

Faith's Knowledge:

On Heidegger's Reading of Saint Paul

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In this paper, I would like to focus on the experience of faith in the proto-Christian life, within the context of the young Heidegger's thought. My thesis is that the notion of faith, within this context, represents the paradigmatic figure of the very type of knowledge that Heidegger strives to describe and unfold through his phenomenological hermeneutics of facticity. This specific type of knowledge is called, in the young Heidegger's words, "formal-indicative" or "based on formal indications" and he considers it to be the most originary grounding for any originary and authentic philosophy.

In order to understand the philosophical implications and scope of this paradigmatic use of the experience of faith in Heidegger's lectures, I follow three steps:

1. The first step is a presentation of some important features of Heidegger's hermeneutics of factual life. These remarks are important to understand what exactly the proto-Christian experience is a paradigm of. I mainly insist on two fundamental, although a bit technical, notions that sustain the rest of my analysis: the notion of "formal indication" (*formale Anzeige*) and the notion of enactment-sense (*Vollzugssinn*).
2. The second step is a description of the phenomenon of faith, as Heidegger understands it in the light of those two notions (formal indication and enactment-sense). In addition to representing the original orientation for Heidegger's phenomenology of life in

general, they provide him with the specific criteria that make it possible to recognize, in the experience of faith, an originary type of pre-theoretical knowledge.¹

3. The third step is an analysis of how this peculiar knowledge, i.e., faith's knowledge, is incarnated in two fundamental Christian ways of behaving: "serving" and "waiting." According to Heidegger, these are the two fundamental characteristics of the proto-experience of Christianity, as described by Paul. But through them we are also able to see how the authentic sense of factual life in general shows up.

I. ENACTMENT-SENSE AND FORMAL INDICATION IN THE HERMENEUTICS OF LIFE

As early as 1919, Heidegger stated that the vocation of philosophy is to be an "originary pre-theoretical science,"² capable of accounting for the disquieting mobility of factual life, without fixing it in advance within a formal and theoretical frame. The whole challenge, in this regard, is to find concepts that express the constantly moving significance of the phenomenon of life. In other words, Heidegger looks for concepts that do not immobilize, devitalize, or de-historicize the lived event of sense (GA 56–57: 74/59, 89–90/69–70, 116/88–89; GA 58: 77, 78).

That does not mean that a phenomenological interpretation of life is totally open and without any landmarks. It certainly requires anticipations or pre-conceptions (*Vorgriffe*), but they must possess a dynamic character in order to correspond to their "object." The phenomenological interpretation thus will not progress by using traditional concepts, the meaning of which is sealed and given once and for all. Instead it must use what Heidegger calls "formal indications," issued from factual life itself and capable of conveying the mobility and dynamism that characterize the intentional cohesion of factual life.

Before I go further with the idea of formal indication, I would like to say a few words about this dynamic intentionality of life that formal indications, in contrast to traditional concepts, are precisely

meant to convey. For Heidegger, every phenomenon is part of a lived experience that implies a behavior or comportment, a *Sichverhalten*. The sense of any given phenomenon is thus always part of a concrete intentional context that participates in the full significance of the phenomenon as such. There is not such a thing as *one* definition that could summarize for good the sense of a given phenomenon. Any phenomenon is inscribed instead in a lived experience and it is to be understood in three different intentional directions that Heidegger calls the “relational-sense,” the “content-sense,” and the “enactment-sense” (*Bezugssinn, Gehaltssinn, Vollzungssinn*).

To put the matter briefly, the relational-sense (or sense of the relation) characterizes the sense of the comportment as it relates to something. This relational-sense is, for instance, what *Husserlian* phenomenology considered to be the core of intentional consciousness. The content-sense, for its part, represents that to which the comportment refers; it is “the to-what [*Worauf*] and the for-what [*Wozu*] of the relation” (GA 61: 53/40, tm). Traditionally, philosophical concepts aim mainly to discover and fix the content-sense of phenomena, that is to say, to discover what they essentially *are* (their essence, so to speak). Finally, the enactment-sense is the mode of comportment by which a relational-sense and a content-sense are seized within a historical and concrete horizon of sense – thereby unfolding the phenomenon itself as a lived unity of sense always susceptible of a transformation or re-appropriation. This enactment-sense, i.e., the intrinsic possibility for any phenomenon to undergo a transformation of its content-sense and relational-sense, constitutes the greatest Heideggerian innovation in terms of phenomenological description.

