

## Revisiting life with Martin Heidegger

### Powrócić do życia z Martinem Heideggerem

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**Abstrakt:** Celem tego artykułu jest prześledzenie zasadniczych zrębów redukcji przeprowadzonej przez Heideggera, w wyniku której z doświadczenia religijnego wyłania się najbardziej pierwotne doświadczenie życia. Przedstawione niżej rozważania konsekwentnie podążają opisaną wyżej ścieżką wiodącą z powrotem do rzeczy samej, czyli właśnie z powrotem do życia samego. Stąd nie będzie nas tutaj interesować po prostu myślenie religijne młodego Heideggera ani też jego odniesienie do problemu Boga. Zamiast tego spróbujemy odtworzyć jego ścieżkę z powrotem ku życiu samemu. Ten artykuł skupia się wprawdzie na wczesnych poszukiwaniach filozoficznych Heideggera. Wydaje się jednak, że Heidegger do samego końca pozostaje wierny ambitnym celom wyznaczonym przez nakreślony z młodzieńczym zapałem poszukiwania prawdziwego życia niepozorny schemat do wykładu *Kriegsnotsemester* z 1919 roku. Trudno oprzeć się wrażeniu, że cała długa droga jego myślenia jest takim właśnie nieustannym powracaniem do życia.

**Słowa kluczowe:** młody Heidegger; wczesny Heidegger; fenomenologia; hermeneutyka; *Kriegsnotsemester*

**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to trace the essential foundations of the reduction carried out by young Heidegger, whereby the most primordial experience of life emerges from religious experience. The considerations presented below consistently follow the path described above leading back to the thing itself, that is, precisely back to life itself. Hence, we will not be interested here simply in the religious thinking of the young Heidegger, nor in his relation to the problem of God. Instead, we will try to reconstruct his path back towards life itself. This article admittedly focuses on Heidegger's early philosophical explorations. It seems, however, that Heidegger remains

faithful to the very end to the ambitious goals set by the inconspicuous schema for the Kriegsnotsemester lecture of 1919, outlined with youthful enthusiasm for the search for real life. It is hard to resist the impression that the whole long path of his thinking is just such a constant return to life.

**Keywords:** young Heidegger; early Heidegger; phenomenology; hermeneutics; Kriegsnotsemester

In his now classic book *Heidegger and Contemporary Philosophy*, Krzysztof Michalski argues that the *problem of being* “is in fact a philosophical question – that is, one that is capable of genuinely questioning the foundations of our knowledge of the world and draws us into a vortex of further questions, where all obvious convictions become open problems”<sup>1</sup>. He also sets himself an ambitious goal: “I would like to find a satisfactory answer to the question: how did it happen that a philosopher focusing on such an «abstract» question became one of the most influential thinkers of our time?”<sup>2</sup> To answer this question, it is not enough to find a path of meaning in the impenetrable thicket of Heideggerian language. There is probably no humanist today, after all, who has not heard of his legendary difficulty. The solution to Heidegger’s conundrum does not lie in solving the riddle of his language, because his effort to return to meaning is not fulfilled by a return to explanation, just as his search for understanding does not exhaust itself in some neatly arranged sentence. We only begin to understand Heidegger when we realise that the path he has taken does not lead towards old theories and old maxims, but rather constitutes a return to life itself. In this statement, moreover, it is not without reason that one hears an echo of Husserl’s famous call, which Heidegger clearly places in a new context. Heidegger’s phenomenology does indeed consist in a return to the thing itself, but with the difference that this thing is dynamic: it is life itself, which happens to us. In this context, the phenomenology of religious life is for Heidegger only a means, the surest way to unveil this dynamic *a priori* behind all manifestations of life. Heidegger takes up an intuition already present in the seed in Husserl’s phenomenology: the life of consciousness is the most primordial and at the same time the most fundamental phenomenon. To return to the thing itself is to return to life itself, which necessarily develops and changes precisely because it teems with life. It turns out, however, that in order to understand this return, it is necessary to return, together with Heidegger, to his youth, which, by the way, has grown into a separate field of research thanks to

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<sup>1</sup> K. Michalski, *Heidegger and contemporary philosophy*, Warsaw 1978, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

authors such as Otto Pöggeler, John van Buren and Theodore Kisiel<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, the object of our consideration here will be mainly Heidegger's youthful lectures, clearly permeated by a fascination with religious life.

The purpose of this article is to trace the essential foundations of the reduction by which the most primordial experience of life emerges from religious experience. The reflections presented below consistently follow the path described above leading back to the thing itself, that is, precisely back to life itself. Hence, we will not be interested here simply in the religious thinking of the young Heidegger, nor in his reference to the problem of God<sup>4</sup>. Instead, we will try to reconstruct his path back towards life itself. It is difficult to deny the validity of the aforementioned Michalski, who wonders how this seemingly very abstract philosophical project triggered a wave of fascination that swept away so many outstanding minds, taking various areas of culture into new and unexplored waters. It turns out, however, that for Heidegger himself it was as much a life project as a philosophical one. Therefore, his thinking, although seemingly very abstract, did not distance him from life at all, but rather brought him closer to life. Jarosław Jagiełło, in a paper on Heidegger's metaphysical thinking, writes: "On various paths of thought Martin Heidegger wandered. It was not a wandering in which Heidegger merely looked at other people's thinking, analysed it, criticised it and looked at it, in a way, from the outside – from a distance. The point is that on these journeys his own thinking happened first and foremost, and in this thinking he himself happened"<sup>5</sup>. It turns out, then, that this return to life was not, for Heidegger, merely a turn towards an abstract idea of life or some primordial condition lying at the origin of life. The steep and one would like to say narrow path leading towards this pre-theoretical dynamic *a priori of life* always leads through concrete life, through the life I am experiencing now. Jagiełło accurately describes this peculiar coupling of life and thinking with reference to Heidegger himself: "In the various paths of Heidegger's thinking the history of his long life, consciously incorporated by him into the history of the whole of European philosophy, was revealed"<sup>6</sup>. One can perhaps venture to say

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<sup>3</sup> See J. van Buren, *The Earliest Heidegger: a New Field of Research*, in: *A Companion to Heidegger*, eds. H.L. Dreyfus and M.A. Wrathall, Oxford 2005, pp. 19-31.

