3

Theology in a New Style

Having discussed the trajectory of Macquarrie's theology, we can now examine the formative factors for his "new beginning" in philosophical theology, his new style natural theology. By speaking of a new style Macquarrie is concerned with method, with laying the philosophical presuppositions required for the possibility of theology. Our discussion in this chapter will signal ideas and themes elaborated on in Part Two.

Macquarrie discusses six formative factors for theology,[1] "experience," "revelation," "scripture," "tradition," "culture," and "reason." These factors are heuristic principles that also display the tension that theology must maintain as explication of faith in the world. That is, theology is busy with how to witness and make relevant the *kerygma* to the contemporary situation. The task of theology, as an intellectual enterprise, is to consider carefully methods of thinking and speaking that best express its content. Therefore, thinking, language, and theology go together, but in theology, which is a word of the Word, language plays a vital role.[2] The content of our speaking and thinking in theology refers to God, who cannot be conceptualized, who escapes all our categories of thinking, and who, as the Infinite, transcends our finitude. Because of this, theology is held in question.

To hold theology in question is not merely a matter of identifying its subject matter, as may be illustrated by the common appearance of

1. Macquarrie, *Principles*, 4–18.
2. Macquarrie's philosophy of language will be a main focus in chapter 8.

prolegomena under the heading "What is Theology?"[3] For as we have seen in a previous chapter, theology appears impossible, for how does one think and speak about what cannot be grasped? However, Macquarrie is not deceived by such appearances. His constructive and positive approach also takes very seriously the reality of paradox and ambiguity, yet he is not willing to settle for a theology of the "impossible."[4] He is not advocating a faith in spite of reason, a leap of faith against all appearances. He wants to show the possibility of theology through a re-evaluation of our thinking and speaking about God. In some ways, this will mean a returning to traditional ideas, such as *analogia entis*,[5] performing a repetition to bring new insights to a received but controversial idea. And, it will include reconsidering "reason" and "revelation" in a dialectic unity,[6] a return to a pre-modern alliance of reason and revelation or a rejoinder to a postmodern approach. Macquarrie wants to take this apparent impossibility of theology as a speaking and thinking of God and show not only its possibility but also its reality. The appropriate method will, Macquarrie insists, allow us "to see the possibility of theology as a meaningful and important area of discourse." But he does not want to be accused of "showing that theology is a possible study of the possible," rather he wants to show "that theology is possible as a study of the most concrete reality."[7] In following this approach, he wants to avoid getting lost in abstractions; therefore Macquarrie is not limiting the area of study of theology, but expanding our awareness of the mystery and awesome nature of our *experience* of reality. His hope is to step beyond the limits of a secularized view of nature and humanity, and into a "sacramental universe."[8] He wants to show that the phenomena of experience are saturated with the Presence of Being. And although he will not say this is a "pure" presence, he refuses to allow the calculative thinking of scientific

3. We will have occasion to discuss further the meaning of the word "theology" below, when we discuss Macquarrie's view of theology. It is interesting to note that the development of prolegomena accompanies the acceptance of the "pagan" word "theology." From its outset theology has been held in question. "What is its subject matter?" "How is theology possible?" "How is talk of God possible?"

4. In this context the "impossible" is a form of radical fideism.

5. We return to this in chapter 5.

6. We return to this in chapter 7.

7 Macquarrie, *Studies in Christian Existentialism*, 10, 12.

8. Macquarrie *A Guide to the Sacraments*, chapter 1.

empirical-rationalism to limit the arena of thinking and speaking or to allow a mystical-fideism to hinder the way to clarity.

Macquarrie's discussion of the factors that give form to theology begins with *experience* and ends with *reason*. These factors are not to be confused with the traditional polarities of empiricism and rationalism: they have a wider reference. However, it will be central to Macquarrie's epistemology to overcome the extremes of traditional empiricism and speculative reason. The theological method[9] he chooses to accomplish this is a variety of phenomenology combined with a "constructive use of reason," which is also "corrective," and is "dialectical in character."[10] Phenomenology is a method of description, and Macquarrie follows it as departure from the traditional use of demonstration and proof in natural theology, which laid too much emphasis on speculative reason and abstraction.[11] Phenomenology as a philosophical method is a *way* of thinking. It attends to the "things themselves," and in this way, it has characteristics that are—so to speak—"docile and receptive," allowing phenomena to be revealed. However, phenomenology requires an active bracketing of presuppositions and attitudes that can prejudice our understanding of the matter we are thinking about and observing and therefore is also rigorous, "strict and disciplined."[12] Macquarrie is clear in his view that there is no knowledge without presuppositions, no theology without assumptions,[13] however, he is convinced that compared to both empiricism and rationalism phenomenology allows things to show themselves, while attempting to avoid doing violence to them by shaping them too much in our own image.[14] Phenomenology allows this, Macquarrie adds, "as far as is possible," that is to say, within the limits of the ambiguity of experience and the constructive use of reason. In this way he follows Husserl who developed phenomenology for the purpose of correcting