Through the attention given to the enactment-sense, Heidegger replaces the traditional ideal of objectivity by the factual determination of all phenomenality (where ‘factual’ designates the historical and situated character of a phenomenon in relation to a self). Because it preserves the sense of facticity of every signification, the enactment-sense is the dominant intentional dimension within every lived experience. In addition to helping to extricate the content-sense from the

snare of objectivation and bringing about new configurations of the lived world, it also recalls the relational-sense's capacity to determine new ways of relating to the world, which implies new modes for the self to appropriate itself.

And it is precisely in order to respect this open intentionality of phenomena that Heidegger will substitute for the concept (traditionally understood as a closed determination of something) what he calls a "formal indication," understood as the *index* or indication of a horizon of sense. This horizon is not to be fixed or definitely fulfilled, but rather kept open to its manifold possibilities of enactment. To lay down a formal indication is to lay down a "(pre)-conception" (*Vorgriff*) that indicates a phenomenon without reducing it to a definition, without shielding it from the constitutive indeterminateness of its sense of enactment, without erasing the historical or "evential" sense of this enactment.

Neither a position nor an intrusion into a reified domain of things, the formal indication is on the contrary "a defense, a preliminary *precaution* to safeguard the enactment character [of the phenomenon]" (GA 60: 64/44, tm). With formal indications "one intentionally affords the concepts a certain lability/mobility in order to secure their determination in the process of phenomenological study itself" (GA 60: 82/57, tm). The emergence of the formal indication marks, in a way, the birth of a possible "pretheoretical science" or "originary theorization," i.e. a discourse which, although theoretical, assumes its grounding within a worldly and pre-theoretical horizon of sense.⁵ In the context of a phenomenology of the religious lived experience, the merit of the formal indication lies in its capacity to maintain open the enactment-sense and to prevent the *a priori* imposition of only one perspective: "A precisely determined constraint resides with formal indication; it implies that I stand in such and such determined *initial direction*, that following the indication only shows the way, in case it should lead to something proper" (GA 61: 33).

Formal indications guarantee the originarity of philosophical investigation, firstly by preventing us from anchoring ourselves to a

particular point of view (*Einstellung*) or regional considerations, and secondly by preserving the factual character of the phenomenon they designate. In other words, a formal indication points towards the “evential” character of sense; the latter brings a potential for mutating, so to speak, to the core of the “concept,” which only then can be grasped as an authentic expression of lived experience.

And it is here that the experience of faith in primordial Christianity, as Heidegger interprets it in his reading of Paul’s Letters, can be brought into play as a paradigm that illustrates and reinforces not only the pertinence but the *necessity* of using his phenomenological tools (i.e., formal indications and the enactment-sense) when the originary sense of a lived experience is at stake. That is what I aim to demonstrate in the next sections.

II. FAITH’S KNOWLEDGE

Heidegger’s phenomenological interpretation of religious experience in primordial Christianity consists essentially in a close reading of Paul’s letters that describe and comment on the lived experience of faith for him and his fellow believers.⁴ We ought to remember to begin with that Heidegger is not trying to produce a theological work here. He wants to unfold what he calls a “hermeneutical phenomenology of religious life in proto-Christianity.” Now, what does phenomenology care about in general? It does not care so much about texts, but about experience itself. What is significant for Heidegger is not really the dogmatic and proto-theological content in Paul’s letters; it is rather the fact that Paul, in those letters, *describes* a specific lived experience – his own and that of his fellow-believers as Christians. Heidegger’s interpretation of Paul is above all a phenomenology of this proto-Christian lived experience of faith.

This remark should clarify from the start Heidegger’s decision to quickly leave behind the interpretation of the Letter to the Galatians in favor of an interpretation of the Letters to the Thessalonians. The Letter to the Galatians contains crucial dogmatic elements of Paul’s preaching, particularly concerning the opposition between faith and

law. To express this opposition in Heideggerian terms, one could say that faith is oriented toward a concrete and lived enactment-sense, whereas law, founded upon theoretical content-senses, finds the horizon of its enactment in the idea of absolute validity (tradition).⁵ And if, from a philosophical perspective, the Letter to the Galatians contains more conceptual elements akin to Heidegger's thought, the Letters to the Thessalonians nevertheless offer – from the perspective of a phenomenological “demonstration,” as we will see – the possibility of an interpretation directly oriented to the factual experience of Christian life, such as Paul describes it.

