

Reading Heidegger through the Cross

On Eberhard Jüngel's Heideggerian Ontology

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ABSTRACT This article is concerned with how a particular concept of ontology switched from theistic to atheistic to theistic again due to the influences and disciples of Martin Heidegger. It is agreed that Heidegger took aspects of Christian thought, namely from Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther, and Søren Kierkegaard, stripping them of their relation to God and instead orientating them to nothingness. Despite Heidegger's methodological atheism, his ontology was taken up by a number of theologians such as Ernst Fuchs and Rudolf Bultmann, who in their turn influenced Eberhard Jüngel, who in turn mentioned the direct influence that Heidegger has on his thought. Whilst Jüngel acknowledges his debts to Heidegger in the area of ontology, Jüngel also seeks to incorporate the history of God into ontology, where the history of God as Trinity is defined by the passivity of Christ on the cross, and how that event redefines evil's work in nothingness. This article initially explores how Heidegger formulated his account of ontology, then explores how Jüngel re-Christianized Heidegger's ontology; evaluating what can be drawn from these shifts about the relationship between ontology and history.

KEYWORDS authenticity; Heidegger, Martin; Jüngel, Eberhard; nothingness; ontology; theology of the cross

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Despite Heidegger's own hostility and ambivalence to theology and the use of God, his work bestrides philosophy and theology in the twentieth century. The influence that Heidegger has on theology has been deeply studied, both in his time and since, and in a remarkably ecumenical move, his thought has been taken up by both Catholic and Protestant thinkers. The focus of this study will be on a particular strand of Protestant engagement with Heidegger, in particular how his account of being informs Eberhard Jüngel's cruciform theology.¹ It will argue that Heidegger's accounts of authenticity and nothingness are taken from Christian thought, but de-Christianized in how they are no longer grounded in God but instead ground Dasein. Through an exploration of Jüngel's thought, it will argue that Jüngel's account of human authenticity and nothingness are formulated as they are in response to Heidegger's ontology. However, it shall be shown that Heidegger is not the only influence on Jüngel's ontology, as it shall be shown that Jüngel's re-Christianization of Heidegger's ontology is irrevocably linked to the time in which he was writing; a time where questions of human suffering and God's reaction to that prompted a theology that focused on the cross. The effects that Jüngel's theology of the cross has on his understanding of human personhood will be explored, and the tension between human and divine personhood will be more fully explicated.

This article will first expound the Christian origins of Heidegger's account of being. It shall then explore how Jüngel himself takes on and acknowledges the influences of Heidegger in his own work. From there, the basis of Jüngel's theology of the cross shall be illustrated, and the impact that it has on human personhood will be explored. Finally, the link between theology and historical context for both Heidegger and Jüngel will be investigated, and conclusions drawn.

1. The influence of Heidegger on Jüngel has been noted. There is Roland Daniel Zimany's exploration of the importance of Heidegger for Jüngel in *Vehicle for God: The Metaphorical Theology of Eberhard Jüngel* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994), which follows on from his doctoral thesis "Eberhard Jüngel's Synthesis of Barth and Heidegger" (unpublished PhD diss., Duke University, 1980). Jüngel's use of Heidegger is also noted by Mark C. Mattes in "Towards Divine Relationality: Eberhard Jüngel's New Trinitarian, Postmetaphysical Approach" (unpublished PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1995) and by Arnold Neufeldt-Fast in "Eberhard Jüngel's Theological Anthropology in Light of his Christology" (unpublished PhD diss., University of St. Michael's College, Toronto, 1996). However, these studies tend to focus on how Jüngel incorporated the later Heidegger's account of language in his theology, rather than how his ontology is an inversion of Heidegger's, and as such, deeply reliant not only on the moves that Heidegger makes but on how Heidegger himself was influenced by Augustine, Luther, and Kierkegaard.

HEIDEGGER'S ACCOUNT OF *DASEIN* AS CHRISTIAN IN ORIGIN

The specifically Christian basis for Heidegger's thought is determined through study of both *Being and Time* and of his 1920–1921 lecture series, the *Phenomenology of Religious Life*. In the *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, Heidegger looks at early Christian writers to find out the kind of existence that Christian life calls one to. This work contains strands that reappear in his later work, such as the limit of temporality as the horizon of human life and Heidegger's understanding of the power of the language of address in how "through the completion of the explication, that which is explicated becomes apparently independent, released from its enactment."² Heidegger focuses largely on Christian figures in these lectures, namely on Augustine, Saint Paul, and Luther. These lectures are seen to have shaped his own writing in *Being and Time*, where Heidegger makes positive and frequent references to Augustine, as well as making mention of Luther and Kierkegaard. Inwood lays out the importance of these thinkers and these lectures for Heidegger, in that

Heidegger's account of resoluteness is colored by his study of the conversions of St Paul, St Augustine, and Martin Luther. Paul is in the same world after seeing the light on the road to Damascus as he was before, but everything looks different. Resoluteness confers on Dasein's decision a fateful necessity despite the nullity of its projection: Luther says not "perhaps this is what I should do", but "here I stand; I cannot do otherwise." In resoluteness Dasein pulls itself together as well as opens itself up.³

However it is in *Being and Time* that Heidegger outlines his own distinctive thought. Heidegger wishes to approach the question of being anew, to find out what it means to exist rather than to ascertain what exists in a way that abstracts being from everyday lived experience. He sought instead to determine Being from beings. He sees that there are things we can know about being without examining the nature of being,⁴ but Being

2. Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologie des Religiösen Lebens*, edited by Matthias Jung, Thomas Regehly and Claudius Strube, vol. 60 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1995), 85; translated by Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei as *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 59. Hereafter *Gesamtausgabe* will be cited as GA, followed by the volume number and the page number; page references in braces refer to translation.

