***Continental Philosophy of Religion: Then, Now and Tomorrow***

Was the Fiftieth Anniversary meeting a celebration of a vital philosophical society—or was it a memorial service held by the elders at the passing of a beloved old friend? Were we giving anniversary papers or eulogies?[[1]](#endnote-1)   
 That question, a bit unnerving I admit, can best be approached by following the fortunes of “religion” at SPEP. The question of the state of continental philosophy and religion “then and now” cannot elude the question of its future. That is why to address this question I must expand it—then, now and then again tomorrow.[[2]](#endnote-2) Accordingly my paper has three parts. First (“then”), I will begin with what I will call the theological sources of “continental philosophy” and of SPEP in particular, which was both a partial mirror—it could not be expected to reflect everything—and the instrument of the emergence of continental philosophy in the United States in the middle of the last century. Next I turn to “now:” the state of the question today, which as Dominique Janicaud complained represents a “theological turn” in continental philosophy.[[3]](#endnote-3) Finally, I will conclude with a third part, tomorrow, the future, what is starting to happen to religion and ethics in SPEP and continental philosophy generally, which threatens (or promises, depending on where you stand on this point) to completely remake or even unmake it, precisely in reaction against the so-called theological turn. These three parts will be entitled 1) the becoming-philosophical of theology; 2) the becoming-theological of the philosophical or the theological turn; 3) the return of realism and anti-religion.

*Origins: The Becoming Philosophical the Theological*

My thesis in the first part is that SPEP in particular and continental philosophy in the United States generally was first nourished in originally religious and theological soil. This is a slightly paradoxical thing to say because if we look at the papers delivered in the first five years, from 1962-67,[[4]](#endnote-4) we will see nothing of the sort, hardly any mention of religion at all. However, far from constituting evidence against my thesis, that fact is actually a part of my thesis.

I want first to point out that there is nothing to be gained from exaggerating the theological dimension I propose to underline. There are obviously internal philosophical reasons for the emergence of continental philosophy in the United States, without which nothing would have been possible. These internal reasons are nicely summarized in what John Wild called as early as 1955 “the breakdown of modern philosophy:”[[5]](#endnote-5) the discontent with the epistemologies of the 17th and 18th century; the critique of metaphysics in the wake of Kant; the critique of Hegel launched by the Kierkegaardian pseudonyms; the intrinsic appeal of phenomenological ideas and, in those days, even more so, the tremendous popularity of Existentialism, which the literary writings of Camus and Sartre helped to make part of the general culture. None of this need necessarily have anything to do with theology.

My only point is that it did. That is because this discontent with modernity found an especially receptive audience among people who—like the founders of SPEP—were either theologically minded philosophers outright or philosophers who having been theologically minded had given it up and were looking for a successor form of thinking to their theological interests. They were seeking a post-theological form of thought that I am describing by saying that their philosophical interests were in a certain sense the becoming-philosophical of their theological concerns. The significant thing is not so much that they gave up theology, which they did in varying degrees, some more than others, but that in looking for a successor form they turned to continental philosophy. If they turned to Anglo-American sources, they embraced not the then regnant Anglo-American analytic and positivistic philosophies but classical American thought: the work of William James, whose *Varieties of Religious Experience* was and is a reigning standard in the philosophy of religion, and Whitehead’s process philosophy (theology), which was then quite influential in no small part because of the work of Charles Hartshorne. From the start an important philosophical and political alliance was forged between continental philosophy, American pragmatism and the Whiteheadians in the Metaphysical Society of America, which later on blossomed in the “pluralist” group headed up by Bruce Wilshire and Charles Sherover, where pluralism mostly meant non-analytic, that is, everybody except the analysts.

Why would this be the case? One explanation is found in Kierkegaard, who fascinated everyone, whether theistic or atheistic, religious or not. One common denominator or family trait of continental philosophers just might be the “E” in SPEP, the question of philosophy as an “existential” matter, a matter of personal passion, a form of life, a way so to speak to “save” ourselves, not by supernatural intervention but by the existential event. It is not an accident that Kierkegaard, arguably the central figure lying in the background of contemporary continental philosophy, is as Heidegger said a “religious writer.” Heidegger, of course, betraying a brand of “anxiety” known as the anxiety of influence, was trying to brush off Kierkegaard in an attempt to deflect our attention from how much he had lifted from Kierkegaard without citation or at least without a dismissive citation.

I will elaborate the first part of my thesis, somewhat artificially but conveniently, by looking in turn at the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish sources and resources of SPEP and continental philosophy.

*Catholic*. Continental philosophy has been a central component in the philosophical curricula of most American Catholic colleges and universities ever since the Second Vatican Council. (The Second Vatican Council was convened on October 11, 1962 and the first meeting of SPEP was held 15 days later, October 26, 1962). A good half of the doctoral programs in the United States that offer programs specializing in continental philosophy are to be found in Catholic institutions. Many prominent members of the movement have been Catholic or at least have Catholic origins. *Philosophy Today*, one of the first and most popular American journals in the field, was founded and edited by Robert Lechner, a Catholic priest, out of DePaul University, where it is still housed today under the editorship of David Pellauer, with which SPEP had a long and fruitful relationship. The reasons for this Catholic side are not hard to understand. Catholics, to borrow a phrase from Bruno Latour, have never been modern,[[6]](#endnote-6) and that was especially the case for Catholic European immigrants to a predominantly Protestant Anglo-Saxon country. Before Vatican Council II, Catholic colleges were insular institutions that served up an exclusive diet of Neo-scholastic and Neo-Thomistic philosophy in an effort to inoculate themselves against “modernity” by enthusiastically embracing Leo XIII’s call to return to St. Thomas in *Aeterni Patris*. At the Catholic University of America, students were even asked to take an oath against “modernism,” which by no means should be understood as an oath to postmodernism.