This being assumed, I would like to suggest that primordial Christian faith, as a factual lived experience, plays and incarnates concretely the very role that Heidegger assigns to formal indication in a philosophical context. As I understand Heidegger's interpretation of Paul, faith as a lived experience represents a very specific form of knowledge, a pre-theoretical knowledge, whose structures and modes of attestation exemplify and confirm the originary insights of his hermeneutics of factual life. But let us then go back to Heidegger's reading of Paul and see what kind of knowledge we are talking about here.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul recalls his own call to faith: his fervent Judaism, his conversion, and his apostolic mission to the gentiles (Galatians 1, 11–24). In other words, Paul's factual experience of faith began with an *event*: his conversion on the road to Damascus. It began with a revelation he received directly from God, and this event becomes the meaning and the guide of his existence and action. In a similar way, in his Letters to the Thessalonians, Paul asks his readers from the start to recall the *event* of their *own* conversion as he was among them. Here is the critical verse:

Because you *know* [οἴδατε] that we *have been* [ἐγενήθημεν] among you for your own good. And you *have become* [ἐγενήθητε] imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving [δεξάμενοι] the proclamation amid many tribulations [ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ] with the joy [μετὰ χαρᾶς] of the Holy Spirit; as such you *have become*

[γενέσθαι] a model for all the believers in Macedonia and Achaea [...]. (I Thessalonians 1, 5–9)

What we ought to notice in this quotation is that Paul is preoccupied by the present situation of the faithful but precisely in regard to a past, in regard to their “having-become.” What characterizes the believers’ situation is their *having become* Christian and their *actual* knowledge⁶ of this transformation. For each of them, a proclamation of the Gospel was *received* and as they embraced the faith, they modified their life to the present. This modification is not just behind them; on the contrary, the fact of “having-become” a Christian still participates in their present experience, it constitutes their *actual* being (GA 60: 94/65). Thus, “having-become” a Christian by receiving the faith actualizes itself in the actual life of the believer.⁷ Concretely, it means that faith received as a gift must *also* be factually appropriated (παραλαμβάνειν) as the *knowing* that is intrinsic to the Christian way of life: “You have *learned* from us how to walk in order to please God” (I Thessalonians 4, 1).

In other words, the moment of the conversion is crucial, primarily because it represents the entrance into a new life. But it only truly unfolds itself in its enactment, i.e., in a practical knowing of “how to behave” within the faith. Heidegger thus describes having faith (πιστεύειν) not as a “holding-true” (*Fürwahrhalten*) – as we usually understand the fact of knowing something – but as a “structure of enactment capable of development.”⁸ One can say that conversion thus determines a factual existence lead by this atypical knowing in the context of faith, or rather co-experienced with this knowledge.

With those first remarks, we can already see that Heidegger, as he interprets the phenomenon of faith as a lived and pre-theoretical knowledge which continually refers back to a factual “behavior,” understands it in the same terms he understands formal indication. And faith clearly does hold this formal indicative role in at least two ways: first, by indicating a direction (which is God) to the relational-sense of Christian existence; second, by characterizing the proper mode of enactment of this relation to God.

I suggest that we keep in mind this reading, as Heidegger's interpretation of Paul becomes more specific. And it does become more specific, since once we have said that faith plays the role of a lived formal indicative knowledge within the proto-Christian existence, we still have to know *how* this knowledge unfolds itself factually. For formal indication has a philosophical interest if and only if it goes along with the uncovering of some authentic possibilities of the phenomenon at stake. What, then, are the authentic possibilities of enactment of proto-Christian existence, opened by faith's knowledge?

Heidegger identifies at least two such possibilities, namely, "serving" and "waiting," which he places at the core of his phenomenology of religious life. Those modes of enactment are clearly identified in *one* critical verse on which Heidegger comments: "you have converted from idols to God, to *serve* [δουλεύειν] the living and true God and to *wait* [ἀναμένειν] from heaven his Son Jesus [...] who delivered us from the wrath to come" (I Thessalonians 1, 9–10).

