part of the second century, likely due to the influence of earlier Jewish apocalyptic. These became rarer toward end of second century CE (Kyle 1998:35).³² Among the reasons suggested for its declining influence are the political establishing of the Church and the growing consensus concerning the unity of the canonical New Testament books (Daley 2003:222).³³ Discussions centered on a few biblical eschatological passages which were interpreted either historically, “spiritually,” or as metaphors for the present life of the church. What resulted was a “taming” of the apocalyptic (Daley 2003:223).³⁴ Later, the apocalyptic writings resurfaced during times of severe persecutions of the third and fourth centuries³⁵ and during times of political instability.³⁶ After the great persecutions the apocalyptic

³² Much attention has been given to the significance of apocalyptic and eschatology in general since the beginning of the twentieth century. Since Adolph von Harnack many have held that the prevailing view was not the imminent return of Christ, but millenarian expectations; a paradise on earth for the just. But more recently Charles Hill has show that millennial expectations were the exception. (Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Future Hope in Early Christianity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). However, there were millennial hopes by many in Asia Minor, Rome, and northern Africa. Brian E. Daley, “Apocalypticism in Early Christian Theology,” in Daley 2003:224.

³³ The most disputed book when the canon was discussed was the Apocalypse (Revelation) of John. (cf. Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.24f.; 7,25) Daley says, “In general, apocalyptic—like other literary and doctrinal features of early Greek East, Judaic Christianity—remained more readily accepted in the Latin West than in the Greek East, and interest in the book of Revelation was more a Latin than a Greek phenomenon.”

³⁴ Dan. 9:24-27; 12:1-13; Mal. 3:23f.; occasionally Isa. 65:17-25; Matthew 24-25 (especially 24:15-44) and par.; 1 Cor. 15:20-28; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; and Revelation 13; 17:3-18; and 20:1-21:5.

³⁵ E.g. the persecutions under Decius (249-251 CE) and Valerian (257-258 CE), and the “Great Persecution” under Diocletian (303-311 CE).

³⁶ See the works of “Judah,” Hippolytus of Rome, Firmilian, Dionysius of Alexandria, and Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage, Origen of Alexandria.

tradition lost its appeal. The reaction toward perceived evil would give occasion for eschatological responses throughout Western history.

Chilistic expectations remained stronger among the Western churches than the Eastern, though the earlier Western Church Fathers (Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian) believed in chiliasm because it was part of the early tradition of the church but also because Marcion and other Gnostics had rejected it. The earliest Christians had expressed a longing for Christ's coming and anticipated an end to history and the establishment of an earthly millennium (*Didache*, *Barnabas*, and *2 Clement*).³⁷ Eternal life and incorruptibility were viewed as gifts *presently* experienced in the church, and martyrdom was the direct access to union with the risen Christ. The author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* (c. 69-131 CE), perhaps the earliest Christian document outside the New Testament, shows that a belief in the six 1000-year periods found in early Persian and Jewish eschatologies. The last millennium was to begin at any time inaugurated by the appearance of Christ (MacCulloch 1912:388). Papias (c.60-130 CE), a Jewish convert who fled from Palestine to Phrygia after the Bar Kokhba revolt (Baumgartner 1999:34) and later bishop of Hierapolis, advocated a materialist or earthly millennialism.³⁸ Justin Martyr (100-168 CE) combined the six-day theory with Papias' materialist millennial

³⁷ See Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*. V; xxii.3f.; Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 3:39. I Clement and Hermas refer to the events in a continuing process giving sinners time to repent. Ignatius and Odes of Solomon (Syriac) suggest a "realized" eschatology: "the sense that final salvation is already real and available for the Christian." Ferguson, 310.

³⁸ "After the Parousia the earth would experience a transformation of nature in the Edenic millennium. Nature would provide bounty with stalks of wheat to have ten thousand ears. Baumgartner notes that a "virtually identical passage appears in a Jewish work, the Syrian *Apocalypse of Baruch*, from the late first century" (Baumgartner 1999:35). Eusebius a few centuries later from this time period describes: "after the resurrection of the dead there will be a period of a thousand years, when Christ's kingdom will be set up on this earth in material form." Eusebius continues: "I suppose he got these notions by misinterpreting the apostolic accounts and failing to grasp what they had said in mystic and symbolic language. For he seems to have been a man of very small intelligence, to judge from his books. But it is partly due to him that the great majority of church men after him took the same view, relying on his early date; i.e., Irenaeus and several others, who clearly held the same opinions" (*EH*, 152).

kingdom (Kyle 1998:37). He knew orthodox believers that did not share the hope of an earthly perfection of the Church.³⁹

Montanists and Manicheans

Non-orthodox believers offered their own eschatological explanations. These originated in the East and consisted of a blending of Christian and pagan ideas. The Montanists, a sect that arose in Phrygia about 165 CE, were one of the earlier non-orthodox Christian sects that held to an imminent return of Christ and the end of the world. Montanus, the leader of the sect, was formerly a priest of the goddess Cybele. Through prophetic ecstasy he prophesied concerning the Parousia, claiming his visions and prophecies were the “Third Testament” from the Holy Spirit (Kyle 1998:37).⁴⁰ The imminent Coming would take place in at Phrygian city of Pepuza, his hometown.⁴¹ Weber argues that Montanism was a reaction against “the growing institutionalization and secularization of the church by a return to original fervor” (Weber, 43). Because of the claim that new revelation was possible and that authority belonged to the prophets and not the bishops, Montanism was ultimately condemned by a synod of bishops around

³⁹ Justin believed during the millennium Jerusalem was to be rebuilt, embellished and enlarged. Cf. Justin Martyr *Trypho*, lxxx.

⁴⁰ Baumgartner says these are activities associated with millennialism. It was a time of famine and earthquakes in the region. Montanus said the spirit spoke through him like a lyre. “He would fall into a trance, not moving or speaking for hours; suddenly the Spirit would bring him into a frenzy of admonition, exhortation, and prophecy” (Baumgartner 1999:35-36).

⁴¹ The New Jerusalem was to descend from heaven as the sign of Christ’s coming, and Christians were urged to gather at Pepuza to wait for the coming by praying and fasting. This message spread throughout Asia Minor, Africa and Gaul. Epiphanius, who wrote two centuries later, said that in his day the faithful were still going to the by then destroyed site of Pepuza to wait for the Christ (Baumgartner, 37).

200 CE on the grounds of date setting and a coming material kingdom considered as “Judaizing” (Kyle 1998:37).⁴²

Another strong eschatological movement arose in the eastern Roman empire in Manichaeism. Its leader, Mani (c. 215 CE), traveled to India from Mesopotamia where he founded his religious movement, which blended elements from major religions of western Asia with Zoroastrianism.⁴³ Mani assumed prophetic authority teaching that the spark of inner light in every human desired to be free from material bondage. As Baumgartner explains, “When all but a minute portion of the light has returned to the Good, a cosmic battle will ignite a conflagration lasting for 1,486 years, which will destroy the entire material universe. Evil and Darkness will be locked into the abyss for eternity while Good and Light will reign forever” (Baumgartner 1999:34). His followers established communities from China to Western Europe having a tremendous influence in Europe until the middle ages.⁴⁴

Origen, Cyprian and Lactantius

Among the Orthodox Christians there was a gradual move away from the idea of an earthly millennialism toward a more political and inward focus. Perhaps it was because the “end” had not occurred but it was also due to the rejection of the

⁴² Baumgartner adds that accusations of Judaizing was because many expecting the immediate return also mandated adherence to Mosaic law. “Since Gentiles made up an ever increasing proportion of Christians, distinguishing themselves from the Jews was becoming ever more important” (39). MacCulloch states, “The excesses of Montanism helped to discredit the doctrine in the East, and to stamp it as Jewish rather than Christian” (388).

⁴³ Mani was born in Mesopotamia to prominent Iranian family and was eventually martyred by the Persians in 276 CE. Taking Paul as his example, called himself “the Apostle through the will of Jesus.”

⁴⁴ See Baumgartner 33f for more details. Mani held that Buddha and others were also God’s messengers. He argued, contra Zoroaster, that Good and Evil were more equal in power. Like Gnosticism, the human body and material world were the result of evil, yet in every human being is a spark of light wishing to be free from material bondage.

millennialism of Montanists, Manichaens, and its associations with Judaism.⁴⁵ The theologians of the eastern churches took a “spiritual” approach to eschatology which reflects the growing Greek influence. In the East, the most significant theologian in this period was Origen of Alexandria (185-254 CE) is accredited with the decline of the belief in millennialism. Though he had once held to a literal interpretation of Revelation and the New Testament in general (Kyle 1998:38),⁴⁶ he rejected millennialism based on the view that matter was the seat of evil. Rather than an earthly millennial paradise, he offered a “spiritual” interpretation of prophetic texts.⁴⁷ He interpreted the eschatological texts as either completed events or with a “spiritual” or allegorical meaning. He held that eschatological change occurs mainly in the soul (Keuhner and Dolan 1967:853).

Origen’s eschatology reflects his neo-Platonic influence. He offered an interpretation of time interpreting Revelation as a return to the Genesis paradise; the end is a return to the beginning, a return to the garden. This was the *apocatastasis*, the restoration of all things in Christ. History and the future is not in dark decline, but is a process of restoration of free creative minds under the providence of God.⁴⁸ Only the spiritually aware understood this process. Origen may have been the first to advocate the triumph of the Gospel in this world and the turn away from millennialism (Daley

⁴⁵ See G.P.F. “Millennium”, Vol. VI, in *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, John McClintock and James Strong 1981:265.

⁴⁶ Origen’s literal interpretation of Matthew 19:12 led him to castrate himself.

⁴⁷ See *De Principiis*, 2:11

⁴⁸ Origen, “On the End or Consummation”: “But since Paul says that certain things are visible and temporal, and others besides these invisible and eternal, we proceed to inquire how those things which are seen are temporal— whether because there will be nothing at all after them in all those periods of the coming world, in which that dispersion and separation from the one beginning is undergoing a process of restoration to one and the same end and likeness; or because, while the form of those things which are seen passes away, their essential nature is subject to no corruption.” (*De Prin.*, Bk.1.6.4)

2003:230).⁴⁹ His views were not popular in his time and were controversial among both Greek and Latin churches but were later condemned at the synod of Constantinople in 543 CE.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, his ideas were advanced by his disciples and gained traction among the elite (Bernoulli 1977:376).

Cyprian (d. 258 CE), the bishop of Carthage, presented an opposite position than Origen articulating a view held by many in the ancient world—that the world had grown old. There was a sense that the planet was decaying and could no longer “abide in that strength in which it formerly stood.” He stated, “if we alleged no proofs from the sacred Scriptures and from the divine declarations, the world itself is now announcing, and bearing witness to its decline by the testimony of its failing estate” (Tuveson 1949:13).⁵¹ Cyprian’s argument based on the observance of nature stated that the heavens were losing their powers to influence earthly affairs, and that the moral order was being subverted. He agreed with Pliny, Lucretius, and the Sibylline Oracles that nature was declining and the end was naturally near. Tuveson notes the importance of Cyprian’s influence,

Thus [Cyprian] made a very important synthesis. When the expectation of the early end of the world arose again just before and during the Reformation, the decay of nature and society was to hover over Western Europe as an omen of the Apocalypse; and one of the elements making possible the emergence of the “modern” world was the final discrediting of the idea, and its replacement with a doctrine of progress rather than degeneration in history. (1949:14)

Lactantius (c.240-c.320 CE), a professor of rhetoric, was perhaps the most significant contributor of eschatological ideas in the West prior to Augustine. Writing during a time of persecution, he linked millennialism with pagan concepts of a Golden

⁴⁹ See Origen, *De Principiis*, 1.5-6; 2.3; 3.1, 5-6 (G.P.F “Millennium”, 265).

⁵⁰ Due to its universalism, its spiritualizing of the resurrection of the body and the idea of a continual creation of new worlds. His position also included the redemption of the devil, complete annihilation of evil, and penalties of hell as tortures of conscience. Cf. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 3:186.

⁵¹ See Cyprian, *Epistle to Demetrianus* (Par.3, 5 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v.5).

age finding in pagan authors, such as Virgil and Chrysippus, intimations of divine truths which spoke of a cyclical restoration of all things.⁵² The pagans were confused, he argued, because they lacked revelation and mistakenly saw the golden age in the past. The golden age of an earthly paradise was yet to come (Tuveson 1949:12.).⁵³

In the last chapter of his *Divine Institutes*, Lactantius offered a scheme of the events of the last days of history.⁵⁴ He combined biblical texts with ancient Hermetic and Zoroastrian ideas as well as pagan philosophical and literary contributions on the end of the world. The world was in the final (sixth) millennium of history, old and falling into ruin. He believed it would end in two hundred years, about 500 CE. Just before the end would be a period of great sorrow (Tuveson 1949:12).⁵⁵ Roman rule would end, and ten tyrants would arise who were to be overthrown by “a mighty enemy from the north” after the cosmos would be devastated. A Syrian king (“son of the Devil”—the anti-Christ) would destroy the human race. After three and a half years, Christ comes and defeats him. Borrowing from Virgil’s *Fourth Eclogue* and the *Sibylline Oracles* he describes times of future prosperity and peace. There would be a total transformation of the natural order after a final skirmish with the Prince of Demons. With the destruction of paganism, the righteous rule with Christ a thousand years on earth.

Lactantius’ eschatology was not popular in his day, but afterward it became the apocalyptic of the learned elite and his influence would extend into the Reformation

⁵² See Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, VII, 22-24.

⁵³ He quotes from Virgil’s “Messianic” *Eclogue* as an accurate description of the golden age which is to come.

⁵⁴ Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 7:14-27.

⁵⁵ “Righteousness will be cast out, innocence will be hated, the wicked will prey on the good, the law of nature will be suspended, and the earth laid waste” (see Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, VII, 17f in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol.7.

(Daley 2003: 232-233). Harnack states, “These facts show how vigorously the early hopes of the future maintained themselves in the West. In the hands of moralistic theologians, like Lactantius, they certainly assume a somewhat grotesque form, but the fact that these men clung to them is the clearest evidence that in the West millenarianism was still a point of “orthodoxy” in the fourth century” (1929:496). This combination of Christian and pagan thought would be significant among Reformation and Post-Reformation authors.

Millennialism remained very strong until late in the reign of Constantine, but afterward it fell into disfavor among Christian writers for more than a thousand years. Among the reasons given for the disfavor is that millennial expectations had been disappointing. The empire was not overthrown, Nero not revived. In addition, Christianity had become the official religion and no longer suffered the threats of earlier persecutions. Added to the list were the increasing influence of Neo-Platonism on Christianity and the Oriental *mystiques* of world transcendence. “These influences,” according to Tuveson, “enforced the concept that salvation is a process of freeing one’s self from immersion in matter” (Tuveson 1949:15).⁵⁶

Post Constantinian Christians were inclined to accept the spiritualizing approach of Origen over Lactantius.⁵⁷ However, by the end of the fourth century and beginning of

⁵⁶ A representative of this new view is Eusebius of Caesarea. He opposed the literal interpretation of Revelation by the Chiliasts (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, 3.39.13; 7.24.1). Most famous was his attack was on Cerinthus who, in his view, advanced a Judaic Christianity with Gnostic overtones. He attacked his view of a material (“fleshly”) Jerusalem. He also included the second century church father Papias in his attack who failed to see the “true and ‘mystical’ meaning of the Apostles.” His theology of history was influential in West but especially East (Tuveson 1949:15).

⁵⁷ For an example, see Hillary of Poitiers and Ambrose of Milan.

the fifth there was a revival of apocalyptic expectations (Daley 2003:233-234).⁵⁸ The reasons for this are not altogether clear. Christians had enjoyed political favor and the large-scale persecutions were over. Some suggest it was the “worldly” nature of the post-Constantinian church. Others maintain there may have been disappointment or boredom with the state of the world or they realized their faith was not compatible with Hellenistic culture.⁵⁹ Persecutions against Christians persisted, though they were not as intense as earlier persecutions. Christians were frequently blamed for the social instability caused by the invasions from the East (the Goths, Huns, and Vandals). These continued persecutions served as reminders of their alienation from their social world.

What can be ascertained at this point in the examination of eschatology? First, that concept of linear time originates in the East pre-dating Greek (Western) philosophy. Second, there is no universally accepted concept of progress among pagans, Jews or Christians. The general consensus was decay or apocalyptic destruction of the world. Third, there was no singular Christian eschatology but two strands: one *external* and *material* that finds fulfilment in history looking for a future political/social millennium, the other *inner* or *spiritual* where the emphasis is not on time but in the development of the inner person (soul). These two strands will remain into the modern period and are

⁵⁸ Apollinarius of Laodicea held that Israel’s temple would be restored. The Priscillianist movement combined an apocalyptic cosmology and eschatology (see Augustine, *De haeresibus*, 70). Sulpicius Severus, the biographer of Martin of Tours composed a history of the world in his *Chronicle* where he says the corruptions of the church were a sign of the day of judgment (Daley 2003: 235). He maintained that firms Nero and the Antichrist must come to power. Nero, who had been miraculously kept alive would rule the west and the Antichrist would rule the east and would rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem claiming to be the Messiah. Eventually the Antichrist would defeat Nero and rule the nations, a view Martin believed.

⁵⁹ Daley speculates, “many in the churches seemed suddenly to experience a loss of confidence in the prospects of human resources and institutions, and a new sense of vulnerability and impending doom, in sharp contrast to the boundless optimism of Eusebius and his imitators” (Daley 2003:234).

important in understanding the use of eschatology in the philosophers considered later in this work.

Augustine

Augustine serves as one of the most important influences Western thought in the understating of future time. The eschatological significance of the fall of Rome for those living in the fifth century cannot be underestimated. By the end of the fifth century, there was an increased sense of doom. Many believed that the violence of the time and the sack of Rome by the Visigoths indicated the end of the world. As Rome was being sacked, Jerome, for example, looked for the transformation of the world to a more glorious form than presently experienced. Early in his career, he offered allegorical and historical interpretations of the end following the exegetical methodology of Origen (Daley 2003:239). After the fall of Rome, however, his hermeneutical approach changed.⁶⁰ Though many others believed that the sack of Rome (410 CE) indicated the end of time, Augustine viewed it differently. His chief work, *The City of God*, not only offered his explanation of the contemporary events but set in place an understanding of the *secular* and *celestial* authorities for at least a thousand years. In this work, Augustine offered a “correct interpretation” of the eschatological details (Augustine 1984).⁶¹

⁶⁰ Jerome lamented, “For days and nights I could think of nothing else but the safety of all the people; when my dear ones were captured, I felt myself a captive, too, sharing in the captivity of the saints.... After the brightest light of all the world had been extinguished, indeed the head of the Roman Empire had been cut off, and—to speak more truly—after the whole world died in one city, then ‘I became silent and lay on the ground, and spoke no good words’ (Ps. 38:4)” (Baumgartner 1999:45).

⁶¹ Hereafter, *CG*. The work was started three years after the fall of Rome in 413 and completed in 426 CE. It was essentially an apologetic written for a disciple of Augustine named Marcellinius who sought to persuade Volusianus, the proconsul of Africa (who had charged that fall of Rome was the due to Christianity), to become a Christian. It consists of two parts: Part one addresses paganism and pagan philosophy, with Rome as the location. Part Two treats the subjects of creation, time and eternity with Jerusalem as the center.

Augustine was reluctant to identify his present day calamities with the end of the age and avoided making predictions (Daley 2003:241).⁶² His writings on this subject are more varied and complex than others marking an epoch in eschatological interpretation. He rejected the pagan concept of periodic revolutions of rebirth and destruction. Offering his own interpretation of the Bible, he held that the world was 6000 years old, but chose to use Greek chronologies over the lengthy Persian calculations of past time (CG 12.11-12).⁶³ In his earlier years, Augustine had entertained millennialism, perhaps due to the influence of Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*. He utilized the day/year theory identifying the six days of creation and the seventh day Sabbath rest with the six-thousand year periods (CG 11.31).⁶⁴ However, Augustine later attacked the idea of the millennialism and was less adamant in identifying the six days of creation with 1000-year ages.⁶⁵ Central to the millennial argument was the interpretation of Revelation chapter twenty. He argued that the earlier millennialists placed all the events of chapter twenty in the future. He explained that he too once held this view but his mature view is that their understanding of the millennialism was too material.⁶⁶ To combat the dangers inherent in chiliasm

⁶² See Augustine's "Sermon on the Fall of the City" and "On the End of the World".

⁶³ The Bible does not explicitly present the 6000-year view of world history but is found in Persian eschatology. It is justified from the Bible using the Old Testament six days of creation and New Testament reference to a "Sabbath rest."

⁶⁴ C.f., *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, 1.35-41; *De diversis quaestionibus*, LXXXIII 58.2). In his earlier writings, he makes use of the "old Roman *topos* of dividing human history into a "week" of ages, the final stage a golden age of cosmic renewal" (CG 11.31).

⁶⁵ Weber says he became troubled by the "contradictions between the accounts of Jesus' origin given by Luke and Matthew. He had solved that problem by treating the texts as not literally but symbolically true. Why not apply the same method to John's Apocalypse, and interpret it not in a material but a spiritual sense?" (2000:45).

⁶⁶ "...this can only be believed by materialists; and those with spiritual interests given the name "Chiliasts" to the believers in this picture..." (CG 20.7).

Augustine had to change the whole meaning of the book of Revelation. He did this by using the allegorical method of interpretation. The symbols of Revelation are “spiritually” fulfilled along the way in history. Yet he held that other elements in Revelation, such as the conversion of the Jews, the Antichrist and battle of “Gog and Magog,” would occur in the future just before the end of time.⁶⁷

Augustine’s emphasis was on *individual* (or psychological) redemption, not cosmic eschatology (Weber 2000:46). One can be certain of individual death. A personal end could come at any time, and afterward was the Judgment. The church would accomplish its mission as the instrument of salvation, then at the end of time Christ would return for the Judgment (Kyle 1998:39).⁶⁸ Weber summarizes,

The City of God was not of this world or for this world. Christians could struggle toward it by restraining violence and injustice, but millenarian perfection could only be attained in another life. If history had failed to end on time, that was because the kingdom of God was already there. The Parousia had come with Christ; and his church, which represented humanity and forgiveness, *was* the kingdom of God on earth. (Weber 2000:45)

Augustine held that the kingdom of heaven is both present and future and is experience or realized in the earthly Church. Yet he did not see the church triumphantly advancing to create a utopian world. As McGinn (1979) says, “The church was God’s instrument of salvation, but it would remain an imperfect mixture of good and evil down

⁶⁷ Augustine’s general sequence of events: “Elijah the Tishbite will come; Jews will accept the faith; Antichrist will persecute; Christ will judge; the dead will rise again; the good and the evil will be separated; the earth will be destroyed in the flames and then will be renewed. All those events, we must believe, will come about; but in what way, and in what order they will come, actual experience will then teach us with a finality surpassing anything our human understanding is now capable of attaining. However, it, I consider that these events are destined to come about in the order I have given” (CG 20.30).

⁶⁸ Kyle says he accommodated the millennial idea to suit the present situation of the church.

to judgment day.”⁶⁹ This “realized eschatology” would be later referred to in Christian theology as “amillennialism.” Baumgartner notes, “Augustine’s amillennialism took the present out of millennialism” (1999:45).

Augustine’s hermeneutic was critical to his eschatological interpretation. Though the Scriptures are the “sovereign authority over the literature of all mankind” (CG 11. 1, 3), they are to be interpreted spiritually not materially (CG 20.29).⁷⁰ Augustine’s hermeneutic is a moderating position. He retained some elements of the literal text but gave it a “spiritual” meaning. Though the millennium was “spiritualized” this, did not eliminate an apocalyptic interpretation. Augustine accomplished two feats: While he eliminated the urgency of apocalyptic expectations, he did not eliminate the ideas altogether. In a sense, he extended cosmic time by casting the end into the *distant* future without eliminating the apocalyptic elements. This is accomplished by maintaining a duality in understanding time. This duality is rooted in two contrasts: the World and God, creation and eternity, the body and soul. “Of all visible things the greatest is the world; of all invisible things the greatest is God. But the existence of the world is a matter of observation: the existence of God is a matter of belief” (CG 11.4). The Scriptures are the “witness” joining both to understanding. There is a “Not yet, yet already here—in the mind.” The “yet already there is in the mind an expectation of things to come” (Weber 2000:45-46).⁷¹

⁶⁹ McGinn is not technically correct when he says Augustine held to a 1000 year reign of the church in future time, but did not see the church triumphantly advancing to create a utopian world. True, the final state of the world would not end in an *earthly* utopia, but there is a progressive improvement for the *spiritual* Jerusalem (1979: 274).

⁷⁰ Augustine adds not materially “as the Jews,” a reference to the apocalypticism of not only the Jews but also the earlier Christians.

⁷¹ See Kermode (1967).

The earlier millennial views for the most part came to an end with Augustine. By 431 CE, the Council of Ephesus had condemned as superstition the belief in a literal earthly millennium. Millennialism was banished from official theology, however, it still lived on in the “lower strata of Christian society.” Weber remarks,

The notion of collective salvation on earth was error and fantasy. Apocalyptic promises applied not to mankind in some earthly garden of Eden, but to individuals and their life after death. Henceforth, talk of last things would be only partly about the end to come, for the end had begun, and Christians already lived in an eschatological age. As Frank Kermode put it, “no longer imminent, the End became immanent. (2000:46)

Augustine’s view became the standard interpretation of the end of the world for the Western or Latin Church through the Middle Ages even to the present (Baumgartner 1999:45).⁷² Augustine’s interpretation had the most enduring influence on the understanding of history and the end of time without rival for at least five hundred years. His view would not have a significant rival until the high Middle Ages in Joachim of Fiore.

Eschatology in the Middle Ages

The medieval period marks a significant time in the development of eschatological thought but most importantly for the understanding of historical and future time. In the early Middle Ages apocalyptic activity was subdued. The 1000-year millennium of Revelation was no longer understood literally. It was believed that the church was in the millennium but it may be at the end near the “little season.”⁷³ Up to the year 1100 there was little apocalyptic activity. This was largely due the cessation of

⁷² According to Harnack, “Augustine was the first who ventured to teach that the Catholic Church, in its empirical form, was the kingdom of Christ, that the millennial kingdom has commenced with the appearing of Christ, and was therefore an accomplished fact” (1929:496).

⁷³ One might expect that the year 1000 would occasion apocalyptic expectations, however, there is no indication of an increased expectation of the end of the world.

persecution and the conversion of secular powers to the Christian faith (Kyle 1998:42).⁷⁴

With the absence of any earthly foe, there was no need to look forward to an earthly triumph. Chiliasm, however, did not disappear. The Sibylline Oracles remained influential in the prophetic movements of the Middle Ages⁷⁵ and was second only to the Bible in guiding Medieval commentaries on the book of Revelation (Kyle 1998:43).⁷⁶

The medieval church and society maintained both a pessimistic and optimistic apocalyptic tradition, in spite of Augustine's influence. In varying degrees medieval Christians generally lived constant state of apocalyptic expectation which involved both fear and hope (McGinn 2003:273). On occasion, there were sudden outbreaks of apocalypticism that had political and social ramifications. When this did occur, it usually faced opposition but now from the established Church.⁷⁷

One of those important apocalyptic signs was the belief in the coming of the "Last Emperor."⁷⁸ The Last Emperor was a final Roman Emperor who would defeat the enemies of Rome, which was the final empire and would be revealed before the coming

⁷⁴ Kyle agrees with the theory that apocalyptic movements arise during times of crisis. "Apocalyptic thinking emerges during times of change, stress, anxiety, and disasters" (1998:45).

⁷⁵ Especially the *Tiburtina* (c.350). The *Pseudo-Methodius*, perhaps the most important of the oracles. McGinn states, "arguably the most important Christian apocalyptic text after the Apocalypse of John" (in Kyle 1998:44).

⁷⁶ Particularly the commentaries by Bede, Walafrid, Srabo, Anselm of Laon, and Bruno of Segni.

⁷⁷ Harnack says, "wherever chiliasm appears in the middle ages it makes common cause with all enemies of the secularized Church. It strengthened the hands of Church democracy; it formed an alliance with the pure souls who held up the church the ideal of apostolic poverty; it united itself for a time even with mysticism in a common opposition to the supremacy of the church; nay, it lent the strength of its convictions to the support of States and princes in its efforts to break the political power of the church" (Harnack 1929:497).

⁷⁸ The last emperor was one interpretation of the restraining force mentioned in II Thessalonians.

of the Antichrist (Kyle 1998:47).⁷⁹ This belief arose out of the Eastern Roman empire and was inspired by the Sibylline tradition which prophesied two warrior-saviors; the first was an earthly emperor who was to rise from his grave and slaughter the forces of evil introducing a period of peace until the Antichrist appeared after which time Christ returns and the Judgment begins (Kuehner and Dolan 1967:853. Rome would eventually end after the Emperor surrendered the imperial regalia. At that time, the Antichrist would be manifested. This belief coincided with the rise of Islam which was considered a chastisement for the failures of ecclesiastical officials (Kyle 1998:44).⁸⁰ The Last Emperor would defeat the Muslims, take back Jerusalem, and inaugurate a time of peace and prosperity establishing a millennial golden age (McGinn 1979:277).⁸¹

The Crusades (1095) were not the result of apocalyptic thinking, but stimulated it and nicely dovetailed with the Sibylline myth (Kyle 1999:46).⁸² There was a revival of

⁷⁹ Numerous dates were set predicting his arrival. A variety of year were proposed: 1184; 1229, 1260, 1300, 1325, 1335, 1346, 1365, 1387, 1396, 1400. Allegorical interpretation was connected with eschatology. E.g. Jerusalem: the historic or literal sense = the past history of the people of Israel; Allegoric sense = the church as the New Jerusalem; anagogic = the true city of God yet to be fully realized. “this analogy took two forms. For some passages there was the objective doctrinal exposition of the end of the world and the end of the individual, the consideration that man is intended for heaven, that he as yet to enter into his inheritance. But in many cases the anagogic sense was more practical and meant a consideration of the life of prayer and contemplation as a preparation for man’s final end” (Williams 1967:536.)

⁸⁰ Merlin Ambrosius, the legendary sixth-century seer, was made famous by Geoffrey of Monmouth’s (1100-1155) *History of the Kings of Britain*. Woven into the Arthur narrative, he prophesied about the last world emperor. He would take the Holy Land from the Muslims and conquer Rome and Italy. Merlin’s fame spread rapidly during the 12th and 13th centuries. McGinn cites Rupert of Deutz (1070-1129) as an apocalyptically minded Gregorian. He did not expect an immediate end of the world. Others, like Norbert of Xanten (d.1134) believed the Antichrist had already been born. Also Gerhoh of Reichersberg (1093-1169), et al.

⁸¹ McGinn notes, “This legend, as well as the widespread expectation that there would be a brief period allowed for repentance between the destruction of the Antichrist and judgment day, showed that not all views of the end-time were pessimistic in the early medieval era” (2003:274).

⁸² The “Emperor of the Last Days” was identified in Charlemagne, Louis VII, and Frederick II who was to rescue Jerusalem. Frederick never denied his “divinity.” Even after his death in 1250, German eschatologists believed until 1500 the prophecy contained in the *Book of 100 Chapters*. Others include

apocalyptic activity after 1100 due to the taking of Jerusalem by Saladin in 1187 which delivered a severe blow to Christendom. By 1200, Roman Christianity was well established in Western Europe, and the Eastern and Southern regions were under Islamic rule. McGinn says,

As a part of what we would call foreign policy, Apocalypticism was called upon to encourage the defense of Christendom and its institutions from external foes, especially Islam. As a part of domestic policy, its primary role was to advance programs of reform viewed as necessary for a Christian society that continued “to live in the shadow of the Second Coming.” (1979:276)

By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a sense of an end of time was becoming stronger. Many identified biblical end-time descriptions with their own time and with the “Great Reform” of the Church by Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085), looked forward to an improved church just before the end of the age (McGinn 1979:278).

Joachim of Fiore

The most significant contributor to medieval eschatology and the understanding of history after Augustine was Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202). Mircea Eliade notes only until recently has scholarship begun to “grasp the complex dimensions of the Calabrian Abbot’s apocalyptic vision and prophetic theology of history” (McGinn 1985:xiv). Joachim developed a new approach by looking for meaningful patterns within history (Koester 1995:131). He departed from Augustine’s concept of history by employing a hermeneutic of “spiritual understanding” (*intellectus spiritualis*) which allowed one to see the “concord,” i.e., “parallel patterns of events” (McGinn 1979:276). Joachim drew parallels between the Old and New Testament ages. The persecutions of the Old Testament found New Testament parallels as identified in the visions in Revelation

Count Baldwin IX of Flanders, Philip II Augustus, Louis IX, Sigismund, Maximilian, and Charles V (Kuehner and Dolan 1967:853).

(Koester 1995:136).⁸³ The future final age would be a spiritual age, which would evolve out of the present age instead of an abrupt interruption in this age. Joachim's innovative approach would change how many Western Europeans viewed history and the future.

His most significant contribution was the projection of a material "Third Age" based on a Trinitarian application to historic time. McGinn notes that his view, "fascinated philosophers and ideologues of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, from Lessing and Schelling to Moeller Van den Bruck and Merezhkousky" (McGinn 1985:xv).⁸⁴ Joachim viewed history "evolving toward an age of peace and spiritual attainment" (Kyle 1998:48).⁸⁵ History is revelatory in that history *reveals* the work of all three persons of the Trinity.

Joachim argued that the Trinity was built into the very fabric of time (Kyle 1998:47-48). He set forth the idea that there are three *overlapping* ages (*status*) in history: The first status was the Old Testament period or age of the Father, the second, the age of the Son was the Christian era until Joachim's day, and the third was new age to come, the age of the "Spirit." Each new age had a period of incubation overlapping the previous age.⁸⁶ The final age of the Spirit would be "less rational, institutional and more spiritual" (Kyle 1998:48).

⁸³ E.g. the "sixth seal" (Rev.6:12-17) was identified with the persecutions in Judith and Esther, but the passage also prophesied the Saladin persecution. Koester references Bernard McGinn's, *Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-en-Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Spiritual Franciscans, Savonarola* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

⁸⁴ Voegelin maintains that Joachim was the source of the later "Gnostic Spirit" in the west. Both Voegelin and Norman Cohn (*The Pursuit of the Millennium*) argue Hitler was influenced by Joachim. Ernst Bloch (*The Principle of Hope*) says Joachim was a Marx before Marx (McGinn 1985: 2).

⁸⁵ See also Emerson and McGinn 1993:73.

⁸⁶ In the third status the spiritual church (*ecclesia spiritualis*) would enjoy the "full flowering of the *intellectus spiritualis*." "As set forth in his Utopian diagram or *figura* entitled 'The Arrangement of the New People of God Pertaining to the Third Status after the Model of the Heavenly Jerusalem,' Joachim's

Joachim asserted the spiritual over the institutional and looked forward to a *reformatio mundi*; a new interruption of the Godhead in history. Joachim also, however, sensed an imminent crisis in history in the overlapping period between the second and third stages. The inner struggles of the church, along with the political tensions within the empire and Islam, convinced him that he was living in an overlapping stage of the second stage, between the years 1200 and 1260. He predicted that in 1260 the millennial reign of the Holy Spirit would begin.

Joachim departed from Augustine arguing for a more literal interpretation of the prophetic passages. He claimed his ideas were the result of a “revelation” but he was largely influenced by the *Sibylline Oracles* (McGinn 1979:207).⁸⁷

While he may not have been a radical, he set some revolutionary ideas in motion. Most important, ‘Joachim broke decisively with the Tyconian-Augustinian tradition of interpreting the Apocalypse allegorically and instead interpreted it historically.’ In many circles the apocalyptic images of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation—Antichrist, millennium, Gog and Magog—were no longer spiritualized, but were regarded as real people and events.” (Kyle 1998:49)

Joachim became a reformer of the church seeking to apply monastic imperatives to the whole of Christendom. His reform differed, however, from Pope Gregory’s in that he located the ideal model of the church not in the past but in the future. McGinn says,

Joachim was not interested in such things as reviving canon law, correcting ecclesiastical finances, reforming church administration, and the like—major

conception of the triumph of reform was different from anything that had gone before.” (McGinn 2003:277). In the imminent third status of the Holy Spirit, the predictions of Revelation 20 would be realized. Before this third stage could begin, the Antichrist had to reign for three and a half years. After the defeat of the Antichrist, the second age of the Holy Spirit would be ushered in. Kyle says, “A purified church would rule over a peaceful, contemplative, monastic world. The Holy Spirit would speak to people mystically, and humankind would experience God directly and become like him.” (1998:48).

⁸⁷ By the end of the 13th century Joachim’s three-fold pattern for understanding history proliferated. He influenced the early Dominicans, Spiritual Franciscans, Beguines, and Fraticelli. Joachim is significant in uniting the mystical with the eschatological. Eliade notes that according to Ernesto Buoniuti, mystical experience expresses itself in “two profoundly different attitudes: Solitary mysticism and Fraternal or communal mysticism....” (in McGinn 1985: xv).

concerns of the Gregorians. None of this counted for much in the midst of the looming terror of Antichrist (Joachim and his followers also had a more predictive sense of the imminent end than the Gregorian reformers). (1979:277)

Joachim also had tremendous political influence. During the Islamic threat, Pope Lucius III (1097–1185) desired to understand the *Sibylline Oracles* and turned to Joachim to provide insight into the meaning of the prophetic texts. Joachim said the Sybil and the Scriptures agreed on the nature of the future. Contrary to the papal position, the church should be a suffering Servant, not a rival military power, and that it would be sinful for the church to engage in world power politics (McGinn 1979:276).⁸⁸

By 1190, Joachim had gained a reputation as a holy man and prophet. The following year Richard the Lion-Hearted sought him out desiring to know the meaning of Revelation 12-17. With a new turn, Joachim departed from the Last Emperor legend teaching that Christian emperors were the heads of the Antichrist. Joachim informed Richard that the Antichrist was already born and would soon gain the papacy. Through this process the church would be purified and a new Pope would arise who would “receive complete freedom in order to renew [*innovare*] the Christian religion and to preach the word of God.”⁸⁹ Joachim stopped short of a direct attack on the papacy.⁹⁰ His theology was not accepted by the Roman Catholic church and was later condemned by the Lateran Council of 1215.

⁸⁸ Joachim’s view differed from the Last Emperor legend. Christian emperors, on the contrary, were the heads of the antichrist associated with Revelation 12.

⁸⁹ As quoted by Koester 1995:131.

⁹⁰ McGinn 1985:21-29. Joachim later fell out of favor with the Cistercians and founded his own monastery of San Giovanni in Fiore. This monastery had the support of Henry VI and Frederick. Joachim supported the papacy of Pope Celestine III who regularized his order in 1196. Joachim died in submission to the papacy and claimed that “the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (McGinn 1985:29).

The status quo position found a defender in Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas had disagreed with Joachim's exegesis and the imminent appearance of the Antichrist and held to Augustine's view.⁹¹ He agreed with Augustine that the end was determined by signs and that prophecy reveals of the course of history. Aquinas considered issues raised by Joachim and concluded church and history is static.⁹² Tuveson says of Aquinas' view, "No purposive change, no climax in a historical plot is to be expected. There is no cumulative increase of virtue from one 'age' to another. The Holy Spirit taught the apostles the essentials of salvation, but not the details of future events, which men should not know" (Tuveson 1949:20). Aquinas held that the events in Revelation would occur suddenly not anticipating an extended future. "That the prophetic book is being unfolded through history is an idea totally alien to the scholastic theologians in general" (Tuveson 1949:18).⁹³ Aquinas' opposition is as much Augustinian as Scholastic, and does not provide an explicit theology of history.⁹⁴

⁹¹ See Aquinas, *Contra Impugnates Dei cultum et Religion*, paragraphs 529-542 (1256) which contains his longest response to apocalyptic theologies of history, and *Summa Theologica*, Q39.A.5 where he addresses Joachim's Trinitarian errors and Q106.A.4 on the "Third State" *Prima Secundae*. See McGinn 1979: 212.

⁹² Aquinas addresses their predictive claims of the Joachimites based on analogy in the fourth book of his *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, 1256.

⁹³ Tuveson takes Aquinas as a representative between Augustine and the Reformation. He was most typical and perhaps greatest exponent of Christian doctrine in high Middle Ages. He systematized Augustine's ideas by giving philosophical supports. See Aquinas, "Treatise on the Last Things" in the *Summa Theologica*. He notes the motion of heavens will cease after final purifying conflagration. In the age to come animals and plants will not be needed. The 'renewed earth' will be no earthly utopia. People will enjoy the aurea, the vision of god, and in some cases the aureole. There is no millennial stage. The details of the book of Revelation play little role in Aquinas' interpretation which differs with the later Protestants. Tuveson quotes Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1941) saying that the "the span between present and Last Things was dark" in the Middle Ages. (1948:19)

⁹⁴ McGinn contends Aquinas had little interest in history. In the *Summa Theologica* he argues for dominance of *ordo scientiae* over *ordo historiae*. (McGinn 1979:213). McGinn further notes that modern historians have divided over the disagreement between Aquinas and the Joachimites. Italian scholars have argued that Aquinas' opposition is a sign of the loss of the historical and eschatological dimension in Scholasticism. French and German Thomistic scholars defend Aquinas arguing he saved true Christian

The Church in the Middle Ages was “fixedly hostile” to the Joachimite dynamic concept of history and the Joachimite movement soon died out under violent official attacks and was not to be found in mainstream medieval thought (Tuveson 1949:20). Joachim’s view of history and the end of time, however, later turned Europe upside down. His theory of three ages of historical evolution “impacted many future philosophies, including those of Gotthold Lessing, Friedrich Schelling, Johann Fichte, Georg Hegel, Auguste Comte, and Karl Marx” (Kyle 1998:48).⁹⁵

Another important eschatological development in the Middle Ages was a turn “inward.” According to Abrams, the apocalypse was internalized. The turn was the result of the coming heaven and earth (outer) to the state of the inner spirit, from the end of the age to the state of the soul at death. The literal or “outer” eschatological event in history becomes the “inner” spiritual or allegorical event of the soul. Abrams states that the, “entire eschatological drama of the destruction of the old creation, the union with Christ, and the emergence of the new creation –not *in illud tempus* but here and now, in this life.” This inward turn emphasized the “Kingdom of God is within you” (Abrams 1971:47).⁹⁶

This poly-semantics of simultaneous reference to the outer history of mankind and the spiritual history of the individual—extended from the Scriptures to secular authors, and with a shift of the literal sense from providential history to

Heilsgeschichte. McGinn says the Italian scholar Tullio Gregory is correct in stressing the “individualizing and cosmologizing effect that Aristotelian physics had upon the Scholastic treatment of the last things” (1979:212).

⁹⁵ Kyle, “Even the modern New Age movement claims Joachim as their predecessor. New Agers believe that their coming new age will share characteristics with Joachim’s third stage” (48).

⁹⁶ Cf. Luke 17:20-21. The phrase “the Kingdom of God is in you” can also be translated “among you”. Abrams adds, “but the words of Christ have in the past been widely interpreted to mean that the coming universal kingdom may achieve an immediate realization in the spirit of each believers” (1971:47). Cf. also Jn.5:24, 25; 11:25, 26 indicates an inward spiritual change.

fictional narrative—shaped the design and component details of many literary allegories in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. (Abrams 1971:49)

The eschatological union expressed in the “Bride and Bridegroom” metaphor became an important theme in the Middle Ages.⁹⁷ Paul had contrasted the new person “In Christ” in contrast to living under Law in terms of the bride united with the bridegroom (cf. Romans 7; Ephesians 5). Abrams explains the Medieval interpretation, “The individual reborn lives as though in a world re-created; and his new life is figured by Paul as a death to the old marriage covenant in the form of laws and a rebirth to spiritual marriage with the divine Bridegroom” (1971:48). The result was a “spiritual eschatology” among Christian mystics who emphasized a private apocalypse as the “inner imitation of the passion and resurrection of Christ” and as an “inner preenactment” of the events in Revelation (Abrams 1971:50).⁹⁸ The old self experiences a death and renovation through the “spiritual marriage.”

These pious explorers of the inner world transferred the locus of the marriage of the Lamb from the apocalyptic conclusions of history to the individual soul, which they held to be capable of achieving, even in this fallen life, the acme of experience, the mystic union with Christ the Bridegroom. This topic introduces a new and important dimension of the traditional renderings of the Biblical plot.⁹⁹

While this apocalyptic development occurred among the mystics, the older apocalyptic and millennial themes continued. Though there were optimistic apocalyptic hopes, there was still a sense of dread especially in northern Europe.

⁹⁷ This theme was a New Testament metaphor describing the union with Christ in the eschatological age. See Matthew 25, et al.

⁹⁸ Cf. commentaries on the *Song* beginning with Origen to Richard of St. Victor.

⁹⁹ “Christian thought readily extended the reference of biblical eschatology from the last day of the human race to the last day of the redeemed individual, whose soul, at the time of his bodily death, is translated to heaven as the bride of the Lamb, or at least as a festive participant in the nuptials of the Lamb, which awaiting the larger company of those who shall be deemed worthy at the Last Judgment” (Abrams 1971:46).

Later Middle Ages and Renaissance

Significant changes occurred between the years 1350-1500 (McGinn 1979:290). During this period arose a number of radical millenarian movements. Jan Hus (1371-1415), a Czech professor from University of Prague identified the Antichrist with the office of the papacy. His followers, the Hussites, were more extreme than Hus. The Hussite movement later divided into the Utraquists (more conservative) and the Taborites¹⁰⁰ who lived in constant anticipation of second coming believing that the end would occur in 1420 (Keuhner and Dolan 1967:853). When the end did not occur, they became a revolutionary movement advocating violence, and holy war. The Taborites organized themselves into communal groups becoming the first *egalitarian millenarians* to appear in the West. Out of the Taborites developed even more radical Christian groups such as the Adamites (or Pikarts) who believed that all prophecy had been fulfilled and that they were living in the last days (Kyle 1998:52).¹⁰¹

Throughout the Middle Ages, a-millennialism remained the official position of the Catholic Church. It became increasing difficult, however, to contain the fringe apocalyptic sects. Historical and political events created a growing sense of apocalypticism. “Apocalypticism erupted with a vengeance. Joachim of Fiore’s ideas opened Pandora’s box. And millennial thinking has not been the same since” (Kyle

¹⁰⁰ They took their name from Mt. Tabor where they believed Christ foretold his second coming.

¹⁰¹ The Adamites were pantheistic, denied both original sin and the existence of Satan. “In the belief that they were like Christ and as innocent as Adam and Eve in Paradise, they wore no clothes, even in cold weather. They engaged in sexual promiscuity, prohibiting marriage and holding that all men possessed all women in common. Owning no property themselves, they believed that they had the right to seize other people’s possessions. Thus they attacked neighboring villages, taking whatever they wanted and ruthlessly killing the inhabitants. The Adamites’ savage and lewd behavior proved so shocking that a Hussite army exterminated them” (Kyle 1998:52).

1998:53-54). These apocalyptic visions would continue into the Reformation and Modern periods. Robin Barnes (2003:323) summarizes,

The great Western transition from medieval to modern civilization involved basic shifts in prevailing conceptions of space and time, the human and the divine, shifts that we cannot begin to fathom apart from the developing traditions of Judeo-Christian Apocalypticism. While older models of “secularization” held that the central tendency of the early modern period was the general dissolution of inherited Christian and pagan myths about nature and history, recent studies force upon us a much more complex picture. The broad outlines of this picture suggest that the changes commonly associated with emerging “modernity,” including the religious reformations, the rise of experimental science, and even the development of political liberalism, were themselves intimately related to the continuing evolution of Western prophetic and apocalyptic visions.

Renaissance Period

There was a growing sense of pessimism at the end of Middle Ages and into the early years of the Renaissance. This period was a time of transition in many ways. There were mixed feelings about the future which included dread and optimism. Barnes notes, “Events were spinning completely out of human control; the forces of evil seemed to be running rampant in a decaying world;” (Barnes 2003:325). There was an “intensified perception of time” a “newly pronounced and pervasive awareness of time’s passage” in both the individual and in history. Along with this sense of time’s passage was a “unique swelling of apprehension and guilt.” This “age of anxiety” lasted from the later Middle Ages into the Reformation (Barnes 2003:324). The period created the “fundamental matrix of the emergence of ‘modern’ attitudes and ideas.”

Eschatological expectations did not diminish but took different turns, in part due to the return to the classical Greek and Roman thinkers, but also because of political developments. By 1453, the Eastern Church was under Islamic order.¹⁰² The fall of

¹⁰² Islam has its own eschatology which is beyond the scope of this work. Its eschatology is also linear and apocalyptic.

Byzantium had in impact on Russian eschatological thought. Russian churchmen regarded the Roman Catholic Church as the fallen church. The Russian monk, Philatheus, put forth a “third Rome” theory in the early sixteenth century. The first Rome was pagan Rome, the second was the fallen Constantinople judged by God because of its association with the Roman church at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1439 (Zenkovsky 1963:39). Apocalypticism only increased during this time. Tuveson (1949: 20) states,

Still, it may be concluded that the Apocalypse and the attitude toward history which it represented slumbered as a force in Western culture—except for some uneasy tossings—for more than a thousand years. But its explosive potentiality had not ended. Its reentry into the main stream of Western thought and the results of that reentry

Apocalypticism became political ideology by linking prophecy and politics. This is exemplified in Florentine preacher Savonarola (Kyle 1998:52-53). He taught an imminent spiritual and moral renewal of the world would occur before the last judgment. There was a new emphasis on hope for an earthly life which was a blend of Apocalypticism with the humanistic vision of a golden age (Barnes, 325).¹⁰³

There were other developments during this period that created a sense of pessimism (Tuveson 1949:22). Reactions to environmental and astrological occurrences, both, fueled eschatological attitudes. (Interestingly, the Black Plague [1348-49] did not have as great an apocalyptic influence as might be expected, though many in Western Europe took it to be an eschatological signal of God’s displeasure since the plague killed good and bad alike.) During this time, there were a great number of earthquakes and

¹⁰³ Barnes, “The joys of classical learning, the growing sense of the power of language, the desire to find dignity in creative human pursuits were all able to build on medieval dreams of a *renovatio mundi*, the sorts of prophetic hopes conveyed by Joachimism and related medieval currents. Advances in trade and technology likewise helped to convince some that Christendom was on the verge of a great flowering” (2003:325).

famines which also gave question concerning God’s judgment and the end of the age (Kyle 1998:46). Connection was made between apocalyptic ideas and the ‘decay of nature’ theme found in Renaissance literature. As with the ancient Romans, there was also a sense that nature was growing old. Christian sources, such as Lantantius’ eschatology, inspired this belief, but also classical Greek and Roman writers. “It was logical to suppose that, as the end of the created world approaches, decay will triumph; the analogy of the world to an animal—ultimately derived from the *Timaeus*—dominated Renaissance as well as ancient thought on the subject” (Tuveson 1949:49).¹⁰⁴

There was also a renewed interest in ancient forms of prophecy and divination during the Renaissance, especially in astrology. The Western interest in astrology began in the twelfth century with the translation of Arabic text into Latin (Barnes 2003:325).¹⁰⁵ This influence was strong among both the elite and common people. Medieval Europeans believed that stars were God’s instruments that contained the key to the future (Kyle 1998:65). The twist was, however, that Christian astrologers held that the “stars incline; they do not force” changes.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ In Tuveson, note 30, 222-223. Tuveson references Don Cameron Allen, “The Degeneration of Man and Renaissance Pessimism” *Studies in Philology*, XXV (1938). Commenting on Allen’s position that there was a change from medieval pessimism of *contemptus mundi* to that of the Renaissance, Tuveson says, “It is, furthermore, a mistake to think that the literary and philosophical writers would not have been very deeply influenced by this kind of material [i.e. Bullinger’s works]. The apocalyptic interpretation occupied a far different position in this period from the one they have in ours; the prophetic schemes were the rationale, political, social, philosophic, of one of the two great parties between which Christendom was divided in a war to the death.” Tuveson references, Victor Harris, *All Coherence Gone* (Chicago, 1949) for account of the mutability problem in the Renaissance.

¹⁰⁵ Barnes, “In the last decades of the fifteenth century, a host of classical and Arabic sources appeared in print, contributing to broader knowledge and sophistication in both astronomy and its practical sister-science” (2003:325).

¹⁰⁶ Examples of such works are Johann Lichtenberg’s (d.1503) *Prognostication (Pronosticatio)* published in Heidelberg 1488. The “Book of a Hundred Chapters” by the “Upper Rhenish Revolutionary” (cir. 1500) predicted the overthrow of corrupt government and society and establishment of a new age. By the 1520s there was a widespread fear of a second universal flood inspired by astrological predictions which was expected to bring an end to the world (Barnes 2003:326).

