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# Weimar's Lost Existence:

## Anachronism in Philosophy, Religion, and Heidegger's *Existence and Time (Sein und Zeit)*

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### **Scholarship Out of Time: A Drama in Three Acts**

The academic world is not monotheistic, but a polytheistic battlefield of “warring gods” (Max Weber). Each discipline has a founding myth and nexus of core ideas and figures, and all exclude from themselves approaches and data that would threaten their self-representations. Academic disciplines are policed territories, and such territory, its protection and expansion, is the most basic root of war. The greatest threat to any and all academic disciplines is history itself, which argues that we do an injustice to the past if we do not recognize what is distinctive to it, and that anachronism, the projection of present standards into our accounts of the past, constitutes a distortion of both history and ourselves.

The uncritical and anachronistic employment of major concepts to organize academic disciplines and the scholarship they create reproduces the ideological structures and history those concepts embody and enable.

Focusing on the interrelated nexus of philosophy and religion, this serially published monograph (an excerpt from a larger project on the intellectual origins of Weimar Germany and posthumanism) renders legible through theory and history the way in which modernity confuses

an anachronistic myth of its own status and origins with a historically accurate perception of philosophy, science, religion, and their connection.

Through exploring this myth and replacing it with a self-conscious rejection of anachronism, this study creates a new framework in which to conceptualize both philosophy and religion, and a set of cognate concepts, including the secular. It then applies this framework to a sketch of the history of metaphysics and theology that opens up the necessary vantage point from which to understand the major work of Martin Heidegger.

Heidegger encapsulates both an ending to the tradition of philosophy as conceived by modernity and a cryptic restatement of its fundamentally religious character, origins, and destiny. This study paves the way for a fuller project, of which it is an echo and promise, and restricts itself to the essential conditions for appreciating how philosophy and religion can be reimagined to illuminate Heidegger and our own time.

It can be read as a drama in three acts. Act One takes up the question of philosophy and religion and justifies the need for substantive historical and theoretical inquiry into the major concepts of the project, which it then follows by an alternate theory of religion and a brief overview of the historical origins of philosophy in antiquity.

Act Two chronicles a major metaphysical development of Platonism from its foundations in Aristotle, through its explicit formulation in medieval Muslim, Jewish, and Christian thought and into its transformation in German Idealism and Kierkegaard, focusing on how the ideal of autonomy reworks ancient ideas of human nature. The turn to Heidegger pursues the ideal of a linguistically sensitive, historically attuned, and conceptually focused interpretation of Martin Heidegger's major work, *Sein und Zeit*, offering a proposal as to how it might be best understood in light of the preceding.

The interpretation of Heidegger, Act Three, begins by examining the state of confusion arising from the translational challenges of rendering Heidegger into intelligible English, and then offers a step-by-step exposition of some of the crucial concepts of the Introduction of *Sein und Zeit*. These include the titular concepts of Sein, Zeit, and Dasein, among others. The argument shows that Heidegger's major concepts cannot be understood without Acts One and Two, for the logic of his work arises out of German Idealism and aspects of the medieval scholastic heritage in which he was trained, and to which he intended to contribute to as a Catholic priest and theologian, before he later abandoned orthodox Catholicism. It also shows the best translation of the title (and thus the major concept) is *Existence and Time*, not *Being and Time*, as in current English translations.

The effect of the whole drama is a historical theory of the book's meaning and significance that connects to the broader framework of how we ought to conceptualize philosophy and religion and whether they are fruitfully operationalized in scholarship as contrasting, rather than complementary or even inseparable, ideas. The study as a whole suggests such a contrast is historically indefensible, theoretically obstructive, and philosophically self-negating, as it involves the cancellation of the conditions of philosophy's own intelligibility, thereby rendering it unconscious to itself and its history.

The conclusion therefore reflects on the path of this study and its implications for the academic study of philosophy and religion, pointing to the larger project towards which this one is moving, and from which it derives whatever measure of unity and force it possesses.