In fact, Heidegger's whole interpretation of Paul, as I read it, seeks to uncover that serving and waiting are "the fundamental directions that determine every other relation" of the Christian life.⁹ Let us see in what sense serving and waiting confirm the paradigmatic dimension of proto-Christian faith, within the conceptual frame of a phenomenology of factual life.

III. SERVING (δουλεύειν)

At the beginning of the First Letter to the Thessalonians, Paul writes that Christians, having received the "proclamation," are serving God "amid many tribulations with the joy of the Holy Spirit" (I Thessalonians 1, 6). The obedience to God is a source of tribulations, distress, affliction and, simultaneously, joy. Why such distress and where does the joy come from in spite of the affliction, indeed, *within* the affliction? The answer from a phenomenological point of view is given with the specific enactment-sense of serving in proto-Christian experience. Contrary to "ordinary life" experiences, the horizon in which proto-Christian life finds the possibility of its enactment does not point to

this world but rather to the coming kingdom of God. *This* world is turned toward the works of the flesh (σάρξ), that is to say, as Heidegger explains it, turned toward the sphere of affects not motivated in God. It is therefore a source of tribulation and affliction for the Christian.

However, flesh cannot simply be denied. It represents a true part of life, of necessary part of our being in this world.¹⁰ But the sense of the Christian faith, precisely, does not refer to a fulfillment befalling our surrounding world¹¹; the Christian strives for the life in God, freed from the flesh. The latter thus appears as being a part of Christian life but more as a “counter-orientation.” Christian life is determined by flesh but in an indirect way. Or so Heidegger interprets this verse of Paul: “Time is short; such that those who have wives should be as though having none [ὥς μὴ]; and those who cry, as not crying [ὥς μὴ]; and those who rejoice, as not rejoicing [ὥς μὴ]; those who buy, as not possessing [ὥς μὴ]; those who use this world, as not using it [ὥς μὴ], because the form of this world passes away” (I Corinthians 7, 29–31).

Is this quote a proof that Christian experience can only be determined negatively from a factual point of view and that it can only find its authentic sense of enactment *outside* of this world? The answer is no. Heidegger reminds us that here, on the contrary, Paul is paradoxically saying something *positive* about the factual enactment of faith. For Paul doesn’t use the privative or strictly denying form of negation in Greek (οὐκ), but a negative form (ὥς μὴ) which preserves the positive sense of what is at stake in the negation.

Heidegger writes about this verse: “it is not a denial of enactment [...]. The ‘not’ refers to the positing of the context of enactment regarding the relation motivated from it” (GA 60: 109/77). Further: “One would be tempted to translate ὥς μὴ by ‘as if’ but it wouldn’t work. ‘As if’ expresses an objective context and suggests the interpretation that Christ should sever his links to the surrounding world. Now this ὥς positively means a new meaning which is added. The μὴ refers to the enactment context of Christian life” (GA 60: 120/86, tm). In other words, the negation is understood here as a “positive” way to characterize the enactment-sense of the relation to the world, without leading

it back to an objective content-sense or a fixed representation, even a negative one.¹² The enactment-sense of faith is certainly defined in opposition to this world (ὥς μῆ) and in relation with the coming world. But this shift of horizon does not mean for the Christian to turn away from his own factual life. On the contrary, it makes him endure this life as self-concern, in regards to salvation. Day after day, for each believer, the factual enactment of faith recalls the Pauline injunction: “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2, 12).

The cohesion of Christian life thus unfolds in serving God, through the constant struggle against flesh, in the distress of fighting against the world and the self. Not that man might defeat the flesh and bring about his salvation only through his own strength and will. To the contrary, it is precisely at the moment where one's weakness is revealed that the might of God is made manifest: “My grace suffices you,” says God to Paul, “because *my* might is felt all the better through weakness” (II Corinthians 12, 5–9). In other words, the weakness of the believer, by revealing the power of grace, serves the glory of God and thus becomes a source of joy. It is precisely from the abyss of his uncertainty and distress that the Christian who serves God receives joy.¹⁵

In terms of hermeneutical phenomenology, this dynamic is of real interest. Indeed, we can find in Paul's acceptance of his weakness the acceptance of a fundamental indeterminateness regarding the objective content-sense of faith and life in favor of the enactment-sense of his Christian vocation. Christian life does not orient itself to representations or visions characterized by their content-sense; on the contrary, it embraces the indeterminateness of the content of faith. It is within this open horizon of enactment in God that the global and intentional sense of proto-Christian religiosity must be understood as a factual experience of faith, constantly renewed and re-appropriated. This is the only way, Heidegger writes, that “the significance of [...] one's own world [...] is possessed and distinctively experienced” (GA 60: 122/87, tm).