Another important development was the reintroduction of a second-century Gnostic work, the *Corpus Hermeticum*. It approached the cosmos as a macro-anthropos wherein there is envisioned as a circular movement from unity into multiplicity and, ultimately, back to unity. Paracelsus Christianized the work defining the fall as “Lucifer” which was the dissolution of the unity of nature. The descent into division is followed by a return to the source, from physical back to spiritual. Christ was to provide this return (Abrams 1971:159).¹⁰⁷ Abrams (1971:160-161) notes the importance of this work in the thought of Jacob Boehme,

In recent decades a number of scholars have made us aware how extraordinarily prevalent, among even the leading thinkers of the European Renaissance, were Hermetic ideas, as well as Christianized versions of Kabbalist doctrines. This occult tradition was in turn communicated to later thinkers by various theorists, including Giordano Bruno, but above all, by Jacob Boehme.¹⁰⁸

The discovery of new continents during this time gave European Christians a new realization of the size of the planet. This expanded sense of space provided a new renewed urgency to proclaim the Gospel which would carry on into the Protestant era. However, it also signaled to them that the end was nearer (Heron 1980:2). The prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation along with the Sibylline Oracles provided inspiration to see that “gospel must first be preached among all nations” (Mk.13:10). The “ends of the earth” now included Asia, which would have to be reached before the end would come (Kyle 1998:56-57). Eschatology was a motivation in Columbus’ desire to discover a new

¹⁰⁷ See Paracelsus, *Secretum magicum*. The goal of alchemy was to transform a particular to the perfection of its own nature.

¹⁰⁸ See Francois Secret, *Le Zhar chez les Kabbalistes Chretiens de la Renaissance* (Paris 1958); Frances Yates, *Giordan Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago, 1964).

route to the East.¹⁰⁹ On his fourth voyage (1501), he wrote in mystical style the apocalyptic *Book of Prophecies* he compiled prophetic texts from the Bible and church fathers. Kyle (1998:57) says,

In Columbus's view the preconditions for the return of Christ included reconquest of the Holy Land and spreading of the gospel. His voyage west would thus have a twofold effect on his apocalyptic expectations. He would acquire enough gold and wealth to finance Spain's reconquest of Jerusalem, and he would take missionaries to Asia to Christianize the East.

Reflecting on the influence of Joachim's prophecy, Columbus wrote,

Jerusalem and Mount Zion are to be rebuilt by the hand of a Christian; who this is to be God declares by the mouth of his prophet in the fourteenth psalm [Ps. 14:7-8]. Abbot Joachim said that he was to come from Spain. . . . The emperor of Cathay some time since sent for wise men to instruct him in the faith of Christ. Who will offer himself for this work? If our Lord brings me back to Spain, I pledge myself, in the name of God, to bring him there in safety. (In McGinn 1979:293)

The eschatological developments during Medieval and Renaissance periods were significant in shaping the view of the future in the modern period. Eschatology was closely connected with political activity. It had been all along but earlier it was the government externally persecuting the church. During this period, the political problems became internal. The end of the age was determined by events on the political scene. Since the Roman Church was so intimately connected with the political, it would later in the period come object of apocalyptic fulfillment.

The later period saw another development not before seen in history—the relationship between eschatology and natural science. Eschatology coupled with the Christian doctrine of freedom provided the idea that humans were no longer subject to the

¹⁰⁹ Columbus had been familiar with prophetic texts since 1480. He thought his discoveries were proof of a dawning millennial age. He believed that by sailing to the Indies he was fulfilling Divine prophecy that all nations would be converted to Christ before the end of the world (Barnes 2003:325).

forces of nature as with paganism, but had the power to control nature. The power over nature would later be understood as a fulfillment of biblical eschatological predictions.

A new perspective of the future resulted. The Augustinian view that the end could occur after an undefined period of time on earth was nearing a thousand years since he wrote. The question was how much longer? There was a sense that time was running out. With the introduction of Joachim's concept of the future, whose significance cannot be underestimated, a new space was created for a coming age to be manifested on earth. But unlike Augustine whose view allowed for at least a thousand years, Joachim's view was not so extended. His vision of a coming age of the Spirit would have a significant impact on German philosophy and the understanding of history in the modern age. Apocalypticism was inspired by the political events and natural occurrences. The combination of Joachim's influence with apocalypticism gave rise to radical movements which would later inspire modern revolutions.

Christian eschatology would be represented by two general views of eschatology: the one more Augustinian which was more Latin and dualistic in nature, the second through Joachim which was more Greek and monistic. The former would be more western in influence affecting British and American thought, the latter would find root in German thought.

Protestant Eschatology

Early Protestants held to the eschatological position of Augustine for the most part. However, it had now been a thousand years since Augustine's writing and many began to look for apocalyptic events anticipating the end of the age. Many Protestants concluded that the golden age of the church was now past and only degeneration lay

ahead. By the time of the Reformation many reformers had anticipated the heavenly kingdom of God. Some Protestants looked for the glorified state in heaven awaiting the final judgment and resurrection, and expected the material world to be changed (Tuveson 1949:17). Others found inspiration in the age to come through Joachim's vision.

The majority of Protestant reformers returned to the apocalyptic literature (Tuveson 1949:9). Apart from Augustine, the apocalyptic works of Lactantius and Cyprian were important in shaping the eschatological view of Protestantism. Cyprian's works were especially influential among the reformers who looked for the decline of nature (Tuveson 1949:43).¹¹⁰ Tuveson notes that even though the "decay of nature" theme was prominent in Renaissance literature it was not a mere cause and effect relationship. Though many believed that nature was in decline, nature was still seen, however, as under the control of God. In John Dove's published sermon of 1594 he articulated what would be a common theme: there are two books of God's mind: the Bible and the "boke [*sic*] of nature." A number of commentators protested against using nature (particularly astrological calculations) to determine the end and setting forth the Bible as the better guide.¹¹¹ Another common theme among Protestants was to attack Aristotle as an "atheist" because he asserted the eternity of the world. The distrust of Aristotle led to suspicion of Reason in general (Tuveson 1949:50).

¹¹⁰ An example of this is seen in the reaction to the nova of 1572. The Sibylline Oracles had predicted two new stars as signs of a great earthly transformation. An example given is Thomas Roger's translation of Sheltoo a Geveren's "Of the End of this world, and the Second coming of Christ." (five editions from 1577-1589.) He references Theodor Beza's comments on the Nova of 1572, 73 which advanced the interpretation of the Bethlehem star. Because the Pope was viewed as the Antichrist, it was believed that second coming could not be far off.

¹¹¹ Tuveson observes, "This attempt to date the termination of things by astronomical calculations rather than by interpretations of the mystical numbers in the Apocalypse itself is an indication of a changing attitude toward eschatology; it is becoming scientific as well as religious in tone. It indicates also, no doubt, influence of the Platonic ideas of the "great year"—of the attempt to coalesce ideas from the classical philosophers with the distinctively scriptural teachings" (Tuveson 1949:55). This seen in Peter du Moulin's, *The Accomplishment of the Prophecies*.

Luther and German Radical Movements

Among the reformers, Martin Luther had the most pronounced apocalyptic outlook. Luther's theology was "thoroughly eschatological" and was influenced by Joachim and Franciscans (Koester 1995:132).¹¹² Luther believed he was living in the last days. The Reformation revealed the final struggle of the saints which indicated that the end of history was imminent. World history was a matter of universal decline and degeneracy (Wagar 1982:58).¹¹³ The "chaos of world history" would last until the judgment and he believed that time was running out (Barnes 2003:330).¹¹⁴

Luther looked to the Apocalypse of John as the key to understanding the history. He initially disparaged the book of Revelation but later wrote a lengthy "Preface to the Revelation of St. John"¹¹⁵ He abandoned the traditional method of interpreting Revelation and held to an *historicist* interpretation. Revelation was a prophecy of entire history of the church. Luther introduces an interesting hermeneutic based on the history of the church stating,

Since it is intended as revelation of things that are to happen in the future, and especially of tribulations and disasters of the Church, we consider that the first and surest step toward finding its interpretation is to take from history the events and disasters that have come upon the Church before now and hold them up alongside of these pictures and so compare them with the words. If, then, the two were to fit and agree with each other, we could build on that, as a sure, or at least an unobjectionable interpretation.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Luther, however, later rejected many of the earlier medieval eschatological viewpoints (Last Emperor, Angelic Pope, Joachianism). As his interest in history grew toward the end of his life, so did his Apocalypticism.

¹¹³ When the year 1540 came, Luther calculated that 5,500 years had passed since Creation. Man was in the middle of the sixth millennium which would not be completed.

¹¹⁴ Johann Carion wrote a universal history called *Chronica* edited by Philipp Melanchthon in 1532 which Luther used in his calculations.

¹¹⁵ For preface, see Luther's Works, v.8, 35: 410.

¹¹⁶ As quoted by Tuveson 1949:26.

The *Theologia Germanica*

Luther introduced a work that had important eschatological influence, the *Theologia Germanica* (TG 6).¹¹⁷ He discovered this anonymously written document and published it in 1516. Chevalier Bunsen, in his 1854 letter to the translator, says the *Theologia Germanica* was a reaction to the Latin theology of Augustine as represented in Scholasticism.

Theology of this school was the first protest of the Germanic mind against the Judaism and formalism of the Byzantine and mediaeval Churches,—the hollowness of science to which scholasticism had led, and the rottenness of society which a pompous hierarchy strove in vain to conceal, but had not the power nor the will to correct. Eckart and Tauler, his pupil, brought religion home from fruitless speculation, and reasonings upon imaginary or impossible suppositions, to man's own heart and to the understanding of the common people, as Socrates did the Greek philosophy. There is both a remarkable analogy and a striking contrast between the great Athenian and those Dominican friars. (TG, 15)¹¹⁸

After an apology concerning its style, Luther stated, “next to the Bible and St. Augustine, no book hath ever come into my hands, whence I have learnt, or would wish to learn more of what God, and Christ, and man and all things are ...” (TG, 6). Luther viewed this medieval work as a justification of the superiority of Germany theology; “German theologians,” he said, “are without a doubt the best theologians” (TG, 6). The fundamental premise of the work is “there is no sin but Selfishness, and that all Selfishness is sin” (TG, 16).

¹¹⁷ *Theologica Germanica*, Susanna Winkworth (trans). [Reprint], Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, p. 6; <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/anonymous/theologia.html>. Hereafter, *TG*. The work may have been the contribution of Johannes Tauler (c. 1300–1361), a student of Meister Eckhart, inspired the “Friends of God” movement in southern Germany.

¹¹⁸ Lutheran scholar Chevalier Bunsen wrote a “Letter to the Translator (1854).” In it, Bunsen says it “paved the way for that spiritual philosophy of the mind.” Luther adds that the simple principle of the work is “Sin is selfishness: Godliness is unselfishness: A godly life is the steadfast working out of inward freeness from self: To become thus Godlike is the bringing back of man's first nature” (TG, 16). The last point is mankind's destiny.

The *Theologia Germanica* is important because it offered a teleological view of human destiny with the goal of perfection alluding to Aristotle's teleological cause.¹¹⁹

The *Theologia Germanica* opens with a quote from the Apostle Paul, "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (I Cor.13:10). The "perfect" in Paul is interpreted as having eschatological implications. However, according to the *Theologia Germanica*, the perfect is,

a Being, who hath comprehended and included all things in Himself and His own Substance, and without whom, and beside whom, there is no true Substance, and in whom all things have their Substance. For He is the Substance of all things, and is in Himself unchangeable and immoveable, and changeth and moveth all things else. (*TG*, 18)

It addresses the question "when will the perfect come?" Here the fulfillment is not a question of future historical time, but a condition of the inner self. "I say, when as much as may be, it is known, felt and tasted of the soul. For the lack lieth altogether in us, and not in it." The perfect can only be realized when "part," the "I" and "Self" which belong to the old man Adam are "despised and counted for nought." "So long as we think much of these things, cleave to them with love, joy, pleasure or desire, so long remaineth the Perfect unknown to us" (*TG*, 18-19). The soul while in the body can "receive a foretaste of eternal life" and experience "the Kingdom of Heaven and Eternal Life on earth."¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Aristotelian teleology is seen in Bunsen's explanation, "Tauler speaks as strongly as our author, and almost as strongly as the Bible. Man is indeed to him God's own image. "As a sculptor," he says somewhere, with a striking range of mind for a monk of the fourteenth century, "is said to have exclaimed indignantly on seeing a rude block of marble, 'what a godlike beauty thou hidest!' thus God looks upon man in whom God's own image is hidden." "We may begin," he says in a kindred passage, "by loving God in hope of reward we may express ourselves concerning Him in symbols (Bilder), but we must throw them all away, and much more we must scorn all idea of reward, that we may love only because He is the Supreme Good, and contemplate His eternal nature as the real substance of our own soul" (*TG* 17).

¹²⁰ Referencing the pseudo-Dionysius he concludes, "And as soon as a man turneth himself in spirit, and with his whole heart and mind entereth into the mind of God which is above time, all that ever he hath lost is restored in a moment. And if a man were to do thus a thousand times in a day, each time a fresh and real union would take place; and in this sweet and divine work standeth the truest and fullest union that

The process of obtaining “this true light and perfect knowledge” is obtained in three stages: the purification, the enlightening, and the union. The ultimate goal is the complete union of God and Man, a union devoid of subject and object, no need for law externally imposed which the Spirit does inwardly.¹²¹ One is to walk in the Spirit of Christ until death. The present world is Paradise, the “outer court of the Eternal.”¹²² In mystical tradition, the Kingdom does not come from an external intervention, but through the inner soul. This clearly indicates a shift in understanding how eschatology is played out—from material/external to inner/mystical.

Luther’s disciples propagated his views and reflected an increased sense of hopelessness for this world. Barnes says, “In the decades after Luther’s death (1546), German Lutherans propounded an increasingly explicit, eclectic, and strident Apocalypticism” (2003:331). Lutheran reformer Andreas Osiander from Nuremberg wrote *Conjectures on the Last Days and the End of the World* (1544). In 1527 Osiander published an updated a Joachimist prophecy which looked toward a purified church before the last judgment (Barnes 2003:330-331; Kyle 1998:62).¹²³

may be in this present time. For he who hath attained thereto, asketh nothing further, for he hath found the Kingdom of Heaven and Eternal Life on earth” (TG, 24).

¹²¹ “For it is the property of God to be without this and that, and without Self and Me, and without equal or fellow; but it is the nature and property of the creature to seek itself an its own things, and this and that, here and there; and in all that it doeth and leaveth undone its ire is to its own advantage and profit. Now where a creature or a man forsaketh and cometh out of himself and his own things, there God entereth in with His own, that is, with Himself” (TG, 39). On the Law and Spirit, see TG, 45.

¹²² “Thus this world is an outer court of Eternity, and therefore it may well be called a Paradise, for it is such in truth. And in this Paradise, all things are lawful, save one tree and the fruits thereof. That is to say: of all things that are, nothing is forbidden and nothing is contrary to God but one thing only: that is, Self-will, or to will otherwise than as the Eternal Will would have it” (TG, 66).

¹²³ Others include Andreas Musculus (d.1581) and Philip Melancton (1497-1560), a disciple of Luther, who viewed many contemporary events as signs the end was near. Some, such as Francis Lambert in Hesse and Martin Borrhaus at Basle, believed in the final victory of the faithful within history. Borrhaus foresaw a period of clamity and suffering followed by a universal renovation. The Augsburg Confession, 1530, most likely has Borrhaus in view when it condemns the teaching that “certain Jewish opinions which

Radical Movements

At the time of Luther's reform movement arose other movements centered in Germany that was strongly linked to the millennialism of the Middle Ages. These movements are referred to as the "Radical Reformation."¹²⁴ These movements were strongly apocalyptic and political in nature and were presented by both Catholics and Protestants. However, the persecutions intensified their end-time expectations (Kyle 1998:58). Out of this movement arose revolutionary movements based on eschatological expectation.

Those associated with the "Radical Reformation" had varying eschatological views. The Anabaptists and Spiritualists had the greatest effect on eschatology. Most did not look forward to an earthly millennium, but were apocalyptic, believing that the return of Christ was imminent (Barnes 2003:327). While Most Anabaptists quietly awaited for the return of the Lord, not all were so patient. The cult leader, Thomas Muntzer (c. 1488-1525), was "one of history's pure revolutionaries," was influenced by Taborite doctrines "and bloodthirsty millenarian beliefs that had crept into Germany from Bohemia..." (Kyle 1998:58-59). Muntzer believed the poor would live in millennial kingdom because they were not corrupted by greed and wealth. The godless would be defeated by the elect who would prepare the way for the reestablishment of the apostolic church and for the Second

are even now making their appearance and which teach that, before the resurrection of the dead, saints and godly men will possess a worldly kingdom and annihilate all the godless (Article XVII)" (Barnes 2003:328).

¹²⁴ The German Radicals, represented by varying groups, believed that Luther and Zwingli did not go far enough in their reforms. They agreed in with the Lutherans and Reformers that the Pope was the Antichrist, but differed in that the Church, not the State, was regarded as Babylon of Revelation (Harnack 1929:497).

Advent which was a mystical advent of the kingdom in the hearts of the elect (Barnes 2003:327).¹²⁵

Other significant apocalyptic movements, such as those led by Melchoir Hofmann (c.1495-1543), Jan Matthys (d.1534), Jan Bockelson [John of Leiden] (d.1537), and the Munster Rebellion illustrate the radical political nature of apocalyptic eschatology. The result was that the Anabaptist movement and millenarianism was discredited. Barnes notes the importance of these movements with later social reforms that would lead to an earthly paradise,

In short, then, it was neither apocalyptic expectancy in general nor the teaching of a coming millennial kingdom in particular that actually set radicals and revolutionaries apart from the mainstream in the early Reformation. Rather, what seems to have most threatened established structures were the notions of immediate spiritual inspiration and the believer's responsibility for social cleansing. It was above all this sort of spiritualist perfectionism, the belief that the faithful could have direct knowledge of God's will in the here and now and that they had an active role to play in the drama of the last days, that had the potential to threaten social order. Those who received the gift of the spirit shared responsibility for the purification of the church and the world, a rooting out of evil in preparation for the end itself. (2003:328)

Jacob Boehme and German Pietism

Jacob Boehme (1575–1624) was perhaps the most significant person on this subject since Joachim. He was very influential within the German eschatological tradition. Considered a prophet like Joachim, he experienced visions which he

¹²⁵ In 1525, Muntzer led an insurrection of peasants (the Peasants' Revolt). The peasants sought to rectify economic and social problems under feudalism. He had visions that God would give victory. The rainbow was a sign that a miracle was about to take place. Muntzer prepared for the coming of Christ by establishing a commune at the New Zion in Munster (1534). He advocated the overthrow of the government and violent annihilation of the wealthy, both ecclesiastical and secular, believing that a violent war against the ungodly would usher in the millennium. The Munster Rebellion (1534-35) was "perhaps the most notorious early modern outbreak of revolutionary Apocalypticism." Muntzer was eventually defeated and beheaded by the German princes (Bernoulli 1997:376).

considered *theosophy* or divine wisdom.¹²⁶ Though raised Lutheran, he was influenced by Neo-Platonic thought. Boehme continued the earlier mystical idea of an inner apocalyptic. He viewed the cosmos as a microcosmic androgyne. The primal source of reality is an eternal unity which he called “Nothing.” An opposing force establishes contraries that set the Unity into motion, from Nothing into Something which is the source of all existing things. The opposites are in the One (pantheistic) God who consists of all things; evil and good; heaven and hell, eternity and time, beginning and end, etc. These opposites constitute all of nature (Abrams 1971:161).¹²⁷

Boehme references the day-equals-a thousand year interpretation of Genesis but appeals to the Sabbath to demonstrate that motion is circular. He designated seven stages of time, the last (the age of Enoch) would experience an eternal victory of good over evil, peace over war, love over wrath, happiness over sorrow. The world would return to Adamic state. Abrams explains, “The course of the created worlds through time is destined to repeat the circular design figured in Genesis, in the ratio of one thousand years for each creative day” (1971:162). Concerning Paradise, Boehme said,

Now the end has found the beginning again, and you shall see, feel, and find, all those of you born in God, what paradise was. For that paradise has been born again...and stands revealed to the children of God in the spirit and in the soul....For the end has found the beginning, there is no stopping it, the power and the falsehood are shattered, and it is only a matter of awaiting the coming of the Bridegroom.¹²⁸

Boehme’s ideas influenced German Radical theology, particularly the Pietists (Abrams 1971:164) through the works of Johann Bengel, Frederick Oetinger, Johann

¹²⁶ In his youth, one experience in 1600 which was the spiritual structure of the world His experiences were at odds with the Lutheran pastor of Görlitz.

¹²⁷ See Boehme, *Mysterium Pansopicum* (1620) and *Mysterium Magnum* (1623).

¹²⁸ Quoted by Abrams 1971:162-163. From Boehme, *Psychologia Vera*, 83.

Jung-Stilling, and Johann Kurtz. His influence would later extend to the German Romantic and Idealist philosophers, particularly to Hegel (Kuehner and Dolan 1967:854). Hegel notes the importance of the “Philosophus Teutonicus” writing a biography of him in his *History of Philosophy* noting that his philosophy is “thoroughly German” (Hegel 1879:182). Boehme was also influential among movements in England. In 1644, his works were translated into English and inspired the English Inner Light Puritans (Winstanley), the Quakers and Jane Leade (d.1704). Their works, in reciprocal fashion, influenced many leaders in Germany from the beginning of the eighteenth century.¹²⁹

In the late-seventeenth and eighteenth-century Germany, particularly in those regions where Lutheran Pietism was strong, a new direction developed. Early German Pietism shared with Calvinist Puritanism the tendency toward a forward-looking millenarian hope, which in some of its forms might be described more as historical meliorism than as Apocalypticism. A key seventeenth-century voice for millennialism was the Philipp Jakob Spener (d. 1705).¹³⁰ Spener held to the conviction that the last times would bring the conversion of the Jews and the fall of the papacy, and that biblical prophecy proved that “God promised his church here on earth a better state than this” before the last judgment. Pietist preaching in this vein encouraged proposals for sweeping social reform throughout Lutheran Germany both before and after 1700. However, Pietist millenarianism was by no means politically revolutionary; on the contrary, most Pietists accepted the state as part of the divinely instituted order of the world (Barnes 2003:346). This is an important development for modern political thought.

¹²⁹ See Baumgartner 1999:110-111, Bernoulli 1977: 376, and Abrams 1971:163.

¹³⁰ The *Theologia Germanica* introduced by Luther was endorsed by Philipp Jakob Spener.

Later Pietist leaders did not uniformly share Spener's brand of explicit millenarian hope. August Hermann Francke (d. 1727), a central figure in the educational, spiritual, and social reform coming from Halle after 1700, represented a far more subjective and individualistic form of piety that down-played hopes for the fulfillment of an objective Divine plan (Barnes 2003:346). There was a strong prophetic element in the Pietist leader and biblical critic Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) (Zimdars-Swartz and Zimdars-Swartz 2003:607). Bengel saw the history of the world as the story of the divine education of the human race, a course of inevitable progress. He calculated that the millennium was likely to begin around 1836 (Barnes 2003:346).¹³¹ Pietist teachings spread most widely in England, America and Germany. F. C. Oetinger (1702-1782), who was influenced by Boehme and Emanuel Swedenborg, taught millennialist ideas in his Christian theosophy. Oetinger had considerable influence in Protestant churches and later on in the philosophy of Schelling and Hegel. Some studies suggest his apocalyptic thought influenced early twentieth century Christian socialism in Germany and Switzerland.¹³²

The new Medieval idea of future eschatological time beginning with Joachim came together with apocalypticism. There was an increasing sense that the end was immanent. Historical time was viewed linearly within the framework of unfolding or sequential dispensations. The apocalyptic enemy became the Church in Protestantism and later, in a subtle shift, the state takes the place as eschatological savior. Most

¹³¹ According to Schaff, his writings open up the third period of millennialism.

¹³² Zimdars-Swartz notes that the influence is still see within the evangelical churches of south Germany among the Hahnische Gemeinschaft (Zimdars-Swartz and Zimdars-Swartz 2003:608).

important for this study is the shift toward the inner person. Inner perfection would lead to outer reform. This will be brought out in the chapter on Berdyaev's eschatology.

Puritan and Radical English Millenarianism

German apocalypticism influenced the eschatology coming from England. During the 16th and 17th centuries a sense of worldly pessimism prevailed and apocalyptic prophecies gripped England to the point that England was “drunk on the Millennium” (Kyle 1998:64). The most significant work is Joseph Mede's *Apocalyptic Key* (1627) which represents the eschatology of early English Puritanism. Mede (1586-1639), an influential biblical scholar as well as a philosopher, botanist, and astronomer, gave the apocalyptic movement an entirely new direction. Before 1620, English Puritans hesitated to advance a future millennium, but after Mede many English theologians began to look for a future golden age.¹³³ Mede had advanced a theory of progress that united the Enlightenment optimism with Christian eschatology. In Mede is the first example of bringing eschatology together with scientific progress making apocalyptic “the guarantor of secular and religious progress alike, rather than the harbinger of decay and a pessimistic prospect for mankind” (Tuveson 1949:77). Tuveson says Mede was,

...a man interested in the general intellectual and political activity of his times, as he proved by attempting to bring eschatology into harmony with the developing scientific conceptions of the universe. His insistence that natural philosophy and revelation are merely different facets of the same truth, and that they must be in harmony—that discoveries in science must be reflected in modified interpretations of the holy Book—greatly influenced such successors as Henry More.... (1949:81).

English Protestants came to believe that progress was divinely revealed.

Mede, moreover, helped indicate the outlines of the method to be used for bringing changes in ideas about the physical universe into harmonious relation

¹³³ The German theologian Johann Alsted was an important influence. Alsted predicted the millennium would begin in 1694.

with the reading of Scripture, upon which Protestants had to insist with a peculiar intensity. Increase of scientific knowledge, as long line of commentators was to hold, makes clear the ‘obscure’ passages particularly of the prophets an apocalypticist. (1949:81).

Unlike earlier Protestants, Mede saw the course of history as upward movement which began before the Reformation. The millennium would be the last in a series of great epochs.¹³⁴ Mede brought the course of secular history into the whole scheme of Divine redemption. He believed there was a progression in history since the beginning of Christianity through a gradual defeat of evil (Tuveson 1949:77).¹³⁵ The last days before the culmination of history are characterized by a remarkable enlightenment of mankind.

Another forerunner of millennial progress was Medes’ successor at Cambridge was Henry More (1614-1687). Tuveson says, “Perhaps no figure of his time more frequently spoke in the accents of later generations” (1949:96). More’s *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos* (1680) anticipated the eschatology of “post-millennialism” which became the prevailing eschatological view of Protestantism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹³⁶ Joseph Mede believed that the millennium would be the period of greatest happiness for humanity, and Henry More held that it would be accomplished through a series of ascending epochs in history. More believed that the millennial kingdom would come by personal spiritual progress (Barnes 2003:343). More, like others before him,

¹³⁴ He interpreted his age in the symbolism of the seven vials of Revelation. Next to the last period (the sixth vial) was the conversion of the Israelites and destruction of the Turkish power. The final seventh period would be the final judgment and millennium. English Protestants came to see the Antichrist as controlling both church and state, and looked to the New World for the hope of a godly society in the millennium.

¹³⁵ Tuveson notes, “The weapons of the Protestant cause, it seems, are not merely spirit—the endurance of ever more severe persecutions, as sixteenth-century commentators had thought—but aggressive, overt action against the powers of evil” (1949:77).

¹³⁶ Tuveson notes, “We are at least very close to the origin of that conception of inevitable progress through predestined improvement and perfection of human nature which, in its many forms, has played a central part in the history of the modern world” (1949:96).

looked for the destruction of the papacy, the defeat of Islam and conversion of the Jews as preceding the millennium.¹³⁷

The idea of an earthly paradise became increasingly more popular. John Milton (1608-1674) believed in an imminent millennium and looked forward to an earth purged of evil and renovated not only morally but naturally.¹³⁸ Milton said, “Whether in Heav’n or Earth, for then the Earth Shall all be paradise...; to ‘the Eternall and shortly-expected king’ who shall ‘open the Clouds to judge the severall kingdomes of the World . . . proclaiming thy universal and milde Monarchy through Heaven and Earth’” (Abrams 1971:63).¹³⁹ Milton, along with Spenser who had a “preoccupation with Apocalypse,” would have a significant effect on Romanticism (Abrams 1971:37). The idea of an earthly eschatological paradise was carried on by the Puritans to America. When the Church of England’s Archbishop William Laud repressed Puritans, they began to regard the Church of England as Antichrist. Some migrated to America, others resisted in England. “Wherever they were, the Puritans attached considerable eschatological significance to [political] events, regarding them as part of a great cosmic conflict” (Kyle 1998:66).

A number of revolutionary millenarian groups looking for an earthly paradise also arose advocating an early form of egalitarianism. Among them were the Ranters,

¹³⁷ More was also influenced by *Theologica Germanica*.

¹³⁸ In Abrams (1971:42). From Milton, *The Christian Doctrine*, I. xxxiii. Milton said concerning the end of the earth, “its final conflagration...is meant the destruction of the substance of the world itself, or only a change in the nature of its constituent parts, is uncertain, and of no importance to determine...Our glorification will be accompanied by the renovation of heaven and earth, and of all things therein adopted to our service or delight, to be possessed by us in perpetuity.” See also *Paradise Lost*, III, 333-8; X, 638-40; XI 900-1; XII, 547-51.

¹³⁹ See Milton’s, *Of Reformation in England* (1641). Milton, “Thy Kingdome is now at hand, and thou standing at the dore [*sic*]. Come forth out of thy Royall Chambers, O Prince of all the Kings of the earth. . . for now the voice of thy Bride calls thee, and all creatures sigh to bee renew’d” (quoted by Abrams 1971:64).

Mugletonians, Levellers, Diggers, Quakers, and Fifth Monarchists. Influenced by German theology, the Mugletonians, the Philadelphians, and the Quakers looked for a universal spiritual breakthrough. George Fox and most the early Quakers viewed the coming of the Kingdom as a spiritual transformation in the hearts of believers. Fox said nearly every thunderstorm aroused end time expectations (Barnes 2003:338).¹⁴⁰ The “Fifth Monarchy Men,” so-named from the four beasts in the book of Daniel, believed that the millennial reign of Christ would begin secretly (Tuveson 1949:89). The fifth kingdom was the government of God whose reign would begin in England and would be established by force (Abrams 1971:63).¹⁴¹ They viewed the millennium as political and social, rather than theological and passive as earlier English millenarians (Kyle 1998:67).¹⁴²

At this time in England there was a decisive inward turn. Paradise was located *inwardly*. Gerrard Winstanley (1609-1676) continued in the mystic tradition by connecting Biblical history to the spiritual history of the individual. He held that every person at birth shares the innocence of Adam. In his pamphlet, “The New Law of Righteousness,” Winstanley stated, “All that which you call history, and have doted upon it, and made it your idol, is all to be seen and felt within you.”¹⁴³ All the Old Testament

¹⁴⁰ Barnes says the beginnings of this movement “cannot be understood apart from the apocalyptic agitation of that era” (2003:338).

¹⁴¹ See Louise Fargo Brown, *The Political Activities of the Baptists and Fifth Monarchy Men in England during the Interregnum* (1912); and William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (1938).

¹⁴² The events in Revelation were to be brought about through the free actions of the saints. The personal reign of Christ and his saints would be initiated when earthly powers had been eliminated. The Antichrist was to be destroyed, England purified, and then Christ’s kingdom would spread throughout the world. Oliver Cromwell’s English armies would sweep through Europe and defeat the pope. The Jews would return to the Holy Land and would defeat the Turks. All these events were to occur between 1655 and 1657.

¹⁴³ From “The New Law of Righteousness,” in Abrams 1971:53.

stories are to be “seen within you” according to Winstanley (Abrams 1971:53). Heaven and Hell are “no more than externalized fantasies of a disturbed mind” or as Winstanley put it “a Doctrine of a sickly and weak spirit, who hath lost his understanding...of the temper of his own Heart and Nature, and so runs into fancies, either of joy or sorrow.” Winstanley stressed the “imagination” over knowledge. The triumph of the Spirit in individual minds would inaugurate a new earth.¹⁴⁴

With the close of the seventeenth century, apocalyptic expectations began to subside. Other social phenomena such as witchcraft, magic, prophecies, astrology, etc. were also on the decline. This was perhaps due to the rise of Deism and explanations offered by science (Kyle 1998:55-56). Nevertheless, interest in eschatological questions persisted. Isaac Newton (1642-1727) speculated on end time events and wrote *Observations of the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John* (not published until 1733) where he claimed that the Beast of Revelation would be defeated in 1867 and the millennium to begin in the year 2000 (Barnes 2003:343). Natural and social events, such as the Great Lisbon Earthquake, the persecution of Huguenots, and French Revolution, stirred up apocalyptic expectations (Kyle 1998:68).¹⁴⁵ Astrology also continued to play an important role in eschatology (Kyle 1998:65).¹⁴⁶ Eventually scientific rationalism led to a rejection of the idea of an apocalyptic ending to the world. By the seventeenth century, “Natural Religion” became hostile toward apocalyptic

¹⁴⁴ The “Puritan Revolution” was the universal millennium spoken of by the biblical prophets according to Winstanley. Later Romantic authors Blake and Wordsworth would derive their “spiritual sense” from this radical inner light hermeneutics.

¹⁴⁵ There were several mass apocalyptic movements: Old Believers, Camisards, English Prophets, Southcotts, and Darbyites.

¹⁴⁶ The conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn 1583 and total solar eclipse of March 1652 inspired end time anxieties.

expectations.¹⁴⁷ Yet even in an age of Enlightenment, many continued to be influenced by eschatological ideas.

In one sense, new critical attitudes had turned history and nature themselves into the main texts into which Western thinkers peered for self-understanding. Yet biblical Apocalypticism and the various structures of expectation that had grown up around it were still very much alive. And even while the traditional imagery had lost much of its immediate resonance among educated Europeans, it continued to carry enormous weight in what we may call the collective unconscious.... (Barnes 2003:350)

Eschatologies that arose during this period were influential in the development of later political movements like National Socialism and Communism. Zimdars-Swartz observe,

The apocalyptic character of some modern political and social movements is now rather widely acknowledged, and some work has been done to identify crucial antecedents of their apocalyptic ideas. But it is not at all clear the channels through which these apocalyptic ideas have been (or are now being) mediated, and thus, which of the many modern representatives of secularized apocalyptic thinking are really worth our attention. (2003:621)

The Rediscovery of Cyclical Time and Infinity

The attempt to bring biblical prophetic beliefs together with a scientific understanding of nature in the modern period led to an inevitable conflict between conceptions of time. However, there were two developments in the early modern period which challenged the linear time—the revival of cyclical time and infinity. Both were the result of the reintroduction of classic pagan works. Jean Bodin (1530-1596) had reestablished this classical conception of history and cyclical conception of time and argued that the true nature of history is cyclical. Bodin gave special attention to the radical apocalypticists in his works and believed them to be the enemies of progress

¹⁴⁷ Examples of this shift are seen in Lord Herbert of Cherbury's *De Veritate* (1624) and Pierre Bayle's *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1697).

(Tuveson 1949:56).¹⁴⁸ He believed the cultural cycle was moving upward which he illustrated in the achievements of the Renaissance. The hidden secrets of nature were being revealed by the,

abstraction and separation of forms of matter....So they who say that all things were understood by the ancients err not less than do those who deny them the early conquest of many arts. Nature has countless treasures of knowledge which cannot be exhausted in any age. Since these things are so and since by some eternal law of nature the path of change seems to go in a circle....¹⁴⁹

Bodin's cyclical viewpoint created a stir in Europe.

Loys Le Roy (1510-1577), the French humanist and Roman Catholic, followed Bodin in interpreting history as moving in a circular course. Like Bodin, Le Roy was influenced by studies in natural science but also the cyclical views of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. All natural phenomena was viewed as a continual series of progressions from incompleteness to completeness and then to a state of disintegration. He supported the cyclical viewpoint of the Greek philosophers but conformed it to Scriptural revelation.¹⁵⁰ He emphasized that it was really Providence which lie behind all change in nature and the rise and fall of nations. There is no inevitable decay, but neither is there inevitable progress. It is possible that the world will end in chaos as the Stoics maintained.

This cycle was found also in the moral world. Le Roy emphasized that, except for natural calamities, the fate of their culture depended on human free will choice. The great threat was not inevitable natural decay, but moral degeneration, lack of ambition,

¹⁴⁸ Specifically chapter vii of *Methodus, ad Facilem Historiarum Cognitionem* (1566) entitled "Refutation of Those Who Postulate Four Monarchies and the Golden Age" a reference to Daniel and the age to come. There were six French editions of Bodin's work in the 16th century along with Italian and Latin but no English translations until the close of the century (1594) reaching the general English public.

¹⁴⁹ As quoted by Tuveson 1949:57.

¹⁵⁰ "Thus Le Roy initiated the attempt to adapt the scripture account of man to a cyclical philosophy based on observation and study of the actual facts of cultural development" (Tuveson 1949:63).

and war. Tuveson notes, “Such a philosophy provided a serious problem for the Christian interpreter. For a Christian, universal history must be linear; the story of mankind, which must be involved in a common fate, could hardly, it would seem, be a series of separate cultural cycles. Yet historiographers had made some cyclical conception of history inevitable” (1949:66). Le Roy pioneered cultural study of analyzing civilization not by major historical events but using the biological metaphor of “anatomy” looking for the internal structure and metabolic change of civilization. Human cultures rise from primitivism, comes to height, and then decline. This movement is possible because of the freewill actions of humans (Tuveson 1949:60-61).¹⁵¹

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) also illustrates the tension between the cyclical and linear concepts. Bacon stressed the mastery over nature by the application of experimental science. He thought the idea of a cyclical pattern of rise, decline, and rise as seen in nature was an “inspiring thought” in part because it provided an alternative to the pagan idea of inevitable degeneration. It also challenged the wisdom of the ancients (Tuveson 1949:66).¹⁵² Bacon believed God was the cause of the beginning and end of the world, thus maintaining the Christian linear concept, but viewed his own age as experiencing an advance. He also interpreted the eschatological message of Daniel, “Many shall go to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased,” as a reference to “the exploration of the globe ‘and advancement of the sciences, [which] are destined by fate, that is, by Divine Providence, to meet in the same age.’” The separation of the rational

¹⁵¹ From Le Roy, *De la Vicissitude, ou Variete des Choses en l’Universs* (1577).

¹⁵² See Bacon, *The Wisdom of the Ancients*.

mind from empirical evidence threw “into confusion all the affairs of the human family” (Abrams 1971:59).¹⁵³ Bacon stated,

And all depends on keeping the eye steadily fixed upon the facts of nature and of receiving their images simply as they are. For God forbid that we should give out a dream of our own imagination for a pattern of the world; rather may he graciously grant to us to write an apocalypse or true vision of the footsteps of the Creator imprinted on his creatures... Wherefore if we labor in thy works with the sweat of our brows, thou wilt make us partakers of thy vision and thy Sabbath.¹⁵⁴

Yet, he saw the cyclical concept in conflict with both his Christian belief and with science referring to it as the “greatest obstacle to the progress of science.”¹⁵⁵

Bacon modified his cyclical theory in his *Novum Organum* insisting on a separation of religious and secular education.¹⁵⁶ In his *Great Instauration*, Bacon, however remained optimistic concerning the future. The fall was a separation between the mind and nature, but the redemptive process would reunite the rational and empirical heralding the entrance into the “kingdom of man.” Abrams notes,

this is closely equivalent to our entrance into the moral Kingdom of God promised to us in the latter days; for it will be a return to the condition of the original Eden by way of man’s resumption of the “purity and integrity” of the mind of a child: with the understanding thoroughly freed and cleansed, the entrance into the kingdom of man, founded on the sciences, is “not much other than the entrance into the kingdom of heaven, where into none may enter except as a little child.” (1971:60)

In conjunction with the renewed interest with cyclical time was interest in the idea of infinity and the infinite universe. Questions concerning an infinite universe challenged the Christian idea of linear time and the eschatological end to history. During the

¹⁵³ Quote from Bacon’s *New Organon*.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted by Abrams 1949:62 from Bacon’s *New Organon*.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted by Abrams 1949:59.

¹⁵⁶ “It may even be that his insistence upon a strict separation of secular from religious learning was partly due to his reaction against the belief that the Scriptures foretell progressive decay of the world. He gave the new historical philosophy a great drive for advancement in culture” (Tuveson 1949:66-67).

Renaissance, Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) argued that there was no center to the world, but that God alone was the center and circumference, the “infinite equality.” However, in science the world was now becoming central. Nicholas did not set forth an infinite universe but stated the impossibility of placing limits on it. Infinity was supported by the new knowledge of astronomy which established that the stars were not as close as once thought but existed great distances apart, suggesting a magnitude previously unimaginable. In the universe nothing is at rest, but all is in constant motion. The heavenly bodies could not be compared with each other for they were equally perfect in their own right. They could experience corruption and decay like terrestrial beings, but their destruction could not be total.¹⁵⁷

Giordano Bruno (1548—1600) was the first to present the doctrine of a decentralized, infinite and infinitely populous universe. Bruno appealed to the cyclical universe of Democritus and Epicurus (Koyré 1957:44-46). According to Lovejoy, he “preached it throughout western Europe with the fervour of an evangelist.”¹⁵⁸ Bruno allowed the possibility of infinite worlds and horizons on the basis that God could not do otherwise. He argued the Creator God, the “incorporeal infinite,” contains all that which is possible and needs infinite space for his infinite worlds (Koyré 1957:52-54). Bruno stated, “Thus is the excellence of God magnified and the greatness of his kingdom made manifest; he is glorified not in one, but in countless suns; not in a single earth, but in a thousand, I say, in an infinity of worlds.” In the universe there are no “ends, boundaries, limits or walls” to deprive “us of the infinite multitude of things.” The “sun’s blaze is

¹⁵⁷ See Koyré 1957:5-24.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted by Koyré 1957:39.

everlasting” and is eternally fueled, for “from infinity is born an ever fresh abundance of matter.”¹⁵⁹

Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), rejected Bruno’s concept of an infinite universe on the basis that it was not empirically based but was a metaphysical doctrine. He attributed it to the doctrine of the Pythagoreans revived by Copernicus, and appealed to Aristotle’s argument for the finitude of the world based on motion; an argument Aristotle used against the Pythagoreans (Koyré 1957:58f).¹⁶⁰ Kepler held to a finite universe and for the uniqueness of this world. An infinite world would require perfect uniformity in its structure and contents and therefore could not change or improve (Koyré 1957:76f). Kepler distinguished between the visible heavens address by the philosophers, and the invisible incorruptible (or empyrean) heavens spoken of by Christ which “simple Christians” take as the “blessed seats.” Referencing the biblical eschatological prophecy, the visible heaven will “pass away,” “grow old” and be destroyed. Kepler said, “And that will occur in order that the alterations in the heavens should not destroy their eternity, if there should be such an eternity, just as the terrestrial alterations, which are perennial and return in a circle, destroy the Earth’s eternity which was equally believed by Aristotle” (Kepler 1952a:848).

After Kepler, Galileo’s use of the telescope demonstrated that the stars were far more distant than previously imagined. Galileo believed the knowledge he obtained through the telescope was God “illuminating my mind.” Though he did not agree that the universe was infinite, he did leave it an open question; a question “inexplicable to human

¹⁵⁹ Bruno quoted by Koyré 1957:42.

¹⁶⁰ Copernicus, “This very cogitation carries with it I don’t know what secret, hidden horror; indeed one finds oneself wandering in this immensity, to which are denied limits and center and therefore also all determinate places” (Koyré 1957:61).

reason” like predestination, free-will and “such others in which only Holy Writ and divine revelation can give answer to our revert remarks” (Koyré 1957:98). He claimed the Christian religion sets up “fences around false speculation” (Kepler 1952a:849). The Trinity made up the principle parts of the world; the center was God, the surface the Son, and intermediate space the Holy Spirit (Kepler 1952a:854). The study of the visible world was to study geometry of which God is the creator. God established nothing without “geometrical beauty” (Kepler 1952b:1025)

The scientific study of nature, particularly astronomy, challenged the belief of many early moderns raising questions about the linear concept of time and the end of history as presented in Christian theology, and toward the idea of an infinite and eternal universe as was first held in ancient Greek and pagan thought. The tension between two radically different concepts of reality and time was being felt. Descartes (1596-1650) appeared to suggest a truly infinite universe, yet he never asserted it explicitly. He said only God is infinite, the world is, in his term, “indefinite” (Koyré 1957:106).¹⁶¹

What resulted in the seventeenth century was an attempt to unite two views of the universe: the Christian view of linear time and a finite end with the idea of an infinite universe consisting of cyclical patterns. It was difficult to shake off two ideas: God and the hope of a better world to come. However, the first was easier to shed than the second. Old eschatological hopes combined with a new understanding of human nature would propel the idea of progress in the centuries to come.

¹⁶¹ Descartes’ distinction, argues Koyré, was most likely to placate the theologians. See Koyré 1957:109.

The Rise of a “Secular Eschatology”

France had experienced the effects of the apocalypticism of the day (Kyle 1998:70).¹⁶² A number of “prophets” arose claiming prophetic inspiration by the Holy Spirit and proclaiming end-time prediction.¹⁶³ The French Revolution symbolized a turning point the eschatological expectations of the time.¹⁶⁴ It marks the occasion for a “secularized eschatology.” Political liberals at the time commonly regarded the early revolution as a turning point of world-historical, indeed of cosmic, significance. It appeared that reason and liberty were emerging triumphant at the heart of European civilization and it seemed nearly certain that there would be universal victory (Barnes 2003:348-349).

For English Non-conformists, the Revolution created millenarian excitement reminiscent of Milton’s age. Wordsworth, Blake, Coleridge, Shelley, Hölderlin and young radicals in Germany viewed the French Revolution as the beginning of the fulfillment of Enlightenment hopes and sign of a new age of universal happiness (Abrams 1971:64).

¹⁶² Popular movements: Camisards, Jansenists Convulsionaries, followers of Suzette Labrousse and Catherine Theot. The Camisards saw their sufferings a sign for the coming millennium. The Camisards were crushed by the French authorities with 12,000 executed. In 1704, many left for England. Kyle notes there were two approaches to millennialism in France: elite-scholarly movement which calculated when the end will come; and Popular movements which dominated the scene inspired by popular piety and mysticism. There was an apocalyptic reaction when the Edict of Nantes (1598) was revoked in 1685. Louis XIV revoked the edict which was granted to the French Huguenots (Calvinists) the right to worship.

¹⁶³ One such prophet was Pierre Jurieu who predicted judgment day would come in 1689. A series of other dates predicting the end followed afterward: 1705, 1706, 1708 (Kyle 1998:70).

¹⁶⁴ There were mixed eschatological implications among Europeans. Kyle notes it was viewed one of two ways: the beginning of a new age which finds representation in Suzette Labrousse and Catherine Theot saw it as the new age of God’s reign or the work of the Antichrist, a view held by many outside of France (Kyle 1998:71). Those outside saw it as the work of the Antichrist whom many identified as Napoleon. The Revolution ignited apocalyptic activities in England especially among the lower classes. This lasted to Napoleon III in the 1870s (Kyle 1998:72).

While most of these persons granted no supernatural authority to the biblical writings that were the traditional basis of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic thought, they found symbolic truth in the texts that pointed to the coming of a peaceful millennial kingdom; and, to the extent that they expected an imminent, radical transformation which would be the beginning of such a kingdom, it is reasonable to think of them as representatives of a secularized Apocalypticism. (Zimdars-Swartz and Zimdars-Swartz 2003:621)

Consumed with the question over the meaning of the Revolution many wondered whether it was part of a divine plan. The arrival of the post-Christian dispensation was clear to many. This was symbolized by the official announcement that the *Anno Domini* system was abolished, along with all other vestiges of the Christian calendar and by the introduction of the new decimal calendar.¹⁶⁵ History was beginning a new era. Added to this was Robespierre's "Cult of Reason," later softened to acknowledge a Supreme Being. "In these respects, the revolutionaries were going beyond secularized forms of expectancy; they were preaching what amounted to a rationalized gospel. For them the messianic age had begun" (Barnes 2003:349). Others, however, saw the French Revolution and its aftermath as a fulfillment of the "opening of the seventh seal and the pouring out of the vials of wrath of the Apocalypse" (Zimdars-Swartz and Zimdars-Swartz 2003:622). There was a change in the identification of the Antichrist. The image of the Antichrist prevailed by reinterpreting the text of Revelation (Barnes 2003:349). No longer was the Antichrist in the church but was now the incarnation of political evil; a secular antichrist.¹⁶⁶ The political and social crises that following the Revolution caused many to lose hope in an earthly millennium brought about by means of violent revolution. L. H. Jung-Stilling (1740-1817) called fellow Pietists to repent of their unbelief and love of luxury, and argued that the church of the last days could find

¹⁶⁵ Year one began with the founding of the Republic in the fall of 1792.

¹⁶⁶ Some identified Napoleon as the Antichrist.

salvation by turning toward “the East” (i.e., Russia and Eastern Orthodoxy) (Zimdars-Swartz and Zimdars-Swartz 2003:607).

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries experienced a convergence between the eschatological ideas in place for centuries with the new developments in rationalistic science. Since pagan eschatology viewed the future as decline and decay, it is unlikely that the modern ideas of progress, social perfection and utopian visions could have arisen apart from the Christian eschatological tradition. The question is how did the transition take place? A number of explanations have been offered. Wagar says that the process of the secularization of eschatology took place in three ways:

It was the metamorphosis of the forms and creeds of traditional religious faith into new ones that preserve unmistakable traces and even essences of the old. It was also the replacement of Jewish and Christian values by analogous modern values that satisfy the same needs without appreciable residues of Judaism or Christianity. Finally, it was the expropriation, for secular purposes, of the symbolic language of traditional belief. (1982:60)

For Wagar, it is a “replacement” by modern values and ideas. Tuveson says the answer involved a kind of neo-Pelagianism: “The advance of civilization, the gradual increase of man’s knowledge and moral refinement, in itself constitutes his salvation. The role of Christ, even in [Henry] More, has become for the most part one of teacher and prophet” (1949:97). That is, it was a process of transformation. History was to end on a joyful note, like a play.

Far different is history to these seventeenth-century men; it ends in a gloriously happy finale. The latter days, like the last act of a tragicomedy, have a special function by way of resolving the problems, apparently so difficult, posed by the preceding acts. And the actors are to step out of this state into another, where the action will continue happily ever after. (Tuveson 1949:98)

This positive attitude toward the outcome of history was possible in modern Europe chiefly because of the eschatological vision inherited from Christianity.

As demonstrated above, the eschatological expectation was clearly prior to the rise of science. Early modern science was received within the eschatological context. There are a number of examples of the union of eschatological visions of the future with science. English Puritan millenarians, for example, had confidence in the exploration of nature interpreting the new discoveries with Daniel's prophecy that knowledge would increase before the end of the age (Dan.12:4). This new expansion of knowledge in natural science was given by God to be used in the millennium. Another example is Francis Bacon's "Great Instauration"¹⁶⁷ (a return to Edenic dominion over nature) which was an attempt to reconcile the Christian faith with scientific theories about the nature of the universe (Tuveson 1949:xii).¹⁶⁸ Under the new science and idea of a new world, a transformation took occurred: "Providence could assume a disguise as 'natural law,' and St. Augustine's *City of God* become the human race progressing culturally and materially" (Tuveson 1949:7). At the same time, there was a growing impatience and skepticism toward radical apocalyptic movements. The "enthusiasms" and excesses of apocalyptic fanatics repelled many. In conjunction with this repulsion was the disillusionment and later skepticism resulting from millennial predictions that never materialized. Skeptics turned to "practical reason" as a guide.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ This work partly influenced the founding of the Royal Society (1661).

¹⁶⁸ Other examples are seen in Thomas Burnet (ca 1635-1715), an advocate of the "new philosophy" who had developed a theory of progress by 1692. The heavenly city of eighteenth century philosophers and nineteenth century optimists retained many features of the New Jerusalem even though heaven went out of fashion (Tuveson 1948:vii). See Tuveson's "Swift and the World-Makers," *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1963?) and "The Origins of the Moral Sense" *Huntington Library Quarterly* (1948).

