Existential and Phenomenological Conceptions of the Relationship Between Philosophy and Theology

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The Event of Faith: The Transformation of Philosophy by Theology in Rudolf Bultmann

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Abstract: This article suggests that Rudolf Bultmann can be seen to reconfigure Heidegger's understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology in terms of a transformation of philosophy by theology. In that sense, though Bultmann is often understood to be in line with the early Heidegger on this issue, it seeks to think with Bultmann beyond Heidegger by showing how Bultmann's theology, precisely as theology, can be used to address critiques (articulated by contemporary French phenomenologists) of Heidegger's understanding of the related notions of possibility and event. In doing so, it will become evident that, although he himself sets up his understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology as fitting Heidegger's broader methodological framework, we can nevertheless find in Bultmann the keys to the thinking of philosophy in relation to theology in terms of the transformation of one by the other that this article seeks to develop.

Keywords: Rudolf Bultmann; Martin Heidegger; Claude Romano; Emmanuel Falque; Event; Faith; Decision; Theology; Philosophy; Transformation; Possibility; Existence

When Martin Heidegger took up a professorship in philosophy at the University of Marburg in 1923, he made the acquaintance of the theologian Rudolf Bultmann. Though Heidegger's stay at Marburg was relatively short-lived, he did not return to Freiburg before developing what would become a life-long friendship with Bultmann and deeply influencing his theology. Indeed, it seems hard to overstate the influence the philosopher had on the theologian, even if the reverse is perhaps not the case.¹ Rüdiger Safranski even speaks of Bultmann's theology as being the key that fits perfectly in the lock that is Heidegger's philosophy, so as to disclose a full understanding of what it means to be human.² The substantive relationship between Heidegger's philosophy and Bultmann's theology as a matter of intellectual history is well-documented and it shall not be my main concern here. Rather, I will suggest that Bultmann can be seen to reconfigure Heidegger's understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology in terms of a *transformation of philosophy by theology*. In that sense, though Bultmann is often understood to be in line with the early Heidegger on this issue, I will seek to think *with* Bultmann *beyond* Heidegger by showing how Bultmann's theology, precisely *as theology*, can be used to address recent critiques of Heidegger's understanding of the related notions of *possibility* and *event*.³ In particular, I will draw on the work of the contemporary French phenomenologists Claude Romano and Emmanuel Falque. In doing so, it will become evident that, although he himself sets up his understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology as fitting Heidegger's broader methodological framework, we can nevertheless find in Bultmann the keys to the thinking of philosophy in relation to theology in terms of the transformation of one by the other that I am seeking

1 For an argument against the prevailing view that Heidegger and Bultmann's intellectual relationship was rather one-sided, see Johnson, *The Origins of Demythologising*, 175 n1.

2 Safranski, *Martin Heidegger*, 35–36.

3 In that sense, my account here is a phenomenological one, ultimately interested in the philosophical questions of existential ontology. However, it does not exclude the possibility, indeed it embraces it wholeheartedly by way of the guise of its proper transformation, that theological reflections might have valuable insights to contribute to the philosophical discussion of matters of existential ontology. What I am interested in here is not so much God, but man as such. For a theological account of this issue, however, see Hartmut Von Sass' *Gott als Ereignis des Seins*.

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to develop here and which can serve to illustrate what Falque means when he says that ‘the more we theologize, the better we philosophize.’

1 Possibility

If we are to understand what it means to think with Bultmann beyond Heidegger, we first need to think Bultmann *through* Heidegger. That is to say, we first need to consider how Bultmann’s theology is generally understood as complementing Heidegger’s philosophy in order to then be able to show how Bultmann transforms that philosophy theologically.⁴ In this regard, the easiest way into Bultmann’s theology might be through Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. What Heidegger seeks to develop there is a fundamental ontology, inquiring once again into the meaning of the question of being (*Sein*). To do this, he turns towards the concrete existence of man or *being-there* (*Da-sein*). Now, this existence can be approached from two distinct perspectives: in the first instance, Heidegger says, “we come to terms with the question of existence always only through existence itself. We shall call *this* kind of understanding of itself *existentiell* understanding. The question of existence is an ontic ‘affair’ of *Da-sein*.”⁵ This *existentiell*-ontic level concerns existence as concrete and factual being-in-the-world: say, the fact that you are reading this article right now. Existence considered on this level does not yet require “the theoretical transparency of the ontological structure of existence”,⁶ which underlies this *existentiell* reality as certain *possibilities-for-being*. This “question of structure”, Heidegger continues, “aims at the analysis of what constitutes existence. We shall call the coherence of these structures *existentiality*. Its analysis does not have the character of an *existentiell* understanding but rather an *existential* one.”⁷ Thus, concrete existence is made possible by a set of formal structures or a particular *existentiality*. This *existentiality* is considered when existence is asked about transcendently on the *existential-ontological* level. What Heidegger then develops is an *existential* analysis of *Dasein*, which, he says, “is prescribed with regard to its possibility and necessity in the ontic constitution of *Da-sein*.”⁸ *Dasein* is a special kind of being that may be of use in inquiring into the meaning of being. Human beings, Heidegger says, “are always already involved in an understanding of being.”⁹ *Dasein* stands out amongst other beings, is *ontically distinct*, in its concern or care (*Sorge*) for its own being, as its life consists in experiencing death as an ever-present possibility. Authentic human existence then consists in projecting our possibilities unto death, in a resolve in the face of death (human finitude). So, what makes the human being special is its awareness of its own being, that it is the being for which being can be an issue. Therefore, Heidegger says, “the ontic distinction of *Da-sein* lies in the fact that it is ontological”,¹⁰ that it has a pre-ontological understanding of being that makes asking about being *possible*. The *existential* analysis of *Dasein*, which is an ontological analysis, then serves fundamental ontology insofar as it renders this pre-ontological understanding of being explicit. In that same way, Bultmann says, *existential* analysis or philosophical ontology serves the work of theology proper as a kind of natural theology. If for Heidegger the fact that the human being is a being that asks about being means that it already has a certain pre-understanding of being, then for Bultmann “the fact that *the Christian proclamation can be understood by a man* when he is confronted by it, shows that he has a *pre-understanding* of it.”¹¹ From this, he concludes, in an entirely Heideggerian way, that “if the pre-Christian existence includes an unknowing knowledge of God, then it also includes a pre-understanding of the Christian proclamation. And if philosophy explicates

⁴ That is to say, according to Heidegger’s understanding of the relationship as it is set out in his lecture on ‘Phenomenology and Theology’—which was to change drastically later on, forming an intellectual, though not a personal, rift between him and Bultmann. This lecture was delivered by Heidegger at the theological faculty of the University of Marburg in 1928, after he had already left Marburg in order to take up Husserl’s chair at the University of Freiburg. After the lecture, Heidegger stayed in Marburg for a while to make corrections to it. Given that Bultmann’s ‘The Historicity of Man and Faith’, an article from 1930, at many instances blatantly paraphrases this lecture (without ever referring to Heidegger’s text), it seems likely that Bultmann assisted Heidegger in making these corrections. The specific convergence between Heidegger and Bultmann as a question of intellectual history is nevertheless not my concern here; insofar as I draw upon it, it is merely for didactic purposes (that is, in order to make a move *from* Heidegger *beyond* Heidegger in the subsequent sections of this essay).

⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹ Bultmann, “The Problem of ‘Natural Theology’”, 315; see also Bultmann, “The Question of Natural Revelation.”

this understanding of existence, it also explicates this pre-understanding. When this analysis is introduced into the work of theology, it becomes a new statement, since its character as pre-understanding is now made clear.”¹²

Deeply impressed by Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, Bultmann thus starts his theology from an analogous methodological point of departure. Drawing on the New Testament idea that “for us there is but one God” (I Corinthians 8:6), he suggests that God’s being is unlike the being of ordinary things, for there are clearly other gods even if we might not worship them.¹³ Rather, “the ‘uniqueness of God’ is (...) His being ‘for us’”, which means that “His being (existence) is understood alright only when it is understood as significant-for-man being; hence, it is not understood alright unless at the same time man’s being is also understood as springing from God (...) and thereby oriented toward Him.”¹⁴ Theology thus necessarily starts from the relationship between God and a human being existing in the world: from God as he is *for us*, or better, *for me*. Bultmann therefore considers the most urgent task of theology to be the following: overcoming the representational thinking that places God over and against (outside of) a subject as the object *about* which it develops a discourse. For in doing so, theology is not considering the reality of God, but merely the concept it has of him: all “‘talking *about*’ presupposes a standpoint outside the object of discourse”, Bultmann says; “However, there can be no standpoint outside of God, and thus God cannot be spoken of in general statements, general truths, which are true without reference to the concrete existential situation of the speaker.”¹⁵ So, for Heidegger as well as Bultmann, there is no standpoint outside the all-encompassing reality of being or God, respectively; which is why we must take recourse to how being or God opens up within human existence: for Heidegger, Dasein has the possibility to ask about being; whilst for Bultmann, the existing individual has the possibility to encounter God. In his *Theology of the New Testament*, for example, Bultmann observes that Paul “sees man always in his relation to God”, thus, “for the sake of understanding this relation, it is necessary that we clarify for ourselves the peculiarity of human existence, i.e. the formal structures of this existence.”¹⁶ This is a faithful restatement of Heidegger’s method: understanding the ontic distinction of Dasein, the fact that it is an ontological being, requires the exposition of the ontological structures that make existence possible.

