Imagination, Religious Practice, and World Transformations: Sophia, Heidegger, and Jacob Bohme's The Way to Christ

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IMAGINATION, RELIGIOUS PRACTICE, AND WORLD TRANSFORMATIONS:
SOPHIA, HEIDEGGER, AND JACOB BÖHME’S THE WAY TO CHRIST

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is offered as a work of original scholarship in the field of Religion and Psychological Studies (RPS). Through its hermeneutic preservation of Jacob Böhme’s *The Way to Christ* in “conversation” with selected works of Martin Heidegger, I retrieve the question of imagination’s relation to religious practice, attending to potentials for world transformations disclosed through this relationship, in order to develop a new hermeneutic option for the RPS field concerning this important question. This new hermeneutic option is developed in such a way as to ensure a subversive compatibility with psychoanalytic hermeneutics—our field’s *koiné*—while opening to certain radical possibilities of interpretation concerning imagination, desire, religious practice, and world transformations.

In the course of the dissertation’s development, issues concerning the western esoteric traditions—Christian theosophy in particular—repentance, guilt, death, new birth, resignation (*Gelassenheit*), contemplation, and a radical encounter with Sophia are brought to the fore for consideration. In addition, this dissertation develops its hermeneutic out of the guiding orientation of a weakening ontology that opens a way for the “return of religion” in postmodern hermeneutic discourse, as articulated by Gianni Vattimo.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS


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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The Question

The question that is the focus of this dissertation concerns the relationship of imagination to religious practice. Specifically, what can be said of the possibility of this relation in a post-metaphysical discourse? With the recent advent of the “return of religion” to such discourse, new avenues of inquiry to advance this question have become possible.¹ This dissertation is intended to explore one such avenue. The hermeneutical wager of this dissertation is that through opening a “conversation” between the twentieth-century German philosopher Martin Heidegger and the seventeenth-century German theosophist Jacob Böhme,² an unexpected dimension of imagination will be disclosed. Further, that this dimension will prove of particular importance for our question of imagination’s relation to religious practice.

Anticipating the end at the beginning, it may be stated that this dissertation will elaborate an understanding of the imagination as fundamentally world-disclosive and

¹ My specific usage of the terms “post-metaphysical” and “return of religion,” which will be clarified shortly, is derived from the work of Gianni Vattimo. His short book Belief provides an excellent introduction, not only to what is being conveyed by these terms, but also to this dissertation as well. See Gianni Vattimo, Belief, trans. Luca D’ Isanto and David Webb, with an introduction by Luca D’ Isanto (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

world-transformative. That is to say, following the “speculations”\(^3\) of Jacob Böhme and the understanding indicated by Martin Heidegger in his work *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*,\(^4\) the imagination will be seen as the “medium” of the opening of world-horizons to human being. This dimension of imagination requires a more ontologically “primordial”\(^5\) articulation than is found in most contemporary discourse on this issue.

The imagination here understood is not the ephemeral “imagining” of a being concerning other beings considered “real” or otherwise. Rather, it concerns the first showing-forth of oneself and other beings as being-in-a-world. Therefore, throughout this dissertation a certain striving for a more primordial articulation will be manifest.

The significance of the development of such an articulation and understanding of the imagination becomes apparent when it is viewed in light of the opening question. Still anticipating the end, it will be demonstrated through this dissertation that religious practice can work to transform imaginally a practitioner’s world-horizon. This claim must be heard as radically as it is intended. With the transformation of the world-horizon, the world transforms. This can include a fundamental transformation of who or what is encountered therein by the practitioner who has undergone such a transformation.

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The intention of this dissertation is to develop and articulate this understanding of imagination through its relation to one specific religious practice. The religious practice through which this dissertation will weave is that articulated by Jacob Böhme in his work *The Way to Christ.* Yet, before engaging this text and its practice, numerous issues must first be attended to as a way of introduction. Beyond situating this dissertation within its proper arena of academic discourse, an elaboration of methodology and critical terms is called for. In addition, as many today are not familiar with Jacob Böhme or his work, a preliminary presentation of Böhme’s life, work, and influence will needs be included.

**Academic Situation**

This dissertation is intended as a work of original scholarship in the field of Religion and Psychological Studies (RPS). My understanding of this field is influenced by Don Browning’s articulation of it as found in his essay, “The Past and Possible Future of Religion and Psychological Studies.” In this essay, Browning identifies RPS as an interdisciplinary and hermeneutic enterprise. For Browning, this enterprise is characterized by a critical and practical interpretation of encounters between traditional “images of the human” and those of the contemporary Human Sciences that escapes the “gotcha” attitude of most contemporary scholarship. This is to say that it does not content itself with merely exposing the secular within the religious, or vice versa. Rather,

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8 Ibid., 177.

9 Ibid., 174, 175.
RPS attempts to unfold a hermeneutic “conversation” between the traditional (generally religious) and the contemporary (generally secular) images of the human which might be applicable as a beneficial ethical possibility within current human problematics. This understanding inspires my dissertation.

Although the above articulation holds true, it must also be acknowledged that it is perhaps less timely than it is dated. Throughout the academy, one can witness this drift towards the hermeneutic. This is a manifestation of our post-metaphysical (or postmodern) condition. Specifically, within the Human Sciences, one can see a deep hermeneutic critique of modern objectification/subjectification, its search for causes, its methods, and its assumptions. The critique of the hegemony of modern metaphysics—the post-metaphysical critique—appears as academically ubiquitous. In addition, we are beginning to witness, across contemporary hermeneutic discourses, a serious and self-critical return of religion as a significant interpretive possibility that can be applied to current problematics. We may well wonder then, how are we to distinguish the discipline of RPS from other hermeneutic endeavors?

I propose, rather undramatically, that the differentiation remain a matter of disciplinary focus. This is to ask, around what or who does the problematic of one’s academic discourse open? For the discipline of Religion and Psychological Studies, the problematic opens around the religious person, however defined. From our discipline’s inception, our concern has been for the understanding and care of the religious person. Our ongoing discourse with pastoral counseling and the psychotherapeutic arts speaks directly to this point. This focus has not altered through post-metaphysical critiques. It has only been problematized. It follows that this dissertation, as a work within the field
of RPS discourse, needs to be understood in light of its concern for the understanding of
the religious person or practitioner.

The question that concerns this dissertation—the question of the relation of
imagination to religious practice—is then one that opens its problematic around the
practitioner. The problematic so opened speaks intimately to certain troubling tendencies
that I identify within the field of RPS, which I hope to address or correct through this
dissertation. For one, RPS discourse over-emphasizes a psychoanalytic perspective for
its methodological support. It must be stressed, at this point, that there are very good
reasons for this. Of preeminent importance is the fact that psychoanalysis has been an
integral component of our discourse since the inception of our field. It is our koiné. And
even as RPS has developed from a modernist enterprise to a post-metaphysical
hermeneutic, so psychoanalysis has transformed with us. This is due, in no small part, to
the influence of Paul Ricoeur through works such as his *Freud and Philosophy.*  
There is no surprise here in that Don Browning has turned to Ricoeur as the means to help
articulate his vision of a viable future for RPS.

The problem as I see it, is not in the fact that a psychoanalytic hermeneutic is
engaged within our field. It is rather, the apparent dearth of other hermeneutical options,
within our field, to be engaged in discourses concerning the imagination, desire, and the
religious person. This problem speaks intimately to the importance of Jacob Böhme and
his theosophical work for this dissertation. The retrieval of Jacob Böhme’s work here is

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10 See Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation,* trans. Denis Savage

11 Browning, “Past and Possible Future,” 171-172.
intended, among other things, to bring forward his theosophical hermeneutic\(^\text{12}\) of imagination and desire in the hope that through its encounter in conversation with the work of Martin Heidegger, a new hermeneutic option will become viable within our field. This necessitates that the hermeneutic of imagination unfolding here be brought into conversation with psychoanalysis, however brief or embedded that conversation may be, in order to disclose appropriately their differentiation.

Another troubling issue I see concerning our field is the relative absence of works treating, in any significant way, the religious person in practice. This is a troubling curiosity in that, from my understanding, the practitioner in practice is a potentially rich arena for RPS, wherefrom we may begin to disclose the who of the religious person. I must emphasize here that the who of the practitioner that I will be attempting to articulate is not merely an abstraction from a religious community of practitioners. Rather, in my understanding, the practitioner is *always* disclosed within a historical world that calls the practitioner to the what of its practices. Yet I contend that in a way at least as significant as one’s general cultural/historical situation or specific confessed doxology, embodied religious practices “gather” the practitioner into the world of community, disclosed through the practice, wherein the who of the practitioner unfolds.

It should be apparent, at this point, that I am attempting through this work to traverse a rather fine line between the particular and the general. That is, I will be attempting to engage a specific religious practice in order to disclose and demonstrate a generalizable relation between imagination and religious practice. I am aware that this

\(^{12}\) Antoine Faivre, in his intelligent and helpful treatment of theosophy, characterizes Böhme’s theosophy as a “visionary hermeneutic applied to biblical texts.” In my characterization, as will be seen in Chapter Three, Böhme’s theosophical hermeneutic is more ontological in scope—dealing as it does with phenomenality. See Faivre, *Theosophy*, 7.
attempt opens me to the charge of being anachronistic—of continuing the discredited modernist project of universalization from within post-metaphysical discourses that have seemingly renounced such universalizing tendencies. As a way of offering up a defense for my attempt, I would like to affirm that there can be a distinction made between self-consciously “weak” generalizations that demonstrate some explanatory power within specific historical arenas of discourse, and the “strong” universalizations of modernism’s excesses.13 Within this dissertation, I am not intending to develop the “final” word on imagination or its relation to religious practice applicable to all. I am rather intending to open and develop a discourse within the field of Religion and Psychological Studies that I believe offers exciting possibilities in relation to our ongoing conversations concerning images of the human.

It must be recalled here that, according to Don Browning, the development of “conversations” centered on the “image of the human” is a primary concern of our field.14 It may be acknowledged then that we do work in generalizing discourses. This “fact” does not constitute a violation of our post-metaphysical hermeneutic enterprise. To become forgetful of our temporal situatedness would constitute such a violation. To forget the traditioned nature of our own discourse would constitute such a violation. In contradistinction, to develop a meaningful narrative interpretation or weak “myth”15 of the religious person in practice is to respond to the historically revealed call of our own

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13 Browning, “Past and Possible Future,” 169-172; and Vattimo, Belief, 43-46.


hermeneutic enterprise. We may also venture the wager that human being is in need of such weak myths at this time.

In line with the practical orientation of RPS, to “care”-fully\textsuperscript{16} respond to living human problematics, this dissertation does also hope to be so responsive. We live in a time when the need for religious persons of differing traditions to understand and respect one another stands perilously revealed. Discourses, among which this dissertation hopes to be numbered, that offer interpretive strategies that respect and help to disclose differences are one of the calls of our time. Yet in generating such a discourse, one must be mindful of not adding fuel to the conflagration of strong positions at war—metaphorically or otherwise. Rather, we must explicitly admit to the weakness and limited appeal of our own positions—even if such admission runs counter to certain academic conventions. To risk a “weak” interpretation is the primary method of this type of discourse. In this spirit, my dissertation stands academically situated. I will now consider more deeply its specific methodology.

Methodology

It has been asserted repeatedly that this dissertation is a hermeneutic work. While this claim does offer a general methodological orientation it does not disclose nearly enough academically. Hermeneutics, whether understood methodologically or philosophically, does not deliver itself up to a unified articulation. There are multiple hermeneutic orientations. Therefore, the hermeneut must make specific her orientation.

\textsuperscript{16} I am alluding to Heidegger’s analytic of \textit{Dasein} as “care” [\textit{Sorge}].
Beginning rather broadly, it can be said that one’s specific orientation is deeply guided by one’s own academic concerns that unfold within the world of one’s discipline. Using Browning as an exemplar, it can be so understood how it is that he turns to the hermeneutic philosophy of Paul Ricoeur to help disclose his vision of RPS. Browning’s concern is to philosophically ground and so unify the varied traditional concerns of our field—specifically in light of our sustaining conversations with “metaphysically” oriented Human Sciences. Ricoeur’s articulation of critical hermeneutics helps Browning achieve this goal.17

My concerns, which initiate the writing of this dissertation, are significantly different. As has already been disclosed, my concerns center on specific problematics I recognize within RPS discourses that I hope to address or correct. To do this, I take my guidance from different hermeneutic orientations. Specifically, I look to Martin Heidegger and Gianni Vattimo for methodological inspiration.

The importance of the hermeneutic philosophy of Gianni Vattimo for my methodological considerations shows itself in how Vattimo’s philosophy helps to legitimize the “return” of religious “myths” as viable interpretive possibilities. He historically justifies this re-legitimation via his explication of how the “destiny”18 of Christianity is unfolding through western discourses, up to and including our own post-metaphysical varieties. According to Vattimo, the ongoing secularizing and hermeneutic trending of western culture over the past, let us say, 400 years, discovers its ownmost

17 Browning, “Past and Possible Future,” 171-172.

18 Vattimo, Beyond Interpretation, 90-94 and 108-109. Vattimo’s usage of the term “destiny” is according to Martin Heidegger’s understanding of Ge-Schick as the event of Being’s opening of our historical and traditioned epochs as “sending” [Schickung]. For Vattimo, this understanding is indispensable for post-metaphysical hermeneutics to escape a vapid relativism.
provenance in the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ understood as *kenosis*. For Vattimo, the “abasement” of the divine through kenotic incarnation initiates the ontological weakening of all strong authoritarian and absolutist constructs, whether religious, socio-political, or philosophical. This includes the weakening of modern “metaphysical” [or scientific] secularism’s cultural hegemony. In the post-metaphysical epoch, according to Vattimo, we attain a secular discourse that is tolerant, pluralistic, and aware of its own weakness as *a sending* of this religious destiny.

Vattimo’s interpretation re-legitimizes religion in three important ways. First, it discloses our discourses—which as “secular” we judge as freed of religious involvement—in truth, as the destiny-laden speaking of a religious “myth” or event. This is a truth from which we cannot extricate ourselves without denying our being as historical. Religious involvement speaks in our contemporary secular traditions even as it does in their heritage. The acknowledgement of religion, then, can be seen as an expression of hermeneutic integrity—rather than a violation of contemporary secular protocols.

Second, through the hermeneutic weakening of all strong positions, Vattimo opens the way for the viability of religious based interpretations in hermeneutic discourses. This possibility is first attained with the postmodern realization that modern demythologization is itself a “myth.” That is to say that the modern secular program of realizing a purely rational or a “fact” based discourse—whether grounded in the certainty

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of an absolute subject or a presumed standard of objectivity—denuded of all
mythological [narrative] elements or overtly “primitive” religious elements, has been so
profoundly problematized concerning its very grounds as to no longer be viable.
According to Vattimo, we arrive at the position, articulated by Nietzsche, where “there
are no facts, only interpretations.”

One must proceed carefully here. The postmodern—that is to say post-
metaphysical—position proposed by Vattimo is not to be understood as a mere
renunciation of modern secularism. Considered in the light of the “return” of religion,
the renunciation of modern secularism is always vulnerable to the regressive violence of
religious fanaticism and fundamentalism. Rather, the postmodern realization of the myth
of demythologization, according to Vattimo, is to be understood primarily in the light of
its appropriation of the historical destiny of Christianity understood as secularism.
Postmodernism is the heir of this destiny. Thus, any return of religious “myth” in
postmodern hermeneutics, must be characterized by a weakened and tolerant discourse.
One’s position is that of offering a myth among myths. Alluding again to Nietzsche,
when we know that we are dreaming [and being dreamed by] the dream that is history,
v violence in any form—including that of a “strongly” proposed position—is to promote a
nightmare for all.

Third, Vattimo understands the event of kenotic incarnation as a making
significant of myths and manifestations of the divine other than those found in

21 Vattimo, *Beyond Interpretation*, 105-106.

Christianity. The Christian event or myth of the abasement of the divine in Christ need not be interpreted, as it often has been, in terms of its strong justification for elevating the truth of Christianity over all other religions, myths, or divine manifestations. Rather, as with Vattimo, it can be interpreted as heralding a historical call to ontological weakening that concurrently affirms the pouring of the divine into “other” embodied or created manifestations. While such an interpretation may not be clearly read in relation to the legitimized canons of Christian scriptures, it can be read in terms of the historical unfolding of Christian destiny understood as secularism and through the secular encounter with the truth of other religions. In that encounter, the truth of other religions stands, even as Christianity stands in its destiny.

This issue of the return of religion in the hermeneutic philosophy of Gianni Vattimo, outlined above, helps me to orient methodologically the intended retrieval of the work of Jacob Böhme within the context of this dissertation. The theosophy of Jacob Böhme has presented various complications throughout the history of its theological and academic engagement. Today, even the word “theosophy” can elicit a reflexive cringe in many academics. There are historical reasons for this reaction. Perhaps the most significant of these reasons is that theosophy and the work of Jacob Böhme specifically have always been surrounded by the suspicion [or judgment] of heresy in the Christian west. In Jacob Böhme’s case, the charge of heresy begins in his hometown of Görlitz and

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the “gag order” imposed on Böhme by that Lutheran town’s pastor, Gregor Richter.24

More will be said of this in the next chapter.

What is relevant here is that this act initiated a struggle for legitimization that continues to this day. In our contemporary context, the theological scholar Cyril O’Regan, has renewed the charge of heresy in relation to the work of Jacob Böhme and all who, knowingly or unknowingly, follow in the wake of his influence. Briefly stated, O’Regan legitimizes his judgment by claiming that Böhme’s work reinstitutes the narrative grammar of the gnostic heretic Valentinus. It is O’Regan’s self-assumed task to eradicate this heresy from our discourses once and for all.25

O’Regan’s charge of heresy touches explicitly the issue here of my methodological orientation. Methodologically speaking, O’Regan’s work proceeds by claiming a core narrative grammar within “legitimate” Christian discourse that he subsequently mobilizes to expose and oppose all alternative narrative grammars. That is certainly one way to go. In contrast, I, following Vattimo, am attempting to heed the “return” of religion as a “sending” of Being within western academic discourse understood as a speaking of the secular destiny of Christianity. It is my hermeneutic wager that the recurrent returns of Böhme into the history of our academic and cultural discourses insistently speaks just such a “sending,” that we have yet to fully appropriate or understand. In our contemporary post-metaphysical discourse, we have, at least, an opportunity to hear Böhme in a new way.


Still speaking methodologically, one way of hearing Böhme anew is in hermeneutic “conversation” with Martin Heidegger. In this conversation, Heidegger will help me to be mindful of attending to the ontological difference, thereby hopefully, to “twist free” of onto-theological metaphysics in my discourse on imagination and religious practice. In addition, Heidegger will provide me with my primary methodological direction.

Methodologically, this dissertation can be characterized as a work of hermeneutic “retrieval.” Concerning retrieval, Heidegger states:

By the retrieval of a basic problem, we understand the opening-up of its original, long-concealed possibilities, through the working-out of which it is transformed. In this way it first comes to be preserved in its capacity as a problem. To preserve a problem, however, means to free and keep watch over those inner forces which make it possible, on the basis of its essence, as a problem. Retrieval of the possible does not mean the taking-up of what is “customary,” “grounded overviews [of which] exist” from which “something can be done.” The possible in this sense is always just the all-too-real which everyone manages to manipulate in its prevailing mode of operation. The possible in this sense directly hinders a genuine retrieval, and thereby in general it hinders a relationship to history.

As I have stated, the “basic problem” that I am attempting to open up and work through in this dissertation is that concerning the relationship of imagination and religious practice. This act needs to be understood as it is disclosed, methodologically, by Heidegger above. The retrieval of this problem functions, first and foremost, as an act that “preserves” the problem as a problem. That is, it is an attending to those “inner forces” which disclose this issue as a problem and as an issue worth pursuing.


27 Vattimo, Beyond Interpretation, 53-54.

28 Heidegger, Kant, 143.
justifications for the pursuit of this issue have been offered, at this point my considerations must take a more concrete turn.

The retrieval of the relationship of imagination to religious practice, as a transformative opening up of its concealed possibilities, must be pursued from within practice itself. It is from within practice that the concealed possibilities can show themselves. And it is from within practice that the “inner forces” of the problem can be seen. Yet as is readily apparent, there are so many different practices. How can one justify the approach of one practice over another? Again, one’s choice must be guided by the problem that one is trying to open up. One must select that practice which helps to disclose the concealed possibilities of one’s own problem.

For the purpose of this dissertation, the practice that will be the focus of my inquiry, as already stated, is the practice articulated in Jacob Böhme’s *The Way to Christ*. This choice, methodologically speaking, helps me to open up not only the question of the imagination, but also the question of religious practice. I have lightly touched on how the issue of the imagination can be opened by Böhme’s work above, and will again. At this point, I would like to focus briefly on the question of practice.

It must first be understood that in opening up the question of religious practice, in this dissertation, I will not be approaching this issue from a “customary” catalogue of different religious practices. Such an approach would seek to disclose how a specific practice functions within a complex set of practices and/or within a given social/cultural or personal context. While this type of approach is certainly admirable, it has the danger of leading to an infinite progression into ever more refined and abstracted grounds of differentiation, or worse, into a reified structure, that so thoroughly obscures the question
of religious practice that it closes it to us as a problem. The choice of Jacob Böhme’s *The Way to Christ* helps me to pursue a different approach.

While the practice articulated in *The Way to Christ* could be characterized loosely as a Christian practice of prayer, such a simple and immediate characterization obscures the profound resonances that this practice—and I argue religious practice in general—is meant to realize throughout the practitioner’s life and world. The way to Christ, as a practice, or complex of practices, articulating a profound transformation, resists such a simple characterization. It calls us, rather, to a more fundamental approach even as it calls me to the more generic term “practice.” This will become apparent in those chapters that deal specifically with this practice.

The foregoing considerations help to lead to what can now be disclosed as my primary methodological approach. This approach, alluded to in the above quote of Heidegger, is borne of my reading of Heidegger’s “The Origin of the Work of Art.” It is the method of what Heidegger calls *preservation*.29 This approach specifically fits the method to this dissertation’s task of disclosing the relation of religious practice to imagination in light of the potential for world transformation.