3. Michael Inwood, *Heidegger* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 73.

4. "One can determine the nature of entities in their Being without necessarily having the explicit concept of the meaning of Being at one's disposal" Martin Heidegger, *Being*

is always grounded in an entity,⁵ and is not something beyond humanity or entities that is constant and waiting to be discovered. To describe this kind of existence Heidegger introduces the concept of Dasein as a word for the mode of existence of humans; existence that is deeply contextual.

In order to posit this new understanding of being, Heidegger sees that he must first destroy the history of ontology. Heidegger saw that Descartes' formulation of the *cogito ergo sum* destabilized, rather than stabilized, Being.⁶ Instead of doing what he saw previous metaphysics did, where it separated Being from everyday, lived existence thereby making it inaccessible,⁷ Heidegger goes back to the Greek philosophy in defining as living Being that has the capacity for discourse, and for Heidegger discourse lets something be seen. As language involves listening it is thus relational.⁸ Heidegger understood that early Greek philosophy let being be and let it reveal itself in a moment of clearing rather than determining it from outside of human existence. Instead, they let being express itself as itself within the act of existence.

Heidegger sees that "*the essence of Dasein lies in its existence.*"⁹ Heidegger sees that the existence of Dasein is that of being faced with myriad possibilities and choosing them, and "because Dasein is in each case essentially its own possibility, it *can*, in its very Being, 'choose' itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself; or only "seem" to do so" (SZ, 42 [68]). Dasein is thus primarily categorized by possibility. Due to the myriad possibilities that a being in the world faces, Dasein experiences Sorge, care, or concern about its Being-in-the-world. As Dasein is Being-in-the-world, it cannot escape the world, which is populated by

and Time, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), 8 [p. 27 of translation]. Hereafter referred to as SZ. German edition: *Sein und Zeit*, 11th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1967).

5. "Being is always the Being of an entity" (SZ 9 [29]).

6. "With the '*cogito sum*' Descartes had claimed that he was putting philosophy on a new and firm footing. But what he left undetermined when he began in this 'radical' way, was the kind of Being which belongs to the *res cogitans*, or—more precisely—the *meaning of the Being of the 'sum'*" (SZ, 24 [46]). The italics are present in the Macquarrie edition and I have thus retained them here.

7. Heidegger finds that "Descartes not only evades the ontological question of substantiality altogether; he also emphasizes explicitly that substance as such—that is to say, its substantiality—is in and for itself inaccessible from the outset" (SZ, 94 [126]).

8. "Listening to . . . is Dasein's existential way of Being-open as Being-with for Others. Indeed, hearing constitutes the primary and authentic way in which Dasein is open for its ownmost potentiality-for-Being—as in hearing the voice of a friend whom every Dasein carries with it. Dasein hears, because it understands" (SZ, 163 [206]).

9. SZ, 42 [67]. The italics are present in the Macquarrie and Robinson text.

other Daseins with which to relate, and thus existence is necessarily subject to this concern.

This outward-looking concern can go too far as “when Dasein is absorbed in the world of its concern—that is, at the same time, in its Being-with towards Others—it is not itself” (SZ, 125 [163]). Distracted by these cares and concerns, Dasein is taken in by the “they,” who seek to prevent Dasein from realizing its true self by distracting Dasein by calling it towards averageness, and inauthentic existence. The tendency towards averageness is exacerbated in that Dasein is thrown into the world and has to find its own way in the world. Dasein thus tends towards surrendering to the world, and lets the world matter to it to the extent that Dasein evades and forgets its own existence. Talk can also be subverted by the “they,” and turned into idle talk (*Gerede*), where “idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one’s own” (SZ, 169 [213]). This closes up Dasein’s being-in-the-world.

What occurs is falling: Being is consumed by care and distracted by the “they” and thus Dasein is carried along by the world and makes no choices for itself.¹⁰ It is characterized by ambiguity (*Zweideutigkeit*), idle talk, and curiosity. This alienation closes off Dasein from its authenticity and those possibilities, forcing it into inauthenticity. The Self then becomes the They-self. Dasein does not want to have authenticity because it is easier to follow the “they.” Fallenness and inauthenticity are highlighted in how they evade Dasein’s relation to death, our ownmost possibility. From this account of how fallenness can occur, there is an implicit criticism of religion, where the answers are given by an other to the individual.

Dasein can achieve authenticity because it is always called to authenticity by itself, and the process of being authentic is through individuation.¹¹ The knowledge that death is one’s ownmost possibility and thus non-relational, and anticipation, which is manifest in us by facing our death properly, individualizes Dasein and “allows it, in this individualization of itself, to become certain of the totality of its potentiality-for-Being”

10. “Dasein lets itself be carried along [mitnehmen] solely by the looks of the world; in this kind of Being, it concerns itself with becoming rid of itself as Being-in-the-world and rid of its Being alongside that which, in the closest everyday manner, is ready-to-hand” (SZ, 172 [216]).