9 Macquarrie, *Principles*, 33–39.

10. Ibid., 16, 33, 38. Macquarrie is always careful to distinguish descriptive (i.e., philosophical, phenomenological) theology from interpretive (i.e., symbolic). Dialectic is associated with interpretation, more than description, and Macquarrie's use of the term reason bridges the distinction between descriptive and interpretive theology. The roles Macquarrie gives to the function of reason will be discussed below.

11. Macquarrie, *Principles*, 15–16.

12. Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, 77.

13. Macquarrie, *Principles*, 43.

14. This is a central theme of chapters 5 and 6.

the errors of positivism and rationalism, which attempts to clean up any ambiguity, creating abstractions out of concrete experience.

However, there is always ambiguity in the application of any method, allowing for diverse possibilities. Although softened by the time the second edition of his *Principles* appears,[15] Macquarrie's reliance on existentialism is still present. Existentialism, he tells us elsewhere,[16] "is a style that may lead those who adapt it to very different convictions about the world and man's life in it." Perhaps this is true of any style of philosophizing. Macquarrie's insistence that the world, God, and humanity are "ambiguous" seems to make it inevitable that there will be various convictions. In relation to human existence, Macquarrie writes that, in our "modern times we seem to be far as ever from an agreed understanding of what man is or who we are, and the great conflicting ideologies of our time reflect different understandings of what constitutes a genuinely human existence—the understandings that we find in humanism or Christianity or Marxism or Buddhism or in plain unsophisticated and unthinking hedonism."[17]

God's actions are also ambiguous; this is true whether he is acting through miracle, providence, or revelation.[18] In relation to the "world," the situation is similar. "In the long run, the picture must be acknowledged to be ambiguous, in the sense that no finally conclusive proof in support of his conviction can be offered by the theist, or for that matter, by the atheist who has been calling attention to other elements in the picture."[19] Macquarrie admits that in his new style natural theology his phenomenological method, relying on description, may point in directions not desired for a Christian theology. It may, for example, point toward a Sartrean view of Being as Nothingness:[20]

> In face of these conflicting views, we can only try to follow the phenomenological method, that is to say, to put aside as far as we can presuppositions and interpretations, so that we are confronted with the phenomena of human existence as they show themselves; and when we have tried to expose ourselves

15. Macquarrie, *Theology, Church and Ministry*, chapter 1. See also, Morley, *John Macquarrie's Natural Theology*, chapter 4.

16. Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, 2

17. Macquarrie, *Principles*, 59.

18. Ibid., 250, 273.

19. Ibid., 55.

20. We will return to this in chapter 6.

> honestly to the phenomena, and to describe them as they give themselves, being especially careful not to omit what we may not want to see, then we can turn to the problem of interpretation.[21]

Let us outline what advantages Macquarrie sees in the phenomenological method. When Macquarrie uses the word "phenomena" he seems to use it to mean any experience of any kind whatsoever. However, human beings are experienced differently from other beings-in-the-world. "Men, cats, trees, rocks all *are*; they have being, we come across them in the world. But as far as we know, only man is open to his being, in the sense that he not only is, but is aware *that* he is, and aware too, in some degree, of *what* he is."[22] As human beings we both are interpreted and interpret, we have our existence disclosed to us and we disclose our existence to others.

Macquarrie's theological method is given in three movements: "phenomenology," "interpretation," and "application."[23] Orthodoxy and orthopraxy is possible only when the three harmonize together in an intelligible and coherent way; which is the goal of Macquarrie's new style natural theology. In this way, Macquarrie would offer *a* view that is consistent with experience and is internally coherent in its argument and assumptions. But it is never raised to the level of exclusivity.