That world vanished in a surprisingly short time beginning in the mid-1960s. Even before the Second Vatican Council, Catholic colleges and doctoral programs had begun to cultivate an historical sense. They always devoted time to Greek philosophy and the history of philosophy generally—the English Jesuit Frederick Copleston’s multi-volume *History of Philosophy* was our trustworthy guide. Etienne Gilson had taught us all the need for a careful study of the neglected middle ages in order to understand the medieval Christian climate of Aquinas as distinct from the Greek world of Aristotle, from whom he was separated by a millennium and a half, a pre-Christian culture and a Latin translation. When the hegemony of Neo-Thomism was finally broken, two things happened. (1) Catholics literally put St. Thomas in his place, converting him from a timeless ahistorical master to a historically situated thirteenth century thinker, and filled in the missing link of the middle ages in standard histories of philosophy, and then went on to cultivate a strong historical consciousness (against which the oath against modernism had been directed). (2) Led by major figures at the Jesuit institutions, Catholics took up their continental European heritage in a sustained way, in search of contemporary resources to think their way through this brave new post-Vatican II world. They embraced the existentialism and phenomenology then enjoying heady days in the United States. James Collins, a Catholic layman at the Jesuit St. Louis University, who had written a major history of modern philosophy, wrote two widely read books—one on Kierkegaard and the other on Existentialism—that were staples of the movement.[[7]](#endnote-7) Wilfrid Desan, a Belgian philosopher who had taken a Ph.D. at Harvard, began writing books about and teaching the work of Jean-Paul Sartre at Georgetown University, the Jesuit University in Washington D.C.[[8]](#endnote-8) Desan introduced Americans to what we used to call “atheistic existentialism,” as opposed to the “Christian existentialism” of Gabriel Marcel, which we also greatly loved. Thomas Langan, a Catholic at Toronto trained at the *Institut Catholique*, wrote two of the first books in English on Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger.[[9]](#endnote-9) This enthusiasm for Existentialism and phenomenology made perfect sense. Catholics were philosophers with a religious tradition that had continental European roots, and they found no nourishment in positivism and analytic philosophy, which seemed like an Anglo-Saxon version of neo-scholasticism, more dry and bloodless technical work. So they readily turned to the philosophers of “concrete existence” and to the phenomenological movement that encouraged a return to the “*Lebenswelt.”* Continental philosophy was cut to fit the intellectual tradition and growing historical consciousness of Catholics.

I also want to point out that there is a kind of natural migration from Aristotle to phenomenology. This, of course, in a word, is the path of Heidegger’s *Denkweg,* who made his way into phenomenology from an ultra-conservative, Catholic German Neoscholastic world and who would come to see in Aristotle the greatest phenomenologist of antiquity. Heidegger’s work was in no small way a reinvention of Aristotle by way of phenomenology and a reinvention of phenomenology by way of Aristotle. This is also the path—and I cannot emphasize this point strongly enough—of John Wild, who made exactly the same migration. Notice the title of Ch. 7 of Wild’s *The Challenge of Existentialism*: “Realistic Phenomenology and Metaphysics.” Many Catholics made their first contact with John Wild as a realist, when they were being dutifully trained in Aristotelian realism by reading Wild and Francis Parker, with whom Wild collaborated. After Vatican Council II, many Catholics moved from the realism of Aristotle and Aquinas to phenomenology, just as Wild himself had done, and just as Heidegger himself had done before that, even as Husserl had appropriated the medieval notion of *esse intentionale* developed by the ex-priest Franz Brentano. The movement is quite natural and it results in a form of phenomenology that is free from the transcendentalism that beset pure Husserlian versions of phenomenology.

It is no surprise that of all the philosophers Catholics read Heidegger enjoyed pride of place. Aided by a wave of English translations[[10]](#endnote-10)and by the landmark study *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, the well known book by William Richardson, a Jesuit philosopher then at Fordham University who would move on to Boston College in 1981 and expand his interests to include Lacan.[[11]](#endnote-11) When Catholic philosophers read *Being and Time* it all made perfect sense and sounded just like what they who were wary of modernity had been looking for all along. When Heidegger criticized Descartes’ idea of a worldless subject and his reduction of the world to *res extensa*, when Heidegger said that the question of the existence of the world when it is raised by a being whose being is being-in-the-world makes no sense, this resonated with the Aristotelian and Neo-Thomistic sensibilities of Catholic philosophers. Raised as “realists,” with an Aristotelian sense that the soul is the form of the body, that all knowledge begins in the senses, that human being is embedded in the order of natural being, and that the world is always and already there, Catholics were a perfect audience for the analytic of Dasein. When Heidegger said that as soon as Dasein comes to be it finds that it is already there, that made instant sense to Catholic realists.[[12]](#endnote-12) They had been critical of modern Cartesian epistemology for decades,[[13]](#endnote-13) and here was Heidegger–he himself a onetime Catholic nurtured like them in Neo-Scholasticism–putting that argument on the map of contemporary philosophy in an original and magisterial way.

While Catholics signed on to the distinction between church and state, they just could not embrace the modernist world-view, the whole idea of rigid territorial distinctions between faith and reason, sacred and secular, private and public, fact and value, subject and object, mind and body. These were modern distinctions, indeed modernist contrivances that had taken root in a Protestant culture, which they distrusted in their bones. When the early Heidegger came along with his critique of Cartesianism, and when the later Heidegger came along with his *grand récit* about modernity and the age of the *Weltbild*, even enlisting the Dominican friar Meister Eckhart in his cause, Catholics were all ears and we understood it all perfectly. When Heidegger offered a critique of what he called “onto-theo-logic,” when he said that an atheism about the God of metaphysics, about the *causa sui,* was closer to the truly divine God, Catholics knew from firsthand experience what he was talking about.[[14]](#endnote-14) They had all been dragged through the pits of onto-theo-logic by the modernist Neo-scholastic manuals; they had had enough of it and they wanted to “overcome” it. Catholics nurtured by a close reading of Aristotle and Thomas did not recognize themselves in any post-medieval philosophical movement until they encountered the concrete, intentionalist, and incarnational philosophies of the existential and hermeneutic phenomenologies.