*Preservation* here entails “standing within the openness of beings that happens in the work,”30 thereby to be brought “into affiliation with the truth happening in the work.”31 We must proceed somewhat delicately in order to approach what is meant in this. In “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger opens the question of the origin—or

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29 Heidegger, “Origin,” 64.

30 Ibid., 65.

31 Ibid., 66.
“source of its nature” — of the work of art. Through the essay, he progressively unfolds this question by troubling our customary notions of what this source is and how our understanding may approach it. Of particular importance is the claim that we cannot approach the work of art in its nature through any of our traditional notions of the work as a “thing,” whether “as a bearer of traits, as the unity of a manifold of sensations, [or] as formed matter.” Rather, we must come to understand it through its work nature as a work.

So, what is a work? Following Heidegger’s lead, we can say that a work, as a work, is a setting-into-work of truth. Yet what does this mean? A work—and not just a work of art as understood traditionally—can be understood as an event or location where truth happens. The truth happens in the creation of a work through opening a clearing wherein beings can stand disclosed in and/or as the beings that they are. Further, this happening of truth takes place in the work of art through the fixing in figure of a striving between world and earth in the being that the work itself is. Thus, the showing forth of the truth of beings in the work, is always disclosed in a fundamental tension between the lighting of the world and the concealing of the earth. We must continue to proceed delicately here, lest we lose our way, since much has already been said in a little. And much more will need to be said as this work proceeds.

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32 Ibid., 17.
33 Ibid., 30.
34 Ibid., 35.
What concerns us at this time is specifically the issue of the methodology of preservation. Following Heidegger further, on this issue, we must come to understand the relation of preservers to a work. Heidegger states:

Just as a work cannot be without being created but is essentially in need of creators, so what is created cannot itself come into being without those who preserve it.\(^{36}\)

We can understand through this statement that a work, as a happening of truth, is in its work-being for preservers. We can also take this an additional step and say that we come to know the truth happening in the work only as preservers.

The work in its work-being does not come to stand for itself or for the creator, as an expression of the creator’s personal experience. Rather, the work in its work-being—as a happening of truth—comes to stand for preservers, as a call to stand in the truth happening in the work. We do not, then, know the truth happening in the work by treating it as an “object” for our analysis. Neither do we come to know this truth through delving into the intentions of the “subjectivity” of the creator. Of course, we may come to some sort of truth through these types of investigations. But it will not be the truth that happens in the work itself, as disclosed by Heidegger. Instead, we come to the truth of the work, or better, into the movement of its happening—as preservers, by “standing within the openness of beings that happens in the work.”\(^{37}\) That is also to say, by

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 64.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 65.
standing in the striving between world and earth happening in the work and/or as the being of the work.  

This understanding of preservation speaks intimately, for Heidegger, in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” concerning historical destiny. Yet, as the quote above from Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics indicates, it also speaks methodologically. Methodologically, preservation means, primarily, to let the work be a work (or a problem a problem). The researcher, then, must mindfully enter into the movement of the work in such a way as to come to dwell within the truth happening in the work. Finally, the hermeneutically oriented researcher must render a historically sensitive interpretation, concerning the work, which is relevant to the concerns of the researcher’s field. The concrete example of this dissertation will be helpful in clarifying what is meant here.

This dissertation is concerned with the problem of imagination and its relation to religious practice. I am “retrieving” this problem in light of its concealed possibilities, specifically in relation to contemporary transformations in post-metaphysical discourses that admit a “return” of religion. This retrieval, first and foremost, “preserves” the problem as a problem. I, as the researcher, have had to come to dwell in this problem, in order to allow its concealed possibilities to disclose themselves—not in

38 It is important to note here, for the sake of full disclosure, that the “work” of art (or practice) is not the only way truth happens, according to Heidegger. In “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger tells us that truth also occurs in: 1) the founding of a political state; 2) the nearness of the Divine; 3) the essential sacrifice (as in Christ’s sacrifice); and 4) the questioning of Being by the thinker. These events of truth’s happening—as the opening of a clearing for the striving of world and earth in lighting/concealment—are differentiated from what occurs in science. Science does not open a clearing for truth to happen. It merely cultivates an already opened clearing confirming the possible and correct within it. See ibid., 60.

39 Ibid., 73-75.

order to close this issue as a problem by offering up an ultimate solution to the problem, but rather to help develop our discourses by rendering an interpretation in light of this issue as a contemporarily relevant problem to the field of Religion and Psychological Studies.

In order to disclose the concealed possibilities of the relation of imagination to religious practice, it is not sufficient that contemporary discourses alone be engaged. Rather, what is essential to this task is to engage practice itself. Specifically, to work with a specific practice wherein the relation can come to stand in its happening within the truth of the practice. In other words, I must come to “preserve” the “work” of a practice itself. Within the context of this dissertation, that work is Jacob Böhme’s The Way to Christ. The method of preservation now means that I must let this text, which articulates a transformative process of religious practice, stand as a “work”—not as a work of art, but as a work of practice. It follows that, as a preserver, I must come to dwell “within the openness of beings that happens in the work” of practice. That is, I must dwell in this work as a practitioner.

This “dwelling” as a practitioner is not only the peaceful abiding in the “free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature.”41 It is also the submitting of oneself to the fundamental striving between the lighting/clearing of the world and the concealing of the earth already happening in the work.42 As a practitioner, this can mean taking this striving into oneself as it is of the peculiar nature of many works of practice that they call

41 Ibid., 147.

42 It is also, as Heidegger discloses in “Building Dwelling Thinking,” “the fourfold preservation of the fourfold” in its “simple oneness.” That is, in dwelling as preservation we “save the earth,” “receive the sky,” “await the divinities,” and “initiate mortals into the nature of death.” See ibid., 148-149.
their preservers to *be* the being or place wherein the work occurs—to be the figure wherein it is fixed. And that is how it stands with *The Way to Christ*.

Finally, within the context of this dissertation, as a methodological preserver, I must render a historically sensitive interpretation. It should be borne in mind at this point that interpretation is always historical. That is, interpretation always occurs as a speaking within the situated sendings of our traditioned discourses. Yet the historically sensitive hermeneutic preserver must speak something more that just the bare fact of being within history. To witness to the fact does not demonstrate historical sensitivity. Neither does simply adopting or responding to the most popular or recent voices in a field’s current academic discourse because they supposedly embody the most “historically” advanced step in that discourse. This is merely to fall into the “customary.” Rather, the historical sensitivity of the hermeneutic preserver is disclosed as an outcome of the “retrieval”—wherein the interpretation speaks. It is ultimately manifest as the hermeneut’s response to the call of the destiny of Being through the disclosure of those concealed ontological possibilities, within the retrieved problem, that have the potential to transform fundamentally our historical discourses, and thereby our worlds.

Returning to the concrete example of this dissertation, the preservation that occurs in relation to the practice of *The Way to Christ*, will disclose its interpretive relevance—and its historical sensitivity—only through the retrieved problem of imagination’s relation to religious practice. Further, my interpretation will prove of significance only insofar as it discloses concealed ontological possibilities within this opened problematic. Whether or not this speaks something of our destiny is for history to tell. Yet my wager is that it will—however modest my impact.
Lest my wager smack of hubris, I will take a brief, “theoretical” turn, at this point, to help clarify the hermeneutic context of my methodological operations. These theoretical considerations will also help me to transition to the deeper discussion of this dissertation’s key terms: world, imagination, and religious practice.

It is understood here that work and preserver, as well as interpretation, occur within history. I follow Heidegger in this, and in what follows. A work, as a being created within history, is the historical self-opening of a clearing wherein beings come to stand in the truth of their being. This is as true for a work of art as it is for a work of practice. As created, the work does stand in need of a creator or creators. Yet, as Heidegger makes clear, the work, as a work, is not to be understood through its creator(s). Rather, it comes more fully into its work-being the more the creator(s) withdraw(s) from the work. However, the withdrawal of the creator(s) from the work does not mean that the work now somehow eludes history. The clearing opening of the work, wherein beings appear in their being, occurs within history in such a way that the clearing opening manifests through a human-like [temporal] projection that gathers a world into the striving with the earth within the clearing’s horizon even as the clearing and its world are gathered into the historical world of its creator, wherein it calls to its preservers.

44 Ibid., 63-65.
45 I am meaning here Heidegger’s “rift.” See ibid., 61-62.
Preservers, as historical human beings, respond to a work’s call from their own particular historical situatedness—from their thrown “ek-sistence” as being-in-a-world. When a work’s clearing opens within the historical world(s) of our thrown belonging-together (Being-with), its truth-happening can disclose new possibilities of being to those who are gathered together, as preservers, within the striving of world and earth/lighting and concealing occurring as the work’s truth. Further, even as the work comes to being through the specific situatedness of the provenance of its creation, the work’s preservers enter the disclosed world of the work through their own particular provenance. That is to say, preservers do not come to stand in the truth-happening of the work as some sort of blank slate, dissociated from their history. Rather, their history is itself gathered into the work’s truth through the being-historical of the preserver. The interaction of work and preservers, then, occurs by the ongoing disclosure of concealed ontological possibilities in the striving of the work that come to manifestation or appearance in light of a preserver’s provenance as brought into relation with the work and its provenance.

As new ontological possibilities are revealed through the preservers of the work, these possibilities, in turn, can come to resonate through, not only the community of preservers, but also the worlds of our thrown belonging-together from whence the

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46 Ek-sistence as “standing out into the truth of being” is to be contrasted with existentia as the actuality of the merely possible idea. See Martin Heidegger, “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” in Pathmarks, ed. William McNeill, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 249. The familiar Heideggerian trope of our being “thrown” (Geworfen) speaks to our being given over to ourselves as Dasein [there-being] into a world to which we must submit. Our being thrown is disclosed as the “‘that-it-is’ of its (Dasein’s) ‘there,’” by mood or state-of-mind. See Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper/SanFrancisco, 1962), 172-177; [H] 134-137.

47 Heidegger, Being, 308; [H] 263.
preservers have heeded the call of the work. In this way, it can be said, the world of the work is gathered into the historical worlds of the whence of its preservers—whether these worlds are historically contemporaneous with the creation of the work, or stand in chronological or cultural distance to it—leading to the potential transformation of those worlds. One of the ways that the world of the work comes thus to resonate is through an interpretation of it offered by its preservers in light of a “retrieved” problematic. In light of the foregoing, it can be seen that the retrieval and preservation of a problem that speaks to current issues, the heeding of the call and preservation of a work in relation to that problem, and the subsequent interpretation of its revealed ontological possibilities in an academic discipline is, at least somewhat, a matter of the destiny of Being.

Returning to the context of this dissertation, I, as a hermeneutic preserver, bringing myself into the truth-happening of Jacob Böhme’s work—in particular, the truth-happening of the practice of *The Way to Christ*—enter this work in such a way that my provenance—specifically here, my academic provenance—enters with me. Thereby, Martin Heidegger’s work enters into conversation with Jacob Böhme’s work through my work of preservation, in light of my retrieved problem. Further, considering current hermeneutic interest in Böhme (e.g., Cyril O’Regan), imagination (e.g., Richard

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48 See O’Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*; idem, *Gnostic Return*. These volumes are but two of O’Regan’s ambitious multi-volume project, as he describes it: “Although it risks the gigantesque, the Baurian project of Gnostic return in modernity will be prosecuted over seven volumes. After this introductory volume individual volumes will be devoted to the German mystic Jacob Boehme, English and German Romanticism, G.W.F. Hegel, and F.W.J. Schelling, anti-Gnostic discourses of the nineteenth century (e.g., Franz Anton Staudenmaier, Søren Kierkegaard, S.T. Coleridge), and Gnostic (e.g., Paul Tillich, Thomas Altizer, Jürgen Moltmann) and anti-Gnostic discourse (e.g., Hans Urs von Balthasar, Eberhard Jüngel) in twentieth-century theology” (Idem, *Gnostic Return*, 5).
Kearney),\textsuperscript{49} religious practice (e.g., Mark Flory),\textsuperscript{50} and world transformation (e.g., Gianni Vattimo),\textsuperscript{51} it is little surprise that a work such as this dissertation should make its appearance at this time. Again, it is, at least somewhat, a matter of “destiny.”

Critical Terms

The terms \textit{world, imagination,} and \textit{religious practice} have been used quite freely up to this point in the discourse. In order to establish first the academic and methodological context of their usages, without going too far afield, this has been deemed appropriate. Nevertheless, each of these terms must be addressed directly. It should be understood that here it is first less an issue of providing a fixed definition than it is a methodological issue of further elaborating and clarifying my understanding of these terms in service of the retrieval of the problem of \textit{imagination’s} relation to \textit{religious practice}—in post-metaphysical discourse—in light of the potential for \textit{world} transformation. One should further bear in mind that a certain degree of repetition and recapitulation is unavoidable. This latter is due not only to the fact that much has already been stated concerning these terms. It is also due to the hermeneutic weaving and


\textsuperscript{50} See Mark Flory, “Transforming Practices: Hesychastic Correctives to Postmodern Apophatic Theology” (Ph.D. diss., University of Denver/Iliff School of Theology, 2005).

\textsuperscript{51} See Gianni Vattimo, \textit{After Christianity}, Italian Academy Lectures, trans. Luca D’ Isanto (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); idem, \textit{Belief}; idem, \textit{Beyond Interpretation}; idem, \textit{Transparent Society}. 

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rewaving of these terms through the varying contexts of this dissertation’s discourse, as a means to the terms’ fuller disclosure.

So, what is meant here by world? Simply and directly, we may say that world is the wherein of human dwelling. Human beings always already exist in a world. We are first conceived and are born in a world. Our everyday engagements occur within a world. Our understanding comes to articulation within a world. It is within the open horizon of a world that beings, both like and unlike ourselves, disclose themselves to us. Nothing is more self-apparent to us than that the world of the wherein of our dwelling is. Yet this very self-apparenncy also makes it one of the most difficult of issues to articulate.

Martin Heidegger can help here. Early in Being and Time, Heidegger articulates four different ways that world has been philosophically understood:

1. “World” is used as an ontical concept, and signifies the totality of those entities which can be present-at-hand within the world.
2. “World” functions as an ontological term, and signifies the Being of those entities which we have just mentioned. And indeed ‘world’ can become a term for any realm which encompasses a multiplicity of entities: for instance, when one talks of the ‘world’ of a mathematician, ‘world’ signifies the realm of possible objects of mathematics.
3. “World” can be understood in another ontical sense—not, however, as those entities which Dasein essentially is not and which can be encountered within-the-world, but rather as that ‘wherein’ a factical Dasein as such can be said to ‘live.’ “World” has here a pre-ontological existentiell signification. Here again there are different possibilities: “world” may stand for the ‘public’ world, or one’s ‘own’ closest (domestic) environment.
4. Finally, “world” designates the ontologico-existential concept of worldhood. Worldhood itself may have as its modes whatever structural wholes any special ‘worlds’ may have at the time; but it embraces in itself the a priori character of worldhood in general.53

52 “Existentiell” [existenziell] and “existential” [existenzial] are terms Heidegger mobilizes in Being and Time to distinguish the former, as one’s particular understanding of oneself on the basis of one’s own possibilities and choices, from the latter, as the understanding of the ontological structure of existence rooted in an analytic of Dasein. See Heidegger, Being, 32-34; [H] 12-13.

53 Ibid., 93; [H] 65. [Translator’s note i: (German original) ‘. . . die “eigene” und nächste (häusliche) Umwelt.’ The word ‘Umwelt,’ which is customarily translated as ‘environment,’ means
While each of these understandings of world may have their own appropriate context of discourse, Heidegger goes on to make it clear that it is world as understood in the third sense above that helps to guide his inquiry. I follow him in this.

Certain things should be said here concerning Heidegger’s understanding of world. To begin, world is not to be understood as an entity that can be encountered as something that stands, as it were, alongside other entities that can be encountered. World is, rather, the wherein of all one’s encounters. It follows that Being-in-the-world is an ontological characteristic of *Dasein*—if there is no world, there is no *Dasein*. If there is no *Dasein*, there is no world. In addition, world speaks the meaningful being of human existence, in that it can be understood as the totality of relational significance. The structure of which totality is what is meant by a mode of worldhood. Now, even as the possibility of the encounter with beings can occur only within a world, so our dealings and involvements with beings within-the-world is also guided by the significance given to them through the world—or the worldhood of the world—as a condition of our belonging-together.

There is then, included with this understanding of world, a sense of its already-having-been as a condition of our human belonging together in a world. This is also to

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54 Ibid., 102; [H] 72.

55 Ibid., 92; [H] 64.

56 Ibid., 117-121; [H] 85-87.
say, our worlds are historical. Hence, Heidegger can develop the claim that human existence is that of being “thrown.” To claim that human being is thrown being, is to affirm at least two important points. The first emphasizes this being historical of worlds. The second emphasizes the centrality of each one’s own situatedness in a world.

To claim that one is thrown into a historical world as a condition of one’s existence, is to convey the understanding that the world is disclosed to each one through the open horizon of each one’s own particular situatedness. I discover the world, the beings in the world, and myself within the world through the open horizon that is my own. How I conduct myself in the world—how I involve myself (or not) with beings either like myself or unlike myself, and what possibilities show themselves to me—is very much determined by how the world is disclosed, in its historical significance, to me within the horizon of my particular and situated being. In turn, the freeing of my conduct, broadly understood, into the world entails that it becomes itself a part of the world’s historical significance.

What begins to emerge in this elusive self-apparency of world is that world and human historical particularity are inextricably constitutive of one another in their being. This insight not only guides this dissertation, it also allows its discourse to shift from world to human person without losing focus. This will become all the more apparent when imagination comes to the foreground of consideration.

It will have been noticed that much of what was just stated concerning “world” intimately echoes what has already been stated in the context of “work” and “preservation.” This is only appropriate as “work” and “preservation” are essential

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57 Ibid., 172-177; [H] 134-137.
human engagements that occur only within a world in such a way as to help co-constitute that world. One may even say that all cultural worlds are perpetuated only through human preservation and a way is discovered for their self-transformation primarily through the works of those humans who dwell therein.

We may carry forward more of our preceding discourse on “work” and “preservation” at this time by recalling that in a work, world and earth are ever entangled in the striving of clearing and concealing characteristic of their natures. This condition holds for the worlds of our present concern as well. All worlds are entangled in a striving with earth. We now make explicit something that has been implied all along. We live amongst multiple worlds—dwelling now here and now there, or attending one another in our separate worlds across the concealing abyss of an earth that nurtures all. Heidegger suggests such a notion of multiple worlds in his guiding definition above, when he states that world “may stand for the ‘public’ we-world, or one’s ‘own’ closest (domestic) environment.”

Not only may we say that one’s own world horizon is potentially subject to a sort of fluctuation from near (domestic) to far (public). We may also “speculate” or propose that where one must move between multiple divergent public contexts in one’s everyday dealings, one is in actuality moving between multiple worlds—specifically as an outcome of modernist hyper-specialization and multi-cultural globalization.

The complexity of world, as historical-meaning-bestowing-clearing-of-our-encounters-and-engagements-in-dwelling, is only just beginning to emerge with the inclusion of multiple worlds and fluctuating human horizons. Beyond questions of the

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58 Ibid., 93; [H] 65.
potential for a sort of “higher” integration of worlds in a “new” structure of worldhood, or questions concerning how we may include in this discourse not only the “striving” of world with earth but also how we stand beneath heaven and “before the divinities” in the “simple oneness” of the fourfold,⁵⁹ other issues linger. Foremost among these is the question: If one accepts this understanding of multiple worlds, how is it that we seem to move from one world to another without noticing? Our existence in-the-world seems to be seamless. I propose that the alterations of human horizons that constitute our being in different worlds are shrouded in *forgetting*.

The condition of forgetting, according to Heidegger, is intimately linked to our being as “thrown” and “fallen.” As thrown, we discover ourselves, in each case, in a historical world of our belonging-together, first manifest in a particular situatedness by no apparent means of our own. We simply are “there-being.” As fallen, we seize upon the world of our specific situatedness and lose ourselves in that world of our involvements with beings.⁶⁰ Each case is rooted in forgetting. As thrown, we forget our ownmost self-projection of the horizon of the world’s disclosure. We forget our projection and so encounter beings-in-a-world. As fallen, we forget our ownmost thrownness in-a-world in light of our involvements with beings as understood by what is “said” customarily concerning those involvements.

Heidegger further states:

*This forgetting is not nothing, nor is it just a failure to remember; it is rather a ‘positive’ ecstatical mode of one’s having been—a mode with a character of its own. The ecstasis (rapture) of forgetting has the character of backing away in the face of one’s ownmost “been,” and of doing so in a manner which is closed*

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⁵⁹ Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” 147-149.

off from itself—in such a manner, indeed, that this backing-away closes off ecstatically that in the face of which one is backing away, and thereby closes itself off too.  

Therefore, in our forgetting, we close ourselves off from that in the face of which we back away. Perhaps one could say we relegate it to the unconscious. And the more primordial the event from which we back away, the more difficult it is to disclose. Being itself is “forgotten” in such a primordiality. This is not merely an issue of fleeing from some trauma. Primordial forgetting is an ongoing eventing that frees us to our engagements in the world. In our present context, it is that which frees us to our involvements with beings of divergent worlds in a seamless manner.

The vision of worlds developing here is a dynamic one. It is to be understood that this dynamism holds sway throughout all of our engagements, including the most everyday variety. It follows that even according to the most mundane of interpretations, our worlds are transformative in character. The potential benefit, then, of the present inquiry will be seen in how my hermeneutic investigation into Jacob Böhme’s religious practice brings dynamics—and perhaps a certain radicality—of world transformation to the foreground. Yet first, I have still to disclose how I will be using the terms imagination and religious practice.

Imagination, as it is to be understood in the context of this dissertation, signifies primarily, the whereby of the “wherein” of our dwelling in-a-world. This is to say, imagination is the projective opening of each human being’s particular and situated

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61 Ibid., 388-389; [H] 339. [Translator’s note: (German original) ‘Die Ekstase (Entrückung) des Vergessens hat den Charakter des sich selbst verschlossenen Ausrückens vor dem eigensten Gewesen, so zwar, dass dieses Ausrücken vor . . . ekstatisch das Wover verschliesst und in eins damit sich selbst.’ Heidegger is here connecting the word ‘Entrückung’ (our ‘rapture’) with the cognate verb ‘ausrücken’ (‘back away’), which may be used intransitively in the military sense of ‘decamping,’ but may also be used transitively in the sense of ‘disconnecting.’ Both ‘entrücken’ and ‘ausrücken’ mean originally ‘to move away,’ but they have taken on very different connotations in ordinary German usage.]
world-horizon that gathers beings, in their being, and world within its clearing.