But we still have to understand in what sense serving God unfolds the constitutive historical sense of life (as formal indication tries to unfold it within the concept itself). In what sense and how is

proto-Christian religiosity able to open and grasp in a paradigmatic way the historical character of facticity? The analysis of *waiting*, which is the second key figure of proto-Christian experience of faith, will answer this question and thus fully clarify the paradigmatic relevance of this experience within the frame of Heidegger's hermeneutics of life.

IV. WAITING (ἀναμένειν)

What does “waiting for Jesus” mean factically, as a lived experience of sense? We have to remember again that for the Christian, to convert, to turn toward God, far from idols, means an inversion of the “normal” direction of factual life. The horizon of its enactment-sense is shifted from this world to the *coming* world, from the reign of idols to the kingdom of God, from corruptible flesh to eternal life. Faith's knowledge, the knowledge of “having become” a “new creature” (καινή κτίσις) is also and always a knowledge of what is *to come* (see Galatians 6, 15). Therefore, the temporal horizon of Christian facticity's enactment is not only the past or the present but the *future*. The Christian lives in the “expectation” of Parousia, the glorious return of Christ and day of the Last Judgment. But what kind of future is this?

One thing Heidegger sees clearly in Paul's Letters is that waiting for the return of Christ must not be understood towards one specific fulfillment.¹⁴ Based on the nature of factual experience of faith itself, Parousia *cannot* be understood in terms of objective historical representations. This is why Paul, according to Heidegger, does not answer directly to the Thessalonians who question him on the *when* of Parousia, but rather leads them back to the very grounding of their facticity as Christians. Paul does not provide temporal indications for the return of Christ, but only speaks of its suddenness: “But as for the times [χρόνων] and the moments [καιρῶν] you very well know [οἴδατε] the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night” (I Thessalonians 5, 1–3). The knowledge of the return of Christ, rooted in faith, is an indeterminate certainty. It does not manifest itself as the objective “truth” of an objective content but as an open horizon of sense for the possible enactments of life.¹⁵

In other words, Paul does not answer to the “when” of Parousia in terms of a worldly understanding or apprehension of an “event.” Paul doesn’t even use the expression “when” but systematically and conjointly employs “the time and the moment” (GA 60: 102/71–72). For Heidegger, this way of saying disqualifies the temporal sense of “when” as meaning an “objective time.” Paul does not say *when* Christ will return but rather provides “kairological” characters to the faithful. Heidegger distinguishes here the *καιρός* on the one hand and linear objective time or chronological time,¹⁶ on the other.¹⁷ The *καιρός* is nothing that could be formalized, for example, in a mathematical way. It is, for oneself, the opportune and crucial instant of a decision oriented toward the future. The kairological character of the return of Christ thus opens a tension in each Christian’s life. And for Heidegger, this tension that animates proto-Christianity toward a “kairological” future is paradoxically what grounds the future itself in actual life. For instance, Heidegger notices that instead of answering the “when?” of Parousia, Paul refers the Christians back to their own actual knowledge and awareness of the return of Christ: “you very well know [i.e., you *already* know!] the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night [...].”

Furthermore Paul refers them to the *impact* of this pre-theoretical knowledge upon their actual factual life; the “answer” they are waiting for is actually a decision dependent on their own life: “Because when they will say: ‘Peace and security,’ upon them will fall a sudden ruin, like the pain of a birthing woman, and they won’t escape. *For you my brothers*, you are not in the darkness, so this day won’t surprise you like a thief. [...] *Let us not sleep like the others but let us be vigilant and sober*” (I Thessalonians 5, 3–6). With Parousia, Heidegger says, “the answer of ‘when’ has been transformed into the question of ‘how to live?’ – [and that answer is] in the mode of wakefulness.”¹⁸ Those who say “Peace and security” have set their mind on the significance of this world which tends to obliterate the disquieting facticity of existence. They indeed live in expectation, but an expectation turned toward their surrounding world, far from their own selves – and the return of Christ will surprise them “like a thief in the night.” But there are also those

who are wakeful, i.e., those who have heard and understood what Paul is saying. For them, the “when” is determined in each instant; Parousia is not so much an event to come as a part of their life.¹⁹