<sup>4</sup> Krzysztof Stachewicz points out that interpretations of Heidegger's thought are a particular example of a failed attempt to inscribe contemporary philosophical thought about God into the categories developed in the classical current of the philosophy of God. He also stresses that "The task of reconstructing the problem of God in Heidegger's thought appears to be extremely complicated, even at the limit of the possible". K. Stachewicz, *Martin Heidegger's thinking of God*, in: S. Janeczek, A. Starościc, *Philosophy of God*, Part 1: *The Search for God*, Lublin 2017, p. 232.

<sup>5</sup> J. Jagiełło, *Martin Heidegger: thinking meta-physically*, in: S. Janeczek, A. Starościc, *Metaphysics*, Part 1: *Concepts of metaphysics*, Lublin 2017, p. 215.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

that, for Heidegger, thinking is life and life is thinking. So let us try, as the title of this paper says, to revisit life with Martin Heidegger.

## 1. Early inspirations of a theological nature and the search for a phenomenology of religious experience

In his early studies in Freiburg, Heidegger achieved a preliminary insight into the main problems of theology. As he wrote in his correspondence with Jaspers, between 1909 and 1911 he was primarily interested in the relationship of Scripture to questions of speculative theology and the relation of being to language<sup>7</sup>. The latter problem pushed him to consider the question of hermeneutics, which he also encountered in Franz Brentano's work *On the Different Meanings of Being in Aristotle*, which was to have a direct influence on the eventual orientation of his interests towards the problem of being<sup>8</sup>. These preliminary studies in theology, which he abandoned in 1911, directed his attention to the question of the phenomenology of religion. In his search, he tried to find a suitable model for it. At first, he sought it in the medieval worldview, perpetuated by the philosophical tradition, which, according to him, remained permeated by the perennial problems inherent also in his epoch<sup>9</sup>. Reflections on scholasticism, as it was for Heidegger a reflection of the medieval worldview, centred essentially on two issues: the question of logic and the history of the psychology of the time, which shows its non-abducibility to contemporary categories because of the central role of intentionality characteristic of it. This issue was considered by Heidegger when studying the strands of phenomenology of religion contained in the mystical, moral-theological and ascetical literature of the period. In doing so, he discovered that, in the medieval world, the essential element of the relationship to life lay in the soul's deep personal relationship to God. The separation between philosophy or theology and life itself then disappears. Thought in such a world order is closer to everyday experience than ever. Philosophy conceived as a coherent system detached from life is powerless against the problems that flow from life itself. Mysticism conceived as an escape into irrational experience also remains misguided because it does not answer the question of life.

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's «Being and Time»*, Berkeley 1993, p. 70.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. O. Pöggeler O., *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, transl. by D. Magurshak and S. Barber, New Jersey 1963, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, op. cit., 71-72.

## 2. The crisis of 1916-1919 and the rejection of scholasticism as distorting the primary intuition of factuality inherent in religious experience

Heidegger, despite various promises and support from his professors Finke and Schneider, was ultimately not given the chair of Catholic philosophy at the University of Freiburg in 1913. When he was authorised to teach in 1915 as a young and enthusiastic lecturer, he had to content himself with assisting the temporarily appointed replacement Fr Krebs in teaching philosophy to theology students<sup>10</sup>. Heidegger's hopes were finally buried by the appointment of Joseph Geysler to the vacant post in mid-1916. This period of personal difficulties marks the beginning of a crisis in Heidegger's relationship to Catholicism. According to van Buren, Heidegger's growing disaffection with neo-scholasticism was not only a matter of difficulties in his relations with its institutional representatives, but was linked to the profound religious, theological and philosophical turn in the war years after 1916<sup>11</sup>. At that time, he decisively distanced himself from the conclusions he had only recently (only a few months earlier) formulated in his habilitation thesis<sup>12</sup>. The scholastic logical system and the psychology characteristic of it now appeared as an opposition to true religious experience, which had to be sought elsewhere. In Heidegger's view, the form of philosophy of religion proposed by some Christian denominations (and especially Catholicism) is incapable of conveying the full complexity and vitality of the problem. Seemingly close to religious issues, however, they are essentially lacking in awareness of the complexity of culture and the structures of its experience and historical development. Therefore, by placing the religious under the guard of pre-established epistemological norms and dogmatised truths, they limit religious experience itself by weakening its power and making it unclear also from the theoretical side. He thus regarded scholasticism, together with the understanding of religion proper to it, as the fruit of an essential distortion of the original intuition of the fullness of facticity as revealed, for example, in early Christianity. In a famous letter to his friend Krebs (the Catholic priest who blessed his marriage and baptised his children), Heidegger wrote: "Cognitive insights extending to the theory of historical consciousness have made the System of Catholicism problematic and unacceptable – but not Christianity and metaphysics"<sup>13</sup>. This peculiar primordial as yet un-systematised experience of faith referred to here will be for him the source

<sup>10</sup> Cf. J. van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumour of the Hidden King*, Bloomington 1994, p. 133.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. M. Polt, *Heidegger. An Introduction*, London 1999, pp. 20-21.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted after: J. van Buren, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

of hermeneutical norms capable of expressing a true religious experience. The young Heidegger's path from his fascination with medieval scholasticism to the growing interest in Christianity of the first centuries that we are witnessing was inspired mainly by reading the works of Schleiermacher and Dilthey<sup>14</sup>. In addition, Heidegger also deepened his knowledge of mysticism at this time by reading the spiritual classics of the Middle Ages and the great Carmelite mystics<sup>15</sup>.