11. “Dasein is authentically itself only to the extent that, as concerned Being-alongside and solicitous Being-with, it projects itself upon its ownmost potentiality-for-Being rather than upon the possibility of the they-self. The entity which anticipates its non-relational possibility, is thus forced by that very anticipation into the possibility of taking over from itself its ownmost Being, and doing so of its own accord” (SZ, 263 [308]).

(SZ, 266 [310]). This anticipation creates the aforementioned clearing (*Aufklärung*) and

anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concerned solicitude, but of being itself, rather in an impassioned freedom towards death—a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the “they,” and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious.

(SZ, 266 [311])¹²

It individualizes, it reveals the self, and in doing so frees it, and now the authentic self is now resolute in the face of death.

The key for Heidegger’s account of being is that the individual achieves authenticity through an orientation towards their own death, which frees them from the distractions of others who wish to cloud Dasein and turn it away from authenticity. This is reversal of a Christian account of being in that it becomes about the self changing the self, and the conscience that calls to the self, rather than the divine addressing the human or through the interruption of the divine event, such as those found in the conversion events of Saint Paul, Augustine, and Luther. Certainly the importance of choice and how it either leads to authentic or inauthentic existence occurs in both Luther and Kierkegaard, who hold that we are faced with the reality of God, which causes us to choose either God or the world, and does not allow us to not make a choice.¹³

12. Heidegger italicizes the entire passage in original, giving additional emphasis to “freedom towards death” through so-called “Sperrsatz,” or wide letterspacing. Only the latter kind of emphasis is reproduced in the quotation.

13. Stephen Mulhall notes the subversion of Kierkegaard in Heidegger’s understanding of authenticity, that humanity has been given the choice between the world and God, which cannot be escaped or not made, as it is our ownmost possibility. For Heidegger, instead of relying on God for knowledge of one’s true self and identity, it becomes about human action, and thus “by accepting the Kierkegaardian conjunction between authenticity and wholeness, but arguing that this conjunction can be properly forged by relating to one’s mortality, Heidegger in effect argues that the theological terminus of Climacus’s argument is avoidable.” Stephen Mulhall, *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996), 124. The argument that Mulhall mentions here is found in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* (vol. 1, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Kierkegaard’s Writings 12, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1992) where Kierkegaard is adamant that faith always requires a decision, and the decision towards God is the only one that grants authenticity. See also Clare Carlisle, “Kierkegaard and Heidegger,” in *The Oxford Handbook to Kierkegaard*, ed. John Lippitt and George Pattison (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 421–39, doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199601301.013.0023.

In contrast to these sources of his own thought, Heidegger lays out his hostility to and his reversal of a Christian account of existence further in *Introduction to Metaphysics*. There he writes that a Christian cannot explore the question of being, of why there is something rather than nothing, as they have the answer in the doctrine of Creation. Heidegger, in his rejection of onto-theology, comments further that “a ‘Christian philosophy’ is a round square and a misunderstanding.”¹⁴ Instead of God, in Heidegger’s account, being is oriented through its relation to nothingness, being is that which is not nothingness, which arises from nothingness, and will return to nothingness. Instead of God orientating and giving being, for Heidegger it is nothingness that is the horizon of being.

However, despite this hostility towards theology, Heidegger was familiar with and influential on a number of theologians, such as his colleague at Marburg, Rudolf Bultmann. Jüngel relates that it was at Bultmann’s and Fuch’s urging that he came to study and know Heidegger.¹⁵ Heidegger’s influence on Bultmann, Fuchs, and Ebeling comes through the possibilities for theology that they see he offers with his reworking of being. The focus on lived experience, the importance of the call that brings us back to authenticity, and an account of human life as defined by possibilities and choices provided a means through which to reintroduce and stress the radical, life-changing nature of the address that God makes to humanity. Heidegger’s understanding of address and also of language as a vehicle or the house of being proved influential on theology, enabling a new account of hermeneutics in theology.¹⁶ A rejection of ontotheology enabled Heidegger to claim the primacy of possibility.¹⁷ Instead, Dasein is its pos-

14. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 8; GA 40, 9.

15. “[F]riendly providence placed noteworthy teachers of very different orientations in the student’s path. . . . [I] was being exhorted to study the texts of Heidegger by the New Testament scholar Ernst Fuchs, who put me in touch with his teacher Rudolf Bultmann. In an ‘illegal’ semester spent outside of the GDR—moving back and forth between Zurich, Basel and Freiburg—I finally heard the master himself. At the time, Heidegger was “on the way to language” (*unterwegs zur Sprache*). Toward the end of his life I had a conversation with Heidegger about the relation between thought and language, and I asked whether it wasn’t the destiny of thought to be on the way to God (*unterwegs zu Gott*). He answered: ‘God—that is the most worthy object of thought. But that’s where language breaks down.’” Eberhard Jüngel, “Toward the Heart of the Matter,” trans. Paul E. Capetz, *Christian Century* 108, no. 7 (1991): 228–33, also available online at *Religion Online*, accessed November 22, 2016, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=441>.