But how can Parousia be situated in the believer’s life, how can it concretely “be a part” of this life? Firstly, Heidegger recalls, it is not a question of living with the obsession of the day of the Last Judgment, speculating on the form the Antichrist will take or upon the Apocalypse and the signs announcing the end of the world. Such a worldly attitude remains oriented to the objective determination of present or future events. Nor is it a question of disrupting the surrounding world, or even one’s own worldly situation for the coming of Parousia. Paul rather says: “May each persevere in the vocation he was in at the time of his calling” (I Corinthians 7, 20).

Waiting for the return of Christ certainly demands a change – a radical change – but it does not primarily concern the relational-sense to this world and even less so the content-sense of existence. It concerns instead existence’s enactment through a specific comportment. When Paul asks to remain aware, he is referring above all to a comportment turned toward the world of self; the Christian’s awareness is oriented to his own life – for salvation. He will try, in conformity to the expectations of Christian life, to live within faith and love. But in his weakness, man can never be certain of his capacity for the authentic enactment-sense he is aiming for, or of his capacity to maintain this orientation until the return of Christ. He is thus beset by doubt and he experiences a constant concern for his self: “[He] troubles himself in an authentic sense, as a sign of true concern, with his capacity to accomplish works of faith and love and to persevere until the decisive day” (GA 60: 107/75, tm). For the Christian, it is not a matter of evacuating the anguish caused by the temporal horizon specific to his factual situation, but on the contrary, accentuating it. Authentic Christian life knows no security; constant insecurity and disquiet characterize it as it also characterizes the fundamental significances of life.²⁰

Thus, from a hermeneutical and phenomenological perspective, “waiting” as the authentic way of relating to the world in terms of

faith's pre-theoretical knowledge rejoins "serving" in the disquieting being-in-the-world, constitutive of the movement of Christian facticity itself.²¹ In the horizon of Parousia, the originary enactment-sense of life opens up on the originary temporality of factual life itself. It reveals the historicity of factual experience in such a way that its paradigmatic character for a broader phenomenology of life again comes to light.

V. CONCLUSION: THE EXPERIENCE OF FAITH AND HERMENEUTICAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF LIFE

How can I sum up the results of what I have written up to now? I previously suggested that faith held the role of an originary formal indication in the context of young Heidegger's phenomenology of religious life. The Heideggerian analysis of "waiting" and "serving," glossed above, seems to confirm this hypothesis. Indeed, in his commentary Heidegger tries not so much to determine the *contents* of embryonic Christian dogmas in Saint Paul, as to underline the essential *indeterminateness* of this content. *It is this very indeterminateness, claimed in the name of the enactment-sense specific to Christian life, that transforms faith's pre-theoretical knowledge into a formally indicative knowledge.*

By way of conclusion, I would like to suggest that the result of this phenomenological exercise on the proto-Christian experience can be read in two directions. For someone who is interested in understanding *religious life* as such, the Heideggerian interpretation can be of some value for the way it underscores both the inescapably factual character of the *experience* of faith and its originary grounding in a temporality oriented towards a future determined as *καίρος*. One can also consider the consequences of Heidegger's phenomenology of religious life from the perspective of his hermeneutics of facticity as such. For it would be incomplete to stay with the idea that proto-Christian life "only" plays the role of a paradigm or exemplification for a more general phenomenology of factual life. The very discovery of kairological temporality already transforms the simple use of the Christian "paradigm" into a resolutely prospective step towards *Being and Time* – where the horizon

of the future will be completely formalized as the primary temporal ecstasis of Dasein and the condition of its temporalization.

It is also necessary to insist on the preeminence of the enactment-sense compared to every other intentional dimension within the experience of faith. Insofar as the phenomenon of Christian faith *structurally demands* the precedence of enactment-sense over the content-sense and the relational-sense, one can understand the “intrinsically” paradigmatic or exemplary aspect of primordial Christianity’s lived experience for Heidegger’s phenomenology of factual life.