### 3. The search for a pre-theoretical *a priori* life and the 1919 lectures

The challenge of breaking through the theoretical paradigm of philosophising towards the pre-theoretical is taken up by Heidegger in 1919<sup>16</sup>. As Kisiel points out, the most important task of the 1919 lectures is to radically detach phenomenology from neo-Kantianism, especially the transcendental value philosophy of the South-Western German School of Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert and Emil Lasek. Here, Heidegger undertakes the daunting task of deconstructing his own views and severing the ties that bind him to his former professors (after all, only recently he dedicated his habilitation to Rickert and recalled the invaluable contributions that Lask had made to his thinking). Heidegger will also acknowledge the influence of Husserl and extract original senses from the canonical concepts of phenomenology, such as intentionality, categorial intuition and a new understanding of the *a priori*<sup>17</sup>. As Kisiel rightly observes, all this will lead the young Heidegger to the conviction that philosophy is neither a theory nor a worldview, but an immersion in life as such in all its authenticity<sup>18</sup>.

Heidegger, during the lectures he gave at the *Kriegsnotsemester* that lasted from 7 February to 11 April 1919, devoted to the theme 'The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview', drew before his students a picture of philosophy standing at a methodological crossroads: something or nothing,

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<sup>14</sup> In Dilthey's works we find many passages describing the importance of life as a source of philosophical convictions and the profound relationship between experience and the formation of a worldview. Dilthey mentions this in his summary of reflections on the essence of philosophy [W. Dilthey, *Das Wesen der Philosophie*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 5, Leipzig-Berlin 1924, p. 392-93]. He says even more on this subject when systematising the types of worldview, where he states that the ultimate root of the worldview is precisely life [Dilthey W., *Die Typen der Weltanschauung und ihre Ausbildung in den metaphysischen Systemen in: Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 8, Leipzig-Berlin 1931, p. 78].

<sup>15</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, op. cit., p. 99-100.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, op. cit., p. 18.

life or death<sup>19</sup>. The dramatic and, in its way, poetic sketch of the great revolution in method necessary to save a dying philosophy from being locked in the grave with the long-dead academic thinkers, gave direction to his early philosophical search. The absolute objectivity sought by the Scholastics, the Positivists, the Neo-Kantists and finally his master himself, Husserl, was, according to the young Heidegger, a kind of grave for philosophy, leading to its self-destruction. The only alternative was to be a return to life, which would be at the same time an entry anew, and perhaps even only for the first time, into the world. For him, restoring philosophy to the world meant at the same time restoring it to life. Heidegger's phenomenology would thus be a return to life in all its simplicity and all its complexity at the same time. In his letters to Jaspers from the same period, he would poke fun at what he thought were Husserl's over-formalised considerations, ironically suggesting ideas of new areas for phenomenological inquiry, such as the logic of ethics. He himself, meanwhile, planned, at first in conjunction with Jaspers himself, to revolutionise philosophy by bringing it back to life. He claimed that philosophy had become so preoccupied with itself that it had in fact completely forgotten about life. It had drifted so deeply into theorising about experience that it had lost experience itself. That is why it needed a return to the source – to the experience of life. When we look at Heidegger's ideas from this point of view, as Derrida, for example, postulated, we discover that all these reflections are indeed impossible to detach from his own life. On the one hand, as a young *Privatdozent* he had behind him the experience of Germany's defeat in the Great War, which claimed the lives of many of his peers. On the other hand, the pervasive revolutionary mindset of the end of the war and the post-war period, clearly played into his hands. Of course, it is possible to quibble to what extent notions such as being-towards-death are a reflection of the wartime experience of his generation, whose existence actually took place, as it were, in the shadow of death. To what extent the term being-thrown refers to being thrown into the war trenches from which so many were never to be able to escape again. To what extent does the idea of a revolution in philosophy stem from the revolutionary romanticism of his generation, and to what extent does the idea of a break with the previous philosophical tradition stem from an antipathy to academic discourse, whose methodological objectivity and scientific rigour failed to protect his own generation from the catastrophe of the conflagration of war, which so many of his contemporaries had, after all, experienced personally in what Heidegger called the most personal experience of death. These questions remain open, especially since Heidegger himself, compared to his contemporaries, experienced the Great War directly as a soldier to a rather mi-

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. G. Payen, *Martin Heidegger, catholicisme, revolution, nazisme*, Paris 2016, pp. 154-158.

nor degree. Perhaps, however, reading the works of a philosopher who turned to life with such consistency and sought to discover the source experience of life, requires that more attention be attached to his own life. Many interpreters analyse Heidegger's path of thought by depicting the evolution in the lectures he gave and the works he wrote, but paying little attention to the biographical context<sup>20</sup>. It seems that sometimes, out of deep humility towards a great thinker, we are afraid to attribute even a hint of purely human characteristics to him. We assume for some reason that the thoughts of the great ones could only be born in vast libraries or descend from the heights of university cathedrals, in strict isolation from all manifestations of life. Heidegger, however, is a thinker who wants to revolutionise precisely this approach.

Heidegger is therefore concerned with the search for this dynamic *a priori* of life, according to the blueprint set out in the famous schema that he is said to have drawn on the blackboard with great enthusiasm and explained to his students as a summary of the *Kriegsnotsemester* lecture of 1919. This schema shows that the two dimensions of the 'thing' (i.e. that still undefined 'something') to which phenomenology is supposed to return must be decisively separated.

1. A pre-theoretical something:
  - a. pre-worldly something, grounded in life itself (*Ur-Etwas*);
  - b. worldly something, grounded in experiences, i.e. in the authentic (henceforth genuine) world of life (*Genuine Erlebnisswelt*);
2. Theoretical something:
  - a. objective formal-logical something, deriving from the former as motivated (grounded in *Ur-etwas*);
  - b. and the object-like thing (grounded in *Genuine Erlebnisswelt*).