16. “This new correlation of hermeneutic to the later Heidegger’s understanding of language provides the potentiality for a new correlation between God’s word and man’s understanding.” James Robinson, “The German Discussion of the Later Heidegger,” in *The*

sibility, Dasein is an entity that has to decide the question of its being. This was transmuted through Bultmann, who, as Caputo notes, took that

The task of theology, armed now with the Heideggerian analytic of existence, is to deconstruct and demythologize the canonical Gospels in order to retrieve their *kerygma*, the living-existential Christian message, one of existential conversion (*metanoia*), of becoming authentic in the face of our finitude and guilt, a task that faces every human being.¹⁸

Heidegger's particular reliance on and use of theological language has been noted. However, whether he successfully disentangles them is another question. With regards to the emphasis on Dasein saving itself in Heidegger in contrast to Kierkegaard, Pattison notes that there is, he sees, a central passivity in Heidegger despite the emphasis on action and individualization as "here too, by a mysterious philosophical alchemy, the ultimate passivity of having to die has been transformed into the ultimate activity of a supremely heroic *but also perhaps self-deceiving* gesture."¹⁹ In Heidegger's account, Pattison sees that authenticity will always elude us, as the whole "of our existence is destabilized at its deepest roots by the possibility of a death that could come at any moment or that might not arrive at the moment when we feel ourselves ready for it, leaving us suspended in meaningless existence."²⁰

It can thus be seen that Heidegger's account of authenticity and the process by which it is achieved has a theological origin. Moreover, Heidegger's turn away from Christianity involved seeing the call towards authenticity not as coming from God, but from ourselves, and it is towards the possibility of our own death that we must orient ourselves, rather than towards God. Heidegger's account of authenticity involves a turn away from God and towards our own mortality, ridding ontology of a need to

Later Heidegger and Theology, vol. 1 of *New Frontiers in Theology*, ed. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb Jr. (London: Harper and Row, 1963), 53.

17. Heidegger's understanding of Dasein "violates Aristotle's ontology in two respects. First, it is not a substance with an essential nature and with properties or 'accidents.' Second, Dasein's potentiality or possibility is prior to its actuality: Dasein is not a definite actual thing, but the possibility of various ways of being." Inwood, *Heidegger*, 19.

18. John D. Caputo, "Heidegger and Theology," in *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 275.

19. George Pattison, *Heidegger on Death: A Critical Theological Essay* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 58.

20. Pattison, *Heidegger on Death*, 59.

base itself in something outside of humanity, and individualizing being so that it is through a turn to the self that the best life is found.

JÜNGEL'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

Contrary to Heidegger, Jüngel's starting point is the event of the cross. This was not, at the time, a particular new or radical move. His book *God as the Mystery of the World* appeared in 1977 after a number of works had been published in Germany on the death of God.²¹ As Heidegger did before him, Jüngel understands that previous theology and metaphysics have created an account of God that is problematic and does not account for the truth of God's existence. Jüngel thus engages in a program of destruction, and from that he reconstructs the concept of God based on how God revealed Godself on the cross.

In order to be able to think and speak of God anew Jüngel finds it necessary to understand previous philosophical and theological thought on God and see how it went wrong. Jüngel does not reject wholesale all the findings of the metaphysical tradition as he is clear that God is unconditioned, as the concept that "God comes from God means, negatively formulated, that God stands under no conditions of any kind."²² Like Heidegger, Jüngel sees Descartes as instrumental to the failings of metaphysics, although whereas Heidegger focuses on what Descartes did to being, Jüngel instead looks at what Descartes did to the concept of God. Jüngel sees that "Descartes secured the existence of God in such a way that it necessarily had to lead to the destruction of the concept of God and of the metaphysically grounded certainty of God" (GMW, 111). Jüngel argues that whilst Descartes was trying to make belief in God reasonable, in doing so Descartes linked the concept of God and doubt together, as he writes that "Descartes' proofs of God all are connected to an idea of God which I discover in my consciousness as a form of it" (GMW, 120). In order to se-

21. The death of God movement, which in Germany was headed up by Ernst Käsemann, Jürgen Moltmann, and Dorothee Sölle, was a worldwide one, although Jüngel restricts his analysis of it to Germany. In the Anglophone world it took very different forms. There was a death of God movement in America, led by Thomas Altizer and William Hamilton. In the UK the focus was on process theology rather than the death of God, as developed by A. N. Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne, and John Cobb. Jüngel focuses on the German discussion, characterized by the use of Bonhoeffer and Hegel for an understanding of God's relation to suffering and the world.

22. Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute Between Theism and Atheism*, trans. Darrell L. Guder (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 35. Hereafter cited as GMW.

cure certainty against doubting our existence, God becomes a guarantor, for “doubt of the human ego as such is not strong enough to produce the securing of the continuity of human existence which he wants. He needs God as a comrade in arms” (GMW, 122). Due to the efforts of Descartes “the mere ‘rational distinction’ between the essence and existence of God was already caught up in the dependence of human thought, which makes that distinction, on the divine thought which from its very origin is in agreement with itself” (GMW, 108).