Imagination, thus understood, is ontological and concealed by a primordial mode of forgetting.  

This understanding of the imagination can be developed from Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant’s First Critique as elaborated in Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics. According to Heidegger, Kant’s First Critique should be understood as an attempted laying the ground for metaphysics, being general metaphysics or ontology, through a retrieval of the problem of human finitude. While for Kant, what is ultimately aimed for may be a secure and unassailable ground as reason. What is actually struck in the First Edition of this Critique, according to Heidegger, is the abyss of the imagination as the root of human finitude and being. Whereas Kant retreated from this disclosure in the Second Edition of this work, we, on the other hand, may advance its implications.

The problem of human finitude, as retrieved by Kant, can be said to find its focus in relation to a model of human experience as constituted by perceptual intuition and conceptual synthesis within the human subject. While the intuition passively receives perceptual impressions, conceptualization spontaneously synthesizes the perceptual manifold into representational unities. Yet, in order for this model to open to a laying of a foundation for metaphysics, a more complex and complete elaboration is called for—

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62 Heidegger, Kant, 163-164.

63 Ibid., 6-9.

64 Ibid., 15.

65 Ibid., 112-113.
Kant attempted to provide this elaboration as his contribution to the historically situated philosophical discourse of his time.

The imagination emerges in this working out of Kant’s *First Critique* as an indispensable human faculty. For Kant, it is that which mediates intuition and conceptualization—receptivity and spontaneity—thus making human experience, as it is, possible. Yet this is not all. Following Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant’s *First Critique*, the “transcendental” imagination stands itself disclosed by Kant as the common root of both perceptual intuition and conceptual synthesis.\(^66\) In terms of intuition, it is the imagination that opens [makes possible] the reception of our first pure look, as a pure or *a priori* “intuition,”\(^67\) by disclosing the horizon of time, as temporality.\(^68\) Thus, it makes possible the meaningful actuality of all of our experiential encounters.

In terms of conceptual synthesis, the imagination shows itself as essentially synthetic, not only through mediating a synthesis of intuitions and concepts, but more primordially, by gathering the originary synthesis of the temporally constituted apperceptive “I” as locus of subjective experience.\(^69\) In each instance, the imagination demonstrates that which can be considered the essential characteristics of intuition and conceptualization in a more primordial manifestation—thus disclosing itself as the

\(^66\) Ibid., 94-97.
\(^67\) Ibid., 99-102.
\(^68\) Ibid., 169-170.
\(^69\) Ibid., 133-136.
common root of both. Furthermore, imagination discloses itself in Heidegger’s interpretation as primordial temporality.70

Bearing in mind what Heidegger stresses we should bear in mind, that this is a general metaphysical or ontological thinking, it becomes a short step to a position that attempts to develop a language of imagination that is itself more ontological in its expression. This is also to say that such a development is itself historically legitimized as a consequence of our secularizing philosophical discourses. Heidegger himself intimates that this is what he has been up to in his own works such as Being and Time.71 The language of Dasein and the language of Heidegger’s later works, as a post-metaphysical discourse, can then be understood in this light.

Abyssal imagination (primordial temporality) is hereby understood, in this dissertation, as the whereby of the “wherein” of our dwelling in-a-world. This is to say that the imagination is whereby the horizon of one’s own particular historical situatedness opens in such a way that beings and their worlds—as well as one’s ownmost self—are gathered therein. It opens the clearing/concealing of Being wherein world and earth are striving. It is the whereby of all our encountering of beings as beings and as “things” to be understood and responded to. Shrouded in forgetting, it reveals itself as dynamic. It also follows that it is our ownmost most intimate bestowal of Being.

We are here seen as primordially beings of imagination—thrown and fallen into worlds that are themselves imaginative. This is not the same as to say that our worlds or we are not “real.” The reality/imagination opposition breaks down here at its root. As

70 Ibid., 137-139.

Being bestows the authority of “reality,” it bestows it as of imagination. For this reason, it becomes prudent, in my estimation, to reclaim the old differentiation between “imagination” and “fantasy,” attributed to Paracelsus—whose work, incidentally, certainly had a significant influence on Jacob Böhme. Fantasy then, it could be said, entails the formation of wish-fulfilling subjective constructs that as objectifying representations may titillate or attenuate desire (and may even seem reasonable), yet nevertheless, are stripped of any “real” being as they divorce themselves from a “truly” lived world. Imagination, on the other hand, whether ontologically or optically, ever desirefully opens clearings for the striving of world and earth wherein it gathers beings in the disclosure of their being into a “living” dwelling together in a world. Fantasy, in this sense, cannot “be” without imagination—in that imagination is always prior to any fantasy and is the root in which fantasy itself is rooted. However, desire is implicated in both. More will be said of this later. Suffice it to say, at this time, that desire is here understood less in terms of lack, than it is in terms of the overflowing or excessive striving of our belonging-together.

72 Faivre, Theosophy, 102-103. By suggesting that we reclaim this differentiation, I am not thereby intimating that I will also begin a preservation of Paracelsus’ work on this issue within my preservation of Böhme’s theosophy and his practice of the way to Christ. However, it is also to be noted that Böhme himself, in his own way, does carry forward this differentiation in his work. That said, it yet must be acknowledged that the characterization of the differentiation of fantasy and imagination that begins its development here is one that I, as a preserver, bring to this work.

73 It is important to note that this initial characterization of “fantasy”—which is intended only for orienting purposes—is not meant to limit fantasy to “conscious” constructs. Rather, it is specifically meant to include “unconscious” constructs, as well, including those that in “disguised” form may trouble or fascinate consciousness. My differentiation of fantasy and imagination here is further intended to help distinguish my discourse on imagination from psychoanalytic discourses without problematizing or obscuring their valuable contributions.

74 It is also important to note here that my hermeneutic of imagination and exceeding desire, as it will be developed in this dissertation, is born “exclusively” from my preservation of Jacob Böhme’s theosophy. This will become clearer in Chapter Three. However, with that being the case, I believe it is
It is through the foregoing interpretations of world and imagination that the issue of religious practice is now to be approached. It has been proposed that religious practice can work in such a way as to transform a practitioner’s world-horizon. By this time, my proposal should not be heard as anything outside the ordinary. Our world horizons can be understood as transforming or fluctuating as a matter of course. The importance of this issue of transforming world horizons—whence transforming worlds—in relation to religious practice can be seen in how religious practice, as an intentional engagement of the practitioner, helps to disclose the event of transformation through a focused approach. This is specifically the case when the practice under investigation itself intends a certain transformation as is the case with Jacob Böhme’s *The Way to Christ*.

In *The Way to Christ*, the process of transformation occurs through the stages or “movements” of repentance, resignation, and contemplation. Traditionally, these or similar such stages, have been understood primarily in terms of a fundamental change within the individual practitioner—whether in terms of spiritual or psychological dynamics. While this dissertation itself will focus on the individual practitioner, nevertheless, here this focus will ultimately be in the service of disclosing a fundamental transformation of the practitioner’s world.

nonetheless of critical importance to acknowledge the potentially “troubling” resonances that my characterization of excessing desire can have with certain psychoanalytically oriented characterizations of desire extant in contemporary academic hermeneutics. I have specifically in mind those hermeneutic discourses that engage the works of Jacques Lacan or Gilles Deleuze. The differentiation of my characterization of desire, as excessing, from Lacan’s, as lack, is self-apparent. It is the same as that between Lacan and Deleuze. What differentiates my characterization from Deleuze’s excessing schizophrenic desire of the subjectless machine, however, is not so readily apparent at this stage of my dissertation’s discourse. I am confident, though, that the differences between our separate characterizations will become clear as this dissertation develops my hermeneutic alternative.

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It has already been intimated that this dissertation will approach religious practice in terms of practice as work. The work of practice, in this case, calls to its preservers as practitioners who fix themselves as the figures wherein the striving between world and earth happening in the work occurs. The practitioner is able to so fix herself through the discipline that the practice discloses—through its injunction of what one does and how one does it. It may also be said that through the injunction one can come to stand beneath heaven and before the divinities, in Heidegger’s simple unity of the fourfold, in such a manner as is disclosed by the discipline demanded of the practice.

“Normally,” one is initiated into a religious world through one’s own early development. From one’s infancy on, one assimilates the practices that disclose a religious world as a matter of taking on its traditioned historical sendings, which is the provenance of one’s own thrown being-in-a-world. In such a way, we rather seamlessly awaken in a given religious world. Yet there can be practices that emerge, as historical sendings within a given tradition, which call practitioners further. That is, practices which disclose to practitioners new or specialized possibilities of being-in-a-world, from within the tradition. These sendings are often initially troubling to the tradition of origin. Nevertheless, it is through such practices—not to speak of conversions—that we can come to view the event of transformation—even if only by a glimpse or a moment’s revelation.

I propose that religious practices, in this latter sense, can help the practitioner imaginally regather her ownmost projected world-horizon towards a rethrowing of that very horizon as the opening into the world intended by the practice as work. This event,

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76 Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” 147-149.
at least in some cases, would entail the “death/resurrection” of the practitioner herself. This can be seen, among other things, as an outcome of the understanding of imagination already articulated. It will be recalled that imagination, as articulated, opens the world horizon—gathering beings in their being and worlds, within its clearing—even as it gathers one’s ownmost self as ek-sistential locus of experience. This is to say, world and self imaginally arise together. If the horizon comes to collapse, my world and my self are extinguished. If a horizon is rethrown, a world and a “resurrected” self will be regathered therein.\(^7\) One must note that this understanding deeply problematizes notions of the self. Yet more significantly, it heralds the radical possibility of opening to different disclosive worlds that may gather within their horizons fundamentally different beings. Which is to say, between one world and the next, beyond the rather straightforward difference of significance given to the same beings within a world, we may even encounter very different beings altogether.

To say that the above may be accomplished, is not to say that it is easy. The regathering of one’s projected ek-sistential horizon necessitates that practice engages one’s complete being. It must engage and regather one’s body and actions, one’s emotions and energy, as well as one’s mind, discourses and speech. It must regather one’s history. Then one must give oneself to its discipline completely—thereby allowing the practice to work and so become a work of transformation. While one must engage the practice hopefully, still there is no surety of success. Even if success is attained, that attainment may take years. Yet ease of execution may be accomplished—and with that,\(^77\) One can witness an interesting and resonant type of dynamic being articulated in Hajime Tanabe’s *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, with his death and resurrected being of the philosopher as thinker. See Tanabe Hajime, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, Nazan Studies in Religion and Culture, trans. Takeuchi Yoshinori, Valdo Viglielmo, and James W. Heisig (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
revelatory flashes of the goal. Still, one must strive and wait. This is to fix oneself as the figure wherein the striving between world and earth, clearing and concealing, occurs as the work of practice—unto awakening in a new world.

My desire in the writing of this dissertation is to help disclose this process through my preservation of Jacob Böhme’s *The Way to Christ*. By tracking each of its three primary stages or movements of transformation—repentance, resignation, and contemplation—I hope to demonstrate how this practice works to imaginally regather the practitioner in her world, leading to a fundamental transformation of that world—or the transformation of the possibilities of encounter therein, such as Böhme’s encounter with *Sophia*. As acknowledged earlier, Jacob Böhme offers much to this discourse—not only in terms of offering a transformative practice, but also in terms of his own theosophical hermeneutic concerning the imagination, desire, and the Divine. This will be disclosed in the chapters that follow.

**Synopsis of Chapters**

Before beginning the hermeneutic preservation of Jacob Böhme’s practice as it is articulated in *The Way to Christ*, certain preparatory tasks, as I have stated in this Introduction, must first be accomplished. Chapter Two, therefore, will constitute a synoptic historical introduction to Jacob Böhme. This will include a presentation of certain key influences understood as formative for Böhme’s life and work. Then, after a consideration of significant events and issues from his life and time, a brief introductory sketch of his own historical influence will be presented.
Chapter Three will consist of an introductory preservation of Böhme’s theosophy, and the beginning of the “conversation” between Jacob Böhme and Martin Heidegger. This will include a more in-depth articulation of Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant, as presented in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*—focused on the imagination.

The preservation of the practice proper begins with Chapter Four. Here, through a consideration of Böhme’s meaning of the way to Christ, I will demonstrate how the practitioner is gathered into Böhme’s world, as her indispensable entry to the practice. Then what follows in Chapter Four is an interpretation of the practitioner’s own self-gathering within that world, as the movement of “repentance,” leading to her death and “new birth.”

Chapter Five continues and ultimately concludes the preservation. This chapter includes the soul’s encounter with *Sophia*, as it is presented by Böhme. It then enters the hermeneutic preservation of the movement of “resignation.” The chapter draws to a close with the problem of the movement of “contemplation.”

The Conclusion in Chapter Six recaps in broad strokes how the task of retrieving the question of imagination and its relation to religious practice and the practitioner have been pursued in this dissertation. It also briefly touches on various wider issues at stake—including those brought to bear in the field of Religion and Psychological Studies.
CHAPTER TWO
JACOB BÖHME AND WESTERN ESOTERICISM

Jacob Böhme (1575-1624 C.E.) was born the fourth of five children to a free peasant family in the Lusatian countryside just outside of Görlitz in what is now eastern Germany. With only a rudimentary education, the young Böhme apprenticed as a cobbler in order to secure for himself a livelihood. Having completed his training as apprentice and then journeyman, Böhme moved to Görlitz and became a burgher. He married, bought a house, and set up shop as a master cobbler shortly before the turning of the century. In 1600, Böhme experienced a profound and personally transforming illumination. These are the bare facts of the first half of his life, as we know them.

At least one facet of the fascination with Böhme’s life and work through the centuries is expressed in the question: How could a person of such humble origin, void of academic training, come to exert such profound intellectual influence—not only in his own time, but through the centuries following as well? In answer, many have invoked “genius.” Indeed, Böhme is the historical prototype of the Romantic genius. Böhme’s own answer to this question certainly would have been that the speaking of the Holy Spirit, through the illumination of 1600 and in all subsequent explicating writings,

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accounts for whatever power and influence is to be found in his work. While there could well be something to this claim, another explanation may also offer some clarification.

When one considers Jacob Böhme’s life and work, it can also be said that one way of explaining his ongoing influence is through how Böhme creatively regathers and carries forward the western esoteric traditions at a critical historical juncture for the western traditions as a whole. It will be recalled that the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries knew the workings of Galileo, Descartes, Bacon, Kepler, Shakespeare, and Cervantes. Each, in his own way, was helping to transform western traditions—so much so that this period can be characterized as the birth of modernity. Böhme, in his own way, also profoundly contributes to this transformation with unexpected and “troubling”79 ramifications.

It is the intention of this chapter to help clarify how it is that Jacob Böhme gathers forward western esotericism in “modern” and now post-metaphysical discourse. This will characterize my introduction of Böhme to the contemporary reader. To accomplish this, I will be outlining selective exemplary influences flowing both to and from Böhme—highlighting how it is that Böhme creatively rearticulates western esoteric traditions from within the context of his own historical situatedness, thereby making them germane to, and subversive for modern discourses. Yet first, it is prudent to emphasize, even somewhat superficially, the relevance of questions concerning the western esoteric tradition to contemporary academic discourse.

Until only relatively recently, the western esoteric tradition has long been an arena neglected by serious academics. Yet, as of the end of the twentieth century,

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79 In this context, by “troubling,” I am intending to convey a sense of the influence that Böhme’s work has exerted in modern discourse to subvert that very discourse.
beginning in France and then Holland, legitimate departments and doctoral degree programs specializing in western esoteric studies have been established in continental universities. Even in the United States, the American Academy of Religion (AAR) has begun organizing ongoing seminars entitled “Western Esotericism from the Early Modern Period.”\textsuperscript{80} There is no risk in wagering that advancing research in western esotericism will profoundly alter our narratives and understanding of modernity itself—specifically, as we include western esotericism’s more subversive discourses in the light of how it is that we are still shaped by their influence. This is to say that the significance of research in this field is disclosed through its potential to transform our discourses concerning our own assumed self-understanding.

To help illuminate the relevance of this research, I would like to turn briefly to how our contemporary discourse may be altered by even a minimal familiarity with the western esoteric tradition. In his lecture \textit{Of Spirit}, Jacques Derrida subtly “questions”\textsuperscript{81} what he sees as Martin Heidegger’s insistence in the essay “Language in the Poem,” that the poetry of Georg Trakl—and Heidegger’s own interpretation of it—speaks something that “ought not to be Christian.”\textsuperscript{82} In his self-constructed dialogue between a Christian theologian and Heidegger,\textsuperscript{83} Derrida implies that, in his opinion, as much as Heidegger

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Faivre, \textit{Theosophy}, xix-xx.
\item Ibid., 93-99.
\item Ibid., 109-113.
\end{enumerate}
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might protest, the path of Heidegger’s discourse and Trackl’s poetry can be understood as essentially “Christian,” and thereby, in Derrida’s view, metaphysical.  

While what Derrida implies is certainly plausible from a broad and rather fuzzy perspective, it does not actually strike the historical heart of what, in my opinion, is at stake in Heidegger’s essay. That is that it appeals to furthering an ongoing historical struggle for legitimization within western discourse, which intimately concerns the western esoteric tradition. To understand this claim, it is helpful to ask what Christianity is it that may be speaking in this and other of Heidegger’s works. In approaching an answer, we may initially concur with the Heidegger of Derrida’s text that it surely is not a “metaphysically” laden scholastic or modern Christianity—which Derrida, it seems, all too quickly identifies with any Christianity or perhaps with Christianity as a whole. Rather, I contend, the traditioned Christianity speaking in its silence through this and other of Heidegger’s works can be identified through a listing of resonant themes identified in “Language in the Poem,” and by highlighting two other exemplary poets who one discovers as illuminating voices in another of Heidegger’s works.

The resonant themes in “Language in the Poem” short-listed are Spirit, flame, the intimate transforming proximity of gentleness to destruction, the origin of evil in Spirit, the “strange” nature of death, the morning’s twilight, the Sister, and the mirror [speculum].  

For those with ears to hear—that is, for those with even an introductory understanding of the western esoteric tradition—these resonant themes shout out the

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84 It is most interesting, in the context of this dissertation, that Derrida identifies the ghost of Hegel in Heidegger. See ibid., 99.

abiding influence of Jacob Böhme. In fact, as will be witnessed through reading this dissertation, this list could very well have been offered as an introduction of themes to be touched upon through this dissertation. Yet so ubiquitous are they in Böhme’s work that the same could be said of nearly any treatment of Böhme.

If we turn now to Heidegger’s work, *The Principle of Reason*, we see the very same influence at work. In the process of preparing the reader for the “leap” into “the other tonality” of Leibniz’s principle of reason, Heidegger calls upon two specific poets—along with Eduard Mörike, Goethe, and Mozart—to help on the way. These poets are Angelus Silesius (Johannes Scheffler, 1624-1677 C.E.) and Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843 C.E.). In each case, Heidegger hears something in the poet that speaks to and troubles the modern metaphysical discourse. What is important in the present context is not how it is, according to Heidegger, that they trouble or challenge, but rather the fact that both Silesius and Hölderlin were influenced early and primarily by Jacob Böhme. They were both Böhmists.

How this information can affect our understanding—and our narrative sense of ourselves—can be seen in how it highlights that there is an alternate or even suppressed undercurrent in modern discourses themselves that reaches into postmodernity. This alternate current can be said to speak already—and subversively—in a different tonality than that of modern metaphysics. Further, we must recognize that Jacob Böhme is a powerful voice of influence in this current. Finally, insofar as Jacob Böhme can be

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87 Ibid., 35, 68, 82-83.

88 Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, 62, 72, 75-78; and Weeks, *German Mysticism*, 185.
understood as regathering and carrying forward the western esoteric tradition, we may speculate that if a Christianity speaks in Heidegger’s essay, “Language in the Poem” (and other works), it is primarily that of the western esoteric tradition—a tradition long in deadly struggle with more “mainstream” expressions of legitimized Christianity. To recognize or accept this is to have to rethink our own provenance. It also demands greater precision in any charges, such as Derrida’s, concerning Christianity, Heidegger, or others who might have been influenced—knowingly or unknowingly—by the western esoteric tradition. Even maintaining a suspicion that I state my case hyperbolically, the consequences still stand.

89 Concerning this issue of precision, it must be noted that in his book Gnostic Apocalypse Cyril O’Regan claims that Heidegger dismisses Bôhme in Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom “as a real influence on Schelling precisely because of the presence of the theological element in his [Bôhme’s] thought . . . .” O’Regan goes on to imply that Heidegger here espouses an interpretation of philosophy which holds philosophy as authentic only to the extent that it is “theologically sanitized.” Thereby, according to O’Regan, Heidegger can further dismiss Bôhme’s work as “ontotheological” while holding Schelling free of the taint of such “sin.” O’Regan then can argue that Heidegger’s reading is “objectionable” in that it poses a “binary opposition between philosophy and theology” and, in addition, does not recognize that Schelling’s discourse is itself “ontotheological.” (See O’Regan, Gnostic Apocalypse, 5-6.) However, when one actually looks to Heidegger’s “Schelling book,” this is what one discovers: “The whole boldness of Schelling’s thinking comes into play here. But it is not the vacuous play of thoughts of a manic hermit, it is only the continuation of an attitude of thinking which begins with Meister Eckhart and is uniquely developed in Jacob Bohme. But when this historical context is cited, one is immediately ready again with jargon, one speaks of ‘mysticism’ and ‘theosophy.’ Certainly, one can call it that, but nothing is said by that with regard to the spiritual occurrence and the true creation of thought . . . .” (Martin Heidegger, Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom, trans. Joan Stambaugh [Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985], 117). “With this, however, a ‘theological’ turn seems to enter the idea of system. . . . But when we speak here of ‘theological’ and ‘theology’ we must remember that the word and concept ‘theology’ did not first grow in the framework and service of an ecclesiastical system of faith, but within philosophy. . . . Every philosophy is theology in the primordial and essential sense that comprehension (logos) of beings as a whole asks about the ground of Being, and this ground is called theos, God. . . . Philosophy’s questioning is always and in itself both onto-logical and theo-logical in the very broad sense. Philosophy is On-theology. The more originally it is both in one, the more truly it is philosophy. And Schelling’s treatise is thus one of the most profound works of philosophy because it is in a unique sense ontological and theological at the same time” (ibid., 50-51). One must question then, what is O’Regan thinking? One must also wonder concerning the very different meaning of ontotheology that apparently is being communicated by Heidegger in his Schelling book—which difference seems to be reminiscent of the varying meanings he employs for “metaphysics” in different texts.
Western Esotericism

Western esotericism has a long and colorful history. Spanning millennia, it is a story that includes the weaving together of divergent traditions—of particular importance those of Hermeticism, Kabbalism, and alchemy. Each one of these traditions speaks a profound orienting facet of the synergy that is western esotericism. As a rather simplistic clarification, one may say that the Hermetic axiom “that which is above is as that which is below, and that which is below is as that which is above” of Hermes Trismegistus’ Emerald Tablet speaks a homology of, and correspondence between, heaven and earth.90 Theosophical Kabbalah provides a vision into the hidden workings of the divine, along with methods for achieving such vision.91 Finally, alchemy investigates and mobilizes these insights towards the transmutation of the practitioner’s psyche, as well as materials within her world.92 After western esotericism acquires a characteristically Christian voice, particularly through the Renaissance, these varied strands become, as it were, more and more inextricably melded one to the other. These traditions merged so much so that we may speak of a western esoteric tradition today.

