Ryan Coyne, *Heidegger's Confessions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Ryan Coyne's monograph on Heidegger and Augustine is clever in both the acclamatory and the critical sense of that word. The book is intelligent and subtle. It is informed by an assured familiarity with Heidegger's writings of the 1920's and beyond, and it raises hard questions about the internal consistency of the de-theologized concepts central to Heidegger's analysis of human existence. At the same time, the complexity of its arguments, particularly in their attempt to play Heidegger off against himself, sometimes seems contrived rather than illuminating, and the author should have exposed himself more fully to the counter-criticisms and counter-narratives that others have offered to pugnacious theological critiques like his own.

The book rehearses the claim that key concepts employed to frame human existence in *Being and Time* – especially fallenness, conscience and care – are abstracted with only partial success from Christian tradition. Coyne's distinctive contribution is to anchor this process of theological retrieval and de-theologization in Heidegger's engagement, specifically, with the work of Augustine, on whom the philosopher lectured in 1921, and to whom he returned briefly in 1930. The first chapter seeks to uncover the groundwork for Heidegger's reading of Augustine in his lectures, a semester earlier, on Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians, which elaborate a view of human existence as always internally divided and 'guilty'.

Chapter Two sets Heidegger's lectures on Augustine in the context of his contemporaneous critique of Descartes, and presents Heidegger's Augustine as pressing, against the confidence of the Cartesian *cogito*, an interrogative form of self-consciousness, in which the *cogito* is always out of reach and the human being remains a question to itself.

Chapter Three offers an interpretation of the de-theologization of Augustine's terminology in Heidegger's thought of the mid-1920's through attention to the philosopher's developing account of Aristotle. Coyne's argument here is that Heidegger's increasing commitment to Aristotelian *phronesis* rather than *nous* as the basic philosophical form of thought both echoes and conflicts with his commitment to Augustinian self-interrogation: On the one hand, for both, philosophical thought is concerned inescapably with the being of the thinker, rather than seeking an objective, detached state of contemplation of abstract realities. On the other, Heidegger's Aristotle regards the human being and his or her existence as a legitimate end in itself, while his Augustine does not. Coyne regards this irresolvable conflict between Heidegger's basic commitments to Augustine and Aristotle (of which Heidegger, Coyne thinks, must have been insufficiently aware) as a rift that runs through and threatens to unsettle the philosopher's entire analysis of human life.

Chapter Four ascribes the alleged failure of *Being and Time* to achieve an interpretation of the meaning of Being via an interrogation of human being (*Dasein*) to this conflict.

Chapters Five and Six turn to Heidegger's work of the 1930's and 1940's, which constitutes a comprehensive critique of metaphysics, pursued partly by way of critiquing or recasting Heidegger's own earlier work. Coyne argues with reference to a private lecture and a reading seminar on *Confessions* XI in 1930/31 that Heidegger's 1930's 'turn' to a direct consideration of Being once again relies on Augustinian ideas, marshalled partly against his own earlier modes of de-theologizing Paul and Augustine. The substantial aim of Coyne's deconstruction of Heidegger's theological debts is to re-open the possibility of a Heideggerian philosophy of religion, pursued but then abandoned by Heidegger in the early 1920's. The strength of such a philosophy would be its attentive elucidation of the vitality and depth of

religious experience, without reducing that experience to concepts alien to it – alien either because they are overly prescriptive and analytic or because they reduce its religious dimension.

Though Coyne does not address analytic philosophy, a project like this is, of course, an implicit critique of analytic philosophy of religion as well as of Heidegger's rejection of Christianity. It would have been useful to set Heidegger's Paul and Augustine lectures in the context of the philosopher's original case, developed in the 1910's, for a philosophy of religion using the phenomenological method. Heidegger developed this phenomenology of religion in explicit response to the neo-Scholastic Christian philosophy of his day, which, in its concept-driven, systematizing philosophical idiom resembled contemporary analytic philosophy of religion. Heidegger pressed the case that the normative systematicity of a *philosophia perennis* distorted the experiences that animated and defined religious faith, and so undercut its life. He turned to Husserlian phenomenology as a method capable, instead, of articulating and so making fruitful the basic religious feeling of anguished but also joyful finitude in the face of an infinite God.