Macquarrie tells us phenomenology is description, but it is not interpretation. Therefore, following Husserl, he insists one needs to be rigorous in the sense that we are to bracket our natural inclination to interpret, to assign value and meaning. We are to remove "concealments," "distortions," "and whatever else might prevent us from seeing the phenomenon as it actually gives itself.[24] Macquarrie claims that there are three main advantages to this approach. "The first advantage," he tells us, "is that it begins at the right place, with the phenomena themselves."[25] To be conscious of phenomena, Macquarrie insists, is to be related to phenomena in a world, it is not an inner representation of the phenomena in an objectifying sense. However, even here ambiguity creeps in for we are still dealing with the appearance of phenomena to our consciousness.

21. Macquarrie, *Principles*, 60.

22. Ibid., 60.

23. This threefold methodology is the rationale for the division of the work in three parts: Philosophical theology (phenomenological); Symbolic Theology (Interpretation), and Applied Theology (Application).

24. Macquarrie, *Principles*, 35.

25. Ibid., 35.

Can we have a "pure" apprehension of the phenomena, form without subjective content? Macquarrie struggles with this, on the one hand, he wants a description of the phenomena without the screen of subjectivity, "the object itself," and for that to be possible our consciousness must be emptied of any preconceived notions. Phenomenology is a non-objectifying science. In his discussion of this, Macquarrie is at pains to say we are to eliminate our presuppositions "as far as possible." "No thinking can be without presuppositions, or entirely uninfluenced by previous thinking." Macquarrie goes on to tell us that interpretation is a necessary part of Christian theology, however, in order to truly think along with the tradition we need to begin with our own convictions, "we should not allow presuppositions or ideas taken over from the history of philosophy or theology to dominate our minds to such an extent that we never really face the phenomena but remain content with some ready-made interpretation."[26] Therefore, "we can decide about this only if, so far as possible, we let ourselves be confronted by the phenomena. So we look at the phenomena as they show themselves, trying as far as possible to see and describe them as they are, without distorting prejudices."[27]

What is left unsaid is how we rid ourselves of the formative factors of our thinking—tradition and culture—both of which are encompassing and defining influences. So here we are called to bracket the unbracketable. Macquarrie is in a position not dissimilar to Husserl. One major criticism that Heidegger launched against his former teacher was precisely that we cannot bracket these influences on our thinking. Heidegger's phenomenology was developed along hermeneutic lines to embrace the unavoidable presence of tradition and culture, and Macquarrie is often walking a fine line between these two giants of phenomenology.

Yet, we understand what Macquarrie is after. He is willing to acknowledge ambiguity in our awareness of God, man, and world, but he is attempting to find a way out of the conflicting views of these phenomena that especially avoids the old style epistemology of subject-object reduction—"the world as picture" as Heidegger called it. He offers interpretation as a separate movement in his methodology because he wants to make it clear that we need to personally work through experience as "purely" as is possible. We must, through the disclosure of the "things themselves," come to our own understanding of the phenomena. It is

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

evident from his own statements, that Macquarrie sows the seed of doubt about whether this is possible: description *without* interpretation is not possible, however desired it may be. In this regard he is not really dissimilar to Derrida who was critical of any "pure phenomenal presence." We are always already in a world of temporality and interpretation. There can be no "pure presence," we are confronted always with a trace of phenomena passing us by already temporal and becoming.

Macquarrie offers a second advantage, which is not unconnected to the first. However, our criticism may suggest that the second advantage of phenomenology is equally problematic. Phenomenology is conducive to clarity. Description conducted as outlined above will allow a clearer view of what man, sin, God, revelation, history, etc. point to.[28] Here, we get the further contact of phenomenology as a formal indication. That is to say, we are still endeavoring to withhold our presuppositions and prejudices, but are merely indicating, pointing to, phenomena that show themselves as "sin," "God," "revelation," "history," etc. Clarity, in this context, would suggest that our interpretive structures cloud the phenomena. Description allows us "to see what these words mean, or how they refer, or in what context of experience they have their home, so to speak."[29] Macquarrie is speaking metaphorically, of course, when he speaks of *seeing* "history," "sin," and "revelation." But the mere fact that what is in question is whether these phenomena are realities indicates that not everyone who looks is going to *see* phenomena as "sinful" and "fallen," or recognize an event as revelation. Always, judgment is involved. Later we will deal with Macquarrie's comments about the struggle for clarity in language and the lack of clarity in the works of many postmodern writers. However, what distances Macquarrie from postmodernism is that he suggests that interpretation and description can be separate cognitive functions. And although there is difficulty in this, our language should—within limits—be capable of expressing clearly the phenomena as it appears.

