Heidegger’s Atheism: The Refusal of a Theological Voice

Ben Vedder

To cite this article: Ben Vedder (2003) Heidegger’s Atheism: The Refusal of a Theological Voice, Ars Disputandi, 3:1, 137-138, DOI: 10.1080/15665399.2003.10819777

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/15665399.2003.10819777

© 2003 The Author(s). Published by Taylor & Francis.

Published online: 06 May 2014.

Article views: 204

View related articles
Heidegger’s Atheism: The Refusal of a Theological Voice

By Laurence Paul Hemming


It is widely known that Heidegger takes philosophy to be of atheist character. For Heidegger, this atheism is a methodological axiom rather than the expression of a personal commitment to an atheist view of life. Philosophy, as it were, brackets the question of God. The author of the present work investigates the consequences of such an approach to philosophy. Hemming concludes that for Heidegger, methodological atheism is a means for arriving at more truthful Godtalk. Therefore, the author can approach Heidegger’s question of God from a Christian perspective and henceforth, in the first chapter, pay much attention to Heidegger’s Christian background.

Much attention is paid in subsequent chapters to the notion of the ‘Turn’ (die Kehre). After the Turn had initially been taken to represent a change of mind in Heidegger’s thought, it is nowadays generally taken as a distinctive element of his thought; the Turn marks the turn from metaphysics to a new beginning. Still, it is unclear how the Turn should be related to the methodological atheism which is assumed.

The death of God as the death of the God of metaphysics is understood in relation to the history of metaphysics, but Hemming warns that Heidegger’s question of being should not be confused with his question of God. Therefore, the author stresses that from Heidegger’s perspective, the question of being must be kept separate from the Christian question of God. Against this background, Hemming extensively deals with the position of Thomas Aquinas, who intimately connects both questions. This is also the reason why much attention is paid to the concept of analogy in Aquinas and Aristotle. The question of God without being is frequently discussed in recent literature. Hemming sets off his position against that of Jean-Luc Marion. Marion too speaks about a God without being, and in his thought too, one could speak of a form of ‘atheism’.
When the author finally attempts to determine Heidegger’s concept of theology, he heavily draws upon a small writing of Heidegger published in 1927, titled *Phänomenologie und Theologie*. In this work, Heidegger takes theology as an exposition of faith, without any relation to philosophy or science. Accordingly, the book ends with a very personal theology which gives Heidegger’s atheism the status of ‘holy atheism’.

A very complete and recent bibliography closes this primarily theological rather than philosophical interpretation of Heidegger.