Quite beyond the question of potential contemporary parallels, closer attention to the unfolding of Heidegger's phenomenology of religion in the 1910's would have set Heidegger's lecture series on Paul in 1920/21 in a fuller context, and rendered unnecessary some speculative and, I think, ultimately wrong interpretations of that text which dog Coyne throughout the book. Coyne's reading relies on the claim of a central but 'tacit' engagement with the concept of the *katechon*, which does not surface explicitly in Heidegger's discussion but is, Coyne argues, nevertheless central to it. In Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle makes mysterious reference to a *katechon*, an otherwise unnamed figure or energy that, Paul claims, is now forestalling the coming of the Antichrist, which must in turn precede the *parousia*, the second coming of Christ. In hindering the tyranny of the reign of Antichrist, this *katechon* is a positive figure for Paul – as, indeed, it is in the 1930's for Carl Schmitt's, in whose political philosophy the *katechon* is a placeholder for whatever allows history to go on.

Coyne argues (without obvious textual support) that for Heidegger, Paul's intended *katechon* is Paul's own spirituality, which is keeping antichristian forces at bay. This resistance, however, cannot be a wholly positive thing for Paul, since the *parousia* which he so eagerly awaits depends on the prior coming of the Antichrist. Heidegger's Paul's hope for Christ's coming, Coyne therefore argues, is tightly interwoven with a sense of guilt: by the success of his mission as apostle, Paul understands himself to be delaying the *parousia* for which he hopes, and therefore to be incurring guilt even as he counsels hope. Coyne infers from this that Heidegger's signature interpretation, in *Being and Time*, of guilt as something to be embraced rather than overcome, is a fruit of his reading of Christian texts, rather than a mark of his emancipation from them. This allows him to conclude to a significantly greater reliance on his Christian sources than Heidegger would like to admit.

This is ingenious, but right as a reading of neither Paul nor Heidegger on Paul. Heidegger mentions the term *katechon* only once in his Paul lectures, and then only because of Paul's immediately following reference to lawlessness already being at work (GA 60, 114; see 2 Thess 2.6-7). The point of the passage, for Heidegger, is not the nature or identity of the *katechon*, but Paul's repudiation of the common interpretation of the Antichrist as an enemy yet to come. Heidegger's point is that the Antichrist is not a future enemy (whose prevention might delay the parousia), but a persistent condition of the world, contrasting with the experience of time as affliction which marks authentic eschatological faith. The Antichrist or his followers here are

anticipations of Heidegger's later 'crowd' (*das Man*), marked by 'intense busy-ness' and 'deception' (GA 60, 114).

Rather than in an eccentric focus on the *katechon*, the key to Heidegger's Paul interpretation is to be found in his religious phenomenology of the late 1910's, which effects a gradual transposition of Luther's emphasis on God's self-revelation in Christ's cross onto the afflicted human believer who, like Hölderlin's mortal hero, knows himself only in his difference from the divine.

As with Heidegger's ambiguous concept of guilt, Coyne telescopes the origin of the philosopher's understanding of life as an unanswerable question into a single text, this time Heidegger's lectures on Augustine's *Confessions*. Coyne's juxtaposition of this work with Heidegger's contemporaneous account of Aristotle is incisive and illuminating. However, once again his tight focus on Augustine occludes other intellectual developments that are crucial to the 'de-theologization' he tries to describe. Paying attention to Heidegger's Luther-interpretation in the mid-1920's, for example, would reveal that Heidegger was not at all unaware of the conflict between his commitments to Aristotle and Augustine's description of life, but conscious in his re-framing. He effected this re-framing through a detailed engagement with Luther's description of sinfulness as a *cursus ad mortem*, which Heidegger lifted from its grounding definition of death as a punishment for sin. Accepting death as natural rather than imposed, the philosopher could redefine the human being's orientation towards his or her own death as unifying rather than self-alienating.

These fuller accounts would complicate Coyne's bold claims of a Heidegger inadvertently divided against himself, though they might not ultimately invalidate them. They would also clarify the stakes and criteria of a new, constructive philosophy of religion such as Coyne hopes to pursue. In Rudolf Bultmann, Edith Stein, Karl Rahner, and a number of later philosophers and theologians who have all engaged with Heidegger's modes of de-theologization, Coyne has more potential conversation partners here than he makes use of.

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