¹⁶⁹ Barnes notes there is continuity between apocalyptic pessimism and modern skepticism. "It was no doubt easier for the enlightened progressivist to retain the outward forms of a biblical faith than it was for the despairing skeptic. But just as in the sixteenth century apocalyptic affirmation and alienation had stood together in constant tension, so in the eighteenth century the idea of human progress and the attitude of critical skepticism evolved in a most uneasy alliance" (Barnes 2003:341).

The Rise of Postmillennialism

An eschatological interpretation that arose in the Modern period, which illustrates the union of an optimistic vision of the future with scientific and technological advances, is Postmillennialism. Postmillennialism served as a transitional eschatology toward a “secularized” eschatology that looked for a heaven on earth. Its roots were in Calvinistic theology and found expression in Puritanism.¹⁷⁰ Beginning in the eighteenth century, it was the popular eschatological belief among Protestants, particularly among Anglo-American Christians, during the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.¹⁷¹

Postmillennialism maintains that the world enters into a state of near paradisiacal existence for a thousand years.¹⁷² There were two phases in the development of Postmillennialism: the earlier eighteenth century form referred to as “Evangelical Postmillennialism” and the later nineteenth century “Progressive Postmillennialism.” Jonathan Edwards is the representative of the first, Timothy Dwight of Yale the latter.

¹⁷⁰ Barnes provides an interesting side note. Perhaps the most important avenue for the propagation of visions mixing secular and spiritual progressivism lay in international Freemasonry. The eighteenth century had seen the appearance of various Masonic organizations throughout Europe, most of which offered broad scope for mystical and even occultist visions of the coming spiritual regeneration of the world. By the 1770s and 1780s, Freemasons were caught up in a broad revival of Renaissance magical traditions based on the supposed wisdom of the ancient East, the recovery of which was crucial to the anticipated blossoming of universal truth. Masonic millenarianism was quite eclectic; in its many forms it included astrological, alchemical, and numerological speculation, the mystical teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg (d. 1792), and even a revival of biblical Apocalypticism (Barnes 2003:348).

¹⁷¹ The term “Postmillennialism” is a recent term used to distinguish it from “Premillennialism” which is characterized by apocalypticism. The basic difference is that the premillennialism holds that the millennium begins with the decisive interruption of the Second Advent. Premillennialism argues that the world will get progressively worse morally, politically, and environmentally. The Second Advent is preceded by a series of apocalyptic disasters, after which there is an earthly rule of Christ on earth for a thousand years.

¹⁷² Postmillennialism is still held today by some Christians, however, it lost many adherents during the twentieth century.

The differences between the two were over *how* the millennium was to be realized.¹⁷³

Evangelical postmillennialists believed the millennium would result through the proclamation of the gospel. According to the evangelical version, the world progressively improves and transitions into a thousand year state of existence where evil is virtually eliminated. Progressive postmillennialists held social reforms were necessary before the millennial period could begin. By the mid-nineteenth century, the evangelical version began to wane, but the progressive form continued into the twentieth century in the form of the “Social Gospel.”¹⁷⁴

From Millennialism to Secular Progress

Carl Becker, Ronald S. Crane, and Ernest Tuveson have all emphasized the importance of Christian perspectivism in the idea of an “inevitable and all-comprehensive progress.” This idea of progress was the result of a predisposition for an “inevitable future of absolute moral and material well-being on earth” (Abrams 1971:59). Tuveson has persuasively demonstrated that the modern idea of progress would not have been possible apart from this eschatological millennial hope. According to his view the idea of progress was the “coming together of the New Philosophy and the revival of the belief in a literal millennial end to history” (Tuveson 1949:vi). The combination of Enlightenment philosophy and millennial hopes created the modern belief that material advances in technology and improvements in standard of living, were advances in religion and spirituality. As humans gained greater control over nature they likewise experience

¹⁷³ Both were highly optimistic about the future. Jonathan Edwards considered the Papacy the Antichrist and believed the Reformation dealt the Pope a fatal blow. He calculated the antichrist achieved power in 606 CE, and adding the 1260 years from Daniel’s prophecy, predicted that 1866 would be the year when “the beast” would fall (Kyle 1998:71).

¹⁷⁴ C.f., Kyle 1998:68, Barnes 2003:344. Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) was the leading figure of this development.

moral improvement. The result was a “materialization of religion.” Without the belief in a “secular millennialism” the notion of progress could never have arisen (Tuveson 1949:vi).

There was a new kind of Providence—the historical process. “Progress” became the new “faith” and had the force of being called “righteous” and “good.” This historical process would lead to a “happy ending in which the tensions and evils of the human race would be resolved and ended” (Tuveson 1949:xi-xii). The transformation of the religious idea of the millennium, which was firmly established in the protestant mind, made it easy to assume that progress is inevitable. Tuveson says, “to challenge the certainty and inevitability of progress through history would, only a few years ago, have seems as outrageous as to challenge the doctrine of the Atonement a few centuries ago” (1949:1). The modern utopia became the secularized heaven. As Reinhold Niebuhr stated, “The redemption of mankind, by whatever means, was assured for the future. It was, in fact, assured by the future” (Niebuhr 1949:6).

Tuveson notes that progressivism can be traced back before 1698 to the work of Thomas Burnet (ca 1635-1715). “I found that the primary element in this faith in progress was the belief that a millennium is to occur; the most significant fact about all the writers in this tradition is that they were millennialists” (Tuveson 1949:viii). Burnet’s interpretation of the prophetic books of the Bible led him to believe in the gradual amelioration of society and nature. Burnet, an associate of Henry More and disciple of Descartes and Boyle, held there was a reciprocal relationship of new revelations of science with biblical texts that expanded the religious conception of the universe. Using Boyle’s notion of God’s great “epicycles,” nature and revelation provided understanding

in a reciprocal fashion. Without an understanding of nature, the meaning of biblical prophecy remains veiled. What occurred was a transferring of Providence to Nature.¹⁷⁵ Auguste Comte (1798–1857), following Burnet’s scheme, believed it was not possible to reverse the course of historical progress. Comte’s positivism rejected the idea of an end or purpose in nature, and rather looked at the constant relations between things in the world. He defined progress as continually refining the understanding of how to utilize the stable structures of static society (Strumpf 1999:333).¹⁷⁶ The permanent elements in static society must be brought up to date by the dynamic component. The result of Comte’s system was a religion of humanity, a secularized version of Catholicism, which would truly unify society on basis of “love” as the supreme moral principle.¹⁷⁷ The goal of human efforts was to ameliorate the order of nature. Comte, in the end, offers a *goal* that society *ought* to move toward. “Both apocalyptic hope and despair had a role in the continuing drive to reimagine the world: in millenarian hope lay the seeds of the modern idea of progress, while apocalyptic disillusionment moved in the direction of practical skepticism and agnosticism” (Barnes 2003:350).

Joachim’s three-fold division of time was employed for understanding secular historical time in the modern period. Comte’s “law of the three stages” (the theological, metaphysical, and positivistic or scientific) says there is a development of ideas in the history of thought. The theological explanation, which he claimed was destroyed by the positive state, argued for “two kingdoms.” The metaphysical approach argues for an

¹⁷⁵ Burnet believed the world would be destroyed by fire afterward a utopia would begin on the planet. Burnet said, “and the great *Natural* character of it, is this in general, That it will be *Paradisiacal*. Free from all inconveniences, either of external Nature, or of our own Bodies” (in Tuveson 1949:122).

¹⁷⁶ Comte saw the Middle Ages as a time when harmony existed between the *static* and *dynamic* elements in society.

¹⁷⁷ Progress is “the development of Order under the influence of Love” (Strumpf 1999:335).

abstract and impersonal *necessary being* or *ground of being*. Positivism rejected the “dogmaticisms” of metaphysics. In his influential work, *On the Education of the Human Race* (1780), Gotthold Lessing, again reflecting Joachim’s influence, saw in universal history a series of three revelations: the Jewish, the Christian, and the dawning universal revelation. Historic Christianity was one of several major stages in the education of humanity. God revealed that world history is a process of education which began with human life itself and would end in the supreme and final understanding. Tuveson says the great question of the eighteenth century was, “...how does a theory of progress from imperfection to perfection as the law of nature fit with a theory which regarded man as complete and finished at his creation, although he subsequently fell into an abject state from which he could be save only by divine intervention?” (Tuveson 1949:96-97).

By the eighteenth century, the notion of the apocalyptic had been lost among Postmillennialists. Reform and progress were the only themes. By the nineteenth century, the transition from heaven and millennium into “progress” and “utopia” was completed. Shortly after the French Revolution and Romanticism, however, the problems of industrial society questioned the notion of progress and it began to lose favor (Wagar 1982:61). With the theological justification removed, there seemed little to believe the course of history led to progressive perfection. Abrams says,

...if the history of unhappy man demonstrates anything at all, it demonstrates that we have no reason to expect radical perfection either in man’s moral nature or in his political, economic, and social institutions. The doctrine of absolute revolution has not an empirical but, ultimately, a theological basis; its certainty is a faith in Providence—a Providence converted into its secular equivalent of an immanent teleology, or dialectical necessity, or the scientific laws compelling historical events; and its prototype is the deeply ingrained and pervasive expectation in the Western world, guaranteed by an infallible text, of an abrupt, cataclysmic, and all-inclusive change which, after an indispensable preliminary of fierce destructiveness, will result in the perfection of an earthly paradise for a

redeemed mankind. Its roots, that is to say, are in the Biblical scheme of apocalyptic history. (1971:63)¹⁷⁸

For many moderns, eschatological fulfillment in history (external and objectively) did not seem plausible. As skepticism grew among enlightened thinkers in the eighteenth century concerning millennial belief, they understood the alternative: the possibility of history as endless and meaningless. However, the subject of eschatology did not die in the modern period. As discussed above, the move toward an internal (subjective) eschatology was underway particularly through German theology. Many Christian theologians would relocate eschatology from the cosmic and historical realm to a personal, inner eschatology.

Eschatology in Romanticism and German Idealism

Developments in German theology, philosophy and science led to important changes in the understanding the eschatological. By the eighteenth century, the apocalyptic elements in German theology were falling out of vogue and the new science of biology was gaining attention. With the incorporation of biological holism there developed an eschatological view that was both subjective (inner) and teleological in nature. This teleological view was in the context of a self-sustaining “system.” The concept of a *system* became important because for an infinite universe a system stands free of causation outside of itself. As seen in biology, life could be self-contained and self-sustained. This idea was compatible with the tradition of Joachim and found expression in German Romanticism and Idealism.

German literature by the nineteenth century was a convergence of the biblical story of Eden and the Apocalypse of Revelation, pagan mythology and elements of

¹⁷⁸ See Isaiah Berlin, *Historical Inevitability* (London, 1954); Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* for concept of total revolution.

mystery religions, “Plotinus, Hermetic literature and Boehme; the philosophical and historical doctrines of Schiller, Fichte, Schelling and contemporary *Naturphilosophie*; the exemplary novel of education, Wilhelm Meister’s *Lehrajahre...*” (Abrams 1971:245). The biblical text and exegesis along with the prophetic vision of Milton and Spenser had provided important background for Romantic thought (Abrams 1971:37).¹⁷⁹ Abrams notes that the “concepts and patterns of Romantic philosophy and literature are a displaced and reconstituted theology, or else a secularized form of devotional experience...” Abrams says if this is not evident, it is because “we still live in what is essentially, although in derivative rather than direct manifestations, a biblical culture, and readily mistake our hereditary ways of organizing experience for the conditions of reality and the universal forms of thought.” What resulted in Romanticism was what T. E. Hulme called a “spilt religion” (Abrams 1971:65-68). Abrams identifies five elements that constitute Romantic philosophy: 1. The self-moving and self-sustaining system; 2. Immanent teleology; 3. Unity Lost and unity regained; 4. Progress by reversion: the Romantic Spiral; 5. Redemption as progressive self-education (see Abrams 1971:172-187).

The assimilation of biblical and theological elements to pagan frames of reference had occurred since the establishment of Christianity, but during the Renaissance through the eighteenth century, it accelerated significantly. This was especially true after the French Revolution when the scope of the undertaking and the intentional nature of the

¹⁷⁹ See Milton, *Paradise Lost*; Thomas Burnet’s *Sacred Theory of the Earth.*; Dryden, conclusion of *Anne Killigrew*; John Pomfret, Pindaric odes in *On the General Conflagration* and *Dies Novissima*; Pope, the *Messiah*; James Thomson, *The Seasons* (Conclusion); James Hervey, *Meditations among the Tombs*; Edward Young, *The Last Day, Night Thoughts* (9th book); William Cowper, *The Task* (book 6).

project expanded. Romantic philosophers and poets were inspired by apocalyptic ideas and imagination (Abrams 1971:65). According to Abrams,

The Romantic writers revived these ancient matters with a difference: they undertook to save the overview of human history and destiny, the experiential paradigms, and the cardinal values of their religious heritage, by reconstituting them in a way that would make them intellectually acceptable, as well as emotionally pertinent, for the time being. (1971:66)

Romanticism also found inspiration in the new developments in biological science. In the seventeenth century, biology was essentially a branch of medicine concerned with human anatomy.¹⁸⁰ Because of the need for classification system in the study of exotic plant and animal life, the classification system of Aristotle was employed. The system not only provided classification, but also stressed the idea of *purpose* or *telos*; an idea that was compatible with Christian eschatology.¹⁸¹ Pearcey and Thaxton observe, “Nothing, it seemed, could be more obvious than that living structures are designed for a purpose.... For many natural historians of the time, the marvelous ‘fit’ between an organism and its environment bespoke a purposeful creation” (Pearcey and Thaxton 1994:100).¹⁸²

Linnaeus (1707-1778), a devout Lutheran, provided the first comprehensive classification system. He held to a belief in the intelligibility of organic nature and looked for a higher order of classification based on the internal reproductive system. Later, the French naturalist Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) stressed the holistic nature of

¹⁸⁰ In Germany, biology was originally studied under “Natural history” (*Naturphilosophie*).

¹⁸¹ Aristotle held that the Forms are eternal. Individual species born and die with endless cycles of generations, but the species is eternal. Christians, however, could not accept Aristotle’s view completely because the species had a beginning at the creation according to dogma. See Pearcey and Thaxton 1994:101.

¹⁸² This relationship with Aristotle ended with Darwin who brought biology back to a mechanistic explanation (Pearcey and Thaxton, 1994:110).

the organism and argued that organic change must be systemic. Cuvier rejected Romanticism and *Naturphilosophie* because it verged on pantheism.¹⁸³ He nevertheless provided “a restatement of the thoroughgoing teleological interpretation of life which he had adapted from Aristotle” (Pearcey and Thaxton 1994:104).

Romanticism rejected physics (machine) from the center of science and replaced it with biology. Romantic writers rejected Descartes’ dualism and mechanistic approach to biology that reduced living organisms to complex machines (Barbour 1966:326).¹⁸⁴ The problem for mechanism was that living things stubbornly refused to fit into simplistic mechanistic explanations. Some French biologists recognized the inadequacies of the mechanistic approach¹⁸⁵ and turned to the organic vision of nature from Leibniz (Pearcey and Thaxton 1994:106). According to Leibniz (1646-1716), nature is a vast organism. Matter and the various parts of nature are permeated with life (force, activity) and mind (panpsychism). Building on Leibniz, Buffon (1707-1788) rejected the classification systems and viewed natural history as a *process* of generation and variation. In so doing, he developed a new kind of natural history that was dynamic, but non-teleological (Collingwood 1944:110).¹⁸⁶

In the Romantic version of nature, matter is possessed with will and psychic qualities. In later organismic biology, life was not an entity or substance but an *organization* where living things are specially organized chemicals. The distance

¹⁸³ His rejection was due to his Calvinistic theology.

¹⁸⁴ This position was articulated by Julian Offray de la Mettrie, French philosopher-physician in *L’homme Machine* in 1749.

¹⁸⁵ Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertius (1698-1759) was an astronomer and biologist who brought Newtonian thought to France but later was also the first person to recognize the Newtonian paradigm was inadequate for biology.

¹⁸⁶ Buffon’s *Historie Naturelle* was an influence for Herder’s thought.

between living and non-living things is a matter of degree. The result was that Romantic materialism made “nature appear self-sufficient and the Biblical Creator superfluous” (Pearcey and Thaxton 1994:109).

Neo-Platonic philosophy was the source for the Romantic spiritualism of German *Naturphilosophen* (Pearcey and Thaxton 1994:97-98). Neo-Platonism emphasized “immanent semi-spiritual ‘active principles’ as formative forces in nature.” Romanticism transformed the neo-Platonic concept of “World Soul” into a universal “Life Force” which became the agent of change and progress (Pearcey and Thaxton 1994:106). While the Aristotelian tradition in biology focused on classification, neo-Platonic influence emphasized embryology.

Through the influence of *Naturphilosophie*, Romantic biologists had embraced and modified a form of pantheistic vitalism to explain organic forms (Pearcey and Thaxton 1994:98). This was similar to the neo-Platonic great chain of being. The difference was that the chain of being was static. Romanticism, however, historicized it.

The entire chain of being was toppled over on its side, as it were, and instead of being a static structure—the inventory of all the kinds of things that exist in the world—the great chain became a dynamic process, a series of stages through which the world develops as the Life Force unfolds its succession of archetypes. The great chain of being, which for 2000 years had been a static concept, was transformed into an evolutionary concept, with everything striving to move up to higher levels of perfection. (Pearcey and Thaxton 1994:107)

Romantic biologists emphasized parallels between the developmental stages in the individual with the historical progress of organic forms (i.e. the doctrine of recapitulation). It was argued that a “vital force” must guide embryonic development which compels the embryo toward its goal (*telos*) to be an adult (Barbour 1966:324).¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Though similar, the difference between organicism and vitalism is there is no external “force” in vitalism.

Some vitalists saw in the embryo an entelechy, a vital agent that directs events in the embryo toward a future goal. It was concluded that if this was true of the individual human, then it must be true of all of life. Unfolding “life” was understood as a “Law of Development.” Not only was this law true for biology, but also for thought and social institutions. “Everything was caught up in a great transformation from primitive beginnings to some exalted future” (Pearcey and Thaxton 1994:107). Vitalism dominated early biology on the Continent. The “life force” was reminiscent of an immanent deity and it was a short step into pantheism and toward atheism.

German Idealism

Apocalyptic themes were translated into the concepts and schemes of German Idealism. The early philosophical writings of the period (Schiller, Fichte, Schelling, and above all Hegel) sought to retain what they considered valid in ancient myths. Friedrich Schlegel articulated the need for a “new mythology” which was to be the unifying grounds of all modern poetry. Philosophy was to be formed “out of the uttermost depth of the spirit” (Abrams 1949:245).

The German Idealist system, which was sketched out by the Fichte (1762-1814), developed by Schelling and later carried on by Hegel, represents itself as a moving system driven by internal sources of contradiction which, in Schelling’s (1775-1854) terms, are “life’s mainspring and core” (Abrams 1949:173). Both Schelling and Hegel consistently use biological metaphors of “life” and “death.” In an organism, the parts are perpetually in self-generated motion. When the parts die, they are severed from the whole.¹⁸⁸ Hegel’s system is a system of motion within a closed system. “Concepts” are

¹⁸⁸ Hegel said, “The totality of the movements of the component concepts is philosophy, or “science”; and truth in this energetic and integral philosophic system does not inhere in any propositions

defined as “self-movements, circles...spiritual entities.”¹⁸⁹ The moving principle of the concept is the dialectic. Hegel stated,

Wherever there is movement, wherever there is life, wherever anything is carried into effect in the actual world, there Dialectic is at work....Everything that surrounds us may be viewed as an instance of Dialectic...by which the finite, as implicitly other than what it is, is forced beyond its own immediate or natural being to turn suddenly into its opposite.¹⁹⁰

For Hegel the plot of history is the self-realization and self-education of the spirit.

The intricate total design of the vast Hegelian system thus asks to be imaged as an immanently compelled evolution of small dialectical circles which compose a continuum in the shape of three large circles, spiraling upward and widening outward until they constitute one great *Kreis von Kreisen* that comprehends everything, by reaching the end which (though only implicitly) was in the beginning, and so returning to the beginning which (now become explicit, “comprehended,” and thus “concrete”) is the end. (Abrams 1949:227)

The Romantic immanent teleology was much like the theological concept of the universal hidden working of Divine Providence. The difference is that the transcendent God becomes the immanent operation of Hegel’s “cunning of Reason.” The vision of the future by German Idealists was a version of Neoplatonic Christianity that maintained that the process of emanation ends in the beginning. Yet it is not merely a return to the original beginning as in the circular monism of the Neoplatonists. In Neoplatonism, the One was the perfection toward which all existence strives, however, in Romanticism it is not a simply unity, but a complex unity which is the process of “cumulative division and reintegration”; a shift from “uniformitarianism” to “diversitarianism.” The reunion or

severed from the whole (for by severance they are at once rendered “dead and positive”) but in the entirety of the dynamic process itself: “this whole movement constitutes the positive and its truth” (in Abrams 1949:175).

¹⁸⁹ Hegel states, “The Concept is the object’s own self which presents itself as its becoming...that moves itself and takes its determinations back into itself,”....” (In Abrams 1949:174; see Hegel’s Preface in, *Phenomenology of Spirit*).

¹⁹⁰ In Abrams 1949:175, from Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*.

synthesis is a “third thing” that is higher than the original unity, and advances as a spiral. As Hegel said, the return to the beginning is “also an advance.”¹⁹¹ Abrams says, “this self-moving circle, in other words, rotates along a third, a vertical dimension, to close where it had begun, but on a higher plane of value. It thus fuses the idea of the circular return with the idea of linear progress, to describe a distinctive figure of Romantic thought and imagination—the ascending circle, or spiral” (1949:184).

The idea of redemption borrowed from Christian theology played an important element in the development and goal of history. The differences were a shift from reconciliation of man to a transcendent to the overcoming of the opposition between ego and non-ego; a reconciliation of subject with object. However, there was a difference in that the reconciliation would occur in human consciousness in this world.

“Accordingly, the history of mankind, as well as the history of the reflective individual, was conceived not as a probation for an other-worldly heaven but as a process of the self-formation, or self-education, of the mind and moral being of man from the dawn of consciousness to the stage of full maturity” (Abrams, 187, 188). Human history was no longer *Heilsgeschichte* but became *Bildungsgeschichte*; more specifically, a *Heilsgeschichte* translated into the secular mode of *Bildungsgeschichte*, a transformation from theological history to a process of human education. Idealism envisioned an imminent culmination of history resulting in a recovered paradise.

The movement toward this goal is a circuitous journey and quest, ending in the attainment of self-knowledge, wisdom, and power. This educational process is a fall from primal unity into self-division, self-contradiction, and self-conflict, but the fall is in turn regarded as an indispensable first step along the way toward a higher unity which will justify the sufferings undergone en route....The beginning and end of the journey is man’s from whom he has, upon setting out, been

¹⁹¹ Hegel said, “The true is its own becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its aim and thus has it for its beginning” (Abrams 1949:180).

disparted. The goal of this long inner quest is to be reached by a gradual ascent, or else by a sudden breakthrough of imagination or cognition; in either case, however, the achievement of the goal is pictured as a scene of recognition and reconciliation, and is often signalized by a loving union with the feminine other, upon which man finds himself thoroughly at home with himself, his milieu his family of fellow men. (Abrams 1949:255)

Marx and Nietzsche

Karl Marx (1818-1883) built on the Hegelian vision of history moved by an immanent dialectic but also in Marx is the eschatological hope of a material utopia and vision of the culmination of history. Marx was influenced in part by the Frenchman Charles Fourier (1772-1837) who, supporting the goals of the French Revolution, believed that not only society, but also nature and the universe would be transformed by human technology. Applying Fourier's thought, Marx condemned the existing world and looked for "an imminent world transformation, triggered by informed human activity" (Zimdars-Swartz and Zimdars-Swartz 2003:622). Through apocalyptic violence, the final stage of world history would be inaugurated.

In his earlier work, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844) Marx viewed history as primarily moral. "The movement of history is toward realizing the highest good of the individual man..." which is "creative self-realization of the 'whole man.'" where "egoism" is replaced by being in a loving community. Evil is essentially *separation*; alienation, estrangement (*Entäusserung* and *Entfremdung*). Labor, which is essential to being human, is to transform inorganic natural things into human things. According to Marx, "Thus *society* is the accomplished union of man with nature, the veritable resurrection of nature, the realized naturalism of man and the realized humanism of nature" (Quoted by Abrams 1949:315). When alienation occurs in the act of production, there is a sense of "homelessness" in life. Marx stated,

It is, therefore, the return of man himself as a social, i.e., really human being, a complete and conscious return which assimilates all the wealth of previous development. Communism as a fully-developed naturalism is humanism and as a fully-developed humanism is naturalism. It is the definitive resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man.... It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be this solution. (Quoted by Abrams 1949:315)

The optimism of a teleological perspective, however, was over by the end of the nineteenth century. The idea of progress as defined as human knowledge and physical well-being was challenged (Tuveson 1949:16). At the height of the age of the “great optimist-rationalist-utilitarian victory” Nietzsche foresaw what was to come. It was out of a time of decadence, dissolution and weakness, Nietzsche believed, that the Dionysian spirit arose (Nietzsche 1956:7-9). In *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1872) he expressed his dislike of Marx’s “optimistic glorification of man” considering it “paradisiacal.” Nietzsche held that art is the highest task, the metaphysical activity of life. Art is the interplay of Apollonians and Dionysian duality, the individual and the “mysterious Primordial Unity.” The generative dialectic the result of sexual opposition, conflict and procreative union. The two hostile principles constitute immanent teleology which is the final goal of art.¹⁹² The ultimate state is not the social state (contra Marx) but a psychic state where man is united into a “higher community” with men and with alienated nature (Abrams 1949:318). Abrams concludes,

We in our time are thus the heirs of a very old and expanding tradition—pagan and Christian, mythical and metaphysical, religious and secular—that it is the lot of man to be fragmented and cut off, but haunted in his exile and solitariness by the presentiment of a lost condition of wholeness and community. The alienated hero, or alienated anti-hero, in an inhuman universe and a disintegrated social order; the maimed and disinherited mind in search of a spiritual father or mother

¹⁹² Abrams, “Nietzsche regards tragic drama as a re-presentation of the myth of Dionysus, and he interprets the Dionysian myth on the model of the cosmic myth of the Universal Man whose dismemberment constituted the primal evil and effected the creation of the world of individual beings, and whose coming resurrection into unity will mark the consummation of all things” (1949:317).

or home; the *Angst* of the solitary and self-divided consciousness in its faintly hopeful, or despairing, or absurdly persisting quest for connection, community, or even communication—these themes, predominant in our literature since World War I, have become obsessive in the philosophers, poets, novelists and dramatists of the last two or three decades. (1949:313)

With Nietzsche comes the end of any vestige of eschatological optimism that had carried over into the modern age.¹⁹³ No longer did it make sense to retain the idea of utopia or that historic time would find some completion. God was “dead.” However, what was left?

Conclusion

The beginning of the twentieth century was a time of transition. Eschatology at the beginning of the twentieth century is very different from the previous centuries. By the early twentieth century, the hope for an earthly Kingdom of God quickly waned. Nietzsche had already heralded the end in Europe. By World War I the optimistic spirit began to wane. Oswald Spengler’s 1917 work, *The Decline of the West*, had predicted the demise of Europe. Germany had experienced its own political crises going into the twentieth century and into the First World War. By the end of the war, Germany had experienced a collapse and humiliation. Illustrative of the change in mood of the time is a statement made by Sir Edward Grey (1862-1933) from his autobiography, “The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.”

It would take a little longer to experience in America what had already begun in Europe (Patterson 1995:32).¹⁹⁴ As discussed above, Postmillennialism pushed for social

¹⁹³ The possible exception of the presence of an eschatology in Nietzsche is his idea of the coming of the “Overman.”

¹⁹⁴ Patterson notes that this sense of dread was not yet felt in the United States until after the 1950s: “In North America, this cultural trend was delayed for the first half of this century. With the exception of the 1930s, North American culture during this period was oriented toward progress and hope in the future. While the tragedy of two World Wars was felt here as well, it was not experienced with the

reform. America was the “city set on a hill” and light to all the nations. Going into the twentieth century, many believe it to be the “Christian Century,” the beginning of the twentieth-century version of the millennial age. However, severe economic depressions, two world wars, and the threat of nuclear annihilation, dashed or at least tempered by mid-twentieth century the belief that progress toward utopia was attainable. The optimistic secular eschatology was transformed into nihilism and a new form of secular apocalypticism. The secularized eschatology of the twentieth century no longer looked for divine intervention to provide salvation and deliverance, but toward government and social institutions for answers to the problems facing the world and inwardly for meaning. Survival from mutual destruction and ecological destruction replaced progress for many. While some looked outwardly for eschatological answers, other turned inward.¹⁹⁵ It was during this century that the philosophers discussed in the following chapters addressed the subject of eschatology in their philosophy.

The spirit of optimism concerning the age to come found in previous generations has all but died, though vestiges can still be located among certain groups. Two World Wars and the possibility of nuclear annihilation have for the most part created nihilism and a state of survival. Is it proper to even speak of a “secular” eschatology today? Is it

intensity and sense of loss that characterized Europe. No cities were destroyed, no cultural treasures were lost, no crowds of refugees roamed streets of rubble in search of relatives lost to the ravages of war. Instead, our streets were filled with ticker-tape. Newsreels and Hollywood combined to create a romance of war, and the victories served to bolster the self-confidence of North American culture at levels never before experienced. As might be expected, the apocalyptic Jesus of Weiss and Schweitzer did not make much of an impact here at that time. Instead, Walter Rauschenbusch's Social Gospel-the North American version of liberal theology-exercised the greatest influence on the quest for the historical Jesus among North American scholars, led by the Chicago School of Shirley Jackson Case and Shailer Mathews. Here Rauschenbusch's call for Christianizing the Social Order still made sense in an atmosphere of undiminished hope for what might be achieved in human culture” (Patterson 1995:32-33).

¹⁹⁵ Examples of this are seen in the drug movement of the 60s and New Age mysticism. For an example of the latter see Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s*. Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1976.

“legitimate” to speak of eschatology today or is it, in the words Emil Brunner the “bastard offspring” of biblical hope (Wagar 1982:61)?

The reason for this historical examination of the subject of eschatology is occasioned by the use of the term by the philosophers in this study, particularly Heidegger’s use of the term and position that all being is eschatological. A number of points are gained from this survey. First, what constitutes eschatology is far more complex than the popular ideas of apocalypse and judgment. This point will be noted in Blumenberg’s treatment of the subject. Second, eschatological belief continued to influence Western thought even into a secular world. This raises the question why it has such an enduring presence in modern thought. As seen here, certain ideas such as progress, were eschatological in nature. Even the increase of knowledge obtained from astrology (astronomy) and natural science was received as an historical fulfillment in the context of eschatological prediction. Third, this survey reveals two general approaches to eschatology which help explain why Heidegger and others included eschatology in philosophy. There were two general eschatological traditions—Latin and German traditions. This distinction is not made in contemporary discussions on eschatology and explains why eschatology is a continual point of interest among the philosophers considered in this work. While the transcendent (Latin) view of historical linear time, which was explicit in the biblical scriptures, became passé for the modern world, the immanent (German) view remained alive into the twentieth century. Even in a secular world, both eschatological views played an important part in political action through the modern period with the imagery of the apocalypse only intensifying in the twentieth-century. The ideas of progress and apocalypticism were competing and conflicting ideas.

It is with this background in view that the use of eschatology in the philosophies of Heidegger, Berdyaev and Blumenberg are considered.

CHAPTER THREE

HEIDEGGER'S ESCHATOLOGY OF BEING

More than ten years after the publication of *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger stated in “The Anaximander Fragment” that the “history of Being is gathered in this departure. The gathering in this departure, as the gather (λόγος) as the outermost point (ἔσχατον) of its essence hitherto, is the eschatology of Being. As something fateful, Being itself is inherently eschatological” (Heidegger 1975:18). This statement raises the question, why did Heidegger use the term “eschatological” in reference to understanding Being, especially at this later time in his career? To state that Being is “inherently eschatological” suggests that eschatology, an exclusively theological term particularly, had some significance for Heidegger. In attempting to answer this question, other questions are raised such as whether there is a difference between eschatology and teleology in Heidegger. How did Heidegger’s understanding of eschatology compare with his contemporaries who also addressed the subject? Why did he offer an interpretation of the New Testament eschatological texts in his early career?

The purpose of this chapter is to explore why Heidegger included the idea of eschatology in his philosophy. Eschatology was an active topic among German theologians at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. It is important to note that Heidegger’s interest in theology took place at the same time. He had some significant theological and philosophical influences in his early career

associated with the subject of eschatology which intersected with both the philosophy of history and phenomenology. On these themes, Dilthey's and Husserl's influences will be highlighted. This together provides part of the reason why Heidegger addressed the subject in his religious lectures. To understand how he approached eschatology, the content of his religious lectures will be addressed. Finally, Heidegger will be compared to three contemporaries who addressed eschatologically related themes: Jaspers, Spengler, and Husserl. This discussion will close with some observations on Heidegger's use of the eschatological idea.

Heidegger demonstrated an "intense interest" in religion and theology, particularly New Testament studies during his early years (Kisiel 1993:149). Religion played a "central role" in Heidegger's early academic training. Between the years 1909-1915 Heidegger was a student at a Catholic seminary and, for a short while, a Jesuit novice. He was a strong advocate of the Pope's anti-modernist position. Prior to 1914, he contributed articles to the periodical *Der Akademiker*, an ultraconservative Catholic publication (Crowe 2006:129).¹ Thomas Sheehan observed² that Heidegger's religious lectures anticipated the key ideas of *Being and Time*, particularly temporality [*Zeitlichkeit*]. It was at this time that Heidegger developed the core "existential categories," e.g., understanding [*Verstehen*], affect [*Befindlichkeit*], ability to be [*Seinkönnen*], and facticity. Sheehan argued that these ideas can all be located within Heidegger's discussion of "primitive Christianity" (Sheehan 1979). Benjamin Crowe, in

¹ Crowe states he "rails against the superficiality and relativism of the modern age and proposes a radical appropriation of the lost grandeur of medieval Catholicism. See also Van Buren 1994:122-129, 349.

² Sheehan observed this was a decade before the general availability of Heidegger's religious texts.

his recent work on Heidegger's religious background, goes beyond Sheehan to show connection of these religious writings with Heidegger's idea of authenticity. Crowe notes that his religious lectures provide the background to his idea of authenticity claiming that religion was both "personally and philosophically central to Heidegger's project" (Crowe 2006:129). Crowe notes that Luther and Kierkegaard were important influences during the early years (Crowe 2006:160).³ Heidegger listed a number of theological influences in his 1922 *curriculum vitae* such as Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932), Wilhelm Bousset (1865-1920), Johannes Wendland (1871-1947), and Richard Reitzenstein (1861-1931), scholars identified with the "History of Religions School" (Crowe 2006:131). However, there were three that were significant in his understanding of eschatology.

Early Theological Influences: Weiss, Schweitzer, and Overbeck

In his early years as a student Heidegger became interested in a particular theological subject—eschatology. According to W. G. Kümmel, theological studies experienced a turning point around 1900 through the works of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer. Both wrote at the turn of the century, but neither received much attention until after World War I. Willis notes, "In fact, the eschatological interpretations of Weiss and Schweitzer did not really carry the day in New Testament scholarship until after World War I when the collapse of liberal world optimism caused by the 'Great War' made it more understandable to speak of an 'otherworldly' gospel" (Willis 1987:3). Prior to the war, however, there had been significant discussions about Christianity and eschatology.

³ Crowe: "If Heidegger's readings of primitive Christianity were indeed of decisive importance for the development of the ideal of authenticity in his work, then it would be a good idea to take some time to pick out the guiding features of the account just discussed in order to see how they reappear in later discussions. I think close scrutiny of Heidegger's lectures from 1920-1921 shows that all the important features of what he calls "authenticity" are clearly present there" (2006:160).

Albert Ritschl (1822-1889), a prominent theological figure of the day, had stressed the idea of the “kingdom of God” arguing from Kantian ethical idealism that the Kingdom was “this-worldly, monistic and ethical in character” (Willis 1987:2). Ritschlian social liberalism, however, came under attack by many of his own students by the end of the century.⁴ Among the critics was Johannes Weiss (1863-1914) who maintained that the Kingdom was transcendent, radically future and not present in any way. The Kingdom did not originate with Jesus’ disciples but was rooted in Jewish apocalyptic. The Kingdom, he argued, does not gradually evolve.⁵ Ethically, the Kingdom of God is essentially world-denying (Willis 1987:4). Weiss's apocalyptic Jesus, however, became controversial among theologians.

Heidegger was also familiar with the work of Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) noting that during his early years the “critical work of Albert Schweitzer came into my field of vision” (quoted by Crowe 2006:131). Schweitzer rediscovered the “apocalyptic Jesus” and was a strong critic of the liberal “quest for the historical Jesus.” Schweitzer had popularized eschatology in two theological works published early in the century: *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1905) and *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (1930) (Crowe 1987:131).⁶ Schweitzer’s earliest work, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (1901), reflected most of the views of the kingdom of God as held by Weiss.

In contrast to the “Eschatological School” after Weiss, Schweitzer offered a “School of Thoroughgoing Eschatology.” In comparison, Schweitzer was the turning

⁴ Wilhelm Hermann offered an individualistic and experiential interpretation of the Kingdom as God’s rule in the heart.

⁵ Contrary to progressive social perfection as seen in post-Millennialism.

⁶ In *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* Schweitzer addressed a few chapters on the subject of eschatology. Chapter XV “The Eschatological Question,” chapter XVI “The Struggle Against Eschatology,” and chapter XVII “Thoroughgoing skepticism and thoroughgoing eschatology.”

point for twentieth century theology. He argued that Weiss weakened the “eschatological point of view.”⁷ Schweitzer was critical of pre-World War I culture and applied eschatology to his culture the same way he believed Jesus attacked his culture using eschatology (Willis 1987:13).⁸ Robinson notes in his introduction to Schweitzer’s work,

When *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* was written, the eschatological orientation of Jesus’ and primitive Christianity’s message could only bewilder contemporary theology. But for theology after World War I, which no longer understood itself in terms of cultural optimism, but more nearly apocalyptically (*The Decline of the West*), Schweitzer’s discovery provided an orientation for the new understanding of existence.⁹

The vital elements of Schweitzer’s “School of Thoroughgoing Eschatology” were later carried into mainstream theological scholarship by the Bultmannian school (Schweitzer 1968a:xxiii).¹⁰

The most important theological influence on Heidegger was the work of Franz C. Overbeck (1837-1905), a German Lutheran theologian (or “anti-theologian”) and

⁷ In his commentary on Romans, Schweitzer said, “Christianity that is not wholly and without exception eschatology has wholly and without exception nothing to do with Christ” (As quoted by Robinson in the “Introduction” to Schweitzer 1968a:xxii).

⁸ Schweitzer’s last work, *The Decline and Restoration of Civilization*. Schweitzer had been an admirer of Nietzsche. Schweitzer considered a “super-human personality” who “destroyed the form of his Weltanschauung.”

⁹ Schweitzer 1968a: xxi. Robinson compares Schweitzer to Schleiermacher as not merely creating a school but founding an age.

¹⁰ Patterson notes that the mood among contemporary theologians was a turn away from the “apocalyptic Jesus.” Since the 1945 discovery of the Nag Hammadi documents and revitalized interest in the “Gospel of Thomas” which contained no apocalyptic references and the Post-Bultmannian movement which sees the “reign of God” (which expresses the hope that God reigns now) as separate and distinct from the apocalyptic (Schweitzer 1968a:37-38). Patterson also notes American contributions by Amos Wilder, Robert W. Funk and John Dominic Crossan who examine the parables as metaphor and narrative (“language events”) which create a “world” in which the “reign of God” is encountered.

professor of New Testament and Church History at the University of Basel.¹¹ Overbeck was also a close friend and colleague of Nietzsche at Basel and had addressed the significance of the subject of eschatology before both Weiss and Schweitzer.¹² Weiss and Schweitzer continued the emphasis on eschatology, both appealing to Overbeck as support for a non-apocalyptic eschatology (Körtner 1995:9-10). Overbeck had attacked his contemporary theologians and Christendom insisting that a true religion, if one was possible, must be founded on a supernatural revelation beyond history. Overbeck's thesis was that contemporary Christianity had compromised with "culture." He denounced the historicizing of Christianity and argued that the primitive Christian faith was distorted by transforming Christianity into a social (cultural and political) movement *within* history. He argued that primitive Christianity's original proclamation was an uncompromising radicalism, but was later "secularized" during the early Alexandrian period. In like manner, modern theological liberalism's faith in progress "blocked it from really appropriating the core of primitive Christianity."¹³ Theology was incompatible with Christianity because of the incompatibility of faith and reason (knowledge), and its

¹¹ Franz Overbeck, *Über die Christlichkeit unserer heutigen Theologie*, 1873 (1903); Two English translations are Franz Overbeck, *On the Christianity of Theology*, (trans. John Elbert Wilson), San Jose, Ca.: Pickwick Publications, 2002, based on the 1873 edition, and Franz Overbeck, *How Christian is Our Present-Day Theology?*, Martin Henry, trans., (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), based on the second 1903 edition.

¹² Overbeck also had significant influence on a number of other philosophers including Karl Löwith who devoted an entire chapter to him in his *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche* (1941).

¹³ Overbeck wrote, "Calm reflection sees plainly that Christianity outfitted itself with a theology only when it wanted to render itself possible in a world which it was actually negating. [. . .] For precisely in the beginnings of theology, i.e., in the oldest Christian Alexandrian theology it becomes as clear as possibly can be [. . .] that Christianity wanted to use its theology to recommend itself to the wise men of the world and to make itself acceptable to them. Viewed in this way, however, theology is nothing more than part of the secularization of Christianity, a luxury it allowed itself which, like every other luxury, is not to be had without a price" (As quoted by Crowe 2006:130-131).

presence was the sign of the decay of religion.¹⁴ Theology is a secularization of Christianity, the “Satan of religion,” and modern theologians are “the gravediggers of a dying Christianity” (Körtner 1995:8).¹⁵

Most significantly, Overbeck located the essence of Christianity in eschatology (Heron 1980:75-76).¹⁶ Eschatology is not compatible with modern theology’s faith in progress which blocks access to the apocalyptic. What was essential to Christianity was an apocalyptic denial of the world. Christianity had emerged from an apocalyptic belief that the world was coming to an end (Henry 2007:391-404). Christianity was born “announcing its imminent doom” (Crowe 2006:130).¹⁷ Among the Jews, apocalyptic replaced prophecy, and it was into such a situation Christianity was born. “In contrast, for Christians apocalyptic is a living form of prophecy which they still experience” (Körtner 1995:8). There is no returning to original Christianity according to Overbeck. The end of the world did not come, only the end of Christianity. What is left is only to mourn and to prevent theologies, orthodox and liberal, from claiming to represent Christianity.

¹⁴ See Henry (2007) who states, “Indeed the appearance of theology was an infallible sign, in Overbeck’s judgment, that the vital impulse underlying a religion was already in decline. This was, in his eyes, especially true in the case of Christianity, which emerged proclaiming the imminent End of the World, and hence could not have expected any history at all to follow, let alone a history of theological reflection. In general, for Overbeck, theology could at most be the undertaker or gravedigger of a religion, never its midwife or physician” (19).

¹⁵ Overbeck: “Calm reflection sees plainly that outfitted itself with a theology only when it wanted to render itself possible in a world which it was actually negating...For precisely in the beginnings of theology, i.e. in the oldest Christian Alexandrian theology, it becomes as clear as it possibly can be...that Christianity wanted to use its theology to recommend itself to the wise men of the world and to make itself acceptable to them. Viewed in this way, however, theology is nothing more than part of the secularization of Christianity, a luxury it allowed itself which, like every other luxury, is not to be had without a price” (As quoted by Körtner 1995:281, note 56).

¹⁶ Theodore Kisiel notes the influence of Overbeck on Heidegger. In 1922 Heidegger had sent Karl Jaspers a copy of Overbeck’s *Christentum und Kultur*.

¹⁷ See Franz Overbeck, *Über die Christlichkeit unserer heutigen Theologie. Streit- und Friedensschritt*. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlicher Buchgesellschaft., 1974), 50.

Overbeck's influence can be seen in Heidegger's use of eschatology; his emphasis on primitive Christianity, his charge against contemporary theologians, the emphasis on going beyond history, the sense of crisis, and emphasis on the original proclamation to name a few. According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, Heidegger, in a public discussion with theologian Eduard Turneysen in Marburg in the 1920s, challenged theology to "fulfill its real function of speaking credibly about faith" and there appealed to Overbeck.¹⁸ Years later in 1970, Heidegger noted the importance of Nietzsche and Overbeck saying,

Almost one hundred years ago there appeared simultaneously (1873) two writings of two friends: the "first piece" of the "Unfashionable Observations" of Friedrich Nietzsche, wherein the "glorious Hölderlin" 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.¹⁹

The War years were a turning point for Heidegger. John Van Buren notes that that a significant "turn" (*Kehre*) took place in Heidegger especially between the years 1917-1918. After the war he rejected the attitude of the anti-modernists (Crowe 2006:129).²⁰ Heidegger went from ultra-conservative Catholic to radical critic of dogmatism emerging as a "Protestant apostate."²¹ Like Luther, an early source of

¹⁸ See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophische Lehrjahre* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), 37.

¹⁹ As quoted by Crowe 2006:130. This was from an introductory statement to Heidegger's 1927 Address "Phenomenology and Theology."

²⁰ Another important topic was the subject of medieval mysticism. Heidegger's 1916 *Habilitation* was on Duns Scotus. Kisiel says "crossovers between phenomenological method and mysticism" began. During this time, Heidegger addressed "Christianity and metaphysics (these of course in a new sense)." i.e. a new take on these subjects. During the war years he had a change in religious conviction (1993:69). In his reference to early Christianity he says, "This theorizing and dogmatizing influence was exercised by church authorities in their institutions and statutes already in the time of early Christianity. [In a situation like this,] an experience like that of mysticism is to be understood as an elementary countermovement" (As quoted by Kisiel 1993:73-74).

²¹ A question that remains is to what is the connection, if any, between this tumultuous period and Heidegger's interest in eschatology.

inspiration, Heidegger was taking his “stand.” From 1917 to 1924, Heidegger leveled attacks on the “dogmatism” of his religious contemporaries in his lectures and correspondences (Crowe 2006:131-132).²² Reflecting Overbeck, Heidegger was in general critical of contemporary theology and the philosophy of religion for its “narrow confessionalism” and “inauthentic faith.” It had avoided the difficult questions, and ignored the basic phenomena of life, and its “religiosity” was an escape from the demands of the present (Crowe 2006:19,131-132). Theology, like philosophy and historical consciousness, is a fugitive, inauthentic way of life. Heidegger challenged the theologians to live up to their calling, to “preserve” genuine faith (Crowe 2006:132).²³ He had rejected the “system of Catholicism” but not Christianity or metaphysics. Rather, he saw Christianity and metaphysics in a “new sense” (Kisiel 1993:70).²⁴

Heidegger was committed to a kind of “free Christianity” found in “primitive Christianity,” i.e. original or first generation Christian experience.²⁵ Primitive

²² Crowe notes that Paul, Luther, and Kierkegaard “provided Heidegger with a vocabulary for adding a critical edge to his more general understanding of tradition and public discourse” (102).

²³ Heidegger held that phenomenology must avoid “idle talk about religion and world-views.”

²⁴ This was probably due to his note receive the chair of philosophy at Freiburg in June 1916 (Kisiel, 72). 1917 was a year of “turmoil and crisis in Heidegger’s inner life.” In mid 1914, he objected to the “antimodernist” papal pronouncement that Italian seminaries strictly adhere to Aquinas (Kisiel, 72). Kisiel says this shows his “modernist” tendencies. By mid 1917 he had rejected the “dogmatic system’ of scholasticism by authentic religious experiences like those of medieval mysticism ...” (Kisiel, 73). He had come to reject the “system of religion for example, Catholicism” (As quoted by Kisiel 1993:73). For some reason he had felt constrained by Catholicism which somehow restricted his commitment to “philosophy itself.” In a letter to Krebs he says, “Epistemological insights extending the theory of historical cognition have made the *System* of Catholicism problematic and unacceptable to me—but not Christianity and metaphysics (these however in a new sense)” (As quoted by Kisiel 1993:74).

²⁵ Crowe argues that Heidegger combined his search for a way to “reappropriate the historical roots of Romantic personalism” with “a decisive intellectual encounter with primitive Christianity.” He had “absorbed the spirit of the early twentieth-century “Luther Renaissance” and looked to the early works of the Reformer as an instance of just the kind of reassertion of primitive Christianity that he himself hoped to accomplish.” Here he found “the paradigm for the idea of a life that has been radically interrupted and permanently reoriented.” Crowe believes that this early period helps to better understand “the rough indications of authenticity in Heidegger’s work...” (Crowe 2006:161).

Christianity was contrasted to a Hellenized Christianity promoted by the contemporary theologians (Crowe 2006:113).²⁶ Heidegger sought to understand the essence of Christianity in its original setting, before it “was effected through the apologetic reaction of defense against paganism and its science” (2004:81).²⁷ Even during his later years, Heidegger distinguished between the “historical, secular-political phenomenon of the church” and “the Christian life of the New Testament faith” maintaining that they are not the same.²⁸ Crowe argues that there is conclusive evidence that Heidegger considered himself a “Primitive Christian” or “New Testament Christian,” i.e. New Testament era.²⁹ Crowe believes this era served as a paradigm for an authentic way of life. Crowe is correct in his criticism of Sheehan who argues that Heidegger was skeptical about Christianity in the early years (1920-21).

Thomas Sheehan suggests such skepticism in his essay on Heidegger’s WS 1920-1921 course, in which he attributes a deflationary view of primitive Christian eschatology to Heidegger. Heidegger’s view is that the proper attitude toward the future advent of Christ is not detached observation and this does not entail in any obvious way any doubts about the objective reality of the event in question.³⁰

²⁶ Crowe notes, “Throughout Western history, the compromise between primitive Christianity and Greek life and thought was challenged in various eruptions of the former, particularly in the medieval mystics, in Luther, and in Kierkegaard.... In the case of Luther, however, the *status quo* soon returned in the form of Melancthon’s Protestant scholasticism...” (Crowe 2006:114).

²⁷ Hereafter *PRL*. The original manuscript of his notes is lost. The work consists of lecture notes from students.

²⁸ See Heidegger’s 1943 essay on Nietzsche. Heidegger, “Therefore, a confrontation with Christianity is by no means an absolute battle against what is Christian, no more than a critique of theology is a critique of the faith for which, theology is supposed to be the interpretation” (As quoted by Crowe 2006:20).

²⁹ Crowe says, “If one takes seriously the paradigmatic status of primitive Christianity for Heidegger, as I have argued one ought to do, then one has a rich body of primary source material at one’s disposal which can, I am confident, do much to help us understand Heidegger’s ideal of authenticity” (2006:154-155).

³⁰ Crowe, endnote 18, p. 268. See also Crowe 2006:132. Crowe states, “Thus there is no indication from Heidegger that his interests in early Christianity were purely “philosophical,” as this [Sheehan’s] view suggests. Nor is there any reason to think that Heidegger’s aim was to articulate some sort of universal philosophical religion, or that he was skeptical about the core doctrines of Christianity.”

It was during the early 1920s that Heidegger first addressed the subject of eschatology which was perhaps the most important theological topic of the time. Crowe says, “It is not too much of a stretch to maintain that Heidegger was part of the overall revival of eschatology witnessed during the first quarter of the twentieth century” (Crowe 2006:161). Many of the theologians contemporary with Heidegger (Bultmann, Barth, Gogarten) recognized the significance of the eschatological in Heidegger.³¹ They likewise opposed the secularized eschatology of nineteenth century liberal theology which emphasized the idea of historical progress (Crowe 2006:161). The subject of eschatology was a central idea in advance of *Being and Time* and his understanding of historicity. Before examining its significance and his treatment in his religious lectures, it is necessary to observe that also during this early period Heidegger addressed the phenomenology of time and history.

Early Philosophical Influences: Dilthey and Husserl

At the same time Heidegger was interested in religious topics he was introduced to two important philosophical influences—Dilthey and Husserl. Heidegger became acquainted with Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) and the subject of hermeneutics.