Jüngel then traces the journey of the self through to a destructive subjectivity. Jüngel sees that the thinking self then becomes the subject of all existence, and when God is conceived of, God is conceived of as above humanity, only with Godself and yet is only known through one’s own thought. This position creates problems that are evinced in later thought as Jüngel sees this contradiction played out in Fichte, where he states that God should not be thought of as it is impossible,²³ where Feuerbach asserts that only when your thought is God is your thought truly thought,²⁴ and in how Nietzsche exclaims whether you could conceive of a God.²⁵

As a result of this aporia concerning the nature of God and in order to be able to speak and think of God correctly again, Jüngel wishes to destroy what they insist on, which is the metaphysical concept of God as a presupposition for the possibility of thinking God.²⁶ Jüngel sees that it is impossible to think God anew without creating a blank slate as all our

23. “Fichte contests the thinkability of God, for the sake of the glory of God. But it is the glory of a highest being metaphysically understood. Feuerbach asserts the conceptual necessity of God for the sake of the dignity of human thought. But it is the dignity of man identifying himself with the highest being, metaphysically understood. Nietzsche questions the thinkability of God, for the sake of the praise and justification of all mortality. But it is the praise and justification of a mortality from which God, metaphysically conceived as the highest being, must be and remained removed, because all mortality is by definition excluded from the metaphysically conceived highest being” (GMW, 128).

24. “The mystery contained in the word ‘God’ should profit man in such a way that everything implied by the word ‘God’ should be asserted of man. . . . With constant reference to the essence of the Christian faith, this exposition is to be completed with the rigorous intention to demonstrate that what theology asserts to be the contrasting relationship between God and man is really the mere division of man within himself. The result is to be that *man*, now coming to himself out of that dichotomization, can be asserted to be that being which rightfully and solely merits being called *divine*” (GMW, 142).

25. From Nietzsche’s understanding of metaphysics in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (trans. Thomas Common, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Oscar Levy, vol. 11, Edinburgh: Foulis, 1909, 100) Jüngel sees that “Nietzsche’s consequence was the most consequent because it began to take leave of the results. In this leave-taking it becomes completely certain that the last certainty of modern metaphysics is that of the factual inconceivability of God. Atheism could now become a foregone conclusion” (GMW, 152).

terms have a loaded history behind them and that history, when taken as Nietzsche does, to its logical conclusion entails and necessitates atheism as such a God cannot be conceived of.²⁷ Jüngel thus wishes to think both God and thought anew from a present situation of inevitable atheism, where belief in God is either non-existent or there is a false belief in the wrong sort of God.

In order to do this Jüngel focuses on the revelation of Christ as he sees, following the thought of Karl Barth, that the only source of Christian theology is in the unity of God and humanity in the incarnation of the person of Christ.²⁸ Jüngel sees that this is most clearly revealed and known in the event of the cross, for “faith in the crucified God forces us to contest the view that God is absolutely invulnerable essence” (*GMW*, 123) as it is an inversion of the Cartesian confidence.²⁹ What happens is that “God is transformed into the humanly conceivable only when he ceases to be that infinity which as superego is opposed to finite man. According to the logic

26. “All three thinkers are presupposing, in one way or another, the metaphysical concept of God” (*GMW*, 128).

27. Whilst Jüngel wishes to follow Augustine’s use of words as signs here, and thus “what the word ‘God’ provides for our thinking is then basically impossible to think through, cannot be grasped by thinking, and thus can only be grasped as something incomprehensible” (*GMW*, 8). He further follows Augustine’s statement in Sermon 117 that if you can comprehend it, it is not God. Therefore, there is a problem of how we are both able to think God and to think of God, which results in a problem in how we can speak of God. Despite these dangers and limitations, Jüngel does not want to go down the route of apophatic theology, for “if God is thinkable only as the Unthinkable, must not then our thinking ultimately resign when it turns to God?” (*GMW*, 8). Jüngel thinks that “such resignation would affect not only thought. It has practical consequences. How should the Christian faith act if it is no longer able to think God and thus no longer understand itself as faith?” (*GMW*, 9). Therefore, whilst Jüngel is not open to an apophatic theology, he is still insistent on the mystery of God, as “the thinkability of something is not necessarily identical with its knowability.” (*GMW*, 103).

28. “Christian theology arose as the explication and self-criticism of faith in Jesus of Nazareth. To believe in Jesus means to understand him as that person through whom and in whom God has become definitively accessible. . . . Therefore, that event in which one comes to the thinking of God is also to be understood as an event in which God brings us to himself” (*GMW*, 155).

29. “It was the defeat of the ability to doubt which made Cartesian man powerful. Would one not suspect that, conversely, the God understood as the highest power would be the one who was totally defective? The highest power could ultimately be found in actual weakness” (*GMW*, 123). Whilst this reaches its apex in Descartes Jüngel puts this theological and philosophical train of thought further back than Descartes to Anselm’s ontological argument, where “the thought of God, always presupposed in a metaphysic which understands God as ‘that which nothing greater can be conceived,’ causes giddiness because it forces thought to compare itself to a height to which it is forbidden to climb” (*GMW*, 149).

of the presupposed concept of God, he then ceases to be God in any sense at all" (GMW, 149).

Too often the suffering and death of God is seen as antithetical to the being of God, as God is not allowed to change or suffer, but for Jüngel God's being does not contradict itself in the crucified man Jesus, but harmonizes with itself. However, this is not to say that the death of God is easy or trivial; "the proposition that God is dead is a dark statement. And it will remain dark as long as it is not understood in terms of its origin" (GMW, 45). The way in which Jüngel is to lighten this statement is by considering its "metaphysical and genuinely Christian origin" (GMW, 47).

Therefore, despite the initial inconceivability of this God, Jüngel insists that there should be only one thing we are bound by in terms of talk about God, and that has been revealed to us as the Crucified One.³⁰ The death of Christ is possible due to Christ's humanity and therefore "talk about God which is oriented to the crucified man Jesus must understand God's deity on the basis of his humanity revealed in Jesus" (GMW, 14).