So here again when one describes phenomena with theologically laden terms, we are moving within a trajectory of always already in a tradition and are also interpreting phenomena accordingly. Macquarrie is not in favor of deductive approaches to theology. He wants description to take the place, not of logic, of *logos*—ordered thinking that both constructs and deconstructs—but of logical *proof*, of thoroughgoing

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

rationalism and deductive thinking. Especially Kant's discussion of the inconclusiveness of the arguments for the existence of God has impressed Macquarrie. Yet, Macquarrie spans the modern Kantian antinomy and the postmodern *aporia* systemic to philosophical theology, through his dialectic of the *coincidentia oppositorum* which is foundational to his new style philosophical theology.

Kant, as well, made it clear that our view of the world is equally ambiguous, possible of widely differing interpretations. Kant's influence in demonstrating the shortcomings of logical argument in these matters have had enormous impact on theology, and Macquarrie sees in dialectical theism a method to gain back a way to discuss these issues with intellectual integrity. The "ground" phenomenology moves along, Macquarrie claims, is dialectically "more secure."[30] That is, it is not an objective reality but a mediated experience, a differentiated historical-temporal manifestation of phenomena. Yet, this security is part of the ambiguity of the structure of being that is revealed through temporality, or, in a postmodern mood through the trace and interpretation of situation. Yet, it is more secure because it does not require the abstraction of logical argumentation for its legitimacy. Instead one merely has to look and see the phenomena as presented. But there is danger lurking here, and Macquarrie repeats his previous caution. "No doubt description too is fallible, and as we have already seen, it can be distorted by uncritically accepted presuppositions. But phenomenological description (the expression is almost pleonastic) at least aims at a degree of care and precision which would seem to lay a firm foundation for any study."[31]

Has Macquarrie really offered us a more reliable method? He has said we should avoid distorting our description of phenomena with presuppositions, but we have no way of guaranteeing this, we can only attempt "as much as possible." But, what *is* possible here? If we go back to the factors that Macquarrie says are formative for theology, and therefore formative for *theological thinking*, will we find that the possibility for theology overcomes the ambiguity of experience, or has he already entered into a postmodern hermeneutic of "nothing outside the text'?

Phenomenology puts all of us on "common" ground by merely indicating the phenomenon. One is pointing and saying "there" and "here" are places that we need to concentrate for contextualizing ourselves, the

30. Ibid., 37.

31. Ibid., 36.

meaning of existence. Each person can look and ask what can "this" mean, what can "that" mean, what are the possibilities for the phenomena? But, always there is ambiguity with possibility. Phenomenology is supposed to allow for clarity *in light* of ambiguity. In fact, we might say, that in "showing" the phenomena, we are lighting-up ambiguity—the plurality and manifold possibilities of meaning in phenomena itself. Macquarrie's view suggests that when we venture an authentic openness to meaning in our experience, openness to revelation and therefore to truth (*alétheia*), we are confronted not with fixity, but a fluidity of possibility. Through human being, meaning enters into the world, but it does so partially, in bits and pieces requiring all the formative factors of theology to patch it together.

Our experience is formed through a variety of ways, as Macquarrie's discussion of the formative factors suggests. Through *revelation*, I am faced with that which is other than myself. Through *scripture*, I participate in the original record of revelation and share in the "memory" of a community. Through the *tradition* of the Church, I learn the meaning of revelation and the possible interpretations and applications of scripture. Through *culture*, all these factors come up against other possibilities of meaning, through which I am shaped and called to participate publically in the renewal and re-creation of culture. Through all of these in various ways, there is formation of how meaning can be disclosed. Because it can be disclosed only through the world, it needs these cultural, traditional, historical forms to do so. How then can description not be shaped and formed by interpretive structures?

All the formative factors are dynamic, there is no *arché* experience since we are always already within them, thrown into the world, as Heidegger likes to remind us. They inescapably structure our view of the world. An authentic description and interpretation of phenomena will bring us into confrontation with the radical contingency of existence; there is no *ahistorical* or *atemporal* necessary phenomena. For Macquarrie, this means not a new piece of knowledge added to what we already hold true, but it is a "seeing deeper," beyond the appearances a realization of the finitude of existence: it signals transcendence, pointing beyond what appears. This seeing deeper is a conversion type of experience. It requires us to convert our old way of seeing to something new because although always embedded in our world we can see "below," "beyond," or "behind" what it is that we have previously experienced, as this is also an inherent reality of human transcendence.