The importance of the Italian Renaissance for the development, dissemination, and “popularization” of western esotericism cannot be overstated. Certainly, the creation of the movable type printing press had more than just a little to do with this state of


affairs. Yet it is through Marcilio Ficino’s Platonic Academy in Florence that western esotericism receives the strength of voice and support necessary to reach a broad audience. The story begins with Marcilio Ficino (1433-1499 C.E.) enjoying the patronage of Cosimo de Medici, working on translations of Plato for his patron. His work is interrupted when Cosimo, having just received a rare and all but complete copy of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, requests that Ficino discontinue his work on Plato until the *Corpus Hermeticum* itself is translated. Ficino, profoundly inspired by the work, further develops and communicates his own humanist thought as a synergy of Hermeticism and Neoplatonism. Shortly thereafter, his student Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494 C.E.), having acquired Jewish Kabbalistic texts in the aftermath of the Jewish Diaspora from Spain in 1492, began to articulate and promulgate a Christian Kabbalism which integrated the influence of Ficino’s Hermeticism.93

Of equal importance, and perhaps more directly responsible for the popularization of western esotericism, the German Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522 C.E.), inspired by Pico, began his own “Christianification” of Kabbalah, even likening it to “an alchemy.” Having read Reuchlin, the humanist Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535 C.E.) went on to write *De Occulta Philosophia* as an attempted complete systematization and integration of Hermeticism, Kabbalism, and alchemy.94 Thus it continued.

It is impossible to calculate how popular western esotericism actually was through this critical period of its development, yet we can get some indication by the fact that

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94 Ibid., 29-33.
between its original publication in 1471 and the end of the sixteenth century, Ficino’s Latin translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, entitled *Pimander*, alone realized sixteen editions with wide circulation.\(^9\) Reuchlin and Agrippa as well attained far-flung and lasting influence through their publications—even in the wake of Luther’s Reformation, which was taking place as they were working on or publishing their more significant works.\(^6\)

It is one of the great ironies of history that Martin Luther, who proclaimed a deep and abiding antipathy towards mystics, may have contributed to the mystical development and popularization of the western esoteric tradition in Protestant Germany. Martin Luther edited and published the *Theologia Deutsch* in 1518—the year after posting his Ninety-Five Theses—later declaring that this work anticipated the Reformation and his theology.\(^7\) However, the *Theologia Deutsch*, as a collection of sermons by Meister Eckhart and Johannes Tauler, is a tribute to the German mystical tradition. In the German milieu of the early Reformation with its anticipation of theological and social freedom—where every man is king and priest unto God—this work exerted a broad popular influence. In fact, many of Luther’s early co-Reformers had a strong mystical bent to begin with. The developing tension between Luther and his mystical or Spiritualist co-Reformers helped lead to Luther’s increasingly more tyrannical dogmatism, which led in its turn, to the progressive “occulting” of the popular

\(^9\) Ibid., 28.

\(^6\) Ibid., 29-31.

\(^7\) Weeks, *German Mysticism*, 2, 144.

\(^9\) Referring to Rev. 1:6; and see Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downer’s Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 392.
mystical or Spiritualist current within Luther’s Reformation. As a result, many Spiritualist Protestants, in their turn, entered into sympathetic and mutually supportive association with western esotericists.

Indeed, as significant to this chapter’s thesis as the popularization of the German mystical tradition via the *Theologia Deutsch*, Luther also expressed his enthusiastic approval of alchemical study and research. He found it pleasing for its “allegory and secret signification.” 99 This rather curious—to our eyes—enthusiasm for alchemy was not limited to Luther alone. Today we seem to forget selectively how far the interest in alchemy, and thereby the western esoteric tradition, spread—weaving itself into German popular culture. As a point of fact, in Mannheim Germany, at the time of Goethe’s birth in 1749, the practice of alchemy was so popular that the city was “obliged to suppress it by law,” as the many alchemical laboratories there posed a considerable fire hazard for the city. 100

Another personage significant to the spread, development, and popularization of alchemy and the esoteric tradition was Luther’s contemporary Philippus Theophrastus Aureolus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493-1541 C.E.), commonly known as Paracelsus. This wandering physician’s name is virtually synonymous with German alchemy, and he figures as important to preliminary transformations in medical understanding paving the way for the early developments of modern empirical medicine. The Paracelsian “reformation” in medicine begins, as did the Lutheran Reformation, with a public act of

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100 Ibid., 58.
dissent. Paracelsus burned his scholastically oriented medical text in Basel in 1527.\textsuperscript{101}

His practice, at that point, turned to the more “empirical” reading of alchemical correspondences in nature as the effective discipline for the cure of disease. His fame and teachings spread, even as did Luther’s.

Via these rather broad and selective strokes, I am attempting to communicate two critical issues. First is the very practical issue of disclosing those influences that flow into the Görlitz of Böhme’s lifetime. Second is the rather difficult matter of disclosing the complexity of, and popular resonance with, the synergy that is the western esoteric tradition. This tradition, through its centerless history, can be said to gather progressively within itself multiple traditions and multiple themes, even as it brings itself more clearly into focus. As we approach the Görlitz of Böhme’s time, we must admit to the western esoteric tradition as a loose accommodation of Hermeticism, humanism, Jewish Kabbalah, Christianity, German mysticism, alchemy, a liberal spirit of inquiry, and an early Reformation spirit of hopeful independence. Through the synergy of these varied traditions, the multiple themes speak.

One of the foremost of these themes concerns a radical shift in the locus of authority. This can be characterized as a shift from ecclesial or political bodies (and their representatives) to the illuminated or accomplished \textit{Magus},\textsuperscript{102} as locus of authority, that each practitioner, through discipline and grace, has the potential to become. This is a variation on the familiar historical keynote that shifts authority to the individual. This theme is further grounded in an additional theme. That is that the individual can read the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[101] Weeks, \textit{German Mysticism}, 125.
\item[102] Ibid., 183-184; and Magee, \textit{Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition}, 7-8, 12.
\end{footnotes}
divine, not only in the book of scripture, but in the books of nature and self as well—another familiar historical trope. As these themes developed together within the western esoteric tradition, they lead to a transformed relation to authoritative sources. The *Magi*, as legitimate loci and sources of authority, can speak from anywhere, anytime, and in any language. His or her own illumination or accomplishment is self-legitimizing—as is the progressive development of each practitioner. They need appeal to no other authority. Yet they constitute together, in an occulted manner, an ongoing body of transmission—an “inner church,” as some like Böhme would have called it.

This notion can be understood further as an appreciation or application of Hermetic correspondences. In Hermetic correspondences, “like” always resonates with “like.” While respective external realms of influence are significant, this fact does not detract, according to this view, from the primary interior co-resonances. So it is for the body of the “inner church.” Separated by time and place—even language and religion—the body of the inner church can recognize and influence one another. This emergent theme of the inner church, in contradistinction to the “churches of stone,” figures prominently in the work of Jacob Böhme and, to a lesser degree, in the Görlitz of his day.

**Görlitz**

Görlitz in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries realized a rather unique combination of politics, persons, and traditions. While predominantly Lutheran, as an acquisition of the Catholic Bohemian crown lands, Görlitz and its sister members of the Lusatian League of Six Cities founded in 1346\(^{103}\) experienced relative freedom from

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the centralized Protestant ecclesiastical authority of Wittenberg, and even Electoral Saxony’s Dresden. The crown-appointed ecclesiastical authority for Lusatia was a Catholic layperson, and tolerance between Catholics and Protestants was the norm—each often sharing a common church with separate altars. In Görlitz then, the local Protestant church was somewhat forced into a collaborative relation with the city council—a situation becoming progressively more the exception rather than the rule in Protestant Germany where the church could exert considerable local authority, especially in ecclesiastical matters.

The tolerant atmosphere of Görlitz and its surrounding environs was not simply an issue concerning Protestants vis-à-vis Catholics. It concerned much more. Near the outer edge of the Reformation’s reach, Görlitz was something of a safe haven for unorthodox Protestants of many stripes. The mayor of Görlitz, Bartholomäus Scultetus, a humanist of some renown is a case in point. During this period of the orthodox Lutheran community’s violent turn, particularly in Germany, away from any accommodation of humanism (referred to as Philippism or even Crypto-Calvinism), Mayor Scultetus organized a humanist club comprised of the city elite called the Convivium Musicum. Even Görlitz’s Lutheran Pastor Gregor Richter, Böhme’s primary antagonist, was a member of this Convivium.

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104 Ibid., 20.
105 Ibid., 27.
107 Ibid., 28-29.
Before the humanist Richter was appointed pastor, the mystically oriented Pastor Martin Moller had spiritually guided Protestants in Görlitz. While Pastor Moller did have to defend himself against charges coming from outside of Görlitz that he was himself a Philippist, this did not prevent him from continuing to minister to his congregation in Görlitz until his death in 1606.\(^{108}\) It is further quite likely that Pastor Moller was familiar with and sympathetic to the work of the “heretical” mystic and Hermeticist Valentin Weigel (1533-1588 C.E.). Although it was not commonly known that Weigel was a Hermetic mystic until his work was published after his (and Moller’s) death, it was, indeed, known beforehand by Görlitz resident and brother-in-law of Mayor Scultetus, Abraham Behem who had been in correspondence with the mystic Weigel.\(^{109}\) It is certainly within the realm of probability, then, that the sympathetic mystic Moller knew the mystic Weigel’s work as well.

The mystic or Spiritualist influence extended beyond the city walls of Görlitz. In the surrounding countryside, several wealthy burgher families who had recently turned landed gentry were known to be Schwenckfeldians.\(^{110}\) The Silesian Caspar von Ossig Schwenckfeld (1490-1561 C.E.) was a significant regional figure of the early Reformation. Yet he became critical of what he perceived as residual “fleshy” elements in Luther’s faith, such as the Eucharist, liturgical ceremony, and the primacy of the written scriptural word. The “inner Word” and “inner church” held more importance for Schwenckfeld—that, and the early Reformation spirit of tolerance for divergent

\(^{108}\) Ibid., 26.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., 30; Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, 35-36.

viewpoints. After his meeting with Luther in 1525 to discuss these issues, Luther turned against Schwenckfeld, leading to Schwenckfeld’s eventual exile from Silesia in 1529.\textsuperscript{111} Nevertheless, Schwenckfeldian conveticals remained—such as those near Görlitz. And if, as was often the case, the Lutheran ecclesiastical establishment of Görlitz wasn’t sympathetic to the influential Schwenckfeldian new nobility, the city council, for the greater public good, could at least ensure that they were tolerated.\textsuperscript{112}

Returning to within the city walls of Görlitz, mention must also be made of the city’s physicians. Paracelsus exerted a profound influence in the Görlitz medical community. In fact, so profound was his sway that Paracelsus’ collected works were edited in Görlitz during Böhme’s lifetime. Moreover, while some among the city’s residents may have suspected the physicians of heretical beliefs—reflected in a complaint against them brought before the city council—nevertheless, the city council could orchestrate a tolerant rapprochement, yet again. Illustrative of such tolerance is the fact that upon the death of the physician Conrad Scheer in 1615, a city chronicler noted that in the forty years of Scheer’s residence in Görlitz, he had never been seen in church, nor did anyone even know in what he believed.\textsuperscript{113}

Finally, mention must be made of Jacob Böhme’s rather remarkable friend, Dr. Balthasar Walter. Walter was known for taking extensive journeys in his pursuit of esoteric knowledge. On one such journey, he traveled to the Middle East—reputedly to gain knowledge in Kabbalah, alchemy, and magic. While one might be tempted to make

\textsuperscript{111} Weeks, \textit{German Mysticism}, 155-157.

\textsuperscript{112} Weeks, \textit{Bohme: Intellectual Biography}, 22.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 29-30.
much of Walter’s influence on Böhme, it must be noted that this relationship seemed not to blossom until rather late in their lives.¹¹⁴

What is of importance though, is how Walter reflects the esoteric interest within the milieu of Böhme’s life. While most of Germany was suffering the horrors of the witch-hunts, the city elite of Görlitz were rather openly pursuing interests in humanism, mysticism, and the esoteric.¹¹⁵ It is my claim that with Jacob Böhme, these traditions are melded into a self-sustaining whole, which resonates through what was then the future.

**Jacob Böhme**

The illumination of 1600 figured prominently in Jacob Böhme’s life. Not only did it resolve questions that plagued Böhme before the event, but it also proved itself the inspirational source of his work thereafter. His illumination, as reported, occurred suddenly. While working in his shop, the brilliant flash of sunlight reflected from a pewter (or tin) vessel is said to have brought his spirit to an intelligible clarity. For a mere quarter of an hour, Böhme is said to have seen into the inner workings of the divine in nature.¹¹⁶

For the next twelve years, Böhme worked and studied in an attempt to make his illumination explicable—primarily to himself. The fruit of his effort is the unfinished *Morgenröthe im Aufgang* or *The Aurora*.¹¹⁷ Had Böhme kept his work to himself, it is

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 30.
¹¹⁵ Ibid., 31.
¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1-2.
¹¹⁷ See Jacob Boehme, *Morgenröthe im Aufgang* (1612), vol. 1 of *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Will-Erich Peuckert and August Faust (Stuttgart: Frommanns Verlag, 1955-61); from the facsimile reprint
possible that we never would have heard of this Lusatian shoemaker. Yet, at the urging of a friend or friends, he shared his work. Shortly thereafter, copies of *The Aurora* began to circulate. One should not overlook the significance of this event. *The Aurora*, as a work in progress, was upwards of four hundred handwritten pages. Further, this rather massive work was initially copied and recopied by hand. Only an enthusiastic appreciation of *The Aurora*, to say the least, would have led others to such an undertaking. It is speculated that the patron of this effort was the Schwenckfeldian noble Carl von Ender, who later became Böhme’s most significant patron.\(^\text{118}\)

Böhme’s local troubles began at this time. Within about one year of *The Aurora*’s original circulation, Böhme was criticized for this work by both the Görlitz city council and Pastor Richter in July 1613. Böhme claimed that the work was strictly personal and that its copy and circulation had occurred without his knowledge or consent. Be that as it may, the city council ordered Böhme to cease writing speculative compositions.\(^\text{119}\)

The city council’s order may seem understandable in its straightforwardness, yet it actually poses numerous interesting curiosities. In a period of generally increasing dogmatic expression and enforcement, a simple gag order should strike one as rather light punishment for one suspected of blasphemy. Further, there is no mention made in the order concerning the books already in circulation or those who copied and circulated

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\(^\text{119}\) Ibid., 93.
Therefore, one may readily suspect that the order was actually an attempt to maintain the status quo in a context where everyone could be suspect for one reason or another. Böhme’s gag order then, can be seen as a diplomatic attempt to safeguard the city from external scrutiny should Böhme become more widely popular through additional works.

However, the issue did not rest so easily. Pastor Richter remained vocal, at least locally, with his extreme criticism of Böhme. Historically, the trend seems to have been for interpreters of Böhme’s life and work to characterize this fact in terms of Böhme’s struggle against orthodox Lutheran Christianity. Yet, as Andrew Weeks makes plain—recalling Richter’s Philippist sympathies—the issue of Richter’s animosity towards Böhme is a different matter altogether. It was not as much about orthodox dogmatics as it was personal.121

While Böhme considered himself a good Lutheran, and certainly adhered to much conservative Lutheran doctrine, he nevertheless was harshly critical of the “learned men” of the Church. Böhme held the learned, with their escalating doctrinal disputes, as responsible for much of the violence of his time. Further, he viewed their strict adherence to “churches of stone” as alienating them from participation in the “true” or “inner church.”122 According to Weeks, Richter’s extreme and ongoing reproach of

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120 Ibid., 93-94.
121 Ibid., 94-95.
122 Ibid., 23, 133-134.
Böhme and his works flowed from Richter’s taking Böhme’s charges as a personal effront, since Richter himself was Görlitz’s own learned authority of the Church.\textsuperscript{123}

After the imposition of the order to cease writing, Böhme complied with this order for the next four and a half years. Then, in response to the repeated encouragement of his supporters, he once again began to write. From this point until Böhme’s death in 1624, a flood of material ensued.\textsuperscript{124} At first, Böhme’s new works were copied and circulated somewhat secretly. Yet as his notoriety grew beyond Lusatia and Silesia, Böhme became bolder. He would encourage the reading of his works and their broadening reach. He would defend his works in written responses against polemic attack.\textsuperscript{125} In addition, he agreed to the printing of two of his essays together as the earliest compilation of what we know now—in an expanded version—as *The Way to Christ*.\textsuperscript{126} He even came to accept *Philosophus Teutonicus* as a nom de plume given him by his supporters.\textsuperscript{127}

It is clear that in 1624, with the publishing of the short *The Way to Christ*, Böhme had staged himself to reach a broad readership. As part of a thrust for a “new reformation,” Böhme then turned his attention to Leipzig and Dresden. He sent several copies of different manuscripts, including his newly printed work, to Balthasar Walter in order to make them available at the Leipzig book fair. He also courted an invitation to

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 94-95.

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 2.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 161-163, 184.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 205-206.

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 129.
the Dresden court of Electoral Saxony as part of this effort. Böhme’s new reformation was meant to issue in a world of tolerance and free thinking; a world where the escalating charges of blasphemy had ceased; a world where people no longer fought wars over a difference in doctrinal position; a world where even “Jews, Turks, and heathens” were welcome and respected as congregants of the inner church. This would be the beginning of an age of the Holy Spirit. Or, so was the hope.

That Jacob Böhme might indeed extend his sphere of influence was evidently altogether too much for Pastor Richter to accept. He intensified his criticism of Böhme both in writings and from the pulpit characterizing Böhme as a drunk, an Oedipus, and an Antichrist. Finally, Richter enlisted the help of a Pastor Frisius in Silesia. Frisius wrote to the Görlitz city council claiming that Böhme’s works were exerting a disruptive influence in Silesia. The Görlitz city council was forced to act. Böhme was once again called before the council. Yet tellingly, knowing that Böhme’s attempt to be received by the court in Dresden had proven successful, the council suggested that Böhme simply leave town for the time being. In effect, the council acted by not really acting.

129 Ibid., 202-204.
130 Ibid., 200.
131 The considerable ambivalence of National Socialism and German nationalist literature towards Böhme is, perhaps, understandable in light of the above. However, one must also make mention of the Kabbalistic influence in his writing and his anti-nationalism to fully understand it. Their ambivalence is demonstrated through the Gestapo’s seizure and holding of Böhme’s original autographs, even while preparations were being made by cultural officials “to celebrate Böhme as a great German.” See ibid., 129-130, 133-135, and 239n.12. For purposes of full disclosure, mention must also be made of the fact that Böhme is not always entirely “friendly” in his characterizations of other traditions, i.e., see Jacob Boehme, The Incarnation of Jesus Christ, trans. John Rolleston Earle (London: Constable, 1934), 2.7.13.
132 Weeks, Boehme: Intellectual Biography, 211-212.
As before, it could be said that the city council was acting in the interest of the status quo. Böhme had many powerful friends among the nobility and certainly on the council itself. Apparently, no one’s interests, except Richter’s, would be served by punishing Böhme—especially for blasphemy. Further, whereas the council surely would have resented Richter for drawing Silesia into this issue—and thereby forcing the council’s hand—they couldn’t very well take Richter to task either. Undoubtedly, Richter had his own supporters on the council and in the community. After all, he was a member of the mayor’s Convivium. Yet certainly the council was aware that as a Philippist, Richter himself would ultimately be vulnerable should this controversy with Böhme spread more significantly beyond the city and its regional environs.  

Therefore, by asking Böhme simply to leave town for the time being, the council was making an informed gamble that without Böhme’s presence in town, Richter would quiet down. Or, that while in Dresden, Böhme might somehow incriminate himself, thus ending the matter. In any event, certainly it would be better not to censure Böhme officially in the wake of his personal invitation to the Elector’s court. The Thirty Years’ War was underway, and there had been a formal alliance made between Protestant Prince Johann Georg of Electoral Saxony and the Emperor Ferdinand whereby Lusatia was brought into Electoral Saxony’s sphere of influence. Therefore, to censure Böhme might be to provoke the Elector’s wrath with potentially tragic consequences for Görlitz. For Böhme though, his interpretation of the council’s judgment was as a personal victory. So, leaving his wife and children in Görlitz, Böhme journeyed to Dresden, stopping along

133 Ibid., 94.
134 Ibid., 154.
the way to meet with certain influential supporters from whom he no doubt received advice concerning the court in Dresden.\(^{135}\)

It is to be recalled that the autodidact Böhme was of peasant origin. While he had rather scandalously changed careers in Görlitz from cobbler to merchant—perhaps elevating his status in that way—one still must understand that for a man of such humble origins and means to be invited to the Dresden court was quite remarkable. Böhme’s invitation was probably realized, then, only through the influence of his friends among the nobility. Without such an explanation, it is hard to comprehend how it otherwise could have happened or what followed once he was there. Böhme was graciously received at court, and the court alchemist attended to his needs. Though he did not meet with the Elector himself, Böhme did meet with virtually everyone at the court with political or ecclesiastical power and position. It appears that wherever Böhme went he was favorably received and assured of support.\(^{136}\)

In questioning how such magnanimity towards Böhme could have been possible, several orientations present themselves for speculation. For instance, having only recently acquired Lusatia as a territory within its political sphere of authority, the court in Dresden may have wooed Böhme as a means to ensuring and furthering amiable relations with his friends among the Lusatian nobility. It surely would have helped that Böhme advocated tolerance and nonviolence among all parties. For another, Böhme had always maintained a conservative Lutheran position vis-à-vis the Eucharist, which was a hot button issue of the time, and he had been critical of any Crypto-Calvinist compromise

\(^{135}\) Ibid., 212.

