

Notable among those who acknowledged their indebtedness to Hegel was his colleague in Berlin, Philipp Marheineke (1780–1846), and others like Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860) and Alois Biedermann (1819–1885), who with Hegelian instruments read Luther in astonishing way, as did Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872), a young Hegelian who claimed to be a “second Luther.”

Hegel's influence is even more salient in theologies that came after the Hegel renaissance of the first half of the 20th century and thereafter (cf. Asendorf 1982; Marsch 1973, 7–38; Reidinger 1969). His system and its theological impact have been of such magnitude that Karl Barth, who acknowledges Hegel's indebtedness to Luther, wonders why he did “not become for the Protestant world something similar to what Thomas Aquinas was for Roman Catholicism” (Barth 2002, 370).

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### HEIDEGGER'S EXISTENTIALISM, INFLUENCE ON

The last decades have seen superb scholarship related to the development of Heidegger's philosophy and an increased interest in Heidegger's intellectual roots in Augustine, Luther, and Kierkegaard. Almost all central concepts of *Being and Time* (1927), as we know now, are derived from Heidegger's re-readings of these theologians and philosophers, whom

he discussed in his lecture courses between 1919 and 1923. What particularly fascinated Heidegger was the attempt by selected philosophers and theologians in the Christian tradition to base their theories on conceptions of what it means to exist and on the question of how theoretical, metaphysical, and cognitive notions of their objects of inquiry are based on existential structures and existential inquiries. Luther's works played a central role in Heidegger's early lecture courses at the University of Freiburg, before he took over a chair of philosophy at the University of Marburg in 1923. During this period Heidegger developed his own approach to phenomenological philosophy and his existential analysis of *Dasein* within the larger framework and attempted to go back to the experiences of early and “primal Christianity.” In addition, Luther's critique of scholastic philosophy as well as his critique of Christian theologies that are developed through the lens of Western metaphysics was of central importance for Heidegger's own philosophical ideas and his attempt to revolutionize Western philosophy. In this vein, it is also of some significance that Heidegger seemed to have lost his roots and trust in Catholicism by 1919. In a famous letter to his mentor and friend Engelbert Krebs, Heidegger underlined that Catholicism had destroyed all references to the primal experiences of early Christianity and turned questions of existence and life into lifeless systems of abstract “technical” knowledge. Heidegger underlined in this letter that he had learned to look at Christianity and metaphysics in a new light; it is safe to assume that this light can be identified with his encounter with Luther's writings. Of central importance for Heidegger's philosophy leading up to his most productive period at the University of Marburg (1923–1928) were Luther's later interpretations of genesis and his early critique of Scholasticism, including Luther's early lectures on the Romans.

### Heidegger as a Lutheran Theologian of Western Metaphysics

Heidegger's contempt for academic “technicalities” and “research” in the modern sense, as well as his own revolutionary desire to go back to the nontheoretical and concrete roots of Western metaphysics via a phenomenology and hermeneutics of ourselves as those beings who ask metaphysical questions, were, according to Heidegger, foreshadowed in Luther and Augustine. It comes as no surprise, then, that almost all central concepts of *Being and Time*, such as running ahead toward death, fallenness, anxiety, conscience, and restlessness, can be traced back to Luther (and Augustine and Kierkegaard), although *Being and Time* can certainly not be reduced to these thinkers' positions. As van Buren nicely puts it, the young Heidegger can be seen “as a kind of Lutheran ‘theologian’ of western metaphysics” (1994, 167). Moreover, in Heidegger's comments on Luther, Luther emerges as a theologian with “proto-phenomenological instinct,” as McGrath has it (2006, 156). Having said this, one should keep in mind that Heidegger's interpretations of past philosophers and theologians were not really meant as contributions to “academic” scholarship; rather, in these interpretations Heidegger tried to uncover in former

thinkers either their historical positions toward metaphysics or the roots of their theoretical constructions in existential and ontological conceptions of what it means to be an entity that encounters itself *in and through* its philosophical and theological reflections.