Thus if we consider Heidegger’s phenomenology of religious life as a *test*, so to speak, of his formal indicative method *within a concrete and historical lived experience* (i.e., the experience of faith), it is obvious that it was a very successful test, indeed. That test shows not only that the experience of faith profits from a formal indicative interpretation of it but also how this exercise crystallizes crucial insights for this mode of interpretation and, thereby, for what was coming in Heidegger’s way of thought.

ENDNOTES

- 1 This knowledge in faith *never* refers, as will be made clear, to any kind of theoretical insight or cognition but instead indicates a concrete orientation for action and a specific enactment for worldly significations which are rooted in the lived experience of faith itself. To designate this pre-theoretical knowledge entailed by proto-Christian life, Heidegger uses the word *Wissen* in contrast to *Erkenntnis* (which would more likely suggest a mere theoretical or “scientific” content). Unlike German or French (*savoir*; *Wissen* and *connaissance*, *Erkenntnis*), English does not have at its disposal two such readily distinct words. For this reason, it deserves to be noted from the outset that, whenever I refer to Heidegger’s use of *Wissen* in GA 60 or to my own interpretation of it, I have in mind what I call “formal-indicative” or “pre-theoretical” knowledge. For a different version of the present paper, see “Foi et indication formelle” in *Le jeune Heidegger (1909–1926). Herméneutique, phénoménologie, théologie*, S.-J. Arrien and S. Camilleri (éds.) (Paris: Vrin [coll. Problèmes et controversies], 2011), 135–151.
- 2 Cf. GA 56/57: 96–97/75–76: “There must be a pre-theoretical or supra-theoretical [*übertheoretische*] science, in all cases a non-theoretical science, a true originary science, from which the theoretical itself would hold its origin. This science of the origin [...] won’t be a theory.” GA 56/57: 59/46–47: “This preeminence of the theoretical must be broken, [...] because the theoretical itself refers back to a pre-theoretical.”
- 3 See GA 60: 55/38: “The problem of ‘*formal indication*’ belongs to the ‘theory’ of the phenomenological method itself [...].”
- 4 But even before considering Heidegger’s analysis, one could raise an objection: *Why* should the primordial Christian life be a *paradigmatic* phenomenon in order to get an originary determination of the phenomenon of factual life “in general”? Isn’t such a choice arbitrary? It certainly may seem so at first glance. Why choose an essentially religious experience rather than, say, an aesthetic

or political experience? Why start precisely from the experience of proto-Christianity rather than any other form of religiosity? Because, Heidegger would say, this religious experience seems to reveal more than any others the world of self (*Selbstwelt*). In the historical figure of proto-Christianity, “the phenomenon of sharpening, of effective accentuation of the world of self ‘literally jumps to our eyes’” (GA 58: 60). Now, the *Selbstwelt* is the nexus of lived experience; it is where the historical, expressive and comprehensive possibilities of the lived world gather. Insofar as the inner experience of faith refers in a constitutive way to the world of self, the latter is *expressly* taken into account by the primordial Christians. Their entire life is indeed dedicated to a “work” of perpetual betterment of this inner life, which alone will speak for them at the moment of Parousia. This perpetual attention given to the world of self is the first reason, the one raised by Heidegger himself, why one should look more closely to religious experience rather than, say aesthetic experience, when the primordial sense of factual life is at stake. But, in my opinion, there is another reason, more specific and more technical in a way, but of significant relevance in order to grasp the full scope of the Heideggerian interpretation of Paul.

- 5 In a way, here we find, even into the interpretations of the Letters of Paul, the clash between Heidegger and Rickert’s transcendental philosophy of values. Cf. B.D. Crowe, “Heidegger et le néo-kantisme de Bade. Critique de la philosophie des valeurs” in *Le jeune Heidegger*, 75–93.
- 6 οἶδατε is from εἶδω/ἰδεῖν (inf) that translates as, among other things, “see, appear, know, be skilled at” or, in my native French, *voir*; *observer*; *examiner*; *avoir une entrevue*; *se représenter*; *se figurer*; *M. se faire voir*; *d’où se montrer*; *sembler*; *paraître*; *avoir l’air*; *faire semblant*; *feindre de*; *se rendre semblable*; (parf. A.) *savoir*; *être informé*, *instruit de*; *être habile à*; *être en état de*, *pouvoir*; *avoir tels ou tels sentiments* (+ acc. n. pl.).