\(^{136}\) Ibid., 213.
with the doctrine of Real Presence. This certainly would have reassured the ecclesial
authorities of the court who were concerned by a rising Calvinist influence, particularly
in Lusatia’s neighbor Silesia. An influential Böhme could help safeguard this critical
point of orthodox Lutheran doctrine. Moreover, in light of this single important issue,
perhaps Böhme could even be forgiven for some of his more problematic points of
interpretation. Finally, one should not ignore or underestimate the possibility that
Böhme’s esoteric reading of Christianity itself was well received in this center of
orthodox Lutheran authority. This then would be to say that the western esoteric tradition
had indeed, by this time and/or in other locales than just Görlitz, set deeper roots than is
commonly acknowledged.137

Böhme was away in Dresden for approximately two months, during which time
Pastor Richter died. Böhme returned to Görlitz in July, but by August he had fallen
seriously ill himself from exhaustion. Nevertheless, in early autumn he traveled to
Silesia to meet with supporters. There, he again became deathly ill and was conveyed
back to Görlitz. Then in November 1624, Böhme died. As he lay dying, the Lutheran
ecclesiastical authorities who remained in Görlitz after Pastor Richter’s death put
questions to Böhme in order to determine and ensure his doctrinal conformity before
offering him the sacrament of Communion upon his deathbed. Even after his death, they
resisted performing his funeral rite until the city council tellingly ordered them to do so.
Böhme, in the end, was buried in the Görlitz churchyard—a final triumph over Richter
and Richter’s charges against him.138

137 Ibid., 213-215.
138 Ibid., 216, 218.
Jacob Böhme’s Synergy

In the early seventeenth century, near the outer edge of the Reformation’s reach, Görlitz proved an ideal environment for Jacob Böhme as an autodidact to blossom intellectually. In his ongoing struggle to bring his illumination to expression, he drew upon the diverse sources—many of them esoteric—available to him in Görlitz. This also included engaging pressing religious questions of his day. Seen in this light, it would not be accurate to presume that Böhme set out specifically to regather and carry forward the western esoteric tradition. He was no Agrippa. Yet regather and carry forward the tradition he did.  

The late sixteenth through the early seventeenth century was indeed a period of violently competing views. Many sensitive issues were at stake, and people lost their lives over these issues. It has been suggested that after Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the castle church door in Wittenberg, many in Germany became hopeful that what later became the Reformation would herald an age of greater ecclesiastic, social, and intellectual freedom. Yet, as divergent views proliferated, Luther himself (and to a great degree his church) became increasingly more adamant (and one could say violent) in the enforcement of what was to be understood as doctrinal correctness. Nevertheless, the genie, so to speak, was out of the bottle.

One such sensitive issue, at that time, concerned the very structure of the cosmos. This is a familiar story. Individuals such as Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543 C.E.), Galileo Galilei (1564-1642 C.E.), Tycho Brahe (1546-1601 C.E.), and Johann Kepler

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139 In order to ensure a critical background for my discussion in this section, I strongly encourage the reader to look to Faivre, *Theosophy*, xxi-xxv, 7-10, 50-59; and see Weeks, *German Mysticism*, 143-152.
(1571-1630 C.E.) were progressively gathering empirical evidence, supported by mathematical calculation, that revolutionized European understanding of the physical cosmos. Our understanding was shifting from an earth-centered to a sun-centered cosmic conception. It needs to be remembered though that in the early seventeenth century the sun-centered viewpoint was far from universal acceptance. The epistemological hegemony of modern science was not yet attained. Competing orientations of epistemological certainty—or uncertainty—were still very much in play and usually brought to articulation in the context of a doctrinal or spiritual Christian discourse.

Luther’s position on this matter, popular in many ecclesial circles, was that given the decrepitude of fallen human nature, only the scriptural Word of the Bible guaranteed certainty. Luther therefore denounced the notion of a sun-centered cosmos.\textsuperscript{140} For Luther and others, it was not a question of accurate empirical evidence. If empirical evidence, subject to human uncertainty, countered scripture (or their interpretation of it), the evidence was simply wrong. The one and only source of true certainty just could not be countered. If countered in any way, according to this position, then we were cut adrift above a satanic abyss.

Before developing this review further, I believe it is important to emphasize the resonance of the foregoing position in contemporary discourse. While many may believe that this epistemological position was overcome in or by modernity, or that it belongs to a way of thinking no longer available to us, we should not be so quick to judge it as so. The recent proliferation of Christian evangelical fundamentalism alone should cause one pause. It demonstrates that we may not be so far removed from this position, and as the

\textsuperscript{140} Weeks, \textit{Boehme: Intellectual Biography}, 45-46.
certainties of modernity have fallen before question, many people have come under fundamentalism’s sway. Surely, the same can also be said for other epistemological positions of this earlier period—including those of western esotericism. The point is that my rather simplistic review here is not intended to speak only of the past, but also to direct attention to trends of thinking that still live within us. This is simply to say that we are in our history, not beyond it.

Returning to the review, the epistemological position of most esotericism differed considerably from Luther and those who held a like position. As has been stated, many esotericists of this period, including Jacob Böhme, while still holding the Bible in highest esteem, believed that the Word of God could also be read or heard in nature and the self. They, along with like-minded humanists and mystics, could Biblically justify this position through emphasizing a reading of the Book of Genesis through the Prolegomenon of John’s Gospel—a well-known trend in German mystical interpretation going back at least as far as Meister Eckhart.\textsuperscript{141} According to this construal, God’s Word—the Son of God, the \textit{Logos}—speaks the cosmos into play—or existence—and so resonates in or as creation even while “transcending” it. This same Word, the Son of God, is further identified as God’s image and likeness (Gen. 1:26 NRSV) in human being, which is human life as light (John 1:1-5 NRSV)—the knowing/understanding feelingful living of our embodied being. The “true” source of our certainty then is disclosed as the shining/resonating Son/inner Word that speaks throughout creation. The Biblical Fall complicates, but does not change this source of certainty. Surely, to invest the Fall with such power to change would be to invest the Fall with power over God.

\textsuperscript{141} Weeks, \textit{German Mysticism}, 73-74; and Magee, \textit{Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition}, 24-25, 107n. 79.
Bearing in mind that the non-centered and diverse phenomenon that is the western esoteric tradition never has claimed a unifying doctrine or creed, the epistemological position articulated above was appealing in seventeenth century Germany and beyond for numerous reasons. As example, for Christian esotericists, it Biblically validated their investigations into Hermetic correspondences and alchemical transformation. It further provided grounds for theosophical illumination. In addition, it justified their high esteem for non-Christian sources since the divine within anyone’s self and nature provided the ground for all human knowledge and striving for truth, be it mundane or profound. Finally, it offered means whereby esotericists could, on the one hand, ally themselves with humanists in defense against attacks coming from a rigidly doctrinal orthodoxy or, on the other hand, shift alliances to stand together with the orthodox against attacks from an overly rational humanism.

The latter shift of alliance became a necessity as humanists and esotericists began progressively to hear *Logos* in different “tonalities.” To be sure, a significant number of early humanists were esotericists as well, and as has been suggested, were responsible in part for the creation and popularization of the esoteric tradition, as we know it. Yet increasingly, humanism’s discourse “proper” was influenced by Greek philosophy, and its interests became that of nascent science. *Logos*, as inner Word, came to mean “reason” as expression of cause—Leibnitz’s rendering reason.\(^\text{142}\) Thereby, we ultimately became “modern.”

Böhme and other esotericists of his day heard *Logos* differently. One way of expressing this difference is to say that for them, *Logos* remained closer to the spirit of

\(^{142}\) For an in-depth analysis of this position, see Heidegger, *Principle of Reason*. 

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creation as opposed to the logic of cause. That is, the esoteric position remained closer to *Magia*. This position, it also should be acknowledged, developed in close proximity to those profoundly influential discourses concerning imagination—with their attending practices—expounded by such esoteric luminaries as Ramón Lull (1235-1316 C.E.), Marcilio Ficino, Paracelsus, and Giordano Bruno (1548-1600 C.E.).

Cause and creation, in this context, are better not confounded. The logic of cause, it may be said, pursues a sequence of events, and driven by its own necessity, leads to a first cause in this sequence. In contradistinction to the necessity of sequence, the spirit of creation or *Magia*, as Böhme and others understood it, concerned an ongoing “process” of manifestation or appearance.\(^\text{143}\) We would say it dealt with phenomenality. More will be said of this in the next chapter.

The epistemological position of the western esoteric tradition and those of like mind (as articulated above), allowed a critical and timely development to occur within the tradition through the work of Jacob Böhme. As stated, in the years that Böhme worked on *The Aurora*, struggling to give voice to his illumination, he engaged numerous contemporary issues to help with this task. These included the violently contended issue of real versus symbolic presence in the Eucharist—which drew in its wake the question of the ubiquity of God. Certainly, to his political advantage, Böhme maintained a conservative Lutheran stance on these issues even as he rearticulated them in line with his theosophical illumination.\(^\text{144}\) Böhme also took into consideration the claims of those who supported the sun-centered cosmos. Contrary to Luther and his followers, Böhme

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\(^{143}\) Weeks, *German Mysticism*, 179-181.

\(^{144}\) Ibid., 174-175.
accepted the new cosmology.\textsuperscript{145} However, it must be understood that for Böhme, his acceptance of the contested cosmology was not simply a matter of acquiescence in the face of irrefutable empirical evidence.

Böhme did believe that the divine and truth could be read in the world, and that any “literal” understanding of scripture needed to be relinquished in the light of what the world revealed. But what the world revealed was never that which was strictly “empirical.” What truth the world, scripture, or the self might reveal was due to the illumination of the ubiquitous Word alone. Human certainty was rooted in the transformative illumination of this shining Word at the center of our being. In turn, the Hermetic rule, “that which is above is as that which is below,” continues as “that which is below is as that which is above.”\textsuperscript{146} Thereby, the shining light of the Son within the center of our being below, could find its correspondence in the created heavens’ above as the Sun-center of the cosmos. Thus the world might be read.\textsuperscript{147}

What Böhme came to articulate, first in \textit{The Aurora} and then more profoundly in his later writings, was a transformed esoteric vision. What Böhme offered in his transformed vision was not only a Son/sun-centered cosmos with no fixed above or below, but also a world whose ongoing creation or appearance is rooted in dynamic co-arising invisible forces—\textit{Quellgeist} or Source Spirits,\textsuperscript{148} in contradistinction to pure forms—which find expression through nature as well as human experience. Böhme thus

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 176-177; and Weeks, \textit{Boehme: Intellectual Biography}, 54-59.

\textsuperscript{146} Randolph, \textit{Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus}, 21.

\textsuperscript{147} Weeks, \textit{German Mysticism}, 183.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 176; and Weeks, \textit{Boehme: Intellectual Biography}, 70-76.
kept the developing esoteric tradition in step with developing science. Thereby, it may be said that Böhme accomplished for esotericism what science (in its own way) would accomplish for humanism. Böhme transformed esoteric discourse in such a way that it could continue to speak through “modern” discourse. Böhme’s acquired nom de plume, Philosophus Teutonicus, was indeed merited.

Therefore, Böhme’s cosmos was not a mechanical system of fixed spheres. It was dynamic and driven by ubiquitous occult forces. And so, one could say, was his God. In fact, his cosmos and his God are not readily divided. This is due in part to another issue with which Böhme wrestled: creatio ex nihilo. For Böhme and others, God’s creating out of nothing was problematic. The notion was that God, in order to maintain “His” status as first and one (or three) alone, could not co-exist with some type of eternal “matter” that then was formed during creation. If such were the case, then a dualist rather than a monist theological position would needs be articulated. Therefore, God must create formless matter out of nothing, which then is the non-eternal stuff out of which creation is formed. Yet for the cobbler Böhme, formed stuff does not reconcile itself easily with living freedom. Rather, it reconciles itself more readily with a view advocating predeterminism or predestination. Therefore, being averse to these notions, Böhme came to articulate a position of creatio ex deo.

According to Böhme, God (or Godhead) “before” creation is Nothing (Nichts)—not a being, not Being, not even an absence of such. Godhead, as such, “is”

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149 Weeks, Boehme: Intellectual Biography, 104-105.
150 Weeks, German Mysticism, 179-181.
incomprehensible. This was a stance familiar to German mysticism, going back to Eckhart, and was also well articulated in Jewish Kabbalah. For Böhme, this eternal Nothing “is” eternally desiring Something, which generates the will of beginningless creation. More will be said of this in the next chapter. Let it be said for the time being that the Trinity, the Word, the Source Spirits, Being, beings, and their “substantiality” all proceed from this source. Every being is of God, and “is” dynamic living God stuff—a “free” appearing as the Something of Godhead’s desire and will. Each particularity also reflects, participates in, and “is” the whole. Yet as manifest beings, dwelling in and as the free-play of the Something of God, beings can be differentiated from—which is not to say divided from—God. Nothing can be outside of God; and so nothing can be divided from God.

As part of this introductory review, this leads to a final issue with which Böhme struggled. That is the question of evil. Böhme understood that if the above was “true,” evil must be rooted in God. Yet it could not be so rooted as to be a necessary

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156 Ibid., xxv-xxvii; and Weeks, *German Mysticism*, 178.
appearance. For as a necessary appearance, evil would be predestined, and Böhme would not abide such a position.157 Evil could appear then only as a possibility integral to the “will” of manifestation itself. For Böhme, as for Jewish Kabbalists—although Böhme often couched this in alchemical terms—God’s “wrath” or “fierceness” was understood as an integral “aspect” of coming to manifestation or appearance.158 Böhme came to understand the first appearance of evil as Lucifer’s freely attempted regressive possession of God’s wrath-fire. This attempt constituted his Fall, and the consequences ensued.159 Again, the above will be made clearer in the next chapter.

Through his struggle to bring his own illumination to expression, Jacob Böhme ultimately wrestled with the question of how God brought God to expression through the phenomenality of creation.160 He worked with that diversity of resources available to him, including Kabbalah, alchemy, Hermeticism, mysticism, humanism, nascent science, and those contentious issues of Protestant Christianity that plagued the society of his day. Thus, Böhme regathered the western esoteric tradition—impressing upon it his own unifying voice and force of vision. In this struggle, Böhme also rearticulated his illumination repeatedly emphasizing now one facet or medium of interpretive discourse,
and now another. While for many readers of his work, this plurality of voices generates little more than confusion. For others, it has been a perpetual source of profound inspiration. It is in this light of Böhme’s capacity to inspire that I will now attempt to communicate how Böhme’s regathered esotericism was then carried forward.

Jacob Böhme’s Legacy

When Böhme died in 1624, both his renown and his influence had already begun to spread beyond the regions of Lusatia and Silesia, despite his original gag order. After his death, his international popularity grew rapidly. It is telling that within only a decade or two of his death, the work of translating and/or publishing Böhme’s complete works had begun in both the Netherlands and England.161

During the latter part of the seventeenth century, Böhme’s works appealed to a wide variety of people. Not only did the likes of Isaac Newton read Böhme,162 but also perhaps more significantly, Böhme became a lasting influence in German Pietism.163 The roots of Pietism, it is interesting to note, reflected numerous issues with which Böhme himself had struggled. In the aftermath of the Thirty Years’ War, many Lutherans came to experience a deep dissatisfaction with the rigid orthodoxy of the church. They, as Böhme before them, began to see the church and its doctrinaire priests

161 Faivre, Theosophy, 37-38.


163 Magee, Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition, 47 and 61-65; Weeks, German Mysticism, 193-194, 196-200.
as responsible for much of the violence they had recently experienced. Further, Pietism emerged in this context as a call for the “completion” of the Reformation.\textsuperscript{164}

It is to be borne in mind that Pietism itself, like the western esoteric tradition, was never a centralized or cohesive movement per se. Nevertheless, certain generalizations can be acknowledged concerning those tendencies that help to characterize it. As a movement to “complete” the Reformation, Pietists looked to return to one of Luther’s originary principles. That is that each believer could be priest and king unto God. Pietists then, professed a tolerant reliance on individual conscience in matters religious in reaction to the violence of their recent history with its church and state imposed doctrinal correctness. This affirmation of the individual within Pietism also entailed a shift in focus from forensic justification to the sanctification of the believer. This latter tack drew in its wake the familiar devotional characterization of Pietism with its emphasis on personal conversion, rebirth, and a feelingful relationship with Christ.\textsuperscript{165}

As with humanism before, Pietism was not foreign to the esoteric tradition. Accented by the elevation of living religious relationships, Pietism has been portrayed as promoting a point of view cast as “Better a live heresy than a dead orthodoxy.”\textsuperscript{166} Pietism then, proved to be a fertile and relatively safe context within which western esotericism could abide. Further, this compatibility between Pietism and western esotericism was most surely facilitated by the work of Jacob Böhme. As recalled from the previous section, Böhme’s “regathering” of western esotericism brought the issues

\textsuperscript{164} Olson, \textit{Story of Christian Theology}, 473-474.

\textsuperscript{165} Weeks, \textit{German Mysticism}, 194-196.

\textsuperscript{166} Olson, \textit{Story of Christian Theology}, 477.
and language of the Lutheran Reformation into his esoteric discourse—making esotericism certainly both more popularly accessible as well as palatable. In addition, Böhme’s *The Way to Christ*, as a compilation of essays on prayer, spiritual transformation, and new birth, spoke directly to and perhaps even prompted formulation of Pietist views on devotion.167

It is through Pietism specifically—though not exclusively—that Böhme and the western esoteric tradition spread popularly in Germany and beyond. Thereby, esotericism’s overarching themes and characteristic understanding of cosmos, human nature, and God integrated themselves into what was developing as modern western culture. This is not to claim that Pietism *in toto* spoke the language of western esotericism. Yet in what may be called the radical wing of Pietism, Böhme and esotericism flourished through the eighteenth century.168

The end of the eighteenth century through the first half of the nineteenth century witnesses the depth and degree of Böhme’s influence and how it was further carried forward, for it was during this time that Böhme was thoroughly integrated into German philosophical discourse. This story begins with the fathers of German Romanticism Friedrich von Hardenberg, or Novalis (1772-1801 C.E.) and Ludwig Teick (1773-1853 C.E.). Historically, it appears Teick was first to encounter Böhme’s work. He then introduced Novalis to the theosophical shoemaker.169 Profoundly inspired by what they had read, Novalis and Tieck began to develop the notion of poet as prophetic “genius,”


envisioning Böhme as their prototype. Thereby, as is widely recognized, they bequeathed to us, via Böhme’s inspiration, the source of our contemporary notions of genius. What is critical in this development is that it secularized and popularized the esoteric ideal of the *Magus*. The “genius,” much like the *Magus*, transcends religious, cultural, economic, academic, and temporal limitations. Further, as with the *Magus*, the genius’ achievement, in whatever arena, could be said to be self-legitimizing.

Not long after Novalis and Tieck had made their pivotal discovery of Böhme, three young Swabians, who had been roommates during their tenure as students in Tubingen, would then engage their separate professional careers in such a way as to fix Böhme inextricably into the history of German philosophy and culture. They were Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843 C.E.), F.W.J. Schelling (1775-1854 C.E.), and G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831 C.E.). As Swabians, these three had grown up in that region of Germany that has been recognized as a center of the radical Pietism which thoroughly embraced Böhme and the esoteric tradition. This was that region that claimed the likes of the eighteenth century theologian Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782 C.E.) who was a Böhmist of considerable renown and is known to have been a profound source of influence upon the two philosophers Schelling and Hegel and the poet Hölderlin. The philosophical project of Hegel and Schelling—although poetically something parallel would hold true of the poet Hölderlin as well—can be characterized as a Swabian Böhmist reaction to the conservative rational Pietism of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804 C.E.). One may recall that Kant had desired to limit reason in order to make way for

170 Mayer, “Reinventing the Sacred,” 256.

faith. In contradistinction to this, these Swabian Böhmists adhered to an ideal of divine wisdom (Sophia) that outstripped Kantian dualist limitations, further rendering the unconscious conscious or the pre-ontological ontological. This is also to say that, for them, the Kantian “thing-in-itself,” then, is disclosed Speculatively (dialectically) to Reason in and as the Unconditioned Absolute that we ourselves also are. In addition, for these Swabian Böhmists, the magic Speculum or mirror of this disclosure is none other than the recollective imagination, thus thoroughly revealing their own provenance within the western esoteric tradition of Ramón Lull, Paracelsus, Giordano Bruno, Böhme, and Oetinger. Thus, Böhme and his regathered western esoteric tradition were inextricably fixed into modern discourse and culture as a subversive voice within that discourse and culture, inasmuch as Kant became one of the dominant figures of modernism.