This contingency is not merely epistemic. For Macquarrie cognition carries with it affective states. Like Schleiermacher, Macquarrie does not detach "feeling" from "thinking" as a cognitive activity. As mentioned in a previous chapter, through our awareness of radical contingency we experience *Angst*; which is a heuristic principal in Macquarrie. We become aware of the possibility of nothingness, shocking us to move forward on a quest. Macquarrie's view of faith does not allow us to merely add God into our view of the world as an additional piece of a puzzle, even if it becomes the dominant heuristic piece, replacing Nothingness with Being. Faith is a way of existence. It requires a renewed epistemological orientation. It allows us to see differently and otherwise, we are not privy to new information, to secrets, but to depth of awareness and atonement. Seeing in-depth will expose the foundations upon which my view of the world is grounded. Such an experience can begin, as Macquarrie tells us, because of *Angst*, Kierkegaardian-Heideggerian Dread. But, it needs also a Kierkegaardian-Heideggerian "Repetition," an idea Macquarrie appropriates as "existential thinking."[32] Seeing in-depth requires a reformation of my view, a conversion, sustained through a repetition.

Such experience is dizzying, Macquarrie acknowledges, and carries with it ambiguity and therefore the possibility that phenomena may lead *not* to an experience of grace, but to an experience of Nothing. Leaning on the words of Kierkegaard to illustrate this state of affairs Macquarrie offers: "One may liken dread to dizziness. He whose eye chances to look down into the yawning abyss becomes dizzy . . . Thus dread is the dizziness of freedom, which occurs when freedom gazes down into its own possibility."[33] Yet, ambiguity is evident only through the interpretation of what is indicated, what is described. Once we have named it "Grace" or "Nothing" it has been interpreted and given meaning. Through our freedom to name our experience we take responsibility for any valuation attached to these experiences.

Macquarrie's philosophical theology requires one to have a predisposition toward Being as graceful, of the possibility of seeing the trace of God in the individual beings. Macquarrie says this possibility is *apriori*, we have built in us a quest for wholeness, not nihilation and oblivion. Such a quest would privilege a view of Being and not Nothing, of grace and not dread. Macquarrie says that eventually everyone will have an

32. This will be discussed in more detail below.

33. Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, 66.

experience of dread, a dark night of the soul; it is, in this way, inevitable: inevitable, but not invincible.

This means that for people who do not have an experience of grace, (Sartre for example) the universe remains unintelligible for only through the grace of Being does the universe have intelligibility, where the ambiguity gets resolved through faith into meaning. In *Principles* Macquarrie offers the following:[34]

> To adapt the words of St. Augustine, human existence makes sense if being grants what it commands, that is to say, if there are resources beyond our human resources to help us fulfill the claims that our very existence lays upon us . . . It has already been said however that human existence considered in isolation does not make sense and that the most acute atheistic philosophers are consciously philosophers of despair . . . Even the philosopher who preaches despair does not usually shoot himself but finds some limited areas of "engagement," as he may call it . . . The man of faith, for his part, is not to be thought of as complacently anchored by his faith, for any faith worthy of the name will be subject to testing, and will not be a permanent possession but an attitude that has to be continually renewed . . . Neither the man of faith nor the man of unfaith (if we may use the expression) has certitude . . . But while we cannot know with certitude the answers to the enigma of human existence, we cannot help coming to some decision about how we are going to understand ourselves, for the very fact that we have to exist, to adopt policies of action, to pursue goals, and to choose standards of value means that implicitly we have already chosen to understand ourselves in one way or another.

Macquarrie's method shows that by pointing to the phenomena we are confronted with ambiguity, the phenomena in itself are undecidable—we need to wrestle the truth out through interpretation—this implies violence.[35] This violence is not a "wrenching or distorting,"[36] but a stretching of language, a "driving of words and constructions beyond their everyday usages so they become creative and illuminating . . . thereby achieving that kind of unconcealment which is the coming to be of truth (*alétheia*)."[37] Violence, therefore, involves going beyond the

34. Macquarrie, *Principles*, 80, 81.
35. Macquarrie, *God Talk*, 147ff. Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, 99.
36. Macquarrie, *God Talk*, 160.
37. Ibid.

familiar and routine opening new levels of meaning. Macquarrie emphasizes the ambiguity of phenomena and the fact that language always has a meaning *more than* we are capable of expressing, "human language labors altogether under great poverty of speech" causing us "to turn to that stretching of language . . ."[38] in order to express transcendence.