What theology results from this methodology? For Bultmann, theology becomes a discourse that “deals with God not as He is in Himself but only with God as He is significant for man, for man’s responsibility and man’s salvation.” It is then clear, he suggests, that all “theology is, at the same time, anthropology”,¹⁷ for “if man will speak of God, he must evidently *speak of himself*.”¹⁸ Therefore, Bultmann continues, “every assertion about God speaks of what He does with man and what He demands of him. And, the other way around, every assertion about man speaks of God’s deed and demand—or about man as he is qualified by the divine deed and demand and by his attitude toward them.”¹⁹ So, we might say, for example, that it is from the saving ontic encounter with God, by an existing individual, that we understand that everyone can be saved, because salvation belongs to the formal structure of human existentiality as an ontological possibility: “Salvation”, Bultmann says, “is nothing else than the realization of the destined goal of ‘life’ and selfhood which are God’s will for man and man’s own real intention, but which were perverted under sin.”²⁰ John Macquarrie’s characterisation of Bultmann’s theology as a “phenomenology of faith”,²¹ then seems especially apt: it is a description of how the divine reveals itself as significant to an existing human being, how it becomes phenomenal against an intentional horizon. What Bultmann uses Heidegger’s existential analytic for is the explication of that horizon, of what constitutes significance for an existing individual.

However, this raises an important problem that was first articulated by Gerhardt Kuhlmann, namely that of the relationship between philosophy and theology when the former is understood as existential analysis.²² For, Kuhlmann suggests, theology can only make use of philosophical ontology in two highly problematic ways: either, the image presented depicts sinful existence, which must be elevated by salvation to a new life of faith; or, it merely supplies the formal structures of existentiality, which govern non-Christian as well as Christian existence. The former is the approach taken by, for example, Paul Tillich, but fundamentally flawed because

¹² Ibid., 330.

¹³ Bultmann, “Paul”, 128.

¹⁴ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 229.

¹⁵ Bultmann, “What Does It Mean to Speak of God?”, 53 (translation modified).

¹⁶ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 191-192.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Bultmann, “What Does It Mean to Speak of God?”, 55.

¹⁹ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 191.

²⁰ Ibid., 269 (translation modified).

²¹ Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology*, 6.

²² Kuhlmann, “Zum theologischen Problem der Existenz”, 28-57.

it cannot but distrust its philosophical starting point. The latter, taken by Bultmann, would be equally flawed since it amounts to a pointless mythologisation of philosophical concepts: theology would merely put a religious gloss over the results of the philosophical analysis of existence.²³ Indeed, Bultmann himself admits this in his reply to Kuhlmann, namely that “the object of an existential analysis of man is man; and it is likewise man that is the object of theology”,²⁴ which means that “theology makes statements which philosophy also makes or that philosophy has already stated what theology also has to say. Both are equally interpreting human existence.”²⁵ He expresses it even more strongly elsewhere: “Obviously, *philosophy and theology* coincide in certain statements. Certain assertions of theology appear to be anticipated by philosophy.”²⁶ One can then not help but wonder whether the two investigations Bultmann deems necessary—the existential analysis of man borrowed from Heidegger’s philosophy and the phenomenology of faith that is his own theology—, actually deliver results differing in anything but name: if the purpose of philosophy, understood as the existential ontology of man, is to expose the structures of what makes something be significant *to* an existing individual; is that analysis then not just repeated in theology, understood as a phenomenology of faith, when the purpose of phenomenology is to understand the structures that allow something to appear *to* consciousness? Bultmann says that the difference is that theology considers, not just man, but “the man of faith”,²⁷ or that in theology “the man prior to the revelation of faith is so depicted (...) as he is retrospectively seen from the standpoint of faith.”²⁸ Yet, is this not exactly the mythologisation Kuhlmann complains about?

What is really at stake in this question is whether or not natural existence is ontologically distinct from existence in faith, whether the ontic encounter with God is ontologically relevant. Bultmann’s answer is at first negative: “If, through faith, existence prior to faith is overcome *existentiell* or ontically, this still does not mean that the existential or ontological conditions of existing are destroyed.”²⁹ Indeed, that the man of faith is still a man, living in the world, is a point of the utmost importance to him. With faith in response to the event of revelation, “it is not that some special, demonstratable change happens in our lives, that we are imbued with special qualities and can do special things or speak special words which are of a non-human kind. What would we ever do or say that would *not* be human!”³⁰ Heidegger articulates the same idea remarkably clearly: “the sense of the Christian occurrence as rebirth is that Dasein’s prefaithful, i.e., unbelieving, existence is sublated (*aufgehoben*) therein. Sublated does not mean done away with, but raised up, kept, and preserved in the new creation. One’s pre-Christian existence is indeed existentially, ontically, overcome in faith. But this *existentiell* overcoming of one’s pre-Christian existence (which belongs to faith as rebirth) means precisely that one’s overcome pre-Christian Dasein is existentially, ontologically included within faithful existence. To overcome does not mean to dispose of, but to have one’s disposition in a new way.”³¹ The reason for this is precisely that God is not an object outside of us in respect of which we can take a position; instead, “‘faith’ as man’s relation to God also determines man’s relation to himself; for human existence (...) is an existence in which man has a relationship to himself. ‘Faith’ is the acceptance of the *kerygma* not as mere cognizance of it and agreement with it but as that genuine obedience to it which includes a new understanding of one’s self.”³² As such, God becomes “an expression of our existence”,³³ namely a new way of understanding ourselves, which is always open to us as a possibility in virtue of the kind of beings that we are. Hence, rather than being a description of sinful existence, the existential analysis provided by philosophy “is a purely formal ontological designation”, namely a description of possibilities-for-being, where “the philosopher completely disregards whether something like faith or unfaith can take place.”³⁴ In short, as Jean-Luc Marion has summarised it elegantly, faith “becomes the ontic variable of an ontological invariant, *Dasein*.”³⁵

As such, philosophy provides the ontology for the science of theology by answering certain pre-theological questions.³⁶ For example, when the theologian says that God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, his

23 This problem is eloquently summarised by Judith Wolfe in her *Heidegger and Theology*, 179-180.

24 Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 93.

25 Bultmann, “The Problem of ‘Natural Theology’”, 325.

26 *Ibid.*, 327.

27 Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 93.

28 Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 191.

29 Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 96.

30 Bultmann, “What Does it Mean to Speak of God?”, 64.

31 Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology”, 51; Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 96.

32 Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 324.

33 Bultmann, “What Does it Mean to Speak of God?”, 60.

34 Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 93.

35 Marion, *The Idol and Distance*, 208.

36 For more on this see Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology*, 6-10.

Trinitarian theology presupposes an ontology that allows for a Trinitarian configuration of being. Even whether we think of God as the act of being or the prime mover is in itself a philosophical rather than a theological question: the definition of God functions as the foundational presupposition from which a theology is developed on the basis of an existential ontology that functions as a natural theology, but which is itself not the domain of theologians (it is presupposed by them). Therefore, Bultmann says, “theology as a science”, given that it is anthropology, “can make fruitful use of the philosophical analysis of human existence. For the *man of faith* is in any case a *man*.”³⁷ This is again nothing but a faithful restatement of Heidegger’s understanding of science as delineated by certain presuppositions, or “fundamental concepts”, that form “determinations in which the area of knowledge underlying all the thematic objects of a science attain an understanding that precedes and guides all positive investigation.”³⁸ Theology in particular, Heidegger says, “is slowly beginning to understand again Luther’s insight that its system of dogma rests on a ‘foundation’ that does not stem from a questioning in which faith is primary and whose conceptual apparatus is not only insufficient for the range of problems in theology but rather covers them up and distorts them.”³⁹ Paraphrasing Heidegger, Bultmann then suggests that “all of the basic Christian concepts have a content that can be determined ontologically prior to faith and in a purely rational way. All theological concepts contain the understanding of being that belongs to man as such and by himself insofar as he exists at all.”⁴⁰ These basic concepts are not the domain of theology but rather of philosophical ontology. We then find “theology ‘incorporating’ that analysis and ‘crowning’ it with specific theological assertions, so that philosophy functions like natural theology in the old sense of providing a foundation.”⁴¹ What does it mean to say that theology ‘crowns’ philosophy? Let us consider this in greater depth.

“Not the least paradoxical aspect of Heidegger-reception in theology”, Jean-Yves Lacoste observes correctly, “has been a complete lack of enthusiasm for criticizing this”,⁴² that is to say, for criticizing the view of theology as a merely positive science built upon the fundamental ontology provided by philosophy. Indeed, Bultmann is no exception to this: theology, “in contradistinction to philosophy”, he says, is “a positive science (...) in that it speaks of a specific occurrence in human existence.”⁴³ As a positive science, it is the ontic complement to ontological philosophy in that “philosophy shows that my being a man uniquely belongs to me, but it does not speak of my unique existence”, for its theme is “not existence, but existentiality, not the factual, but factuality”, whilst speaking of the former “is exactly what theology does.”⁴⁴ For Bultmann, philosophy is the ontology that provides the definition of Christian concepts, say, proclamation, by grounding them in the being of Dasein as *possibility*. To this agnostic and formal understanding of proclamation, theology adds, as a phenomenology of a specific instance of proclamation—which is to be recognised as such because of its pre-theological definition—the understanding of a specific proclamation as it is made to a concrete individual. Thus, “philosophy and theology have the same object, namely, man, but (...) they make it their theme in different ways”, Bultmann says, “philosophy by making the being of man its theme, i.e., by inquiring ontologically into the formal structures of human existence; and theology by speaking of the concrete man insofar as he is faithful.”⁴⁵ It is precisely in that sense that some of theology’s assertions are anticipated by philosophy and indeed “repeat the analysis of philosophy, insofar (...) as it can only explicate its fundamental concepts as concepts of existence on the basis of an understanding of man’s ‘being’, and insofar as it is dependent on philosophy for the analysis of the meaning of being.”⁴⁶ Insofar as philosophy then makes outlining these possibilities-for-being its domain, insofar as it “claims to be able to understand the existence of man”, to that same degree “faith as a function of existence must in some way be within philosophy’s field of vision.”⁴⁷ This should be understood in the strongest possible sense: “Is it not a fact”, Bultmann asks rhetorically, “that theology is taking over the philosophical analysis of existence?”⁴⁸ Theology can and should simply take over the existential analysis performed by philosophy precisely because they share the same object, namely man, whose formal ontological structure the two disciplines do not disagree on: “the formal structures of existence treated in ontological analysis are ‘neutral’”, that is to say, “they are valid for all human existence. Therefore they are also valid for the existence which is confronted by the proclamation,

37 Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 94.