Pure reason and its critiques, pure, bloodless, transcendental subjects, religion within the limits of reason alone, all of that looked like a Protestant church with no statues! They had no taste for modernity’s rigid divisions of labor, for its rigorous separation of science, ethics, art, and religion, which confined knowledge to representations inside our head–flying directly in the face of what they knew about intentionality*–*making ethics and religion into some sort of strictly private business. Philosophers who were nourished by *pre*-modern sensibilities were ready to be romanced by any movement that offered the opportunity *not* to be modern without appearing reactionary, antediluvian or *anti-*modern, that indeed was actually the latest word! That they found in existentialism and phenomenology, and they found it in Heidegger in particular. The welcome extended to the arrival of continental philosophy in America by Catholic Ph.D. programs at one time included St. Louis, Marquette, Georgetown, Catholic University of America and Notre Dame—all of which have in varying degrees since retreated from that commitment and adopted a kind of “analytic Thomism,” especially in ethics. That is because, while they found existentialism and phenomenology congenial, they were extremely suspicious of the turn taken in post-structuralism, and also because the windows opened by Vatican II were gradually closed by later popes. But that is another story.[[15]](#endnote-15)

One can document in the biographies of the prominent people in the movement. James Edie, a central figure in the original executive committee, had been a Benedictine priest, who studied at the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm in Rome and did his doctoral dissertation at the Catholic University of Louvain on the work of Etienne Gilson.[[16]](#endnote-16) Indeed Calvin Schrag reports that the first time he met him Edie was still wearing his Roman collar. Edie would also co-edit a volume entitled *Christianity and Existentialism*.[[17]](#endnote-17) Joseph Kockelmans was a seminarian in Rome, although he was never ordained. Reiner Schürmann’s career in the United State began as a Dominican priest teaching at the Catholic University of America. For many years, the lay people teaching philosophy in Catholic universities were, like myself, former seminarians, priests or members of religious orders. Some of us maintained our religious beliefs and some of us mutated into secular “phenomenologists” or “existentialists.”

*Protestantism*. It is probably true to say that the ultimate setting of the creation of SPEP was Harvard in the 1950s. The founding father of SPEP is John Wild (1902-72), who taught at Harvard from 1927 to 1961 and who had spent 1931-32 in Freiburg hearing the lectures of Heidegger and Husserl. Wild’s study of Heidegger came to fruition for him only after he read Merleau-Ponty,[[18]](#endnote-18) which sent Wild back to the sources and led him to give courses on Heidegger at Harvard. This occasioned his own shift from realism to phenomenology and his departure from Harvard to Northwestern, where he established one of the two the major programs in continental philosophy at the time outside the Catholic institutions, the other being the New School of Social Research. He stayed at Northwestern for only two years and then moved on to Yale, where a number of his students were to go on to distinguished careers in continental philosophy. To Wild’s presence at Harvard we should add the arrival of Paul Tillich in the United States, first at Union Theological Seminary (1933-55), and then at Harvard (1955-62) (and finally at Chicago). Students at Harvard in the 1950s had the remarkable opportunity to study existentialism and phenomenology with Tillich and Wild.

Calvin Schrag was one such student. He was Paul Tillich’s Teaching Assistant at Harvard and he wrote a dissertation on Heidegger and Kierkegaard, directed by Tillich and Wild (and he also notes meeting a young French exchange student at Harvard named Jacques Derrida). When Tillich speaks of religion as a matter of ultimate concern—let us say, as an ultimate *Sorge*—and of God as the “ground of Being” rather than a particular entity—let us say that *Sein selbst* is not to be confused with *Seienden*—he was articulating a radically new theology that drew deeply not only upon Hegel and Schelling, but also Kierkegaard and Heidegger (with whom Tillich taught at Marburg, in 1924-25). One of most important effects of the theology of Paul Tillich was to help introduce Heidegger to a generation of American students. After a year in Germany, where he studied with Löwith and Gadamer, Schrag returned to Harvard to complete his dissertation. Writing in the “Preface” to a book that he would write many years later (during the “theological turn”) entitled *God as Otherwise than Being*, Schrag says:[[19]](#endnote-19)

It should come as no surprise that it is difficult to write about Kierkegaard and Heidegger without having philosophical and religious topics and themes crisscross at rather crucial junctures. Thus in this very early work certain background interests that circumscribe the present project are already discernible.

Schrag’s journey is a prism of the journey of many if not most of the original generation of SPEP. Allow me to mention a similar recollection made by Don Ihde, who was still a student at the time of the foundation of SPEP, and is at present one of its distinguished elders. Ihde describes this scene very tellingly:[[20]](#endnote-20)

I got an M. Div from Andover Newton in 1959 before doing my philosophy Ph.D at BU, 1964.  We had a consortium with all the local theological schools so I took most of my theology with Paul Tillich...Cal Schrag was his assistant then, too...I learned of Heidegger via Tillich.  But even while an undergrad I was reading Kierkegaard, Marcel, Sartre, Tillich.  I did my M. Div with a thesis on Nicolas Berdyaev.

Along with Wild and Edie, Schrag was one of the five figures who founded SPEP, the first “executive committee” for the first meeting at Northwestern in October, 1962. We have already noted that Edie had been a Catholic priest, and that Wild was a man with theological interests, a background in Aristotle and Aquinas, who had written a book on “Christian Philosophy;” as a biographical point, I note that his daughter Mary married Tillich’s son René. There were two others. William Earle kept a safe distance from anything resembling confessional religion but he had taken a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago under Charles Hartshorne, the leading process theologian of the day and had a mystical streak.[[21]](#endnote-21) George Schrader (1917-98) first came to Yale in 1939 as a student in the Divinity School, where he earned his B. Div. in 1942. From there he went on to do graduate work in philosophy at Yale, earning his Ph.D. in 1945. In all five cases, a theological project turned philosophical.