This moves us to wonder about the danger of subjectivism, which is what the phenomenological method was to guard against. In any interpretation we must have a pre-understanding, a frame of reference, "we do not come with a mind that is a *tabula rasa*. We come to any text or any phenomenon with some idea of what it is about and where it belongs in a 'world.'"[39] There is circularity, to which we add something new, a new understanding that widens and deepens our initial beginning point. It is circular, from the known to the unknown and back to the known,[40] but it is not because of this "subjective." Instead, it is a reciprocal relationship between phenomena and experience. This points to not only the circular nature of interpretation but to its repetitive character where one takes up something new and experiences it in relation to what has been known and recognizes possibilities that are original: this is the dialectical character of hermeneutics.

Phenomenology first "lets us see," and only after does it apply interpretation. This, of course, is the ideal, and as mentioned Macquarrie realizes that presuppositions and prejudice are stubborn characteristics of our thinking and experience.[41] However, the stress is "as far as possible" to allow us to see the phenomena, and this is meant to move theology out of the realm of the "possibility of the possible" (a shadow of idealism) and into theology as the "possible study of the most concrete reality." Therefore, pure speculation is to be avoided. Speculative reason becomes abstraction, theory detached from the lived situation. *Theoria*, which too often takes the form of conceptual violence applied to the phenomena, is very much tied to the metaphysical tradition Macquarrie wants to move beyond. Yet, he is also not interested in privileging *poiesis*[42] in opposition

38. Macquarrie, *Principles*, 193.

39. Macquarrie, *God Talk*, 149.

40. Macquarrie, *Principles*, 36ff.

41. This is evidenced by the central role of tradition and culture as formative factors of theology as inescapable presence in any knowing.

42. In relation to theology the distinction between *theoria* and *poesis* is grounded in the perennial question of the relationship between philosophy and theology (faith). Post-Heideggerians adopting Heidegger's onto-theological criticism of philosophy and

to *theoria* as Heidegger did later in his life, and many postmodern Christians are doing in his wake. Said differently, he has no desire to privilege *passion* over *intellect*. Macquarrie thinks such trends are a result of the abandonment of the philosophical *logos* in theological thought.[43] He is not interested in abandoning theoretical thought, however, it needs to be located within *praxis*: there can be no abstract theory replacing a living theology.

The later Heidegger turned to poetry to express thinking. Poetry for Heidegger became the "particular form of language which in a signal way lights up Being."[44] Heidegger's turn to *poiesis* is a response to the forgetfulness of Being, and many postmodern theologians confine themselves to this way of thinking, working within the space provided by Heidegger. Macquarrie, however much he relies on Heidegger, does not limit himself in this way. John Milbank has written a defense of this move toward *poiesis*. He says, "poiesis may be the key to . . . a postmodern theology. Poiesis . . . is an integral aspect of Christian practice and redemption. Its work is the ceaseless re-narrating and "explaining" of human history under the sign of the cross."[45]

Although Macquarrie would agree that *theoria* needs to be located in practice (he is always a liturgical thinker), theology as a "step back" is nevertheless capable of some distance and objectivity, whereas *poiesis* does not allow for theoretical distance.[46] The method of phenomenology, Macquarrie insists, requires this distance. But, it also allows for a systematic approach to theology. In many ways, Macquarrie's view of theology

theology, want to separate philosophy from theology. Macquarrie is critical of this, and stands out from the present generation of theologians working in Heidegger's shadow. Although Macquarrie joins postmodern theologians in opposing an Enlightenment form of reason that attempts to give a totalizing picture of everything, he is not opposed to theory at all costs. As we shall see, the role he gives to imagination and constructive reason will move him in the general direction of building systems of thought.

43. However, one thing we need to consider is whether Macquarrie's constructive reason is not merely a species of this tradition where *theoria* dominates, where Idea dominates over Word.

44 Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, 89.

45. Quoted in Hankey, see above page 28, note 62.

46. In Macquarrie, *Theology, Church and Ministry*, Macquarrie criticizes "the notion of a detached or value-free study of religion and theology," he claims "that some minimal sympathy must be present" (13). Theology as a "second order language" cannot be detached, however it does have a "distance" from faith (12). This is Macquarrie's view of theology "stepping back," as it were, looking at faith with distance but not detachment.

is similar to Milbank's "re-narrating and explaining of human history under the cross." However, the fact that postmodern theology does not permit the "step-back" and instead connects phenomenology with faith, means theology and faith cannot be distinguished in a coherent way and the re-narrating and historical look become too interweaved with subjectivism as opposed to a primal revelation and living tradition.