While it is true that Hegel, Schelling, and others rarely, if ever, referenced Böhme in their published works, the fact of Böhme’s direct influence was known and acknowledged by everyone—as revealed in personal correspondences of the time. For instance, when Schopenhauer wrote that Schelling was stealing ideas from Böhme, it was countered by J. B. Rätze that Schopenhauer’s philosophy of Will was itself stolen from Böhme. Be that as it may, in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Hegel does

172 Ibid., 120.
173 Ibid., 151-154.
174 Ibid., 120-123.
175 Weeks, Bohme: Intellectual Biography, 129; idem, German Mysticism, 184. It is important to note here Böhme’s link to psychoanalysis itself, which manifests specifically through Schopenhauer. See Michel Henry, The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis, trans. Douglas Brick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), Chapters 5 and 6. It is further suggested by Weeks that Böhme “seems to anticipate
identify Böhme as an important modern philosopher stating further that Böhme’s is the first characteristically German voice in philosophy. However, Hegel does go on to criticize Böhme for his “barbaric” use of sensually-laden language—Hegel seeing his own abstract and conceptual discourse as more appropriate to the task of truth. Whether Hegel is correct in this opinion concerning appropriate discourse, is to be questioned seriously. And indeed, he was questioned at the time (although without reference to Böhme or Böhme’s preferred style of discourse) by Hegel’s great Danish critic Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855 C.E.). And while it is to be acknowledged that Kierkegaard certainly had his own reasons for criticizing Hegel’s philosophy, it nonetheless is curious to note, that Kierkegaard’s one-time friend Hans Martensen (1808-1884 C.E.), who became a bishop of the Lutheran church in Denmark, was himself a staunch supporter of Böhme, having written a sympathetic introduction to and theological affirmation of the theosopher’s life and work.

The image that emerges from this brief historical sketch—and indeed a similar type of depiction focusing on the likes of William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Law could have been generated from English history, or we could have discussed the French and Freemasonry—is one in which Jacob Böhme’s regathered esotericism is woven intimately into early modern culture and discourse in such a way

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177 Magee, Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition, 49-50, 133, 144.

that it resonates subversively through modern theology and philosophy or poetically in a different (perhaps even prophetic) “tonality” from the mainstream modern “metaphysical” discourse. The fact that, from the end of the nineteenth throughout much of the twentieth century, intellectual concerns became progressively dominated by science and scientism and human concerns by the horrors of world wars and holocaust does not eradicate Böhme or his influence from our culture or our history—although it has relegated him to our “forgetting.”

Insofar as we are still shaped by Pietism, we are still shaped by Böhme. And insofar as German Idealism and Romanticism have woven themselves through our collective psyches and discourse, we are still shaped by Böhme. Further, with the advent in the twentieth century of phenomenology and then post-metaphysical hermeneutics open to the return of religion, it could be said that Böhme has now found that appropriate home wherefrom he may speak to us meaningfully again.

As Antoine Faivre has characterized it, theosophy is a hermeneutic or historically meaningful interpretive discourse.179 The issues of theosophical hermeneutics directly concern issues of phenomenality, or the meaningful appearance of beings among beings to beings as beings—the classic arena of phenomenology.180 Additionally, inasmuch as

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179 Faivre, *Theosophy*, 7 and 137.

180 In his work, *Incarnation: Une philosophie de la chair* (Incarnation: A philosophy of the flesh), Michel Henry states: “When, at the dawn of modern thought, of which it determines the essential themes, the cobbler Jacob Böhme formulated the immense question, theological in appearance: Why has God created the world?—the extraordinary response advanced belongs to phenomenology: God has created the world in order to manifest himself. The phenomenological structure of such a manifestation is clearly indicated” (Michel Henry, *Incarnation: Une philosophie de la chair* [Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000], 65-66). [Henry’s note 1: A theological question, but one it is easy to give a purely philosophical formulation: “Why is there such a thing as a world?”] Though his short interpretation of Böhme, which follows, is over-simplified, somewhat confused, and so in my opinion, mischaracterizing of Böhme’s work, he does here, nonetheless, clearly situate Böhme in the phenomenological tradition. [I thank Dr. Frank
phenomenology and hermeneutics continue to challenge and subvert the dominant “metaphysically” laden discourses of our day, they themselves are continuing the work of Jacob Böhme and the western esoteric tradition—which have always challenged and subverted the dominant discourse, of whatever day, in the ongoing struggle for legitimation.

As stated in the previous chapter, this notion of Böhme’s abiding influence (and thereby of the western esoteric tradition), in spite of our “forgetting,” is one that deeply concerns contemporary scholar Cyril O’Regan. As example, among other arenas, O’Regan reads Böhme’s influence in late modern theology. That is, O’Regan witnesses to the continuation and propagation of the “heretical” Böhmist “gnostic return” in the works of the theologians Paul Tillich (1886-1965 C.E.), Jürgen Moltmann (1926 C.E.- ), and Thomas J.J. Altizer (1927 C.E.- ).181 Wherever one might fall out in relation to these specific theologians, the fact of O’Regan’s specific identification of a Böhmist influence in their work demonstrates the very point I am attempting to make, vis-à-vis the continuation of a Böhmist and thereby an esoteric legacy in contemporary discourse. It is indeed identifiable.

As O’Regan’s work illustrates further, we are still locked in the struggle for legitimation. Beyond the contention between the scientific “metaphysical” and hermeneutic post-metaphysical discourses, there is the developing struggle in post-metaphysical discourse between the likes of O’Regan (who continues to characterize

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Böhme and western esotericism as heretical and dangerous, or just naïvely wrong-headed) and those who would take these traditions seriously for their long-neglected potential to transform beneficially our discourse, our culture, and perhaps even our worlds. What this means for western esotericists today is not that we must necessarily become champions for the work of Hegel or Schelling, for example. Rather, it does entail preserving works of our tradition in such a way that they “work as works,” and therefore are meaningful today and for the future. This may also involve developing new synergies within the tradition as part of the work of the tradition. In any event, although it is unlikely that western esotericism will ever be overtly unified or mainstream, its work as a subversive force in our ongoing discourses is still a work unfinished.

To conclude this chapter, for those interested in more in-depth historical treatments of Jacob Böhme and the western esoteric tradition, I enthusiastically refer them to the works cited of Andrew Weeks and Glenn Magee as invaluable starting points. The research and opinions of these scholars are woven throughout this chapter. These sources and the authors’ influence were integral to its writing. Further, for those interested in western esotericism as a field of contemporary academic study, I refer them to the works of Antoine Faivre.

182 See generally his introductions, O’Regan, Gnostic Apocalypse; and idem, Gnostic Return.

183 Certainly, the irony of the situation should not be lost, that were the esoteric tradition to become mainstream, it would not then be esoteric at all.

184 See Weeks, Boehme: Intellectual Biography; idem, German Mysticism; and Magee, Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition.

185 See especially Antoine Faivre, Access to Western Esotericism (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); and idem, Theosophy.
CHAPTER THREE
BÖHMIST THEOSOPHY AND IMAGINATION

Martin Heidegger:

J: In what sense?
I: Hermeneutically—that is to say, with respect to bringing tidings, with respect to preserving a message.
J: Man stands “in relation” then says the same as: Man is really as man when needed and used by . . .
I: . . . what calls on man to preserve the two-fold . . .
J: . . . which, as far as I can see, cannot be explained in terms of presence, nor in terms of present beings, nor in terms of the relation of the two.
I: Because it is only the two-fold itself which unfolds the clarity, that is, the clearing in which present beings as such, and presence, can be discerned by man . . .
J: . . . by man who by nature stands in relation to, that is, is being used by, the two-fold.
I: This is also why we may no longer say: relation to the two-fold, for the two-fold is not an object of mental representation, but is the sway of usage.
J: Which we never experience directly, however, as long as we think of the two-fold only as the difference which becomes apparent in a comparison that tries to contrast present beings and their presence.186

Jacob Böhme:

1. Magic is the mother of eternity, of the being of all beings; for it creates itself, and is understood in desire.
2. It is in itself nothing but a will, and this will is the great mystery of all wonders and secrets, but brings itself by the imagination of the desireful

hunger into being.

3. It is the original state of Nature. Its desire makes an imagination (Einbildung), and imagination or figuration is only the will of desire. But desire makes in the will such a being as the will in itself is.

4. True Magic is not a being, but the desiring spirit of the being. It is a matrix without substance, but manifests itself in the substantial being.

5. Magic is spirit, and being is its body; and yet the two are but one, as body and soul is but one person.

6. Magic is the greatest secrecy, for it is above Nature, and makes Nature after the form of its will. It is the mystery of the Ternary, viz. it is in desire the will striving towards the heart of God.

7. It is the formative power in the eternal wisdom, as a desire in the Ternary, in which the eternal wonder of the Ternary desires to manifest itself in co-operation with Nature. It is the desire which introduces itself into the dark Nature, and through Nature into fire, and through fire, through death or fierceness, into the light of Majesty.

20. It is impossible to express its depth, for it is from eternity a ground and support of all things. It is a master of philosophy, and likewise a mother thereof.\textsuperscript{187}

Böhmi
t theosophy can be portrayed as a hermeneutic that persistently folds back in on itself even as it unfolds its meaning. This fact has been a source of great frustration for many of the shoemaker’s readers. It makes him hard to grasp. Further, his discourse often defies rational conventions—most notably that of the excluded middle.\textsuperscript{188} It should also be recalled that even his great admirer Hegel was inclined to characterize Böhme’s theosophical hermeneutic as “barbaric.”\textsuperscript{189} Yet Böhme’s confounding of reasonable discourse can be understood as less a matter of barbaric naïveté, than it is a matter of


\textsuperscript{188} Faivre, \textit{Theosophy}, xxi-xxii.

\textsuperscript{189} Magee, \textit{Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition}, 144.
frustrating a reason that in Böhme’s judgment leads human beings astray, so that the message of his originary theosophical disclosure might find a more fitting or appropriate voice.

It will be recalled from the previous chapter that humanists and esotericists progressively began to hear Logos in different tonalities.\textsuperscript{190} These were the tonalities of cause and creation. For humanists, Logos was developing into that logic of cause which characterizes modern metaphysics with its reliance on a reason that must render a cause. But for many esotericists, and certainly for Böhme, Logos was speaking rather through the “relations” or “sway” of the phenomenality of an ongoing creation. This is not the creation of an “in the beginning” happening once upon a time in the past as a first cause. It is however, the creation of perpetual “beginning” that shows forth its own occurring even as it shows forth beings given to their being in and as the showing-forth.\textsuperscript{191}

In the call to hear and preserve this other tonality in western discourse, one must be mindful to enter into the work of its own disclosure. In the present context, I may be aided in this task in at least two ways. First, whereas in the previous chapter the balance of its focus was on demonstrating how it was that Böhme historically regathered and carried forward the esoteric traditions in western discourse and culture, in this chapter and those that follow, the balance shifts to an approach to Böhme which understands him as origin, or better wellspring, of the theosophical disclosure that gripped him. This is to say that we may heed the disclosure originarily in Böhme’s work, as his mode of writing was such that Böhme himself heeded the disclosure welling up through him as he wrote

\textsuperscript{190} For a review of the “other tonality,” see pages 66-70 above.

\textsuperscript{191} Weeks, \textit{German Mysticism}, 177-184; Faivre, \textit{Theosophy}, xxi-xxv. See also Boehme, “First Point” in “Six Theosophic Points,” 5-37.
“in the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{192} Certainly, Böhme may be subject to “a hermeneutic of suspicion,”\textsuperscript{193} but that is not the task at hand. Again, my task is hermeneutic preservation\textsuperscript{194} and retrieval, and approaching Böhme as wellspring facilitates this enterprise.

Second, my task is aided by drawing Martin Heidegger into the discourse—allowing him to converse with Böhme, in a manner of speaking, through this preservation. Chapter One has already suggested that Heidegger’s discourse will assist in avoiding the habituated tendency to speak automatically in a modern metaphysical voice, even when hearing in a different tonality. This includes remaining mindful of the ontological difference. Further, as the quotation that opened this chapter from Heidegger’s “Dialogue on Language” indicates, the unfolding discourse will also need to resist a reflection on difference generated on the basis of a simple comparison between Being [“presence”] and beings. I must rather speak of the twofold—a position not necessarily antagonistic (and one could even say sympathetic) to Böhme’s discourse with its disregard of the law of the excluded middle. Following Heidegger’s lead, I must continue to work towards a new way of speaking in the “other tonality.”

Chapter Two further suggested early on that it is highly likely that Heidegger himself may not have been exempt (despite his silence on the issue) from being affected by the western esoteric tradition as it had developed in Germany through Böhme’s influence. Again, I am not claiming that Heidegger was a closet Böhmist. However,


\textsuperscript{193}Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 32-36.

\textsuperscript{194}For a review of the methodology of preservation, see pages 16-25 above.
unavoidable resonances with Böhme can be found in Heidegger. This is certainly understandable, specifically considering Heidegger’s Swabian origins, and his admiration of Hölderlin, as well as other German Böhmists. Acknowledging this state of affairs is critical to considering how it is that Heidegger may help develop my thesis on the imagination and its relation to religious practice, or even how we are to understand imagination in Böhmist discourse. The discourses of Böhme and Heidegger, in my opinion, are not incommensurable.

As the quotation from Böhme’s “Six Mystical Points” which helped to initiate this chapter demonstrates, imagination is central to Böhme’s understanding of phenomenality. It should also be clear from the passage that when Böhme uses the related term Magic or *Magia*, he is speaking of an issue quite other than what one might think upon first encountering the term. It follows then that in order to approach appropriately the meaning of these and other Böhmist notions, we must of necessity enter the labyrinth of Böhme’s theosophy.

Jacob Böhme continuously cautions—as I must also now—that one must not hear his discourse too linearly or literally. Although his presentation of phenomenality proceeds as if there were a first stage, a second, and so forth, for Böhme such is not the case. All “stages” occur perennially and simultaneously and are ultimately non-differentiated—each abiding within the other. This is readily witnessed in any of his many discussions of the polysemic Source Spirits [*Quellgeister*]. Böhme further cautions in *The Incarnation of Jesus Christ* that whereas “the Spirit of God is often subject to the spirits of men, if they exercise good-willing,” and “everyone receives according to his endowment,” “not even anyone” (emphasis mine) should expect to understand Böhme
exactly in his sense.\(^{195}\) And I submit, nor should one want to. This is not to say that we should abandon any attempt to come to an understanding or that one has been given carte blanche in one’s attempt to approach Böhme. No. Rather, we would do well to approach Böhme’s discourse as itself a work of “weak” narrative or myth.\(^{196}\)

One must not then, in an attempt to be “true” to Böhme, reify his discourse. This is also to say that the reader must not hear my presentation of Böhme with the habituated ears of modern academic conceptual reification with its discourse of rational critique.\(^{197}\) Rather, the reader should hear Böhme even as a forerunner of Gianni Vattimo’s call for a self-aware “weakened” narrative that was already writing outside the confines of a discourse of reified categories or fixed concepts with its “strong” narrative.\(^{198}\) Hence, Böhme’s calls for tolerance in a historical period fraught with the excessive extremes of religious violence rooted in the adherence to “strong” doctrinal positions. Of course, Böhme had very strong beliefs concerning many issues such as the ubiquitous presence of God, the real presence of the Eucharist, and the errors of his detractors. Yet his theosophical disclosure can be seen as already speaking as a “weakening myth.” In any event, that is my claim, and I further encourage hearing in this light even Böhme’s good faith claim to be writing “in the Holy Spirit.”\(^{199}\)

\(^{195}\) Bohme, *Incarnation*, 2.7.5.

\(^{196}\) Ibid., 2.7.12-13; Vattimo, *Belief*, 38-43, 91-93.

\(^{197}\) I have in mind here Michel Henry’s critique of Böhme found in Henry’s *Incarnation: Une philosophie de la chair*.

\(^{198}\) Vattimo, *Belief*, 43-46.

\(^{199}\) Bohme, *Incarnation*, 2.7.4; idem, *Aurora*, 2.15-21 (pg. 53-56).
Böhme’s Theosophical Hermeneutic

Theosophical discourse, according to Gershom Scholem, “seeks to reveal the mysteries of the hidden life of God and the relationships between the divine life on the one hand and the life of man and creation on the other.” While this is a workable orienting definition, in Jacob Böhme’s case one may say more specifically that his discourse concerning the phenomenality of creation and human transformation unfolds in such a way as to disclose the participation of divine life in human life/creation and vice versa. This is to say that Scholem’s two hands become significantly blurred in Böhme’s narrative such that, as participants in divine life, human lives and creation have intimate and immediate “access” to the hidden workings of the divine. We are these workings, even as we are given over to ourselves. As indicated in Chapter Two, this understanding can be seen as a consistent extension of Böhme’s Lutheran belief in divine ubiquity—that God is all in all.

My preservation of Böhme’s theosophical hermeneutic, drawn primarily albeit not exclusively from The Incarnation of Jesus Christ begins with his disclosure of divine “Ungrund”—the ungrounded Nothingness of God. This “ungrounded deep” is the hidden source of Böhmist phenomenality and speaks somewhat of the “essential” Liberty

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200 Scholem, Kabbalah, 4.

201 The synopsis that follows is gleaned from numerous sources, both primary and secondary, most of which—including the relevant passages—have already been cited. To avoid a confusing chaos of repetition, I will be keeping my citations in my synopsis to a minimum. I follow a multitude of Böhme scholars by choosing such a protocol. For an exemplary alternate and independent academic synopsis, please see Faivre, Theosophy, 138-143. I also strongly encourage the reader to refer to Böhme’s Incarnation, Part II, Chapters 1-4 in their entirety. [An on-line version of The Incarnation of Jesus Christ can be found at http://www.heiligeteksten.nl/TH%20INCARNATION%20OF%20CHRIST-%20BOHME.htm. (Accessed 18 October 2009)]
of Divine and human life. This most curious term Ungrund—unground, or perhaps better, nongroundedness [Ungrundlichkeit]—already places one ahead of the unfolding discourse beyond or outside of the arena of modern metaphysical theology. In Böhmist discourses, one cannot speak or think Divine Ungrund as a Supreme being among other beings or as the first “cause” in a broadening web of concatenating causes. Nor can one say or think Ungrund in terms of some sort of nihilistic void divorced or divided, in any absolute sense, from the phenomenality of beings and their causal interdependence. Böhmist discourse must already, ahead of itself, abide in the nothingness of a twofold that says the “sway” of phenomenality. It must speak of Magia as its ownmost theosophical disclosure.

Although of Ungrund nothing, properly speaking, may be said, Böhme does nonetheless, in his hermeneutic, speak of stirrings. Ungrund primordially stirs as desireful longing for Something as source or wellspring of phenomenality. For Jacob Böhme, Desire perennially stirs as “contraction” of Ungrund. The desireful hunger of Nothing for Something draws “into” Nothing as a seeking of Something, which seeking “is” also a Will to Something as a finding. Will, as spirit, gathered in the contracting anguish of Desire “finds itself” in its seeking as a Will to being in and as phenomenality—as a Will to being Something and finding that Something in its seeking as a being. Will here is not a being, nor can it be said that it “is” Being. Rather, one perhaps may say that it engenders Being as Ungrund’s desireful longing for Grund [Ground] of Something.

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202 Boehme, Incarnation, 1.5.2.-1.5.4.
Still following Böhme’s hermeneutic, *Ungrund*’s willing, as desireful seeking of *Ungrund* and as “wakened” Will of Desire’s anguished contraction, engenders through its “finding” *Sophia* as mirroring awareness of *Ungrund*’s wakefulness to Being. Hereby, I am hopeful that one may begin to hear Böhme’s characterizations of *Sophia* as mirror *[speculum]*, wisdom, virgin, and not a being “herself.” Sophia “is” Nothing and yet of *Ungrund*’s wakefulness as “Other” of will’s seeking, through whom we may appropriately begin to speak of Something. She does not create, yet *Sophia* shows and ultimately gives beings to their own being as *Ungrund*’s phenomenality. Hence appropriately, she also may be called Being. *Magia*, however, creates. As the sway of phenomenality, in one way of speaking, *Magia* concerns Will and *Sophia*. In another way, it concerns Being and beings. And in yet another way, it concerns Spirit and Nature. One could also say *Magia* concerns *Grund* or *Logos*.

Thereby, the saying would be that the sway of the twofold—*Magia* as the sway of phenomenality—ultimately says the twofold of *Ungrund* and *Grund*. This translates, in the silence of a more appropriate way of saying, into the opening and gathering of beings as the spontaneous play of manifestation through *Sophia*. Though, to assert this is perhaps to run ahead of myself. Yet having run ahead, let us hear as preparation: *Magia*, in the saying (*Logos*) of the twofold, speaks already in Heidegger’s philosophical discourse of opening and gathering.

Coming back to my narrative preservation of Böhme’s hermeneutic, it now may be said that *Magia/Sophia* gives *Grund*. Further, as Böhme’s initiating quotation to this chapter discloses, *Magia* gives ground as “nature,” and this it does as Desire’s

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Imagination. Whereas *Sophia* as Being and first “Other” gives beings to their own being, *Magia*, by imagination, gives them a natural ground. Whereby, beings come to stand as the Something of *Ungrund’s* desire and as “something” vis-à-vis one another. One can understand then, that this “by imagination” says something of ultimate importance to human being and beings in general. It should also be understood that imagination in Böhmist theosophical discourse means something very different from what we have come to expect in other discourses. Imagination for Böhme is primordial and ontological. Imagination in this sense, although rooted with Desire, is never mere fancy or fantasy. I will return to this later.

We have arrived at that point in the narrative where beings first come to stand as beings. However, Böhme’s recirculating hermeneutic is far from concluded. What has been disclosed thus far reveals only a foundational first pass through the complexities of Böhme’s theosophical discourse. It also needs to be noted now that the world of beings thus arrived at is not that or those of our earthly lives. Rather, it is a prelapsarian world of angels. We must follow Böhme into another narrative pass through the hidden workings of phenomenality. In this pass, I will introduce Böhme’s “Principles” of Fire and Light.

We enter again the labyrinth. In coming to ground, ungrounded will imaginates in desire into *Sophia’s* mirroring awareness whereby her “lustre” enters the will, so bestowing a heart to the will as “Other” will. This Heart is the Son of the Father and Word of God. The originary will of *Ungrund* thus impregnates itself with the “Other” will overshadowed by imagination.\(^{204}\) This imagination—not yet being—is a darkness.

\(^{204}\) Boehme, *Incarnation*, 2.3.3-2.3.5.
Yet this “is” a darkness replete with the wonders of “powers, colors, and virtues” striving to being as disclosed through Wisdom’s lustre. Through the Heart, the impregnated will in its ongoing imagining into Sophia “is” thereby also a sounding forth or speaking of the Word whereby beings come to their being in the Holy Spirit as the showing forth of the manifold wonders to manifestation in the sway of the twofold. That is, as Fire and Light as into the freedom of the Air.

