



10. At Cross-Purposes: Religion, Ideology, Theology

The tension between religion and ideology is productive, and not just for theology, but for existence in general. According to our rudimentary Heideggerian critical theory, it is not necessary that the tension be made explicit for the results of its productivity to emerge into being as *being human*. Even though human existence appears able to find ways to integrate the tension between religion and ideology that do not depend upon a theoretically explicated mechanism, these integrations frequently have been scenes of clumsy and profligate attempts to "live an exemplary life" or "set the world aright," attempts that historically have often been accompanied by extremes of violence, as personal or social absolutisms have striven to extinguish all trace of deviance from their own imagined ideals. Every attempt to come to terms with existence entails a theoretical grasp of reality, whether the theory is an explicit one or not; the great advantage in having an explicit theory is that formerly inchoate compulsions are brought into some kind of light. Thus begins the dialectic of enlightenment, a technological development.

History is replete with fictional dilemmas that have been posed by projections of a need to choose between imagined dichotomous possibilities within a single ideology or between "religion" and "the world." The theory under development has tried for a number of reasons to make explicit an ontological basis of these kinds of tensions; in addition to the obvious (but remote) possibility of reducing pain and suffering by demystifying and thus de-energizing the agents of totalization, the most important reasons for trying to explicate the ontology of religion and ideology are to contribute to the hermeneutics of public discourse and to contribute to an ethics which begins its analysis with the non-substantialistic thinking of the Being of human beings.

To do this, we tried first to break free of the impulse to define religion and ideology clearly in advance, in order to see how an informal understanding might work itself to clarity in conversation with the fairly formal ontology of Heidegger's existential analytic. In this respect, the discussion departed from its technological program, but only in order to return to it more fully at a later time. The departure was occasioned by a need to develop understandings of religion and ideology that are techno logically viable, that is, which have the appearance of independent motivation. This we did by researching

Being and Time. Even though the formal ontology of *Being and Time* was incomplete and incapable of communicating very much about Being itself, it at least raised the question of Being at the scene of beings and encouraged the attempt to imagine religion and ideology critically-theoretically as classes of ontical possibilities with an ontological basis.

Religion and ideology also did not need to be defined in advance because in an important sense they had come into the discussion already defined by their historical Being and presence-at-hand. Presence-at-hand was seen to be a property of tools in *Being and Time* and, in a step beyond that text, tools were defined to include symbol systems, including religions and ideologies. With the hindsight granted by the analysis of technology, it became evident how symbol systems as tools can become mechanisms for the technological manipulation of understanding. We have not renounced this possibility, since it seems to be part of the task of the university in society to realize this possibility of consciousness and, with some measure of hermeneutical maturity, *to be conscious of doing so*.

The presence-at-hand of religion and ideology in general was established by the fact of so much discussion. Through the analysis of *Being and Time*, it was defined that things become present-at-hand when they pose a problem or present some kind of challenge; after working through the problem of religion's presence-at-hand with reference to *Being and Time's* concept of falling, our conclusion was that the presence-at-hand of religion and ideology does not appear to be beneficially construed as a sign of malaise. On the contrary, by opening up understanding to technological development, the presence-at-hand of religion and ideology creates new possibilities of consciousness that supersede and transcend the old. This is not an expression of naive modernism. To gain perspective on the current presence-at-hand of religion and ideology and to provide something of a frame of reference for the critical theory, a reading of the history of religion's presence-at-hand was proposed which culminated in Heidegger's effective re-introduction to Western philosophy of the possibility of religious human beings who were not simply fearful primitives or calculating opportunists.

The presence-at-hand of religion and ideology was still being viewed primarily as an ontical phenomenon until the notion of falling was formally introduced as that aspect of the Being of Dasein which produced involvement with the presence of the Present. Fall