*Jewish*. It will not have gone unnoticed that every one of those of whom I have been speaking is a white Christian male. Aaron Gurwitsch and the group of Jewish phenomenologists and thinkers who had assembled in exile at the New School were not part of the first Executive Committee but they had established the first beachhead of continental philosophy in the United States and their pure Husserlian brand of phenomenology was an important part of SPEP early on. The first debate to break out in SPEP took place between pure Husserlian “phenomenologists” and the “existentialists” about the name of the new Society. Still, the New School philosophers showed very little interest in Jewish theology or religion. So even here, we must go back to John Wild, whose role in advancing the current interest in Levinas has been documented by Richard Sugarman, then a young Jewish student of Wild at Yale and Florida in the 1960s, who was first introduced to the work of Levinas by Wild.[[22]](#endnote-22) Sugarman recounts the intense interest Wild showed in Levinas and the prescient grasp Wild had of the importance Levinas would eventually have. Wild also taught what is probably the first course in the United States on *Totality and Infinity* in 1971. According to Sugarman, Wild wrote a commentary on *Totality and Infinity* that “keenly anticipated” the changes Levinas would introduce in *Otherwise than Being*.[[23]](#endnote-23) Edith Wyschogrod also reports that the first course she took in philosophy was a course taught by Wild at the Harvard Summer School. With the mention of Edith Wyschogrod we come finally to the first theologically and religiously sensitive philosophical Jewish presence in SPEP. In her wake, a great deal of work has been done on Levinas, Rosenzweig, Walter Benjamin and others.[[24]](#endnote-24)

There was certainly broad participation in the formation of continental philosophy in America by Jewish philosophers. Maurice Natanson wrote a series of books on Husserl and phenomenology and the social sciences. Hubert Dreyfus was a student of Wild’s at Harvard and collaborated with Wild on an early but unpublished translation of Being and Time. Herbert Spiegelberg wrote the authoritative history of the phenomenological movement. Natanson, Speigelberg and Dreyfus were founding members of the board of editors of the Northwestern University Press series, which was edited by James Edie and, of course, bore the acronym “SPEP.” Edith Wyschogrod’s husband, Michael, an expert in the Jewish-Catholic dialogue, had like Calvin Schrag also written a book on Kierkegaard and Heidegger. Maurice Friedman was writing about Martin Buber, whose I and Thou was something of a classic in those days. Marjorie Grene did important work on Sartre. Marvin Farber established the journal Philosophy and Phenomenological Research. Hannah Arendt famously enlisted J. Glenn Gray to serve as editor of the first series of Heidegger translations from Harper and Row. But until the ascendency of Levinas later on, and the arrival of Edith Wyschogrod on the scene, SPEP did not directly engage the philosophical import of Jewish theology and the Jewish Scriptures.

*The Theological Turn: The Becoming Theological of Philosophy*

It was inevitable—with the insight granted by hindsight—that with this much theological questioning running in the background continental philosophy would take a “theological turn.” To be sure, such a turn may be regarded as skidding off the road and ending up in a ditch, which was the view of Janicaud who coined the phrase, for whom it represents one more attempt to make philosophy a handmaiden of a theological agenda, which is the most consistent argument made against it. Or it may be regarded as a genuine renewal of what had been traditionally called the “philosophy of religion,” which is how it is embraced by those who involve themselves in it. Either way a new subdiscipline has emerged that for the most part is called “continental philosophy of religion,” an expression that positions it as a rival and alternative to the reigning Neoscholastic and analytic approaches.

The continental approach to the philosophy of religion is vastly different from the business as usual of philosophy of religion because it has displaced the standard debates about proofs for the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and the problem of evil with a new project, one that was conceived in the spirit of what the later Heidegger called “overcoming metaphysics” and the critique of “onto-theo-logic.” What theologians and philosophers of religion sensed in Heidegger’s meditations on God and the gods, the holy and the divinities, was an acute religious sensitivity, an appreciation of the specific character of the religious, which in a letter addressed to the theologians Heidegger himself described as “non-objectifying thinking.”[[25]](#endnote-25) Whatever “God” means, God is not an object for a subject, not the referent of a propositional assertion, not the subject matter of a demonstration, all staples of “modernity,” which is why the theological turn is sometimes called “postmodern theology.” Heidegger is calling for a veritable paradigm shift in thinking about God, whose implications for the philosophy of religion, for theology and for religion itself are considerable, indeed revolutionary. Of course, as with anything new, it is also very ancient. Its antecedents may be found in mystical theology, and Heidegger himself was deeply interested in Meister Eckhart.[[26]](#endnote-26) It is also found in Pascal’s defense of the reasons of the heart, and in Luther’s critique of the crust of scholastic metaphysics that had been allowed to grow over the life of the New Testament, which must be submitted, as Luther said, to a *destructio*. This was almost certainly the source of Heidegger’s use of the word *Destruktion*,[[27]](#endnote-27) and served as a prototype for Heidegger of a project of a thinking bent on overcoming metaphysics in order to retrieve (*wiederholen*) the things themselves, the genuine substance (*Sache*) of the phenomena. The entire project of the delimitation of metaphysics has a religious model. If as Marx thought the prototype and paradigm of criticism is the critique of religion, the prototype and paradigm of non-metaphysical and meditative thinking is also religious, and so it should not be surprising to see continental philosophers taking a theological turn.

Heidegger set out to release the “truly divine God” from its captivity by the dominant figures of “Being” that hold sway in the history of metaphysics. While for the young Heidegger, immersed as he was in Augustine, Kierkegaard and the letters of St. Paul, this described a Christian project, the later Heidegger had in mind the Greek divinities, and by non-objectifying thinking he meant poetic thinking, not Biblical. That was basis of the critique of Heidegger, first by his contemporary Levinas, thinking from the Jewish tradition, and in the next generation, by Jean-Luc Marion, working from the Catholic tradition, each of whom proposed alternate ways of thinking God “otherwise than Being” or “without Being.” Levinas and Marion are the central figures in the theological turn and they are singled out for sharp criticism by Janicaud for just that reason. Levinas has been the subject of countless sessions at SPEP for several decades while Marion was introduced to the membership in a plenary address he gave at SPEP in 1993 (Chicago)[[28]](#endnote-28) and has since been the subject of numerous studies, inside and outside the Society. As Ricoeur’s successor at the University of Chicago, Marion has built up a very considerable American presence.