38 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 8.

39 Ibid.; Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 98.

40 Ibid., 96.; Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology”, 51.

41 Bultmann, “The Problem of ‘Natural Theology’”, 324.

42 Lacoste, “Existence and Love of God”, 99.

43 Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 94; Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology”, 41.

44 Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 93.

45 Ibid., 94.

46 Ibid., 95.

47 Bultmann, “The Problem of ‘Natural Theology’”, 314.

48 Ibid., 324.

both for existence outside faith and for existence in faith.”⁴⁹ Indeed, philosophy can perfectly explicate both faith and unfaith, but only in terms of *possibility*, for it considers them transcendently: “So far as faith and unbelief are single acts of existence, philosophy can in fact point out the conditions of their possibility.”⁵⁰ It can describe faith ontologically (what it means to have faith formally as existential possibility-for-being), but it cannot describe it phenomenologically on the ontic level (what it means to have faith materially as an actually lived experience). Take the doctrine of justification, Bultmann suggests, it is “not specifically Christian in its theocentric form; it is understandable in itself as a doctrine in which conceptions of God and man are developed logically.”⁵¹ Both philosophy and theology can speak meaningfully about it, but not in the same way: “theology teaches not merely the *concept* of justification”, like philosophy does, “but teaches it as an actual *event*, since theology speaks of Jesus Christ”, and can thus conceptualise justification as the forgiveness of sins through him. Yet, Bultmann is quick to add, “if theology wants to define the nature of the event of justification (...), it can do so only in categories which have been originated and perfected in philosophy.”⁵² At first glance, Kuhlmann’s challenge thus seems to have been met by Bultmann: philosophy is the ontological inquiry concerning man’s existentiality as such, consisting in the existential analysis that secures the formal structure that makes possible man’s ontic encounter with God, thus forming the transcendental foundation for all theology; this theology is the positive science that gives an ontic account of man’s concrete existence in faith as a phenomenological description of existentiell events or experiences in which God is encountered through lived faith and can only be recognised as such because of pre-theological definitions.⁵³

Nevertheless, one cannot help but wonder whether this view does not overemphasise philosophy at the expense of theology: if concepts such as God or proclamation are defined philosophically, with their existentiell encounter with man being described theologically; does this not reduce all theological questions to philosophical ones? Bultmann seems to think so, suggesting that “whether faith is interpreted as holding things to be true or as trust, as obedience or as numinous experience; or whether the concept of sin is interpreted in terms of nature or of ethics—always the concepts that must guide the interpretation are concepts in which the ‘natural’ man understands himself and his world.”⁵⁴ Indeed, as an ontic science of lived experience, theology cannot teach us anything more *about* faith, which is already and completely defined philosophically as an ontological possibility of Dasein; the only thing theology can help us understand is what it means to a specific individual to exist *from* faith, that is, to understand faith subjectively rather than objectively, to *live* faith.⁵⁵ Yet, by giving up autonomy when it comes to its foundational concepts, theology risks turning into philosophy, for it is there that all its important questions are decided. Echoing Kuhlmann’s critique, Karl Barth suggests that, “with the recognition of the feudal rule of philosophy, theology has ceased to be theology. (...) She then no longer has a serious reason to deny that she is a somewhat superfluous doubling of philosophy.”⁵⁶ He then continues with a stinging but powerful remark: “All too often, theologians believe themselves to be also philosophers by way of a side-job able and obliged to do the truly serious work of philosophy. In doing so, they have all too often exposed themselves as dilettantes or dependent disciples of whatever philosophical school; and in doing so, they have all too often neglected to learn their own lesson, and perhaps forgotten that they had their own lesson to learn.”⁵⁷ In short,

49 Ibid., 330-331; Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology”, 53.

50 Bultmann, “The Problem of ‘Natural Theology’”, 328.

51 Ibid., 326.

52 Ibid.; Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 93, 97; Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology”, 51.

53 Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology”, 52; Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 97.

54 Ibid., 98. Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 98.

55 This is a distinction derived from the one Bultmann makes in his “What Does it Mean to Speak of God”, which I develop phenomenologically in my “Givenness and Existence”.

56 Barth, “Theologische und philosophische Ethik”, 553.

57 Ibid., 547. In his letter to Bultmann of 12 June 1928 (Barth/Bultmann, *Letters*, 41), Barth puts this to him directly: “I have come to abhor profoundly the spectacle of theology constantly trying above all to adjust to the philosophy of its age, thereby neglecting its own theme.” Specifically, in a subsequent letter dated 5 February 1930 (49), Barth—possibly gaining a deeper understanding of these things as time progresses and thus starting to detect a rift between himself and Bultmann—expresses concern at the way a host of thinkers, including Bultmann, “are trying to understand faith as a human possibility, or, if you will, as grounded in a human possibility”, which means, he says, that “you are once again surrendering theology to philosophy.” It is especially upon the publication of “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, Bultmann’s reply to Kuhlmann, that Barth seems to become aware of the extent of their disagreement, writing on 27 May 1931 (59), that “the very painful fact how very far apart we are and how little, at root, we ever were together” has now become apparent. It is worth noting how strongly he expresses himself in this letter, which gives rise to a series of tense exchanges between the two in June 1931 (60-66) that centre around Bultmann’s frustration at Barth’s continual refusal to engage seriously with those who might disagree with him. For more on Barth’s attempt at understanding Bultmann, see his *Rudolf Bultmann: Ein Versuch ihn zu verstehen*.

when theology provides the crowning glory of philosophy, does it not do so only by giving up its own crown?

It is particularly the example of friendship, which Bultmann uses to argue in favour of the Heideggerian conception of the relationship between philosophy and theology, that shows us why it is ultimately untenable. Again performing the basic Heideggerian move, Bultmann says that if a friendless person wants a friend, then that means that he already “knows what friendship is—and yet does not know it either”,⁵⁸ for it belongs to his existentiality as an ontological possibility, even if he has never actually lived or experienced friendship. If I find a friend after being friendless, “what ‘more’, then, do I know”, he wonders, now that “I stand in an actual relation of friendship? Nothing!—at any rate, nothing more *about* friendship.”⁵⁹ Having the experience of friendship, then, teaches me nothing *about* friendship; for this denotes an ontological understanding, not of the lived reality of *actual* friendship, but of the transcendental structure that makes that reality *possible*. The lived experience does, however, provide me with a new ontic understanding *of* friendship *from* friendship, for “what ‘more’ I do know is that I now know my friend and also know myself anew.”⁶⁰ It is a subjective understanding of the relation wherein I understand myself anew in terms of it. I am not reflecting, ontologically, on the transcendental reality that is the existentiality that makes friendship possible, as an object opposed to myself; rather, I am reflecting, ontically and subjectively, on how my existence is factually determined by an existentiell reality. The former I can know *a priori* (transcendental condition of possibility), whilst the latter I can only know *a posteriori* (actuality of lived experience): “however well I can know in advance and in general what a friend is, and also know that friendship must surely make my life new, the one thing I can never know in advance and in general is what my friend is to me.”⁶¹ As is it for philosophy and theology: philosophically, I know everything there is to know *about* faith because having it is an existential possibility for everyone (*a priori*); theology, then, describes how I exist *from* faith, how my existence is determined by my encounter with God (*a posteriori*).⁶²

This treatment of friendship, and the position it supports, is problematic. Not because, as Judith Wolfe suggests, the knowledge the friendless man has of friendship “is likely to rest on the cultural and personal testimony of those who *have* experienced friendship”,⁶³ for the account fits with the ontological difference: I can recognise testimony of actual friendships without having to experience them myself because the possibility of friendship belongs inherently to my being. Indeed, Bultmann pre-empts that critique on those grounds: “The very fact (...) that any such talk of friendship (i.e., as may be the result of an actual friendship) can be understood by any other friendless person shows that the knowledge of friendship is also open to a person who is actually friendless.”⁶⁴ However, it is problematic because it calls into question the difference itself. For, surely, the ontic experience of taking part in a friendship discloses something *about* that relationship? Let’s take a more extreme example. Bultmann could say that, even though not all are parents, all have the possibility to love unconditionally, like parents love their children, and therefore all know what unconditional love *is* (ontologically), even if they might not know what it *is like* (ontically). However, in practice, the lived experience of becoming a parent does not just teach me what unconditional love *means to me*, how it relates me and my child; it teaches me what unconditional love *is*: it must be experienced personally in order to be understood generally. Indeed, Bultmann admits this himself when he discusses “the relation of fatherhood and sonship” elsewhere:

When that relation is viewed as a natural phenomenon—so that it can be spoken about—the essential character of the relation is not discoverable (...). Where the relationship really exists, it cannot be viewed from the outside. That is, it is not something in respect of which, for example, the son can claim for himself or permit to himself this or that, or feel obligated to this or that because of it. The essential relation is destroyed when any thought of this ‘in respect of which’ enters. It is there only where in his life the father *lives* truly as father and the son as son.⁶⁵

If it cannot be understood from the outside but needs to be *lived* in order to be understood, that means that it cannot be understood *a priori* (as ontological possibility) but only *a posteriori* (in lived experience): “Love is

⁵⁸ Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 100.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² In that sense, a philosophy of Christianity is possible, simply because, as Emmanuel Falque has put it eloquently in a different context, it covers elements of what it means to be a human being that are *universally credible on the basis of our being a human being*: the Christian message, Falque says, “is not only ‘believable’ (by giving faith), it is also ‘credible’ (with a universalisable rationality)”, for it “is not simply one of conviction, but also one of ‘culture’, or of pure and simple humanity” (Falque, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, 43 (translation modified)).