Reflecting on those days Heidegger writes,

At that time, I was particularly excited by the question of the relation between the Word of Holy Scripture and theological-speculative thinking. In short, the relation between language and being.... Later I met the term ‘hermeneutics’ again in Wilhelm Dilthey in his theory of the historical human sciences. Dilthey’s

Crowe says of his purpose, “My contention in all this is that one has an incomplete understanding of Heidegger’s conception of philosophy should these practical issues not be taken into consideration. While it is true that Heidegger’s “hermeneutics of facticity” is not supposed to be “edifying discourse” or moral homiletics, it is also assuredly not purely theoretical” (2006: 19).

³¹ Contemporary theologians such as Pannenberg, Jüngle, and Moltmann have continued this tradition.

familiarity with hermeneutics came from the same source, his theological studies, especially his work on Schleiermacher. (Quoted by Kisiel 1993:70)

Heidegger notes that in his early years Dilthey was a theologian, but while planning to write a history of Western Christianity he abandoned theology through his study of the medieval problem of faith and knowledge. Heidegger states, “Dilthey sided with knowledge and this-worldliness. He renounced all closure and finality and was everywhere satisfied only with being able to explore, only with researching and ‘dying on the journey’.” Nevertheless, Dilthey took from theology “essential impulses for understanding human life and its history. His passion remained open for the scientific investigation of human life” (Heidegger 2002a:151-152).

Heidegger’s idea of history as essentially futural is rooted in Dilthey. Dilthey sought to provide a foundation for history by providing an account of human beings as temporal unfoldings in everyday life experiences (*Erlebnisse*). Human existence is described as a “perpetual movement,” a “temporal unfolding.” Because of the continuity of the past and the future, present life experiences constitute a continuity or “course of life” which is a “‘unified flow’ by ‘development,’ ‘formation’ (*Gestaltung*), and ‘purposiveness’.” The experiences of life consist of “meaning-filled interactions with the world.” Through *reflection* (*Besinnung*) on these experiences, a meaningful whole of life, and historical understanding, is made possible (*Zusammenhang*) (Guignon 2006:545; Guignon 1992:132). Being embedded in history allows humans to have a sense of meaning in history. Meaning permits humans to see the moments of life as a meaningful whole. Before becoming observers of history (i.e. viewing history as an object), humans

are first, in their “facticity,” historical beings who “bear” or “carry” history.³² The “connectedness” of life can only be understood through “meaning.” Therefore, there must be some understanding of a whole which is constituted from the past (memory) and future (potentialities) (Guignon 1998:132-133).³³

The understanding of the meaning of life is never complete while the individual remains alive, because the future actions always allow for the possibility of reinterpretation. Guignon explains, “This parts-whole circularity implies that our grasp of a life will be open-ended so long as the individual is still alive and capable of reinterpreting his or her life through future actions” (Guignon 1992:133). The conception of the meaning of life constantly changes. Dilthey says, “The purpose we set for the future conditions how we determine the meaning of the past” (in Guignon 1992:133).³⁴

What applies to the individual’s personal history is true of the whole of history: the meaning of history can only be comprehended at the end of history. In order for history to be meaningful at the present time there must be a projection of “some vision of the final outcome” of life. This serves as a “basis for seeing events as part of the process with cumulativeness and direction in the building toward the whole” (Guignon 1992:133).³⁵

Heidegger notes that Dilthey was primarily concerned with the “concept of life” or more specifically the “conceptualizing of life” (Heidegger 2002a:155). Dilthey had succeeded in the reality that authentic human Dasein is historical being, however he did

³² Dilthey said, “We are historical beings before we are observers of history, and only because we are the former do we become the latter.” Dilthey 2010: 297 in Guignon 1992:546.

³³ See Dilthey 1962:107.

³⁴ From Dilthey 1962:106.

³⁵ Gadamer labels this “anticipation of completion.”

not address the question of historicity, the sense of Being. What needed to be done was to work out the being of the historical, “historicity rather than the historical, being rather than beings, reality rather than the real” (Heidegger 2002a:159). Time is the “fundamental character of Dasein” and on the basis of it, human being is historical. While noting that modern philosophy of history is indebted to Dilthey, his “authentic tendencies” have been hidden. Heidegger seeks to “characterize this knowledge of the historical being of the world.” “Which reality is historical in the authentic sense? And what does historical mean?” Heidegger argues that “authentic historical reality is human Dasein itself” (Heidegger 2002a:150-151).

In his 1925 essay, the “Struggle for a Historical Worldview,” Heidegger addresses Dilthey and the crisis in philosophy and science, and makes reference to the war years. Heidegger stated that the “fundamental problem pervading the whole of Western philosophy” was “the problem of the sense of human life” (Heidegger 2002a:148). In philosophy and science, he argues, a “great revolution” and “crisis” had been under way in physics, biology, the historical sciences and also in Protestant theology. Questions have arisen about the understanding of historical [*Geschichtlichen*] reality and possibilities of interpreting the historical past. “Philosophy also stands within this general crisis, a crisis whose roots go back before the war. It develops out of the continuity of science itself, and this is the guarantee for the earnestness and reliability of its upheavals” (Heidegger 2002a:148).

Dilthey’s project to provide a foundation for history found in the temporal unfolding of human beings molded Heidegger’s sense of “genuine history” as essentially futural. Genuine history is not an account of past events, but a “wider happening that

catches humans up and carries them along in its unfolding.” History of being is a “sending.” Guignon says, “the history (*Geschichte*) of Being is a happening (*Geschehen*) that constitutes a destiny (*Geschick*).” It is “informed by a unifying meaning: the essential unfolding of the event of Being...as it realizes its mission” (Guignon 2005:393).

The second significant influence for Heidegger’s philosophical thought on this theme was the work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Husserl’s phenomenology permitted Heidegger to go beyond Dilthey. His phenomenology addressed the theme, “to the things themselves.” Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* was the first breakthrough in the problem of research and life. However, the problem with Husserl’s phenomenology was it obfuscated “the simple, originary, and genuine.” Heidegger says, “Traditional philosophy begins with opinions about things, i.e., with concepts that are not examined regarding their original appropriateness in the past. In contrast, phenomenology postulates an advance into the things themselves” (2002a:160).

One fundamental misinterpretation according to Husserl originates with Descartes’ *ego*. Here consciousness is like a box with the ego inside and reality outside. Heidegger says that “natural consciousness” is not like this. *Dasein* is in a world, and life is a reality that is in a world and has a world. Every living creature has a disclosed, uncovered environing world. Life and world are not separate things existing side by side. Rather “life ‘has’ its world” (Heidegger 2002a:163). The “fundamental structures” of being in the world are first, not an object of theoretical knowledge, but an environing world [*Umwelt*] where one “looks around” and “acts.” It is a world of *practical* concern. This world is “in space” i.e. moments of nearness and distance of everyday life. Things have places. Geometric space (as in physics) follows from this world. This world also

consists of others (being-there-with-us) who share the same space. “Being-in-the-world is thus being-with-one-another” (Heidegger 2002a:163-164).³⁶

By 1919, Heidegger brought together the hermeneutical tradition of Dilthey with the phenomenology of Husserl in what he called a “phenomenological hermeneutics” (Kisiel 1996:240-241). Husserl would later, however, address an issue related to the topic but from a teleological perspective (discussed below). Equipped with Dilthey’s understanding of history and Husserl’s phenomenological consciousness, Heidegger approached the theological subject of eschatology in his religion lectures. The next section examines the content of his discussion.

Eschatology in the Religion Lectures (1920-1921)

Heidegger’s interest in the subject of eschatology is clearly seen in his two religion courses taught in the winter semester (1920-1921) at Freiberg. Heidegger stated that at the center of Christianity is the eschatological problem (*PRL*, 73).³⁷ He was familiar with the history of eschatology from theological discussions but intended to use the term in a different sense. “The title ‘eschatology’ is just as oblique,” he states, “because it is taken out of Christian dogma and designates the doctrine of final things. Here we do not understand it in this theoretical-disciplinary sense” (*PRL*, 82). In the “Anaximander Fragment” where he defines the phrase “eschatology of being,” Heidegger says, “...we do not understand the term ‘eschatology’ as the name of a theological or

³⁶ It is important to note from this that there is not an eschatological world to come. The present world is the only world.

³⁷ Concerning Heidegger’s examination of the Thessalonian letters, he says, “The present study takes up the center of Christianity: the eschatological problem. Already at the end of the first century the eschatological was covered up in Christianity. In later times one misjudged all original Christian concepts. In today’s philosophy, too, the Christian concept-formations are hidden behind a Greek view. One would also have to draw on the gospels—the great eschatological sermon of Jesus in the gospel Matthew and Mark—of which the basic position of the problem arises” (*PRL*, 73).

philosophical discipline. We think of the eschatology of Being in a way corresponding to the way the phenomenology of spirit is to be thought, i.e. from within the history of Being” (Heidegger 1975:18).

Heidegger chose to lecture on two New Testament letters by the Apostle Paul.³⁸ Heidegger’s choice for selecting the texts was most likely the current eschatological concern and his interest in primitive Christian eschatological experience. The two New Testament letters were written by the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonian church in the decade of A.D. 50.³⁹ Both letters are responses by Paul to questions raised by the Thessalonian Christians over eschatological concerns both personal and cosmic. The first letter primarily addresses *individual* eschatology where Paul responds to the question of the fate of those who died before the *Parousia* of Christ (4:13-5:11). The second letter is a response to a report that the *Parousia* had already occurred (2:1-15).

The fundamental reason Heidegger addressed these epistles was because of their antiquity and because they were considered authentic letters by the Apostle, but most importantly because of the practical life situation of the early Christian eschatological experience which they set forth. He is specifically interested in the content of the letters because they are a “form of proclamation” and they address the *Parousia* (“coming” or “appearance”) of Christ (*PRL*, 69).⁴⁰ He finds the letters important not because Paul responded to a “distressful situation.”

³⁸ See Appendix C for the texts.

³⁹ For background discussion see Kummel 1966:179-190. Heidegger argues they are authentically Paul based on the content.

⁴⁰ See the Introduction for the definition of *Parousia*.

Heidegger was thoroughly familiar with the history of the theological discussions on eschatology. He first approaches the topic from an “object-historical” viewpoint. From this view, the people who lived during the New Testament period believed the world had come to its end, but it was not until after 120 CE that “later millenarianism returns to life.” This concept of the end was maintained through medieval millenarianism and in modern Adventism. The problem in addressing this subject is that the history of dogma (religion) took on an “ideational attitude” from which it never recovered (*PRL*, 78).⁴¹

Heidegger contends that by the end of the first century CE, the eschatological was “covered up” because of the imposition of Greek concepts by the early Christians. Christian eschatology finds its “basic direction” in late Judaic eschatology, however, “the Christian consciousness a peculiar transformation thereof.”⁴² Christian “concept-formations” became hidden “behind a Greek view.” This resulted in a misjudgment of “all original Christian concepts” (*PRL*, 73).

Heidegger notes that Paul’s eschatology differs from other eschatologies (e.g., Babylonian, Jewish, etc.).⁴³ What Paul says has a “peculiar expressive function.” One finds in Paul’s eschatological writings an “obstinate waiting,” a matter of a factual “serving God” not an “ideational ‘expectation.’” Paul’s letters can only be understood out of the “the enactment in which Paul stands.” “All concepts are to be understood from out of the context of Christian consciousness” (*PRL*, 48). Paul does not offer a “purely

⁴¹ Augustine saw the problem of the historical in Christian life experience. See Heidegger’s lecture on “Augustine and Neo-Platonism.”

⁴² The Judaic origins go back to the apocalypse of Ezra, he notes.

⁴³ Heidegger, “The original complex of enactment, in which the eschatological is found for Paul, is important, independently of connections that exist between Persian and Jewish eschatological ideas” (*PRL*, 48).

theoretical complex of reasons” as proof, but his letters are “always an originally complex of becoming of the kind that, in the end, is also merely shown in a proof” (*PRL*, 80). To retrieve the first century understanding of the eschatological one must go back to the Gospels to the “great eschatological sermon of Jesus.” For out of the gospels “the basic position of the problem arises” (*PRL*, 73).

Heidegger’s interpretation of Paul’s letters differs from the “self-evident” interpretation by the contemporary theologians. Heidegger states that according to the theological interpretation of his day,

It is said that these millenarian ideas are temporally-historically determined and therefore have no eternal validity. One attempts to examine the eschatological ideas according to their lineage. Thereby one is led to late Judaism, further to ancient Judaism, finally to ancient Babylonian and ancient Iranian notions of the end of the world. With that one believes to have ‘explained’ Paul, freed from all churchly ties—that is to say to have determined how Paul himself was to have looked. (*PRL*, 78)

Heidegger says that neither philosophy of religion nor philosophy of history can adequately address Paul’s eschatology. Philosophy of religion addresses the “subject” in the “phenomena of consciousness” but it ignores the “object,” and the philosophy of history simply cannot come to the aid of religion.⁴⁴ The problem results when a general concept of the historical is formed which is then imposed onto “the individual formations of problems.” He explains,

The tendencies of understanding arise from out of the living present, which are then merely formed out in science in “exact” methodology; the “exactness of method” offers in itself no guarantee for correct understanding. The methodical-scientific apparatus—critique of sources according to exact philological methods, etc.—can be fully intact, and still the guiding foreconception can miss the genuine object. Despite this, the modern history of religion accomplishes much for phenomenology, if it is subjected to a phenomenological destruction

⁴⁴ “Today’s philosophy of history achieves nothing for positive historical research—and vice versa.” Here he points to the “‘merit’ of Spengler” who “compressed the comic effect of this situation into a philosophy” (*PRL*, 53).

[*Destruktion*]. Only then can the history of religion be considered for phenomenology. (*PRL*, 54)⁴⁵

The historical-objective view leads to a “false conception.” Heidegger holds that this approach fails to recognize the fact that “*the eschatological is never primarily [an] idea.*”⁴⁶ Viewing eschatology as an “idea” constructs an “objectivity” which “never puts into question whether those who have eschatological ideas of this kind indeed have them as ideas” (*PRL*, 78).

Phenomenological Explication and Complex of Enactment

Heidegger does not offer a typical exegetical commentary but a “*phenomenological explication*” of the Thessalonian correspondence. He uses the texts as an occasion to demonstrate a phenomenological approach to understanding. Paul’s letters must be addressed by going back to “the phenomenal themselves, to go back to what is original” (*PRL*, 67). One must begin with the “foreconception of phenomenological understanding” which starts with familiar phenomenon. Phenomenological understanding consists “not in the projecting of what is to be understood, which after all, is no kind of object, in a material complex” (*PRL*, 57). It does not have the “tendency of determining such a realm with finality.” A phenomenological understanding is rather, “subordinated to the historical situation— insofar as the foreconception is even more decisive for phenomenological understanding

⁴⁵ Heidegger is also critical of the Hegelian theologians who posit the rational-irrational distinction. He argues that “one may not posit life as ‘irrational’ without being clear about the sense of irrationality. No material of explication has been understood as long as its indicated sense complex is not enacted. The complex of enactment itself belongs to the concept of the phenomenon” (*PRL*, 59).

⁴⁶ *PRL*, 78. Emphasis added.

than object-historical understanding” (*PRL*, 57).⁴⁷ By this approach the entire conceptual structure in Paul is other than what it appears to be. What the phenomenological situation reveals is the “situation of religious struggle and of struggle itself.”⁴⁸ This “fundamental comportment of Christian consciousness” must be understood out of the “aim” which is “salvation” and “life” (*PRL*, 48). It is in this manner and with this end in view that he addresses Paul’s eschatology (*PRL*, 57). However, it is also where he approaches the subject of eschatology.

What is critical to a phenomenological understanding is to approach the text by recognizing the “complex of enactment” [Enactment = *Vollzug*]. The eschatological waiting, “stands in the complex of enactment of the entire Christian life” (*PRL*, 79). The “complex of enactment” is decisive and is co-experienced in life. Heidegger says, “The content of the idea may certainly not be eliminated, but it must be had in its own (relational) sense. The *enactmental* understanding from out of the situation eliminates these difficulties.”⁴⁹

The “enactment” is important in the understanding of the historical and eliminates the difficulties of the objective-historical approach (*PRL*, 78). As it relates to the historical, the “enactment of the explication is not a separated succession of acts, grasping determinations.” In the enactment within the life-context one can have “the directions of sense that are ‘not seen.’” It is important to note here that the “not seen” is

⁴⁷ Heidegger says the common concepts of “rational” and “irrational” used in philosophy of religion are to be “eliminate entirely” because the meaning of rational cannot be determined. It is “an aesthetic play with things that are not understood.” “Phenomenological understanding according to its basic meaning, lies entirely outside this opposition, which has only a very limited authority, if at all” (*PRL*, 55).

⁴⁸ In the case of *Galatians*, Paul struggles between “law” and “faith” which are “modes of the path of salvation” (*PRL*, 48).

⁴⁹ *PRL*, 78. Author’s emphasis.

in context with the eschatological which also is “not seen” but only apprehended by “faith” (*PRL*, 56, 60). It is in the complex of enactment that the “How” of enactment gains its meaning.

The *enactmental* understanding arises “from out of the *situation* and is “gained only in a concrete life-context.” The *situation* is a significant phenomenological term that belongs to understanding the manner of enactment. There is not an *order* relationship in a situation nor a “series in the manner of an order” (*PRL*, 63). The *situation* is neither static nor dynamic, but stands “beyond” these alternatives. Out of the situation the element of *time* is derived in factual life. “The time of factual life is to be gained from the complex of enactment of factual life itself, and from there the static or dynamic character of the situation is to be determined” (*PRL*, 65). Situation is grasped “formally as unity of a diversity” and what makes up the unity is indeterminate. It is similar to the “like an I” for “what is had seems always still to appear as something objectively characterizable: the relation of the people before Paul to him is how *he* has them” (*PRL*, 65).⁵⁰

Paul’s experience as a Christian was that he lived in a *break* from the past, which began with his encounter with the risen, present existing Christ. Paul did not live in the historical but made a complete break with his past (*PRL*, 48). His Christian life was not through historical tradition or the religion of an historical consciousness of Christ, but through “an original experience.”⁵¹ Paul had established a new religion. Heidegger says

⁵⁰ This is probably a reference to Paul’s use of “I” in Galatians 2:19-20. Heidegger’s “Like an I” is connected with the problem of the “concepts of Being” (*PRL*, 64).

⁵¹ The reference here is to Paul’s encounter with the risen Christ (cf. Acts 9). The radical break was the conversion from a system of Law to receiving Grace. Heidegger’s statement that Paul “made a complete break with his past” is not completely accurate on one level, but is was in the sense of a re-orientation to Life.

“Self-certainty of the situation [*Stellung*] in his own life—break in his existence—original historical understanding of his self and of his existence. From out of this, he performs his feat as apostle, and as human being” (*PRL*, 51).⁵² What must be explicated from Paul is “the fundamental religious experience” of Paul, not his theological “*system*.” Out of this fundamental experience “one must seek to understand the connection to it of all original religious phenomena” (*PRL*, 51).⁵³

Paul stood in his conversion experience *in between* a complete and decisive break from the past and the future *Parousia*. This is a “fundamental posture” that is thoroughly eschatological and in this fundamental posture Paul “finds himself in a struggle” (*PRL*, 50).⁵⁴ This posturing was also the experience of the early Christians and was central to the proclamation of faith. This is the explication from Paul’s writings.

It is clear from this discussion that Heidegger is speaking to his contemporary theologians, but uses an interpretation of eschatology to do so. Analogously, Heidegger identifies himself with Paul in an eschatological context.

⁵² Heidegger’s treatment of Paul’s letter to the Galatians may reveal an important insight into Heidegger’s philosophy as he compares Paul’s “break” from the Law in Judaism. Behind Heidegger’s discussion on the eschatological lies the discussion of the relationship between Law and Grace (or Faith); an important theme in Luther’s theology. Christian conversion involves a decisive break from the past (Law). The Christian stands by faith between the end of the old Law and the eschatological future which involves not knowing what lies ahead. See the *Book of Hebrews*, chapter eleven: “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.” (11:8); “By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible [unseen].” (11:27) Also, 2 Corinthians 4:17, 18: “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984). Hereafter, *NIV*.

⁵³ Heidegger bases his argument on the assumption that Paul’s experience was a model for all Christian experience.

⁵⁴ This is explicit from Heidegger’s reference to Paul’s letter to the Philippians (3:13): “Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead...” (*NIV*). It is in this *in-between* Paul “stands” and writes.

The Proclamation of the Revelation

Significant for Heidegger's interpretation is the "proclamation of revelation." In the act of proclamation [*Verkündigung*] the Gospel is revealed.⁵⁵ The proclamation is not a new theory about life, but is the how of a reorientation of a whole existence (Crowe 2006:156). The "How" of Paul's proclamation," he states, "is "before us" in his letters. In it is "the immediate life-relation of the world of self of Paul to the surrounding world and to the communal world of the community is able to be comprehended." His letters are a "central phenomenon." They are not to be taken as propositions, but "phenomenological explications" (*PRL*, 55). It is important to note here that the phenomenon of the letters have *revelatory* import.

In the proclamation of the revelation, God himself "comes to language." Heidegger says revelation here is not a matter of presenting information about "present, past, and imminent happenings." Rather, in "this imparting lets one 'part-take' of the event of revelation [...]"⁵⁶ To the reader, "...the epistolary character appears, all of a sudden, as a phenomenon."⁵⁷ The core of the message of the proclamation which is to be received is that the Jewish Messiah has *already* come which separated primitive Christian

⁵⁵ Among theologians the term *kerugma* is generally used. See Crowe 2006:155.

⁵⁶ Quoted by Crowe 2006:155.

⁵⁷ He notes that nineteenth century Protestant theology has created work on the history of style, the literary forms of the New Testament, is misguided. "One approaches the matter entirely externally, insofar as one integrates the New Testament writing into world literature, in order to analyze its forms according." One cannot proceed this way. "In analyzing the character of the letter, one must take as the only point of departure the Pauline situation and the How of the necessary motivation of the communication in letters" (*PRL*, 56).

eschatology from its counterpart in Jewish Apocalyptic (*PRL*, 49). That is, eschatology is already *realized* in their experience.⁵⁸

The proclamation must be accepted by receiving the message (*δεχεσθαι του λογου*). Heidegger says acceptance “is in itself a transformation before God.”⁵⁹ When one responds to the revelation there is a participation in the unique “history” or “destiny” from which the revelation arises.⁶⁰ It is through the *acceptance* of the proclamation of revelation that the Thessalonians experienced “having-become.”⁶¹

The proclamation is a religious phenomenon and was to be analyzed “in all phenomenological directions of sense.” The proclamation of the revelation is “continually co-actual in the enactment of life.” Proclamation is deeper than the commonsense theory-practice model, it is not a “neutral theory about the objective nature of reality, but something more akin to a personal *address*” (Crowe 2006:155). The proclamation and its reception by the believer marks the *beginning*. Crowe explains, “The basic feature of primitive Christian life-experience, as Heidegger sees it, can be stated succinctly as follows: Christian life is defined by uncanny uncertainty that is suspended between the incalculable eruption of the “proclamation” and the incalculable arrival of the Parousia” (Crowe 2006:155).

What is gained from “the phenomenological characteristic of the proclamation” are “authentic perspectives.” The characteristics of the proclamation show the “communal-worldly relation of Paul to the Thessalonians; what Paul’s “situation

⁵⁸ It is in this way Christian eschatology is a “realized” eschatology.

⁵⁹ See I Thess. 1:1-10.

⁶⁰ Crowe notes, “the proclamation is integral to one’s identity” (Crowe 2006:155).

⁶¹ He notes Paul’s frequent use of *γενεσθαι*, to become.

authentically accentuates.” Here is found the “solution of the problem of knowledge” that belongs to facticity, the “richer structure of Christian life experience” which is “What” and “How” that is “always dependent upon the complex of enactment” (*PRL*, 71).⁶²

The *Parousia*

The idea of the *Parousia* (coming or appearance of Christ) is a central idea in Paul’s letters and is addressed by Heidegger. The traditional interpretation is that Christ returns a second time before the Judgment, while in the meantime, Christians are to wait for that day to come. The Christian meaning is not the traditional Jewish historical-apocalyptic idea. According to Heidegger, Paul does not use the word in its traditional sense and offers an alternative understanding of *Parousia*.⁶³ The basic comportment of the word, as commonly interpreted, is not “waiting” nor is it Christian “hope” in a special case of waiting. This understanding is, in his words, “entirely false!” The reason is that such an understanding does not bring one to the *relational* sense of the *Parousia*. “We never get to the relational sense of the *παρουσία* by merely analyzing the consciousness of a future event. The structure of Christian hope, which in truth is the relational sense of *Parousia*, is radically different from all expectation” (*PRL*, 71). Paul changes “the entire structure of the concept”—“Initially, the expression *παρουσία* has in its conceptual history a sense we do not intend here; the expression changes its entire conceptual

⁶² Heidegger references his 1919 lecture “On the Essence of the University” (concerning the argument about the origin of perception and of knowledge from the explication of factual life experience) and “Basic Problems of Phenomenology” winter 1919-20 (“on the developments regarding the concrete logic of a material region.”).

⁶³ He notes the meaning in classical Greek (“arrival,” “presence”), in *LXX* (“the arrival of the Lord on the Day of Judgment”), and in late Judaism (“the arrival of the Messiah as representative of God”). Paul used the term *παρουσία* three times in the first letter (2:19; 3:13; 5:23) and once in the second (2:9) (Aland et al 1983).

structure, not only its sense, in the progress of its history” (*PRL*, 71). The Parousia is “the appearing again of the *already appeared* Messiah” (*PRL*, 71 emphasis added). Paul’s letters reveal that he, along with the Thessalonians, stood in a *having-become situation*. Their pressing question is concerned with what “lies before” them in *relation* to the Parousia (*PRL*, 70). “The awaiting of the *παρουσία* of the Lord,” Heidegger says, “is decisive. The Thessalonians are [to] hope for him not in a human sense, but rather in the sense of the experience of the *παρουσία*” (*PRL*, 67). This “conceptual transformation” of the term shows that the “Christian life experience” is “different in kind.”

Heidegger’s use of eschatology is a departure from the interpretation presented by the historical school of theology. Heidegger’s is radically centered on the individual relationship. In reference to what was noted in Chapter Two of this work, Heidegger applies eschatology to an already present state. The eschatological experience is a bracketed experience in the present.

Heidegger observes two essential eschatological questions which arise in their factual experience in the Thessalonians in the first letter—“*How* does it stand with the dead, who no longer experience the *παρουσία*” and “*When* will the *παρουσία* take place...?” (*PRL*, 70 emphases added). The *How* and *When* questions are important. However, Paul, does not answer with “worldly reasoning” according to Heidegger (*PRL*, 70).

Heidegger says that the concern about the future details of the Parousia are not important. In I Thessalonians, Paul instructed the believers that he had no need to

communicate anything to them concerning the events of the future.⁶⁴ According to Heidegger the authentic believer does not need to be told about these matters because of their “having already become” or “being-already” [*Gewordensein*] as a result of Paul having entered their lives in a decisive way that determines the “How” of the factual life (*PRL*, 70). Throughout the First Thessalonian letter Paul juxtaposed two ways of life when he contrasts the “they” and “but you.”⁶⁵ Paul compares the faithful (i.e. authentic) Thessalonian Christians (“You”) with the “They” who cry out “peace and safety” (I Thess. 5:3). “But this is not a juxtaposition of two different types; rather the motive lies in the How of the communication” (*PRL*, 72). The They only worry about the “when” of the Parousia. The Christians are not to conduct themselves in the world like the They, but are to conduct their lives in a different manner. “What is decisive is how I comport myself to it in actual life. From that results the meaning of the “when?” time and the moment” (*PRL*, 70).⁶⁶

Heidegger acknowledged that Paul’s use of “time and moment” (I Thess. 5:1) created a special problem for his interpretation, but offers an explanation: “The ‘When’ is already not originally grasped, insofar as it is grasped in the sense of an attitudinal ‘objective’ time. The time of ‘factual life’ in its falling, unemphasized, non-Christian sense is also not meant. Paul does not say ‘When,’ because this expression is inadequate to what is to be expressed, because it does not suffice” (*PRL*, 72). Paul did not address a

⁶⁴ See I Thess.5:1-5. “Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness” (*NIV*).

⁶⁵ Cf. I Thess. 5:3-4. This juxtaposition is found also in II Thessalonians Heidegger notes.

⁶⁶ After this, Heidegger’s comments are unclear as to how they connect with the point of the Parousia.

cognitive question but one based on his readers previous experience—they already knew the answer; in Paul’s words, “You know exactly” (I Thess. 5:1, 2). This kind of knowledge, Heidegger adds, “must be of one’s own.” Paul refers the Thessalonians “back to themselves and to the knowledge that they have as those who have become.” That is, in order for them to have become Christians they must have already known from their experience. Paul’s answer to their question “determines that the question is decided in dependence upon their own life” (*PRL*, 72). They are not in the “night,” but in the “light” (I Thess. 5:4) and the light is, according to Heidegger, “knowledge of oneself.” Heidegger then says,

this then is the kind of mode of Paul’s answer. Through this...we see: the question of the “when” leads back to my comportment. How the *παρουσία* stands in my life, that refers back to the enactment of life itself. The meaning of the “When,” of the time in which the Christian lives, has an entirely special character. Earlier we formally characterized: ‘Christian religiosity lives temporality.’ It is a time without its own order and demarcations. One cannot encounter this temporality in some sort of objective concept of time. The When is in no way objectively graspable.” (*PRL*, 73)

The meaning of this *temporality* is fundamental for the factual life experience of the Christian (*PRL*, 73).⁶⁷ Heidegger obtains from the experience of the early Christians how the eschatological is experienced, not in the realm of historical time, but in existential time.

Distress

When one receives the proclamation, a new situation arises; *Tribulation* or *Distress*. Between the beginning proclamation of revelation (Gospel) and the end

⁶⁷ Heidegger says it is also necessary for “problems such as that of the eternity of god.”

(Parousia) is the experience of distress.⁶⁸ Heidegger says that the “experience [of the parousia] is an absolute distress (θλιπις).”⁶⁹ This knowledge of “one’s own having-become” is the essential ground (“the starting point and the origin”) for theology (*PRL*, 66). An essential part of his having-become by acceptance of the proclamation was that it was “in great despair” (εν θλιψει πολλη μετα χαρας). It is essential to the life of the Christian for in accepting (δεχεσθαι) the Gospel one is also “entering-oneself-into anguish” which is a “fundamental characteristic, it is an absolute concern in the horizon of the παρουσια, of the second coming at the end of time” (*PRL*, 66).⁷⁰

The distressful situation of the Thessalonians, according to the text, was the result of two situations: the death of those believers who died before the coming of Christ (I Thess. 4:13f) and a disturbing report that the Parousia had already occurred (II Thess. 2:2). In the first letter, Paul assures them that the departed dead will not miss out on the return of Christ. In the second letter, he explains that before the Parousia occurs there are two necessary preludes: the apostasy and the revealing (Parousia) of the “man of lawlessness” (Antichrist). Here Heidegger focuses on the distressful situation. Like Paul, the believers had already received the message in “great tribulation” (Crowe 2006:156).⁷¹ It is this distress which was the occasion for the writing of the letter; it reveals the “self-world of Paul” (*PRL*, 67). As an apostle, Paul’s peculiar distress is in his own expectation of the second coming of the Lord. Paul’s distress “articulates the

⁶⁸ The term for “distress” can also be translated “tribulation” and is used in conjunction with the return of Christ in other places in the NT writings.

⁶⁹ Heidegger uses the terms “tribulation [*Trübsal*]” “affliction [*Bedrängnis*]” “distress [*Not*]” and “anxious worry [*Bekümmierung*]” (*PRL*, 157-158).

⁷⁰ This is also an allusion to the words of Jesus who said his followers would experience trouble in the present world by following him.

⁷¹ *Trübsal*. Heidegger gets this term from I Thess. 1:6

authentic situation of Paul. It determines each moment of his life.” “One must proceed from his distress, in order to understand his letter-writing comportment” (*PRL*, 67).⁷²

The self-world of Paul is characterized as “weakness” and through weakness he enters into a “close connection with God.”⁷³ In withstanding the anguish of life he comes to “have-God” (*PRL*, 69). It may be that the emphasis on distress in an eschatological context is parallel to Heidegger’s experience of crisis in Europe.

This fundamental requirement of having-God, Heidegger notes, is the “opposite of all bad mysticism. Not mystical absorption and special exertion.” On the contrary, withstanding the weakness of life is decisive. It is here where one sees the eschatological for Paul. “For Paul *life* is not a mere flow of events; life is only insofar as he has it The ways of ‘having’ life itself, which belongs with the enactment of life, still increase the anguish.... Each authentic complex of enactment increase it” (*PRL*, 70).

He emphasizes that the authentic Christian has no “security” in life but lives in constant insecurity. Insecurity is “fundamentally significant in factual life. The uncertainty is not coincidental; rather it is necessary.” This necessity is not a logical one, nor a natural necessity.

In order to see this clearly, one must reflect on one’s own life and its enactment. Those ‘who speak of peace and security’ spend themselves on what life brings them, occupy themselves with whatever tasks of life. They are caught up in what life offers; they are in the dark, with respect to knowledge of themselves. The believers, on the contrary, are sons of the light and of the day. (*PRL*, 73-74)⁷⁴

⁷² Based on II Cor.12:5 “I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses.” Heidegger says, “Paul wants to be seen only in his weakness and distress.” Satan (adversary) exacerbated his distress, “his calling in this end of time” (Emphasis added, *PRL*, 69).

⁷³ Heidegger alludes to II Cor.1:20-31; 2:1-5 to make this point.

⁷⁴ I Thess. 5:5. “Light” and “Day” were references to the revelation of the knowledge of the “Day of the Lord” at the end of the world.

Here Heidegger departs from the idea that the Kingdom comes to earth. Rather the early Christians lived in a stressful situation. In the first letter, Paul says that those who are outside the faith will experience “sudden destruction” (I Thess. 5:3). Heidegger explains this is the They whose “attitudinal expectation” is “absorbed by what life brings to them.”

Because they live in this expectation, the ruin hits them in such a way that they cannot flee from it. They cannot save themselves, because they do not have themselves, because they have forgotten their own self, because they do not have themselves in the clarity of authentic knowledge. Thus they cannot grab hold of and save themselves.... (PRL, 72)⁷⁵

Concerning the question of “When of the *παρουσια*,” Paul’s answer is an “urging to awaken and be sober.” Heidegger says this is an argument against enthusiasm, “against the incessant brooding of those who dwell upon and speculate about the ‘when’ of the *παρουσια*. They worry only about the ‘When,’ the ‘What,’ “the objective determination, in which they have no authentic personal interest. They remain stuck in the worldly” (PRL, 74). Here Heidegger argues against the idea of the earthly paradise to come in the objective world at a future time.

One substantive question of the Thessalonians answered by Paul was, What about those who have already died? Interestingly, Heidegger avoids this question. He says, “But we do not have to concern ourselves with such curious questions, for faith gives us certainty.” He references the Gospel of Mark (9:1), “Individuals among you will not die, before the *βασιλεια του θεου* comes *εν δυναμει*.” Heidegger only mentions that, “all who stand outside the Christian context of becoming are without guidance as to the

⁷⁵ Heidegger says the comparison with the pregnant woman emphasizes the suddenness, but he says it offers “particular problems” in that “what the comparison achieves in the sense of complex, how far it can be “pressed” etc. He does not explain the reference.

question of the dead. The way in which God resurrected Christ, so too will he bring the dead to him along with Christ” (*PRL*, 81).⁷⁶

In this context, Heidegger addresses the concept of time. The Christian life is not experienced as continuous and linear but is one that is “interrupted”; this is a theme that recurs throughout Heidegger’s discussion. He says, “[A]ll the relations to the surrounding world must pass through the context of enactment of the being-already [...]” (quoted by Crowe 2006:158). The idea of a radical interruption (a break or “conversion”) in the normal course of events is an important feature of eschatology (Crowe 2006:161). This disruption is the result of the proclamation that the Messiah has already come. Those who accept the proclamation experience a radical interruption. They *now stand* between the past (having-already-become) and the future. Crowe explains, “Hearing the word of God, which comes in ‘spirit and power,’ is not like listening to a philosophy paper. Its interruption irrevocably changes the way one lives” (Crowe 2006:157). For the first time the Thessalonians are aware of their own lives. “They are “awake” to the fact that their lives are their own. They understand themselves within the framework of the eschatological drama of world history” (Crowe 2006:160).

The Antichrist

Heidegger takes up the subject of the Antichrist. The climax of Paul’s discussion to the Thessalonians is in his second book which Heidegger addresses is the discussion on the “Man of Lawlessness” which is commonly understood to be the Antichrist. Paul assures the Thessalonians that the “Day of the Lord” i.e. the Final Judgment, will not

⁷⁶ See I Thess. 4:13.

occur until the Man of Lawlessness is revealed.⁷⁷ Heidegger uses Paul's reference to the "Man of Lawlessness" as an opportunity to take a jab at the contemporary theologians, Troeltsch, Radbruch, Tillich, *et al*, identifying them as the Antichrist; "The appearance of the Antichrist in godly robes facilitates the falling-tendency of life; in order not to fall prey to it, one must stand ever ready for it" (*PRL*, 80). The application of the appearance of the Antichrist is to the theologians or philosophers who were operating with the object-subject distinction and failed to capture the essence of Christianity. They rejected the truth and believe the lie; "they are not indifferent; they are highly busy, but they are deceived and fall prey" (*PRL*, 89).

Here again Heidegger departs from any traditional interpretation. His focus is on the situation created by Paul's answer as he stood in his own complex of enactment. As a "called" apostle who is in "urgent anguish of his vocation," he faithfully executes his function by increasing their anxiety. Heidegger refers back to Paul's first letter where he made the distinction between those who "know" and those who are "perishing." The ones perishing (i.e., those who misunderstood Paul) are "missing a real enactment, which will not at all let itself be expressed positively; for the complex of enactment can be explicated neither positively as a mere course of happenings, nor negatively though some negation or other. The complex of enactment determines itself first in and with the enactment" (*PRL*, 77). For the believers, their complex of enactment, which is "capable of increase" and by which they stand, is their "faith." This increase of their faith is "the proof of genuine consciousness" (*PRL*, 76).⁷⁸ They really stand in this "το νυν of the

⁷⁷ Cf. II Thess.2:1-4.

⁷⁸ On II Thess. 2:13 Heidegger says, "that shows that the $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ itself represents a context of enactment, which can experience an increase" (*PRL*, 77).

complex of enactment.” What is decisive is *how* the They stand, not the “anticipation of a special event that is futurally situated in temporality.”

Only believers, those who receive “the love of the truth,” which is, according to Heidegger, standing in the complex of enactment, can “see the Antichrist who appears in the semblance of the divine” (*PRL*, 80). The appearance (*parousia*) of the Antichrist is for the believers alone and is a test for those who have knowledge.⁷⁹ The one who knows “first sees the great danger in store for the religious person: whoever does not accept the enactment cannot at all see the Antichrist who appears in the semblance of the divine, and becomes enslaved to him without even noticing it” (*PRL*, 80).⁸⁰ Those who perish are those who believe the delusion of the object-historical for “they are deceived precisely in their highest bustling activity with the ‘sensation’ of the Parousia, and fall from their original concern of the divine.” These will be annihilated; that is, what they lose is life. Therefore when Paul says that the Anti-Christ must “come first” (II Thess. 2:3), he is not providing an “extension of the deadline” but an “increase of the highest anguish” (*PRL*, 81).

Heidegger offered his own unique interpretation on the subject of eschatology. His purpose was to address his own time and those (i.e. the “They”) who were satisfied with the world of objectification. Heidegger saw in Paul an answer to those who were satisfied with understanding on the level of objectification. The nature of the experience

⁷⁹ Heidegger says Paul did not hold to a mere afterlife (*Postexistenz*) of the damned away from God. “In Paul, to be damned means an absolute annihilation, absolute nothingness; there are no levels of hell, as in later dogma.” The idea of an eternal hell is “the recoiling and increasing reformulation of Christian life experience into objective form.” This occurred among the later apologists (*PRL*, 81). Heidegger, however, offers no proof for the claim, but it is similar to the position held by Berdyaev.

⁸⁰ Heidegger appears to be taking a shot at the theologians who “appear in the semblance of the divine.”

of Christian eschatology offered an important parallel for phenomenological understanding.

Heidegger's Eschatological Critique of Jaspers, Spengler, and Husserl

About the time of the religion lectures, Heidegger analyzed the works of Jaspers, Spengler, and Husserl who also touched on the subject of eschatology. His comments on these works show how his understanding of the eschatology compares to the subject of teleology.

Jaspers' *Psychology of Worldviews*

Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) had published *Psychology of Worldviews* the year before Heidegger's religious lectures. That same year Heidegger wrote his review of Jaspers' work (Heidegger 2002b). The purpose of his review was to demonstrate the inadequacy of Jaspers' "philosophy of life." He rejected Jaspers' "vital process" of psychological life which serves as the medium of "limit-situations." Heidegger's approach focused on Jaspers' "foreconceptions" in regard to their "philosophical relevance and primordially of the immanent intentions" (Heidegger 2002b:77). Problems of foreconception are methodological in nature. Jaspers' "presupposition" was what is "immediately 'on hand' in one's objective historical, intellectual situation into the in-itself of the 'things themselves'" (Heidegger 2002b:74).

Similar to his analysis of Paul's letters, Heidegger analyzed the "How" of Jaspers' work.⁸¹ The "How" is a critical approach which "must constantly renew itself in the form of a destruction" of what has been "handed down to us in intellectual history" (Heidegger 2002b:73). The question Heidegger raises is how the material which Jaspers addressed is

⁸¹ Heidegger states, "[his] tasks, his choice of methods, and his way of employing these methodological means to carry out his tasks..." (Heidegger 2002b:72).

actually “there”—“to see *what* is concretely ‘necessary’ in philosophy...” (Heidegger 2002b:72). What does it mean to “have” it before oneself? How does one gain access to it? Heidegger asks,

From the point of view of the underlying tendency that actually guides Jaspers’ problem of psychical life, is it at all feasible for him to adopt this foreconception about what the basic aspect of psychical life is? In other words, is this foreconception really in keeping with the underlying tendency of Jaspers’ problem of psychical life? Are not unexamined presuppositions introduced here in an illegitimate manner? (2002b:76)

Jaspers, Heidegger argued, had misunderstood Dilthey’s “real intuitions” noting that even Dilthey himself was unable to gain insight into his own intuitions. What is characteristic of Jaspers’ *intuition* is “that it actualizes itself in the context of a definite orientation and an anticipatory foreconception of the respective region of experience” (Heidegger 2002b:74). Intuition, however, can “easily fall prey to a certain blindness” and fail to obtain what is *primordial*. He makes clear what he meant by primordial.

Primordially,

does not lie in the idea of something outside of history or beyond it; rather, it shows itself in the fact that thinking without presuppositions can itself be achieved only in a self-critique that is historically oriented in a factual manner. An incessant actualizing of a certain worry about achieving primordially is what constitutes primordially. (Heidegger 2002b:74)

The problem of contemporary philosophy had been to center on “life” as the “primordial phenomenon.” The two ways that life is understood is either “objectifying in the widest sense, as an act of creative formation and achievement, as an act of going out of itself” or as “experiencing, as having an experience, understanding, appropriating” (Heidegger 2002b:81). Heidegger states,

Either life is approached as the fundamental reality, and all phenomena are seen to lead back to it, so that everything and anything is understood as an objectification and manifestation “of life,” or life is seen as the formation of culture, and this

formation is thought to be carried out with reference to normative principles and values. The meaning of this watchword “life” should be allowed to remain ambiguous, so it is able to indicate for us all of the different phenomena intended in it. (2002b:81)

The result of Jaspers’ “whole of life” is a “fundamental aesthetic experience” which makes “life” an object. Life “is there” as something possessed by “looking at it.” Jaspers had missed the primordial base of his foreconception. His foreconception assumes already what life is. Life becomes a “thing-like object,” something which is given. Jaspers turned life into a “static concept” and thus destroys the essence of life which is “restlessness and movement.” His work is all “theoretical understanding” and shows that he was still operating within metaphysics (Heidegger 2002b:88). Observation is not always theorizing but must go beyond the “basic experience” to consider the “full sense” of the relationship with the object in order to apprehend the “genuine structure of explication” (Heidegger 2002b:88). The factual experience of life is not a region or universal where the “I” is individuated. Factual experience is essentially “historical” phenomenon; not an “Objective historical phenomenon” but “a phenomenon of *historical actualization* that experiences itself in such actualization” (Heidegger 2002b:94).

What Jaspers’ work brought to the forefront were the issues of life, infinity, and teleology. The reference to “Life” touches on the discussion in Chapter Two of this work where the question of eternity and infinity was addressed. Heidegger says the positive aspect of Jaspers’ work is that it called attention to the problem of existence, but his fault is that his foreconception of “the whole” comes from the “infinite whole of life” (Heidegger 2002b:82).⁸² Jaspers stated,

⁸² Heidegger says, “It is only with reference to the infinite whole of life that the particular framework of such concepts as the “limits of life,” “limit-situations,” “structural antinomies,” “reactions,” and “vital process” can be understood to have the function it does in Jaspers’ scheme of classification. The

The infinity of this life of the mind is there for us, whether we deal with this life in general terms or deal with it in the concrete and unique form of an individual person. This intensive infinity of the mind, i.e., this infinity in which it lives, stands in contrast to the limitlessness of the mind in which it has a chaotic character.... (Quoted by Heidegger 2002b:83)

Heidegger argued that Jaspers “foreconception of the whole of life” was rooted in “teleological contexts” which arose, quoting Jaspers, in the “biological life of the body” as an “intensive infinity”; that is, “things never come ...to an end” (Heidegger 2002b:83). Heidegger does not identify the “teleological contexts” here but notes that the problem lies in Jaspers’ application of the biological to the psychical; that is, Jaspers claims the “life of the mind” possesses the same kind of infinity as the body. What Jaspers’ introduces is a different “concept of infinity.”

The objective ‘concept’ of infinity apparently obtained specifically from the unity of *biological* objects is claimed for the life of the mind as well, but in such a way that when Jaspers goes on to define the life of the mind further, a different notion of life intervenes. In looking at the life of the mind, one notices a movement toward the infinite is “behind it.” (Heidegger 2002b:83)

He argues that his concept of infinity is not a limitless progression in human activity but the result of an “objectifying, *theoretical understanding*” (Heidegger 2002b:83).

Heidegger states that the “full sense of any phenomenon” includes “intentional relation, content and actualizing” which are not an “aggregate or succession of moments tallied up” but a “structural context of relationships that varies in each case according to the levels and directions of experience involved” (2002b:87). Heidegger further explains, “This context of relationships and the shifts of emphasis occurring here should not be understood as a ‘result’ or as a momentary ‘addendum’ but as the authentic factor that comes to light in the phenomenological articulation of the above-mentioned intentional

very meaning of this conceptual framework somehow depends on an initial approach to the whole of life, and the contexts of meaning Jaspers describes are always ultimately related back to this whole” (2002b:82).

characteristics” (2002b:87). The “authentic factor” is a “‘prestruction’ of one’s own existence” which is actualized in “the current facticity of one’s life in the form of a self-appropriation.” Prestruction “discloses and holds open a concrete *horizon of expectation* that is characterized by *worry* and is developed and worked out in each particular context of actualizing it” (Heidegger 2002b:87 emphasis added). The explanation is similar to his treatment of Paul, but here he does not mention eschatology. The comments by Heidegger here are similar to his observation about Paul’s experience. What is manifest here in the discussion on Jasper is that eschatology is different from teleology. Heidegger association of teleology with “Life” philosophy indicates that his later use of eschatology differed from the current philosophical ideas associated with teleology. Eschatology was not the same as teleology.

Spengler’s *The Decline of the West*

The second occasion which sheds light on Heidegger’s eschatology is found in his response to Oswald Spengler’s work, *The Decline of the West* (Spengler 1970). Spengler (1880-1936) published his work in 1918 offering it as a “philosophy of the future” (Spengler 1970:5). Spengler had objected to the linear and progressive “West-European scheme of history” and opposed what he called the Ptolemaic view, offering his vitalist view of history based on “life” and the “organism” as a Copernican revolution (Spengler 1970:18, 26).⁸³ Such a claim attracted Heidegger’s attention.

Spengler held that Greek classical culture (along with Vedic India) did not have a conception of history that would make a world history possible. The classical world was concerned with the “pure Present,” not past and future. The cosmos of the Greeks was a static world “at rest” which saw the world as complete, not continuous. The view of

⁸³ As Spengler puts it, a “Copernican form of the historical process.”

history in the modern West, however, was based on a linear progression of the three-fold division of history as “ancient-medieval-modern,” the modern as the third and last great epoch. This schematization was the creation of the “Magian thinker” originating from the Persian and Jewish religions (e.g., Daniel), and was later developed in the post-Christian religions in the East, especially in Gnostic systems. The notion of historic periods of time is represented in the Apocalypse of John (Spengler 1970:18). This distortion of time, he argues, occurred when medieval mysticism was made scientific in the seventeenth century. He notes this began with Joachim of Floris, “the first thinker of the Hegelian stamp who shattered the dualistic world-form of Augustine...”, and it became the standard from the Schoolman to the present day Socialists including Herder, Kant and Hegel. These philosophers made it the basis of their “philosophies and dragged in God as author of this or that ‘world-plan.’” The result he concludes was, “Western consciousness feels itself urged to predicate a sort of finality inherent in its own appearance” (Spengler 1970:20).

Spengler argued that this antiquated view of history had “exhausted its usefulness” (Spengler 1970:22). The space of world exploration has diminished and the world has become smaller. There are no longer any more worlds to discover. The linear progressive view of history has become meaningless in a world that now understands itself from the viewpoint of “continents” (Spengler 1970:22). Under the linear view the end never arrives. The result is a sense of meaninglessness.

Spengler viewed his age as post-Nietzschean and laments that few contemporary philosophers and historians had yet come to recognize this truth. “What they do not possess is real standing in actual life. Not one of them has intervened effectively, either

in higher politics, in the development of modern technics [*sic*], in matters of communication, in economics, or in any other *big* actuality, with a single act or a single compelling idea.” Unlike Goethe, Hobbes and Leibniz,⁸⁴ contemporary philosophers “lack weight.” Schopenhauer, Comte, Feuerbach, *et al*, and their “whole psychology, for all its intention of world-wide validity,” are one of “purely West-European significance” (Spengler 1970:24). Nietzsche contained the last trace of romanticism and “he never once moved outside the scheme” of Western thought.

Spengler’s new view of world history was also inspired by Goethe from whom he was indebted for his understanding of Becoming, his Life Philosophy.⁸⁵ “Goethe would have understood all this and reveled in it, but there is not one living philosopher capable of taking it in” (Spengler 1970:43). Goethe, like Plato, stood for a philosophy of Becoming; Aristotle and Kant, a philosophy of Being. “Here we have intuition opposed to analysis.” The means of “historical research” are “sympathy, observation, comparison, immediate and inward certainty, intellectual *flair*” which enabled Goethe “to approach the secrets of the phenomenal world in motion” (Spengler 1970:25). He “felt history ‘becoming’” (Spengler 1970:25). Noting that the following sentence “comprises my entire philosophy,” he quotes Goethe:

The Godhead is effective in the living and not in the dead, in the becoming and the changing, not in the become and the set-fast; and therefore, similarly, the reason (*Vernunft*) is concerned only to strive towards the divine through the becoming and the living, and the understanding (*Verstand*) only to make uses of the become and the set-fast.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Of Leibniz, he says, “without doubt the greatest intellect in Western philosophy.”

⁸⁵ “The philosophy of this book I owe to the philosophy of Goethe, which is practically unknown to-day, and also (but in a far less degree) to that of Nietzsche” (Spengler 1970:49).

⁸⁶ As quoted by Spengler 1970: 49, note.1.

Goethe as artist saw life and development, “the thing-becoming and not the thing-become.” “For him, the world-as-mechanism stood opposed to the world-as-organism” (Spengler 1970:25). Goethe provided the answer when he said, “What is important in life is life and not a result of life.” He “followed out” from the “organic logic” in plant life the “*Destiny in nature and not the Causality.*” The organic states of “youth, growth, maturity, decay” are the “ready-made scheme.” He says,

We know it to be true of every organism that the rhythm, form and duration of its life, and all the expression-details of that life as well, are determined by the *properties of its species*. No one, looking at the oak, with its millennial life, dare say that it is at the moment, now, about to start on its true and proper course. No one as he sees a caterpillar grow day by day expects that it will go on doing so for two or three years. In these cases we feel, with an unqualified certainty, a *limit*, and this sense of the limit is identical with our sense of the inward form. In the case of higher human history, on the contrary, we take our ideas as to the course of the future from an unbridled optimism that sets at naught all historical, i.e., organic, experience, and everyone therefore sets himself to discover in the accidental present terms that he can expand into some striking progression-series, the existence of which rest not on scientific proof but on predilection. He works upon unlimited possibilities—never a natural end—and from the momentary top-course of his bricks pans artlessly the continuation of his structure. (1970:21)

It is only by an “understanding of the living world” that the symbolism of history is understood. In the living world there is “nothing constant, nothing universal” for “Universal validity involves always the fallacy of arguing from particular to particular” (Spengler 1970:23).