Heidegger seem to have seen parallels between his own attempt to dismantle the history of philosophy through a reinvestigation of metaphysics, which in *Being and Time* he called the “destruction of the history of metaphysics,” and Luther’s concept of *destruction*, which Luther used for distancing Greek metaphysics from Christian religion as well as for the development of a theology that no longer is complicit in the human longing for quietude, security, and something final and “fixed” such as secure knowledge. Similarly, for Heidegger, as he presented it in his early lectures at the University of Freiburg, philosophy is not a discipline or a pool of knowledge and information; rather, philosophy ought to be radical by its ongoing attempt and struggle to ground itself in the fundamentally unsettling (and historical) nature of human life. Accordingly, philosophy in Heidegger’s conception becomes less a form of theoretical knowledge and cognition; instead, philosophical knowledge turns into an authentic response to its place of origin, that is, in existence now understood in its own historicality.

### Existential Phenomenology of Death and Sin

In this vein, Heidegger not only transformed Luther’s critique of human longing for security in power and glory in his own conception of fallenness, but he also transformed Luther’s conception of death in his own philosophy, which Luther presented in central passages in his commentary on genesis. For example, Heidegger intended to use Luther’s passage *statim enim ab utero matris mori incipimus* (right from our mother’s womb we begin to die) as a motto for one of his lectures. Importantly, here death was no longer understood as an “objective” event in time; rather, Luther foreshadowed Heidegger’s conception of death in *Being and Time* as an active and practical relation *toward* ending, which no longer allows us to understand death as something that occurs at some point in the future. Instead, as Heidegger demonstrated in his main work, death is something with which we have to “struggle” at any point in time and defines our way of existence if we accept it in a free relation toward it. Similarly, according to Luther, being alive is identical with dying *ab utero*, that is, Luther acknowledged that we already die in the uterus. Life, as Luther had it in his genesis commentary, is *in media morte* (takes place in death). In sum, Heidegger read Luther through the lens of his analysis of *Dasein*. Existential structures and existential categories (“existentialia”) were expressed in Luther’s move away from a theology driven exclusively by Scholasticism and Christian metaphysics.

Against abstract ideas of philosophy, Heidegger posed the claim that philosophical knowledge is, as knowledge of human life, not a form of propositional knowledge, as it must secure its authenticity in authentic life itself. This radical notion of philosophy as something that in each of its moves tried to go back to its roots in existence, and

what it means to exist was foreshadowed in (Heidegger’s interpretation of) Luther’s conception of theology as something that goes back to a *theologia crucis* (theology of the cross) as well as to Luther’s focus on “experience.” Luther’s theological position began with *experiencia*, as Heidegger pointed out in a central lecture on Luther’s concept of sin, which he delivered in Rudolf Bultman’s seminar at the University of Marburg in 1924. “Experience” here does not refer to an empiricist or scientific concept of experience; rather, the term refers to fundamental ways in which *one encounters oneself in what one is*. *Experiencia* points to exceptional experiences that reveal the nature of human life and what it means to *encounter oneself in it*. Sin as an essential property of human nature (ontology) becomes a category of existence, that is, as something that only exists in its actualization. According to Heidegger’s comments on Luther, sin is such an experience inasmuch as sin does not refer to arbitrary actions or something that we can get rid of in life; rather, sin is the fundamental existential category through which humans discover themselves as being related to God. Heidegger’s term for this relation was *Gestelltsein* (being positioned), which points to the fundamental passive situation of being *placed* before God without the ability to escape. This situation can also be described as *affectus* (affection), which Heidegger described as *horror*. Horror, similar to what Heidegger said about moods in *Being and Time*, reveals something that is enclosed in horror as a phenomenon. Humans are horrified in their existence because, paradoxically put, they try to escape from that from which they cannot escape, which Luther called *affectus horrens peccatum* (affect of being horrified at sin). The existential fact of sin leads to a self-relatedness of human existence that Heidegger also discovered in his interpretations of Paul and Augustine, insofar as human life is never something “fixed”: that is, it never simply “is”; rather, it is moving, restless, and unquiet in its basic realizations and self-questionings. In fear and anxiety our fundamental “situation” and “placement” becomes visible.