Moreover, Jüngel has a traditional Lutheran understanding of the person and work of Christ, where the main work of Christ is that of the justification of sinners, achieved through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on the cross. This heritage means that Jüngel also has an account of the *communicatio idiomatum* in the person of Christ, where the humanity of Christ is distinct from the humanity of other humans. For Jüngel, Jesus's humanity is the medium for the presence of God in the world. God can only be found in Christ, and this is known from the existence of the historical Jesus.³¹ Whilst there is this unity in Christ between humanity and God, the person of Christ still preserves the distinction between God and humanity in order to prevent the divinization of humanity.³² The incarnation

30. "When we attempt to think of God as the one who communicates and expresses himself in the person Jesus, then we must always remember that this man was crucified, that he was killed in the name of God's law. For responsible Christian usage of the word 'God,' the Crucified One is virtually the real definition of what is meant with the word God." Christian theology is therefore fundamentally theology of the Crucified One" (GMW, 13).

31. This view is clearly espoused in how Jüngel views Christ as the only true sacrament, in that it is only in Christ that God is met and communicated. (Eberhard Jüngel, *Was ist ein Sakrament* (Freiburg: Herder, 1971), 53–4).

32. "The humanity of God corresponds not to the divinity of humanity, but only to the humanity of humanity, who, as it is and from him, cannot correspond in themselves to the possibility of the mediation of God" Jüngel, *Was ist ein Sakrament*, 58. This is emphasized by McCormack: see Bruce L. McCormack, "Participation in God, Yes; Deification, No: Two Modern Protestant Responses to an Ancient Question," in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 235–60.

necessitates this, because “God became human, in order to distinguish so strictly between God and humanity that they might be able to be together without restriction.”³³ This again ensures that it is only through the action of Christ, not that of humanity, that we are united with God.

Jüngel sees that this is achieved as

what characterized Jesus’ self-relationship was this unique openness for this divine activity, which corresponds to the God who is more intimate to me than I am to myself, in the performance of his own human existence. He relied so totally on God that he could not really be a person without God’s existence turned toward him. And because of his total dependence of God he was able, as one who was without pretension in regard to himself, to be completely there for others.³⁴

The passivity and dependence that Christ shows is key going forwards to a discussion of Jüngel’s account of theological anthropology. This passivity and dependence is understood as the supreme act of selflessness, and this supreme act of selflessness as the death on the cross. Thus, Jüngel sees that “God defines himself when he identifies himself with the dead Jesus.”³⁵

As the death of Christ on the cross is the full and complete revelation of God, this obedience and passivity characterizes Christ as the second person of the Trinity as well. Jüngel sees that “the Jesus who exists totally from the Father made it possible to believe in God as the Father, the God who identifies with Jesus in his death makes it possible to believe in God the Son” (GMW, 368). This enables Jüngel to be able to say that a theology of the cross is not abstract revelation, but the concrete revelation of the being of God both as Christ and Trinity. For Jüngel the example of Jesus

33. Eberhard Jüngel, “The Dogmatic Significance of the Historical Jesus,” in *Theological Essays 2*, trans. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast and J. B. Webster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 118.

34. GMW, 358. Torrance sees that this hypostatic union enables an understanding of the death of God in Jüngel, thus enabling his theology of the cross as “it is no longer to rest satisfied with a traditional *theologia gloriae*, without avoiding the scandal of the fact that in becoming flesh for us the Son of God became cursed under the law and that in his death the love of God identified itself with the crucified. Can one both deny the fact that Jesus died ‘as God’ and affirm that God gives himself in self-communication to man? The doctrine of the hypostatic union holds those inseparably together,” Thomas F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Towards Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 83.

35. GMW, 364. “God has then identified himself with the Jesus who made himself sin for us as our substitute. We have recognized this identification of divine life with the dead Jesus as the event of divine love. As such, it is the turning point of the world, because God has interposed himself in the midst of fatal God-forsakenness in order to create a new relationship with God” (GMW, 367).

is the pattern for human life in Jüngel, and thus humanity is called to be passive, to be dependent, and to rely on God, not ourselves. As we shall explore in the following section, true authenticity and the choice that humanity must make is to be passive, like Christ was, in relation to God, and to choose that passivity over and against choosing ourselves.

JÜNGEL'S ACCOUNT OF HUMAN BEING

Having explored both Heidegger's account of being and Jüngel's account of the being of God, there are a number of moves that both of the thinkers make. Heidegger's thought and the process that Heidegger follows are key for Jüngel in that Heidegger provides a means by which to destroy previous accounts of the being of God in order to build a new account of God based on the revelation of the cross. Furthermore, Jüngel also utilizes Heidegger's understanding of human existence. Heidegger understands Dasein to be relational; a person is a process of being related to others and that which is outside itself, as Dasein derives from contextualized relationships. However Jüngel differs from Heidegger substantially in how humanity achieves authenticity. In Heidegger it is through individuating that one achieves authenticity, through taking control of one's own being and choosing for oneself; whereas in Jüngel authenticity is realized through relinquishing any claims of individuality and freedom to choose one's own destiny. Instead, in Jüngel's account, what creates true human existence is surrender to God and to God's action in us. Whilst Jüngel sees that Heidegger's account of humanity is accurate, Jüngel sees that it is only accurate in describing the sinful nature of humanity. In Jüngel, there is a drive for self-actualization in humanity, but whilst for Heidegger self-actualization leads to authenticity, for Jüngel that same movement is the move that nothingness as evil works in humanity.