Mankind belongs to earth’s organisms in a comprehensive unity. Contrary to linear time, world-history is a “picture of endless formations and transformations” not as “a sort of tapeworm industriously adding on to itself one epoch after another” (Spengler 1970:21-22). Rather than one world progressing into world unity, the world is a multi-cultural world which must be thought of as “continents.” It consists of,

the drama of *a number* of mighty Cultures, each springing with primitive strength from the soil of a mother-region to which it remains firmly bound throughout its whole life-cycle; each stamping its material, its mankind, in *its own* image; each having *its own* idea, *its own* passions, *its own* life, will and feeling, *its own* death.... They belong, like the plants and the animals, to the living Nature of Goethe, and not to the dead Nature of Newton. (1970:21-22)

Spengler adds that the organic view “is the answer to any and every senseless attempt to solve the riddle of historical form by means of a *programme*” (Spengler 1970:20). Here there is not “linear graph which steadily rises in conformity with the values of the (selected) arguments.”

That the 19th and 20th centuries, hitherto looked on as the highest point of an ascending straight line of world-history, are in reality a stage of life which may be observed in every Culture that has ripened to its limit.... our own time represents a transitional phase. . . . The future of the West is not a limitless tending upwards and onwards of all time towards our present ideals, but a single phenomenon of history, strictly limited and defined as to form and duration, which covers a few centuries and can be viewed and in essentials, calculated from available precedents. (Spengler 1970:39)

The increase of knowledge about other cultures led Spengler to advocate multiculturalism. “In other Cultures the phenomenon talks a different language, for other men there are different truths. The *thinker* must admit the validity of all, or of none” (Spengler 1970:25). All Western values have become “local and temporary,” not “world-historical or ‘eternal’ values” (Spengler 1970:24).

I look round in vain for an instance in which a modern “philosopher” has made a name by even one deep or far-seeing pronouncement on an important question of the day. I see nothing but provincial opinions of the same kind as anyone else’s. Whenever I take up a work by a modern thinker, I find myself asking: has he any idea whatever of the actualities of world-politics, world-city problems, capitalism, the future of the state, the relation of technics to the course of civilization, Russia, Science? (Spengler 1970:43)

Other cultures have “with equal certainty evolved out of themselves. That and nothing else will impart completeness of the philosophy of the future...” (Spengler 1970:25).

The “Western thinker” has failed to come to terms with historical and cultural relativity. There is no “standpoint as absolutely right or absolutely wrong” (Spengler 1970:25). “It is *this* that is lacking to the Western thinker,...--insight into the *historically relative* character of his data, which are expressions of one *specific existence and one only*;...” (Spengler 1970:23). The result of his evaluation is that one must acknowledge historical/cultural relativism. “The real student of mankind treats no standpoint as absolutely right or absolutely wrong.” He argues that it is “insufficient to appeal to personal experience, or an inner voice, or reason, or the opinion of ancestors or contemporaries” (Spengler 1970:25).

While human history “has no aim, no idea, no plan, any more than the family of butterflies or orchids,” one must look “beyond the innocent relativism of Nietzsche and his generation” and see how “widened and deepened” Western world-criticism can be (Spengler 1970:45).⁸⁷ There must be a refining of “one’s sense for form and one’s psychological insight.” It is possible to “free oneself from limitations of self, of practical interests, of horizon.” This must occur before “one dare assert the pretension to understand world-history, the world-as-history” (Spengler 1970:25).

Heidegger was clearly interested in Spengler’s ideas as reflected in the number of references to Spengler in his own works. In his essay “Struggle for a Historical Worldview,” Heidegger called Spengler’s interpretation of a universal observation of history an “aesthetic kind of observation” based on vitalism; “a type of botany masquerading as history” (Heidegger 2002a:174). In the “Anaximander Fragment,” where Heidegger referred to the eschatological nature of Being, he referenced Spengler’s prediction that the West has entered a state of decline as a prediction based on

⁸⁷ See also Spengler 1970:21, 25.

Nietzsche's philosophy.⁸⁸ Spengler, operating with a cyclical concept of time, believed that old Europe would be forgotten but would continue to live on in a new form.

Spengler's idea of cyclical history Heidegger rejected (Heidegger 2002a:174).

In the religion lectures, Heidegger commented on Spengler's understanding of the historical noting three different ways in which the term "life" is asserted against the historical.⁸⁹ These approaches to the historical are ways of "securing" the present against history. The first is the "Platonic way" which is a radical renunciation of history. The Platonic way is modified by the inclusion of Kantianism. The neo-Kantian version, reflected in Rickert and the Marburg school, sought to interpret Plato anew and becomes "transcendental" in the sense of having to do with "consciousness."⁹⁰

The second way is the position of Spengler which is the "Radical Self-Extradition" or surrender to history.⁹¹ Spengler's position is characterized by the "act-context of historical existence [Da-sein]" which is the human-historical reality (i.e. "Culture"), the achieving of life and existence which desires a *security*, an idea he argued against in the religion lectures (*PRL*, 33-34). Heidegger describes Spengler's position which argued that,

⁸⁸ Heidegger references Nietzsche's, "The Wanderer and his Shadow" (1880).

⁸⁹ Kisiel uses the term "present" but Heidegger uses "life." Perhaps "present life" is the idea.

⁹⁰ He notes, "between the temporal (historical) and the extra-temporal (world of ideas), a third, mediating real appears, the realm of meaning..." (*PRL*, 27).

⁹¹ The third way is a compromise position between one and two. This is the position of Dilthey, Simmel, Rickert, Windelband. (*PRL*, 27; Kisiel, 161). In the Third way the need for security still there, but the "discontent itself remains unproblematized: existence [Da-sein] is something that goes without saying, something which no longer needs to be attended to; only securing it is much more important." This way is called the "philosophy of life." For Simmel it is more biological, for Dilthey more spiritual. "'Life' is the fundamental reality and secures itself through the 'Turn to Ideas'; ideas are the 'Dominators of Life' (Simmel)." Simmel worked out the epistemological foundation for the second, but Dilthey gave the first radical conception of the problem (*PRL*, 34).

History is the expression of a soul (“soul of culture”). History is not contrasted to an extra-temporal reality; rather, the security of the present against history is reached in that the present itself is seen as historical. The reality and uncertainty of the present are experienced in such a way that they themselves are drawn into the objective process of historical becoming, which is nothing else but an ebb and flow of the becoming of “Being which rests in its midst.” (*PRL*, 29-30)

The problem with Spengler’s position, according to Heidegger, is that the historical becomes objectified and then becomes foundational. Spengler is guilty of attaching “a wild metaphysics” which is a radicalization seeking to raise history to a science. Heidegger says, “It would be crucial to render the science of history independent of the historical conditionality of the present. One must carry out a Copernican act. How can that happen?” The way this is accomplished is that the “present, which drives history and recognized history, is not absolutized, but is rather placed within the objective process of historical happening” (*PRL*, 29). The historical world is the foundational reality, the *single* reality where all that is known are cultures. Heidegger says of his view, “My recognizing as a foundational reality the historical in which I myself stand and which disturbs me results in my having to enter into the historical reality, since I cannot resist it. For us today, a conscious participation into the declining occidental culture ensues. Thus also in Spengler the interpretation of the reality of the historical has a liberating effect” (*PRL*, 31). Heidegger says this foundation must be made clear (*PRL*, 28).

Spengler’s position is no different from the first Platonic way in that the sense of securing is sought by positing an *objective Being* through epistemology. It proceeds as a struggle between absolutism and skepticism (*PRL*, 31).⁹² Along with objectifying Being through epistemology is a tendency to *typologize*, “to understand by forming types.”

⁹² “As much as the skepticism of the second way opposes absolute validity of Platonism, the mode of securing against history is the same in both” (*PRL*, 31).

Heidegger notes that the tendency to typologize is “important because it characterizes the fundamental character of the theoretical attitude in its relation to history. Therein the attitudinal character of the *relation* to history is shown” (*PRL*, 32). Here “Attitude” [*Einstellung*] is used in a special sense as a “relation to objects in which the conduct [*Verhalten*] is absorbed in the *material complex*.” “Not every relation is an ‘attitude; but each ‘attitude’ has the character of a ‘relation’ (*PRL*, 32-33). In this attitude one directs oneself only to the matter. “I focus away from myself toward the matter.” As a result “the *living* relation to the object of knowledge has ‘ceased’ [*eingestellt*]” (in the sense of ‘it will cease,’ for instance, as it says, ‘The struggle has ceased’)” (*PRL*, 33).

There is, therefore, a double meaning of attitude: an attitude toward a realm of matter, and a ceasing of “the entire human relation to the material complex.” History is the *Sache* (the *material*) and the *object* “toward which I take a cognitive attitude” or as Spengler has shown, “that which disturbs us is the same as that which is disturbed: both are expressions of one soul of culture” (*PRL*, 33). Spengler’s “relation is attitudinally cognitive.” Thus the,

morphological study of types is nothing other than the solidification and foundation of the complex of the matter from out of itself; it executes the material complex in the logical sense: the typologization “executes’ [*erledigt*] history. If one says that the conduct of system-building is an understanding, an attitudinal understanding is meant; but this has nothing to do with phenomenological understanding. (*PRL*, 33)

Concerning his “philosophy of life,” Heidegger asked, “Does the Securing Suffice?” The answer is no, for the reality of *life* (i.e. the “human existence in its concern about its own security”) is not taken in itself. The problem is that life is regarded as object and is placed within the historical objective reality (*PRL*, 34). Kisiel explains, “Instead, the reality and the insecurity of the present is experienced historically within the

objective process of historical becoming, which as a whole is nothing but a continual flow and ebb of expressive gestalten ‘of the life resting in the center’” (Kisiel 1993:162). The result of Spengler’s position is that history “loses its disturbing character (*PRL*, 29). The “worry” is not addressed, only objectified.

Spengler is the clear example of one who wanted to secure a *science* of history in thinking that he made history a science, according to Heidegger. But his accomplishment is that he “destroyed” history; “he has mathematized world history such that the types stand next to one another like houses.” The formal, aesthetic study of soul and expression is imposed on history from without. Therefore there is “an aesthetic and a mathematical tendency” which is not addressed (*PRL*, 34).

Husserl’s Phenomenological Teleology

Heidegger’s response to Husserl’s works is also helpful in understanding the question of the relationship of eschatology with teleology. A. L. Kelkel is one of the few who have addressed the topic of the relation of eschatology with teleology in Heidegger in his essay “History as Teleology and Eschatology: Husserl and Heidegger” (Kelkel 1979). In this work, he compares the points of convergence between Husserl’s teleology and Heidegger’s eschatology.

Heidegger noted that phenomenology cannot escape its historical motives and needed “to enter more and more into the possibility of extricating itself from the tradition in order to free up past philosophy for a genuine appropriation” (Heidegger 2002a:160). Husserl rejected the idea that all human understanding is contextualized in history. Historicism maintains that all beliefs and interpretations are co-relative to one’s historical worldview. As Guignon notes, it led to a self-defeating relativism in that it would itself

be historically relative (Guignon 2006:545). Historicism undermined the ability for science to discover universally valid truths. In order for science to find such universally valid truths, historical information must be bracketed (Guignon 2006:546).

The last two works of Husserl addressed concerns raised by Heidegger. Here Husserl was primarily concerned with how things show up for consciousness, not in providing historical explanations.⁹³ The problem which phenomenology faced was that it centered on the subjective. Heidegger sought to move away from Husserl's subjectivism and challenged Husserl's phenomenology by directing the aim of phenomenology away from the "intuitions in the consciousness of a subject to what emerges into presence in a temporal and historical unfolding" (Guignon 2006:545).

In his *First Philosophy (Erste Philosophie, 1923-1924)*, Husserl discussed the "eidetic history" of philosophy which is a conjunction of phenomenology with the history of philosophy (Kelkel 1979:383). Humans are situated in history. *Temporality* constitutes the essence of individual subjectivity, but in history lays the temporality of *intersubjectivity*. Intersubjectivity outlines the horizon of transcendental subjectivity. History is the "horizon of intelligibility in the vision of the philosopher's developing self-consciousness" and is the "ground" which carries both present and future. The philosopher is not concerned with the fact of history, but with the meaning of history; that is, the "telos which animates it and which acts like an historical *a priori* supporting all historical facticity" (Kelkel 1979:384). Meaning is conveyed through *tradition*. The "culture form" is inscribed "through the community in the universal historicity" and "serves as the foundation for the meaning of all history of fact." Philosophy transmits the idea (i.e. telos) and provides the "continuity and unity of a traditionality." It provides "a

⁹³ See Husserl's essay, "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science" (1911).

unity of meaning of the universal historical horizon” which promotes radical self-consciousness and self-understanding (Kelkel 1979:384). In *First Philosophy* he argued that the history of philosophy is to tell of the “hidden meaning of the history of European humanity.” What is gained from the history of philosophy is that the “supreme condition” of any cultural development is authentic rational science. This science can only be animated by a “vision of ultimate rationality and self-responsibility.” In this function, the philosopher becomes the “civil servant of humanity” (Kelkel 1979:384-385).

In the “Origin of Geometry” (1936), Husserl addressed the subject of teleology. Here he sought the “most original sense in which geometry once arose” i.e. the “initial spiritual accomplishment” that was present when geometry first came into being. To understand the meaning of anything one must go to its origins or beginning. This initial founding is a “beginning” (*Anfang*) which, at the same moment, establishes a *telos*. The reason this is the case is because “any intentional act always intends its fulfillment.” The example of geometry shows that geometry is the history of its development. When one asks “What is geometry?” therefore, it is also an asking of its history and tradition, that is as Guignon says, to “know what geometry is just is to know its inner history.” Guignon adds, “from its beginning through its practice today ... it develops toward its (perhaps never fully realizable) future fulfillment” (Guignon 2006:548).

Asking “what is geometry” is not asking what others have said about it, but bringing to light its essential structures. “Asking Backwards” gets to the “submerged original beginnings” in their “primally establishing function.” It brackets factual history and returns to the *Quellen* from which the conceptions and practices were first drawn.

One may look at the historical facts concerning the subject but this does not get to the sense of science, i.e. its meaning. To get to the essential structures of a science, “implicit knowledge” must be utilized to recover the original meanings of a science. As Derrida notes, the subjective praxis of geometry can be known only “retroactively and on the basis of its results.” The founding meanings define the teleological project of science. They are based on our goals and purposes as practitioners. As Derrida says, “only a teleology can open up a passage, a way back toward the beginnings” (Guignon 2006:549).⁹⁴

Husserl claimed that the history of European philosophy shows there was a battleground between Reason and non-reason. European history is the history of an “infinite movement animated by a telos ‘innate’ in European humanity, which will lead it from a Reason latent and buried in the darkness of night toward a luminous and responsible Reason, capable of serving as a norm to an authentically human humanity” (Kelkel 1979:391). The rational is juxtaposed to being dominated by “blind organic development” (Kelkel 1979:390). Philosophical reason is not a cultural form among others but is characterized by a universality and rationality with transcends other cultural forms. It is a guide to cultural humanity in order to lift it to a “universal self-consciousness and to an ultimate rationality.” The history of philosophy demonstrates that an authentic rational science is “the supreme condition for the possibility of the cultural development’ of humanity and for its accession to a rational humanity” which

⁹⁴ As quoted by Guignon. From Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, p. 64. Guignon (2006) explains that there is a “shuttlecock movement between present and past.” As Husserl says, we “proceed forward and backward in a zigzag pattern.” In order to grasp the beginnings, we must project our ends into the future. The result of this interpretation is used as the basis for selecting events that then count as significant in the development of that science. Guignon: “So the inner history must be understood in the light of the *de facto* history, while the *de facto* history is intelligible only in the light of the inner history.” The “relative clarification” of one elucidates the other. It is a reflexive or circular movement (2006:549).

began with Plato in Greece (the “cradle of the European spirit”) (Kelkel 1979:390).

Philosophical Reason is conscious and responsible to itself.

According to Kelkel, Husserl’s teleological “philosophy of history” was inspired by Hegel’s rational teleology. It is in the absolute *Idea* that the teleology of universal history originates (1979:392). Husserl was opposed to Hegel’s metaphysics of history and attributes to him the rise of skeptical historicism and the weakening of philosophy in general. He responded to the threat of skeptical relativism in historicism. Husserl blended his own teleological vision with the rational teleology of Hegel and maintained that the “idea of philosophy” is “supratemporal.” He acknowledged that the philosopher sees history as a source of inspiration. Husserlian teleology progresses and ascends toward universal Reason (see Kelkel 1979:381-382, 497).

It is in Husserl’s *Crisis of the European Sciences* where he specifically addressed Heidegger’s concerns, particularly in his Vienna lecture, “Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity” (1935). Here he explains his teleological view of an “inner” history. He seeks to “disclose the ‘hidden motives’ and the immanent teleology which betray the effective movement of history in order to bring to light “behind the disorderly historical fact” the unity and final harmony of a meaning (Kelkel 1979:391). He notes that philosophy is “nothing but “*rationalism*, through and through rationalism” (quoted by Kelkel 1979:391). This is demonstrated in the history of Western thought. This unfolding of universal reason is “innate” to humanity. Husserl recognized that his time had come to a crisis point in contemporary Europe. It had come to the point that some questioned whether it “denotes the absolute meaning of the history of the world or the

absurdity of a deadly destiny” (Kelkel 1979:392). Only phenomenology could save it. Europe had been and continues to be the carrier of the “teleological idea” in history.

Husserl maintained there are “two epochs” of modern history. The first is Descartes’ emphasis on intentionality, apodicticity centered in the cogito. This set Europe on its course. But Descartes misunderstood the project of rationalism and fell into “naturalism” and “objectivism” like Galileo before him. Knowing was reduced to mathematico-physical knowing of modern science. Reality was seen as an extended thing, and the “I” as a psychological I rather than the “absolute ego.” Thus, Descartes fell into objectivist and naturalistic presuppositions which resulted in the “greatest danger” of western civilization. With Hume came a rejection of objectivity which led to the second epoch of modernity, a turn to the “primal ground” of philosophy which broke from objectivity. It brought to light “absolute intersubjectivity” which is “absolute reason coming to itself.” This is the “inner history” (Guignon 2006:547).⁹⁵

Husserl argued that the crisis of European existence was its failure to “realize its overarching *telos*, a goal of achieving freedom by undertaking the task of rationally grounding all belief and action. Europeans had been distinctive in that they were driven by the idea of achieving a rational (theoretical) knowledge of the “totality of beings.” This detached *theoria*, originating among the ancient Greeks, is seen in humanity as being a “nonparticipating spectator.” The resolve was to not accept tradition but to encounter truth itself. This was the *telos* of European humanity. Husserl says that this Greek conception of the “whole of Being” lead to a “final form [*Endgestalt*]... which is at the same time a beginning form [*Anfangsgestalt*] of a new sort of infinity” (Guignon 2006:546; see Husserl 1970). Husserl notes, “What defines Europe’s spiritual idea (and

⁹⁵ See Husserl, “The Origin of Geometry” in his appendix to *The Crisis*.

distinguishes it from merely ‘empirical anthropological type[s] like ‘China’ and ‘India’) is its ‘being toward a telos; that is, its being underway in a shared project in which we, as philosophers, are ‘functionaries of mankind’” (Guignon 2006:547).⁹⁶ This is the “hidden entelechy” which “underlies and makes intelligible all historical events.” Husserl says what needs to occur is to “strike through the crust of externalized ‘historical facts’ of philosophical history,” to exhibit “their inner meaning and hidden teleology” (Guignon 2006:547).

Husserl was aware of the failures of historical rationalism and the rise of irrationalism; of the increasing mathematization of nature and pernicious objectivism. The European crisis lies in that the irrational and mystical displaces faith in science and philosophy. He recognized that science as ultimate and absolute made possible the breakdown of the rationalist ideal and continues to remain a dominate force. But out of this crisis arose phenomenological philosophy whose task is “the comprehension of its historical mission” which is to provide philosophy as “the foundational science.” The only way to overcome the crisis is for philosophy to reconcile philosophy and science with the “world of life.” Thus for Husserl, skepticism has a positive function (Kelkel 1979:397). It is history, not metaphysical speculation, which reveals the,

teleological structure and the immanent unity which it owes to the common vision of a single end which generations of philosophers pursued with a more or less clear consciousness of their task. But the task will only become fully evident at the end of the historical process of the clarification of its meaning in its ultimate establishment (*Endstiftung*) by transcendental phenomenology, which, as it grasps itself in its integral historicity, simultaneously understands that its realization is a never-ending task devolving upon humanity present and future. (Kelkel 1979:398)

⁹⁶ Quote from Husserl, 1970:16-17.

Kelkel notes a number of similarities between Husserl and Heidegger. Both were united to the tradition of 19th century philosophy of history and committed to addressing the decline of Western thought (1979:406). Both held fundamental history is “the secret history of the occident”: for Husserl it is the history of absolute reason and with Heidegger it is the “destinal history of Being” (Kelkel 1979:382). Both historicized the Absolute but on different grounds.

the one under the name of Reason, and the other under that of Being, conceiving the movement of history as eschatologically determined by its march toward the end. In other words, both proceed to a reconstruction of history. They start by casting a critical glance at the present epoch, and they imagine the past as the ‘prehistory’ of humanity, which at the same time consecrates, in their eyes, the Occident’s privilege—both a distinguished privilege and fatal fortune—and, at the very least, the eminent mark of its historical essence. (Kelkel 1979:407)

On these points Husserl and Heidegger are not fundamentally opposed. However, there were a number of differences between the two. The most significant is on the role of reason. Heidegger had rejected Hegel’s teleological myth of the progress of Reason (Kelkel 1979:382).

When Husserl thus considers positively the progressive establishment of the reign of universal reason and of a humanity conscious of its power over the totality of being, Heidegger makes a *negative* appreciation; for him the establishment of the planetary reign of a calculating and technical Reason — because technique and technicized science are merely the mask of an accomplished metaphysics of the atomic age — expresses the progressive decadence of the authentic ontological relations of man to Being; in opposition to Husserl, Heidegger does not believe that man’s salvation can come to him through this dominating Reason, self-assured and conquering, which he sometimes denounces as the fiercest opponent of true thought. (Kelkel 1979:395)

Kelkel notes that Heidegger held that Being was eschatological (1979:405).⁹⁷ He acknowledges that the expression “eschatology of Being is “somewhat enigmatic” and is

⁹⁷ “Western history is eschatology par excellence... because Being is in itself eschatological.”

only “partly elucidated by the philological guides” provided by Heidegger (1979:404).

He explains,

The history of Being is eschatological because it is in its totality that teleological movement, which from its very commencement, is directed toward its own end, and which will realize itself at the instant when Being finds itself, for one last time, summoned in the ultimate “difference” (*Ab-schied*) of itself with being leaving man utterly adrift from Being. (1979:405)

Kelkel is correct when he says that Heidegger’s does not stress

an immanent rational idea which would act as an end tending to realize itself progressively through the hazards of the empirical history of men; the profound history of humanity reveals, rather than progress, an ineluctable decadence or decline, and the end toward which it is moving is truly the realization or completion (*Vollendung*) of philosophy, arrived at its ultimate stage in the form of planetary science and technique, the origin of which is the same, namely, metaphysical and Greek. (1979:399)

He is also correct that Heidegger “puts us on guard against all theological reminiscence (1979:404). Heidegger, however, is clearly not using eschatology in any theological sense. Kelkel is also right to note that in Heidegger’s thought is “the expression of the unconscious heritage of Christian eschatology” (1979:407).

Kelkel, however, seems to confuse the distinction between teleology from the German Idealist tradition and the eschatology of Heidegger. This is clear when he says the idea that “each historical epoch is itself marked by the eschatological law – the grand law of history — and tends toward its own realization in the new suspension of the authenticity of Being.” There is nothing that in Heidegger’s eschatology of “a sort of continuous progression toward an end – which is simultaneously telos and the outcome and ultimate realization of its essence...” (1979:405). The idea of progression, characteristic in Hegelian teleology or in Enlightenment eschatologies is not emphasized.

Heidegger intended eschatology to apply in a total sense and viewed it as a development of Hegel's teleology.

The phenomenology of spirit itself constitutes a phase in the eschatology of Being, when Being gathers itself in the ultimacy of its essence, hitherto determined through metaphysics, as the absolute subjectivity [*Subjektivität*] of unconditioned will to will.... If we think within the eschatology of Being, then we must someday anticipate the former dawn in the dawn to come; today we must learn to ponder this former dawn through what is imminent (Heidegger 1975:18).⁹⁸

What Heidegger sought to accomplish by utilizing the eschatology of Paul was to find a more primordial base than what was expressed in teleological concepts of history or phenomenology. As seen above, in the eschatology of Paul there is no unfolding progress in a teleological sense. It begins with an event (the advent and/or resurrection of Christ) and ends with an event (the second advent and general resurrection). What Heidegger emphasizes in his Religious lectures on Paul's writings is the existential experience of the first century Christian living in the in-between of the first and second comings; the complex of enactment.⁹⁹ What is experienced is an *event*, a *standing*, a *relational situation* (with Christ and one another) set in a *crisis* situation. What is absent in Heidegger's writings is the fulfillment of a *telos*. There is no sense of an unfolding in Paul's eschatology for Heidegger. The eschatological is aoristic; that is, as with the aorist tense, there is no sense of unfolding time or a series of cause and effect relationships. The cause and effect of progressive historical unfolding has led to a decadent history reaching a crisis state for Heidegger. The present state of affairs has led to a crisis and

⁹⁸ It is not clear what Heidegger means by this last statement. If he is thinking in terms of Christian eschatology, he may be alluding to texts such as Luke 1:77-79; 24:1; Romans 13:11,12 (cf. John 11:11) which speak of an eschatological resurrection. On the other hand, he may merely be alluding to the natural phenomenon.

⁹⁹ I.e. the *standing* in the *now* of the complex of enactment and the eschatological reference to Paul I Thess. 3:7-8; 2 Thess.2:15. Also, see above, pp. 26-33, on the discussion of enactment.

because of this situation Heidegger draws analogies the first century Christian experience. Such leads to the “apocalyptic” tone in his eschatology.

Heidegger intentionally chose the term eschatology over teleology. The question is why? Heidegger apparently saw in Pauline eschatology an analogical understanding which was beyond the object-subject distinction in teleological understanding.

Eschatology avoids the problem of causation. In “The Question Concerning Technology” (1949) he notes Aristotle’s four causes. Even in this later work, the earlier eschatological thinking can be seen. He noted that *telos* belongs to *causa finalis*.

Aristotle’s four causes, however, are not primal enough to reveal being. He asked, “suppose that causality...is [itself] veiled in darkness with respect to what it is?”

(1982:314).¹⁰⁰ Technology itself is a mode of *revealing*. “All coming to presence, not only modern technology, keeps itself everywhere concealed to the last... in the realm of thinking, a painstaking effort to think through still more primally what was primally thought is not the absurd wish to revive what is past, but rather the sober readiness to be astounded before the coming of the dawn” (1982:327). The parallel to eschatology is seen in the hidden Christ to be revealed in the future without reference to a causal unfolding or progressive historical development. It is in the anticipation of the end, as Paul’s Christians were to remain sober in anticipation of coming of Christ, the “coming of the dawn.”¹⁰¹ That the eschatological is still in view in his later writings is clearly seen

in the quote from Hölderlin’s “Patmos.” In almost theological language Heidegger says,

¹⁰⁰ “The doctrine of the four causes goes back to Aristotle. But everything that later ages seek in Greek thought under the conception and rubric “causality” in the realm of Greek thought and for Greek thought *per se* has simply nothing at all to do with bringing about and effecting” (314).

¹⁰¹ On being “sober” in an eschatological sense, see I Thess.5:6-8 in Appendix. There may also be a possible allusion to 2 Peter 1:19: “19 And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.”

“The granting that sends one way or another into revealing is as such the saving power. For the saving power lets man see and enter into the highest dignity of his essence” (1982:337). The influence of his early eschatological thought seems to have not departed from his later philosophical writings. The eschatological experience seemed to offer a strong illustration for his philosophical point.

Eschatology in *Being and Time*

It is clear that Heidegger was familiar with the subject of eschatology and referenced it in his early work and critique. The question here is, did it play a formative role in *Being and Time*? Heidegger does not use the term eschatology in his monumental work. It is the contention here, however, that it was in the background.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger focuses on *Dasein* as “the being whose being is in question” (Guignon 2005:396). Being makes sense only in terms of time, i.e. on the basis of time *Dasein* can understand and interpret something like being. By “time,” Heidegger means “originary temporality” (Guignon 2005:397; Blattner 2005:311). *Dasein*, has a deep, temporal structure. Each fundamental element of *Dasein*’s being is grounded in an aspect of past, present, and future time (Blattner 2005:312-313). Because *Dasein* *cares about* what is at “stake” in its being, there is always a “taking a stand” in expressing life. *Dasein* is always outside itself (*ex sistere*) and is directed toward its own realization (Guignon 2005:397). In this stance there is a “forward-directedness” constitutive of its existence. Futurity is a condition of human life in that actions contribute to the realization of *Dasein* as a totality. *Dasein* is a “being-toward-the-end” or “toward-death.” Heidegger says that *Dasein* is a “bringing itself to fruition.” There is a coming “toward”

to finality as a totality. Dasein's being is always a "not yet realized." Dasein is always a "having been" – this is thrownness (Guignon 2005:397).

The past is a way of coming to the future, not something that "follows along after Dasein" (Guignon 2005:396). Past commitments can only become meaningful in relation to our future commitments. The past happens out of its future. As Guignon says, "The past counts for me in some determinate way only in the light of my sense of what my life is 'coming to' as a whole" (Guignon 1992:133; *BT*, 41). However, this future directedness is possible only as Dasein "circles back, appropriates, and carries forward what has been." This results in Dasein's structure as having-been, a sense of "beenness." Dasein is thrown and enmeshed in a pre-given context where the "factual" context of meanings and possibilities are already given. His interpretation of Dasein's historicity stems from a "more complete" working out of temporality (Guignon 2005:397). Dasein's "authentic potentiality-for-Being-a-whole" is grounded in temporality. Heidegger asks, "Can Dasein be understood in a way that is more primordial than in the projection of its authentic existence?" (*BT*, 424).

Heidegger holds that Dasein can exist "historically" because of its "temporality." In his analysis he states that Dasein is temporal not because it "stands in history," but that by its very being it is temporal. "[I]t exists historically and can so exist only because it is temporal in the very basis of its Being" (*BT*, 428). For Heidegger history is not that which is "in the past" but a "*derivation [Herkunft]* from such a past" (*BT*, 430). Dasein also "stands in the context of becoming." Something that is "epoch-making" determines a future in the present. An "epoch making event" in history is at the same time something that determines a future in the present moment of the event. In this sense,

history “signifies a ‘context’ of events and ‘effects’, which draws on through ‘the past’, the ‘Present’, and the ‘future’” (BT, 430). It can never be said of Dasein that it exists in the past if the past is defined as “no longer either *present-at-hand* or *ready-to-hand*” (BT, 430).

It is *Dasein* that is primarily historical. That which is encountered within-the-world is “secondarily historical” (BT, 433). What is called “world history” arises out of the secondarily historical. “World-historical entities do not first get their historical character, let us say, by reason of an historiological Objectification; they get it rather as those entities which they are in themselves when they are encountered within-the-world” (BT, 433).

One criticism of *Being and Time* was it was too individualistic.¹⁰² After 1930 Heidegger used the term *Volk* (historical people) in speaking about humans (Guignon 1992:141). Dasein in its thrownness is always being-with-others in the world. Authentic Dasein recognizes that its life is bound to a community (*Volk*) with a shared *heritage* and is bound with the mission or sending of an historical people which is its *mission* or *destiny* (*Geschick*). The idea of heritage makes authentic historicity possible. Authentic historicity is “repeating or retrieving the heritage of possibilities into which one is thrown and taking a resolute stand on what is demanded by one’s current situation” in order to realize a heritage (Guignon 2005:397).¹⁰³ There is a limited scope of possibilities or range of goals provided by the historical legacy which provide possibilities for the future (Guignon 1992:137). How this happens is seen in the way writing history

¹⁰² In Div. II, chapter 5 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger discusses the relationship of temporality to historicity against the charge of being too individualistic.

¹⁰³ Drawing on Nietzsche, Heidegger says that authentic historicity is monumental, antiquarian, and critical (Guignon 1992:137).

(historiography) contributes to transmitting a tradition. This selection process is guided by the historian's sense of outcome. As Guignon says, "Our ability to identify what genuinely matters in the events of the past depends on our ability to grasp history as a 'context of effectiveness and development' which is seen as adding up to something as a totality – as going somewhere of making sense overall" (1992:137). Out of the possibilities of the community's destiny, the historian projects possibilities and anticipates where things are going.

The question here is whether Heidegger is successful in the transition from the individual to the community? How does being bound to a community translate into a destiny? If "Destining" of Being is moving to a fulfillment of potentialities, can this be considered eschatological?

Conclusion

What conclusions can be made from this examination of Heidegger's use of eschatology? It is possible that the crises of post-1914 Europe occasioned Heidegger's use of eschatology because it was a popular topic of the day. Perhaps he saw its popularity was a useful starting point. However, it is probably not his primary reason for discussing eschatology. The eschatological question pre-dated the events surrounding the world crisis of 1914 as seen in Overbeck, Schweitzer, *et al*, among whom it was a religious topic. It is clear that Heidegger's use of the term was occasioned by the theological discussion that led up to his religious lectures before and after the European crisis. Yet, Heidegger was careful not to use the term as traditionally understood by the contemporary theologians. In this critique of the contemporary use of eschatology among theologians, he was clearly motivated by Overbeck who denounced historicizing

Christianity and the transformation of Christianity into a social/political movement *within* history. The occasion for his discussion of eschatology was in response to the contemporary theologian's *misinterpretation* of the meaning of Paul whom Heidegger argues were guilty of objectification. Perhaps Heidegger employed eschatology as a regulative idea. It is likely Heidegger found a sufficient paradigm from the theological discussion and in the eschatological letters of Paul to assist his phenomenological understanding of being in the world. In following Overbeck, however, it appears that he located the essence of Being in eschatology. Like Luther, he took his stand against their inauthenticity and irrelevancy by bringing eschatology into the realm of phenomenological experience.

Another conclusion can be made by noting that in Heidegger's religious lectures there appears to be a conscious effort not to speak in terms of teleology. He critiqued the teleology of Jaspers, Spengler, and Husserl, and desired to bring something new to philosophical understanding by employing eschatology. It seems he consciously intended to maintain a distinction between the two concepts.

John van Buren's analysis of the influence of medieval mysticism in Heidegger's thought may shed light on the tension. He notes that by the years 1915-1916, when Heidegger wrote on the concept of time, that his philosophy was ultimately philosophical mysticism" (1994:122). He had moved to the Dasein of the "world of lived experience"; from the "historical context" (Van Buren 1994:92). He had become dissatisfied with Dasein of logical sense ("logical place") and sought a more "concrete, historical doctrine of the category of Being" (Van Buren 1994:88). Van Buren notes that between the years

1915-1919 the “damming up of Heidegger’s philosophical and religious impulses finally burst, and we have been trying to cope with this explanation ever since” (1994:88).

Heidegger’s “spiritual restlessness” looked for a “pre-logical”, “authentic depth dimension” grounded in lived experience.¹⁰⁴ “Worldview” is the ur-sprung from which philosophy arises. Form and matter create a “reciprocity of determination” which cannot be separated. This reciprocal relationship is the “transcendental-ontic composition of the concept of object” or the “principle of immanence” in which the “immediate life of subjectivity” lives (Van Buren 1994:96). This “breakthrough” (Durchbruch) was obtained by Emil Lask’s influence, which van Buren notes moved in a “decidedly ‘mystical’ vein” and led Heidegger to Meister Eckhart (Van Buren 1994:99). Heidegger saw in Eckhart’s concept of the soul’s relation to God an analogical relationship to the immediate life of subjectivity of the transcendental-ontic.¹⁰⁵ The medieval notion of the soul as the microcosmic of God where the innate natural soul is illuminated by the Logos was an application of Aristotle’s notion of active intellect. Heidegger applied this medieval psychology via phenomenology to the personal life of the subject which he describes is a “teleological consciousness” like the divine telos. Heidegger says, “In the whole medieval worldview, because it is already radically and consciously teleological, there lies a whole world of manifold differentiations of value.”¹⁰⁶ Medieval thought was neither monistic nor dualistic, according to Heidegger, but was “mystical analogism”

¹⁰⁴ This is the basis of Heidegger’s “hermeneutics of facticity.” Heidegger held that the “context” out of which the categories were interpreted was a translogical context. They were an “interpretative expression of the living spirit of the times itself” (Van Buren 1994:94).

¹⁰⁵ Van Buren says, “Heidegger’s claim that the principle of the material determinateness of form (transcendental truth) which includes the truth of the subject-object relation can also be found in the theory of truth in Eckhartian mysticism” (1994:100).

¹⁰⁶ As quoted by Van Buren 1994:118.

(Van Buren 1994:127). With the assistance of Hegel he moved from person to history.¹⁰⁷ Living spirit is historical spirit, a “historically teleological consciousness,” and history is “the objectification of spirit (i.e. value) enacting itself in the course of time” (Van Buren 1994:103). Through the objectification of the human spirit culture is created.

Why reference eschatology when Hegelian teleology seems to be sufficient? Heidegger most likely would note that it had not broken free from the problem of objectification. Heidegger appeared to struggle with the distinction and redefined telos. Prior to *Being and Time* Heidegger taught on Aristotle up to the summer of 1924 and during that period wrote a work entitled “Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation (1922)” (Guignon and Altman 2011:5). He argued that Aristotle’s use of *telos* had been distorted by Latinization and Christianization. *Telos* is not “aim” or “purpose” but “the perceivable form of the realized Being . . .” (Guignon and Altman 2011:7). In his work *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* (1924), Heidegger says,

One must be cautious with the concept of ‘teleology.’ Aristotle had no ‘teleological’ worldview. Even a superficial understanding shows that *telieon* and *telos* do not mean ‘aim’ or ‘purpose.’ It is explicitly formulated [by Aristotle] as *ton eschaton ti*; it has the character of what is outermost. The primary basic determination is being-an-end. (in Guignon and Altman 2011:8)

Being is determined by the *eschaton*. What is the “character of what is outermost”?¹⁰⁸

For Aristotle the end was the Good and the Good for humans is *eudaimonia*, a state of

¹⁰⁷ For Hegel, as Van Buren puts it in near eschatological language (cf. I Cor. 15:24f), Absolute Spirit “pours itself” into the “chalice of history such that the ‘kingdom [*reich*] of spirits’ in turn hands the chalice filled with myriad shapes of life back to the ‘throne’ of the king.”

¹⁰⁸ The question arises here what is the difference between the “perceivable form” of the *telos*, and the “character of what is outermost” of the *eschaton*?

flourishing or way of being (Guignon and Altman 2011:10-11).¹⁰⁹ In his earlier religious lectures, however, he does not make any reference to Aristotle's use of *ton eschaton*. This suggests that his primary source was the concept of eschatology from the Christian perspective. It was only afterward that that he offered analysis of Aristotle's use of the terms *telos* and *eschaton*. Heidegger saw the difference between the two concepts and tried to show the relationship between the two. He chose the eschatological concept, however, because he saw it as more primal.

It is clear that Heidegger's eschatology was not an apocalyptic Christian eschatology in any traditional sense. When he later stated, "Being is inherently eschatological," it was clearly not Christian, but early Greek. The term *eschaton* predates Christian usage as a term for "end." Eschatology is "something fateful." In his eschatology there is no expectation of a better world. Quoting Anaximander, "*Whence things have their origin, there they must also pass away according to necessity; for they must pay penalty and be judged for their injustice, according to the ordinance of time*" (Heidegger 1975:13). He does not use the term merely to describe an end, but he borrows from the Christian eschatological *experience*, an experience conditioned by a particular understanding of the end. Heidegger transforms the *idea* of eschatology from Christian sources, the New Testament texts of Paul and contemporary theological use, into a phenomenological use. But is it warranted to use the Christian eschatological experience, as he did from Paul, and apply it in a secular setting to the destining of a community? Are there any difficulties in bringing eschatology into this philosophical discussion?

¹⁰⁹ Guignon and Altman, "a 'how' of acting and not a state of any sort" (11).

The tension between eschatology and teleology in Heidegger is seen in the difference noted in the previous chapter between Latin materialistic, transcendent eschatology and German immanent mystical eschatology.¹¹⁰ Eckhart's eschatology, where both the living and the dead are mystically united with God in a state of divinization, is diametrically opposed to the Latin conception. If Heidegger is employing a "Christian" eschatology, it is the latter form which was discussed in Chapter Two of this work.¹¹¹

Either way, however, Heidegger's eschatology is a departure from any traditional Christian understanding of eschatology. There is no end of time in Heidegger's eschatology. In the Latin and Protestant versions, there is a total and final end of *time* and the age of human/natural history. It is not a phase of history or an event in a series of events bringing about a new age within history. However, this is clearly not what Heidegger sets forth in his eschatology. Heidegger does not hold to a total "end" for humanity and human existence as set forth in Christian eschatology.¹¹² At this point Heidegger makes a shift from eschatology to teleology in that "destining" moves toward fulfillment of potentialities which may or may not be reached.

Traditional Christian eschatology presumes a duality—the idea of the otherworldly transcendent entering or breaking into this world. It assumes a victorious deliverance from evil and a realization of perfection, and anticipates the end of evil and the ultimate redemption of both the individual and collective (both of humanity and

¹¹⁰ The debate whether one version is Christian and the other not will not be addressed here. See Thiel 2006:527; Ozment 1980:115-16. See also O'Regan 2001 and *Gnostic Apocalypse: Jacob Boehme's Haunted Narrative* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY, 2002).

¹¹¹ This distinction will be elaborated upon in the Conclusion in Chapter Six.

¹¹² The research conducted in this work did not find anywhere that Heidegger believed an end was inevitable but only that it stands as a possibility.

nature). There is not only a *personal* (individual) hope of resurrection but the arrival of the Kingdom of God *collectively* (whole). It is always an eschatology of *hope*, not “something fateful.” The end in Heidegger’s eschatology, however, is ultimately death.¹¹³

The difficulty for Heidegger remains the move from the *individual* (personal eschatology) to the *communal* (collective). An eschatology of death applied at the existential level of one facing death appears less problematic. In the case of individuals, a beginning and end are clearly known without question. Life’s meaning for the individual cannot be grasped apart from, and perhaps until, the point of death. As Guignon explains, “In other words, as long as I am alive, there is something outstanding that keeps me from being able to grasp my existence as a whole” (Guignon 2005:395). As long as one is alive, death is always present “before.” However, how can an eschatology of death be applied beyond the individual or particular entity such as a culture, state or civilization or history? Heidegger tries to make the connection. It could be argued that Heidegger commits the fallacy of composition by applying what is true of the individual (particular) to all of humanity (general).

What Heidegger does with Christian eschatology is to make it a purely secular experience. His use of eschatology is limited to *personal* eschatology. There is a difference between how one faces his or her own possibility of death and whether or not the entire human race experiences death. That one dies does not mean that all die collectively. The very phenomenon of experiencing the death of another indicates that one’s personal end is not the end of all; i.e. others continue to live afterward. Perhaps Heidegger’s reply would be that such a question reflects the problem of objectification.

¹¹³ See *BT*, Book II, 370, paragraph, 65.

Along with the question of individual to universal is the question of the nature of time. The eschatological is possible only because of a *linear* concept of time. Within the experience of the individual, a linear conception is without question; one is born, lives, and dies. Here Heidegger is right in that death is always before one in the ultimate sense of end. This works within an existential experience. There is no reason, however, to conclude this beyond the individual experience. Historical science has assumed a linear concept of time, but there is nothing in the experience of nature or in history to suggest any kind of end on the scale of eschatology in Christian thought. Time beyond the individual in the world of nature is cyclical time. Outside of the individual experience, the linear concept of time cannot be maintained on empirical grounds.

The concept of eschatology was clearly in Heidegger's thought throughout most, if not all, of his life. As late as 1953, in "The Question Concerning Technology," he quoted a poem by Hölderlin entitled "Patmos"; an allusion to the Book of Revelation.¹¹⁴ Heidegger clearly maintained a sense of an eschatological end in his own lifetime. In the "Anaximander Fragment" he questions, "But what entitles antiquity to address us, presumably the latest latecomers with respect to philosophy? Are we latecomers in a history now racing toward its end, an end with in its increasingly sterile order of uniformity brings everything to an end?" He continues with the questions,

Do we stand in the very twilight of the most monstrous transformation our planet has ever undergone, the twilight of that epoch in which earth itself hangs suspended? Do we confront the evening of a night which heralds another dawn? Are we to strike off on a journey to his historic region of earth's evening? Is the land of evening [editor note Abendland "the evening-land" means Occident, the west,] only now emerging? Will this land of evening overwhelm Occident and Orient alike, transcending whatever is merely European to become the location of a new, more primordially fated history? Are we men of today already "Western"

¹¹⁴ According to Christian tradition the *Book of Revelation* was written by the Apostle John while imprisoned on the Greek isle of Patmos.

in a sense that first crystallizes in the course of our passage into the world's night?
(Heidegger 1975:16-17)

CHAPTER FOUR

BERDYAEV'S ESCHATOLOGICAL METAPHYSICS

The next of the eschatological philosophers in this study is Nicolas Berdyaev (1874-1948). Berdyaev takes a very different approach to the subject than Heidegger. The subject of eschatology was essential to his overall philosophical pursuit which he began in 1901—to investigate the meaning of life. Berdyaev was also familiar with the works of Johannes Weiss¹ and other contemporary eschatological theologians, particularly the work of the Polish philosopher August Cieszkovsky (1814-1894)² who emphasized the “era of the Paraclete” (*MH*, 203).

Berdyaev approaches the subject of eschatology from the Russian Orthodox tradition. He notes the distinction between Western and Russian philosophy, stating that Russian philosophical thought is closely tied to a religious philosophy of history which has always been inclined to the “eschatological problem and apocalypticism.” Eschatology distinguishes Russian philosophy from Western thought and gives it a religious character” (*MH*, vii). In *The Russian Idea* he states,

[T]he Russian people, in accordance with their metaphysical nature and vocation in the world, are a people of the End. Apocalypse has always played a great part both among the masses of our people and at the highest cultural level among Russian writers and thinkers. In our thought the eschatological problem takes an

¹ See discussion in Chapter Three, pg. 103, of this work.

² In Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936). Hereafter, *MH*. Berdyaev states in a footnote: “Among those who defend the eschatological interpretation of Christianity upon scientifically historical principles Weiss and Loisy should be specially mentioned. The most remarkable religious and philosophical exposition of Christianity as a religion of the Spirit and of belief in an era of the Paraclete is provided by Cieszkovsky” (*MH*, 203).

immeasurably greater place than in the thinking of the West and this is connected with the very structure of Russian consciousness.³

Berdyayev sets forth his eschatological philosophy most explicitly toward the end of his career in his work, *The Beginning and The End*.⁴ He makes clear that his “philosophy of the End” was not a proclamation of the end of the world. It had little to do with the “various interpretations of the Book of the Revelation and it does not imply an expectation of the end in some definite year” (*BE*, 51). Berdyayev considers his work as “an essay in the epistemological and metaphysical interpretation of the end of the world, of the end of history, that is to say it is a book on eschatological epistemology and metaphysics” (*BE*, 13). His thinking, he claims, is the result of a “spiritual experience” which was “evoked by the catastrophic events of our times” (*BE*, vi). The unique contribution of this work is that he argued for the meaning of life in terms of “Spirit” in contrast to a secular world (Richards and Garner 1970:121). What he sets forth is an “eschatological metaphysics” or an “existential metaphysics.”

The eschatological problem, Berdyayev argues, was not specifically addressed by the philosophers in his day but through the literary figures, particularly Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, who related the philosophy of history with the problem of conflict in personality.

Our creative philosophical thought has been tinged with a religious spirit, and a yearning for the Kingdom of God is disclosed in it, together with a sense of the impossibility of reconciling oneself to this world. Its fundamental problems were not questions about the theory of knowledge, about logic or abstract metaphysics. They were problems concerned with the philosophy of history, the philosophy of religion and ethics. Certain themes can be shown to be specifically Russian.

³ As quoted by Rowley 1999:1582.

⁴ Nicolas Berdyayev, *The Beginning and the End [Opyt Eschatologicheskoy Metaphiziki, 1941]*, New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952. Hereafter *BE*.

Among such themes I place the subject of God-manhood and of eschatology and again the theme of the end of history. (*BE*, 35)

Prior to the Russian revolution Berdyaev was a Marxist but later rejected Marxism because of its determinism (see Langiulli 1971). In 1922, Lenin expelled Berdyaev from Russia because he objected to a work that he co-authored entitled “Oswald Spengler and the Decline of Europe” (Owens 2001:434). While living in Berlin he began his work, *The Meaning of History*, which was based on a series of lectures given while in Moscow at the Liberal Academy of Spiritual Culture during the years 1919-1920. At this early period, Berdyaev emphasized the importance of eschatology in the history of Western thought. In *The Meaning of History*, he defines eschatology as,

... the doctrine of the goal of history, its issue and fulfilment. It is absolutely essential for the conception and elaboration of the idea of history, as a significant progress or movement capable of fulfilment. No conception of history is feasible without the idea of fulfilment because history is essentially eschatological; it postulates a final solution and issue, it presupposes a catastrophic fulfilment which inaugurates a new world and a new reality utterly different from the world and reality familiar to the Greeks, who had no eschatological sense. (*MH*, 32)

Objectification of Being and the Overcoming of Dualism

Berdyaev argued that there were two problems in the history of philosophy. The first problem is the objectification of being (*BE*, 98). Since the beginning of philosophy, philosophers have struggled with the problem of the one and the many, and the quest to obtain knowledge of what constitutes *being* (*ousia, essentia*) and to construct an ontology based on that knowledge. The Greeks looked for the primordial (*arche*) in seeking to explain how becoming arises out of being and attempted to “rise above the deceptive world of the senses and penetrate behind this world of plurality and change to the One.” The hope was that if knowledge of being could be obtained, one could reach “the summit of knowledge, and...attain salvation through having achieved union with the primary

source” (BE, 92). Parmenides, the founder of the ontological tradition, held that there is being, no non-being, and that it is one and unchanging. Plato continued the ontological tradition arguing that true being is in the realm of ideas, but also held that the Good was supreme over being. Unity of perfection was the highest idea. Philosophers since tried to overcome the unstable world of the senses, the world of becoming. In the process, being became an object of thought and therefore denoted *objectification* (BE, 93). The problem has been that philosophy has not been able to overcome objectification. Berdyaev questions,

The problem which faces us is this: is not being a product of objectification? Does it not turn the subject matter of philosophical knowledge into objects in which the noumenal world disappears? Is not the concept of being concerned with being qua concept, does being possess existence? (BE, 91)

Berdyaev believes that his eschatological philosophy overcomes the problem by addressing the subject of freedom. Berdyaev explains that ontological philosophy is not a philosophy of *freedom*. Freedom, he argues, cannot have its source in being. A choice must be made between being and freedom; “the primacy of being over freedom, or the primacy of freedom over being. The choice settles two types of philosophy” (BE, 104). Freedom is not *ontic* but *meonic*; that is, freedom arises from nothingness. Being is essentially a by-product of freedom; it is “congealed freedom.” Once something exists freedom becomes limited and “disappears altogether.” “This cooling of the fire, this coagulation of freedom is in fact objectification. Being is brought to birth by the transcendental consciousness as it turns to the object” (BE, 111).

The second problem Berdyaev sees in the history of philosophy is the ongoing tension between monism and dualism. The history of Western philosophy is an attempt to overcome the problem of dualism and to obtain monism. Since Plato, there have been

many attempts to overcome dualism but none had been successful.⁵ Dualism, he argues, is only resolved by eschatology. The tension begins with Plato in his dualism of the noumenal world of ideas and the phenomenal world of the senses. Plato believed that true thought (*episteme*) was located in the noumenal world. He saw that reason could apprehend being; reason was located in being and this made rational knowledge possible (*BE*, 9). Later, Aristotle had attempted to resolve dualism through his explanation of potentiality and actuality but he failed to arrive at monism through teleology. Afterwards, the Neoplatonists, Plotinus and Proclus, offered a mystical pagan monism. In Neoplatonism Plato's ideas become gods. However, none of these attempts were successful and all led to a false monism (*BE*, 20).