⁶³ Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, 183.

⁶⁴ Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 99.

⁶⁵ Bultmann, “What Does it Mean to Speak of God?”, 54.

not something external in respect of which it is possible either to act and speak or to refrain from acting and speaking. Love exists only as a determining element of life itself. Love is there only when I love or am loved; it has no existence alongside or behind me.”⁶⁶ Indeed, is it not by definition that unconditional love is *not* a choice for one of many possible ways of existing, but rather that that choice is made for me by the existentiell situation I find myself in and the way it changes my existentiality, the possibilities that I have? Friendship is a more casual relationship, but nevertheless, in choosing to be someone’s friend, other things, such as sleeping with my friend’s wife, become less possible—though not by my own decision. That is, the ontic experience discloses something about the ontological structure that makes it possible: in existing *from* friendship, I do, after all, learn more *about* friendship. It is thus not the case that love, faith or even friendship, can simply “be *understood* ontologically, insofar as it can be shown that these possibilities are actualized by an *event*”, precisely because that event changes those possibilities, and in relation to which it is therefore no longer “possible to speak of ‘before’ and ‘after’”, as Bultmann suggests.⁶⁷

Precisely on this point, Bultmann becomes susceptible to the recent critiques of Heidegger as unable to think the event (*Ereignis*) as anything other than appropriation (*Er-eignis*) in terms of Dasein’s possibilities. For Bultmann too, the event seemingly plays only on the ontic level without having any ontological impact, whether this is the event of friendship or of revelation, since both are thought along the same lines:

In knowing my friend in the *event* of friendship, the event of my life becomes new—‘new’ in a sense that is valid only for me and visible only to me, that indeed only *becomes* visible in the now and thus must always become visible *anew*. (...) What ‘more’, then, does the man of faith know? This—that revelation has actually encountered him, that he really lives, that he is in fact graced, that he is really forgiven and will always be so. And he knows this in such a way that by faith in the revelation his concrete life in work and in joy, in struggle and in pain is newly qualified; he knows that through the *event* of revelation the events of his life become new—‘new’ in a sense that is valid only for the man of faith and visible only to him, indeed that *becomes* visible in the now and thus must always become visible *anew*.⁶⁸

This is certainly true, but it must be thought more radically. For what Bultmann is doing here, as Marion puts it, is “taking the event as the product of a cause”, and in so doing he “confuses it with a simple fact, added afterwards to others: the ‘events’ of the day, the month, the year, which one actualizes on the stage of actuality and which therefore are not put in operation by themselves.”⁶⁹ Man becomes new when he encounters the event of revelation, certainly. However, not in the sense that the *events of his life* become new (ontically); but rather that his *possibilities-for-being* are restructured (ontologically), which changes everything. The event does not merely actualise possibility, but reorganises possibility and as such *makes it possible*. “The event”, as Marion puts it, “thus attests to its nonconstitutability by constituting me, myself, its effect.”⁷⁰ It is also Marion, this time in a theological register, who has inquired whether Christian notions like proclamation really are as “existentially powerless”,⁷¹ as these two Germans would have it: “do the Incarnation and Resurrection of the Christ affect ontological destiny”, he asks, “or do they remain a purely ontic event?”⁷²

⁶⁶ Ibid. Unlike Heidegger’s notorious silence on the subject, *love* is actually an important category for Bultmann (he is, after all, a theologian). However, his accounts of love and friendship do not really fit together. Indeed, if he considers friendship to be a mere worldly event, he understands it in the exact same and arbitrary way in which Heidegger understands love. Lacoste, who is himself very sensitive to the issue I am exploring here, puts this eloquently: “The virtual absence of love, then, marks a decision, or a judgement, we have not been told about. *Dasein* may love, to be sure, but a description of the phenomenon of love would tell us nothing about being, nor of how being is put in question by existence. Love may happen to us, obviously enough, within the world; but we cannot show that the world has had anything to do with it” (Lacoste, “Existence and Love of God”, 97). However, as we are already discovering here, this is not Bultmann’s understanding of love. I will continue to negotiate this tension within Bultmann’s work in what follows.

⁶⁷ Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 95n8.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 100. In “What Does it Mean to Speak of God?” (53-56), Bultmann analogously makes the same connection between parental relation and man’s relation to God.

⁶⁹ Marion, *Being Given*, 165.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 170. On this, see also Derrida, “A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event”, 451.

⁷¹ Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology”, 51.

⁷² Marion, *The Idol and Distance*, 213-214. The lines preceding this quotation make clear the deeply theological nature of this question, which follows from the incarnational and kenotic structure of the Christian doctrine of God: “if God invests the human with all of his greatness, without reserve, abandoning himself to the human being from the depths of distance—it is not only human ‘ways’ that God assumes, but humanity itself; it is not the ontic ‘way’ of a particular being, but the fundamental constitution of *Dasein* that he puts on and renews. Kenosis coincides perfectly here with recapitulation: in abandoning himself in humanity and in sacrificing thereto the insignia of divinity, God takes possession of humanity magisterially, fundamentally, and as his good.” This, in turn, then raises the following question: “Does the Christ, through the magisterially recapitulative kenosis, content himself with an ontic and ontically thinkable event, which modifies after the fact certain ontic determinations of *Dasein*”

2 Transformation

Whilst I have until now sketched Bultmann's understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology entirely along Heideggerian lines—with philosophy providing the transcendental grounding of the positive science that is theology—; I will now show how Bultmann, in articulating the relationship between the two as such, himself seems to be pushing up against the limits of the Heideggerian conception of that relationship according to which “theology is limited (...) to an ontic variable.”⁷³ In that sense, by taking him through the critique of Heidegger, I want to show how we can think *with* Bultmann *beyond* Heidegger precisely *as theology*, thus showing how philosophy can be *transformed* by theology *for philosophy's sake*.⁷⁴ By this, I in no way mean to suggest that philosophy is completed by theology; rather, it is a question of remedying a fundamental flaw in Heidegger's existential ontology, what Lacoste describes as the fact that “one of the most ambitious projects in the history of philosophy is conditioned by a reductive self-limitation”, since *Being and Time* “assumes a man secure in his being and existentially atheist.”⁷⁵ What I want to expose using Bultmann, still as a question of existential ontology and thus philosophy, is the aspect of what it means to be human that Heidegger neglects, namely, the transformative power of the event of faith, or the way in which love can turn the world upside-down. It seems that Bultmann, to a certain degree, was aware of this himself: “Since ‘ontological understanding cannot be neatly cut off from ontic experience,’ this question must become acute”, he says, “and it is understandable that Kuhlmann's polemic against my theological work (...) corresponds to a polemic directed by certain philosophers against Heidegger.”⁷⁶ Let us therefore now explore those philosophical critiques directed against Heidegger, before showing how Bultmann implicitly formulates a theological answer to them.

Emmanuel Levinas was the first philosopher to take issue with Heidegger's attempt at understanding existence entirely in terms of formal structures by seeking “to unite events of existence affected with opposite signs in an ambivalent condition which alone would have ontological dignity”, namely, the *possibility-for-being*, “while the events themselves proceeding in one direction or in another would remain empirical, articulating nothing ontologically new.”⁷⁷ Crucially, Levinas does not break with Heidegger's method of “seeking the condition of empirical situations”, but modifies it so as to leave “to the developments called empirical, in which the conditioning possibility is accomplished—it leaves to the *concretization*—an ontological role that specifies the meaning of the fundamental possibility, a meaning invisible in that condition.”⁷⁸ Indeed, in man's existentiell encounter with empirical or ontic reality, the being of Dasein appears in a way that it does not do through existential analysis for Levinas, namely the meaning of my being as being-a-friend: even if this is merely, as Bultmann puts it, “a possibility of man that must constantly be laid hold of anew”⁷⁹; insofar as I lay hold of that possibility, my being is changed, my possibilities reorganised, by the demand the other in their relation to me places upon me.

The most powerful critique of Heidegger's understanding of the event, however, is articulated by Claude Romano. He starts from the observation that Heidegger always reduces the event to the deployment of Dasein itself as actualisation of a particular possibility-for-being: “Dasein (...) is only accessible in its turn through a reduction of events (*Ereignisse*), which are thereby relegated to the level of mere facts (*Tatsache*), whose mode of Being is actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) or subsistence (*Vorhandenheit*). This reduction is achieved for the sake of putting in relief a singular meaning for the possibility from which existence itself (*Existenz*) becomes conceivable”, and

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(‘content’), without thoroughly affecting its most intimate constitution, or does he undertake, through an original and terminal advent, to invest not only a particular being (his own humanity) but indeed the Being of beings with a new dimension?”

⁷³ Marion, *The Idol and Distance*, 209.