For some reason, Heidegger never published the schema itself. It is preserved only in the notes of one of his listeners Franz Joseph Brecht under the date 11 April 1919. The note from this very lecture opens with the telling sentence: "It is necessary to see the fundamental necessity of phenomenology: that «something in general» (*Etwas*) is not the result of a devitalizing [i.e. separating from life – note] process of theorizing, but rather belongs to the original phenomenological sphere"<sup>21</sup>. He goes on to record that phenomenological

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<sup>20</sup> Reconstructing Heidegger's life seems as unattainable a task as reconstructing his thought. Regarding this, it is worth reading the introduction to his comprehensive French-language biography, in which the author shares his reflections on the difficulties encountered. G. Payen, *Martin Heidegger, catholicisme, revolution, nazisme*, pp. 13-22.

<sup>21</sup> M. Heidegger, *The idea of philosophy and the problem of worldview*, in: M. Heidegger, *Towards the definition of philosophy*, transl. T. Sadler, London 2000, p. 185.



intuition is ‘the experience of experience’. Understanding life, on the other hand, is a hermeneutic intuition, which is to be understood as making intelligible or giving meaning. Thus, it becomes apparent that the immanent historicity of life as such, presented in the schema above, constitutes hermeneutic intuition. It consists, in a strict sense, of a cognitive grasp of the relationship between *Ur-Etwas* and *Genuine Erleibniswelt*. Brecht briefly notes this most fundamental aim of phenomenology: it is the study of life as such. Ostensibly, it coincides with the goal of constructing and explaining a worldview. In reality, however, as we can clearly see from the schema above, it is its opposite, since it does not descend below the theoretical level. The worldview breaks its ties with the vibrant sphere of the pre-theoretical and thus freezes reality at the theoretical level, as it were, ends life in favour of systematisation<sup>22</sup>. From Brecht’s notes, we learn that philosophy can develop not through the study of a worldview, but only by absolutely plunging into the experience of life itself (*Genuine Erleibniswelt*), because phenomenology is never finished, but always open, always plunging into what lies at the source of life itself (*Ur-Etwas*). In this way it reaches back to the thing itself, to that most primordial ‘something’ lying at the origin of every experience. The pre-theoretical and pre-worldly, however, can only be reached through a sincere and uncompromising immersion in the authenticity of life as such, which is ultimately only achieved through the authenticity of personal life as such<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, as Heidegger stated, the fundamental methodological problem of phenomenology is the scientific disclosure of the realm of lived experience. This problem is itself a kind of ‘principle of principles’ of phenomenology<sup>24</sup>. Therefore, phenomenology does not absolutise any religious or philosophical worldview. Instead, it consistently moves towards real life; it is interested in the primordial relationship of life experience (*Genuine Erleibniswelt*) to life as such (*Ur-Etwas*). The phenomenological attitude consists in an absolute co-sensibility with life, which co-sensibility is identical to what we call life experience. The phenomenological attitude is therefore pre-theoretical in principle. Heidegger, referring to the dilemma of the relation of phenomenology to the dispute between realism and idealism that preoccupied Husserl in *The Ideas of Pure Phenomenology* and *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, poses the question of what is the source of cognition: the pre-theoretical or the theoretical. In this context, he states that before the advent of phenomenology, the pinnacle of knowledge was the completely empty and formal character of an objectified ‘something’. This something, however, is secondary, moreover, subjected to such a radi-

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 187-88.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 187-88.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 185.

cal process of devitalisation that all content has been extinguished in it, its meaning devoid of any relation to the world of content. The world of just such theoretical things is, according to Heidegger, absolutely worldless and at the same time alien to all life. For him, it constitutes a realm that does not so much take one's breath away, but precisely deprives one of one's breath and in which there can be no room for any life. According to Heidegger, both life itself and the circumstances surrounding it are worthy of attention. For him, the meaning of the word 'something' (*Ur-Etwas*) is simply 'experience possible as such'. The indifference of this 'something', or rather 'anything', does not imply its detachment from life. On the contrary, it represents a manifestation of the highest potentiality of life. Its meaning lies in the fullness (and at the same time the absoluteness) of life itself. This means that, although it does not yet have a concrete worldly characteristic, it remains a motivation for the world. The primordial pre-theoretical 'something' is what animates the world. In other words: it brings the world to life. It can be said to constitute the specific life of life. Heidegger in states that "it is a 'not-yet', i.e. something that has not yet been broken through into real life, it is essentially pre-worldly. This means that the sense of something as experiential presupposes a moment of 'going towards' or 'directed towards', 'into the (concrete) world', and indeed in its undiminished 'life impulse'. This 'something', to which phenomenology attempts to return, is prior even to the world and therefore cannot be grasped theoretically, in terms of some physiological and genetic considerations. It is a fundamental phenomenon (*Ur-Etwas*) that can be experienced in understanding, e.g. in a life situation of gliding from one world of experience to another equally real world of life or in moments of particularly intense living (*Genuine Erlebniswelt*)"<sup>25</sup>.