The problem with all attempts at monism was that they first failed to provide an explanation on how non-being comes into being. Berdyaev asks, "What is the source of movement and of change? Is it potency or act? Pure act is unmoved and unchanged, for it is a completed condition, whereas movement and change indicate incompleteness" (*BE*, 157). There is something more in potency, he argues, than there is in actuality; "noumenal spiritual world discloses itself in creativeness, in movement, in freedom, not in congealed, self-enlocked, motionless being" (*BE*, 158).

The second reason philosophical monism failed was that it was an attempt to find unity within the parameters this world alone (*BE*, 51). As Berdyaev states,

⁵ Berdyaev identifies seven "antitheses" seen throughout the history of philosophy (*BE*, 50, 51):

1. Philosophy of the subject and philosophy of the object.
2. Philosophy of the spirit and naturalistic philosophy. (cont.)
3. Philosophy of freedom and determinist philosophy.
4. Philosophy which is dualistically pluralist and monistic philosophy.
5. Philosophy which is creatively dynamic and statically ontological philosophy.
6. Personalist philosophy or the philosophy of personality and the philosophy of universal common sense.
7. Eschatological philosophy, the philosophy of discontinuity and evolutionary philosophy; the philosophy of continuity.

“Eschatological philosophy springs from a philosophical problem raised already by Plato. Philosophical monism was an attempt to solve the eschatological problem within the confines of this world, to assert a unity without linking the end into its purview” (*BE*, 51). This resulted in what Berdyaev called a “metaphysical heresy”: This heresy consisted in the denial of the existence of two natures or two principles, “the denial of the operation of God and of response to God in the creative act of man” (*BE*, 27). Abstract monism denies the drama and mystery of reality. It sees the Divine Being as static and opposed to process. It sees the world as only appearance and illusion, having no “real existence.” Movement is associated with the relative world unaffected by the divine life. Monism brings a cleavage between spiritual-divine world and the world of plurality and change. It cannot explain inwardly the origin of the plural world (*MH*, 46). Dualism will remain in force because history demonstrates the problem of objectification and the failure to achieve freedom in the deterministic world of phenomena (*BE*, 247). The reason there is an idea of eschatology is because of the problem of dualism (*BE*, 28).

Berdyaev argues there are only three ways of overcoming dualism: First, to see the world of sense and plurality as an illusion as does Indian philosophy (Schopenhauer).⁶ He rejects this view because he believes it too is another form of objectification. Second, the noumenal world (spiritual) *unfolds* in the phenomenal world; a “metaphysical evolutionism” which may turn into a materialism. This view of Hegel and Schelling corresponds to Aristotle and Plotinus in their attempt to move away from Platonic dualism. Western monistic views are teleological and began with Aristotelian monism.

⁶ “The case is the same in Indian thought. The Absolute is neither subject, nor object. Subject and object are identified in Atman. Brahman is the subject in cognition. Indian thought has shown an insufficient appreciation of the whole burden of objectification and the whole difficulty of overcoming the breach. Its sense of the illusory nature of the world has been stronger than its sense of the world's evil and sin” (*BE*, 63).

The world is an immanent unfolding of the other world (*BE*, 20). Because it is immanent and monistic, it cannot overcome objectification.

It is only the third way which is the *noumenal* (Spirit) operating in and ultimately *breaking into* the phenomenal world as the coming of the Kingdom of God. Here only is the solution to the problem of dualism can be obtained. Only such an eschatological philosophy can offer a solution to the problem. The problems of monism/dualism can only be resolved in the idea of an eschatological breaking-into this world (*BE*, 27).

Berdyaev's Critique of Heidegger

Berdyaev had a high regard for Heidegger, regarding him as one of the “most serious and interesting philosophers of our time” (*BE*, 116). There is no indication, however, that he was familiar with any of his eschatological discussions. The use of eschatology in his writings is very different than Heidegger’s following more closely to the German mystical tradition. Though Heidegger was the latest philosopher to attempt an ontology, he failed to provide a philosophy of being because he did not address the problem of objectification (*BE*, 92). Berdyaev locates the problem in Heidegger’s phenomenology (*BE*, 33, 38.). He charges that in phenomenology the *subject* is passive and is not existentialism, whereas in Berdyaev’s existentialism the subject is *active* (*BE*, 38). Heidegger viewed humans and the world “exclusively from below” (*BE*, 117). offering “merely a philosophy of *Dasein*” (*BE*, 117). Berdyaev interprets *Dasein*’s being cast into the world as “the Fall” and argues that being thrown into the world is in fact *objectification* (*BE*, 116).

Berdyaev believes Heidegger was correct in saying that there must be an understanding of the *Existenziele* as an interpretation of the self, but he raises the

question of “truth.” Truth exists to the extent *Dasein* exists and that it is possible because *Dasein* is within truth (*BE*, 43). Heidegger indeed sees a truth but not the “*final* truth,” for he was still under “the sway of objectification” (*BE*, 117).

Heidegger does not explain whence the power of getting to know things is acquired. He looks upon man and the world exclusively from below, and sees nothing but the lowest part of them. As a man he is deeply troubled by this world of care, fear, death and daily dullness. His philosophy, in which he has succeeded in seeing a certain bitter truth, albeit not the final truth, is not existential philosophy, and the depth of existence does not make itself felt in it. (*BE*, 117)

Berdyayev considered Heidegger the “most extreme pessimist in the history of philosophical thought in the West” (*BE*, 116). The present state of being and anxiety is unconquerable and is inclined toward death. He thought his philosophy was “godless” and that it lacked “resurrection.” Heidegger’s philosophy, therefore, is the opposite of an eschatological philosophy (*BE*, 212, 213).

The godlessness of Heidegger’s philosophy, which is very characteristic of the present day, lies in the fact that from its point of view the present condition of being and the anxiety that belongs to it are unconquerable. Being which inclines toward death is anxiety, and anxiety is being which inclines towards death. (*BE*, 212)

The significant contribution of Heidegger was not a theory of being, but that he raises the problem of nothingness (non-being). Berdyayev commends him in following Boehme saying philosophy must go “deeper” than being. Contra Heidegger, philosophy must begin with *nothingness* (*BE*, 110). “Without nothingness there would be neither personal existence nor freedom” (*BE*, 116).

Berdyayev notes that his eschatological metaphysics, in contrast to Heidegger, is not ontology (*BE*, 98). His is neither rationalistic nor scientific but truly existential.⁷ Berdyayev’s existential metaphysics is rooted in his philosophy of “personalism.” The

⁷ On the contrary, “It will probably be found to be even irrationalistic, but I cherish the hope that it is enlightened philosophy in the Kantian sense of the word” (*BE*, v).

starting point for philosophy, he argues, must begin with individual personality. “I take my stand upon a different scale of values,” he states, “one in which human personality, unique, unrepeatable and irreplaceable is the highest value of all” (*BE*, 128).

Philosophical knowledge is an act of “self-liberation on the part of the spirit” (*BE*, 7).

The goal of philosophy is that it not only desires *meaning*, but desires that that meaning should *triumph*. To do so, it must either discover wisdom which the world provides or “break through to another world (*BE*, 5). For Berdyaev it is a breakthrough that can only realized in the human subject.

History is the result of the movement of the human spirit desiring freedom. Dilthey showed that thinking is not merely an autonomous intellectual activity but involves the whole of life. Intellectual activity cannot be separated from the *person* who thinks. Thinking is not an isolated activity but done within the “corporate experience” of “brothers in spirit” (*BE*, 37). Dilthey noted that there were three types of philosophical world-outlook: naturalism, objective idealism and idealism of freedom (*BE*, 49). It is the latter position that Berdyaev believes offers the best answer to the problems seen in the history of philosophy.

From Cosmocentrism to Anthropocentrism

The idea of a cosmocentric and anthropocentric world are important to Berdyaev’s understanding of eschatology. Berdyaev notes that throughout the history of Western thought there has been a clash of two worldviews: cosmocentricism and anthropocentricism (*BE*, 115). With the rise of modern physics came the ultimate destruction of the cosmological world. Since then idea of a harmonious cosmos no longer exists. “The world, this planet of ours, has been set reeling. Already man no

longer feels the ground firm under his feet, ground which is linked with a world order” (*BE*, 249). There are certain consequences of a cosmocentric worldview. First, there is the loss of freedom and the loss of meaning. In the cosmocentric world human existence is determined by fate and law. Man “lives out his fate, submerged in the cosmos.” Freedom cannot be realized in a world subject to the cycles of nature. In such a world, the meaning of life is not revealed (*BE*, 113).

Cosmocentric philosophy is a philosophy of the object (*BE*, 11). In a cosmocentric view of the world reality is *static*, it exists in *space* (*BE*, 199; *MH*, 50).⁸ Since the rise of the anthropocentric world, however, the objective world no longer exists as a *whole* as it once did in a Ptolemaic cosmos. The objective world is a partial world which is still in the process of being created. “The cosmos is still to be created, and it must be created; it will make its appearance as a result of the transformation of the world” (*BE*, 148). The world is presently in a “fluid condition.”

Berdyayev says the idea that nature is foundational is the “great lie.” The world of nature is the world of phenomena. “In the phenomenal world of the senses everything is brought into subjection to the common, to the species, to law” (*BE*, 122). Knowledge of the world of nature is obtained through reason. Under cosmocentrism are all forms of rationalism, which include Platonism, scholastic realism, and naturalistic materialism. The problem with metaphysical naturalism is that it “regards spirit as nature and substance.” Naturalism leads to a “static ontologism”; “It makes use of the spatial symbolism of a hierarchical conception of the cosmos, not of symbols which are associated with time” (*BE*, 115). In actual experience, both nature and spirit are at work,

⁸ Greek philosophy had established the two fundamental approaches as seen in Parmenides and Heraclitus. The former hindered Christianity’s dynamic development of history rooted in the divine life of the Trinity.

but the natural dominates over the spiritual. The natural becomes an enslaving power, leading to objective determinism (*BE*, 218). Berdyaev says that the right view of nature sees nature, not as mere matter, but as “spiritual nature.” It is Spirit that provides history and progress.

Berdyaev addresses the question of time. Nature (being) is spatial. Time is associated with the process of being coming into existence from non-being. Berdyaev notes that in a cosmological world time is cyclical and reality is static. The static conception of the world in antiquity was based on the immanence of life and being within a cosmos. In a cosmocentric world, the world is eternal and infinite. Berdyaev notes, however, that time is not a *form*. Time exists because there are the phenomena of *newness* and *creativity* (*BE*, 163). Since being is a reality because of non-being, time is dependent on non-being coming into being.

Our existence is steeped not only in reality which has realized itself in the forms of the object world, but also in reality which is potential and which is deeper and wider. It is for that reason alone that change, creativeness and newness are possible. But potentiality itself is steeped in freedom and for that reason can be distinguished from being. (*BE*, 163)

Berdyaev notes there are three types of time: *cosmic*, *historical* and *existential* time. These three types of time are inter-connected and have been revealed through the developing history of philosophy (*BE*, 206). *Cosmic time* is the experience of time of the ancients. It depends on objectification. In the cosmological world there is no such thing as a “finished and closed reality” because things come and go out of existence. The empirical world is never a completed “one” (*BE*, 163).

The second type of time is *Historical time*. It was introduced through Judeo-Christian influence. Cosmic and historical time are identified with the cosmocentric and

anthropocentric worldviews respectively (*BE*, 114). Historical time occurs within cosmic time. History “issues out of the cosmic cycle and stretches out towards what is coming” (*BE*, 166). The main difference between historical time and cosmic time is “that the events of history take place in another sort of time from that in which the events of nature occur (*BE*, 166). “While life in nature flows on in cosmic time, life in history *moves forward* [emphasis added] in historical time” (*BE*, 113). Historical events are singularly unique and non repeatable, though they have general characteristics which may appear repeatable (*BE*, 166). Historical time is “the pathway of man towards eternity” (*BE*, 207). In historic time are the notions of past, present and future time. The only way to be free from objectification is through history. However, the past and future belong to the objectified world (*BE*, 240).

The final type of time is *Existential time*. It likewise arises out of both cosmic and historical time but it depends on *experience* (*BE*, 206).⁹ Existential time indicates time is *in* the person; humans are not *in* time. It is the time of “inward existence.” It is out of a non-objectified existential philosophy that the meaning of history can be obtained (*BE*, 115). Events occurring in existential time invade historical time. Existential time allows for the present and past to be real, but also future (*BE*, 163). It is the source for the possibility of change, creativeness and newness, but also joy and suffering (*BE*, 115). As existential time lies hidden behind historical time, so there is a meta-history that lies hidden behind the historical. “Noumenal realities” lie behind the phenomena of history. “The meta-historical arrives out of the world of the noumenal into this objective world and revolutionizes it. A real profound revolution in the history of the

⁹ Berdyaev notes that cosmic time is symbolized by the circle and is mathematically calculable and, historic time is symbolized by a line and his mathematically calculable, and existential time is symbolized by a point and is not mathematically calculable.

world is a noumenal revolution, but it gets into a state of tangled confusion owing to the terrible determinism of the phenomenal world” (*BE*, 211-212).

Existential time enriches history. Existential events interrupt the series of historical time and give higher meaning and destiny, a “meta-history.” This is accomplished through the “self-revelation” in history of “meta-history” (*BE*, 115). “The meta-historical breaks up not only the cosmic cycle but also the determinism of the historical process, it breaks up objectification” (*BE*, 166-167). When existential time is applied to history, existential time becomes eschatological (*BE*, 115).

Existential time is “akin to eternity.” In it there is “no distinction between the future and the past, between the end and the beginning.” Existential time brings the eternal to the historical. In existential time is where “the eternal accomplishment of the mystery of spirit takes place” and temporal life is “consummated in eternity” (*BE*, 206-207). It is “absolutely impossible to conceive either of the creation of the world within time or of the end of the world within time. In objectified time there is no beginning, nor is there any end, there is only an endless middle. The beginning and the end are in existential time” (*BE*, 207).

It is in existential time where the “Spirit” manifests itself in “creativity” and “newness.” The result of the working of the Spirit through existential time is a “revolution of the noumena.” “The real revolution of the spirit is the end of objectification as belonging to this world; it is the revolution of noumena against the wrong line which the world of phenomena has taken” (*BE*, 221). This revolution is anticipated eschatologically. “When that time comes the spiritual society, the realm of Spirit, the Kingdom of God will be made plain, decisively and finally” (*BE*, 221).

Berdyaev illustrated the point made in Chapter Two of this work where it was noted that eschatology was located in the Self.¹⁰ Berdyaev says the realization of the spiritual, noumenal revolution was not to be a possibility in the history of thought until Kant, but it would not have been possible for Kant apart from the introduction of Christianity.

The Eschatological Contribution of Christianity and Its Failure

Berdyaev held that with the introduction of Christianity in Western thought came an advance in overcoming the dualism of Plato (*BE*, 28). Christianity was unique in the history of thought for it gave to the world a truth not located in the abstract realm of ideas (Plato), but in a *person* (Christ). It offered a way of escape from objectification through its message of the centrality of the individual person. The message of the Gospel, he states, is “I am the truth” or better, “God is Truth.” The truth of Christianity is “a victory over objectification” and over “the illusory and transparent nature of object being” (*BE*, 44).

The miracle of Christianity consists in the fact that in it the incarnation of Truth, of the Logos, of Meaning, appeared, the incarnation of that which is unique, singular and unrepeatable; and that incarnation was not objectification, but an abrupt break with objectification. It must be constantly reiterated that spirit is never an object and that there is no such thing as objective spirit. Being is only one among the offspring of spirit. (*BE*, 96-97)

Christian theology holds that in a fallen world dualism is unavoidable. However, it offered a way of resolving the tensions which was an improvement over Plato’s dualism. This was accomplished in two ways: through the emphasis on the *individual* salvation in a fallen world through the doctrine of the Incarnation and through a “new eschatological element” (*BE*, 20). What developed was a philosophy of the ego as seen

¹⁰ See Chapter Two, p. 48.

in Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa and Duns Scotus into the Middle Ages. The idea of individual salvation in Christian theology led ultimately to existential personalism, and its eschatological doctrine led to the idea of existential time. What resulted along the process of philosophical history was that Christianity made any form of monism impossible in an objectified world (*BE*, 20). “Monistic Unity is unattainable from and through the object, it is only in the subject and through the subject that it can be reached” (*BE*, 21). This tension between inner and outer is a significant point in the history of eschatology.

Berdyaev claims that only an understanding of the meaning of Christianity can provide an escape from the dilemma created by mere objectivity. The message of Christ is critical in understanding how to escape objectification and to give meaning to history. With the coming of Christ there was a *break* into history. Christ “came” not in historical time but in existential time. Meta-history broke into history providing liberation (*BE*, 211). History has a meaning because meaning, the Logos, appeared in it; “the God-man became incarnate, and it has meaning because it is moving towards the realm of God-Manhood” (*BE*, 115). History is, therefore, essentially *messianic*.

Deep down in the whole historical process, there is a tangled dialectic of the messianic idea. Messianic thought is historical and eschatological, it is concerned with history and with the end, with the historical future and with eternity. And Christianity itself is historical and eschatological. (*BE*, 246-247)

Berdyaev sees Christianity’s doctrine of the *Fall* a key aspect in objectification. Unlike the traditional biblical doctrine, Berdyaev defines the “fall” as separation from God “into the external sphere.” God is a “Mystery” which is unlike all the properties and relations of the natural, historical and social world” (*BE*, 214). The fall is the

“enslavement to the external objective world,” it is the “process of exteriorization” which resulted in the loss of freedom (*BE*, 214).

In my opinion the central thought an eschatological philosophy is connected with the interpretation of the Fall as objectification, and of the end as the final and decisive victory over objectification. The choice of the type of philosophy is settled by the spirit of the philosopher as a whole, by decision and emotion rather than by the intellect. But the human intellect itself is also inseparable from the existence of the whole man, from choice of his will and from his emotional experience. (*BE*, 51)

The material world of nature (the phenomenal and its time), along with the social world (sociomorphism), belong to the fall (*BE*, 103, 241).

The problem with Christianity, however, was that in its own history it often failed to live up to its own teaching. Berdyaev illustrates with the example of the “Church.”

The church possesses both noumenal and phenomenal aspects. Throughout history, however, the church itself has fallen into objectification to its own destruction (*BE*, 132).

The problem of objectification is seen in the social division of church life, especially in its hierarchy with the distinction between clergy and laity. Yet, in the very idea of the entity called the Church lies in part the answer to the problem of dualism. At the heart of the Church is its spiritual life and therein lies the reality and contribution of the Church.

It is not in the objective, visible church but in the invisible church where the truth is to be found. The mysterious presence of Christ is found in the invisible church.

The noumenal side of the Church is real spirit, not nature and society; it is the Kingdom of God which cometh not with observation. The phenomenal side of the Church, however, is the objectification and symbolization of spirit. The Church as spirit is a reality which exists within human beings, not outside them and not above them as objective universals do. In this sense the Church is an illuminated and transfigured world, an illuminated and transfigured society. (*BE*, 132)

Berdyayev argues that in the Russian Orthodox concept of *Sobornost* the church can best understand its own nature (*BE*, 131-132; Zenkovsky 1963:43f).¹¹

It is a miraculous life which is not subject to social laws; it is a community, a brotherhood of men in Christ. It is the mysterious life of Christ within a human communion, it is a mysterious entering into communion with Christ. In this sense the Church is freedom and love, and there is no external authority in it, there is no necessity and no coercive force. (*BE*, 131)

Historically, the problem of objectification is also seen in the church's expressions of eschatology. Christian eschatology was not freed from objectification. This is seen in the various eschatological doctrines, particularly in its doctrine of hell which is a continuation of dualism into the age beyond. "The eschatological outlook which envisages hell is slavery to fallen objectified time. It goes to show that the eschatological problem by which man is faced is insoluble within the sphere of objectification" (*BE*, 236). Christianity itself faces the danger of falling into either monistic naturalism or dualistic Satanism (*BE*, 243).

With the rise of Christianity the classical world was introduced to a new concept of historical time—linear time. The introduction of a new concept of time by Christianity provided the way of overcoming the problem of objectification. Time would end in a consummation of all things. The Christian concept of time made possible the idea of history. History would be the beginning of the end of cosmocentrism. Berdyayev notes that a cosmocentric view of the world can never produce a philosophy of history (*BE*,

¹¹ I.e. the congregational nature of human consciousness: "*Sobornost* was substantially a new notion and of the Russian conscience it spelled the idea of the Church's *unity in grace*, with the emphasis on the grace. In other words, the congregation is united in the Church through the very essence of the Church, where all the faithful are one in Christ, and not merely united by formal, outer bonds. The notion of *sobornost* took deep roots in Russian thought." Prince Serge Trubetskoi added the idea that it was the "congregational nature of man's conscience. Conscience is not personal "because it contains many elements which are not *from us* but only *in us*...Conscience is *supra-personal*, it binds us with all men" (*MH*, 44). It was opposed to western individualism which they believed ruled out the natural unity of humanity and unity within the church through grace. Cf. Acts 15:28 appealed to showing the synergy of the Holy Spirit and Church wherein the truth appears.

198). Nature can be understood either as a cosmic infinity wherein human events have no meaning or as “entering into human history as a preparatory part of it, and in that case it is given a significant meaning.” Reality, according to Berdyaev, is “always historical—it can be nothing else” according to Berdyaev (*BE*, 197-198).

Berdyaev held human beings are “in the highest degree an historical being” (*MH*, 14). Humans are “situated” in history and history in the human. History is not a mere phenomenon. History and the “historical” is noumena. “The historical in the real sense of the word brings with it the revelation of essential being, of inner spiritual nature of the world and of the inner spiritual essence of man, and not merely of the external phenomena” (*MH*, 15). History is not an objective empirical datum but arises from myth. This does not mean it is a fiction. It is a reality of a different order. Myth served a function in human development, but in the process it made man an historical being (*MH*, 21).

Berdyaev notes that the idea of history which developed in the West arose out of Judeo-Christian eschatology. The influence of the Hebrew and Christian writings provided the idea of history and ultimately led to an anthropocentric reality that was unknown in the Ancient world. The concept of history came not through philosophy but by the introduction of the Hebrew writings. “For the ancient Hebrews the idea of fulfilment was always closely allied to that of Messianism” (*MH*, 28). Jewish consciousness aspired toward the future, as seen in the book of Daniel. Here the very idea of the historical can be found. It was Christianity, however, that would provide a “real philosophy of history as a particular category of spiritual knowledge and

Weltanschauung” (MH, 33). The early Christians had “an intense sense of expectation” and looked forward to “the incarnation of Meaning, of the Logos, in history” (BE, 199).

The reason the Greeks did not arrive at the historical was that they did not have “real knowledge of freedom.” “Submission to fate is the most characteristic feature of the Hellenic spirit. It had no conscious knowledge of freedom, that freedom of the subject to create history, without which neither its fulfilment nor comprehension is possible” (MH, 29). The Greek philosophers had no conception of history as coming to a completion or fulfillment. They viewed the world aesthetically, static and harmonious cosmos. There was no goal or purpose, no beginning or end, but was governed by a cyclical motion.

With the introduction of Christian worldview, however, there came the possibility of deliverance from the cosmos (BE, 241). With Christianity came the idea of the deliverance of the individual and with it the idea of spiritual freedom over the forces of the cosmos. “Christianity teaches a doctrine of the deliverance of man from the power of the world, from the cosmic cycle and the hierarchy of cosmic spirits and demons. It is in this that the unique character of the light of Christianity is to be found, and the distinctiveness of Christian eschatology” (BE, 241).¹² The historical is “a sort of revelation of the deepest essence of universal reality, of the destiny of the world focused in that of man. It is a revelation of noumenal reality” (MH, 15). The mystery of the historical is something to be grasped.

Not only did Christianity give the world the idea of freedom, but its eschatology provided a *dynamic* view of world history against the static conception of reality. With

¹² Throughout his work, Berdyaev notes this holds true as well for Indian philosophy and religion.

this freedom was the dynamic expansion within a linear conception of time which would give the world the idea of history.

The Christian world...discovered expanses and passed beyond the cupola of heaven; and its urge towards the outer spaces gave rise to that dynamism and drama of history which drew into their vortex even those people and nations which, though now estranged from the Christian consciousness, have yet remained Christian and historical in their destiny. (*MH*, 36)

The historical view of the world allows reality to be interpreted dynamically or progressively. He says that to, “interpret the world as history, is to take a dynamic view of it, and this view understands the emergence of what is new” (*BE*, 115). It is only from an historical (linear) view of the world that meaning can come to light. “It is not in the cycle of cosmic life that meaning can be revealed, but in movement within time, in the realization of the messianic hope. The sources of the philosophy of history are not to be found in Greek philosophy but in the Bible” (*BE*, 115). The coming of Christ is the “meta-historical event par excellence.”

It took place in existential time, but it broke through into the historical, and here it is received with all the limitations which history imposes, those which belong to particular periods of history and those which are due to the limitations of human nature. But meta-history is always there as the background behind history, and the existential design throws light upon the objectified order. (*BE*, 167)

Eschatology is not objective and historical, but is essentially inner working outward to transform reality.

The Return to Jacob Boehme

Central to the development of Christianity and to eschatological philosophy of Berdyaev is the teaching of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624).¹³ Berdyaev notes that Boehme had significant impact on German thought and was chiefly responsible for the German philosophical tradition. Boehme was not a philosopher but a cobbler by trade and more

¹³ Boehme (1575-1624), sometimes spelled Böhme or Behmen. See also Berdyaev, *MH*, 54f.

of prophetic figure.¹⁴ The “German idea” originated in Boehme and he influenced the German philosophical tradition ever since (Berdyaev 1930:15).¹⁵ Mysticism played a significant role in the German theological tradition but it is also true of its influence in both German Idealism and Existentialism. From Kant onward, Boehme’s ideas on rationality and the nature of being influenced German thought. Hegel had recognized German philosophy’s indebtedness to Boehme. Franz Von Baader had reintroduced Boehme to philosophy at the beginning of the nineteenth century and his contemporaries Hegel and Schelling were both influenced by Boehme’s ideas (Benz 1983:13).

Berdyaev notes that “German philosophy as a whole was inoculated with German mysticism....” The contribution of German mysticism was that it “revealed the divine depth in the primary foundation of the soul and thereby transferred the centre of gravity to the subject (Eckhardt and Tauler)” (*BE*, 17). Mysticism introduced the idea of “newness” to the history of spirit. Eckhardt was in line with the Neoplatonic tradition, but in Boehme “a new feeling for the world becomes evident.” His influence did not have its full effect in German philosophy until the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth (*BE*, 18).

Without Boehme’s intuitions of genius, the rationalism of antiquity and Scholastic philosophy, and also the rationalism of modern philosophy, of Descartes and Spinoza, count [*sic*, could?] not be surmounted. Only a mythologic consciousness could have seen an irrational principle within being, wherein the philosophic consciousness had always seen but a rational principle. Boehme returns

¹⁴ N. A. Berdyaev, “Studies Concerning Jacob Boehme: Etude I. The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom” (*Journal Put*’, Feb.1930, No 20, p.47-79). Printed pages 1-24.

¹⁵ Berdyaev calls Boehme the theosophist the “greatest of Christian Gnostics.” He differed from the German mystics in that he did not write “about his own soul...[but] what transpired with God, with the world and with man.” His teachings were not informed from philosophy but by “primal intuitions.” Berdyaev notes that his gnosis was from experience and life, an “intuition of fire...akin to Herakleitos.” Boehme claimed that his philosophy derived from “this whole nature with innate birth” and that he received “nothing from or through man.” It was in the “Spirit of God” that his “inborn spirit” stood (Berdyaev 1930: 2).

metaphysics back to the sources of the mythological consciousness of mankind. But his mythological consciousness itself is nourished by the wellsprings of the Biblical Revelation. From Boehme comes the dynamism of German philosophy, and it might even be said, the dynamism of all the thought of the XIX Century. Boehme was the first to have conceived of the world, of life as a passionate struggle, as movement, process, an eternal genesis. Only amidst such an intuition of world life could there become possible the phenomenon of Faust, could there become possible Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche, already so remotely sundered from the religious ponderings of Boehme. (Berdyaev 1930:15-16)¹⁶

Bohme's metaphysics was "a musical Christian metaphysics and in this it is in character of the German spirit" (Berdyaev 1930:16).

Berdyaev sees Boehme as a genuinely Christian thinker who began a new era in Christian thought. Christianity had not yet been freed from the "power of the objectified world over man" (*BE*, 12). Medieval philosophy, which was not essentially Christian, had been under the grip of Greek and Latin (Scholastic). Due to Aristotelian categories of thought, scholastic metaphysics was essentially naturalistic.

The view usually adopted is that medieval philosophy was Christian, whereas the philosophy of modern times is non-Christian or even anti-Christian. But in actual fact it is rather the reverse of this which is true. Medieval scholastic philosophy was fundamentally Greek; it did not pass beyond the bounds of ancient thought; it was a philosophy of the object, that is to say it was cosmocentric. (*BE*, 12)

Boehme first began the process of breaking the grip of thought on Christian consciousness. He marks the turn from cosmocentricism to anthropocentrism. But Boehme also marks the departure of German thinking from Latin thought on the subject of reason. This was the fundamental difference between German and Latin metaphysics. In Latin thought reason is illumine the world. Reason is located in man and nature. Latin

¹⁶ In *The Meaning of History* he notes that the Gnostics had a mythology which explained the divine mysteries as historical destiny. "Such a mythology makes possible the apprehension of the essence of celestial history, of the stages, the aeons or ages of the divine life. The very conception of the divine aeons is bound up with concrete destiny and is essentially illusive and inapprehensible to any abstract philosophical system. Only a mythology, which conceives the divine celestial life as celestial history and as a drama of love and freedom unfolding itself between God and His other self, ...can provide a solution of celestial history and through it, of the destinies of both man and the world" (*MH*, 52).

metaphysics saw rationality as flowing from being. However, since Boehme, German metaphysics being as founded on irrationality, “stands affront the irrational darkness and has to bring light into it” (*BE*, 111).

Central to Berdyaev’s eschatological views was Boehme’s doctrine of the *Ungrund*. He argued that the foundation of reality was located in the irrational, the *Ungrund* or Abyss (*BE*, 18). The *Ungrund* “is nothingness, the groundless eye of eternity; and at the same time it is will, not grounded upon anything, bottomless, indeterminate will” (*BE*, 105). This idea originated from the medieval distinction set forth by Duns Scotus between *apophatic* (*via negativa*) and *kataphatic* (*via affirmativa*) theology. Kataphatic theology states that God is knowable and can be seen in nature. “The God of kataphatic theology is a God who reveals himself in objectification” (*BE*, 100). Apophatic theology, however, is about what is primary. Apophatic theology says there is something “deeper down” than being; there is nothingness and darkness (darkness is not equivalent to evil). Kataphatic theology is about some *thing* and is secondary (*BE*, 106-107). Boehme recognized that what is more primary to being is nothingness or non-being, and that Nature and history emanate from it (*BE*, 100-101).

Another significant aspect of Boehme’s theology which is important in Berdyaev’s eschatology is the idea of the Trinity (*MH*, 50). Behind the God of kataphatic theology lies the Absolute God as seen in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. “The *Ungrund* is indeed the Godhead of apophatic theology and at the same time, the abyss, the free nothingness which precedes God and is outside God” (*BE*, 106). Out of the *Ungrund* God “gives birth to himself, realizes himself out of the Divine Nothingness” (*BE*, 107).

Two other important concepts associated with the Ungrund which are foundational to Berdyaev's eschatological philosophy are Boehme's teaching on freedom and will. Berdyaev notes that Boehme "was the first in the history of human thought to locate freedom in the primary foundation of being, at a greater and more original depth than any being, deeper and more primary than God himself" (*BE*, 108). For Boehme, freedom was a "cosmological mystery." Freedom is like nothingness. It emanates from nothingness. It has no substantial essence (Berdyaev 1930:8). At the basis of being is "groundless freedom." It is the "passionate desire of nothing to become something" (*BE*, 107). Freedom for Boehme is not the grounding of moral responsibility or the regulation of the relationship between man, but an "explanation of the genesis of being and together with this the genesis of evil, as a problem ontological and cosmological" (Berdyaev 1930:11). Freedom is also identified with and inseparable from Will. They stand together at the Ungrund as the beginning of everything and are inseparable. The Ungrund is the "bottomless, indeterminate will" (*BE*, 107). The groundless Will must be satisfied which is the "hunger of freedom."

Boehme is the founder of metaphysical voluntarism and was the first to make that move for philosophy. It was Kant, however, who would later develop it (*BE*, 107). Hegel, unlike Kant, understood that German philosophy is indebted to Boehme (*BE*, 18). The problem in later German philosophy, however, was that it tried to rationalize Boehme's vision of the Ungrund and moved from Boehme's primordial freedom to nature (*BE*, 111).

The Christian contribution to philosophy is best seen in the history of German thought, according to Berdyaev. He believed that German philosophical thought is

essentially a Christian philosophy of the *subject* (*BE*, 12). Yet, it had taken Christian thought sometime to be free from the objective world. This was not seen until the modern world. The beginning of a change was through the work of Kant.

The Kantian Revolution

Next to Boehme, Berdyaev identifies Kant as the philosopher who brought a revolutionary turning point in German philosophy with his philosophy of the ego (*BE*, 5).¹⁷ In his 1794 essay “The End of All Things” (*Das Ende aller Dinge*) Kant asked, “Why is it that human beings expect an *end of the world in the first place*? And even if one grants them this possibility, why do they expect the end to come with terror (for the greater portion of humankind)?”¹⁸ The previous year he argued for a teleologically oriented morality in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793). There he noted that without an eschatological belief creation would be pointless and meaningless. Kant saw the moral value of the Kingdom of God but had difficulties with the idea of a catastrophic end of the world. The imminent end, the Antichrist and apocalypse have a functional purpose. Kant said,

The appearance of the antichrist, *the* millennium, and the news of the proximity of the end of the world—all these can take on, before reason, their right symbolic meaning; and to represent the last of these as an event not to be seen in advance (like the end of life, be it near or far) admirably expresses the necessity of standing ready at all times for the end and indeed (if one attaches the intellectual meaning to this symbol) really to consider ourselves always as chosen citizens of a divine (ethical) state.¹⁹

¹⁷ Berdyaev holds that next to Plato, Kant is the “greatest and most original philosopher in the history of human thought” (*BE*, 5).

¹⁸ As quoted Körtner 1995:36.

¹⁹ As quoted by Körtner 1995:37-38.

Kant had retained the notion of the “end of the world” for its “symbolical representation.”

Connecting biblical eschatology with history, Kant says,

This sketch of a history of after-ages, which themselves are not yet history, presents a beautiful ideal of the moral world-epoch, brought about by the introduction of true universal religion and faith *foreseen* even to its culmination—which we cannot *conceive* as a culmination in experiences, but can merely *anticipate*, i.e. prepare for, in continual progress and approximation toward the highest good possible on earth (and in all of this there is nothing mystical, but everything moves quite naturally in a moral fashion).²⁰

With Kant came the complete shift to an anthropocentric philosophy and “a Christian way of philosophical thinking” according to Berdyaev (*BE*, 11). He argues that the interpreters of Kant were mistaken in thinking he put an end to metaphysics (*BE*, 8). “It is an absolute mistake,” he contends, “to interpret Kant’s philosophy as ‘subjectivism’ and psychologism or to confuse this theory of knowledge with the physiology of the organs of sense” (*BE*, 10). Those who see Kant as “false subjectivism” are themselves under the influence of a “false objectivism” (*BE*, 10). Kant’s followers missed what could be derived from Kant by rejecting his dualism and following monism. He points to a number of examples of those who misunderstood Kant. Schopenhauer arrived at monism through his metaphysical principle of the will with the result that he put an end to personality and individuality (*BE*, 30). With Feuerbach, the individual disappears in economically controlled matter leading to a religion of race over personality; and with Marx likewise followed the same course ending in “anti-humanism” (*BE*, 31-32). Kant was a metaphysician and should be interpreted as such, Berdyaev argues. He laid the “foundation stone of true metaphysics” and put an end to naturalistic-rationalistic metaphysics derived from the object (*BE*, 28). Kant saw beyond the “naïve self-confidence” of reason seeing through the confusion of thinking and being. Kant had a

²⁰ As quoted by Körtner 1995:37. See Kant, *Religion*, Book III, Division 2.

positive view of the Enlightenment but notes that it is not the same thing as rationalism. The true Enlightenment as shown by Kant revealed the impossibility of using reason alone (*BE*, 12).

He overcomes the power of the object over the subject by bringing to light the fact that the object is the offspring of the subject. Kant's great discovery which makes a sharp cut in the whole history of human thought and divides it into two parts, consists in this, that what refers merely to appearances and phenomena must not be transferred to what is noumenal, to things-in-themselves. (*BE*, 9)

While Kant's great contribution was his doctrine of transcendental illusion, the problem with Kant was he "denied intuition in metaphysical apprehension" (*BE*, 13). Contemplation requires an object, but the thing-in-itself is not present to the mind. He recognized intuition of the noumenal world but allowed for pseudo-metaphysical knowledge; he "submits it to doubt and exposes its illusions" (*BE*, 13). Kant would not allow for another sort of knowledge.

He does not explain why knowledge of the world of appearances is true scientific knowledge while at the same time it has nothing to do with true reality. It is not only the transcendental dialectic of reason which gives rise to illusions. The scientifically knowable phenomenal world also is itself an illusory world as the philosophy of the Upanishad recognizes. The upshot is that the truly real world (things-in-themselves) is unknowable whereas the unreal world (appearances) can be known. (*BE*, 14)

Another problem with Kant's philosophy was that he had misused the words "object" and "objectivity." He equated objectivity with reality and truth, with "general-validity" (*BE*, 16). However, Kant failed to see the paradox that objective is subjective and vice versa. The result was that he ended up rejecting spiritual experience as the grounds for metaphysics and reduced it to ethics. He would not "acknowledge outright that non-conceptual, spiritual, existential apprehension of a noumenon is a possibility" (*BE*, 14). Kant may have been inconsistent, according to Berdyaev, but was closer to

being freed from objectification than Fichte, Schelling and Hegel (*BE*, 26). He prepared the way for existentialism by providing a metaphysics of freedom basing it on the subject (*BE*, 9). Metaphysical reality is located only in the individual (*BE*, 23). Kant made existential metaphysics a possibility making freedom the primary principle; “the order of freedom is indeed *Existenz*” (*BE*, 9). His metaphysics, according to Berdyaev’s “deeper spiritual interpretation of it,” had built within its own chiasm. When one says life has a meaning, he is affirming chiasm (*BE*, 252).

The centrality of personality had been prepared throughout the history of philosophy through Plato, Christianity, and Boehme, but it was Kant who prepared the way for existentialism. The philosophy of those after Kant, however, became anti-personalist. Fichte, Hegel, Feuerbach, Max Steiner, Karl Marx and Nietzsche were not able to “rescue the value of personality” (*BE*, 33). They essentially committed the “heresy of monophysitism” according to Berdyaev,²¹

It was the engulfment of man, of the personal human features, by the world-ego, by the self-revealing world-spirit, by the human race, by the Unique One, by the social collective, or by the superman and his will to power. It was this system of thought which prepared the way for and made possible existential and personalist philosophy. But it could not itself effect a transition to it. It was in a different dialectical movement. The service it rendered was that it came near to the problem of the end and touched upon eschatology. (*BE*, 33)

The Problem in the Metaphysics of German Idealism

Berdyaev states that the crucial turning point in the history of modern German philosophy regarding eschatology began with Hegel. In describing the contribution of Hegel, he notes that Hegel was the first philosopher to interpret the world as in the process of becoming. The world is not a static system but is dynamic (*BE*, 161). His significant contribution was his emphasis on the idea of non-being out of which

²¹ I.e., the doctrine that Christ possessed only a divine nature.

becoming emerges and, along with it, the idea that Being is irrational (*BE*, 18). “If we concede being only,” Berdyaev reiterates, “there will be no becoming or development of any sort. Newness in the process of becoming emerges from the heart of non-being.” (*BE*, 161). There is a “progressive ‘furbishing’” in the world as a whole which Hegel believed was a direct operation of God (*BE*, 144). Berdyaev shows that Hegel’s idea of progressive development originated from the writings of Jacob Boehme who was first to use the term *Auswicklung* to express “the development, and emergence into view of that which reveals itself anew” (*BE*, 161). It is from Boehme where the idea of progress arises. Progress is a spiritual category which presupposes freedom. “[I]t presupposes appraisal from the point of view of a principle which ranks higher than the natural process of change” (*BE*, 164).

Hegel, however, set German philosophy on a course which only increased the problem of objectification. According to Berdyaev, in Hegel’s philosophy there is no consciousness of the tragedy between the *personal* and *universal* (*BE*, 213). “This is a mistaken interpretation of objectification as a disclosure of noumena in phenomena, as a realization of spirit in history. Subjective spirit becomes objective spirit and behind it absolute spirit stands and acts” (*BE*, 145). Spirit and Personality were suppressed by the objectification of nature and history. Hegel, therefore, showed himself still under the sway of determinism, objectivism and monism (*BE*, 135).

There is no such thing as objective spirit. There is merely the objectification of spirit, and that is a distortion; it is estrangement from itself and it is an adaptation to the world as we have it. Spirit, which is freedom, is objectified in the historical process, in culture, but it is not revealed, it does not come to light in its existentiality. (*BE*, 27)

Hegel and those after him were right in seeing that history must come to an end, but they were wrong about how the end is obtained; they thought of it wrongly in an *immanentist* manner. “What was fundamentally wrong about those idealist systems of metaphysics was their monism, which is an impossible thing within the limits of a fallen world, their mistaken, anti-personalist conception of freedom” (*BE*, 25-26). Man was the self-consciousness of God, but in the end, the person is degraded by denying all independence to human nature. The result was the eschatological element was lost and progress was viewed as immanent within historical time within a monistic world.

For Hegel, freedom was born out of teleological necessity. Hegel’s teleological progress, however, became naturalized and secularized during the nineteenth century resulting in an evolutionary monism (*BE*, 164). Nineteenth century evolutionary theory allowed for the possibility of what was new and pushed toward perfection. Berdyaev, however, rejects the foundation of the progressive evolutionary optimism in Idealism.

Hegel’s error was seeing the world teleologically. Berdyaev acknowledges that in the world there is a “partial teleology,” but it should not be taken as a universal principle. “The idea of teleology was due to a mistaken confusion of the ethical with the ontological, of obligation with being” (*BE*, 146). Such a world of necessity runs counter to freedom of spirit. “There is in it no immanent progressive revelation of spirit; no regular development which must lead on to the highest goal. Hopes of that kind cannot be made to rest upon processes of objectification, upon the ejection of man into the objective world” (*BE*, 147). There is no necessary evolutionary progression. There is no “law” of progress or “necessity” for it. Naturalism cannot offer any notion of progress. In the material world there is only a “shifting and redistribution of the parts of the world,

of the matter of the world, which fashion new forms out of the old material” (*BE*, 160). Evolutionary progress based on nature is never *creative*.²² In the end, the biological world only leads to regress. The idea of destiny derives from the spiritual nature which resides within man, in the realm of spirit (*BE*, 211). “Progress is a task, not a law, and the idea of progress inevitably finds its support in a messianic and eschatological expectation, but it is an expectation which requires the creative activity of man” (*BE*, 165-166).

The idea of teleological progress based on objectification is an illusion. In the objectified world progress uses the present as a means to serve the future. Its advancement is always at the cost of another. “One generation is a means which serves the interests of the next, progress carries with it not only life but death also. In the natural and historical world birth is pregnant with death” (*BE*, 164). The conflict between spirit and natural necessity is the result of fallenness. It is “a striving of personality with the objective world, a conflict which God in man wages with the 'world', which in its fallen state has lost its freedom.” What constitutes any real progress in the world are the results “not of a regularly-working and necessary process, but of creative acts, of the invasion of the realm of necessity by the realm of freedom” (*BE*, 147). Materialism is never a philosophy of emancipation. “There is, for instance, no more horrifying

²² Berdyaev says, “The doctrine of evolution is entirely under the control of determinism and causal relations. In evolution, as the naturalistic theory of evolution understands it, newness cannot make its appearance in any real sense, for there is no creative act, which always ascends towards freedom, and breaks the causal link. It is only the consequences of creative acts which are accessible to the theory of evolution, it seeks no knowledge of the active subject in development” (*BE*, 160).

misunderstanding than to regard materialism as a philosophy of emancipation and the spiritual view of life as a philosophy which enslaves” (*BE*, 220).²³

What is true in the realm of nature is also true as in the idea of progressive development rooted in history. Hegel and the German Idealists were optimistic about history but they failed to see that history does not provide any reason for optimism. History is the result of objectification. It is not a “progressive triumph of reason,” but on the contrary, history ends tragically. History “takes no account of man” but uses “man as material for the creation of an inhuman structure and it has its own inhuman and anti-human code of morals” (*BE*, 208).

History consists moreover in the bitter strife of men, classes, nations and States, of religious faith and of ideas. Hatred is its controlling power and its most dynamic moments are associated with hatred at its keenest. Men carry on this senseless strife in the name of historical aims, but it inflicts grievous wounds upon human personality and is the cause of measureless suffering among men. In fact, history has become something like a crime. (*BE*, 208)

What is significant is not the idea of progress but pessimism (*BE*, 249). In objectified time there is neither beginning nor end, only an “endless middle” (*BE*, 207). There is no progressive development toward freedom, no straight line of development. There is nothing within history to suggest that the world is getting progressively better and that it will culminate in a grand existence (*BE*, 249).²⁴ There can be no totalizing progress. Progress is only relative to parts or groups of phenomena, never in relation to a whole.

²³ Berdyaev argues there is a “double process” which occurs in human experience: “A double process is going on; the world is becoming more and more dehumanized, man is ceasing to be aware of his central position in the world structure, and at the same time he is expending colossal creative energies to humanize the earth and the world, and to subject it to himself. The contradiction between these two processes is not capable of resolution within the confines of this world. It is man as noumenon who alone is the centre of the world, man as phenomenon is an insignificant speck of dust in it (*BE*, 249).

²⁴ “Evolutionism (albeit of the spiritual and not the naturalistic type) is just as mistaken as monism” (*BE*, 26).

Progress in one respect may be accompanied by regress in another. There may be intellectual progress and moral regress, technical progress and regress in general culture; there may be progress in culture and social regress, and so forth. (*BE*, 165-166)

Berdyayev references the book of Daniel to support his claim that in the objective world of history there is only a tragic end: “The first philosophy of history—the Book of Daniel, speaks of this, and there the fate of kingdoms is foreseen. Almighty and majestic kingdoms for the sake of establishing which the sacrifice of numberless men has been made are doomed to perish, and have perished” (*BE*, 207-208). What has been learned from history itself is not that the world is getting better, but the very opposite. “This world is tortured by rancorous hatred and cruel animosity. Human history presents a hideous spectacle of pitiless wars among people, nations and classes. A state of peace among men exists for a mere brief moment, as a breathing space, even the *pax Romano* did not last long” (*BE*, 147).

The result of Hegel’s idealism was a conflict between personality and history; it produced a loss of personality and freedom. Hegel did not understand the conflict between personality and history as seen in his optimistic view of history (*BE*, 26). The conflict between human personality and history cannot be resolved within history. There is an “insurmountable antithesis” between existential time and historical time. Man as an historical being only recognizes the fullness of his existence in history. Dostoyevsky noted this in the character of Ivan Karamazov showing that no historical solution is found for the existential problem (*BE*, 147). The only possible way of thinking about a world harmony and a world order is by making it part of eschatology, by regarding it as the

coming of the Kingdom of God, which is not a 'world', not an objective order" (*BE*, 147).²⁵

Berdyayev addresses the developments within nineteenth century social thought which was the result of an immanent progressive teleology. Nineteenth century social thought arose in the context of the "extreme objectification of human existence." What resulted was a conflict between "collective realities" and personality. Collective realities in their varying degrees are the outcome of objectification. Teleology, either as immanent in the world or transcending the world, was "put to very bad use." By it "many things have been justified which ought not to have received justification" (*BE*, 145).

Society can only be understood in two ways: either nature or spirit. The one is submissive to the law of the world, the latter submissive to the law of God.

As nature, society is under the power of necessity; its motive power is the struggle for predominance and mastery; natural selection of the strong holds good in it; it is built up on the principles of authority and compulsion, and relations which occur within it are settled as object relations. As spirit, on the other hand, society finds its motive power in the quest for freedom; it rests upon the principle of personality and upon relations which are subject relations. Its controlling motive is the desire that love and mercy should be the basis upon which the fabric of society rests. (*BE*, 218)

Universals do not originate in the rational but in the personal, the existential. Only those political forms which provide the greatest amount of true freedom should be recognized. Collective realities may be considered individual realities or entities, but cannot be considered personalities (*BE*, 129). Collective realities are the "projection into

²⁵ In *The Meaning of History* he discusses the idea of "celestial history" from which the "depths of the inner life of the spirit, resides that predetermination which reveals and manifests itself in the terrestrial life, destiny and history of mankind." Goethe's *Faust* is the example of a "heavenly prologue" predetermining the "terrestrial destiny of mankind." Berdyayev says, "The philosophy of history ought to be the metaphysics of history; it has its origins in the heavenly prologue which predetermines historical destinies and in the revelation of the inner spiritual history; for heaven is our inner spiritual heaven" (*MH*, 40).

the external of states of consciousness and the arranging of them in hierarchical order.” Collective realities built on the natural organism model are hostile to the individual. The organic theory of society is hostile to the individual.²⁶ Capitalism, Socialism and Marxism are all based on organic models.²⁷ Industrial capitalism is essentially atheistic and is built on the natural state. It proved to be a destroyer of the spirit and is the cause of social inequalities. It is “anti-ontological, mechanistic and fictitious” and is “sowing the seeds of its own destruction by sapping the spiritual foundations of man’s economic life” (*MH*, 219). Its penalty is Socialism. Socialism is a development out of Capitalism and is guided by the will to universal power and organization (*MH*, 220).²⁸ Marxism is also based on economic naturalism. Like Hegel, Marx continued teleological monism, however, with him was a turn from the primacy of *thought over being* to *being over thought* (*BE*, 31-32). Marx, who “naively considered himself a materialist,” objectified the proletariat.²⁹ In the end, his humanistic philosophy becomes anti-humanism, anti-personalist (*BE*, 32). No collective realities can be eschatological.

Berdyayev holds that there are no such things as nations, states and societies “existing as collective common realities which stand on a higher level than personality and turn it into a part of themselves” (*BE*, 129). All totalitarian objectifications are an

²⁶ He notes that Nicolai Mikhailovsky, “exposed the character of the organic theory of society, Darwinism in sociology, and so on, as reactionary and injurious to human personality” (*MH*, 219, Note 1). See Mikhailovsky, “The Struggle for Individuality.”

²⁷ On his criticism of the Soviet regime and capitalism, see Owens, “Metacommunism,” 435-436.

²⁸ “The crime of killing God must be laid at its door rather than at that of revolutionary Socialism, which merely adapted itself to the civilized ‘bourgeois’ spirit and accepted its negative heritage. [It] did not altogether repudiate religion: it was prepared to admit its pragmatic utility and necessity.... The popularity of pragmatism in America, the classical land of civilization, need cause no surprise” (Berdyayev, *MH*, 218, 219; also *BE*, 219).

²⁹ “The labouring class exists as an empirical reality within capitalist societies and Marx said a great deal that is true about its position. But it certainly does not exist as a reality that can be apprehended by the mind; in the Marxist sense it does not exist as a universal” (*BE*, 128).

“enslaving lie.” Totalizing collective realities are likened to ancient idolatry. It is an “idolatrous attitude” which allows the state to become the highest value.³⁰

The natural world, society, the State, the nation and the rest are partial, and their claim to totality is an enslaving lie, which is born of the idolatry of men. Collective substances (aggregates) are not real. The fact is that the soul within its own thought imparts a unity to them. The soul of man consolidates realities which bring it into subjection to necessity and into a state of servitude. (*BE*, 136)

When the nation or state became an “objective” reality, it became more real than the person. “The nation and the State do, of course, represent a certain degree of reality in world life, but their overwhelming grandiose and compelling 'objectivity' is created by the 'subjective' state of society, by the beliefs of the people, by the objectification of a state of mind” (*BE*, 127).