⁷⁴ The Heideggerian reading of Bultmann was, especially within the English-speaking world, popularised by Macquarrie's *An Existentialist Theology*. More recently, however, other authors have emphasised that, though Bultmann indeed entirely takes over Heidegger's formal framework, insofar as he gives it substance by adding the material element of Christian theology, he carries it beyond Heidegger. My thinking of transformation here is in line with this recent trend that refuses to read Bultmann as merely a theological version of Heidegger, but it is at the same time more radical in that it does question whether Bultmann leaves Heidegger's framework formally unchanged. On this, see especially: Congdon, “Is Bultmann a Heideggerian Theologian?”; Jones, “Phenomenology and Theology”, as well as his *Bultmann*, 63-125. In that sense, if Bultmann describes, in “The Historicity of Man and Faith” (102), the thrust of his own argument in relation to Friederich Gogarten as “not directed against him, but rather (...) intended to inquire *with* him in the direction of his inquiry”, I would suggest that the same goes very much for his argument in relation to Heidegger.

⁷⁵ Lacoste, “Existence and Love of God”, 104.

⁷⁶ Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 99. Bultmann cites Heidegger's *Being and Time*, 295.

⁷⁷ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 173 (see also 27-28).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁷⁹ Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 96.

through it, Heidegger “reduces the multiplicity of events to *one alone: existing*, in a transitive sense. No other event happens to Dasein than that event which it is itself, insofar as it understands Being—insofar as it is itself understanding of Being, transcendence.”⁸⁰ In the language of Christian theology, as exposed in Heidegger’s early lectures on the phenomenology of religious life,⁸¹ Romano states this reduction as follows:

The elucidation of the originary phenomenological meaning of the temporality of Christian life rests on a *de-worlding* of the eschatological event and—through the bringing to light of the modalities according to which the event is *lived*, that is, ‘experienced’ in advance in the form of hope—in a *reduction* of that event, qua phenomenon of the world, to the ‘how’ (*Wie*) of its appearing in and for factual life experience, in short, in the *subordination* of that event to its *possibility* for the Christian, insofar as that possibility conditions the transformation of his factual life itself in its entirety.⁸²

In short, the eschatological event (*Ereignis*) is appropriated (*Er-eigenet*) by the Christian, brought into his own being, in terms of his own possibility-for-being (hope), and as such is it experienced. This means, then, Romano continues, that Dasein faces “one single alternative: to be oneself or to be the they-self, *Eigentlichkeit* or *Uneigentlichkeit*”,⁸³ and we might add, with Bultmann, faith or unfaith. Precisely this move—where “the object is converted into an event of the subject”—⁸⁴ is what Levinas calls *totality* and which is rather breached or opened up by the eschatological event, as an experience of transcendence.⁸⁵ Indeed, it entirely rules out “the possibility of a *becoming-other by and through the experience of events* qua upheavals of the world, qua reconfigurations of all its essential possibilities.”⁸⁶ Instead, Romano suggests, a more radical thinking of the event sees it not as an event *in* the world, but the event *of* the world; not as an event within time and space, but one that forms spatio-temporalisation itself.⁸⁷ The event “*is nothing other than this impersonal reconfiguration of my possibilities and of the world—a reconfiguration that occurs in a fact and by which the event opens a fissure in my own adventure*. The transformation of myself and of the world is therefore inseparable from the experience I undergo of it.”⁸⁸ The event thus embodies a certain *transformative force* of experience, for only as “pure reconfiguration of possibilities” can we think how “an event transcends any innerworldly fact and eludes any causal explanation. Neither causing anything itself nor being caused by anything, it is simply *origin* of the world.”⁸⁹ As something radically new without antecedent (impossible), the event transforms the world because it transforms or reorganises my possibilities, as such transforming my relation to the world (disclosure) and to myself (understanding).⁹⁰ Emmanuel Falque captures it well when he says that the event “makes the world ‘worldly’ in some way, in that it happens not only ‘in’ the world but transforms me, myself, who am ‘in’ the world.”⁹¹ The event is thus a matter of an experience (ontic) that forms the world as world because it reconfigures my possibilities (ontological), yet is not produced in the world (as a fact) but rather forms the world itself.⁹²

⁸⁰ Romano, *Event and World*, 134.

⁸¹ See Heidegger’s *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*. On how these lectures anticipate Bultmann’s theology, see Jones, *Bultmann*, 94-101.

⁸² Romano, “Possibility and Event”, 27.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁸⁴ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 274.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 22-26.

⁸⁶ Romano, “Possibility and Event”, 56.

⁸⁷ Romano, *Event and Time*, 185.

⁸⁸ Romano, *Event and World*, 31.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁹⁰ Romano, *Event and Time*, 179-180.

⁹¹ Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 108.

⁹² The most concise summary Romano gives of his thinking, which eloquently shows how it is a matter of thinking with Heidegger beyond Heidegger, is perhaps worth quoting here at length: “As such, events do not pertain to *actuality* (with the mode of being corresponding to it, *Vorhandenheit*), but to possibility, indeed to the possibility of making possible, to *possibilization*. As distinct from the fact (*Tatsache*) (...), an event is what lies in reserve in every fact and every actualization, (...) what re-transfigures the world introducing in it an excess of meaning that transcends all understanding (*Verstehen*) understood as finite project of a potentiality-for-Being. An event, therefore, is only thinkable as such (...) in its relation to possibility, since it is that which *reconfigures in each instance the possibilities of existence*, introducing a wide gap in the self-closure of possibilities, since *after* the springing forth of an event, things will never be as they were *before*; it will no longer be the same world, with its open possibilities, since the event’s very upsurge, by opening up new possibilities and correlatively closing out others, upends (...) ‘the world’. If indeed the world is ‘*das Ganze der wesenhaften inneren Möglichkeiten des Daseins*,’ then we must assert, against Heidegger, that it is not *first* my freedom that projects a world beyond entities and possibilizes all my possibilities configured into a world by my resolute project toward death, but that it is the event, understood more radically in its relation to possibility, that (...) reconfigures all my possibilities before any project of *mine* and is world-forming for the ‘entity’ that I am. As a consequence

We should be warned, however, that whilst for Heidegger faith entails “a specific *transition* of existence, in which pre-Christian and Christian existence are united”,⁹³ and for Bultmann the kerygmatic event “breaks through this finitude of man and thereby raises him up to his real nature”⁹⁴; this is not what Romano has in mind when he speaks of *transformation*: “Such a transformation”, he says, “cannot be understood as the transition from one form to another inside of a becoming itself understood according to the temporal scheme of ‘passage’”, but “insofar as it concerns the event as metamorphosis of the world (...), the transformation means a mutation that is in each case *total*, a change *through and through*.”⁹⁵ As a result, Romano concludes, “human existence as a whole must be approached henceforth in its eventual sense, more originarily than in the existential analytic, in such a way that the ontological difference, which forms the starting point of *Sein und Zeit*, becomes itself an *event* springing forth with *Dasein*.”⁹⁶ The analytic of finitude itself needs to be modified so as to make room for the event that does not have, as John Caputo puts it, “a seat in being at all”, for it is not an innerworldly fact, “but below being and beings, simmering beneath the ontico-ontological difference.”⁹⁷

If Lacoste is then justified in speculating that within Heidegger’s framework around the time of the publication of *Being and Time* “the intervention of God (not of the *concept* of a supreme being, but of an experience claiming to be of ‘God’) would make no difference to being-in-the-world, and would raise no question about ‘the world’”,⁹⁸ my task is to show how Bultmann corrects Heidegger’s oversight. In what follows, I will thus show how the kerygmatic event of revelation as it appears in Bultmann can be thought as interrupting the ontological difference by way of an experience that has ontological impact: how he accounts for freedom as ultimately rooted in an event more fundamental than the projection of possibilities, an event that is not in the world but instead forms the world itself in such a way that after it there can be no before; how he understands existence, not just as the *actualisation* of possibilities through faith, but their *transformation* by revelation; how he sees theology, not just as a positive science forming the complement to philosophical ontology, but as one that equally does transcendental-ontological work. In short, I will show how we can find in Bultmann the accomplishment of a *transformation of philosophy by theology*, of the ontology of man by the phenomenology of faith.

3 Metamorphosis

Emmanuel Falque’s work can prove instructive here, for if Bultmann theologises Heidegger, then Falque theologises Romano’s critique of Heidegger.⁹⁹ Where Romano speaks of *the transformation of possibility*, Falque talks about *the metamorphosis of finitude*, which is always “the metamorphosis of one’s own finitude”,¹⁰⁰ of our proper humanity, through the event of the Resurrection, in which “it is the world itself, in this its most fundamental structure, that awaits metamorphosis.”¹⁰¹ Similarly, Falque shares with Bultmann an emphasis on the fact that “in philosophy as in theology, the horizon of finitude will always remain primary, at least as function of that with which, as humans, we are *first* confronted”, and from which an “unsurpassable immanence” follows.¹⁰² This idea is identical to Bultmann’s continual stressing of the fact that the man of faith is still a man existing in the world (finitude); and that we can only talk of God by talking of man, since there is no standpoint

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the relationships between the world (...) and the event, understood in its most radical sense (a sense that remained unnoticed by Heidegger) are reversed: the possibility of making possible, *the possibilization* that makes a world beyond all entities reign, is not the characteristic of an autarktic freedom belonging to *Dasein*, but a feature of events in which all freedom is rooted; by reconfiguring my possibilities more originarily than any project of an authentic potentiality-for-Being does, events *reconfigure my world by their upsurge and manifest this world as such*” (Romano, *Time and Event*, 186).

93 Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology”, 51n2.

94 Bultmann, “The Problem of Natural Revelation”, 98. For commentary, see: Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 63, 77, 148, 172; Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 103, 111-112; Falque, “The Visitation of Facticity”, 207-209.

95 Romano, *Time and Event*, 186.

96 Romano, “Possibility and Event”, 66.

97 Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 36.

98 Lacoste, “Existence and Love of God”, 102-103.

99 Of course, Bultmann would not say that he theologises Heidegger, but rather that Heidegger secularises what he finds in the New Testament. Similarly, Falque might say that he is simply articulating the conception of humanity that he finds within the Christian tradition (see, for example, his *The Guide to Gethsemane*). In any case, I simply mean to illustrate the relationship between the secular and religious authors here.