Jüngel, as a follower of Heidegger and his Christian interpreters, places a strong emphasis on the importance of language; seeing it as constituted by the acts of speaking and of listening, by address.³⁶ Jüngel understands God as a God who speaks, and understands humanity as constituted by the act of God addressing us. This act of speaking and the linked act of listening are, in Jüngel, the pivot on which the relationship between God

36. "Jüngel has derived his understanding of truth as the revelation and 'letting-be' of what is. More importantly, from him he also gets his understanding of the value of language for revealing the ultimate. When Jüngel claims that the parables reflect Jesus' own (God-determined) Being, he is applying Heidegger's explanation of how Being expresses itself in language." Zimany, "Eberhard Jüngel's Synthesis of Barth and Heidegger," 53.

and humanity turns. The importance of the use of speech is linked with an account of human and divine determination, where speech is the way in which God communicates Godself and in doing so determines Godself as the one who speaks.

Therefore, in relation to God, humanity listens, and humanity receives. The role of human being is not to speak first, but to listen, and then live the message that they receive. Humanity receives from God the gift of faith, and faith is seen by Jüngel as more than a possibility for thought,³⁷ but a capacity given by God. As faith is a gift from God Jüngel sees that there is an intrinsic passivity in faith, as “in faith, the human person relies totally upon the act of God, or rather, upon God’s creative word-act.”³⁸ Faith is the renouncing of possession and claims to anything, a surrender.³⁹ Jüngel emphasizes the sense of surrender rather than entitlement⁴⁰ in faith as the freedom to decide for oneself involves an understanding of freedom that Jüngel does not accept. Instead Jüngel sees that

real freedom does not even consist in freedom from the determination of the will by the outward conditions of life to which decision and action are subject; rather is it in freedom from ourselves—from ourselves as we are in every now as people who come out of their past and are determined by it.⁴¹

Faith provides this freedom from ourselves in our reliance in God, and in discovering God we discover ourselves anew.⁴² Freedom is thus being

37. “[I]ntrinsic to the definition of theology is that it has as its object that possibility which comes to human existence from beyond itself alone, not only as a possibility for thought, but rather as a real capacity.” Jüngel, “‘You talk like a book . . .’ Towards an understanding of the Philosophical Fragments of J. Climacus, edited by Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855),” in *Theological Essays* 2, 32. This use of Kierkegaard is a further example of Jüngel rechristianizing Heidegger’s account of being.

38. Eberhard Jüngel, “On Becoming Truly Human: The Significance of the Reformation Distinction between Person and Works for the Self-understanding of Modern Humanity,” *Theological Essays* 2, 231.

39. “The human person should have or possess something, but nor possess him- or herself. In their own regard, human persons are, rather, without possession. Much more does one forsake oneself in faith, in so far as in faith one goes beyond oneself and grounds oneself in God. And in love one gives oneself to others, thus forsaking oneself once more in another way.” Jüngel, “On Becoming Truly Human,” 234.

40. “Faith is frequently understood as being a human decision for God, whereby the human Self makes its own fundamental decision about itself.” Eberhard Jüngel, *Justification: The Heart of the Christian Faith*, trans. Jeffrey F. Cayzer (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 238. Hereafter cited as *Justif*.

41. *Justif*, 240. Jüngel attributes this idea to Bultmann.

freed to say Yes to God,⁴³ freed to be passive and obedient to God as “it is the act of saying Yes to my own negation and affirmation by God” (*Justif*, 242). Faith is freedom from ambivalence, which Jüngel sees as intrinsic to our natures. Due to this tyranny of choice “it is good for us not have control over our personhood. We have been removed from ourselves for our own good” (*Justif*, 249). In Jüngel’s account, sin is the desire to be in charge of our own destiny and of our own origin, to want to be the judging, determining, differentiating factor in the world, in short, to actualize ourselves and find authenticity like Heidegger does. Jüngel sees this self-determination and self-actualization as sin as it is only God who can determine us, only mutually dependent relations that actualize us.

This ties into Jüngel’s account of justification, in that what Jüngel’s doctrine of justification shows us is that humanity is excluded in any way from defining itself by its own works, and that the righteousness of God must be seen as given,⁴⁴ not earned, and thus in regards to justification we are also passive receivers.⁴⁵ Due to this, Jüngel is emphatic that justification is the center of the Christian faith.

Thus it can be shown, leading from Jüngel’s account of Christ on the cross, and through his account of humanity as choosing to be in a passive relationship to God, that Jüngel inverts Heidegger’s stress on self-actualization, seeing that as sin. Moreover, in Jüngel’s discussion of nothingness, nothingness is that which lures humanity into this drive for self-actualization.⁴⁶ Thus centering one’s being on nothingness does not lead

42. “Faith is a self-discovery that begins at the same time as we discover God. It is the discovery of a self-renewal that affects the whole person. Those who discover themselves as new persons cannot make themselves into new persons; nor can they decide to exist as such” (*Justif*, 241).

43. “That Yes which we are to see as being faith is the discovering understanding of the divine decision about human beings, which is now being made by human beings. By expressing our entire existence in this heartfelt Yes to God’s judgment, we are admitting that the first thing was for our hearts to be conquered, that we needed first of all to be set free to speak this affirmative Yes. Thus faith is the self-discovery and experience of the Self that has been set free unto freedom” (*Justif*, 241).