The search for this particularly intense moment of life would soon lead Heidegger to another breakthrough. In the summer semester of the academic year 1919-1920, Heidegger was scheduled to give a lecture that had already been announced: *The philosophical foundations of medieval mysticism*<sup>26</sup>. Shortly before the start of the semester, however, he wrote to the dean to change the topic to: *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* explaining that there was not enough time to prepare the previously announced topic. However, he devoted the first two hours of his lectures to the issue of religious experience<sup>27</sup>, making remarks that would set the path towards the thoughts formulated in *Being and Time* almost ten years later. Among other things, he stated that in the history of ideas, the problematic of actual life originates in the experience

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 98-99.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. ibid., p. 77.

of the first Christian communities. This original insight into the inner world made at that time, however, was eclipsed by the infiltration of motifs taken from the foreign tradition of Greek metaphysics into the description of spiritual reality. It is therefore necessary to restore to that experience of interiority its proper vitality by returning to the classical hermeneutics of religious experience. This remains available, according to Heidegger, in some thinkers such as, for example, Augustine<sup>28</sup>, Luther and Kierkegaard<sup>29</sup>. The awareness of the historical character of life in Western thought, according to Heidegger, began with the birth of this specific experience. Heidegger took the above intuition from Dilthey's *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, which he was inspired by during the aforementioned lectures<sup>30</sup>. As can be seen, at the root of Heidegger's thinking, in addition to Catholic doctrine, which he identified with scholasticism in practice in the philosophical field, there remains the thought of the Neo-Kantists, which preoccupied him during his preliminary philosophical studies. In his introductory philosophical reflections, Heidegger wished to restore to philosophy its connection with everyday life, which he believed had been lost<sup>31</sup>. Rather, the development of Western thought had brought it out to the antipodes of the hermeneutics of facticity, to which it must now return in order to regain its former strength and influence on culture. This should be done by returning to the living spirit in all its manifestations, and therefore to the history of this spirit of the West understood in the neo-Kantian sense. Its scope was therefore to include the values of ethics, aesthetics and religion. In analysing the issue of categories in Duns Scotus as part of his habilitation dissertation, he attempted to show, in the light of the achievements in the field of logic at the time, a problem far more serious than the issue of scholastic grammatical structures. He chose this thinker because, on the basis of his theory, he wished to put the question of the relation of subject and object at the centre of his considerations anew.

#### **4. On the paths of mystical experience: in search of a hermeneutic of experiencing a relationship with God**

Consideration of the texts of *Scotus* merely provided the basis for an in-depth consideration of mysticism in the Master Eckhart's edition, and more specifically of the relation of the subject (and therefore the soul) to the object

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 105-108.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. O. Pöggeler, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. C.B. Guignon, *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Cambridge 1993, p. 241.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

(in this case God Himself, although this formulation is only a kind of *terminus technicus* and does not at all imply His objectification)<sup>32</sup>. It is worth adding that for Heidegger the opposition between the rationalism of scholasticism and the irrationalism of mysticism, the shadow of which will appear as a result of his later distancing from the former, does not yet exist here<sup>33</sup>. He treats both currents as elements of a single system of thought inherent in medieval culture.

After questioning the description of inter-subjective relations characteristic of scholasticism, Heidegger decided to extend the search on the level of mysticism. Analysing the works of Eckhart, he sought to inquire into the structure of the mystical relation and thus philosophically ground this *unio mystica*, which the Master himself described as: "I am in him and he is in me"<sup>34</sup>. Heidegger wishes to avoid entanglement in the poetic language that is characteristic of mystical literature and at the same time always inexact, sticking resolutely to scientific hermeneutics. This raises the question of the possibility of encapsulating an experience of such an intimate nature as mystical union in the scientific language of philosophical hermeneutics. In spite of his own uncertainty, Heidegger nevertheless manages in his analyses to isolate a concept central to the description of the relationship with God: detachment, or *Abgeschiedenheit*<sup>35</sup>. As the young philosopher intended, it does not describe an abstract metaphysical structure, but a process that touches the deepest layers of actual life. *Abgeschiedenheit* is the movement within the subject towards its creation by returning to its inner roots, to the very sources of its inner life. The most interesting thing about this discovery is the fact of the surprising similarity of this process taking place in the depths of the soul moving towards God to the process proper to phenomenological *epoche*. Heidegger will long be influenced by this discovery.

The resemblance with the classical theory of phenomenological reduction is striking when we look deeper into the process Heidegger describes. Well, the movement of detachment, or *Abgeschiedenheit*, does not lead to the search for some strictly defined form of relation, it does not seek to produce the appropriate conditions for the occurrence of union. Rather, it represents a liberation from all form, from multiplicity, of the individual elements of religious experience. Through such a reduction of the experience of reality, the soul finally reaches the One who is completely free of form, who is empty form – the first element of reality no longer disintegrating into any other, unassembled and indivisible – the One we call God. Gradually achieving greater and greater

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. C.B. Guignon, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 82-83.

objectivity of experience, the subject moves towards the experience of objectivity in the highest sense, i.e. God Himself.

### **5. The problem of faith and its role in the experience of the factuality of mystical experience – inspiration from Troeltsch's reading**

Following the path of the search for a historically oriented phenomenology of religion, Heidegger matured in 1919 to pose the problem of faith as an indispensable element of mystical union<sup>36</sup>. His attention was drawn to the phenomenon of faith mainly by reading Troeltsch, whose texts he encountered while looking through articles and encyclopaedic entries related to the question<sup>37</sup>. It turned out that in Protestant theology, of which the aforementioned author is a representative, a historical orientation in the systematic study of the phenomenon of religion was already present. In his writings, Troeltsch defines faith as an act of trust and devotion to a reality accessible through ideas. Hence, it follows that it constitutes the rational aspect of piety<sup>38</sup>. Furthermore, he explicitly links faith as a specifically religious way of thinking and acquiring knowledge with the practice of everyday life that this conditions. It should be added that, although faith resorts to myth in its cognition, it does so only for the sake of the practice of religious life, which it can only express, objectify and make communicable by means of it. In these intuitions of Protestant theology, Heidegger finds an orientation antagonistic to the Catholic position. In his view, the latter depreciates the role of faith as the centre of everyday life by reducing it to that of a mere centre of belief, which nevertheless remains separated from the practical and ethical dimension. Catholicism therefore seems here to fail to sufficiently value faith as a volitional centre in man. A consequence of these discoveries by Heidegger is his increasing sceptical distance for Catholicism as a possible vehicle for authentic religious experience<sup>39</sup>. At the same time, the experience of the true life found in the early Christians and the mystic Paul the Apostle becomes ever closer to him. Its central formula: "Christ in me, I in Christ", or more precisely the preposition "in", will become the subject of further analysis for Heidegger, as Kisiel points out<sup>40</sup>.