100 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 2.

101 Ibid., 8. Falque himself admits his great debt to Romano when it comes to his central idea of the metamorphosis of finitude. On this, see: Falque, “The Phenomenology of Experience”, 227-229.

102 Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 22; Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 15-20.

outside of God (immanence).¹⁰³ Hence, Bultmann is annoyed by all piety based on an understanding of God as a transcendent being that would be inaccessible to me as long as I am bound to my fleshly finitude, for this “would be flight from before God, because man would be trying to flee from the very reality in which he exists. What he desires to escape is precisely his own concrete existence; yet only in that existence can he grasp the reality of God.”¹⁰⁴ Falque similarly complains that “to everyone’s enduring regret, the believer would posit transcendence directly and rid himself, right from the start, of his pure and simple humanity (...). Such an act, however, confuses the point of departure with the destination. It fails to see that to begin with finitude is not to imprison oneself immediately in it.”¹⁰⁵

The only issue on which Falque then disagrees with Bultmann, he says, is what he sees as the naïve opposition between possibilities-for-being, which would need to be decided between in a merely factual (ontic) choice. Bultmann, like Heidegger, would lack the means to think the *transformative experience* of the event that restructures the possibilities themselves, according to Falque: “On the one hand, we find the unbelieving Dasein and, on the other, the believing Dasein; there is despair for the one, and for the other, faith and love; on the one side, auto-decision and on the other, dependence upon another. These oppositions appear too simplistic to be but reiterated. As we will show, the ‘ruptures’ should be seen as mistaken insofar as they simplify out of an excessive desire to purify philosophy as well as theology.”¹⁰⁶ In short, instead of the rupture between faith and unfaith and the discontinuity between the two ways of existing this implies, Falque suggests that we should think the *event* in which one is *transformed* by the other, in which our possibilities are reconfigured to the point that it is no longer a simple matter of choosing between two equally valid ones.¹⁰⁷ “In the kerygmatic and thus Christian decision”, Falque says, “the human neither chooses to believe nor decides to commit himself to believing, but ‘falls’ under the decision (...), such that his decision to decide comes to pass according [to] the decision of God—that is, in standing beneath God’s wings as beneath his shadow.”¹⁰⁸

Yet, Falque’s depiction of Bultmann is only accurate if we understand him along Heideggerian lines. To the contrary, and despite Bultmann often explicitly framing his own thinking along those lines, I would argue that Bultmann *does* leave room for the transformative experience of the event, for the ontological relevance of experience. Indeed, as Gareth Jones puts it, the problem with overly Heideggerian readings of Bultmann is that, in the process, “Bultmann’s reflections upon the meaning of human existence are raised to the level of a full-blown anthropology, which is then, with reference to Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, turned into ontology *per se*; that is, the human question becomes, erroneously, the sole ontological question, which in fact it can never be for Christianity.”¹⁰⁹ I already hinted at this when I explained how Bultmann suggests that the parental relationship of love cannot be understood from the outside (ontologically) but must be lived (ontically) precisely because love exists “only as a determining element of life itself.”¹¹⁰ Given that, like love, God is “the reality that determines our existence”,¹¹¹ then, in the same way that I cannot take a neutral attitude towards my father, I cannot simply decide between faith and unfaith from a position of neutrality: if this were the case, “we should have wholly failed to comprehend what the determination of our existence by God means. For that determination also involves the *claim* of God on us. Consequently, every setting of ourselves outside of God”, that is, every setting ourselves in a position of neutrality, “would be a denial of God’s claim on us”, and “to assume such a position of neutrality is to abandon the idea of God.”¹¹² Indeed, at times, Bultmann comes very close to formulating a transformative notion of the event of revelation that reorganises existential possibilities, resulting in a metamorphosis—not simply a shattering, as Falque would have it—of finitude:

103 I do not mean to imply that either Falque or Bultmann doubt the transcendence of God. I simply want to suggest that they both make the basic phenomenological point that, precisely because he is transcendent, we can only speak of him insofar as he enters the sphere of immanence.

104 Bultmann, “What Does it Mean to Speak of God?”, 57.

105 Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 22; Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 14.

106 Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 103.

107 Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 63, 107.

108 Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 111–112. Falque cites Bultmann’s “The Problem of Natural Revelation”, 98: “Knowledge about God is in the first instance a knowledge which man has about himself and his finitude, and God is reckoned to be the power which breaks through this finitude of man and thereby raises him up to his real nature.” Jones, in his *Bultmann* (118), similarly stresses—incorrectly, in my view, insofar as they are also considered equally attractive—that faith and unfaith, authenticity and inauthenticity, “are, for Bultmann, necessary alternative responses to God’s demand in Christ.”

109 Jones, *Bultmann*, 65.

110 Bultmann, “What Does it Mean to Speak of God?”, 54.

111 *Ibid.*, 56–57.

112 *Ibid.*, 55.

God's revelation in Christ is not the communication of knowledge as such, but rather an occurrence for man and in man that places him in a new situation and thereby also opens up to him a new understanding of himself. Thus this knowing has its basis in being known by God. So it is that faith is the new possibility for existence before God; it is created by God's saving act, is laid hold of in obedience, and manifests itself as confession and hope, as fear and trust—in short, as a new understanding of oneself.¹¹³

Bultmann continues this train of thought by saying that “faith must also be a free act, the primary act in which we become certain of our existence. But this basic act is not an optional affirmation which we decide to make. It is obedience, a *must*—it is, in truth, faith. (...) Faith can be only the affirmation of God's action upon us; the answer to his Word directed to us.”¹¹⁴ Indeed, Bultmann reconceptualises *freedom as obedience (faith)* in the face of the event in which God demands a response from me to his revelation, makes me choose, even though there is but one possibility: “Man, upon whose whole self God's demand is made, has no freedom toward God.”¹¹⁵ The experience itself means that the only possible possibility is to respond in faith, as obedient hearing of the word of God.¹¹⁶ He again uses love as an example to make this point: “freedom of choice is not taken away from the man of faith because for him love is now the *only* possible possibility. For love does not mean an inherited possibility for existing authentically which has been freely chosen and in which the man who is to resolve necessarily exists; on the contrary, such a possibility is first chosen *in* love. (...) Choice is not taken from him; he stands under the demand to choose in love.”¹¹⁷ This is precisely the result of the fact that, when faith and love of God has become a possibility, it is impossible to remain neutral towards that possibility, *it has already been decided*: “Knowledge of God is a lie if it is not acknowledgement of Him”,¹¹⁸ precisely because there is no objective knowledge of God; he is not *known* unless he is *lived* in faith.

This puts Bultmann very close to Romano's account of the transformative experience of the event: “To decide about a self-transformation”, the latter says, “is not to decide among possibilities, but to decide in favor of possibility. (...) It does not choose between alternative paths according to motives that it would limit itself to actualizing. It instead answers for eventuality by allowing itself to be preceded by it; it results from the transformation that is at work in every ex-per-ience without being able to arouse it.”¹¹⁹ Romano describes this decision further as follows:

[U]nlike every factual decision in which I decide (...) *among possibilities* (...), the decision that is operative in every transformation, and through which the [self], preceded and passed over by that which happens to him, (...) consists only in responding in a perpetually new and different way to the renewed injunction of the new, in beginning perpetually anew in accordance with the possibilities that the event makes possible. Such a decision does not decide among possibilities, but decides in favor of the possible; it does not choose between adverse possibilities, but decides for the adversity of possibility. It is, consequently, the decision in play in every factual decision, the decision according to which every factual decision among possibilities is solely—and originally—possible: the decision to decide.¹²⁰

Falque puts this in simpler terms: “deciding to decide becomes simply deciding to become open to the undecidable.”¹²¹ This openness to the event is precisely how Bultmann conceptualises obedience: “For freedom is nothing else than being open for the genuine future, letting one's self be determined by that future.”¹²² Only in obedience is our natural process of projecting our possibilities unto the world brought to a halt; only as such can we be open to the event, and in that sense free. Moreover, we know this by doing theology, *not philosophy*: “What

113 Bultmann, “Paul”, 141.

114 Bultmann, “What Does it Mean to Speak of God?”, 63.

115 Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 14.

116 Bultmann, “Paul”, 140.

117 Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 107.

118 Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 213. See also Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 20: “A striking example is the event of birth, which is received before having been chosen, as brilliantly adduced by Claude Romano. What is true of birth is all the more true of confessional faith. ‘There is no choice’ about having the choice; in the choice of our non-choice resides paradoxically the greatest force of our choice.” The idea that God cannot appear in a way that does not evoke love, that God cannot be known except in and as love, is also an important motif of the nine studies collected in Lacoste's *The Appearing of God*. In “Perception, Transcendence, and the Knowledge of God”, for example, he asks rhetorically: “Could God appear (in flesh and bone) and not be loved? Can we conceive of an experience of God that did not invite love? Could we, if only as a distinctive event of some person's individual existence (*existentiellement*), *not-love* God, and yet know him?” (33).

119 Romano, *Event and Time*, 187.

120 Ibid., 188; Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 124-126.

121 Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 113.