If today it is unremarkable to hear even very secular elbow-patched philosophers discussing the “wholly other,” an expression borrowed from the darkest chambers of mystical theology, that is almost single-handedly the doing of Levinas. For Levinas, the liberation of God from Being was the definition of “ethics,” which Levinas himself called “metaphysics” (if Heidegger said something, Levinas felt duty-bound, bound by ethics, to say the opposite). Levinas meant that ethics alone breaks the crust of Being, which he called the sphere of the “same.” The ethical other breaches what we comprehend and pre-have in advance, and exposes us to the “wholly other,” by which he meant not God, but the “face” of the neighbor or the stranger, which is the “trace” that God leaves behind in withdrawing from the world (Being). Levinas radicalizes the ethics of neighborly love and hospitality in the Jewish Scriptures, by means of which he thought “first philosophy” could be revitalized and ethics returned to center stage in continental thinking, a project in which he broadly succeeded. Marion’s trope, “without Being,” is structurally similar to Levinas’, but Marion really does mean God, the God of mystical theology, whom he approaches in an ingenious series of three “reductions” in the Husserlian sense: first of transcendental subjectivity (Kant and Husserl), then of existential agency (Dasein), and finally of Being itself. The upshot of reduction is to release the givenness (*Gegebenheit*) of what he calls the “saturated phenomenon.” By this he means the phenomenon untethered from prior limiting conditions which is free to be given in a flood of *donation* that overwhelms the conceptual resources of the one to whom it is given (the *adonné*). Reversing orthodox Husserlianism, the givenness of the saturated phenomenon exceeds the intentional act.

In my own opinion the most interesting expression of the religious turn in continental philosophy is found in Derrida, and this because Derrida is by anyone standards a secular thinker and even, by the standards of the local pastor or rabbi, an atheist. So it came as a shock to read about Derrida’s “religion” in his famous “Circonfession” (1989), which was a deconstructive riff on Augustine’s *Confessions* in which Derrida restages the scene of the *Confessions*. Once again, we come upon a scene in which the speaker (Augustine/Jackie), an emigrant from North Africa to the Big Apple (Rome/Paris), has his back to us and is praying to someone (*te,* God/ *tu*), while his mother (Monica/Georgette) lay dying on the other side of the Mediterranean (Ostia/Nice). In this remarkable little book, Derrida tells us he is a man of prayer, has been praying all his life, and that no one, not even his mother, has understood this, and this has led to a misunderstanding of his work.[[29]](#endnote-29) But to whom is Derrida praying, and how could he be praying at all? Does he not, by his own admission, “rightly pass for an atheist?” That is what they say about him and they are right—“right,” correct, as a propositional matter. But clearly (or not so clearly) there is a more obscure sense of religion “without religion” in Derrida, and a prayer to a God not only unknown but non-existent, that nonetheless constitutes a genuine prayer. Indeed, if is true to say, as does Jean-Louis Chrétien, one of the new religious phenomenologists, that prayer is a “wounded word,”[[30]](#endnote-30) what word is more wounded than a word from one who does not know to whom he is praying (a lost letter, destination unknown), or if anyone is there to hear his prayers, or if he is praying at all, who has to pray to be able to pray at all, for something, he knows not what, something “coming,” the coming or incoming (*invention*) of something unforeseeable, which we desire (Augustine) with a desire beyond desire? In this rich, allusive and haunting text, Derrida puts on a deconstructive performance (or per-ver-formance) that is suggestively religious. But this does not represent an Augustinian conversion. Derrida’s atheism is crucially important to his religion, because it allows him to isolate the very structure of prayer, and hence of the religious posture, with or without what we in the great monotheisms call “God,” thereby putting into question the very binarity of theism and atheism. A whole body of work has sprung up in its wake, inside and outside SPEP, which takes its lead from the idea that deconstruction is structured like a religion (unless it is the opposite, that religion is structured like a deconstruction).[[31]](#endnote-31)

A great deal of other work emerged in the transformed climate of continental thought, in which it once again became respectable to raise the question of religion. (There are of course other very good reasons to talk about religion inasmuch as the rise of fundamentalisms, Christian, Jewish and Islamic, is at the heart of much of the current political turmoil in the middle east, western Europe and the United States.) There has been a renewal on several fronts of the theology of the “death of God,” which links up with the work of T. J. J. Altizer. Gianni Vattimo, taking his cue from the history of nihilism in Heidegger and Nietzsche, produced a series of essays under the umbrella of “weak thinking,” by which he means non-metaphysical thinking. According to Vattimo, first introduced to SPEP by Hugh Silverman, the history of theology and of metaphysics represents the withering away (weakening) of the supersensible being and transcendent God of metaphysical theology, finally mutating into the form of the world, of peace and justice, of a radically democratic order, according to which God’s death represents God’s greatest triumph, the arrival of the Kingdom of God in the world, the age of the Spirit first mentioned by Joachim of Fiore.[[32]](#endnote-32)

More recently a series of atheistic and materialist interpretations of St. Paul have arisen, beginning with Alain Badiou’s *The Universalism of St. Paul,* according to which Paul is an exemplar of the galvanized subjectivity that is required by a truth-process. Paul’s letters are a journal of the transformation of the subject under the impact of the event, which produces an apostolic mission to establish the universality of the truth. The universality of the truth event is achieved in a process of the subtraction of ethnic particularity, resulting in a reign of truth where there is neither Greek nor Jew, male nor female, master nor slave. Of course, the content of Paul’s letters, the resurrection of Jesus, is not the truth but a fantasy, but it is in the form of the truth. Slavoj Zizek contributes to this debate by way of an unorthodox version of Hegel read through Lacan, the watchword of which is Lacan’s saying that the therapy is over when the patient realizes there is no Big Other. The final words of Jesus on the cross, my God, why have you forsaken me, bear witness to the final atheistic conversion of Jesus, when God himself ceases to believe in God. What remains after Jesus departs is the galvanization of the kingdom of the Spirit, the community of those who, having assumed responsibility for themselves, set out to produce a radical egalitarian socialist order.[[33]](#endnote-33)

*The Return of Realism and of Anti-Religion*

Vattimo’s “death of God” is rooted in a reading of Heidegger and Nietzsche, and as such is continuous with what we have been calling “postmodern” theology and continental philosophy in the style to which we are accustomed. But Badiou and Zizek represent a departure and a discontinuity. They make a conscious break with the “postmodern” which they hold up for scorn. They insist on the universality of truth and its clear separation from fiction, and on the decisiveness of political action as opposed to “undecidability” and what they mock as an anemic “political correctness.” They advance strong metaphysical thinking and they ridicule what they call a weak and flaccid postmodern play of signifiers. That is a sign of new times, which is why I have chosen to add the “future” to my assigned topic. For if the subject matter of the anniversary meeting was continental philosophy “then and now,” a new generation of critics of continental philosophy say it has no future, at least not as we know it. They would regard the anniversary meeting as a memorial service, at which we are giving loving eulogies of the late lamented. Not only are the soixante-huitaires dead—the whole thing is dead. Requiescat in pace.