From the point of view of the analyses presented here, it remains interesting that Heidegger tries to juxtapose the definition of faith found in Troeltsch

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. B. Vedder, *Heidegger's philosophy of religion. From God to the Gods*, Pittsburgh 2006, p. 27.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 38-39.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 82-84.

with its descriptions as a cognitive act found in Husserl's *Ideas*<sup>41</sup>. There, faith is framed as the cognition of a multiplicity of modalities, which, however, cannot be classified by *species* or *genus*. Behind these cognitive acts is what Husserl referred to as *protodoxa* (i.e. *primordial faith*), to which all other acts of faith are intuitively referred<sup>42</sup>. The modalities of faith described here, interestingly, also refer to modalities of being.

## 6. The hypothesis of the departure of religion from its original and only proper form inspired by Schleiermacher

In his further reflections, Heidegger continued to follow the path set by phenomenological methodology. Reading Hegel, he came to the conviction that his analyses from the early period of his work, although very promising and reflecting the climate of vitality of faith inherent in the beginnings of Christianity, were still tainted by an erroneous teleology. The question of a teleological interpretation of the history of religion was still brought to his attention by the neo-Kantists. It was not until Schleiermacher, a contemporary of Hegel's, that he found the right direction in this matter; his reading of Schleiermacher was to ultimately direct his steps to the antipodes of Catholicism and, later, Christianity in general.

Schleiermacher points out that, in its historical development, religion has moved considerably away from its original and at the same time only proper form. Two main strands of its teleologically erroneous development are now, in his view, the source of the greatest misunderstandings: identifying it with a form of belief and a way of viewing the world culminating in metaphysics or reducing it to morality. In the face of these distortions, it is necessary to carry out something like a kind of *epoche* of religion itself<sup>43</sup>, which will restore its specific character and its proper place in human spirituality. It can be said that Schleiermacher seeks to perform a reduction of religion from the teleological side by restoring its true purpose, which is the Holy One, and not goodness, truth, beauty or any other value sensibility. In doing so, he simultaneously verifies the cognitive aspect of faith, which can only use contemplation, which is the athematic cognition of the Infinite Being and looking at everything finite through the prism of the Infinite, on the way to the encounter with God. Religion itself is the possession of life in Him, an incomprehensible sense of His nearness. Schleiermacher refers to God as the Infinite in order to avoid any

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. B. Vedder, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, op. cit., p. 89-91.

attempt to enclose religious experience in concepts, an attempt that is always destructive to him.

Schleiermacher seeks to unveil the innermost life of consciousness in which religious feeling occurs. Religion constitutes the intuitive and affective relation of each individual part to the ungraspable whole<sup>44</sup>. The noematic space of experience is incapable of encompassing the experience of the movement of the parts towards the Being-Whole, finding its goal in the mystical moment of union of intuition and will in relation to the Infinite-Saint. The infinity of this experience also lies in the fact that no part of this Wholeness can gain supremacy – every experience of approaching the Deity is equally legitimate, regardless of the colouring of the more volitional or intuitive<sup>45</sup>.

On this basis, Heidegger notes that religious life according to Schleiermacher is based on a two-way process<sup>46</sup>. First, the subject gives himself in trust to the infinity of the Universe, so that then, deeply moved by it, he allows his entire inner life to be permeated by this movement. Religious experience consists in the constant renewal and reassertion of this process in the human being. In this way, the gradually progressive interiorisation of the experience of the Infinite leads to the unification of personal acts and the concentration of their content around a deeply lived reality. In this way, religion recovers its vitality, forgotten in the process of historical development, and from its position as an additional sphere of human everyday life becomes an integral part of it. Furthermore, Heidegger finds in Schleiermacher the basis of his thesis on the historicity of religion and religious experience and the foundation for the phenomenological hermeneutics from which the hermeneutics of facticity would later be born<sup>47</sup>. It is in it that the revelation of what is most inner and at the same time most sacred becomes available. Historical consciousness will therefore remain for Heidegger at the centre of his considerations, and he will find its grounding and description of its birth in Dilthey.

Schleiermacher allowed Heidegger to deepen his understanding of the Pauline formula, the meaning of which he was seeking<sup>48</sup>. Finally, however, it is important to note the conclusions he made about the mystical relation. For him, the pure *ego* remains the first moment of openness to all experience. It is realised through self-consciousness of a historical nature, moreover, the capacity to change oneself and the premonition of coming from elsewhere. The latter captures the eternal call of the subject, the peculiar vocation inscribed in its existence, which remains the source of its life and action. This means that

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 91-92.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. B. Vedder, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 22-24.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. O. Pöggeler, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 360.

Schleiermacher, and perhaps Heidegger after him, stood for *anima naturaliter religiosa*<sup>49</sup>. This premonition in religious experience strives for its fulfilment, which, however, is strictly mystical and does not involve any form of noematic act. The ability of the subject's passage through religious experience leading from the possibility of being in relation with the infinite and the sacred to its fulfilment, as described here, constitutes a form of relation between the substance and the possibility of consciousness. It is these two concepts that constitute the proper warp of the intentionality of religious experience as described by Schleiermacher<sup>50</sup>. Although these theses seem quite promising, it must not be forgotten that religion according to him bears clear features of pantheism – there is therefore no place for a relationship with God or any form of expectation of ultimate fulfilment. Religious feeling, which is the subject of many of Schleiermacher's analyses, nevertheless reveals to Heidegger the inner life of consciousness and therefore remains of interest to him.