The State was a necessary development but one that is evil. Drawing from the eschatological works of Daniel and Revelation, Berdyaev says, “And the image of the State will be shown in the final end to be the image of the beast which issues out of the abyss” (*BE*, 221). It seeks to create the perfect utopian society, but it cannot obtain the perfection it desires. Government institutions, be they secular or religious governments are sociological myths which have been perpetuated to maintain order. “This investing with a sacrosanct character is a social act on the part of the collective and is brought about in the name of the collective” (*BE*, 149). What must be denied to collective realities is to attribute “sacred character to the relative.” “There is nothing that is sacred in politics, and much that is criminal” (*BE*, 150). Any form of authority is relative, and when governments are deprived of their alleged sacred character, only then is humankind in the process of being free. “The proclamation of pure truth, the overthrow of the

³⁰ Noting the sociologists like Durkheim he states, “In exactly the same way one might assert the absolute supremacy and dominance of the world as a whole, the cosmos, over man and his interior life, and thus fall into an idolatrous attitude to the cosmos” (*BE*, 127).

conventional social life does not mean a denial of what is relative, but to remove from it its halo of sanctity, that is to say, it means putting a stop to the process of making the relative absolute” (*BE*, 150). Personality, truth, and right must exist over the State (*BE*, 217).

The separate man is a cosmic and social being to start with; he is already a whole world. Human personality is not to be thought of in the abstract and in isolation. It is a cosmic and social being, not because it is determined by nature and society in the sense of having a cosmic and social content bestowed upon it from outside, but because man bears within him the image of God and is summoned to the Kingdom of God. (*BE*, 136)

Technology also has eschatological significance for Berdyaev. Coupled with the rise of the totalitarian state is the rise of the machine and technological knowledge is the “most revolutionary and cataclysmic event in the history of the world” (*BE*, 222). In technology there is a predictive apocalyptic element according to Berdyaev. Alluding to the prophecy of Daniel (12:4) he says, “With it goes a dizzying increase of speed, a frenzied acceleration of every kind of process. Man has no time for recollection or for looking inwards into his own depth. An acute process of de-humanization takes place and it is precisely from the growth of human might that it takes its rise” (*BE*, 224). He states that the technical machine, “raises the eschatological question, and leads up to the breaking of the seals of history”; an allusion to the “seven seals” from the Book of Revelation (*BE*, 225).

Technology produces greater objectification in the social life and also “inflicts injury” on human lives. It disrupts the soul from its natural order, enslaves the spirit, and power reduces man to a thing. Dominating technological societies assert their will to power. The condemnation lies in this: their instruments of destruction are greater than their power to construct.

In summary German metaphysical idealism resulted in a number of errors. First, as an unintended consequence, it resulted in the loss of personality. “The most astonishing thing is the fate of German metaphysics in regard to this question. It began as a philosophy of the ego, of the subject, and arrived at the denial of the individual ego....” (*BE*, 134). It had “sacrificed the soul in the interests of absolute spirit.” The idea of absolute spirit devours the personal spirit. It began with declaring the autonomy of human reason but subjected the personal spirit to “collective communities and objectified universals” (*BE*, 135). It failed to recognize that within the limits of a fallen world it would only lead to an anti-personalist conception of freedom (*BE*, 25-26). Secondly, it was not eschatological, but teleological. Within German metaphysics there was the idea of an eschatological end, but it was overcome by its immanentist teleology (*BE*, 24). In its view of the final consummation it is arrived at “in an immanentist manner, within the confines of this world in which spirit is decisively revealed by way of dialectical development” (*BE*, 25-26). Third, the fundamental problem with idealist systems of metaphysics was monism. In its contemplation of the teleological end its monism crushed in individual spirit. This is clearly seen in Fichte’s individual ego which becomes merely a part of the great whole. “Personality disappears in the contemplation of the end” (*BE*, 134). Finally, the problem of German Idealism was that it fell to objectification. Because of the influence of Christianity, however, it would lead eventually to eschatology. The turn from object to subject was the result of Christianity’s influence and emancipation from medieval cosmocentrism (*BE*, 12).

Berdyaev's Existential Eschatology

Eschatology for Berdyaev is centered in the person. Only in the existential subject is the answer to the problem of objectification found. Out of the depths of the person comes the realization of the possibility of other worlds and the sense of destiny (*BE*, 42). The existential subject exists only in the “qualitative character of personality” and the *universal* is found only in the individual person. Personality is a spiritual and ethical category and cannot be identified with matter or nature. Personality is not phenomenon, but noumenon and is “created spiritually and gives actual effect to the divine idea of man” (*BE*, 136).

[Personality] is outside the world, it is spiritual and it invades the natural and social order with a claim to be its own end and the supreme value, with a claim to be a whole and not a part. Human personality is a break with the world order. It is an integral form, it is not constituted from parts, and it has mutual relations with other forms, social and physical. But man is spiritual personality, whereas other forms may not be personalities. Totality, wholeness, the supremacy of the whole over the parts—such ideas have reference to personality only. (*BE*, 136)

In the depth of the ego lay infinity and eternity (*BE*, 42). The existential subject stands in between nothingness and infinity. Berdyaev says,

Attempts have been made to stabilize being and strengthen its position between nothingness and infinity, between the lower abyss and the higher, but this has been merely an adjustment of reason and consciousness to the social conditions of existence in the objectified world. But infinity breaks through from below and from above, acts upon man, and overthrows stabilized being and established consciousness. It gives rise to the tragic feeling of life and to the eschatological outlook. (*BE*, 99)

The sense of the eternal arises out of existential time (*BE*, 207). The existential subject is “surrounded by cosmic infinity” (*BE*, 250). “Existential eternity” is the realm of a different kind of knowledge where the regular categories of human thought do not apply. This includes history. Neither the future nor past should be idolized as divine. It is

eternity which is to be esteemed. He argues that eternity is not completeness nor the consummation. Rather eternity is “eternal newness, eternal creative ecstasy, the dissolving of being, in divine freedom” (*BE*, 170).

Personality is a paradox within the objectified world. The fundamental theme of personalist philosophy is the conflict with the objectified world. Here there is a battle against “false objectified universals, false collective realities” which must be overthrown. Personality seeks harmony with the world but is never successful. Berdyaev refers to Dostoyevsky as one who has clearly illuminated this problem. There is a conflict between personality and “world harmony” (*BE*, 148).³¹ The Russian theme finds no historical solution for the existential problem. This is why there must be an eschatological end to history. “The world and world harmony must be brought to an end for the very reason that the theme of personality is insoluble within the confines of the world and history, and because the world harmony in this aeon of the world is a mockery of the tragic fate of man” (*BE*, 136).

As the person engages with the objectified world, he must “wage senseless and devastating wars” to maintain his place; in this is a continual apocalyptic element in human existence. However, there must be a projection of the hope for a positive outcome of history, otherwise history has no meaning. History is to be “absorbed into eternity” and “Eternity embraces time” (*BE*, 252). Only an eschatological answer can save humankind (*BE*, 250). This comes about through an “interior movement.” In this way, the “mysteries of the spirit” are accomplished (*BE*, 252).

³¹ “The phrase 'world harmony' is quite certainly not applicable to this world; it is a false idea which acts as a palliative to evil and is at variance with truth and right” (*BE*, 148).

Berdyayev recognizes that bringing together the two types of eschatology, individual and cosmic, is a very difficult task. “On the one hand, the individual decision upon personal destiny after the death of a man is maintained. On the other hand, the decision upon the destiny of the whole world and mankind is expected at the end of time, when history comes to a conclusion. Between these two prospects there is a period of time which is empty” (*BE*, 235). The problem of the “paradox of time” can be resolved on the basis that man is a *microcosm*. World history is fulfilled not in the macrocosm, but in the microcosm. In the person is located the special relation between the historical and the metaphysical (*MH*, 26).³² Within the microcosm individual eschatology is bridged to historical eschatology. “The fate of the world and of all humanity is my fate also, and, vice versa, their fate cannot be decided without me. My failure, or the failure of any creature whatever will be world failure too, it will be the failure of humanity as a whole” (*BE*, 235).

The human is a creative being but her creativity is not merely the product of ego, for ego itself is the result of a synthesizing creative act. As a creative being, “man is *microtheos*” (*BE*, 129).

Man is a being who masters and surmounts himself and overcomes the world; it is in that that his value and dignity consist. But this securing of the mastery is creative power. The mystery of creativeness is the mystery of achieving the mastery over given reality, over the determinism of the world, over the locking of its closed circle. In this sense creative activity is an act of transcending; in a deeper sense it is the victory over non-being. (*BE*, 172-173)

³² “Each man represents by virtue of his inner nature a sort of microcosm in which the whole world of reality and all the great historical epochs combine and coexist. He is not merely a minute fragment of the universe, but rather a world in his own right, a world revealed or hidden according as consciousness is more or less penetrating and extensive. In this development of self-consciousness the whole history of the world is apprehended, together with all the great epochs....” (*MH*, 22-23).

Personality is spirit and freedom, and the “secret of personality” is revealed only in the creative life of the Spirit when viewed in totality (*BE*, 133).³³ Only the individual person possesses *spiritual* personality. Personality “realizes itself in both cosmic and social relations” (*BE*, 129). World history works itself out from the depth of man’s microcosmic nature through a process of exteriorization. This nature is “projected into the external, its qualities are hypostatized, and realities are objectified which have no existential centre” (*BE*, 129). As an individual one may be considered as part of the race and of society, but personality is not a part of any whole in any sense. Other entities can be seen as individuals and perhaps possess “personality” in some sense. Society consists of personalities, but it possesses properties beyond personality because of objectification.

The Age of the Spirit and Creative Newness

The eschatological hope is for the end of the world, the end of objectification, and the realization of the age of the Spirit. Echoing the eschatology of Joachim, he states that the eschatological is realized only with the coming of the age of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit.³⁴ “There exists a socially useful lie about God and the only thing that can withstand it is a purified spiritual religion. It is only the crowning revelation of the Holy Spirit and the era of the Paraclete that will lead to this” (*BE*, 150-151). In the “epoch of the Paraclete” objective categories will not apply (*BE*, 251).

³³ Though Plato had addressed the nature of the soul, and distinguished between the noumenal and phenomenal, the secret of personality was not revealed. Medieval Scholastic philosophy under Plato’s influence had a problem with individuality. “The individualization of matter in reality indicated the denial of the individual” (*BE*, 134).

³⁴ The concept of the Spirit is foundational in Berdyaev’s eschatology. The eschatological is the breaking in of Spirit (*BE*, 156). The use of “Spirit” originates from the New Testament but it is more specifically the eschatological understanding from Joachim of Fiore and is carried on by Boehme. Contrary to Idealism, Spirit is never an object (*BE*, 95-96). Spirit is not being but is primary to being. Spirit is “the existent, that which exists and possesses true existence, and it is not subject to determination by any being at all. Spirit is not a principle, but personality, in other words the highest form of existence” (*BE*, 102).

Spirit is understood not as substance, nor as another nature comparable with material nature. Spirit is freedom, not nature: spirit is act, creative act; nor is it being which is congealed and determined, albeit after a different fashion. To the existential philosophy of spirit the natural material world is a fall, it is the product of objectification, self-alienation within existence. But the form of the human body and the expression of the eyes belong to spiritual personality and are not opposed to spirit. (*BE*, 103-104)

The Spirit is the noumenal breaking into the phenomenal world. Kant had provided insight into the way but did not go far enough. The problem was that Kant did not see man as a *spiritual* being. He provided a doctrine of causality through freedom, but he did not offer an explanation as to *how* the noumenal can *break into* the causal sequence of appearances. “His conception was of two worlds which are, so to speak, entirely sundered from one another, and each shut up in itself. But the one world can invade the other and act creatively within it” (*BE*, 156). Hegel, likewise in holding that truth of necessity is freedom, did not grasp the primary nature of freedom. His ontology was a disguised determinism (*BE*, 104). Freedom exists outside the causal sequence of events in the world. Behind the phenomenal world is the noumenal world of the Spirit. “If we make use of the Aristotelian phraseology, we may put it that our world is full of potencies, possibilities and energies, but the sources of these potencies reach back into the noumenal world to which our causal relations are not applicable” (*BE*, 158).

Eschatology can only be revealed in the age of the Spirit (*BE*, 242). What is needed (and anticipated) is a “revolution of the spirit” (*BE*, 212). How is this revolution realized? The age of the Spirit is first brought about by a “personalist spiritual revolution” which brings about the end of the “objectified everyday world, the world of determinism and a transition to the realm of freedom, which is the new era of the Spirit”

(*BE*, 227). This personalism is not merely in the future but is already being established here and now (*BE*, 227).

The eschatological outlook is not limited to the prospect of an indefinable end of the world, it embraces in its view every moment of life. At each moment of one's living, what is needed is to put an end to the old world and to begin the new. In that is the breath of the Spirit. The aeon of the end is the revealing of the Spirit. (*BE*, 254)

The end is realized as personality and Spirit are manifested through *creative newness*. The very presence of creative newness reveals that this world is not adequate and also affirms dualism. Human creativeness reveals two worlds. "The whole creative process takes place between the infinite and the finite, between the flight and the image which enters into this objectified world" (*BE*, 182). The aspirations for a better world arises from duality and cannot be derived from being. "The vision of world harmony is the image of a world which can be grasped by the mind, and which anticipates the transformation of the world. The beauty of this world, the beauty of man, of nature and of works of art, all this is a mark of the partial transformation of the world; it is a creative breakthrough towards the other world" (*BE*, 147).

Newness cannot be based on the natural world of causality. Creative newness is a "breakthrough" *into* the objective world, not an evolution *in* the world. This is something not explicable in monism because newness cannot start from the object. Newness is not based on being, but presupposes non-being. Potency makes possible the creation of what is new. Determinist science attempts to explain newness on causality and necessity but its explanation is insufficient.³⁵ "Consistent and thorough-going ontologism is obliged to deny the possibility of newness, creativity and freedom, for these are things which denote

³⁵ "Determinism and the naturalistic theory of evolution, in investigating the world setting and historical environment in which the creative act breaks through and enters, imagine that they are explaining the creative act itself" (*BE*, 168).

a breakthrough in the closed system of being” (*BE*, 159-160). Creative newness is like the Parousia.

In the creative act of man, a new element is introduced, something which was not there before, which is not contained in the given world, and is not part of its make-up, but which breaks through from another scheme of the world, not out of the eternally given ideal forms, but out of freedom; and not out of a dark freedom, but out of an illuminated freedom. (*BE*, 171)

Neither can newness be based on history. Creative newness cannot be explained on the basis of what is past (the historical) but only from the future. The experience of newness presupposes time and occurs in existential time (*BE*, 163). “The whole creative process takes place between the infinite and the finite, between the flight and the image which enters into this objectified world” (*BE*, 181). Like the Parousia the creative act has the appearance of coming from the future, but this is only possible because of historical time for past and future exist in the objectified world (*BE*, 169). Therefore, it is eschatological in nature. “In this lies the mystery of creativeness and the emergence of what is new. In this lies the mystery of freedom. It is the paradox of time” (*BE*, 169).

The “End of the World”

The eschatological idea of an end of the world is not exclusively a religious idea according to Berdyaev but is an existential idea (*BE*, 147). As noted above, the meaning of history cannot be obtained or apprehended in its objectification. If history is viewed only in its objectified form “the end of history is concealed from sight” (*BE*, 209). The end of history is necessary for two primary reasons. First, unlike the teleological optimism of German Idealism, history must end because of the conflict between personality and objectivism.

History ought to come to a conclusion, because it turns human personality into a means to an end, because in it every living generation merely manures the soil for

the benefit of the generation which follows, and for which the same fate awaits. History must have an end also because it is based upon a terrible breach between ends and means. (*BE*, 147)

The meaning of history cannot be immanent in history, it lies beyond the confines of history. Progress, which has a habit of offering up every living human generation and every living human person as a sacrifice to a future state of perfection, which thus becomes a sort of vampire, is only to be accepted on the condition that history will come to an end, and that in that end all previous generations and every human person who has lived on earth will be able to enjoy the results of history. (*BE*, 209)

Second, history must come to an end because without an end meaning is not possible. History is meaningful only if there is an end to history. If the idea of an unending progress is true, this would imply that the only meaning of history is that one generation serves the one which comes after it; one's generation is merely a means to an end. "Endless progress, an endless process, means the triumph of death" (*BE*, 229). If there is no end, the meaning of human history would be an "evil infinity." The endlessness of history, Berdyaev claims, is a "horrible absurdity" (*BE*, 230).

Furthermore, meaning cannot merely be individual. It must include meaning for all of humanity. A meaning for all must be a "resurrection" of all. Berdyaev states, "A 'meaning' which is not commensurable with the destiny of personality, with my personal fate, and has no significant bearing upon it, has in fact no meaning. Unless the universal meaning is at the same time a personal meaning also, it is no meaning at all" (*BE*, 229).

Personality is not content with living in the "great whole." What one desires is that the great whole live "in me." If one's death is the end, there is no meaning. But on the other hand, if the present objective life were endless, it too be an absurdity (*BE*, 230). "It is only an end which can give meaning to personal and historical existence, an end

which takes the form of resurrection into which the creative attainments of all human beings enter” (*BE*, 230).

The end does not come about by a teleological process working in objectified historical time nor in the natural world but in existential time, as a creative break-out of the higher spiritual reality from the noumenal into phenomenal world (*BE*, 156). The noumenal self is the “true, deep-down existence of man” which does not belong to the world of objects. It is only in the noumenal that the “transcendent light” is manifested (*BE*, 232). It is a world in which the creative power of Spirit and personality “moves out beyond the limits of objectification and is directed towards a new life, towards the Kingdom of God” (*BE*, 250).³⁶

History as Prophetic Messianism

Berdyayev sees philosophy of history as essentially religious built on the idea of eschatology.³⁷ When one considers the “deeper view of history,” Messianism is the basic theme of history. A prophetic Messianism³⁸ announces the Kingdom of God. The eschatological meaning of the Kingdom of God is the announcement of the end of this objective world and the coming of another transformed world. Original “Primitive Christianity” was messianic but along the way, it lost its spiritual force and became objectified. The doctrine of the church became affected by the social, the “phenomenon

³⁶ Berdyayev says, “It is a transition from the 'objectness' to the 'subjectness' of existence, a transition to spirituality. Man as a noumenon is at the beginning and as a noumenon he is at the end, but he lives out his destiny in the phenomenal world. That which we project into the sphere of the external, and call the end, is the existential experience of contact with the noumenal, and with the noumenal in its conflict with the phenomenal. The experience is not one of development from one stage to another, it is an experience of shock and catastrophe in personal and historical existence” (*BE*, 232).

³⁷ “The philosophy of history can be nothing but a religious metaphysic of history” (*BE*, 199).

³⁸ Berdyayev makes a distinction between prophetic Messianism and apocalyptic Messianism. Apocalyptic Messianism, which he notes was a later development probably influenced by Persian sources, is other-worldly but it is historical and objective. It is concerned with personal immortality and national deliverance (*BE*, 201).

crushed the noumenon,” and the result was the church was “seduced” and declined and became a theocracy (*BE*, 203). There was the “triumph of historical objectification over spirit.” The church eventually ceased to be the Kingdom.

The one and only true messianic belief is the Messianism which looks for a new era of the Spirit, for the transformation of the world and for the Kingdom of God. This messianic belief is eschatological and it stands in direct opposition to all the theocracies of history and to all efforts to turn the State into something sacred. It is only the quest for truth and right in the ordering of society which enters into the true messianic belief. (*BE*, 203-204)

What does the end and the Kingdom of God look like? The end brings freedom and is the transformation of the objectified world and arrives at monism. In the eschatological age a, “truly spiritual victory over the limits of space and time will, however, belong to the new spiritual era, the era of Paracletism. In the Spirit everything will appear in a new and different light” (*BE*, 240). The “second coming of Christ” is the “form of Christ,” and occurs when the “perfection of man appears in its fullness” in an age when the “perfection and fullness all the creative activity of man will enter” (*BE*, 251).³⁹ With the “coming of the Kingdom of God” is the transformation of the world and the “Resurrection of every creature” (*BE*, 233).⁴⁰ The Resurrection is dependent on the state of the spirit-soul and the idea of a general resurrection is necessary for meaning must be a meaning for all. Berdyaev concludes, “It is from this that the doctrine of the resurrection derives its outstanding truth and depth; it is a resurrection, that is, of the complete human being, not the conservation of disrupted parts of him. What occurs is a

³⁹ He calls this a “active interpretation” of the apocalypse. The objectified apocalypse is a “passive interpretation.” This did not occur with the first advent of Christ but was hidden, only to be understood later. Here he references Fedorov and Cieszkovski, “the chief Polish philosopher of Messianism.”

⁴⁰ Berdyaev references N. Fedorov's *The Philosophy of the Common Task*.

new clothing in bodily form, a new incarnation, not only of an individual creature, of man, but also of the whole world” (*BE*, 242).⁴¹

Conclusion

Berdyaev’s argument for eschatology is the most explicit and extensive among the philosophers considered in this work. The totality of his philosophy culminates in eschatology, but a particular understanding of eschatology derived from Joachim and Boehme. His use of eschatology is truly eschatological in that there is an abrupt end. There is no gradual teleological transformation, no “immanent progressive revelation” in the noumenal world. The noumenal will someday break into and overcome the phenomenal.

Though Berdyaev is masterful in bringing eschatology to philosophy, there is some question concerning the use of and dependence on religion. Berdyaev comes very close at best in crossing from philosophy into theology. His understanding of Christianity, which is more Gnostic, allows him to remain philosophical in his treatment. One inconsistency is to consider history as messianic with Christ breaking into history, yet argue that he did not enter historical time, only existential time. History is a “revelation.” Here there is a clear dependency on the nature of biblical history as revelation which provides his understanding of history as a progressive unfolding. This take on history, which is clearly in harmony with Joachim’s thesis, is a “progressive revelation.” Berdyaev makes no apologies for his dependence on Christian concepts of history. Another problem is his claim that history will end tragically. The question could be asked, “On what basis can it be supposed that history will end and end tragically?”

⁴¹ He says that physical death is not the end, but the resurrection may be experienced as death (*BE*, 241).

There is nothing in experience nor logical reason for such a claim. Again, there is a dependency on the prophetic book of Daniel which sets forth the idea of an end of history. One could arguably make the case based on history that life has been improving.⁴² Nevertheless, Berdyaev argues that history will end. Criticisms aside, what Berdyaev's discussion on eschatology provides insight into the contrast and difference between eschatology and teleology. Eschatology cannot be maintained in a monistic world. He also demonstrates that an eschatology of linear time can only be located in the individual personality in existential time.

⁴² See Blumenberg's argument in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

BLUMENBERG'S TRANSFORMED ESCHATOLOGY

The question of eschatology was addressed by Hans Blumenberg. Whereas Heidegger and Berdyaev employed the idea of eschatology in their philosophies, Blumenberg emphasized the negative dimension of eschatology in the modern age. This chapter addresses Blumenberg's argument against the significance of eschatology and the views of those who opposed his position. It will conclude with responses against Blumenberg's thesis and a discussion on idea of progressive revelation. What comes out in Blumenberg's treatment differs from Heidegger and Berdyaev. The focus here is the importance of the subjects of politics and secularization.

The Debate over Secularization and Eschatology

In 1966, Hans Blumenberg (1920-1996) published his work *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* which leveled an attack on the theory of secularization.¹ He questioned whether the modern age was a secularization of Christian eschatology. By the mid-twentieth century the belief that many developments in the West were the result of a secularized eschatology had been gaining adherents. Blumenberg challenged the thesis.

Blumenberg considered Carl Schmitt's secularization thesis the "strongest version of the secularization theorem" (*LMA*, 92). Schmitt had argued in his *Political Theology* (1922) that all the significant concepts in Western political thought were a secularization

¹ Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Robert M. Wallace, trans.). Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1983. Originally published as *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit (erweiterte und überarbeitete neuauflage)*, 1966. Hereafter *LMA*.

of theology (*LMA*, 92). His argument was based on the “sociology of concepts” which seeks to discover “the basic, radically systematic structure” and compares a given “conceptual structure with the conceptually represented social structure of a certain epoch” (Schmitt 1985:45). The sociology of concepts is “concerned with establishing proof of two spiritual but at the same time substantial identities” (Schmitt 1985:45). Schmitt specifically addresses the concept of sovereignty using the field of jurisprudence as the example.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were dominated by this idea of the sole sovereign, which is one of the reasons why, in addition to the decisionist cast of his thinking, Hobbes remained personalistic and postulated an ultimate concrete deciding instance, and why he also heightened his state, the Leviathan, into an immense person and thus point-blank straight into mythology.... For him this was no anthropomorphism—from which he was truly free—but a methodical and systematic postulate of his juristic thinking. (1985:47)

In the 1934 preface, Schmitt noted that the Protestant theologians Heinrich Forsthoff (1871-1942) and Friedrich Gogarten (1887-1967) demonstrated that modern German history could not be understood outside the concept of secularization (1985:2). The “wholly Other” God of theology had become the political state. Schmitt argues at the beginning of his chapter on “Political Theology,”

All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development—in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver—but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concept. The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology. Only by being aware of this analogy can we appreciate the manner in which the philosophical ideas of the state developed in the last centuries. (1985:36)

Schmitt argued that it was not accidental that the modern constitutional state arose at the time Deism became the leading theology. “This theology and metaphysics rejected not

only the transgression of laws of nature through an exception brought about by direct intervention, as is found in the idea of a miracle, but also the sovereign's direct intervention in a valid legal order (1985:36-37)." The sovereign, in the example of the monarch, became the personified architect who is both creator and legislator of the world. "The sovereign, who in the deistic view of the world, even if conceived as residing outside the world, had remained the engineer of the great machine, has been radically pushed aside. The machine now runs by itself" (1985:48).

Schmitt locates the beginning of this trend in the area of jurisprudence among Catholic philosophers Bonald, de Maistre, and Donoso Cortés, but especially Leibniz (1646–1716). In Leibniz's *Nova Methodus*, Schmitt notes, the processes of secularization is clearly seen. Leibniz noted the relationship between theology and jurisprudence stating, "We have deservedly transferred the model of our division from theology to jurisprudence because the similarity of these two disciplines is astonishing" (quoted by Schmitt 1985:37-38). Schmitt observed there was a methodological relationship between Scripture and Reason (natural theology and natural jurisprudence). Both reason and scripture were "positive revelations and directives." The result was transference of sovereignty of God in theology to that of the State. "A continuous thread runs through the metaphysical, political and sociological conceptions that postulate the sovereign as a personal unity and primeval creator" (1985:47).

By the nineteenth century, the substitution became a "widespread dogma." The transition is observed in Rousseau who politicized theological concepts (Schmitt 1985:46). Democracy is political relativism and scientific orientation "liberated from miracles and dogmas" (Schmitt 1985:42). In Marxist philosophy of history,

“interdependence is radicalized to an economic dependence; it is given a systematic basis by seeking a point of ascription also for political and social changes and by finding in it the economic sphere” (1985:43).

Schmitt notes that throughout the nineteenth century the idea of immanence dominated (1985:49-50). He believed that the idea of transcendence would not be credible among the educated class. They would “settle for either a more or less clear immanence-pantheism or a positivist indifference toward any metaphysics” (1985:50). He states, “Insofar as it retains the concept of God, the immanence philosophy, which found its greatest systematic architect in Hegel, draws God into the world and permits law and the state to emanate from the immanence of the objective (1985:50).” The nineteenth century is therefore characterized by the “elimination of all theistic and transcendental conceptions and the formation of a new concept of legitimacy” (1985:51). Schmitt concludes that legitimacy in the traditional sense “no longer exists.”

Blumenberg took issue with Schmitt arguing that Schmitt should have interpreted the circumstances in reverse: “it would have been more natural, in view of the intention of this ‘political theology,’ for it to establish the reverse relation of derivation by interpreting the apparent theological derivation of political concepts as a consequence of the absolute quality of political realities” (*LMA*, 92). Theology is not a stage in the “transformation of anthropology.” It is the reverse: “Philosophy’s talk of history and of man is the perfected final phase of theology, in its humanly most ‘refined’ form as theodicy” (*LMA*, 57).

Karl Löwith's Secularization Thesis

Blumenberg's work was in part a response to Karl Löwith's secularization thesis. Blumenberg applied the same method of critique to the work of Karl Löwith (1897–1973) who, following Schmitt's thesis, argued for secularization but more specifically a secularization of Christian eschatology. Löwith questioned the legitimacy of the modern age in *Meaning in History* where he argued that the modern age is the result of a secularization of Christian eschatology.² The modern age is, “entirely dependent on theology of history, in particular on the theological concept of history as a historical history of fulfillment and salvation.” The modern situation is the result of a long process of secularizing particularly the Christian doctrines of redemption and eschatology. Modernity is “secular” because it has been built on both Christian and classical thought but along the way rejected the transcendent (God) (Syse 2000). Löwith defined secularism as a “blend” of both Christian and non-Christian elements which are neither religiously pagan nor Christian (*MH*, 200-201). “In our modern world everything is more or less Christian and, at the same time, un-Christian” (*MH*, 201).

Löwith's occasion for writing was to explain the rise of nihilism and totalitarianism in the twentieth century. The “European crisis” which led to nihilism and totalitarianism was essentially a spiritual crisis that was a climax of a developing secularization (Wolin 2001:72). The crisis began when the educated elite of the mid-nineteenth century turned against the “timeless” classical values (e.g., as exemplified in Goethe and Hegel) and the Christian tradition. European nihilism resulted with the removal of the traditional ontological constraints (Wolin 2001:74). After rejecting the

² Löwith 1949:1. Hereafter *MH*.

eighteenth-century belief in reason and progress, philosophy became “more or less homeless” (*MH*, 1).

The rise of totalitarianism in modernity was the direct result of the secularization of Christian eschatological ideas. Löwith argues that modern philosophy of history would not be possible apart from the eschatological understanding of time given to the West by Christianity.³ Modern philosophy of history is not based on science, but is founded on the vestige of Christian ideas. When modern histories rejected the theological interpretation of history, however, they removed the very foundation and context of their historical interpretation. Löwith notes, “Since the middle of the nineteenth century, European historians no longer follow the pattern of progress, but that of decay” (quoted by Wolin 2001:72).⁴

Löwith traces modern historical thinking backward from Burckhardt to the biblical origins. He highlights medieval prophet Joachim of Fiore (1131-1202)⁵ as a critical influence on the modern sense of the apocalyptic. During the Middle Ages, however, a significant change occurred. At the beginning of the medieval period Augustine set in place the two-tier concept of sacred and secular time. This understanding was not challenged until the high Middle Ages. It was Joachim who made the first attempt to immanentize historical meaning by introducing a new “scheme of epochs and dispensations” based on the three-fold idea of the Trinity (Syse 2000). Joachim’s intention was to desecularize the church of its worldliness, but in this process

³ Karl Löwith, “Modern Transfigurations of Joachimism,” Appendix I, in *Meaning in History*, 208-213.

⁴ From Löwith 1966:7.

⁵ See Chapter Two, p. 43, of this paper for the introduction to Joachim.

there resulted a departure from the Augustinian concept of historical time. In his scheme, the final age, the new age of the Spirit, would signify the overcoming of paganism and announce the universal spread of Christianity. The result would be the realization of the kingdom of God in the *saeculum* (MH, 145).

Joachim's conception of historical time was considered a Christian eschatological concept of history, but what resulted was a significant shift in understanding future time. Historical interpretation became prophecy. Joachim's concept became foundational for modern philosophies of history (Lessing, Comte, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Nietzsche), and culminated in the Third *Reich* (MH, 159; Kortner 1995:40-41). Afterward Friedrich Lücke (1791-1855) and Auguste Sabatier (1839-1901) held that Messianism was the foundation of modern historical philosophy (Kortner 1995:38). The idea that modern philosophy of history is a secularized form of Christian salvation history, however, began with Kant.

Löwith, however, did not advocate a Christian concept of history, nor suggest a return to the biblical "historical" consciousness. On the contrary, he argued that in the strict sense, there is no Christian philosophy of history, for "Christians are not a historical people" (MH, 194-195). Christianity as a historical world religion was "a complete failure."⁶ "Thus if we venture to say that our modern historical consciousness is derived from Christianity, this can mean only that the eschatological outlook of the New Testament has opened the perspective toward a future fulfillment—originally beyond, and eventually within, historical existence" (MH, 197). Judaism, however, can be world-historical: "A Jewish theology of secular history is indeed a possibility and even a

⁶ On this point Löwith references, in a note, Berdyaev's *The Meaning of History* (1936) and Overbeck's *Christianity and Culture* (1919).

necessity” (*MH*, 19-196). Unlike both Judaism and Greek thought, Christianity brought about a “radical elimination of limits.” Löwith says Christianity “conceives the suspension of all historical particularities not as the kind of recurrence described by reasoned, universal thinking, but rather as a cosmic, all-encompassing event happening but once” (quoted by Kortner 1995:40).

The contribution of Christianity was the idea of redemption (*MH*, 191). Any Christian concept of history is founded on an understanding of history in the context of *salvation* (*MH*, 18). Jesus was not seen by Christians as a world-historical link in a series of historical events, but as the Redeemer. He was not considered a new epoch in secular history but marked the end of world-history for the Christian. Anything that is presented as a Christian philosophy of history is an “artificial compound.” For the Christian, the Kingdom of God is “not to be realized in a continuous process of historical developments” (*MH*, 197). The “true” focus of history is the future, and this idea was the contribution of Christian eschatology. Eschatology provided a “compass” which pointed to the “Kingdom of God as the ultimate end and purpose” (*MH*, 18). The eschatological motivation “from Isaiah to Marx, from Augustine to Hegel, and from Joachim to Schelling” provided an ultimate end, both “a *finis* and *telos*,” and a “progressive order and meaning” that provided an “overcoming” of the “ancient fear of fate and fortune” (*MH*, 18). The secular world, with its hope of a “better world,” is unwittingly the product of Jewish and Christian eschatology.

At the same time, the modern world is also heir of the classical pagan tradition, which consists of “classical polytheism” (*MH*, 197). This is demonstrated in science’s approach to nature as object and the interest in a plurality of cultures without a concern

for redemption (*MH*, 19). The problem, however, is modernity's "overemphasis" on the centrality of *secular* history against classical and Christian concepts. This is a product of alienation (*MH*, 192). The post-Christian age is a "creation with creator, and a *saeculum* (in the ecclesiastical sense of this term) turned secular for lack of religious perspective" (*MH*, 201-202). The secularist believes that "the future can be created and provided for by himself" (*MH*, 10).

Central to Löwith's argument is the concept of future time. The concepts of cyclical and linear time were the "two great conceptions of antiquity and Christianity." There are no other possible ways to approach the understanding of history. "Even the most recent attempts at an interpretation of history are nothing else but variations of these two principles or a mixture of both of them" (*MH*, 19). The ancient's understanding of the future was based on "inferences from the past," based on nature and predetermined fate. They did not attempt to make sense of the meaning of history because of their cyclical conception of time and the idea of recurrence. The Greeks, for example, were concerned only with humankind's ability to nobly face every situation, but they were not concerned with a *philosophy* of history (*MH*, 18).

This is not the case with the concept of time inherited from Christianity. Christianity introduced to the West the linear concept of time that extended redemption to all mankind (*MH*, 10). The linear concept of time originated with the Jewish prophets whose messianic predictions were based on faith in the revelation and purpose of God manifested in the history of the Jewish people. Löwith agreed with the neo-Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen, founder of the Marburg school, that the "concept of history is a product of prophetism" and that the "Jewish prophets" were "radical philosophers of

history” (MH, 195). The Greek conception of history was an investigation into the “fact” of the past. For the Jewish prophet, on the other hand, time becomes primarily future.

Quoting Cohn,

Time becomes primarily future, and the future the primary content of our historical thought. For this new future ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ is not sufficient. He has to create ‘a new heaven and a new earth.’ In this transformation the idea of progress is implied. Instead of a golden age in a mythological past, the true historical existence on earth is constituted by an eschatological future. (MH, 18)

Löwith’s contention is that it is not legitimate to hold a view of history which is built on two radically different conceptions of time. He references Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* as an example.⁷ Spengler built on a cyclical conception of time and held that *necessity* determines the course of history. History is the fatal fulfillment of life-cycles as found in biological cycles of growth and decay, without any divine purpose or fulfillment. It is sublime because of its purposelessness (MH, 11). Spengler inconsistently went on to argue, however, the future “destiny” of civilization based on noncyclical time (MH, 12). Löwith points out it cannot be both ways.

The fact that the modern world is still concerned with “the unity of universal history” and achieving a “better world” shows it is still influenced by the Judeo-Christian tradition. An interpretation of history can arise only from “the basic experience of evil and suffering, and of man’s quest for happiness” (MH, 3). In the West, the problem of suffering has been approached either in the myth of Prometheus or faith in Christ, but neither “indulged in the modern illusion that history can be conceived as a progressive evolution which solves the problem of evil by way of elimination” (MH, 3). Löwith states,

⁷ See Chapter Three, p. 138, of this paper.

Such a theological understanding of the history of mankind cannot be translated into world-historical terms and worked out into a philosophical system. World-historical establishments and upheavals hopelessly miss the ultimate reality of the Christian hope and expectation. No secular progress can ever approximate the Christian goal if this goal is the redemption from sin and death to which all worldly history is subjected. (*MH*, 189)

Once modern histories rejected soteriological foundation, history could no longer have meaning. The meaning or purpose of history can only make sense in the horizons which established the very idea of history (*MH*, 18).

Löwith's argument is founded on identifying "meaning" with "purpose."

Meaning implies purpose (*MH*, 5). To say history has an ultimate meaning (the *whole*) implies that there is a purpose or goal which transcends particular historical events.

Because history is a "movement in time," the purpose is a goal. This requires that a *telos* must become apparent. Meaning is located in the future. Particular events are not meaningful unless seen as part of a whole. Meaning is possible only if it indicates something beyond the object itself. "If we reflect on the whole course of history, imagining its beginning and anticipating its end, we think of its meaning in terms of an ultimate purpose" (*MH*, 5). To claim that history has an ultimate meaning means it has a purpose or goal which transcends the particular event. This temporal horizon for the final goal he defines as the "eschatological future" (*MH*, 6). The teleological view of history presupposes eschatology and exists by "expectation and hope" (*MH*, 6; Körtner 1995:40).⁸ From a secular point of view, however, historical events have no grand meaning. Reason cannot provide a meaning and purpose for contemporary events. Historical events are merely contingencies governed by chance and fate (*MH*, 198-199).

⁸ Körtner says, "Löwith considers modern historical consciousness basically illegitimate not because one is not permitted to translate Christian eschatology into the concepts of world history, but because one cannot so translate it" (41).

“In the reality of that agitated sea which we call ‘history,’ it makes little difference whether man feels himself in the hands of God’s inscrutable will or in the hands of chance and fate” (*MH*, 199). In an age where millions of people are senselessly killed, a teleological understanding of world history apart from a theological belief is meaningless.

The problem of history as a whole is unanswerable within its own perspective. Historical processes as such do not bear the evidence of a comprehensive and ultimate meaning. History has such as no outcome. There never has been and never will be an immanent solution of the problem of history, for man’s historical experience is one of steady failure. (*MH*, 191)

Blumenberg’s Reply to Löwith’s Substantialist Ontology

Blumenberg challenged Löwith’s position that the modern age is a secularization of Christian values and beliefs and contended that Löwith lacked proof for his thesis. He argues that Löwith does not acknowledge the difference between Christian eschatology and the modern concept of progress. His objection is that his theory, along with Schmitt and others, “presuppose the existence of constants in the history of ideas, and thus are based upon a substantialistic ontology of history” (*LMA*, 113). He argues that Löwith erred in taking one interpretation, that of German Idealism, as an “objective thesis” of the modern situation and making secularization an instrument for historical explanation (*LMA*, 27).

Blumenberg did not object to the use of “secularization” as a descriptive term (Palti 1997:503f). However, he did object to its use as a “spiritual anathema” by the “crisis theologians” of the 1920s (*LMA*, 5; Lazier 2003:624). Blumenberg took aim specifically at Karl Barth’s “dialectical theology” and the “demythologizing of the kerygma” by Rudolf Bultmann (*LMA*, 51). He gives a number of examples of the charge that the modern age is a secularization of Christian thought.

It has become almost a fashionable pastime to interpret expectations of political redemption, like those typified by the Communist Manifesto, as secularizations either of the biblical paradise or of apocalyptic messianism. Once one has come to understand the idea of progress as a transformation of a providentially guided “story of salvation” [Heilsgeschichte], then either the infinity of this progress will have to be given out as the secularization of the omnipotence that had reigned over history previously, or an expected final stage of progress, a “golden age,” “permanent peace,” or “universal equality after the dismantling of the state” will have to be a sort of “eschatology without God”.... (*LMA*, 15)

Löwith had attempted to lay blame on the heirs of theology making the whole use of secularization the result of a “specific theological pathos” (*LMA*, 5). The use of the term secular and its correlative “worldly” is acceptable from a theological perspective, but that does not mean the modern world lacks legitimacy.

Blumenberg’s primary issue with Löwith’s thesis was that he opposed Löwith’s assumption of a continuity of substance between epochs. A “substantialistic conception of historical identity” is the idea is that the identity or the original *content* is preserved in some sense in the present, i.e. that the form “B is the secularized A” (*LMA*, 4, 28-29; Brient 2000:517). There are three criteria of Löwith’s view of secularization: first, there is a *substance* that is transformed from Christian to a secular form; that is, there is a substantive connection, not merely analogous. Second, that the substance belonged with “Christianity.” Third, the substance was transformed by an “outside agent” (Wallace 1981:69). He points out that the idea of a permanence of substance as necessary for distinguishing between the old and new was first argued by Kant. Blumenberg agrees in part with Kant but rejected the idea of a transcendental substance. Historical substantialism “relies on a continuity of content, not merely of function” (Lazier 2003:628).

Löwith's secularization thesis makes theoretical success dependent on establishing fixed constants in history. As Lazier explains, "[I]t identifies a substance proper to medieval Christianity, which in its modern guise appears to have undergone transformation into a secularized form but in fact has not dislodged itself from its originally Christian framework" (2003:628). Such constants bring the theoretical process to an end, limiting the possibility for future critical inquiry (Brient 2000:518). Though the context may be the same, in terms of its language, etc., the function can be entirely different. Blumenberg explains,

propositions of an entirely different form appear, propositions of the form 'B is the secularized A.' For example: The modern work ethic is secularized monastic asceticism; The word revolution is the secularized expectation of the end of the world; The president of the Federal Republic is a secularized monarch. Such propositions define an unequivocal relation between whence and whither, an evolution, a change in the attributes of a substance. (*LMA*, 4)

Blumenberg did not intend to advance another ontology of history. "...[O]ur purpose," he states, "is only to set over against the unquestioned preference accorded to a certain implied philosophy of history the possibility of other lines of inquiry that it does not allow for" (*LMA*, 113). A philosophy of history must take epistemological issues into account. It is rational to establish constants, but it also must be allowed that when constants are established there is the renunciation of possible knowledge. This renunciation, however, is not to be accepted as inevitable. This is how it occurs in the study of the natural sciences, but it should also be the same for the human sciences.

...in the human sciences the production of constants must be understood to be a theoretical resignation without any corresponding gain. It is perfectly possible that insurmountably contingent facts may be arrived at; what concerns us here is not this kind of constraint but the expectation with it is met: that with the standstill of the theoretical process, the need for theory would be satisfied. This is the source of the weakness of substantialistic preconceptions in the theory of history. (*LMA*, 113-114)

Blumenberg argues that the modern age, in response to the theological absolutism of medieval nominalism, was compelled to assert itself through reason. Nominalism failed to provide sufficient answers to questions concerning why the world existed. Thus, a framework created by nominalism was “re-occupied” by mechanistic explanations of nature. An example is the field of mathematics. When it was understood that mathematics could accurately predict nature’s behavior, it was shown that theory could “recreate” the world (Brient 2000:523). Reason created the possibility of creating a new world. Blumenberg states, “The power of reason does not consist in enabling us to transcend the empirical world but rather in teaching us to feel at home in it.”⁹ When God becomes absolutely transcendent, man as *homo faber* becomes the measure of all things. What is needed is a “sufficient rationality” which embraces human reason, not divine. Therefore, the modern age is legitimate because of the necessity of the accomplishments of reason (Brient 2000:529).

Secularization by Eschatology

Blumenberg concludes that what occurred in the modern world was not the secularization of eschatology, but that Christianity was secularized by a historicized eschatology (Körtner 1995:43). Secularization is the result of the “historicization of Christianity” which Christianity had done to itself. Blumenberg argues his position from the history of eschatology. He says this process is illustrated in the New Testament writings of the Apostles Paul and John. He states that though early Christian eschatology arose out of Jewish apocalyptic, the difference was that Christianity possessed an

⁹ As quoted by Bouwsma, 348, from Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, tr. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton, 1951), esp. 5,13.

“immediate expectation” (*LMA*, 41).¹⁰ The end of time was offered to the individual and to that generation. The events that are decisive for salvation had already occurred and the end was to occur soon. But the move toward historicization can be seen in the New Testament writings of that generation. Paul had looked for a final judgment but the “acquittal” had already occurred by “faith and baptism,” while John had said the judgment already occurred and that eternal life was already possessed by the believer.¹¹ They did not explain away the eschatological delay but “relocated” salvific elements in the past placing emphasis on “inner” certainty. Therefore, nothing new was expected for the future. “Consequently the basic eschatological attitude of the Christian epoch could no longer be one of hope for final events but was one of fear of judgment and the destruction of the world” (*LMA*, 44). Blumenberg states,

The exaggerated ethical demands made in the acute expectation of a near end, the unavoidable refutation of the apocalyptic promise, and the necessary dissolutionment of renunciation which could have triumphed only if the world indeed passed away—all these factors forced answers to questions which had not been asked before, and in whose formulation theology did not have ample opportunity to exercise its skills. (Quoted by Körtner 1995:43)

There was no concept of history or eschatological fulfillment in the distant future. There was only an “interval of grace” in the existing world. Therefore, instead of thinking of the modern world as a secularized eschatology, modernity should be understood as “secularization by eschatology,” that is, secularization is a legitimate result of a failed Christian eschatology (*LMA*, 37). Blumenberg says, “If ‘the modern world can largely be understood as the result of a secularization of Christianity,’ then that must be

¹⁰ He does acknowledge, however, the Hebrew non-cyclical view of time.

¹¹ The discussion here is similar to Heidegger’s interpretation of the Thessalonian letters. Blumenberg makes no mention of Heidegger. On this point Blumenberg was indebted to Bultmann’s analysis of the letters of Paul and John (*Theology of the New Testament and History and Eschatology: The Presence of Eternity*).

demonstrable in the historian's methodical analysis by reference to the criteria of the expropriation model" (*LMA*, 25).

Secularization by Expropriation

Blumenberg argues that the concept of secularization is an "expropriation" based on the idea of a property of ideas. He explains that the term *saecularis* was originally used in a descriptive sense in the context of a "political expropriation of ecclesiastical goods" (*LMA*, 18). As Hermann Zabel demonstrated, the term as a "category of interpretation" originally arose as a metaphor in legal terminology in conjunction with the expropriation of church property. One of the developments of the modern epoch was the idea that "legitimate ownership of ideas is derived only from their authentic production" (*LMA*, 72). This makes the idea of a "legitimate secularization" paradoxical, and also gives the idea of genuine ownership importance. The ownership of ideas, what one "originally produced, thought, and created, is a modern idea" (*LMA*, 38). Blumenberg's contention is that its use is an anachronism in the modern age, because the concept of truth and idea of ownership has changed (Brient 2000:517). The idea of "spiritual ownership" is actually destructive. "The claim that the use of this schema promotes historical understanding involves a premise that is foreign to the modern age's self-understanding and that it is 'secularized' in its own right" (*LMA*, 73).

Blumenberg objects to the idea that, "religion's self-interpretation has privileged access to truth" (*LMA*, 74). Leibniz demonstrated against Descartes that "Truth has ceased to be analogous to theology's rule of grace" (*LMA*, 73). Truths of reason are identified by their "internal" necessity. Blumenberg says, "Neither would the object possess its properties by virtue of internal necessity, nor would the knowing subject

possess its truths by insight into such necessity.... The idea of endowed and conveyable property in ideas thus loses its basis” (*LMA*, 73; Brient 2000:518).¹²

Reoccupation Thesis

As an alternative to Löwith’s historical substantialism, Blumenberg offered what he called a “reoccupation” thesis which provides a “phenomenological” approach “grounded in the immanent unfolding” of history (Brient 2000:519). The reoccupation thesis focuses on *contextual* function and less on *content*. Rather than view the change as the *transposition* of theological ideas into a secularized alienation, the change should be viewed as a “*reoccupation* of answer positions that had become vacant and whose corresponding questions could not be eliminated” (*LMA*, 65).

The reoccupation thesis is based on the idea of “epochal change” which argues that when such a shift occurs, a new set of ideas, values, and attitudes replace or reoccupy the position of the older configuration and serve the same function. The replacement ideas are new and original. There is no “cannon” of “great questions” or problems. Pressing existential questions change from one epoch to another. Certain “carry over” questions are addressed from one epoch to another which create a historical *identity* (*LMA*, 65). There results a continuity which is a transcendental condition which allows for the experience of historical change. The discontinuity produced by epochal change is also a necessary condition for experiencing history (Ingram 1990:2-3).

Blumenberg’s “reoccupation thesis” arose as a response to Hans Jonas’ “pseudomorphosis.” Jonas had borrowed the idea from Spengler who discovered it in his studies as a mineralogist. The idea is that if certain crystalline substances fill in

¹² Brient says, “This model of knowledge acquisition through immanent self production is fundamentally inconsistent with the secularization thesis, which presupposes the notion of an original (and divine) property in ideas” (518).

geological layers where other crystals had once occupied, then crystals are forced by the mold to take on a different form. Only a chemical analysis can identify it as the original crystal; i.e. “pseudomorphosis works as a corrective to arguments too easily duped by an apparent continuity of substance” (Lazier 2003:625). Spengler applied this to epochal shifts in history saying that in the West, Christianity occupied what was left of the Greco-Roman world. Jonas embraced Spengler’s thesis that dying cultures were occupied by new ones. What Spengler had discovered was “the universality of a new stance towards being.” Jonas, along with Heidegger, considered this a useful metaphor to describe epochal shift (Lazier 2003:626).

Blumenberg’s reoccupation thesis is similar to Jonas’ view in that they both agreed that origins were unknowable and that the epochal shift could not be precisely located. But he challenged Jonas’ thesis by raising the question “what is an epoch?” For Blumenberg (as well as Jonas) one age is not the reversal of another. “Man indeed makes history, but he does not make epochs” (*LMA*, 478). The point was that epochal changes can occur without a continuous historical (hidden) identity (Lazier 2003:629).

Blumenberg notes, “Questions do not always precede their answers. There is a ‘spontaneous generation,’ from the authority of nonrational annunciations, of great and acutely active assertions such as those of eschatological immediate expectation, the doctrine of the Creation, or original sin” (*LMA*, 66). To demonstrate, he notes that the Greeks were not concerned with the meaning of human history. Christian theology introduced new questions which created a sense of obligation to answer (*LMA*, 65). “Just as patristic theology appears in the role of ancient philosophy, so modern philosophy ‘substitutes’ to a large extent for the function of theology—...” (*LMA*, 69). The

philosophies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries addressed these inherited problems. They did so by the concept of progress which was not a secularization of Christianity but arose from earlier astronomy and physics.

Progress as Ersatz Religion

Blumenberg questioned Löwith's argument that there is a connection between the eschatological expectations of Christianity and the modern view of progress (Syse 2000:4). There is a sense in which Löwith would have agreed. Löwith pointed out that there was one thing that Christian and Greek concepts of history did share—both would have rejected the modern idea of progress. Both were free from the “common illusion of progress.” Löwith said, “If the idea of progress had been presented to a Greek, it would have struck him as irreligious, defying cosmic order and fate. And when it was presented to a radical Christian of the nineteenth century, it had the same effect” (*MH*, 200).¹³ Löwith warned that one must be careful not to read modern secular historical thinking into the Old and New Testament texts (*MH*, 196). “Nothing in the New Testament warrants a conception of the new events that constituted early Christianity, as the beginning of a new epoch of secular developments within a continuous process” (*MH*, 196). The Christianity of the New Testament emphasizes redemption, not the beginning or continuation of a process of progressive fulfillment. On the contrary, “the history of this world had rather come to an end...” (*MH*, 197).