Interestingly, we have reached a curious state of déjà-vu.[[34]](#endnote-34) If SPEP was the very much the work of John Wild, and if Wild’s work (like Heidegger’s) followed a trajectory from realism to phenomenology, we are today seeing a movement in reverse, from phenomenology back to realism. Furthermore the later theological turn, almost predictable from the theological beginnings of continental philosophy, has occasioned a turn towards an anti-religion, towards a new atheism, a new modernism, and a new materialism, reminiscent of the debates about scientific realism when Wilfrid Sellars presented his views on the manifest image and the scientific image in the early years of SPEP. (Richard Rorty once quipped that what drives the change in philosophical theories is boredom. After a while we get tired of saying the same thing and the graduate students and young Ph.D.s see a career opening in saying something different!)

Under the impulse of Badiou in particular a new group of young philosophers has emerged who are challenging the dominant style of continental philosophy for which SPEP has always stood. The heart of the argument is found in Quentin Meillassoux’s After Finitude, a book that has been a sensational success among a younger generation of philosophers.[[35]](#endnote-35) Meillassoux, who was a student of Badiou, makes two charges. (1) “Correlationism:” continental philosophy from Kant to the present is inherently subjectivistic and anti-realist and makes nonsense of modern science. It reduces the world in itself to our relationship to the world. The laws of physics are deprived of their reality and reduced to a social construction or subjective constitution, the premise that provoked the Alan Sokal ruse?[[36]](#endnote-36) The villain of the piece is Kant’s perversion of the Copernican Revolution, wherein Kant reinstated the very anthropocentrism which Copernicus was trying to destroy. I should add that this condemnation is so sweeping that it includes not only continental philosophy, but analytic philosophy as well, everything that has allowed itself to fall victim to correlationism, whether the subject of correlation is transcendental conscious, Dasein, the lived body or ordinary language. Perhaps there is comfort to be had in knowing that we do not stand before the firing squad alone. (2) “Fideism:” when Kant said he found it necessary to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith, he laid the ground for the theological turn. He invented the God of the gaps. He turned philosophy into a kind of apologetics that delimits the natural sciences and leaves the barn door wide open through which theology makes an easy escape. By consigning the results of the natural phenomena to phenomenal appearance, the later “theological turn” becomes almost predictable. Phenomenology, hermeneutics and deconstruction are just so many versions of Kantian idealism under another name, constituting the dark damp soil in which the poisonous mushrooms of theology take root. If the theological turn is where continental philosophy leads us, the young critics seem to say, that is the last straw, its reductio ad absurdum!

Needless to say, the response to these charges is complicated. In general I think that what Meillassoux calls “correlationism” is a red herring and, since this is his root complaint, the new realism is the fruit of a poisoned tree. Even in the case of Husserl, whose formulations are the most vulnerable to the charge of correlationism—there are statements in Husserl that have left us all wondering—the best scholarship today has made it plain that Husserl is not serving up metaphysical idealism but a theory of what sort of acts are necessary on the part of the subject in order that objects may appear to the subject. [[37]](#endnote-37) Objects do not drop from the sky—and that goes for scientific objects.[[38]](#endnote-38) But the history of phenomenology after Husserl, especially nervous about pure transcendental phenomenology, mounted a sustained critique of Husserl on just this point. The subsequent history of phenomenology is a successive insistence on the reality of our being-in-the world, to adopt the formulation of a young sometime Catholic Aristotelian realist named Heidegger, to which Merleau-Ponty added later on that being-in-the-world is a radically bodily and incarnational phenomenon. Levinas made an argument for the radical alterity—read irreducible “reality”—of the other person. Interestingly enough the new realists will sometimes cite Levinas’s “reversal” of intentionality and his plea for radical “exteriority” as a residual trace of a quickly evaporating realism among the phenomenologists.[[39]](#endnote-39) When faced with the charge that deconstruction has locked us all within the prison house of language Derrida replied, a bit non-plussed, that everything he has to say concerns the “other” of language and hence represents a discourse on the real.[[40]](#endnote-40)

That correlationism is a red herring is made plain by turning to the most sensible voice in the new debate, Bruno Latour, who was a student of Michel Serres, and whose work in “science studies”—conducted under the motto of the title of his first major book, We Have Never Been Modern –has been to show that science does not drop out of the sky. One would be hard put to differentiate what Latour calls his “non-modernism” from what continental philosophers (loosely called “postmodern”) are saying, provided one takes the time to actually read the latter instead of repeating what one overhears in conference hotel bars. Indeed Latour’s work had led to the charge that even he does not “believe in reality,” an objection that only momentarily left him speechless but quickly led to a wonderful book entitled Pandora’s Hope.[[41]](#endnote-41) There he argued that, far from being opposed to each other, our power of “construction”—read “constitution”—goes hand in hand with “reality,” so that the more construction, the more reality. The more complex and sophisticated the scientific community, the more elaborate and complicated the experiment, the more technical the laboratory instruments, the more support the community shows for funding research, the more reality science will attain. Microbes and subatomic particles are both constructed (by complex scientific practices) and real. As Latour points out in a wonderful series of studies, it would have left scientists like Pasteur stupefied if someone thought to oppose the two. Consequently, it is not helpful to call microbes either pure fact or pure fiction, the “pure” being the problem. They what Latour calls “factish” (neither fact nor fetish), a neologism meaning that reality is accessed under the conditions which make access possible. That, by the way, although Latour would cup his ears if anyone said this to him, is exactly the two-sidedness of the word “invention” Derrida analyzes: l’invention de l’autre means not only our inventiveness but the in-coming (in + venire) of the other (or real) which accompanies our inventiveness; the more inventiveness, the more in-coming.[[42]](#endnote-42) The “construction” of the “real” is also the argument that is made in a phenomenology of science, even though Latour dismisses phenomenology as a “philosophy of consciousness,” as if the entire history of phenomenology after Husserl never happened. Indeed, he says things about deconstruction and postmodernism that are no less stupefying to people who have actually studied these materials, something evidently that Latour himself has not been able to squeeze into his busy schedule. Fortunately, Don Ihde, one of the SPEP’s most distinguished thinkers, has called Latour to task on just this point.[[43]](#endnote-43)