## 7. Dilthey and the discovery of the breakthrough in the history of human consciousness made by the early Christians

As mentioned earlier, Heidegger was very much inspired in his search for a phenomenology of religion by Dilthey, whom he quoted very abundantly in his early lectures<sup>51</sup>. Of particular interest to him were two chapters of the *Introduction to the Human Sciences*. Heidegger drew attention in particular to the characterisation given there of the breakthrough made by the first Christians in the history of the development of human self-consciousness. By emphasising the development of one's inner self and placing self-consciousness at the centre of the historical understanding of one's own life, they broke with the limitations of the cosmological orientation of reflection characteristic of Greek thinkers. In order to better understand the origins of this break from the mindset prevalent in the culture of the time, it is necessary – according to Dilthey – to consider the phrase: “The kingdom of God is not of this world”<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> Cf T. Kisiel, op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. O. Pöggeler, op. cit., p. 30-31.

<sup>52</sup> According to Dilthey, Christianity, with its unprecedented emphasis on the inner experience of the will, revealed hitherto unknown layers of content inherent in life itself. It is worth quoting here a passage of reflection taken from the *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, which inspired Heidegger: “The kingdom of God is not of this world. Thus, the will no longer finds satisfaction in the creation of objective facts, in the discernible moral work of a politician or a talented statesman and orator. Rather, as it were, it hides behind all this, as a mere figure of the world, and withdraws into itself. The will, which shapes the objective facts in the world, remains in that area of world consciousness to which its aims belong. In Christianity, the will experiences its own metaphysical character.



Imbued with this truth, human thought is no longer able to be satisfied with the orderly artistic harmony of the cosmos of the Greek philosophers, but rather turns to those spaces it finds inside consciousness. The essence of the change here lies in the fact that, according to Heidegger, the Christian experience of life is therefore actually historical, it is an experience of life in its facticity, that it sees the dominant structure of life in the sense of achievement, not in the sense of content. This means that the subject's entire attention is focused on his or her own experience, on the lived life that is happening now. According to Dilthey, Christians have simply recognised that authentic knowledge grows with awareness of the content of one's own interiority<sup>53</sup>. This specific form of self-consciousness becomes a previously unheard-of source of the factuality of lived everyday life. This means at the same time that the rift between thought and life is finally broken here – the practice of actual living becomes the basis of theory. The inner content of the movements of the will and the heart becomes the content of thought. According to Dilthey, this is a significant breakthrough in relation to any previous search for true wisdom and thus the authentic content of human life. In subjectivity understood in this way, the path to the highest virtue and therefore to the fullness of humanity no longer leads through the acquisition of knowledge or variously conceived wisdom, but through service and suffering<sup>54</sup>. Because “the Kingdom of God is not of this world. It is impossible to attain it through this world, understood as some universe of entities requiring ordering according to some particular (preferably divine) principium. It is only accessible in consciously living each moment of life as if it were the moment of death, that is, standing before God”<sup>55</sup>.

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This brings us to the limit of our thinking, which here is directed exclusively towards the human and the historical.” – W. Dilthey, *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften Versuch einer Grundlegung für das Studium der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte*, Berlin 1922, p. 251.

<sup>53</sup> Here Dilthey describes the revolution in Western man's self-consciousness brought about by the discovery of these ‘inner experiences of will and heart’: “The certainty of the inner experiences of the will and heart, then the content of these experiences, and then the change in the innermost life of the soul: all this not only included the requirement of a foundation built on inner experience, but also influenced further intellectual development in a different way, both with regard to knowledge of nature and the humanities. This new form of self-consciousness is the essence of the «experience of Christianity» (der Erlebnis des Christentums) – W. Dilthey, *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften Versuch einer Grundlegung für das Studium der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte*, p. 252.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>55</sup> The experience of Christianity, according to Dilthey, became the source of a new metaphysics. The main axis of this metaphysics is the fragility of life, which at the same time moves towards the divine: “Thus, the starting point of this metaphysics is the divinity captured in religious experience; its problem is the emergence of the finite in its concrete character; this emergence appears as a living psychic process, in which then the fragility of human life also appears: until, in an equally curious process, there is a return to divinity. The fragility referred to here will be reflected in the way Heidegger conceived of the dynamic *a priori* underlying life. Life does not rest on the unshakable certainty of theory. Rather, the power of theory is a response to the unbearable fragility from

This concept is taken from the thought of St Paul, who in his First Letter to the Thessalonians wrote: "There is no need for you brothers to write about times and moments. You yourselves know that the day will come like a thief in the night". According to Dilthey, the early Christians lived as if every moment opened up the possibility of Christ's second coming and this gave them an inner freedom<sup>56</sup>. It therefore differed significantly from that found in some strands of Greek philosophy close to Stoicism, where the ability to accept life with all its consequences resulted only from a logically grounded attitude and not from the deepest inner relation to life itself.

Christianity, therefore, at its origins gave birth to a specific form of self-consciousness in the history of thought, according to Dilthey<sup>57</sup>. Its genesis consists of several elements. In addition to the idea of the Kingdom of God, Dilthey mentioned: fraternity, Christian community, sacrifice, inner freedom through faith, and the experience of the living God (*der Erfahrung des lebendigen Gottes*) revealed in Paul's struggle of conscience and in the historical life of Jesus Christ<sup>58</sup>. The last of the stated sources of Christian experience remains the most important. The God who was previously locked in the space of the inaccessible past becomes attainable in the concrete historical moment as a person. One can see here in Dilthey's views, which are partly followed by Heidegger, a definite evolution from Schleiermacher's pantheism. It is in Christ that the model of the facticity of life becomes available – his experi-

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which life inevitably draws its source. Heidegger, following the inspiration drawn from Dilthey, is admittedly aware that the pre-theoretical *a priori* of life is uncertain and therefore in a peculiar way paradoxical, but he knows that it is the only thing that remains." – W. Dilthey, *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften Versuch einer Grundlegung für das Studium der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte*, p. 253.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. O. Pöggeler, op. cit., p. 38-40.