- 7 GA 60: 94/66, tm: “The γενέσθαι is a δέχεσθαι τὸν λόγον, ‘receiving the proclamation’...”
- 8 GA 60: 108–109/76–77: “*steigerungsfähiger Vollzugszusammenhang*”; in this context Heidegger comments on II Thessalonians 1, 3: “We ought to unceasingly give thanks to God, my brothers, for your faith is growing ever more and the love you hold for each other is becoming abundant [...]”. On the specificity of the knowledge in faith, see also GA 60: 310/235–236.
- 9 GA 60: 97/67: “δολεῦν und ἀναμένειν bestimmen als Grundrichtungen jeden anderen Bezug.” Most analyses in Heideggerian studies dedicated to the question of primordial Christianity direct their attention to the second term (*waiting*) that leads to vast perspectives on the question of Dasein’s originary temporality. The fact that *Being and Time* echoes this problem directly, as well as the rather fragmented character of the Freiburg analyses of serving, explains in part why this latter notion was neglected in favor of the phenomenon of waiting. And yet, from the perspective of hermeneutical phenomenology of life, I think that the interpretation of “serving” is indispensable, particularly if one wishes to understand what is really at stake with “waiting.”
- 10 According to Heidegger, flesh certainly refers to the dynamic enactment of “authentic facticity amid life related to the surrounding world” (GA 60: 124/88, tm).
- 11 Cf. Philippians 1, 21–24: “Because for me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I live in the flesh, I will reap the fruit of my labor; and thus I don’t know which to choose. I feel pressed on both sides, desiring to depart and be with Christ, something much better for me; and to remain in the flesh, something necessary for you.”
- 12 Heidegger developed many analyses based on a similar interpretation of negation. For instance, see the analysis of the love of truth and its enactment-sense (GA 60: 109–110/77–78) where Heidegger comments on II Thessalonians 2, 10: “[...] those who

- perish, since they didn't receive the love of truth in order to be saved."
- 13 This uncertainty, indeed this distress, lived as an extreme weakness and vulnerability, opens up the possibility of a true enactment in grace, a testimony to the divine might. Cf. Martin Luther, The Heidelberg Disputation, 18th thesis: "It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ"; Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Career of the Reformer*; Harold J. Grimm and Helmut T. Lehmann (eds.) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), 39–58.
- 14 In this sense, for example, the Hegelian interpretation, which tries to grasp "the appearance of Christ in terms of its [content] sense, as the revelation of the profundity of substance or Idea" is absolutely distant from the truth of Christianity.
- 15 Cf. GA 60: 150/106–107: "Und wie bestimmt er [Paul] dieses Wann ? Nicht durch objektive Zeitangabe, sondern durch das *Wie*, und zwar *Wie* als bezogen gleich auf den Bezug zu dem *Wie*, denn der Bezug bzw. Vollzug ist das Entscheidende des *Wann!*"
- 16 *Καιρός*, Pöggeler observes, "places it on the razor's edge in the decision. [Kairological] characteristics do not reckon with and master time; rather they place one into the threat of the future. They belong in life's history of [enactment] which cannot be objectified." Cf. Otto Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, trans. Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1987), 24.
- 17 This tension that animates proto-Christianity towards a future not chronological but "kairological" is also what grounds this future itself in the facticity of life. Thus is uncovered, for Heidegger, the initial motivation of history (*Geschichte*) and the originary temporality of factual life.
- 18 Françoise Dastur, *Heidegger et la question du temps* (Paris, PUF, 1990), 19.

- 19 For them, Heidegger maintains, “the question of ‘when’ leads back to comportment. The way Parousia is situated in life refers to the enactment of this life as such” (GA 60: 104/73, tm).
- 20 Hence the task befalling the Christian, on the basis of his factual situation, is to become conscious of his own limited being and be concerned with its enactment, leaving no room for “peace and security.”
- 21 Cf. GA 60: 133/94. Cf. Martin Luther, *op. cit.*, The Heidelberg Disputation, 11th thesis: “Arrogance cannot be avoided or true hope be present unless the judgment of condemnation is feared in every work.”