Latour’s point about the “factish” applies no less to religion[[44]](#endnote-44) and hence answers to Meillassoux’s second point, about fideism. Religious beliefs and practices are certainly constructed—they are “forged” (a wonderfully ambiguous and “factish” word) in concrete cultures, languages, traditions and historical world-views. Do religious people then fall down in “naive belief,” in worship before the products of their own human-all-too-human hands? Only the modernist critics of belief believe so naively in such naive belief. The people whose practices these are understand (just like the people who actually practice science) both that they have composed these prayers, constructed these places of worship, made these statues, etc. and that in them they access something real which they have not made. In my own view, Latour is quite right about this, but it would require a distinction between foi and croyance of the sort we find in Derrida to make this argument stick. [[45]](#endnote-45) While I think that “correlationism” is a phony rap, there is something to Meillassoux’s critique of “fideism,” because continental philosophers of religion too often treat continental theory as a way to limit science in order to create a gap that can be only filled with God. The real meaning of fideism is found in the God of the gaps. In my view, continental theory is more “realistic” than Meillassoux allows and it also capable of a more critical reading of religion than the Kantian version of postmodern theory allows, which I think is indeed a version of fideism.[[46]](#endnote-46) But I would argue that there is nothing fideistic about Derrida’s account of religion without religion even as there is in Derrida a remarkable account of a certain faith (foi). This faith goes hand in hand with Pandora’s hope, and even with a “love” of the undeconstructible, of what is to come (à venir). But this reproduction of faith, hope and love occurs “without” religion, where the name of “God” is name not of the gap God fills but of the gap God opens. This religion keeps its distance from confessional beliefs (croyance) and it has

made its peace with the natural sciences and the “inhuman” from which the human is inseparable.

To rush to my conclusion: while the charge of “correlation” made by the enfants terribles is unreasonable and has led to wildly unreasonable criticisms of late continental philosophy, it is far from unreasonable to complain that postmodern French philosophy, and SPEP along with it, has marginalized the natural sciences. We have been extremely interested in “technology” but we have avoided the confrontation with mathematics and the natural sciences that was a part of the early phenomenological movement. Up to now philosophers like Michel Serres and Bruno Latour have been treated as minor voices, and that I think has to change. The future of continental philosophy depends on it, not just the future of a continental philosophy of religion.

We at SPEP have never been modern and have made a good living off the critique of modernism and of its binary oppositions. But I think that the business as usual of continental philosophy will have to be expanded to include a critique of the opposition of the human and the non-human, of physis and techne, and of “continental philosophy” and “science.” For the truth is we have been a party to the science wars. That is why I think that the work of Catherine Malabou is exactly the sort of work that SPEP and continental philosophy generally will have to do in the future.[[47]](#endnote-47) We have yet to admit how deeply inscribed the human is in the non-human and the technical. We have yet to appreciate that being-in-the-world is not only historicized, gendered and incarnate, but that it is also both a neural and a galactic event, of both microscopic and a macroscopic proportions. Can it be of no interest to “philosophy,” can there be nothing to “wonder” about, that our bodies are literally made of stardust? We have yet to realize how deeply interwoven is the imagination of speculative physics with the wonder of the philosophers. If the best we can do is to protect our turf by saying that science does not think, we stand a good chance that the sciences will steal our thunder, that is, our wonder, right out from under us. Science does think and science wonders, because wonder is the piety of thought. That is a matter to which SPEP, and continental philosophers generally, whether they have taken a theological turn or are running in the opposition direction, should give more thought.[[48]](#endnote-48)