### Toward a Theology of the Cross

The primacy of human life as a practical and unsettling *self-relation* (existence) is central both for Heidegger’s phenomenology of life and for his claim that we are troubled and unquiet in relation to what we are (i.e., our being). Accordingly, Heidegger’s focus on Luther’s move toward a *theologia crucis* demonstrated a similar move toward a theology based on “experience.” In fact, for Heidegger, we are never ontologically fixed, since we are beings who constantly have to respond to the question of what kind of being we are. Heidegger followed Luther very closely, especially given that in his lectures on the Romans Luther polemically called theologians who see sin as something that can be overcome or those who treat it as a secondary issue as “pig theologians.” The consequence of a theology that turns sin into an arbitrary action or deflection from the norm is that human nature and its relation to God is placed *before* the “fact” and experience of sin, which Luther identified with its Scholastic predecessors and a *theologia*

*gloriae* (theology of glory). Scholastic theology can therefore no longer see the fundamental disclosure of what it means to be placed before God in its abstract system of knowledge and conception of human nature as something to be defined prior to sin. In addition, the problem of sin conceived of as something arbitrary or moral would point to the freedom of the will, which Luther rejected and Heidegger, less radically, reinterpreted as a practical realization of death in the form of an authentic acceptance (i.e., running ahead toward death) and embrace of the "fact" that we die. As for Luther, for Heidegger, freedom is not primarily located in the human will. Finally, though the concept of faith is absent in *Being and Time*, one can easily see how Heidegger's existential conception of death in connection with his noncognitive concept of conscience is closely related to a philosophical concept of faith as something that cannot be reduced to cognition or propositional knowledge.

In sum, the influence of Luther on Heidegger's philosophy of *Dasein* should not be underestimated. Although theology and philosophy, for Heidegger, were uncompromisingly separated from each other, this separation and distance opened up the path toward a theology no longer based on metaphysics, but instead, on existential phenomenology.

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—CHRISTIAN LOTZ

### HEIDELBERG DISPUTATION

In the year that Martin Luther wrote the 95 Theses, he was invited by his superior, Johannes von Staupitz, to a public disputation of the Augustinians at Heidelberg. The 95 Theses had embroiled Luther in a controversy over indulgences, so Luther was told to stay clear of that issue. The themes he was to argue were sin, free will, and grace. The Disputation was structured upon these themes. He began with twelve theses on the topic of sin, followed by six on the enslaved will, and ended the theological portion with ten theses articulating God's grace. His proofs for these theses, written as notes for the event but published later in his life, help illuminate his argument. Luther also wrote twelve philosophical theses linked to the Disputation that critique Aristotle's metaphysics; they are not dealt with here.

### Sin

In this section, Luther opposed the law as the theological basis for both spiritual development and religious jurisprudence. While he recognized that the law is one of God's great gifts, he noted that it does not advance one in the search for righteousness before God. Left to their own powers, human beings cannot do what the law requires. Luther launched a strong critique of the reigning Scholastic notion that God requires human beings to "do what is within them." In the opening pair of theses, Luther leveled an attack on all notions of spiritual progress. Luther undermined the law as the foundation for theological knowledge. He shattered the old foundations before proposing an alternative way of coming to knowledge of God. He claimed that human perspectives on what is beautiful and good as well as those on what is ugly and evil are in direct contradiction to God's appraisal. Human acts lead to mortal sins; God's action leads to immortal merit. God's alien work terrifies humanity through the law as humans lean on their own powers. This alien work prepares human beings for God's characteristic work of saving. With the law's attack on human presumption, people must throw themselves on the mercy of the God who is hidden from their view. The glory of God, according to Luther, is the sinner who has been claimed and saved by utter grace. When humanity leans on its own powers it ends up covering its sin with excuses (*excusandas excusationes*). But when the law causes humans to accuse (*accusamus*) themselves, then God moves in to forgive (*excusat*).

### The Enslaved Will

In the 13th thesis Luther rejected free will, saying it exists in name only. The will is captive, and its only freedom is the freedom to do evil. Within human beings the will is always captive. If it is not captive to sin, then this is because it has become captive to God. If human beings trust in their own powers they are lost, but if they give up on their own powers and trust in the power of God they are saved. While humans are guilty of sinning, their greater fault lies in believing that this is not inevitable if they are left to their own powers.

Luther stripped humanity of all hope based on the law and on the human will's power to follow this law. The law comes only in wrath. But when the law has forced humanity to come to terms with its own inadequacy, then God's grace will enliven those thus humbled. The divine working through the law is for the greater purpose of bringing salvation. God impoverishes listeners to the law that they might have abundant grace through Christ.

Luther offered a blistering critique of human power with its illusions of progress. He worried that the search for spiritual progress turned the theologians who heard him away from the reality of human suffering in the world. While the Reformer refrained from mentioning the sales of indulgence, such practices of the institutional church were not far from his mind. As with the 95 Theses, Luther's sword cut more deeply at those who benefited from the theology of spiritual progress. Luther's global critique of human efforts challenged the power relationships within the church itself. He robbed