<sup>57</sup> This awareness was, on the one hand, a revolution and, on the other hand, a continuation of the process still initiated by Greek metaphysics of the peculiar unveiling of this inner relation to life. According to Dilthey, the experience of the religious life of the Christians played a fundamental role in this process: "This created entirely new conditions for the intellectual development of European civilisation. From the tacit life of the individual, the features of the will that separated it from the whole context of nature emerged into the foreground of world history: self-sacrifice, the recognition of the divine in pain and in lowliness, the sincere negation of what it must reject in itself. Man's relation to himself in this essential core, which determines all his values, constituted the kingdom of God, in which all differences between nations, cults and education were abolished, and then detached from all kinds of political relationships. If the metaphysics created by Greek antiquity was to continue, it had to gain a connection with this new world of will and history. In the spiritual formation of the old peoples plunging into crisis, as in the fate of the religious process, there were also conditions that determined the direction in which this process of erosion took place." – W. Dilthey, *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften Versuch einer Grundlegung für das Studium der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte*, p. 255.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, op. cit., p. 77.

ence as a human being remains the model of authentically human life, and thus remains for the historical consciousness of man the model of its fullest fulfilment. Heidegger, however, in adopting for his hermeneutics of facticity the essential framework of Dilthey's analysis of the religious experience of the first Christians, seems at the same time to completely disregard the central role of the very expectation of a final encounter with God. It accepts hermeneutical inspirations drawn from New Testament thought, while at the same time rejecting the hermeneutical key that constitutes their foundation and ultimate rationale. It seems that we are dealing here with the aforementioned peculiar *religious reduction*. Heidegger explains the experience of the first Christians as an experience of life, a relation to that which is most primordial for experience.

## 8. Summary: Understanding life anew with Martin Heidegger

Therefore, Heidegger carried out a kind of reduction of religion, which ultimately led to the secularisation of the main religious ideas, which, by the way, only confirms the fact that both ideas and doctrines lay outside his field of inquiry. The first path to a phenomenology of life is the phenomenology of religious life, because religious life has a clearly defined *a priori* to which it not only constantly refers, but with which it is in constant contact. The religious *a priori* in religious life is constantly being lived. Religious life thus actually becomes a phenomenon, i.e. a manifestation of this *a priori*: one can say that the heart of such life beats in this *a priori* and that this life throbs with life and as life manifests itself. Against all appearances, Heidegger rightly draws attention to the uniqueness of religious life, which cannot be overestimated here. We see it more clearly when we juxtapose religious life with the adherence to a worldview. A worldview has to do with life as a still life has to do with living nature. A worldview is merely a frozen image of an idea, it is, as it were, life frozen and viewed as if through the eyepiece of a photoplasticon. Adhering to a worldview, or even living a worldview (if an exceptionally zealous form of its adherence can be described as such) does not yet give access to this *a priori* life, i.e. to life itself, but only to its re-theorised caricature. A simple conclusion emerges here: where there is no life, there is also no understanding. It turns out that understanding is not a theoretical construction, but a pre-theoretical one. Understanding is prior to theory. Understanding is related to life and not to theory; it flows from a direct (i.e. authentic) relationship with life and not from a smooth operationalization of the relationships between particular theoretical claims. Therefore, understanding is an understanding of life and not an understanding of a sentence. It turns out that the

more we live, the more we understand. Heidegger thus seems to be calling for everyone to return to life. As we have seen in the course of our reflections, this call is far from trivial.

Within the framework of the aforementioned considerations, it is clear that the cited schema for the *Kriegsnotsemester* 1919 lecture forms the basis for the later project of the hermeneutics of facticity proposed by Heidegger. At the same time, it explains in a surprisingly clear way the complex construction on which he built his entire phenomenology. In this article, we have admittedly focused on Heidegger's early philosophical explorations. However, Heidegger seems to have remained faithful to the end to the ambitious goals set by this inconspicuous scheme outlined by his youthful enthusiasm for the search for real life. It is hard to resist the impression that the whole long path of his thinking is just such a constant return to life. The fascination with Heidegger's early reflections is echoed in the opening sentences of Van Buren's book *The Young Heidegger*: "For many years we have heard rumours of an unconfirmed story concerning Martin Heidegger's unpublished youthful writings prior to his 1992 publication of *Sein und Zeit*. The rumours suggested that already in these writings he had discovered the question of being, had made a turn (Kehre) beyond all subjectivity to being itself (so that his later turn after *Sein und Zeit* was a return to his youthful period) and had done so in a unique way through his reading of Meister Eckhart, Luther, Kierkegaard, Aristotle's Ethics, Plato's Sophist, Dilthey and Husserl"<sup>59</sup>. The young Heidegger captivated a whole generation of thinkers. Hanna Arendt writes that the beginning of his fame was precisely the first lectures and seminars discussed here, which he gave as a mere *Privatdozent* and at the same time assistant to Husserl while still at the University of Freiburg. And one lecture, in fact: delivered to an audience supposedly recruited in great part from surviving veterans of the Great War, a lecture from *Kriegsnotsemester* 1919. Heidegger seemed to cast a spell over his entire generation, as Galarowicz suggests in a book with the telling title *Heidegger: genius thinker or shaman?* Even Arendt herself, who for obvious reasons later acquired a critical distance from Heidegger, cannot explain the source of her fascination with his first teachings: "There was nothing concrete on which his fame could be based", she writes, "nothing concrete on which this fame could be based, nothing written, except the notes of his lectures, which circulated everywhere among the students"<sup>60</sup>. Along with these notes, there was supposedly a rumour about Heidegger, which quickly turned into a legend about the "hidden king", as Arendt herself puts it<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. J. van Buren, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, op. cit., p. 16.

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