These are subtle differences, but they are significant in our situating Macquarrie in the space between modernism and postmodernism. In his phenomenological method, Macquarrie says he follows the initiative of Husserl, who could be considered to be the "father" of phenomenology and perhaps there is a connection between Husserl's view of phenomenology as a communal activity and Macquarrie's emphasis on community as the authority for theology. The fact that Husserl believed his method was a breakthrough allowing for the "realization of the *idea* that governed philosophy from its inception"[47] is not far from Macquarrie's own view that his new style natural theology would overcome the forgetfulness of God.[48] However, it is more accurate to say that he is following the early Heidegger. The distinction is important because Heidegger's move away from Husserl was considered by him to be a "new beginning" in phenomenology, and it begins precisely where Husserl was not initially interested in going. It is the *epochē* that is the point of departure of Heidegger's "new beginning." As Merleau-Ponty has commented, "the whole of *Sein und Zeit* springs from an indication given by Husserl and amounts to no more than an explicit account of the "naturlicher Weltbegriff" or the "Lebenswelt" which Husserl, towards the end of his life, identified as the central theme of phenomenology."[49]

But, we need to dig deeper. Heidegger's "new beginning" in phenomenology has been shown to rely quite heavily on Christian sources; not only the New Testament, but the writings of many diverse thinkers in the Christian tradition such as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Pascal, Kierkegaard, and others.[50] His method of textual exegesis is said to have been inspired by Karl Barth.[51] In his early work, Heidegger was referred to by Husserl as a Christian theologian and Heidegger always acknowledged

47 Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, 2.

48. Macquarrie, *Principles*, 116.

49. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, vii–viii.

50. Van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*; Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's* Being and Time; Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*.

51 Steiner, *Martin Heidegger*, 73.

this as his beginning.[52] Without this Christian theological beginning, he claims, his philosophy in *Being and Time* would never have come about. Other connections can be made to Heidegger's involvement with Christian sources in his later philosophy and we will have reason to mention these in relation to Macquarrie's views on language and thinking.

The significance of these comments in the context of Macquarrie's phenomenological method is that it has been claimed that the reason theologians find such an affinity with Heidegger's philosophy is that they are, as it were, "looking in the mirror."[53] Macquarrie himself makes a reference to the biblical beginnings of Heidegger's existentialism.[54] Macquarrie's own attempt at a "new beginning" in theology, mirrors Heidegger's "new beginning in philosophy" in many ways. But there are differences. Macquarrie appropriates Heidegger with the purpose that theology has to be intelligible to other ways of thinking. This is to say, the apologetic value of theology is that it can speak to other intellectual disciplines, contributing and sharing in a goal of the unity of knowledge.[55] For Heidegger, none of these disciplines can be said to "think" at all. Macquarrie sees theology not only as rigorous thinking but in sharing in the goal of the unity of knowledge. This goal, however unrealizable or deferred, should always direct our thinking and its expression in language. In this, he expects more from his method than Heidegger was concerned with. It is interesting to note that Macquarrie, who is attempting a re-expression of the Christian faith in a way more relevant to both Christian and secular thinkers is involved in a demythologizing of Heidegger,[56] making more

52. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*.

53. Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 23. Also see Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*, 173.

54 Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology*, 240.

55. Macquarrie, *Principles*, 21.

56. I borrow the phrase from John Caputo, whose work *Demythologizing Heidegger*, has as part of its purpose exposing the debt Heidegger owes to Christian theology. There is irony in the title, of course. Bultmann, who borrowed much from Heidegger developed the method of "demythologizing" the New Testament in order to make it more relevant to a modern time. Macquarrie, although critical of Bultmann in many ways, works within the tradition of demythologizing of the Gospel, and is closer to modernity than to postmodernity. Yet, in building his theology on the foundations of both early and later Heidegger, he is at once indicating the affinity between the Gospel and Heideggerian thought. In this way he interprets Heidegger in light of fundamental biblical themes, which are, after all, the root of much of Heidegger's thinking. His implicit acknowledgement of this affinity between Heidegger and Christianity shows Macquarrie's relevance to postmodern theologies that attempt a demythologizing of

explicit the formative Christian content that lies implicit in Heidegger's thought.