122 Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 334.

faith and theology say and show”, Bultmann suggests, “is that in this possibility of being (which in its ontological character is not in dispute) there is always present in fact a *necessity of being*, insofar as every actual choice in which man chooses a possibility of existing authentically he in fact always chooses what he already is—that he never gets rid of his past and is therefore never free. For this reason, however, he is also genuinely historical insofar as historicity means the possibility of an actual i.e., a new occurrence.”¹²³ This is precisely the kind of decision Falque aims at as the decision made while ‘standing beneath God’s wings as beneath his shadow’, for in conceptualising freedom as obedience it becomes evident that “deciding is not choosing but responding.”¹²⁴ Decision (or obedience) “does not belong to freedom as a discretionary power over a possible, which the [self] would have available in advance, *a priori*”, Romano explains; rather, “it is originarily conditioned by the eventuality to which it opens and in view of which it disposes of the [self]: its *a priori* possibility is rooted *a priori* in a necessary *a posteriori*.”¹²⁵ For, as Bultmann emphasises, it is precisely in relation to the kerygmatic event that “the ‘before’ and ‘after’ that are spoken of in relation to this event neither may nor can be further clarified in an ontological sense.”¹²⁶ As such, we can conclude that Bultmann, unlike Heidegger, *does* manage to think the event ‘understood in its most radical sense’, *does* secure the ontological significance of lived experience, *does* think revelation as a transformative event and faith as an ontological instead of a factual choice: “Could faith then be the Archimedean point from which the world is moved off its axis and is transformed from the world of sin into the world of God? Yes!”¹²⁷ Indeed, Bultmann would wholeheartedly agree with Falque that, like the Resurrection, “confessing faith changes everything.”¹²⁸ However, it is only *as a theologian* that Bultmann is able to think this event.

Having thus demonstrated how Bultmann manages to go beyond Heidegger precisely as a theologian by showing how “the God question”, as Jones puts it, “is the question of the ontological difference, where ‘difference’ is understood in a dynamic sense, as something that differentiates but at the same time is always being overcome”,¹²⁹ allowing that difference to itself become ‘an *event* springing forth with *Dasein*’ (Romano); I still need to show, once more against Falque’s reading of Bultmann, how the kerygmatic event transforms rather than shatters the horizon of finitude, how there is continuity between the natural man and the man of faith precisely in the event of metamorphosis. If we read against the Heideggerian thrust of some of Bultmann’s texts, the answer is clear: “If, through faith, existence prior to faith is overcome *existentiell* or ontically, this still does not mean that the existential or ontological conditions of existing are destroyed.”¹³⁰ Finitude is not annulled, but is *inhabited* differently, with certain possibilities becoming more possible, and others becoming less possible: an ontological change has taken place, yet this is not a break with but rather a reorganisation of what was already there, a renewal and trans-formation. Bultmann clarifies: “The ‘exclusiveness’ that theology claims for the word of proclamation and thereby for the Christian man (i.e., for the man of faith and love) as alone genuinely historical may not be falsely interpreted to mean that the Christian man is in any way exempt from the ontological conditions of human existence.”¹³¹

Bultmann gives several examples of how finitude is inhabited differently by the man of faith, how ontological concepts are transformed by the event of revelation that gives itself as both faith and love. To begin with, he says, there is “the future of Christ”, which, “instead of being a yet unknown segment of time due to appear, which will at some time become present and then past, is the future which marks an absolute limit and is ‘always the opposite of every conceivable and possible present’. Clearly, the ‘future of Christ’ means (...) nothing more than futurity *per se*, which is always the opposite of every conceivable present. Hence, therefore, we have expressed (...) an understanding of human temporality in contrast to the temporality of nature, such as we find in Heidegger.”¹³² The point, however, is that human temporality is not abandoned and in that sense it is not structurally dissimilar from Falque’s notion of transformed time: for him, “rather than occurring in time”, the event “disrupts the course of time and opens a new time.”¹³³ In other words, the event in which my possibilities are reorganised is itself not temporal, but is instead temporalising: it opens up time, makes the world worldly,

123 Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 107.

124 Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 111.

125 Romano, *Event and Time*, 188-189; Romano, *Event and World*, 136-138.

126 Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 95n8.

127 Bultmann, “What Does it Mean to Speak of God?”, 64.

128 Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 99; Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 179.

129 Jones, *Bultmann*, 64.

130 Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 96.

131 *Ibid.*, 107.

132 Bultmann, “The Problem of ‘Natural Theology’”, 324.

133 Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 108; Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 115.

renders the possible possible.¹³⁴ Another example Bultmann gives is death, or finitude itself: “For him who knows himself loved”, he says, “it becomes clear that the actual limitation of the I is given by the thou, and death forthwith loses its character as the limit. The question concerning death becomes superfluous for him who knows (*existentiell*) that he is there to serve the neighbor.”¹³⁵ Based on this, it seems that the kerygmatic event does, after all, remove the man of faith from the human condition of death. Does that mean that theology can correct the philosophical analysis of man? Bultmann’s answer is a firm “No!”, for “death stands before even the man of faith. If it has ‘lost its power’ for him, this simply means that faith (and, accordingly, theology also) sees that death means an either/or for man in the sense of judgement and grace (and therefore in the sense of a qualification of man as a totality of which existential analysis can know nothing), which is decided in faith.”¹³⁶ As such, the man of faith, who has undergone the metamorphosis of faith, is still finite and limited by death, but insofar as death has lost its power over him, he relates to it differently, inhabits this finitude differently. Bultmann then describes this transformed finitude as follows: “As *faith* is coming under the eyes of God, so *love* is the resolution that lays hold of the situation, and *hope*, the being ahead of oneself in care, in which one is concerned for himself, but which this ‘for himself’, while not destroyed, is left in the hands of God. And by the same token, *joy* is nothing other than the anxiety that motivates man (as the latter is anxious about ‘nothing’, so joy rejoices in ‘nothing’) in a specific modification, as ‘overcome’.”¹³⁷ Thus, as it is due to the Resurrection for Falque, so is it due to the kerygmatic event for Bultmann, that “there are not *two worlds* but *two different ways of living the same world*.”¹³⁸ One as “*closing in on oneself* (earth)”, and another as “*openness to God* (heaven)”,¹³⁹ namely being exposed to “the genuine future, letting one’s self be determined by that future.”¹⁴⁰ The kerygmatic event is thus “not an event of the world, or one that is produced in the world, but the event that ‘makes worldly the world’”, in that “the structure of the world as such is not only changed but changed to the extent that a sudden *irruptive event* (...) transforms my manner of being in the world from top to bottom, and thus ‘makes [the] world’.”¹⁴¹ It does not release us from our worldly nature, it merely *discloses* the world in a new way. Hence it forms, or makes possible, by trans-forming, what Falque calls “another way of living the same world.”¹⁴²

Bultmann also formulates this idea of the continuity between the two ways of existing theologically by emphasising that “it is unbelieving existence which comes to faith. Faith does not change human nature into something else; the justified does not possess any new qualities which are demonstrable—the justified one is the sinner. (...) Even the man of faith remains in existence; he does not have a new structure of existence created for him.”¹⁴³ Man only comes to faith precisely *as* man and only has faith *insofar* as he is a finite human being: faith is not the knowledge of an external object, but a new way of understanding myself. Bultmann indeed explicitly rejects Falque’s accusation that on his account the kerygmatic event would shatter or break the horizon of finitude of the natural man:

If faith is an event in historical life, then it comes within life’s coherence, which is conditioned by the understanding. And if an understanding in faith is given, an understanding which displaces and replaces all earlier understanding, then that earlier understanding must include a pre-understanding. Otherwise, through revelation and faith, the old man would be completely annihilated and a new man, who had no continuity with the old, would take his place. That would be the view, for example, of the Hellenistic religious revelation in the Corpus Hermeticum. But faith specifically rejects this view when it declares the event of revelation to be the forgiveness of sin. For in acceptance of forgiveness, man claims his past. Forgiveness involves the continuity of the believer as the new man with the old man. It is he, the man, who believes—‘at once sinner and justified’ (*simul peccator, simul iustus*). The sinner is the justified.¹⁴⁴

The event of revelation does not destroy the natural man, his being is not “shattered and reconstructed anew”,¹⁴⁵ for that “would be true if the coherence of life were a coherence of nature and consequently the revelation were a natural event”, on the ontic plane; “but the life-coherence in which man lives cannot be set up, like an object in

¹³⁴ Ibid., 114; Romano, *Event and Time*, 185.

¹³⁵ Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 108.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 109.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 110.

¹³⁸ Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 102.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 96.

¹⁴⁰ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 334.

¹⁴¹ Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 107; Romano, *Event and World*, 66.

¹⁴² Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 102-111.

¹⁴³ Bultmann, “The Problem of ‘Natural Theology’”, 327-329.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 316.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 315.

nature, as an objective entity to investigate for the purpose of understanding it. On the contrary, the coherence of life is itself only constituted fully by the understanding.”¹⁴⁶ There is no destruction followed by reconstruction, but instead a reorganisation or *transformation* of what is *already there*, which now becomes lived differently and only in that sense *new*: that man is made new, reborn, does not “deny the continuity. For the man is new simply because he believes, not because he has been given newly existent qualities. (...) Anyone who denies that, is no longer talking about the human being that repents, who believes and who loves; he is talking instead about a mysterious something in him or in his stead.”¹⁴⁷

4 Conversion

What does this then mean for the relationship between philosophy and theology? Well, to begin with, Bultmann and Falque agree that it would be wrong to consider them as distinguished by their respective objects: philosophy does not simply treat the natural man, nor does theology occupy itself exclusively with the man of faith; instead they both speak of *man*, but as he appears against different horizons, from different perspectives, with a different approach.¹⁴⁸ Unencumbered by any desire to make his conception of this relationship fit within a Heideggerian framework, it is Falque who perhaps articulates this most clearly: through Resurrection (Falque) or proclamation (Bultmann)—the event that “changes everything”—philosophy is transformed by its encounter with theology; or better, philosophy is *converted* by theology.¹⁴⁹ This should not be taken to mean that philosophy becomes confessional or, as Joseph O’Leary has suggested, that Falque presents “philosophy as a pouting servant girl, the *ancilla theologiae* who would like to climb into her master’s bed.”¹⁵⁰ Rather, philosophy is transformed by theology *for* philosophy’s sake and precisely *as* philosophy—in this case, as existential ontology: “it is not simply a question of the assumption or integration of philosophy into theology”, Falque says, “but more importantly a matter of the ‘transformation’ or ‘metamorphosis’ of philosophy by theology.”¹⁵¹ In the encounter with the transformative kerygmatic event, the analytic of finitude is seen from a new perspective precisely as a matter of existential ontology, for “the roots of the existential analysis (...) are ultimately *existentiell*—they are *ontic*.”¹⁵² It is precisely in that way that Bultmann sets up his theology:

So far as faith and unbelief are single acts of existence, philosophy can in fact point out the conditions of their possibility. But theology must answer that unbelief is in no way a contingent attitude which appears in existence, that it is not a determination in favour of a specific position which could be understood philosophically, from the point of view of the determination, as an attitude of human existence in its authenticity. Theology asserts, rather, that unbelief is the basic position of human existence, that it is the constitutive element of it as such.¹⁵³

Precisely as such theology too is doing ontological work, namely *transforming* the work done by philosophy. “It must be noted, however”, Bultmann continues, “that the being of man prior to faith first becomes visible in its true lineaments only from the standpoint of faith itself and that it is from this perspective alone that it can be understood.”¹⁵⁴ For him, the existential ontology of man *as such* can only gain its proper scope *through faith*, or by way of the man of faith, precisely because it is necessarily retrospective: transcendental investigation never starts from the *a priori possibility* it seeks to establish, but rather from the *a posteriori actuality* of the phenomenon of which it seeks to secure the possibility.¹⁵⁵ For this reason, Romano suggests that “every *a priori* is structurally *a posteriori*—that is, structured *a priori* by an *a posteriori* in no way ‘empirical’, but transcendental, that bestows on the *a priori* itself its eventual meaning. The [self] is thus not describable or interpretable in himself, apart from the events that befall him and his history: events and the [self] arise together and are inextricable.”¹⁵⁶ As

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 22-23, 131-136. Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 22-23, 131-136.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 316.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 327; Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 22.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 22-23, 131-136.

¹⁵⁰ O’Leary, “Phenomenology and Theology”, 107.

¹⁵¹ Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 131.

¹⁵² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 11.

¹⁵³ Bultmann, “The Problem of ‘Natural Theology’”, 328.

¹⁵⁴ Bultmann, “Paul”, 128. See also the *Theology of the New Testament*, 270: “Paul regards *man’s existence* prior to *faith* in the transparency it has gained to the eye of faith.”

¹⁵⁵ It is impossible to establish a possibility *de jure* (which is a *a priori*), if you will, without there first being a possibility *de facto* (which is a *a posteriori*).

¹⁵⁶ Romano, *Event and Time*, 152.

such, what Bultmann sees (with Heidegger) as the ontic or positive work of theology, must be understood (once we have passed through the critique of Heidegger) as itself having transcendental or ontological scope: it is in the experience of revelation (*a posteriori*) that the structure of Dasein as such (*a priori*) appears in a new light (transformed). Faith can only be a possibility-for-being of Dasein as what Romano calls “a ‘transcendental’ *a posteriori*”, which can only be known “*after the fact*, in the *essential a posteriori* of a necessary retrospection.”¹⁵⁷ Precisely because the ontological has its roots in the ontic, existential analysis is always retrospective (ontology is always phenomenological), and thus “man prior to the revelation of faith [*a priori*] is so depicted by Paul as he is retrospectively seen from the standpoint of faith [*a posteriori*].”¹⁵⁸ The very work of Bultmann’s theology annuls the ontological difference on which he builds it. Unwittingly, Bultmann thus heeds Falque’s call, directed at both “the philosopher and theologian”, to “recognize that *existentiell* or (...) experiential questions are ultimately at stake in the upcoming of philosophy and theology. Thus, in the end, *existentials* are described by phenomenology and at the same time put to work by theology, until they are entirely transformed and ‘metamorphised’.”¹⁵⁹ Philosophy is then *converted* by theology in the same way that being-in-the-world is *transformed* by the experience of revelation (the kerygmatic event), in which the self comes into itself as self. In that sense, Jones’ suggestion that “as a theologian, Rudolf Bultmann is not an existentialist, but rather a phenomenologist”, is entirely correct.¹⁶⁰

It is then particularly disappointing that Bultmann simply repeats Heidegger’s reading of Christian thinkers like Kierkegaard. Heidegger famously does not mention his Danish source in the text of *Being and Time*, but states in a footnote that “Kierkegaard explicitly grasped and thought through the problem of existence as *existentiell* in a penetrating way”, whilst “the existential problematic was so foreign to him.”¹⁶¹ Similarly, Bultmann says that “Heidegger’s ontological analysis can be fructified by Kierkegaard’s explicitly Christian understanding of man without Heidegger thereby becoming a theologian or Kierkegaard turning out to be a philosopher.”¹⁶² Is this, however, not a gross misreading of Kierkegaard? Indeed, most of his works are *existentiell* descriptions of existence, but it does not follow that their significance is entirely ontic. What Kierkegaard primordially wants to remind us of is that “one who exists is prohibited from wanting to forget that he exists.”¹⁶³ By this he means that the absolute transcendental position of what Falque calls “pure philosophy” is impossible.¹⁶⁴ The ontological difference annuls itself in the *event* of existence: that the human being is existing being means exactly that we cannot take our own being as an object ready for analysis. For even in performing that analysis, even in speaking *about* being, we are existing subjects who at the same time speak *from* being. Kierkegaard is perhaps the thinker *par excellence* for whom philosophy is done by doing theology, the transcendental laid bare in the positive, and ontology practiced as phenomenology; precisely because, for Kierkegaard, thinking “must correspond to the form of existence.”¹⁶⁵ Hence, Bultmann’s reading of Kierkegaard is disappointing, because the thrust of his theology, despite his attempts at fitting it within Heidegger’s methodology, comes very close to fulfilling Kierkegaard’s ambition: “For all talk of reality which ignores the element in which alone we can have reality—that is, talk which ignores our own existence—is self-deceit.”¹⁶⁶ Moreover, it is precisely as a theologian, and through theological reflection, that he is able to articulate this idea. This is perhaps most evident when he poses the problem as follows: “We cannot talk about our existence since we cannot talk about God. And we cannot talk about God since we cannot talk about our existence. We could do the one only with the other.”¹⁶⁷ It is precisely in this way that Falque’s dictum that “the more we theologize, the better we philosophize”, proves so powerful: since doing existential ontology exists in a constant “there and back again”, moving from the ontic to the ontological and back, from the positive to the transcendental, from the lived experience to the possibility-for-being; “the starting points are all the more *philosophical* when the endpoints are *theological*.”¹⁶⁸

Indeed, for both Falque and Bultmann, *philosophy comes first*: we must speak of man before we can speak of God, for we can only speak of God by speaking of what he does to man (Bultmann) and have no experience of God but that of (the) man (Falque).¹⁶⁹ The reason for this is that the Christian message is meaningless if it is

157 Romano, “Possibility and Event”, 62.

158 Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 191.

159 Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 24.

160 Jones, *Bultmann*, 77.

161 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 407.

162 Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith”, 101; Bultmann, “The Problem of ‘Natural Theology’”, 327.

163 Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 256.

164 Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 100.

165 Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 68.

166 Bultmann, “What Does it Mean to Speak of God?”, 60.

167 Ibid.

168 Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 147-152; Falque, *God, the Flesh, and the Other*, 13-42.

169 Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 122-128; Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, 15-16; Falque, “Phénoménologie et

unable to address itself to *man as such* in his “life-relation.”¹⁷⁰ It should therefore “find a *common grammar* with our contemporaries whose first language is the language of the human per se—finitude or humanity without God—yet accept receiving the metamorphosis of God.”¹⁷¹ Like Bultmann’s project of demythologisation, this results first of all from a *cultural* urgency for Falque: “the issue at stake in philosophy, but also in the theology of today, is to envisage the meaning, *including the cultural one*”, of the kerygma, for it forms “the condition for God himself to continue to address himself to man”,¹⁷² since only through existential analysis is it possible “to *liberate theology by means of philosophy* in order to give dogma its double consistence, human according to the existential dimension of philosophy and transformed by God according to the theological dimension of the Resurrection.”¹⁷³ As such, “theology renews itself by means of philosophy” (Falque), in that it becomes able to articulate itself in the world, in what is always a “*new conceptuality*”¹⁷⁴ (Bultmann); however, “theology is never content to use philosophy, but to transform it through and through.”¹⁷⁵ Indeed, as Bultmann shows, even though the analysis of the natural man comes first (philosophy), existential ontology gains its true coherence *retrospectively*, after it has been transformed by kerygmatic event as a transcendental *a posteriori* (theology): “The pedestal common to humanity awaits its philosophical foundation in order to be ‘metamorphosed’ theologically.”¹⁷⁶

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théologie”, 201-210; Bultmann, “What Does it Mean to Speak of God?”; Bultmann, “The Problem of ‘Natural Theology’”.

¹⁷⁰ See Bultmann, “Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?”.

¹⁷¹ Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 133. See also: Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology”; Falque, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, §8 (‘A Matter of Culture’), 43-45.

¹⁷² Falque, “Spread Body and Exposed Body”.

¹⁷³ Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 133.

¹⁷⁴ Bultmann, “Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?”, 296.

¹⁷⁵ Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 125. Macquarrie, in his “Philosophy and Theology in Bultmann’s Thought”, has summarised this same idea eloquently in relation to Bultmann: “Theology cannot be absorbed into philosophy because it knows and proclaims what God has done about that human situation which philosophy can only analyze” (131).

¹⁷⁶ Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 20 (translation modified).

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