What really begins with the appearance of Jesus Christ is not a new epoch of secular history, called “Christian,” but the beginning of an end. The Christian times are Christian only in so far as they are the last time. And, since the

¹³ Löwith's idea reflects a particular understanding of Christian eschatology. Clearly Christian eschatology in the Modern period did see progress as part of eschatological fulfillment, e.g. post-millennialism. Löwith's comment is true if limited to primitive Christianity or the views late nineteenth century German theologians, Overbeck, Weiss, Schweitzer, Barth, *et al*, whom Blumenberg identifies as the “crisis theologians.”

Kingdom of God is not to be realized in a continuous process of historical developments, the eschatological history of salvation also cannot impart a new and progressive meaning to the history of the world, which is fulfilled by having reached its term. (MH, 197)

From the New Testament perspective the world had entered into the eschatological. What Christianity provided was a perspective toward future fulfillment. Löwith attempts to clarify the distinction between the Christianity of the New Testament and historical Christianity. There derived out the Christian consciousness a historical consciousness. Though Christian by derivation, the historical consciousness is also non-Christian “because it lacks the belief that Christ is the beginning of an end and his life and death the final answer to an otherwise insoluble question” (MH, 197). He concludes,

If we understand, as we must, Christianity in the sense of the New Testament and history in our modern sense, i.e., as a continuous process of human action and secular developments, a “Christian history” is non-sense. The only, though weighty, excuse for this inconsistent compound of a Christian history is to be found in the fact that the history of the world has continued its course of sin and death in spite of the eschatological event, message, and consciousness. The world after Christ as assimilated the Christian perspective toward a goal and fulfillment and, at the same time, has discarded the living faith in an imminent *eschaton*. (MH, 197)

If there is no Christian philosophy of history or concept of progress in original Christianity, Löwith argues there can be no concept of progress in a secular philosophy of history. *Reason* cannot provide a meaningful plan for history; “who would dare pronounce a definite statement on the purpose and meaning of contemporary events?” (MH, 198).

Blumenberg contends there is a difference between progress and eschatology. Eschatology involves an interruption of the historical from a transcendent source, but progress denotes an immanent process within history. The modern idea of progress did not originate from Christianity but from two sources: The first was the work in the field

of *astronomy* by Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The increase of knowledge in this field was made over centuries. This revealed an entirely new structure in Western thought (*LMA*, 30). It was on the basis of the relation between “the quantum of time and the quality of achievement” which he located in the development of modern astronomy.¹⁴ The second was a “quarrel of the ancients and the moderns” which centered in the Renaissance view of whether the arts could be improved upon (*LMA*, 33). The new understanding of the arts emphasized the idea of the power of the creative individual. These sources, he argues, came together in the 18th century to provide the idea of progress.

Progress is not the idea of the world progressively getting better, Blumenberg maintains, but the elimination of “bads” in the world. “If we define progress for once not as an increased quantity of goods but as a reduced quantity of ‘bads’ in the world, we can see more clearly what really differentiates the modern concept of history from the Christian interpretation and why, in the perspective of the latter, the former had to be illegitimate” (*LMA*, 53). The problem lies in the Christian theodicy introduced by Augustine who reacted to the problem of Gnosticism. Augustine located the cosmic problem of evil in man’s original sin which reduced the possibility of good to be realized.

Blumenberg states,

Augustine’s explanation of the bad in the world as the result of human wickedness, as a species-wide quantity, made it necessary for any subsequent notion of progress that would undertake to diminish the bad in the world also to establish man’s ability to lessen his culpability by his own efforts. The idea of progress, as was to become evident much later on, requires a reversal of the causal relation between moral and physical evils; it is founded on the assumption that in a better world it would be easier to be a better person. (*LMA*, 53-54)

It was not until Kant that the “negative concept of ‘progress’” was reversed (*LMA*, 53).

¹⁴ See Bull 1995:9.

Blumenberg contends that the theory of progress became a replacement (*ersatz*) religion because of the failure of Christian theology. It was discovered that man had the power to make history. This “human self-assertion” is the genealogy of progress, not eschatology. Thus, there was a gradual emergence of the idea of progress which was comparable to eschatology but remains different from eschatology in that it is *immanent*, not *transcendent*. Also, progressivism did not see itself as a totality, as does eschatology. Progress is not associated with the meaning of history as a whole, but only of the success of particular human beings (Wallace 1981:70-71). Blumenberg’s contention was that the idea of progress was independent of eschatology.

Blumenberg recognizes that eschatology is a transcendent “event breaking into history.” The idea of progress “extrapolates from a structure present in every moment to a future that is immanent in history” (*LMA*, 30). Therefore, it is unlikely that eschatology was the model for forward movement in history. Rather, it arose from instances of progress that is found in “individual lives, individual generation, and the combination of generations.” It was a “projection onto history as a whole” (*LMA*, 31). “My opinion is that it was novel experiences involving such a great extent of time that the spring into the final generalization of the ‘idea of progress’ suggested itself as a natural step” (*LMA*, 31).

Responses to Blumenberg’s Thesis

A number of critics have pointed out the weakness of Blumenberg’s thesis. Löwith replied to Blumenberg’s reoccupation thesis noting that on the basis of tradition there is a continuity between the ancients and moderns. He stated, “that the inheritance of a powerful tradition (and what tradition, as compared to the political authorities, has been more potent and stable through two millennia of Western history than

institutionalized Christianity?) is a co-determining factor even of all relatively new beginnings?" (quoted by Wallace 1981:72).¹⁵ He also stressed that the linear concept of time cannot be so easily dismissed. Modern Enlightenment rationality did not reoccupy linear time and replace it with something new.

That the idea of progress should have only regional significance and a partial derivation, namely from the realm of the scientific discoveries and the literary-aesthetic controversies of the 17th century, and not touch the question of the meaning and the course of history as such and as a whole, is as improbable as the assertion that the rationality and autonomy of man in the modern age is an absolutely original and free-standing one. (Quoted by Wallace 1981:72)

Another critic, Christopher Lasch, questions how Blumenberg's argument can establish any sense of "legitimacy" for the modern age (Lasch 1991). The attempt to legitimize the modern idea of progress based on a "reoccupation" of Christian eschatology fails because there was not *necessarily* a progressive element in Christian eschatology. He argues that the "secularization thesis" has "too long obscured differences between the idea of providence and the modern idea of progress." Neither Hebraic nor Christian belief "implied a belief in progressive improvement, let alone the crude celebrations of racial and national destiny so often associated with progressive ideologies in the modern world" (Lasch 1991:46). Lasch rightly observes that the biblical passages referring to the millennium could be interpreted a number of ways and that there was never a "dominant" view among Christians. Both Old Testament and New Testament passages have been used to support the idea of an apocalyptic judgment

¹⁵ From Karl Löwith, *Philosophische Rundschau*, 15 (1968), 197.

waiting in the future but also a time of prosperity and blessing in a future age (Lasch 1991:46).¹⁶

Voegelin's Secularization Thesis

Eric Voegelin also responded to the European crisis and, like Löwith, assessed the situation as “the throes of a spiritual crisis” (Germino 1978:120). His work followed Löwith's, and was inspired, in part, by his *Meaning in History*. He continues Löwith's argument that the modern situation is a result of an complex process of secularization. Voegelin agrees with Löwith on the importance of eschatological time. He notes that in Augustine, history moved from a cyclical idea (Greek) to a directional concept which viewed the end of the world as a transcendental fulfillment (Voegelin 1952:118). After the fall of Rome, and the realization that “Christian” Rome was not the eschatological fulfillment (cf. Augustine's *City of God*), the sphere of political power was “de-divinized” and became temporal. Augustine distinguished between sacred and profane history, and maintained that only sacred history has direction. Profane history only waits for the end. Its sense of being is “an age that grows old,” a *saeculum senescens*. The result was a double representation of man which lasted through the Middle Ages (Voegelin 1952:106).

Voegelin also agrees with Löwith that Joachim was the first to break from the Augustinian conception of history. In Joachim is found the first Western attempt at immanentization by conceiving of a new “transcendental irruption of history” in the age

¹⁶ While Lasch is correct in his observation that there is no “dominant” view among Christians, it should not be understood that there were other eschatological views among Christians that did include the idea of progress as illustrated in Chapter Two of this paper. These might include early “primitive” Christianity and the Augustinian amillennial view which would not be considered progressive, but the “postmillennial” position of the modern period did include the idea. Blumenberg is not completely wrong on this point, however, he did not reflect a familiarity with various eschatological positions.

of the Spirit. Joachim “attempted to endow the immanent course of history with a meaning that was not provided in the Augustinian conception” (Voegelin 1952:119).¹⁷ Joachim’s influence was realized over the period of time he calls “from humanism to enlightenment.” This led to a second phase in the eighteenth-century notion of progress which he calls “secularization” (Voegelin 1952:119).

Joachim’s immanentization created a theoretical problem which Voegelin calls “the problem of an eidos of history.” The soteriological truth of Christianity broke the eidos of the cycle of rhythm and decay, and provided a supernatural destiny of man, perfected by grace, which enabled humankind a fulfillment beyond nature. The eschatological idea, however, did not provide an eidos of history. This occurred when Christian transcendental/eschatological fulfillment was hypostasized by immanentization.

The course of history as a whole is no object of experience; history has no eidos, because the course of history extends into the unknown future. The meaning of history, thus, is an illusion; and this illusionary eidos is created by treating a symbol of faith as if it were a proposition concerning an object of immanent experience (Voegelin 1952:120).

Voegelin calls this a theoretical fallacy. This attempt at constructing an eidos of history he calls a “fallacious immanentization of the Christian eschaton” (1952:121).

Talmon’s Political Messianism

The force of historical evidence in political expressions creates problems for Blumenberg’s thesis. This is particularly true in the modern period. J. A. Talmon in his work *Political Messianism* addresses the rise of totalitarian democracies in the modern age asking, “whence the perennial hope for millennium? Why does it grow so intense in

¹⁷ Voegelin elaborates on Löwith noting that Joachim created four symbols for modern political society’s self-interpretation: (1) history as a three-stage sequence (e.g., Comte, Hegel, and National Socialism), (2) the idea of the effective Leader, (3) the new age Gnostic prophet or intellectual, and (4) the brotherhood of autonomous persons (1952:110-113).

one age, while dormant in another?” (Talmon 1960:16). Like Löwith, he concluded that modern totalitarian democracies are the direct result of Christian eschatology, particularly the Messianic movements originating from the Medieval and Reformation periods. Talmon anticipated Blumenberg’s substance argument noting that it may appear inappropriate to consider “Messianism as a substance that can be divorced from its attributes” and that it might suggest a “mystical agency active in history.” But what Talmon considers is the “state of mind, a way of feeling, a disposition, a pattern of mental, emotional and behavioristic elements, best compared to the set of attitudes engendered by a religion” (Talmon 1970:11).

Talmon argues that an important shift occurred during the eighteenth century. Religion began to lose both its intellectual and emotional hold by this time. “Men were gripped by the idea that the conditions, a product of faith, time and custom, in which they and their forefathers had been living, were unnatural and had all to be replaced by deliberately planned uniform patterns, which would be natural and rational” (1970:3). Traditional conceptions of order were replaced by the “idea of the abstract, individual man.”

The immediate antecedent of the change to political Messianism was the chiliasm of the Middle Ages and Reformation, particularly the 17th century English Puritan Revolution. The medieval world, with its singular leader in the Pope, a common brotherhood, and common language, was now replaced by the advances in science. Luther and the Reformation had paved the way with its emphases on the rejection of church authority and individual conscious (Talmon 1960:70). These earlier movements

led to Liberal Democracy which addressed individual freedom and the right to interpret Scripture.

The coexistence of liberal democracy and revolutionary Messianism in modern times could legitimately be compared to the relationship between the official Church and the eschatological revolutionary current in Christianity during the ages of faith. Always flowing beneath the surface of official society, the Christian revolutionary current burst forth from time to time in the form of movements of evangelical poverty, heretical sects, and social-religious revolts. (Talmon 1970:9)

One significant difference between the earlier and modern messianic movements was the scale and duration. The earlier movements, based on interpretations of the word of God, were more localized and sporadic with little effect on society as a whole, usually becoming Christian sects.¹⁸ One reason the Christian messianic movement did not become totalitarian was the distinction between the Kingdom of God and secular state which allowed resolution in a future eternity.

It is thus a remarkable fact that the Christian revolutionaries, with few exceptions, notably Calvin's Geneva and Anabaptist Münster, shrunk from the use of force to impose their own pattern, in spite of their belief in its divine source and authority, while secular Messianism, starting with a point of reference in time, has developed a fanatical resolve to make its doctrine rule absolutely and everywhere. (Talmon 1970:10).

Modern Messianism, however, was a revolution of society as a whole based on Reason and looked for earthly happiness through social transformation. Modern messianic movement, based on a monistic concept of reality, "demands that the whole account be settled in the here and now" (Talmon 1970:10). Enlightenment individualism looked forward to the time when all would become rationally enlightened. The nineteenth century moved away from 18th century individualism toward collectivism. The first half of the nineteenth century saw a proliferation of utopian movements inspired

¹⁸ See Chapter Two, p. 61f.

by a “religion of Revolution.” The idea of a “permanent revolution” began with the French Revolution which sought to remove all evil in the quest for perfection (Talmon 1960:19).¹⁹ The Industrial Revolution was considered an apocalyptic crisis by the heirs of the French Revolution.

Talmon locates the rise of political Messianism in Claude de Saint-Simon whose goal was “the progress of enlightenment and the fate of humanity.”²⁰ He had great hope in Napoleon, the “scientific Legislator of mankind” (Talmon 1960:35-40). According to Saint-Simon, society was a “real organized machine” which has adapted through the ages. History is not a series of isolated facts but a series of human developments (Talmon 1960:43). Social systems are the applications of philosophical ideas organically connected to form a Weltanschauung which Saint-Simon called the “religion of the age.” Talmon says, “Although it comprises so much more than theology, ritual, and Church, it fulfills the dual role of religion: offers both a picture of the universe and code of life, designed to bring the believer into line with the universal order” (Talmon 1960:66). Saint-Simon looked for an abrupt and imminent change in the social order and compared the revolution to the rise of Christianity (Talmon 1960:58-59). He realized that his proposals for the new order based in rational thought could not produce a perfect social cohesion and looked to original Christianity and prophesied a “*Nouveau Christianisme*.” Saint-Simon stated,

The people of God, that people which received revelations before the coming of Christ, that people which is the most universally spread over the surface of the earth, has always perceived that the Christian doctrine founded by the Fathers of

¹⁹ “To use Marxist terminology, it was not a revolt against evils, but an uprising against evil itself, and would not come to an end, till the evil of evils had been uprooted, and harmonious justice established in its place” (19).

²⁰ “progrès des lumières et l'amélioration du sort de l'humanité”

the Church was incomplete. It has always proclaimed that a grand epoch will come, to which it was given the name of Messiah's Kingdom; an epoch in which religious doctrine shall be presented in all the generality of which it is susceptible; that it will regulate alike the action of the temporal and that of the spiritual power; and that then all the human race will have but one religion and one organization. . . . The golden age of mankind is not behind us; it is in front of us; it is the perfection of the social order: our fathers have not seen it, our children will arrive there one day; it is for us to pave the way. (Quoted by Talmon 1960:70)

In contrast to Blumenberg's thesis, Saint-Simon demonstrates a distinct secularization of Christian eschatology. Talmon goes on to show that the Revolution together with the Napoleonic wars, and especially the Industrial Revolution, moved away from individualism to the importance of collective force. This awareness led to a greater emphasis on historical forces. History was redefined. Talmon says,

The collective effort is not a matter of here and now only, but a sustained endeavor, one generation carrying on from where the last had left off. And so reason was reinterpreted from a force repudiating history into a force which unfolds itself gradually across history. History became an ally instead of an enemy, something to be fulfilled rather than overcome. The progress of time was conceived as steady advance towards higher integration. Since individual self-realization was not anchored in social cohesion and harmony, history appeared as a liberating force. (1960:22-23)

What resulted was an "idolization of history" which was a "pantheistic History anchored to the idea of the oneness of Life" (Talmon 1960:25). Talmon explains, "The essence of the religion of History underlying political Messianism is the profound faith that the march of Time is tantamount to an ever-growing integration and cohesion of human and social contents, which in turn make possible an ever higher measure of individual self-expression through the activization of all the forces of man within a harmonious whole" (Talmon 1960:25). Christianity now became the "arch-enemy" of the new religion which sought the unity of history and of mankind. With the "death of

God” came a substitute in the “myth of the nation” and the organic whole “nation” (individuals comprising a single whole) became the primary datum (Talmon 1991:1-2).

Talmon’s conclusion is that modern totalitarian governments became secular religions. It began to spread throughout Western Europe after 1870 and found a home eastward in Russia.²¹ Talmon concludes,

Whatever may be said about the significance of the economic or other factors in the shaping of beliefs, it can hardly be denied that the all-embracing attitudes of this kind, once crystallized, are the real substance of history. The concrete elements of history, the acts of politicians, the aspirations of people, the ideas, values, preferences and prejudices of an age, are the outward manifestations of its religion in the widest sense. (1970:11)

Taylor’s Providential Deism

A more direct and recent critique of Blumenberg is that of Charles Taylor in his work *The Secular Age* (2007). Taylor rejects the “Blumenbergian twist” which attempts to legitimize the modern age because it “utterly passes over the ways in which this new self-understanding has been constructed in our history” (Taylor 2007:294). Taylor addresses the “fundamental shift” that has occurred in “naïve understanding which has led to disenchantment of the modern age.” He is concerned with the origin of “exclusive humanism.” What Taylor offers is not a theory but the “contemporary lived understanding; that is, the way we naively take things to be” (2007:30). How moderns stand today is the result of being historical beings. There is a present awareness that the historical situation involved a struggle over a period of time—“our sense of where we are is crucially defined in part by a story of how we got there” (2007:29). How moderns

²¹ This was the subject of his two later works which formed a trilogy on political Messianism, *Political Messianism and Myth of the Nation* and *Vision of Revolution: Ideological Polarization in the Twentieth Century*.

explain the way the present age is related to the past is by a “subtraction account.” In response to Blumenberg’s thesis, Taylor says,

This is the massive shift in horizon, which has been identified as the rise of modernity. It has been differently understood. By secular humanists, it is often framed by what I call a “subtraction” story: the religio-metaphysical illusions fall away, and human beings discover that they just *are* humans united in societies which can have no other normative principles but those of the MMO [*modern moral order*], and so on for the other features of the newly defined predicament. (2007:294)

Taylor begins his analysis by asking the question, “why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable?” (2007:25). There was a time when presence of God was integral to the fabric of society. Society imagined that God was intimately involved in nature and in the social structures of their lives. The world was “enchanted” with spirits, angels and demons. In a world that experienced a “felt presence of God” in a natural order, a social hierarchy, and was “enchanted” it would have been nearly impossible to not believe. In such a world atheism was nearly inconceivable (2007:25-26). But the enchanted world became disenchanting. Taylor asks how this occurred. Taylor argues there was a shift in the understanding of “fullness.”

The key difference we’re looking at between our two marker dates is a shift in the understanding of what I called “fullness”, between a condition in which our highest spiritual and moral aspirations points us inescapably to God, one might say, make no sense without God, to one in which they can be related to a host of different sources, and frequently are referred to sources which deny God. (2007: 26)

The “fuller” subtraction story says there must be some reason for the transition. How was a world where the fullness was occupied by God replaced by the alternatives? The “subtraction” theory based on “disenchantment” is not a sufficient explanation. Taylor argues that the exclusive humanism which arose afterward did not present itself as

an alternative. Natural science was not presented as an alternative to God. The alternative was first “imagined.” It was reached over a period of time by “emerging out of earlier Christian forms.”

Taylor argues the transition occurred because of a “buffered” self (2007:27-28). Moderns live with a greater sense of a boundary between the self and the other. He describes the self of the pre-modern world as “porous.” In the enchanted world there was a greater sense of being connected with the surrounding world. The self was influenced and molded by forces outside of the self. But the buffered self sees that boundary dividing internal from external as a means of protecting the self. There is a sense in which the buffered self is taken out of the world.²²

Taylor addresses the issue of time and eternity. He shows that Blumenberg’s reoccupation thesis cannot be supported because he does not give due weight to the concept of time, especially eschatological higher time. Taylor defines *saeculum* as century or age. Secular time for the modern is understood as “ordinary time.” By contrast are “higher times,” such as holidays, which “gather and reorder” secular time. In paganism time was viewed differently. Time was a “moving image of eternity.” The stars in their endless circularity demonstrated the fixed and unchanging eternity. True reality was in eternity, in the realm of ideas, not in the temporal world. That which was located in time possessed less reality. The sphere of the constellations was closer to eternity and provides a limit to temporal events (2007:56). Ever repeating “great years” were viewed as holding huge cycles of time in place.

Christianity preserved the idea of eternity but differed from the pagan conception by introducing the linear historical time. The coming of the Incarnate Christ gave

²² See Taylor’s discussion in 2007:29-61.

support to the idea that what happens in the temporal world has significance. Taylor notes that out of the early Christian conception came another idea of eternity arose in neo-Platonism. God is not a player in history. The way to God involves rising out of time. Augustine introduced a new concept of eternity, the idea of “gathered time.” To God, all times are present as an instant. God “contains all time” (2007:57). The past is gathered together with the present to project a future. With this understanding, God can be a player in time. “The past, which ‘objectively’ exists no more, is here in my present; it shapes this moment in which I turn to a future, which ‘objectively’ is not yet, which is here qua project” (2007:56).²³

Through the middle ages, two models of eternity were present. It preserved what he calls “Plato eternity” which is perfect immobility and impassivity, and “God’s Eternity” which preserves time but gathers time in an instant (Taylor 2007:57). Only by participating in God’s life can one experience this eternity. This idea of gathered time is ultimately expressed in Christianity by the idea of the eschatological.

Though he does not focus on the subject eschatology *per se*, as did Blumenberg and Löwith, it is clearly a part of his explanation and argument.²⁴ Taylor uses the term Parousia to highlight the eschatological outlook of the Medieval concept of time. The Carnival is a foreshadow of the Parousia, a looking ahead to a time of eternal joy (2007:47). Carnival is an example of kairoitic time. Taylor says that the “kairoitic knots” expressed in Carnival, but also in holidays, nationalistic historiography and Revolutions point to “higher times.” Higher times, “gathered, assembled, and reordered, punctuated profane, ordinary time” (2007:54). He notes that the term “eternity” has been

²³ Taylor notes Augustine “foreshadowed the three *ekstaseis* of Heidegger” (2007:56).

²⁴ The present edition of *A Secular Age* does not index the term eschatology.

traditionally used in philosophy and theology to express the ultimate time. Along with “Plato eternity” and “God eternity” is a third kind of higher time, “Great Time” which is a “time of origins.” This type of eternal time is part of folk traditions. It is the time when the order of things was established in the world. It is time past which is beyond repetition but can be “re-approached” by ritual (Taylor 2007:57).

The three aspects of higher time formed the time-consciousness the medievalists. “In each case, as well as the ‘horizontal’ dimension of merely secular time, there is a ‘vertical’ dimension, which can all of the ‘warps’ and foreshortening of time which I mentioned above. The flow of secular time occurs in a multiplex vertical context, so that everything relates to more than one kind of time” (Taylor 2007:56).

Taylor explains that out of the pre-modern world arose the possibility of an “anti-structure” in society, one where the “human code” existed in a larger spiritual cosmos that led to the secularization of public space. Taylor sees this as an important element in the rise of secularity. The pre-moderns lived life with a sense of *communitas* set in a spiritual context. *Communitas* is the “intuition” shared by members of the community which is a sense that human beings are associated together as equals in spite of their varied individual roles. In society there is a structure which is made up of the “role-sets, status-sets and status-sequences” by which the society consciously operates. Anti-structures arise out of a society where the members of the community take their structure seriously as a collective whole (2007:47-48). In modern society there was an “eclipse of the anti-structure” which created the possibility for secularization.

I draw attention to it here, because I think that it played a very important role in the rise of secularity: 1. That is, it was the eclipse of this sense of necessary complementarity, of the need for anti-structure, which preceded and helped to bring about the secularization of public space. The idea that a code need leave no

space for the principle that contradicts, that there need be no limit to its enforcement, which is the spirit of totalitarianism, is not just one of the consequences of the eclipse of anti-structure in modernity. That is certainly true. But it is also the case that the temptation to put into effect a code which brooks no limit came first. Yielding to this temptation is what helped bring modern secularity, in all its senses into being. (2007:50-51)

Taylor notes that the first occurrence was in the epoch of the French Revolution. Here the anti-structure was “totally missing.” The French Revolution produced its own secular festivals, carnivals, etc. However, Carnival and Revolution cannot coincide because the carnival was only meaningful within the existing structure of society. A revolution replaces the present order and births new codes. The negation of earlier codes was to create space for a new utopia (Taylor 2007:53).²⁵

Taylor notes the shift began at the time of the Reformation when there was a turn toward the inner life. The inward turn began with Meister Eckhart and was followed by a number of others such as the Taborites and Lollards. The desire for a more intense devotional life, a rejection of Roman Catholic “white magic” as seen in the sacramental practice and the doctrine of salvation by faith led to the earlier “Reform spirit” to the Reformation. But it also led to the “abolition of the enchanted cosmos” (2007:77). The leader of this movement, John Calvin, made a radical break with the past. The channels of grace were not external but internal. The internal life, guided by the Holy Spirit, was to lead to a new order of things (2007:80). The movement toward immanence was accomplished by rejecting God in two ways: the purpose of order was defined as human flourishing and to obtain it was strictly a matter within human power (2007:84). A consequent of this turn was the rise of exclusive humanism.

²⁵ Taylor draws an analogy to the “revolution” of Paris in May of 1968: “Think of May ’68 in Paris, with its denunciation of structure (*le cloisonnement*), and the energy of *cummunitas* that it thought it was releasing. The ‘Soixante-huitards’ wanted precisely to eschew the anti-structure of private space; they wanted to make it central to public space, indeed, to abolish the distinction between the two” (2007:53).

The “turning point” toward secularization occurred with what Taylor calls “providential Deism.” He singles out three facets of Deism: God as the Divine Designer of the world, impersonal order as primary, and a true, original natural religion (2007:221). Deism accepted God as the Architect of the universe but did not believe that God intervenes in history. What occurred was an “anthropocentric shift” which provided an immanent order of God’s purposes for certain kinds of “human flourishing.” God’s relation among men is mediated by an impersonal, immanent order which had removed all enchantment and operated by causal laws (2007:290). The idea of human relationships based on law codes in ideas such as “Natural Law,” “Utilitarian Principle” and “the Categorical Imperative” comprises in part the meaning of modernity. “My thesis here,” says Taylor, “is that, although Reformed Christianity (and not only its Protestant variants) was a large part of the motor behind this development, its successful advance creates a predicament—where we in fact *do* live in an immanent order of law, ethics, and universe governed by natural law—which can be read in terms of the anthropocentric shift” (2007:290-291). Deism had placed God’s existence outside the horizon. What resulted was a “major shift in our background understating of the human epistemic predicament.”

Conclusion

Blumenberg’s critics offer sufficient information to show that his thesis of reoccupation is not a satisfactory explanation. There are too many important aspects of from eschatology which are not addressed in his theory. Blumenberg demonstrates the ongoing significance of eschatology for the modern situation. There is merit to his thesis that a belief can be replaced by a rational idea. There can be an over application of the

idea that X is a secularization of Y; for example, the guarantee of knowledge (theoretical certainty) is the secularization of Christian doctrine of salvation, the modern work ethic is a secularization of Christian saintliness, etc (*LMA* 13f). Everything in the modern age is reduced to an illegitimate secularization of Christianity. As demonstrated in the second chapter of this work, the issue of eschatology is more complex. The problem, however, is that his reoccupation thesis does not take in to account a number of important facts. He locates the beginning of secularization after the Peace of Westphalia in the rise of legal concepts related to canon law, but it is clear that his thesis does not consider larger, pervasive influence of eschatology. Eschatology is, however, not merely a concern about the final Judgment as Blumenberg believes. He makes no attempt to distinguish the various approaches to Christian eschatology arising at that period. For example, he makes no mention of the Joachite tradition or the developments in the interpreting eschatology which led to “post-millennialism.” A significant example is his failure to see the eschatological impact of the interpretation of Daniel 12:4 [“many shall run to and fro, knowledge shall be increased”] in the time leading into the modern period.

Blumenberg points to Francis Bacon (1561–1626) as a critical figure of the modern scientific knowledge used in the service of man. He argues that Bacon’s idea of paradise was not eschatological but teleological based on understanding nature (*LMA*, 107, 383-388). Bacon is indeed an important figure in the transition to the modern age. However, parallel to the development of his method, Bacon explicitly wrote with an understanding of eschatology as he considered his age. He frequently referenced Daniel’s apocalyptic vision to support modern advancements in scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge was a development in a progressive eschatological fulfillment of

prophecy. Bacon clearly saw himself in the context of an eschatological mission. In the work cited by Blumenberg, *Valerius Terminus*, Bacon says,

for to my understanding, it is not violent to the letter, and safe now after the event, so to interpret that place in the prophecy of Daniel, where, speaking of the latter times, it is said, Many shall pass to and fro, and science shall be increased; as if the opening of the world by navigation and commerce, and the further discovery of knowledge, should meet in one time or age. (1819:131)

Bacon is important because not only does he show the connection between eschatology and science, but reveals a hermeneutical shift which was important in the transition to the modern age.²⁶ Bacon combined, perhaps for the first time, biblical prophecy with science and history. He appealed to Edenic dominion mandate (Genesis 1:28) in the context of a future eschatological fulfillment. Most significantly, Bacon interpreted biblical prophecy as *progressively* fulfilled in *history*. In the *Advancement of Learning* he references Daniel's "latter times" prophecy saying it applied to his time period. Developments in natural and civil history come together within a eschatological future vision: "For it may be truly affirmed to the honour of these times, and in a virtuous emulation with antiquity, that this great building of the world had never throughlights made in it, till the age of us and our fathers" (Bacon 1952a:37). Bacon links together the understanding of the knowledge of the cosmos through astronomy and navigation to the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of the last days saying "it may seem ordained by God to be coevals, that is, to meet in one age. For so the prophet Daniel speaking of the latter times foretelleth..." (1952a:37).

In a significant paragraph he claims that prophecy does not happen all at once but is "springing and germinate accomplishment throughout many ages", that is, using biological imagery, the prophecy is progressively fulfilled (1952a:37). In the same place

²⁶ See Chapter Two, p. 73f.

he notes that church history receives the same divisions as civil (secular) history. This is most likely viewing history in three periods: Greek, Roman, and Christian (1952a:37). It is clear that Bacon employed a modified three-fold division of historical time first introduced by Joachim.

History ecclesiastical receiveth the same divisions with history civil: but future in the propriety thereof may be divided into the history of the church, by a general name; history of prophecy; and history of providence. The first describeth the times of the militant church.... The second, which is the history of prophecy consistent of two relatives, the prophecy, and the accomplishment; and therefore the nature of such a work ought to be, that every prophecy of the Scripture be sorted with the event fulfilling the same, *throughout the ages of the world* [emphasis added]; both for the better confirmation of faith and for the better illumination of the Church touching those parts of prophecies which are yet unfilled.... The third, which is history of providence containeth that excellent correspondence which is between God's revealed will and his secret will:... (1952a:37)

A further example is found in the *New Atlantis* (1614-1617) in the mythical island Bensalem, whose righteousness was "greater than the righteousness of Europe." Bensalem was a Christian nation of eschatological fulfillment. As the story goes, in Solomon's house, which was dedicated to the study of the works and creatures of God, was located the Old and New Testaments "and the Apocalypse itself" (1952b:203). Bacon states that scientific knowledge was the fulfillment of Daniel's eschatological prophecy. Malcolm Bull correctly states that Bacon, "believed that knowledge would continue to grow in fulfillment of prophecy because prophecy itself was progressive in its fulfillment. He argued for the progress of science not by extrapolation from that progress, but by coupling it with the progressive knowledge derived from prophecy" Bull 1995:12). Bacon may have empowered humankind by emphasizing *nomos* over *phusis*, as Blumenberg shows, but there is no question that Bacon saw his project in the context of Christian eschatology. As Bull concludes,

It is therefore difficult to accept Blumenberg's contention that Bacon is introducing a scientifically generated concept of progress. On the contrary, both Bacon (whom Blumenberg thinks of as establishing the idea of progress) and Lessing (whom Blumenberg sees as inflating the scientific idea to theological dimensions) would appear to be appropriating a well-defined and established Christian theology of progressive enlightenment through prophetic fulfillment in history (1995:13-14).

Tuvenson contradicts Blumenberg's thesis giving support for the influence of the eschatological idea on the notion of progress in the work of William Twisse (1578–1646).²⁷ In the preface to Mede's work, *The Key of the Revelation*, (1643), Twisse combined an almost Baconian confidence in the present and future. Likewise quoting Dan.12:4, Twisse said the verse prophesies that the "opening of the world by Navigation and Commerce, and the increase of knowledge, should meet both in one time, or age....And this increase of knowledge, which these latter times have brought forth, appears in nothing more remarkable, then in the interpretation of these mysterious booke, the Revelation of Saint Iohn" (quoted by Tuveson 1949:79). Joseph Mede and others looked for the age, "When darkness covered the earth, and grosse darkness the people; the Lord hath risen upon us, and his glorie hat been seene upon us."²⁸ This, according to Tuveson, indicates that the modern age was carried on the shoulders of the ancients.

When Blumenberg tries to legitimize modernity on the basis of its progressive nature, he begs the question. Because he did not work with a more comprehensive grasp the scope of eschatology and the concept of time of which progress is heir, he sets the advancements of rationality in the scope of a linear eschatological frame. What is at the heart of eschatology is the concept of linear verses cyclical time which he does not

²⁷ Blumenberg was apparently not familiar with Ernest Lee Tuveson's work *Millennium and Utopia* which came out the same year as Löwith's. In contrast to Löwith who addressed French and German thought, Tuveson focused on English authors of the 17th and 18th centuries.

²⁸ Mede as quoted by Tuveson 1949:79.

address. As David Ingram demonstrates, the “link between legitimacy and progress has nothing whatsoever to do with such a progressive capacity” (1990:7-8) “Legitimacy” cannot be based on the necessity of the accomplishments of reason outside of a linear concept of time which provides meaning to those accomplishments, at least on a large historical scale.

CHAPTER SIX

THE END OF ESCHATOLOGY?

The goal of this work has been to show the importance of study of eschatology in the area of philosophy. This study has investigated and analyzed the subject of eschatology as presented in the philosophies of Heidegger, Berdyaev, and Blumenberg showing that eschatology was a central idea in their philosophies. Chapter Two provided the historical material to establish the continual impact of Christian eschatological belief had in Western thought. As seen in the preceding discussion, a number of philosophers and political historians in the twentieth century, such as Löwith, Tuveson, *et al*, considered eschatology as an explanatory device critical to understanding the process of secularization. Their analysis of eschatology, however, was limited to a particular eschatological tradition or understanding of the subject, and did not consider the broader dimensions as demonstrated in the Chapter Two. What can be concluded from the examination in the previous chapters and what can be gained from this study for philosophy in general?

In Chapter Two a number of points were made from history showing how eschatology affected Western thought and political action. The idea of linear time in Western eschatology provided a hermeneutical framework for understanding social, political, scientific and historical events. It was noted that eschatology is not limited strictly to Christian theology. Paganism had some sense of a cosmic end of time as seen

from the ancient Persian cosmologies and the pagan influences on Christian thought through the Middle Ages. Since the Middle Ages, pagan and Christian beliefs intermingled to create different understandings of the end of time, whether it was the six thousand year structure of historic time or the inclusion of Sibylline Oracles and other pagan sources. Eschatological belief through much of the Western Christian thought was a blend of Christian scriptures or pagan sources, and was interpreted by political and social events. Therefore, it is not inappropriate in the modern age to refer to eschatology as strictly “Christian,” however, it is necessary to understand the elements that constitute “eschatology” and have clarity on the distinctions. The conclusion made is that the subject of eschatology is complex.

Through this background examination of the history of eschatology, it became clear there were two broad currents of eschatology in the West. The Latin tradition of the Western Church articulated in Augustine with its distinction between celestial and terrestrial life, and a second tradition that was set forth by Joachim consisting of Greek or Alexandrian influence. Both traditions viewed time and history as coming to an end. But they differed in the intensity of expectation. The first tradition allowed for undetermined period, was dualistic and emphasized a transcendent intervention. The second view stressed the imminence of the end, tended to be apocalyptic and emphasized an immanent cause of end operating inwardly in the Self. This second view was particularly influential in German theology from Luther to the Pietists, and later German Romanticism and Idealism. Because of its inward eschatological emphasis, it tended to remain more acceptable among moderns. All the philosophers discussed in this work, especially Heidegger, Berdyaev, and Blumenberg, are heirs of this second eschatological tradition.

Both traditions were “Christian” in that both looked forward to the end of the age. The eschatology of earliest Christianity and that which prevailed in the Latin Church was *transcendent* in that the present reality would come to an end by the intervention of a divine or outside source. Two realms, heavenly (*caelum*) and earthly (*seculum*), could exist side by side until the fulfillment of biblical prophecy in the future. The end, however, was not perceived as imminent. Augustine allowed for the possibility of hundreds of years of future time. Apocalyptic expectations subsided as a result of the political establishment of Christianity in the Roman Empire and Augustine’s argument against apocalypticism helped curb apocalypticism. Nevertheless, the idea continued that the end would come by external or transcendent intervention by God at the end of time. The second eschatological tradition arose after the teaching of Joachim in the Middle Ages anticipated an *immanent* manifestation of the “Spirit” in the *seculum* through an historical unfolding. This view which was centered in German theology heightened the expectation of a coming age and eventually lead to a revival of apocalypticism in the early modern period. However, the difference between the transcendent and immanent view was that the age to come would be brought about from “within,” through the working of the “Spirit” in the hearts of the Christian faithful. This transcendent/ immanent distinction can also be referred to as “outer” (transcendent) and “inner” (immanent). The transcendent eschatology is the outer in that eschatological fulfillment is caused outside of the human action either externally by Nature (the natural world) or supernatural forces (as in the case of religion). This difference is important in understanding what resulted in the modern period.

Changes in eschatology took place at the beginning of the modern period with the rise of scientific method. In early modern eschatology, at the beginning of modern science, the objective world of Nature was the eschatological object of transformation. This was noted in Chapter Two and in Chapter Five, particularly with Bacon. As noted in the second chapter, there was a renewed sense, revived by pagan literary sources, that the world was old and in decline at the beginning of the modern period. At the same time, the idea that the universe might be eternal was becoming intellectually acceptable. These two ideas, that the world would end and the world was eternal, conflicted with the transcendent eschatological belief in the end of time and with the belief that the end was imminent. This tension is observed in Bacon, Mede, and others who tried to reconcile the two views of the world. However, the two views of an eschatological end of the age and an eternal universe could not be sustained for long. If the natural universe was eternal, it did not make sense that the world should end.

One attempt to reconcile the two views was that the infinite universe was grand enough to contain God. This notion was not far from pantheism. Deism, as noted by Taylor, was also the result of this tension marking a turn toward secularism. Another example of this attempt to reconcile new ideas about the world was seen in the rise of postmillennial eschatology. Heaven would be on earth and brought about through human effort and progressive reform. People were to prepare the way for the coming Kingdom. However, as noted in Chapter Two, this attempt to reconcile the conflict would end by the twentieth century. This is the “failed eschatology” spoken of by Blumenberg.

In the meantime, however, the second “inner” eschatology was able to endure longer than the other for its eschatology was less affected by the external world or

science. The eschatological interpretation from Joachim to Luther to the Pietists allowed for a immanent eschatology where eternity was already located in the heart in union with God. This eschatology was compatible with science and history, at least for a while. First, this inner eschatology was compatible with the notion of self-sustaining, self-contained system of Nature. Biological life was the natural model. Rather than look for a transcendent intervention into the external objective world, eschatological fulfillment could occur by a transformation within nature. Science could play a vital role in the transformation of the natural environment. However, the compatibility with natural science was short lived. Nature does not support an eschatology of hope and progress, but as the ancients understood, the world of nature was decline and death, and cyclical at best. Berdyaev notes this problem. Only Spirit could provide hope and could break the cycle of nature.

The second area where this eschatology could be compatible was with history. Eschatology in general was crucial for the belief of a universal history. This was especially true for the immanent eschatological view. The transcendent eschatology of Augustine did not offer a progressive idea of history. His two-tiered view allowed for a secular existence for an undetermined duration that would eventually end with a divine (transcendent) apocalyptic intervention. The notion of a progressive development in history leading to an age of perfection, however, begins with Joachim's evolutionary concept of historical time built on the Trinitarian structure. The most important feature was the belief in an age to come of the Spirit prior to the end of the world. This age would be a revolutionary transformation. Apocalyptic expectations were heightened in anticipation of the transformation of society and nature. As shown above, this view of

history inspired German Idealism. This too, however, was short lived. As the belief in an infinite universe became acceptable, the expectation of the end of this world also ended. Apocalypticism transformed into revolution in the here and now. As shown above in Chapter Two, the French Revolution marked the completed shift away from earlier eschatological expectations. The notion of progress would continue for a while if the present universe was all there was but it soon made little sense to retain the idea. This is indicated in Spengler's view of world history. What remained was an eternal world where cultures would come in and go out of existence.

Taylor identifies in his definition of "Providential Deism" important elements in the transition to a secular age. He touches on eschatology, but does not develop its significance in that transition. What was at the core of immanent eschatology, however, was not Nature, or History, but the Self. The realization of eschatological perfection essentially located in the Self working outward through the body to the world, was an essential element of the second type of eschatology. Berdyaev is clearly in this tradition when he sets forth eschatological fulfillment as the inner (noumenal) overcoming the outer (phenomenal) world in existential time. Berdyaev illustrates the shift away from nature and history to preserve eschatology. Eschatology is protected in the realm of personal eschatology. The objective world becomes the eschatological enemy (antichrist) to be overcome in his eschatology.

Heidegger also follows in this tradition. Unlike Berdyaev, Heidegger is careful to avoid theology. As seen in Chapter Three, Heidegger begins with phenomenology, but goes beyond the subject/object, noumenal/phenomenal distinctions in appealing to eschatology for his understanding of Being. Heidegger's eschatology is realized in the

present as an essential structure of Being. However, as noted in Chapter Three, in his attempt to avoid the charge of subjectivism, Heidegger struggled with a tension. Heidegger clearly rejected teleology explicitly appealing to eschatology for understanding Being. The question is, why not use teleology? Understanding the distinction between two types of eschatology in the west and the transition from linear historical time may help to explain Heidegger's choice of eschatology and the tension he faced. Heidegger focused on the inner experience of eschatology as noted in his treatment of Paul. The use of eschatology is less problematic for Heidegger so long as he applies it to the experience of Dasein. However, when he extends this experience beyond the individual, teleology would appear to make more sense.

As noted in the introduction, the term *eschatology* is relatively new, coming into use in the early modern period. *Eschatology* in Christian theology meant the end of an historical period and the external world brought about by divine intervention to end one age and begin a new world. This is the understanding in the West through the Latin tradition into the Modern period. However, eschatology of the second type (Greek) was teleological in nature; the inner works outward toward eschatological fulfillment. This eschatology would be better described as a "teleological eschatology." By the time of Bacon (see Chapter Five), eschatology and teleology began to blur. What occurred at the beginning of the Modern age was not a mere replacement of inferior facts about the world with better rational ideas, as Blumenberg argues, but a more fundamental conflict of two conceptions of the nature of reality and time. It was a deep contextual change which tried to reconcile the linear and finite view of the present universe received from Christian eschatology with a view of the world which was eternal. The rational view of

an eternal world gradually opened the space for teleological view of the world as seen in Hegel and life philosophy. Berdyaev rightly identifies the turning point with Kant who provided the intellectual shift away from eschatology toward teleology.¹ This was an important turn for eschatology. Even though a transcendent eschatology was no longer acceptable in the outside world, there is an inner, immanent understanding of eschatology endured for a time as a vestige of Christian thought. What comes to light is that the modern age entailed a shift from a world that viewed itself, as a whole, eschatologically and was teleological in particulars, to a world which was essentially teleological at the whole and located eschatology in the realm of the Self. This tension between teleology and eschatology may also help to explain why Heidegger later addresses the difference between *eschatos* and *telos* in Aristotle. He captured the eschatological *experience* in his return to “original Christianity” but when applied to the larger community (folk), it is hard to see why teleology would not suffice.

This exchange of eschatology and teleology also is supported by Berdyaev’s discussion on dualism and monism. Berdyaev noted that the history of philosophy was the failed attempt to achieve monism. Monism could not be obtained until the noumenal overcame the phenomenal. So, Berdyaev looked to an eschatological age or world to come. Heidegger, however, was not a dualist in his understanding of Being. This is why he had difficulty applying eschatology outside the individual experience of Dasein. What is left is a personal eschatology experienced in existential time. In this life, only death is in the eschatological future.

Is it possible to have eschatology in a secular world? For the individual the answer may be yes in Heidegger’s sense of Dasein’s experience of future time. However,

¹ See Chapter Three, 193f.

on the cosmic level of historical time, the answer depends. On the one hand, the answer is “no,” if the universe is infinite and eternal. It is only possible to speak of eschatology if there is a decisive beginning and an end to the universe. The individual can say, “I will die.” However, this cannot be said of the whole of the universe. It is logically possible, however, this is not the case. Even if there was a decisive “Big Bang” and the present universe will someday entropy out of existence, the possibility of an infinite universe remains. On the personal or individual level of eschatology, however, there is a beginning and end. Here there can be “Being-*toward*-the-end.” What does it mean to speak of eschatology beyond the experience of the individual?

To speak of eschatology beyond the individual perspective makes little sense in an teleological universe. What appears to remain beyond the individual eschatology, in spite of Heidegger’s protest, is the view of the world presented in Spengler based on a cyclical pattern of an unending universe. Heidegger’s application of eschatology may be the last attempt to seriously apply eschatology in the modern world. The horizon of experience may be considered a teleological end, but not eschatology in the true sense of the term. If the present physical universe, on the other hand, is not infinite, the only way to think eschatologically is an apocalyptic eschatology of death. Nature, History and the Self end in death. This apocalyptic eschatology is characteristic of the latter half of the twentieth century and may define the end of the modern age.

One concept which was not fully explored in this work but only introduced at the introduction is the idea of space in relation to eschatological time. Parallel to Christian eschatology was the missionary mandate to proclaim the message of Christianity throughout all the earth. As the world became larger through exploration, the urgency

intensified to spread the message. As the span of the globe became clearer in the modern age space became smaller and the sense that the end of time increased among many Christians who looked toward the fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

What happens, however, when the “ends of the earth” are reached, when this world is all that remains? In order for there to be any sense of eschatology in the future, new spaces would have to exist. The exploration of “outer space,” for example, might allow for this sense of space in the natural world. However, the prospects of occupying that space are difficult and limited at least at the present time. Other realms of space have been more realizable, such as in the realm of the mind (psychology) or manufactured space such as “cyber space.” Both, however, are “inner” space. Even if more spaces become available, however, it seems unlikely that it would change the present modern situation eschatologically. Such an examination is beyond the scope of this work. At present what remains in the horizon is an apocalyptic future which ends in Absolute Death in any area of reality.

An example of an apocalyptic eschatology is the recent work by Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (2010). Žižek uses eschatological metaphor to analyze the present global situation and to describe demise of capitalism. “The underlying premise of the present book is a simple one: the global capitalist system is approaching an apocalyptic zero-point. Its ‘four riders of the apocalypse’ are comprised by the ecological crisis, the consequences of the biogenetic revolution, imbalances within the system itself (problems with intellectual property; forthcoming struggles over raw materials, food and water), and the explosive growth of social diversions and exclusions.” (Zizek 2010:x) Zizek provides his own analysis of apocalypticism explaining there are

presently three types of apocalyptic: Christian fundamentalist, New Age, and techno-digital-post-human (2010:336). He dismisses traditional Christian apocalyptic as the “most ridiculous” yet “still dangerous in terms of its content” (2010:337). He further categorizes apocalyptic into those types within the power of human control and those beyond human control. Examples of the second are in the realm of the “natural” as seen in natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunami’s, etc. The new forms of apocalyptic are a modern creation: those initially created by humans but threaten to be out of human control if not addressed within time. The apocalyptic threat is not from an outside, transcendent source (religious or natural), but is immanent, “self-generated by human activities linked to scientific advances (the ecological consequences of industry, the psychic consequences of uncontrolled biogenetics, and so on), such that the sciences are simultaneously (one of) the source(s) of risk, as well as (one of) the sources(s) of coping with the threat, of finding a way out...” (2010:360-361). The ideal world in Zizek’s future is the communist society where, like a rock concert,

All liberal-individualist prejudice need to be abandoned here—yes, each individual should be fully immersed in the crowd, joyfully abandoning his or her critical distance, passion should obliterate all reasoning, the public should follow the rhythm and orders of the leaders on stage, the atmosphere should be fully ‘pagan,’ and inextricable mixture of the sacred and the obscene, and so on. In this way, the very act of over-identification with ‘totalitarian’ *sinthomes* suspends their articulation into a properly ‘totalitarian’ ideological space. (2010:371-372)

Passionate immersion does not negate the “rational Self” but ends the “reign of the survival (self-preservation) instinct” (2010:373). To realize utopia, space needs to be created to open the “field for authentic idiosyncrasies.” Referencing Alain Badiou, social space is “progressively experienced as ‘worldless’.” Zizek believes that, “With such a space ‘meaningless’ violence is the only form protest can take” (2010:364-365). In the

modern world, space is created by destruction. If there was a value of Nazism, it “disclosed reality in a way which allowed its subjects to acquire a global cognitive map, and which included a space for their meaningful engagement” (2010:365).

A critique of Žižek’s eschatology is beyond the scope of this paper, but Žižek illustrates the enduring influence of thinking eschatologically in philosophy. Perhaps he will be the last to do so. Perhaps eschatology has come to an end as a philosophical subject. Perhaps a new term is needed to resolve the tension between eschatology and teleology. One term is found in the biblical eschatological texts—*sunteleias* (συντελεία) which means “to end together” at the end of the age.² Nevertheless, as long as there is a sense that things are not right in this world and as long as there remains hope for a better world, it seems some form of eschatology will persist as a way of interpreting the experiences of human life in the Twenty-First Century.

² Daniel 12:4, 13 for *qetz* and Ezekiel.7:2, 15 in conjunction with *`akal*; *to bring to an end, destroy*; Matthew 13:39-40,49; 28:20.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.” (Rev 20:4-8 NIV)

Appendix B

The “Sequence of Kingdoms” from of the *Sibylline Oracles* (Book Three)

III. 162 Then there arose inside me the voice of the great God, (163) ordering me to prophesy through every (164) land, and to kings, and to bring to their minds future events. (165) And the first thing he brought to my knowledge was (166) the number of human kingdoms that will arise.

167 The house of Solomon shall rule first of all, (168) and the Phoenicians, invaders of Asia and of other (169) islands; also the Panphylian race, the Persians, the Phrygians, (170) the Carians, the Mysians, and the race of wealthy Lydians.

171 And then the Greeks, proud and impious; (172) another >ple, from Macedonia, great and diverse, shall rule, (173) coming upon men as a fearsome cloud of war. (174) But the heavenly God will utterly destroy them.

175 But then shall arise another kingdom, (176) white and many-headed, from the western sea. (177) It will rule much land, overthrow many people, (r8) and bring fear in its wake to all rulers. (179) It will also plunder much gold and silver (180) from many cities — but there will be gold again in the God-given earth, (i8i) and then too both silver and finery, (182) and they will bring trouble upon men. But those men will meet great (183) disaster when they begin their proud and unjust ways. (184)

Immoral behaviour will be forced on them at once; (185) male will lust with male, they will place boys (i86) in dens of vice, and in those days (187) men will be afflicted with great distress confusing all, (i88) confounding all, and filling all with evil (189) through sordid greed and ill-gained wealth, (190) in many lands and especially in Maceca. (191) Among them shall arise hatred and every form of trickery, (192) until the seventh reign, the reign (193) of an Egyptian king of Greek birth. (194) And then they will be the guides of life to all humankind.

From John R. Bartlett 1985:42-43.

Appendix C

I Thess.4:13-5:10

“13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words. [chapter 5] 1 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 5 You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. 9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.

II Thessalonians 2:1-12

“1 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. 3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is

worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. 5 Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? 6 And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."