Macquarrie does not enter the postmodern debate regarding the deconstruction of Heidegger, laying bare Heidegger's unpaid debt to his sources. He thinks of Heidegger as offering a reconstruction, retrieval, of the description of authentic (Christian) existence. He does this in spite of Heidegger's protests about connecting philosophy with faith. But neither Macquarrie nor those involved in the deconstruction of Heidegger's thinking accept Heidegger's protests.[57] Macquarrie mentions the affinity between Heidegger and Christianity with little commentary, instead reading him as one who "secularized" Christian views of humanity and the world, and therefore, a source useful for a new approach to theology. He does not enter the debate of the deconstruction of Heidegger because Heidegger's approach suits his own program of a needed secular vocabulary, operating as "neutral ground" to build an intelligible apologetic theology for our age. However, we need to notice that Macquarrie's *secular* vocabulary borrowed from Heidegger's *secularization* of Christianity is handled in a manner that in many ways clears up the distortions caused by Heidegger's philosophy of Being, which in its final form became more concerned with a paganism that is hostile to the Gospel.[58]

All this is mentioned not to minimize Macquarrie's originality, but to point out that the concepts and vocabulary he develops in his philosophical theology, which are obscure and difficult, have their origin in a thinking that has its *arché* in Christian sources, but it *telos* in another direction. Macquarrie is attempting to show a way where this end point can remain in and make an apologetic contribution to the Christian tradition while appealing to a secular culture. He is pursuing a *rapprochement* between theology and philosophy. So, whereas Heidegger secularizes Christian concepts only to leave behind Christian thinking, Macquarrie begins with Heidegger's secularization only to end with a "new beginning" for Christian thinking, which may not be so new, but perhaps a repetition, a reappropriation, a recovery, or a retrieval of a way of thinking that is already implied in the Gospel. Therefore, Macquarrie's

Heidegger.

57. Macquarrie is quite critical of Heidegger's onto-theological stance, separating biblical faith from philosophy. He mentions that Heidegger's view does indeed offer a closer connection between faith and philosophy than Heidegger recognises or admits to. See Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, especially chapters 4 and 7.

58. Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, chapter 7.

use of Heidegger's "new phenomenology" as a way of thinking, which attempts to think as much as possible without presuppositions, may be laden with the most significant of values if indeed it is a way of thinking that is structured through an original Christian view of time, history, death, fallenness, conscience, logos, and transcendence, all of which are central concepts to Heidegger.[59] For that reason, Macquarrie's intention of establishing a non-religious secular grounding for theology is suspect. This is all the more puzzling since he both explicitly and implicitly acknowledges the Christian foundations of Heidegger's "atheistic" analytic and yet is determined to consider his phenomenological description as neutral. Indeed, with his protests about the limits of *poiesis* as an approach to theology, Macquarrie will follow a not dissimilar approach with his reliance on Schleiermacher to navigate through the difficult connection between "faith" and "reason," the affective status of a philosophical *logos* for theology.

Macquarrie's use of phenomenology is meant to allow him a new approach (style) to doing theology, laying the philosophical foundations for explicating the Christian faith. I have argued that Macquarrie finds in Heidegger a method and vocabulary for doing theology in a secular world, and that this is primarily because Heidegger's major concepts are a secularization of New Testament themes. Macquarrie's philosophical theology is, in many ways, a creative reinterpretation of Heidegger's philosophy involving a returning of Heidegger's concepts to their original source. And so we find philosophy grounding theology. This is not merely methodological. For the key word for Macquarrie's philosophical position is Being: Being attends all thinking and ontology is pretheological. Therefore the possibility for any theology is dependent upon ontology: and for Macquarrie, a *true* ontology is possible only after the Gospel.[60] This *is* ontotheology, and although our discussion of this will be deferred until later chapters when we elucidate Macquarrie's philosophical theology proper, we must now acknowledge in the context of *situating* Macquarrie's theology that this reliance upon ontology places him at odds with the trends of postmodernism, which generally speaking find any ontotheology to be the destruction of both philosophy and theology:

59. See "Existentialism and the Christian Vocabulary," in Macquarrie, *Studies in Christian Existentialism*, 127–36.

60. In this way, his dialectical approach centering on the incarnation has something similar to Hegel.

and, as we have said, have them thinking within Heidegger's shadow. To the question of postmodernism, we now turn.