44. Instead there is imputation, as because “the *imputation of extraneous righteousness* (*imputatio alienatae iustitiae*) can only be rightly grasped when it is seen as God *granting* divine righteousness in such a way as to *effectively* change the *being* of humans” (*Justif*, 211). Yet there does seem to be some ontological change here.

45. “What is excluded is any view of the righteousness of God as being in any way earned and possessed. Similarly out of the question is any understanding of justification as a process by which we are involved other than by hearing and believing” (*Justif*, 206–7).

46. Nothingness, according to Jüngel, is the “absolutely impossible, the incapacity to become. From nothingness, nothing is derived. But that is not all! Beyond that we must

to authenticity, like it does in Heidegger, but instead leads further into sin and away from true authentic human existence, that of passivity and dependence on God.

CONCLUSION

Jüngel's use of Heidegger is twofold. First, Jüngel draws his account of human being from Heidegger, both in his understanding of how language is an integral aspect of human life, and in how he understands human being as having a desire to actualize itself, to find authenticity in itself. Second, Jüngel sees Heidegger's account of human being as essentially sinful, as a counter-example to what true human life should be. Instead of the human needing to actualize the self, Jüngel sees that only dependence on God can create authentic human life as humanity is called to participate in God's Trinitarian life.

This inversion of Heidegger's account of being from the positive to the negative is in part possible due to the particular historical context of Jüngel's thought. Jüngel was writing at a time when there was a renewed interest in the co-existence and coherence of God and evil and suffering. The tragedies and horrors of the war, and especially Heidegger's link to Nazi ideology undermined the goodness and reliability of human nature and human choosing, and led to a time of particular emphases in theology, where suffering became part of God's nature, as it seemed impossible to talk of goodness when the world was steeped in blood. Furthermore, talk of a triumphant view of human nature, of the human overpowering and conquering and finding themselves, was at best naïve in post-war Germany, and at worst willful ignorant.⁴⁷

say that *because* nothing is derived from nothingness, nothingness is, in relation to being and its possibilities, a negatively virulent emptiness without a place in being, a destructive undertow, a negative ontological whirlpool, a 'nihilating nothing' (*nihil nihilans*)" (GMW, 216). Jüngel sees that a tending towards nothingness appears to have captured our hearts more than creating possibilities. Therefore, in order to limit the growth of nothingness in the world God needed to involve Godself in nothingness. This is done through the crucifixion, where in Jüngel's thought "talk about the death of God implies then, in its true theological meaning, that God is the one who involves himself in nothingness" (GMW, 218).

47. "A theology which did not speak of God in the sight of the one who was abandoned and crucified would have had nothing to say to us then" Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (London: SCM, 2001), 1. He writes further "what does it mean to recall the God who was crucified in a society whose official creed is optimism, and which is knee-deep in blood?" Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 4.

The staurocentrism of post-war theology enabled a view of God that did not deny the horrors that the world had gone through, where suffering was able to touch God, and God was able to experience and empathize with what had happened. Human suffering was then not alone, not in vain, and not trivialized. Whilst Jüngel is less radical in his account of the suffering of God than his contemporaries both in Germany and in Anglophone theology, he also cannot ignore his historical context. It is this pessimism about human action that enables Jüngel to develop from his theology of the cross a passive account of human action. From the example of Christ on the cross, human activity should become passivity. Instead of finding authenticity in knowing ourselves, we instead find it in knowing others through the relationships that God as Trinity, which is revealed on the cross, and this can only be done through the surrender of our desire to actualize ourselves.

Therefore, it is due to his particular historical context that Jüngel is able to invert Heidegger's account of being from self-actualization to participation. However, this inversion of Heidegger is truer than Heidegger's own, as through Jüngel's emphasis on humanity being actualized by God and by participation in God, Jüngel brings Heidegger's account of being back to its sources, back to the emphases that Saint Paul, Augustine, Luther, and Kierkegaard had of choosing God, and choosing dependence on God. However, it is only because of Jüngel's historical context, and the limits of human action and the intrinsic goodness of human choice, that this account of being could be promulgated. This historical connection has its limits, as a common thread that runs through the contemporary commentaries and critiques of Jüngel's theology is that his account of human action is lacking and that it does not speak to the problems and stresses of contemporary theology.⁴⁸ Jüngel, having been able to re-Christianize Heidegger's thought due to his own historical context, is now jettisoned and adrift on the same sea of history as theology continues on, charting new courses.

48. Jüngel's account of the passive nature of humanity is noted by most commentators, and is seen as the prime fault of his anthropology. This passivity is not restricted to action, but is also at work in Jüngel's understanding of language. John Webster sees that Jüngel's account of justification "introduces an emphasis on man as the passive recipient of the work of God." John Webster, "Eberhard Jüngel on the Language of Faith," *Modern Theology* 1, no. 4 (1985): 268. This is echoed by Ivor J. Davidson in "The Crucified One," by Paul J. DeHart in "On the Contrary: Thomistic Second Thoughts on Analogy and Trinity in Eberhard Jüngel," and by George Hunsinger in "A Reformed Theology of Justification," all found in *Indicative of Grace—Imperative of Freedom: Essays in Honour of Eberhard Jüngel in His 80th Year*, ed. R. David Nelson (London: T & T Clark, 2014).

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