Following Böhme, we can now proceed a step deeper into the mysterium. We have thus far been given to see how Böhme approaches an understanding of the Trinity—whereby, according to Böhme, one may properly say God. Father “is” the will of Ungrund. Son “is” the Heart of the Father and Word of creating. Holy Spirit “is” disclosed in the outflowing free-play of beings in manifestation. Nevertheless, each is also understood as Person—not a being—in the Wisdom awareness of Sophia, even in Desire, Love, and Delight, respectively. Further, through Magia—as the giving of Grund as Nature—they can be understood in Fire, Light, and Air—that is as Flame.

We must now enter into the workings of the Word. The Word as “Other” will overshadowed in the lustrous darkness in imagination, discloses from His darkness the seven Mothers or Source Spirits in the striving to and attainment of phenomenality. These seven—resonating for Böhme with the seven days of creation and the Seven Spirits before the throne of God—following one redaction are: 1) the Sour, 2) the Bitter, 3) Anguish, 4) the Fire-flash, 5) Love, 6) Sound, and 7) Rest. By the Sour, one is given to understand the by now familiar contraction of desire, only now in the “Other” will of the Word. Which Spirit engenders—as each Spirit engenders the others in imagination—

\[205\] Ibid., 2.3.8-2.3.9.
the Bitter as a stinging drawing of the will further into itself as the only finding of its
seeking, which in the contraction of desire becomes, as it were, a painful oppression and
differentiation. Through this oppression, Anguish arises as a turning separating within
the darkness of the “Other” will. This is the anguishful wheel of Essences, which
essences are to be understood ultimately as the coming to nature and senses. Yet, in
the Spirit of Anguish—desiring to manifesting and longing for the freedom of the
_ungrund_—we are also first to understand the wheel as a dying in the “Other” will.
Through which dying—that is also a coming to life—is revealed the Fire-flash. Thusly
arise the Principles of Fire and Light as life from death into the giving of beings to their
being through the imagining of the separating essences, via the Fire-flash, out of the
Word and into the mirror of Sophia.

Two Principles, Fire and Light, thus arise through the Fire-flash. Böhme gives us
to comprehend by a Principle a source that springs from Nothing whereby true lives, with
understanding and senses, can come to being. We are given further to recognize that
these two co-eternally belong together even as the Trinity abides in their belonging
together. In addition, whereas both Principles arise in the “dying” of the Word in
_ungrund_, the Fire properly belongs to the Father and the Light to the Son. Father’s
Fierce Fire releasing the Son’s Light, and Light’s gentleness feeding and so soothing the
fierceness of the Fire, thereby also quenching the Anguish. Hence arises the fifth Spirit,
Love. Sound, the sixth, is whereby innumerable beings are gathered in their being in the
Clearing of the Light through the saying of the dying/living Word as into the Air.

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206 Ibid., 2.3.6-2.3.7.
207 Ibid., 2.5.1-3.
Understand, in the Fire Principle, the Anguish, so quenched by the Gentle Light, can now be seen as a giving of the wonders—powers, colors, and virtues disclosed by the lustre of Sophia in the darkness of imagination—back to Sophia, and thereby to their ownmost living being, as the wheel of “essences” perennially fixes them through Magia as imagining centers in themselves of Grund or nature in the sway of the twofold. Who, through the dying of the Word in Ungrund, lovingly sound in the Grund of Light as innumerable differentiated and unique free-living beings, given to their own Being as Ungrund’s manifest Desire of desiring to phenomenality. Here, in the Light, the Holy Spirit moves, as Air, with and in beings. Thus Rest, the seventh Spirit, is attained. Again, this is to be understood as the prelapsarian world of Angels.

We have not yet reached the end of complexities in Böhme’s theosophical narrative, for we have yet to arrive at that point whereby we can pose the question: And what of human beings? To ask this question we must first consider the Fall of Angels and the arising of a Third Principle. Angelic beings, given to their being, stand free in the clearing of the Light through the sway of the twofold heard in Grund and Ungrund. It is only as a free being that one can come to understand Lucifer’s Fall in Böhmist theosophy. Moreover, to understand freedom, one must hearken to Ungrund in the sway of the twofold. Earlier in this chapter, it was stated that Ungrund concerned somewhat of Divine and human liberty. We must hear this again. According to Böhmist theosophy, nongroundedness abides in the sway. Phenomenality then is understood here not only in coming to ground, but also equally in its primordial groundlessness. Ungrund, it may be said, gives the clearing of the sway wherein beings stand, move, think, and determine their own course even as they abide upon the ground. It also may be said that Ungrund
gives liberty even as it gives beings desire, will, and imagination in “nature” as a coming
to senses and particularity. It bears reminding here that this discourse of liberty was
critical to Böhme in order to counter the deterministic theological doctrines extant in his
day—a situation not too distant from facing the challenges presented by the material and
cultural determinisms of our own. This is to say, there still remains something of
importance in considering such discourse.208 It also bears reminding that for Böhme the
discourse of Liberty concerned the question of evil.

At this juncture in Böhme’s hermeneutic, there is no Evil. Neither is there any
law beyond abiding in the freedom of the Light. We come to the Fall.209 According to
Böhme, however it may have occurred, Lucifer came up with the notion that he with his
angels would rather abide in and thereby possess the Fire Principle, and so hold sway
“before” the Light. Lucifer and his angels thereby entered into the Fire by imagining
into it. Yet, as previously disclosed, the Fire is appropriate to the Father. They could not
abide in nor possess it. What their act accomplished was rather a reawakening of the
fierceness of the Fire, now as Wrath. Whereby, they discovered themselves in a
darkness. This constituted the emergence of a new Principle. One may rightly say then
that Evil, as the awakening of Wrath, was the result of a regression. Further, that the
Principle so quickened is the one wherein we abide.

208 One can witness the relevance of such discourse by viewing Slavoj Žižek’s 2007 seminar at
the European Graduate School, “Materialism and Theology.” In this seminar, Žižek gestures to
groundlessness, Badiouean multiplicities, and unfinished materiality as ontologically fundamental to
freedom. Or, see the EGS video of Jacques Derrida’s 2004 Paris seminar, “A Critique of Psychoanalysis,”
in which—through a discussion of a text of Gilles Deleuze—he also links groundlessness to freedom. See
both at European Graduate School EGS; from (egsvideo); [website]; available from http://www.youtube
.com/egsvideo or http://www.egs.edu/; Internet; accessed 14 October 2009.

209 Boehme, Incarnation, 1.2.6-9.
Böhme understood the creation story of Genesis as that concerning this “Third Principle.” The sun and stars here generated were to bring light to the darkness and so redeem it. Now we may ask the question: And what of human beings? For Böhme, human beings are a singular creation in the Third Principle. Created in the “image and likeness” of God, we contain and participate in all three Principles. We were also given ultimately to bear the Heart of God and to abide in union with Sophia. Thus, humans were to be and so manifest the fullness of God.

In Böhme’s hermeneutic, Adam, in the Biblical Paradise of the Third Principle, was originally androgynous—210—a familiar theosophical interpretation of the Genesis account of Adam’s creation. “He” was man and woman. His soul was fire and his spirit light. His being was constituted in one supreme element alone so that he had dominion over the traditionally recognized elements of fire, air, water, and earth, as well as the sun, the planets, and the stars. Adam’s being was such that he could see truly into all beings as well as freely show forth the divine wonders disclosed in Sophia. He also had the power to generate magically another being of himself. The only law of Paradise was simply not to mix the Principles.

Adam, destined to be the fullness of God in the Third Principle, was understood by Böhme as a free being of desire, will, and imagination. Bearing the Fire of the First Principle within himself and abiding in the Third Principle, he was nonetheless to keep his desire—via imagination—in the Light of the Second Principle. Thus, the Principles would remain “unmixed.” However, all the Principles desired Adam’s imagination—that he might imaginate into them—that their desire might carry over into him and so have

210 Ibid., 1.6.6.
strength and ascendency in his will. Böhme’s Fall of Adam then consisted in Adam’s bringing his desire—via imagination—out of the Second Principle and into the Third Principle. He imaginated himself into the desiring of the external “world” showing forth in and as the Third Principle.\(^{211}\)

Many consequences followed this mixing. For one, the Tree of Good and Evil manifested as a product of Adam’s own imagination. For another, he became heavy with external desire and so fell to sleep. He fell from his primordial wakefulness. Thereby, Sophia “withdrew” from him and he separated into a man and a woman. Ultimately, as the story then unfolds in the more familiar vein, Adam, Eve, and their progeny—meaning us—became subject to the stars, planets, and the elements in the darkness of the Third Principle. We became as we (in the west) imagine ourselves to be—even following the modernist narrative. Hence, according to Böhme, while we have not fallen in the manner of Lucifer’s angels, we have fallen in our own all too human way.

Human beings—and our destiny—require then restoration. And while this is a common Christian motif, in Böhme’s hermeneutic one may hear it in a more radically transformative sense. For Böhme, fallen humanity is lost in the darkness and desire of the Third Principle. We have become subject to—through our imagination—the external “world” and its elements. While we do possess the understanding of our reason, our reason cannot rise beyond the sway of the stars. Reason even helps to keep us subject to them in our fallen condition. According to Böhme, we cannot restore ourselves. Nor can

\(^{211}\) Ibid., 1.5-6.
our reason alone help to restore us. Rather, our restoration is dependent upon the “Other power” of God.²¹²

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is then our restoration in operation. In Böhmist theosophy, the Word, as the Heart of God, is fixated into human being by the incarnation of Jesus as the Second Adam. Thereby, it is made universally accessible to all humans—past, present, and future—who follow the way He has opened to the Light in death, resurrection, and ultimately ascension. One must hear this aright, that the way is opened to anyone—even among “Jews, Turks, and heathens”—who re-imagines into the Second Principle through a death and resurrection, even while continuing to abide in the Third Principle. That is, through the New Birth.²¹³ We are approaching here the “strange” nature of death alluded to in the previous chapter. We are also approaching the critical issue of the centrality of practice and its relation to imagination. But we have first to finish this introduction to Böhmist theosophy, and then proceed to a hermeneutic of an ontologically understood imagination.

It must be noted that the “way” of our restoration—the way of Christ—according to Böhme, itself follows somewhat the way of phenomenality even as it gives to human beings again our originary state while bestowing fulfillment of our destiny to bear the Heart of God, and so manifest God’s fullness in union with Sophia even in the Third Principle. To understand this one must return to the heart of phenomenality in the Divine. It was previously disclosed that for the showing forth of living beings in

²¹² I am alluding here to the “Other Power” position of Hajime Tanabe, which is to be contrasted to the “Self Power” position of Kitaro Nishida, in the Kyoto School Other Power/Self Power philosophical debate. See Tanabe, Philosophy as Metanoetics.

²¹³ Boehme, Incarnation, 1.8 and 1.12.
manifestation a dying occurs primordially in the Divine. Recall that out of *Ungrund*’s anguishful seeking to manifestation, the Word is a dying to *Ungrund*’s darkness whereby arise the Principles of Fire and Light and the sounding of the Word as the showing forth of phenomenality. The gentleness of the Light then soothes the anguish and quenches the Fire’s fierceness. Fallen humanity, lost in the anguishful darkness of the Third Principle must similarly die in this darkness to be born anew in the Light of Divine phenomenality. Jesus Christ—the Second Adam and forerunner of our bearing of the Heart of God—opens the way to this restoration by being the dying/living Word, who “unmixes” the Principles and whose Gentle Light quenches the Father’s awakened Wrath, at least as it relates to human beings.

Yet according to Böhme, human beings must also be free-willing participants in this way of our restoration. Further, such participation is not accomplished through doctrinal confession or affiliation with any established “church of stone.” Nor is it accomplished by our reason. Rather, we must freely follow the way of Christ—even if ignorant of Him—and so re-imaginate into the Light. That is, we must die to the desiring of the Third Principle which has claimed us through our Fall. We must die to our subjection to the elements and stars. We must die to the arrogance of an unillumined reason. One thereby dies to the world of our fallen condition in order to be reborn and reawakened in the originary world of our restoration. Again, this does not demand any specific confession of faith. But it does entail a radical transformation rooted in Grace and one’s own faithful striving (or working) towards the Liberty of *Ungrund* disclosed in the Light of Love. This according to Böhme is a transformation accomplished on our part via imagination.
One becomes thereby the equivalent of Christ—which is the fullness of God. One is then even one’s own God. As Böhme makes clear however, this transformation initiated by one’s New Birth also occurs as a development in time. One must mature through practice into this Divine Sonship or Daughtership while still living in the Third Principle. One must grow strong here, through practice, in wisdom and in love. Further, one must develop, again through practice, one’s own particular gifts. Thus we are also given to recognize that each Son or Daughter of God is unique—each speaking or acting according to each one’s particular gifts and understanding, as well as in accordance with each one’s own specific temporal context and degree of development. This is also to say that one discovers a vast and far-reaching variety in Böhme’s rendition of the “inner church.” His is indeed a radical, transformative diversity.

We are far from having exhausted what can be said as introduction to Böhme’s theosophy. This is specifically the case considering the existence of Böhme’s more alchemically inspired discourses not discussed here—the language of which can seem even stranger to our ears. Yet at this point, I do have enough of that introductory narrative in place to begin the development of my thesis. This development begins with imagination and the unfolding of the “conversation” between Böhme and Heidegger in greater earnest.

**Heidegger and Imagination**

The ontological priority that Böhme gives to imagination in his theosophy has itself been a recurring source of inspiration in the ongoing development of western

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214 Ibid., 1.5.26.
discourses. To confirm this claim, one needs simply to consider, as examples, the likes and influence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his *Biographia Literaria* or Schelling and his Transcendental Idealism. One may even say that it has called—and still calls—many in our cultural heritage who hear in the “other tonality.” However, it must also be acknowledged that as inspiring as Böhme may be on this point, he is at the same time quite disappointing when it comes to actually clarifying how it is that we are to understand this imagination. This is the importance of turning to Heidegger for direction in developing such clarification in our post-metaphysical discourse.

As has already been stressed, there is in my view, little to no incommensurability between the discourses of Jacob Böhme and Martin Heidegger. Heidegger’s phenomenological hermeneutic—and his “thinking”—developed in a cultural and philosophical context deeply stamped by the influence of Böhmist theosophy. I repeat, evidence for which claim was provided in the previous chapter. Therefore, in turning to Heidegger for clarification concerning imagination, as initiated through his work *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, I believe that I remain in the stream of the “other tonality.”

There is not just a little irony in my preliminary reliance on this work of Heidegger’s. It is, after all, one of his more “metaphysical” works. Yet this should not throw one off the track. The metaphysics at stake in this relatively early work, and how metaphysics comes to be characterized in Heidegger’s later works, are not necessarily equivalent. As example, the metaphysics that is the concern of the work *The Principle of Reason* is that of historically “destined” modernity. This meaning, as previously disclosed, resonates in my repeated use of the term “post-metaphysical” and its variants.
This meaning can be contrasted with how metaphysics is to be heard in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, wherein metaphysics (and Kant) is understood within the context of a specific retrieval. In Heidegger’s “Kant book,” the metaphysics at issue concerns the originary philosophical questioning of “beings as such and as a whole.” That is, it ultimately regards the question of Being—Heidegger’s guiding problematic.

As acknowledged in my first chapter, Heidegger interprets Kant’s *First Critique* as an attempted “laying the ground for metaphysics.” In his Kant book, Heidegger credits Kant for his (Kant’s) originary approach to the foundation laying through his placing the finitude of the questioning being—human being—at the center of his *Critique*. That is, according to Heidegger, Kant begins to articulate a “fundamental ontology.” In Heidegger’s words, “Fundamental Ontology means that ontological analytic of the finite essence of human beings which is to prepare the foundation for the metaphysics which ‘belongs to human nature.’ Fundamental Ontology is the metaphysics of human Dasein which is required for metaphysics to be made possible.”

According to Heidegger, the way to approach an understanding of what is at stake in Kant’s *First Critique* is to acknowledge that metaphysics as “the fundamental knowledge of beings as such and as a whole,” itself announces the problem of the knowledge of Being by the finite being who questions beings. That is to say, that in

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216 Ibid., 1-2.
217 Ibid., 8, 117-118.
218 Ibid., 1.
219 Ibid., 5-15.
questioning a being that somehow is before me, I already must understand that this being is. I must have an understanding of Being even before encountering any being as such in experience. The task then is to approach such a priori understanding of Being through that human being which already knows Being and questions beings in finitude. The issue ultimately becomes what the relation is between Being and finitude. Further, what is it to be finite in the way that human Dasein is?220

It can be said that Kant’s approach to the ground laying begins with the acknowledgment that we always already comport ourselves towards beings. Yet one must then ask how such comportment is possible. Particularly, how is it possible in such a way that one may have [ontic] knowledge of those beings that one comports oneself towards? Which is also to ask, how are beings made manifest to me, as an inner possibility, in such a way that I might “reasonably” comport myself towards them? These guiding questions orient Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant in his Kant book.221 They also help provide the ontological key to understanding Kant’s primary question: How are a priori synthetic judgments possible as the disclosure of the “essence” of Pure Reason? As Heidegger states it, “Laying the ground for metaphysics as a whole means

220 It is to be noted that there is some controversy concerning Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929). Kant’s Critique, as Heidegger himself makes clear, is generally understood to be a theory of knowledge for the making possible of science (as Kant’s response to Hume’s terror-evoking questioning of the validity of causality), rather than a laying of the ground for metaphysics as a fundamental ontology. The more generally accepted or common understanding of Kant is certainly rooted in Kant’s own characterization of Pure Reason as “that which supplies the principles to know something entirely a priori,” and more primordially, in his guiding question, “How are a priori synthetic judgments possible?” However, it must be recalled that what Heidegger is attempting in his Kant book is to retrieve the question of Being as the originary problem of metaphysics through his preservation of Kant’s First Critique—hence, Heidegger’s objection to the “customary” understanding of Kant, which in Heidegger’s view “directly hinders a genuine retrieval.” (See Heidegger’s Kant book, pgs. 9-12 and 143.) However, one might also question here to what degree is Heidegger continuing the Swabian assault on Kant’s limitation of “Reason” begun by Hegel and Schelling.

221 Heidegger, Kant, 6-7.
unveiling the inner possibility of ontology.”\textsuperscript{222} The laying of the ground concerns what “is brought forward a priori in ontological knowledge prior to all ontic experience, although it is precisely for this [ontic experience].” This “knowledge which unveils the being itself, Kant calls ‘synthetic.’”\textsuperscript{223}

It is to be acknowledged at this point that such investigation into synthetic a priori judgments does not entail only what “is ‘brought forth’ (synthesis) from the being itself with which the judgment is concerned.” Rather, it also concerns a determination of Being as “a preliminary self-relating to the being.” Which “pure ‘relation-to . . .’ (synthesis) forms first and foremost the that-upon-which \textit{[das Worauf]} and the horizon within which the being in itself becomes experienceable.” Following Kant, such investigation is called “transcendental.”\textsuperscript{224} That which concerns Heidegger in his Kant book, and me in this dissertation, is the possibility of such transcendence as a pure a priori synthesis of the preliminary understanding of Being which discloses beings.

Having established what according to Heidegger is at stake in Kant’s \textit{First Critique}, I may now begin to disclose how it is that the “transcendental” imagination claims priority in Heidegger’s interpretation of this work. To accomplish this it must first be understood that for Kant, finite human knowledge is first and foremost a knowing “in the service of intuition.” Kant states: “In whatever manner and by whatever means a

\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., 10.
knowing [eine Erkenntnis] may relate to objects, intuition is that through which it relates itself immediately to them, and upon which all thought as a means is directed.”

That the finite intuiting/thinking human being is “biased” for Kant towards intuition in a preliminary way—that intuition claims priority in knowledge—speaks directly to the notion put forward previously that humans are always already predisposed to comport themselves towards beings which in their turn offer of themselves to intuition as a taking-in-stride of what is there. Thinking, as that which is secondary, occurs in service to such intuition, and therefore must also have an “inherent relationship” to it.

Further, this inherent relationship is specific to our finitude. It arises only in relation to it. Infinite intuition does not require thinking, which being conceptual imposes limits. In addition, infinite intuition, as understood in this context, cannot even be dependent upon an already existing being. Rather, it is the creating of beings themselves that gives these beings to their Being. Hence, we must come to question the finitude of our own intuition, specifically through its relation to thinking and the inner possibility of “transcendence.”

Heidegger states the case thus:

If the essence of a priori synthetic knowledge is to be brought to light, then a clarification is first required of the standing of its necessary elements. As knowing, the transcendental synthesis must be an intuition and, as a priori knowing, it must be a pure intuition. As pure knowing which belongs to human

\[\text{\textcopyright\textsuperscript{225} Ibid., 15, quoting Immanuel Kant, Kritik der reiner Vernunft: Nach der Ersten und Zweite Auflage (Critique of Pure Reason: First and Second Edition), ed. Raymund Schmidt (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1926). See B 306. The First Edition (A) and the Second Edition (B) are juxtaposed to one another in Schmidt’s edition. This work is cited here and henceforth according to A and/or B. These same page references are retained in Kant, Critique of Pure Reason.}\]

\[\text{\textcopyright\textsuperscript{226} Heidegger, Kant, 16.}\]

\[\text{\textcopyright\textsuperscript{227} Ibid., 17.}\]
finitude, pure intuition must necessarily be determined through a pure thinking."^{228}

That the Kantian transcendental analytic presents human knowledge as comprised of the “necessary elements” of intuition and conceptual thinking—as that determining which applies to many—is commonly acknowledged. Yet here in Heidegger’s interpretation of the First Edition of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, imagination as disclosed by Kant, and as the additional necessary element, comes fully into play.

The clarification of the elements begins with intuition as a representing which “takes things in stride."^{229} Empirically speaking, this characterization of intuition is easily grasped. Intuition must be a taking of beings in stride as the receptive medium of immediate encounter of beings as phenomena—the showing appearance of themselves. Yet, when considering a pure intuition, what is it that is “encountered” in the taking-in-stride? It cannot be a being. Also, it must be “something” given of itself as the inner possibility of encountering beings in the first place. Pure intuition therefore must disclose the horizon of encounter, which is “creatively” given where no “thing” as yet is. Nevertheless, Kant provides an answer. Space and time are pure intuitions as the interdependent horizons of outer and inner sense respectively wherein encounters occur.^{230} Kant further states, “Time is the formal a priori condition of all appearances whatsoever.”^{231} Hence, for Kant, time, as the horizon of inner sense, gains priority in his transcendental analytic. It must be acknowledged that such prioritization should not be

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^{228} Ibid., 30.