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**Endnotes**

1. My thanks to Calvin Schrag, Don Ihde, Robert Scharff and Richard Sugarman who have taken to time to answer my questions about matters discussed in this paper of which they were witness. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The topic of the last conference I ran in 2011, just before my retirement from Syracuse University, was “The Future of Continental Philosophy of Religion.” The proceedings are currently being edited for publication. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Dominique Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” in *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn: The French Debate,* ed. Dominique Janicaud et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000)3-103. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. *An Invitation to Phenomenology*, ed. James Edie (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1965); based on the first two meetings; *Phenomenology in America*, ed. James Edie (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1967); based on the third, fourth and fifth meetings. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. John Wild, *The Challenge of Existentialism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), 9 ff. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. James D. Collins, *A History of Modern European Philosophy* (Milwaukee: Bruce Pub. Co. 1954); *The Mind of Kierkegaard* (Chicago: H. Regnery Co. 1953): *The Existentialists: A Critical Study* (Chicago : H. Regnery, 1952). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Wilfrid Desan, *The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965); *The Tragic Finale : An Essay on the Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (New York : Harper, 1960). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Thomas Langan, *The Meaning of Heidegger* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); *Merleau-Ponty’s Critique of Reason* (New Haven: Yale, 1966). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Harper & Row (New York City) had undertaken a series of translations of Heidegger’s works into English under the editorship or J. Glenn Gray. Gray, a Hegel scholar, had been recruited for this job by Hannah Arendt through their mutual contact at the New School for Social Research, which was the first beachhead of continental philosophy in the United States. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Though Phenomenology to Thought*, with a Preface by Martin Heidegger (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974); *Lacan and Language: A Reader’s Guide to Écrits* (New York : International Universities Press, 1982). The Heidegger book gave a generation of American readers their first serious encounter with Heidegger that pushed them past an “existentialist” reading of Heidegger and turned their attention to the later work. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 15th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1979), §§29, 41; Eng. trans. *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962),§§29, 41. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. It is not an accident that both Gilson and Jean-Luc Marion started their careers and achieved international eminence as Descartes scholars. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Martin Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957). Eng. trans. *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York, 1969). [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. See John D. Caputo, Philosophy and Prophetic Postmodernism: Toward a Catholic Postmodernity, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 74: 4 (Autumn, 2000): 549-568. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Callistus James Edie, *The Philosophy of Etienne Gilson* (Université Catholique de Louvain, 1958). See also Callistus James Edie, “The writings of Etienne Gilson chronologically arranged,” in *Mélanges offerts à Étienne Gilson de l’Académie française* (Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies; Paris: J. Vrin, 1959), 15-58. I am assuming that “Callistus” was a religious name, taken on the occasion of taking first vows. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. *Christianity and Existentialism*, eds. James Edie, William Earle and John Wild (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963). [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. William McBride, “John Wild, Phenomenology in America, and the Origins of SPEP,” *Continental Philosophy Review*, 44, 3 (August, 2011): 282. I have found this entire special issue, “Remembering John Wild,” dedicated to the memory of Alan Paskow, an invaluable resource. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Calvin Schrag, *God as Otherwise than Being* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002), xi-xii. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Email correspondence. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Earle argued, “The transcendental ego is... in its essence, the essential intuition of God by God” and that the “passion for truth which men of good will manifest ... always was and remains a passion for recognizing and honoring the divinity in oneself and the other.”William Earle, *Mystical Reason* (Chicago: Regnery/Gateway (1980), pp. 106-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Richard Sugarman, “Wild and Levinas: Legacy and Promise,” *Continental Philosophical Review*, 44, 3 (August, 2011): 307-16. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. *The Promise of Phenomenology: Posthumous Papers of John Wild*, eds. Richard I. Sugarman and Roger Duncan (Lexington: Lexington Books, 2006). [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Today, SPEP numbers among its satellite groups both a “Society for Continental Philosophy in a Jewish Context” and the “Society for Continental Philosophy and Theology,” the latter founded by Merold Westphal, Bruce Benson, Norman Wirzba and myself. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. See Heidegger’s communication to the participants in a conference held at Drew University in 1964 in Martin Heidegger, *The Piety of Thinking*, ed. J. G. Hart, trans. J.C. Maraldo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 22-31. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. See John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* ( New York: Fordham University Press, 1986). [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. John E. Van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumors of a Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 167. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Jean-Luc Marion, “The Saturated Phenomenon,” *Philosophy Today* , 40, 1 (SPEP Supplement; Spring, 1994):103-124. Marion gave this paper as a plenary at SPEP in 1993. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Jacques Derrida, “Circumfession: Fifty-nine Periods and Periphrases” in Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1993), 154-55. See also *Augustine and Postmodernism: Confessions and Circumfession,* John D. Caputo and Michael Scanlon, eds.(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Jean-Louis Chrétien, “The Wounded Word: Phenomenology of Prayer,” in *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn: The French Debate,* ed. Dominique Janicaud et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000),147-75. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Mark Taylor’s *Erring: An A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) was the first major presentation of Derrida and theology to cause a stir at SPEP and elsewhere, but it was a “death of God” Derrida written before the quasi-Augustinian quasi-prayerful Derrida that became focal during the later so called theological turn. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. See Gianni Vattimo, *Belief*, trans. Luca D’Isanto and David Webb (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) and *After Christianity*, trans. Luca D’Isanto (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Alain Badiou, *The Universalism of St. Paul* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) and Slavoj Žižek and John Milbank, edited by Creston Davis, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic*, MIT Press, 2009. *St. Paul among the Philosophers,* eds. John D. Caputo and Linda Martin Alcoff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009). [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Speaking for myself—I graduated from college and started graduate school in 1962, the year of the inaugural meeting of SPEP, which was held on my twenty-second birthday, shortly after I had left a Catholic religious order (the De La Salle Brothers), and I retired from teaching in 2011, the year of the Fiftieth Anniversary meeting—the third part might be called “This is Where I Came In! [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008), 28ff. For a robust rebuttal of Meillassoux, see Adrian Johnston, “Hume’s Revenge: À Dieu, Meillassoux” in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, eds. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), pp. 92-113. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense* (New York: Picador, St. Martin’s Press, 1998). [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. See in particular Dan Zahavi, *Husserl’s Phenomenology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. That is why a Catholic priest and classical Thomistic philosopher like Robert Sokolowski was also a distinguished Husserlian, one of the original board member of Edie’s SPEP series at Indiana University Press, and defended the idea that “constitution” is an epistemological not a metaphysical principle. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. See Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 230-34. One can also see some continuity in Graham Harman’s work, which stems from an idiosyncratic interpretation of Heidegger’s analysis of tools. Harman, who wrote his dissertation at DePaul on Heidegger, records his emigration from the world of SPEP and the dominant strains of continental philosophy in *Towards Speculative Realism: Essays and Lectures* (Winchester, UK: Zero Book, 2009), a collection of papers, some of which were rejected by SPEP and the Heidegger Conference, rejections he wears as something of a badge of honor. Harman also studied at Pennsylvania State University, with Alphonso Lingis, Levinas’s first English translator, and took away from his work with Lingis the beginnings of what he calls “object oriented ontology” [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. See Jacques Derrida’s remarks on realism in Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility, in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (New York: Routledge, 1999) and, for a commentary, my “For Love of the Things Themselves: Derridas Hyper-Realism, *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (August, 2000). Electronic journal (http://www.jcrt.org). [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Bruno Latour, Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Jacques Derrida, "Psyche: Inventions of the Other," in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, trans. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1-47. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Don Ihde, “ANT meets Postphenomenology,” 4/S, 2008 (<http://www.4sonline.org> ). [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. See Bruno Latour, *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*, trans. Catherine Porter and Heather MacLean (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 93-94 (et al). [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. See Derrida’s distinction between *foi* and *croyance* in “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of Faith and Knowledge at the Limits of Reason Alone,” trans. Samuel Weber, in *Religion*, eds. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 1-78. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. I take on the Kantian version of postmodern theory in John D. Caputo, “On Not Settling for an Abridged Edition of Postmodernism: Radical Hermeneutics as Radical Theology,” in *Religion with Religion*, ed. Aaron Simmons (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, in press). [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with our Brain*, trans. Sebastian Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008). [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. It may be a sign of the times that at the concluding plenary at the anniversary meeting John Sallis gave a paper on “Black Holes!” *Viens, oui, oui!* [↑](#endnote-ref-48)