^{229} Ibid., 31.

^{230} Ibid., 31-36.

^{231} Ibid., 34, quoting A 34, B 50.
surprising in the striving towards a fundamental ontology. Bluntly stated, the horizon of inner sense, as the making possible of affectivity that allows the announcement of beings to the “subject” as well as states of being in the “subject,” is the sine qua non of Dasein. This is the horizon of representing as such.  

Thinking, on the other hand, as the conceptual representing of ones that apply to many, spontaneously determines what shows as a manifold in receptive intuition. Thinking, in the service of this showing is the very determination of beings through the unification of the one or ones that apply/applies to many. Yet in the representing of such unities [concepts] which “can be embodied in various [things],” which “things” in turn belong together in the unity that gathers them, what does not apply must be discarded—or “abstracted,” in the Kantian sense. Of course, such unification and abstraction is something that can be empirically learned. And I contend it follows that through the discipline of this “learning,” the gathering together of such representational unities—which carries with it the forgetting of abstractions—as the gathering together of beings that thereby belong together in their Being constitutes, or better helps to constitute, the worldhood of the world wherein one “finds” oneself. Be that as it may, these representing unities that are empirical concepts must, according to Kant, hold in view in a preliminary way unification as such in order to be unifying. Further, this holding in view is related to—or rather grounded in—that holding of the many in view before the one that

232 Ibid., 34-36.

is consciousness itself as the apperceptive being or “subject.” This holding in view is called by Kant, rather significantly, “Reflection.”

Pure thinking (notions) then, following Kant’s transcendental analytic, as the spontaneous a priori synthesis of the unifying which has as yet no object, and in its “essence” is unifying itself, can be understood originarily in the gathering of an “I” that comports itself towards beings which show themselves to that pure intuition which announces their appearance through the affectivity of a self sense which in turn gathers such beings a priori through unifying concepts [notions] into a “world” of ontic beings in view before the “I.” As elegant, or as convoluted, as such a position might be, it yet announces a problematic—which is how do these two “necessary elements” fit together? And then, through pursuing the foregoing question, do they perhaps have a common root?

The Kantian transcendental analytic, in presenting an answer to the question of how intuition and thinking fit together, proposes imagination as the solution to the problematic. Hereby, imagination becomes an additional “necessary element” in human knowing. It is further to be understood that in bringing together [synthesizing] intuition and thinking, imagination must bear within itself the qualities of both. That is, it

234 Heidegger, Kant, 55-56.

235 Ibid., 37.

236 Ibid., 38.

237 Let it be noted that, following Heidegger’s lead, I am not drawing the debatable “categories” of the “Table of Judgments” into my presentation of pure concepts. For clarification on the justification of this approach, see ibid., 39-41, 46-48, and 60-62.

238 Ibid., 44.
must be both spontaneous and receptive at the same time. Now, this understanding—that imagination bears the qualities of both intuition and thinking—coupled with the insight that intuition and thinking must, of necessity, already belong together for any fit to be accomplished as human knowing in the encounter of beings, 239 points towards imagination as the common root of both. 240 Thus is opened the question of the transcendental power of imagination that concerns “the essential unity of pure knowledge.” 241 This pure knowledge, according to Heidegger, is the “knowing” of Being as pure synthesis. 242

According to Heidegger, Kant opens and develops this question of the essential synthetic unity of finite knowledge through his Transcendental Deduction. 243 In the Deduction, Kant relates both pure thinking and pure intuition to the transcendental power of the imagination. In relation to pure thinking, Kant discloses that Transcendental Apperception “‘presupposes’ a synthesis” 244 as an originary unifying of the unity that is the “I.” 245 Moreover, as “all synthesis is brought about from the power of imagination,” Transcendental Apperception is thus “related essentially to the pure power of

239 Ibid., 43.
240 Ibid., 44-46, 97.
241 Ibid., 41.
242 Ibid., 46.
243 Again, Heidegger’s interpretation is according to the First Edition of the First Critique.
244 Heidegger, Kant, 59; and 56, quoting A 118.
245 It must be understood that it does not follow that we are speaking of a reified or fixed “I” or “subject” here. The unity of the “I” rather becomes hereby an ongoing finite construction.
imagination.” Concerning pure intuition, it is disclosed that whereas the pure intuition cannot give connection of itself, it is itself dependent on the pure power of imagination as that which offers all connections as the “‘affinity’ of appearances” within the manifold of intuition through the pure forming of relations. Further, in either instance, whether in terms of thinking as a modification of the mind or a given intuition wherein connections occur, the transcendental power of the imagination is here disclosed as essentially “relative to time.” It also needs to be reiterated that for Heidegger, what is being disclosed here is nothing less than the ontological “space for play necessary for a finite creature and in which ‘all relation of Being or Not-Being takes place.’” That is, the “inner possibility of ontological knowledge” now understood as held together by the pure power of imagination.

The analytic deepens, according to Heidegger, when Kant discusses schematism as the bringing to sense of concepts. Empirically speaking, the issue of schematism is relatively straightforward. Concepts, in order to determine intuitions, must be made sensible by being imaged. Imagination gives concepts a “look” as a schema-image—such as that of “house” or “dog” in general. It offers the look according to the rule of

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246 Heidegger, *Kant*, 56.
247 Ibid., 58.
248 Ibid., 57-58.
249 Ibid., 59.
250 Ibid.; and quoting A 110.
251 Ibid., 62.
252 Ibid., 64.
making sensible that is the schema of the concept. The schema-image then can be synthesized with intuition through the image of perception, itself given by imagination as the offering of the look of what is there.

Transcendental Schematism, on the other hand, is ontological. It concerns the a priori possibility of encounter as such. This is also to say, as Heidegger following Kant characterizes it, what is of concern here is the issue of forming the horizon of a pure letting-stand-against (possibility of objectification) as a free possibility of turning-toward (subject). So being, when considering pure intuition as time, it can now be understood that the transcendental power of imagination “creates” the pure look of the horizon of encounter as temporality. Further, through the transcendental schematism, the pure concepts or notions—as a priori rules regulating a look, “thought in the pure ‘I think,’” which before any encounter determine the possible experienceability of beings—must be themselves formed in the image of temporality by the transcendental power of the imagination in order for the pure synthesis as ontological knowing to be. Indeed, one should begin hearing resonances with Being and Time here.

Kant thus established the structural centrality of transcendental imagination as pure synthesis. This centrality, again, leads one to question the possibility of the transcendental imagination being the common root of both intuition and thinking. Indeed, Kant himself opens the possibility of this question. Whereas, as has already been established, Kant had characterized time as a pure intuition, in his analytic of

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253 Ibid., 67.
254 Ibid., 63-64.
255 Ibid., 72-73.
transcendental Schematism, time now is to be understood as “the pure image” (emphasis mine). Thus, it is not only the pure image of sensibility or pure intuition as the taking-in-stride of the horizon as possibility of encounter. It is also the pure schema-image of pure thinking or a priori concepts that regulate or gather the possible look of the experienceable as such.256 Kant now also understands further, pure concepts “thought in the pure ‘I think’” as themselves “grounded in pure schemata which procure an image for them.”257 They are thus for the image. This is to say, intuition and thinking are both ultimately grounded in time as pure ontological image formation. This is temporality as pure creative product of the transcendental imagination and as pure ontological synthesis that, it can be said, ultimately, opens “this or that particular, revealed, indeed ontic horizon”258 of encounter, and “at the same time” gathers beings by their particular look within it.259 The ground of metaphysics as fundamental ontology is thus laid. This is the understanding of Being as the formation of transcendence.

It will be recalled from my first chapter that according to Heidegger, it was this very disclosure—the fruit of the Kantian transcendental analytic—that Kant retreated from as from an abyss.260 Hence, Kant significantly altered the Second Edition of his First Critique by obfuscating this centrality of the transcendental power of the imagination. Although many competing interpretations addressing this fact are certainly

256 Ibid., 73.
257 Ibid., 72 and 74.
258 Ibid., 76.
259 Ibid., 84.
260 Ibid., 118.
justified, I contend, following Heidegger’s lead, that Kant’s retreat can be seen as that away from the abyss of the Nothing of Being. Which Nothing (Sophia), it also may be said following Böhme’s lead here, “is” rooted more primordially in the “infinite” Desire and Magia of Ungrund—the “Pure” Person of the Divine.

Imagination then can be said to be primordially productive—“infinitely” of Divine Magia and “finitely” of Dasein. Therefore to say, as many have, that these two—the human and the Divine—are separated by an Abyss, in this context, speaks something very different from out of the “other tonality.” The Abyss here is the Nothing of Being (Sophia). It is “at the same time” the understanding of Being as the transcendental power of the imagination. Again, one should be hearing resonances—this time with later Heidegger’s “sway of the twofold.”

Certainly, that imagination is creatively productive is commonly acknowledged. We readily recognize its influence in works of art, wit, “superstitions,” or flights of fancy. Psychoanalytic hermeneutics considered alone have made much of this self-evident fact. However, virtually all of such psychoanalytically oriented interpretations of imagination ultimately stress the unreality of its products. Yet, as can be witnessed from what has preceded, Heidegger’s ontologically oriented interpretation of Kant’s First Edition of The Critique of Pure Reason radically challenges any judgment of imagination that views it as merely or always expressing that which is fundamentally unreal. The understanding that imagination, among other things, is able to bring to image or “make present” that which is not or cannot be present-to-hand “empirically” is at least in part responsible for such common views of the imaginal that stress this unreality. However, following

261 Ibid., 112-117.
Heidegger’s interpretation, we can now understand that this fundamental power of “making present” also itself makes possible the “real” as encounter with beings.

I return to imagination as the root of both intuition and thinking—or, rather that root in which they both are rooted. As Heidegger himself develops the Kantian ground-laying further through his more originary interpretation, he is able to disclose that the transcendental power of imagination gives—or better, “is”—time itself as what is purely intuited. The transcendental power of imagination spontaneously shows forth or opens out of “itself” that horizon of receptive intuition that is not and cannot be present-to-hand in the manner of ontic beings. Finitely, it does not create beings. Yet it does create the ontological horizon of encounter with beings. Further, as horizon of inner sense and the pure image of the schemata of concepts, it also spontaneously forms the receptive “law” to which the concepts of the pure “I think” must submit. Ultimately then, as disclosed by Heidegger, it can be understood that the transcendental power of imagination/time gives—or better, “is”—itself the pure “I” of self-affectivity that is the feelingful free “turning-towards” of a “letting-stand-against.” Again, as that which—or better, who—cannot be present-to-hand to oneself as just another ontic being.

The transcendental power of imagination/time then, gives the horizon of “real” encounter with beings and “at the same time” gives the being (who) of the person who

262 Ibid., 97-99.
263 Ibid., 123.
264 Ibid., 92-93.
265 Ibid., 108-112.
266 Ibid., 132-136.
encounters the “real” spontaneously gathered beings in that receptive horizon of encounter. Which who then also gives these beings their look as they show of themselves. We can witness the pure temporality of the “I,” according to Heidegger, through Kant’s “modes of synthesis” that constitute the subject. These are apprehension, reproduction, and recognition—each of which is ultimately determined temporally—which is also to say, imaginally.  

Hence, it can justifiably be said that for Heidegger in his Kant book “time,” “the transcendental power of imagination,” and “self affectivity” are all synonymous terms. Further, I suggest that acknowledging this equivalence will be helpful to understanding my application of certain of Heidegger’s other works in this dissertation. That such applicability is possible with Being and Time Heidegger himself makes clear in the final section of his Kant book. In the final section, Heidegger continues to develop his interpretation of Kant, only now in the direction of a “metaphysics of Dasein” that firmly links Heidegger’s Kant book to the work previously accomplished in Being and Time.

Turning now to later Heidegger, in the 1953/54 “A Dialogue on Language”—within the context of that essay’s conversation—the Kant book and the imagination as “wellspring” are both explicitly acknowledged as relevant to the unfolding dialogue, thereby affirming that this view abides throughout Heidegger’s work.

The Heideggerian question of Being is thus never far from the question of imagination. As the foregoing hopefully has made clear, they can be said to be

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267 Ibid., 124-130.

268 Ibid., 153-173.

inextricably linked. Therefore, when developing my discourse on imagination and its relation to religious practice, this discourse will be enhanced profoundly and deepened through drawing aspects of Heidegger’s other works into the conversation with Böhme.

It is also to be acknowledged that the question of Being is not something foreign to Böhme’s discourse as well. This has been established. Yet I further contend that it is at this specific point that Böhme’s theosophical and Heidegger’s philosophical discourses meet—in the Nothing of Sophia. In fact, at the close of his Kant book, Heidegger himself names Being Sophia.270 And as we see in both Heidegger and Böhme, Sophia and imagination abide together.

Looking Forward

When we bring Böhme and Heidegger into “conversation,” as we are only just beginning to do, the possibility of a radically new understanding of the imagination is disclosed. This begins with the acknowledgement that all human ek-sistence is imaginally rooted. That includes then such familiar Heideggerian tropes as: We are thrown; we are fallen; our most fundamental mood is anxiety as a holding of ourselves into the Nothing; and that being-towards-death recalls our ownmost authentic being, etc. It also includes the understanding of our ek-sistence as fundamentally characterized by forgetting, concealment, and “abstraction.” These very notions are then only enhanced by Böhme’s more primordial disclosure of the Desire of Ungrund and the radically transformative possibility of human being and world.

270 Heidegger, Kant, 173.
I state again, in the hermeneutic that I am developing, imagination opens and gathers. Imagination desirefully throws open a horizon of encounter and “at the same time” gathers beings as well as the self of the “subject” together into a world of encounter into which we fall. This world—or better, these worlds—in which we are as thrown-fallen-\textit{Dasein} are not only characterized by ontological forgetting of our thrown-falleness, and fundamental concealment through the striving of world and earth, but also by the very construction of an “abstraction” which it can be said, discards one possible world of belonging-together for another—even one possible being of encounter for another.

To say that imagination desirefully opens and gathers or “\textit{is}” opening and gathering as sway of the twofold fundamentally applies to human dreaming and fantasy construction as well. I return now to the interpretation initiated in my first chapter that desire is better characterized here by \textit{excess} than by \textit{lack}. Simplistically stated, desire understood in terms of lack is fundamentally dependent upon that object which is outside itself to herald and potentially assuage the inescapable craving of lack’s void. Desire as excess, following Böhme, ever overflows from out of itself to open that horizon wherein can be gathered the being or beings of its ownmost longing.

In a fantasy state then, one can be said to be opening [or “projecting”] a “play space” wherein one can gather beings—in disguised or undisguised form—that are not or cannot be ontically present-to-hand in accordance with one’s conscious or unconscious “wishes.” It follows that what characterizes fantasy as an imaginal event is that it thereby strips such beings of any living encounter as “other” by subordinating them to those subjective wishes as “wish fulfillment”. Fantasy, it can be said further, renders beings, as
well as oneself, vacuous—particularly when occurring in a context of regression. The event of dreaming, on the other hand, is a far more complex issue with certain radical possibilities which will have to wait for a separate discussion altogether. Be that as it may, one can readily witness that dreams of all events clearly embody the paradigm of imagination being disclosed by the forgoing interpretation.

I am hopeful it can be recognized clearly now that the hermeneutic of imagination being developed here is not necessarily at odds with psychoanalytically oriented hermeneutics. It simply means to open new and I believe critical possibilities of interpretation. I am confident that these possibilities will become ever more apparent as we work through the practice of Böhme’s *The Way to Christ*.

I consider it prudent to remind the reader that the task, and so the tone of the dissertation alters, yet again, rather dramatically at this point. Of necessity, this is unavoidable. To arrive where the relationship between imagination and religious practice can be investigated directly as I now hope to do—with an eye towards the event of world transformation—has required substantial preparation that has included methodological, historical, theosophical, and philosophical engagement, each with its own style of discourse. This ground had to be covered rather carefully, albeit quickly, since the hermeneutic being developed here is somewhat novel. That being the case, I strongly encourage the reader to hold ahead of one’s view that which has gone before—although the tone is to change now that we come to practice. This will indeed facilitate one’s

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271 Again, as examples, I believe the deep resonances and counter resonances with the discourses of Deleuze and Lacan concerning desire are apparent and open important avenues of investigation. And while Böhme’s characterization of *Unggrund*’s excessing Desire may appear remote from Deleuze’s subjectless machine, nevertheless, I believe that they can quite readily be brought together into a working conversation in light of human beings’ “fallen” condition.
ability to track my hermeneutic preservation through the movements of personal transformation as they unfold in the work to come, leading to that looked-for event, world transformation.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE WAY TO CHRIST AND REPENTANCE

*The Way to Christ*, as a guide or manual for the Christian practitioner, has an interesting provenance. It was previously disclosed that this work was composed of two separate treatises written by Böhme, originally selected and subsequently published together by Böhme’s supporters—to his delight—near the end of his life in 1624 C.E. However, after Böhme’s death, this work was then expanded through several publications—from its original two treatises, until acquiring its “final” form of nine treatises with the Böhme popularizer Johann Georg Gichtel’s printing of the work in 1682. Yet even then, the order of presentation of its treatises could be subject to slight alteration dependent upon the desire or judgment of any given editor.²⁷² It may be rightly claimed that *The Way to Christ* is and always has been a work for preservers by preservers.

It was also previously disclosed that *The Way to Christ*—as a guide for the practitioner—illuminates three “stages,” or better, “movements” in the transforming life of the Christian practitioner who takes up this path. These movements are repentance, resignation, and contemplation. It is with this work and these movements that I will concern myself through the hermeneutic preservation of the chapters that follow.

The Way to Christ

The Way to Christ, as I will be characterizing it here, begins with gatherings.273 That is, even as early as Böhme’s preface to the First Treatise, the sincere practitioner can be seen to be called in the work to interrelated series of considerations, through which the practitioner can gather herself and her world into the world of the work—so ultimately, to be fixed as the very site of striving/transformation.274 To illustrate this point, I will begin with the Fifth Treatise, “On the New Birth.” It must be understood here that by beginning with the Fifth Treatise, I am in no way violating any rigid and necessary order of passage through the work—as a reading of the Fifth Treatise will attest. The Fifth Treatise was first introduced into the work in a 1628 edition, well after the author’s death.275 It was included, as were all the treatises, to aid preservers in their practice. Whether one reads it—or the Ninth Treatise for that matter—earlier or later, is dependent on the needs of the practitioner. I choose it now as a place of beginning, since it of all the treatises most clearly illumines the world of the work.

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273 I strongly encourage the reader to review the approach to practice that I will be engaging in this preservation as it is presented in my introduction. I so encourage since without such review, the reader may experience some confusion due to what could be called the uncustomary nature of my approach. However, with the review, the reader will recall how my approach to practice as “work” is specifically fitted to my method of preservation and the tack of the retrieval. See pages 14-16, and 36-39 above.

274 In the preservation of the practice of the way to Christ that unfolds in this and the following chapter, I will be continuing to refer to the practitioner via the feminine case throughout—except in those rare instances where it would be awkward or potentially confusing when used with the masculine case of quotations from Erb’s translation. My use of the feminine case here is not intended to express any gender bias I may be reading into this specific practice. Nor do I believe does the masculine case of the original—in translation—reflect any originary intention of Böhme’s concerning the appropriate “who” of the practitioner. Be that as it may, for my part, I am simply continuing hereby a consistency of case that was initiated in my introduction.

275 Ibid., 2.
For most of us in our contemporary world, we need this illumination as introduction. This is so, since for many even a “traditional” Christian world of practice can seem foreign and rather incomprehensible—let alone a Böhmist Theosophical one.

We now need the introductory gathering of the Fifth Treatise to approach the gathering of the First Treatise.

In the Fifth Treatise, we are called early in its series of considerations “to consider man, what and how he is,” specifically as a Christian—a consideration incidentally that touches the heart of Religion and Psychological Studies concerns. I will begin with the latter half of this consideration, as it is certainly the easier, and it will lead us towards the former. Yet as I begin, two points should be borne in mind. The first is that to hear this work as a preserver, one must open to its gathering. This is an act of imagination set in motion by one’s desire to enter the world of this work—or heed its call.

The question and analysis then, as an example, of the “rightness” or “wrongness” of Böhme’s interpretation of what makes a Christian is not the task of this dissertation. My task is to work with his interpretation—even as I, were I preserving a different practice, would need then to work with the interpretation given through that practice. To be mindful of this point will aid in not being distracted by secondary concerns—as interesting and critical as they may be—thereby missing the primary issue of the retrieval.

The second point is a reminder that with Böhme we enter the “other tonality.” One is gathered into this tonality via Böhme’s “considerations” that reveal not a system

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276 Boehme, Way to Christ, 139.

277 For a review of the “other tonality,” see pages 66-70 above.
of precise propositions, but rather, a story. This story discloses the world of this practice and the “what and how” of the practitioner. It is a story that is clearly Christian. Yet it is also a story that “at the same time” resonates in and outside of—with and away from—most of our ordinary or traditional notions of Christianity and its stories. One has already witnessed this somewhat through my preservation of Böhme’s Theosophy given in Chapter Three. To be gathered into this “other tonality” with Böhme, is not a simple thing. One should bear this in mind.

According to Böhme, neither is it “a simple thing” to be a Christian, as he states at the beginning of the Fifth Treatise:

[1.]4. However, since it remains true that a true Christian is born of Christ, and that the new birth is a temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, and that only the new man born of Christ enjoys the flesh and blood of Christ, it is not a simple thing to be a Christian. Christianity [moreover] does not [simply] stand in the history that we only know and which knowledge we take to ourselves so that we say “Christ died for us and has broken death in us and made it into life. He has paid the debt for us. We need only to comfort ourselves with this and firmly believe that it has happened.”

The “true” Christian rather must be born of Christ. This is the issue for Böhme, and not only for this Treatise, or this practice. This is also the issue for the Böhmist Christian:

That one is born of Christ, and how this occurs. The question of how this occurs will lead us to the consideration of “man, what and how he is.” First, however, we will linger with this notion of the Christian and her Christianity. Böhme “defines” the Christian religion for us in Chapter Eight of the Fifth Treatise:

[8.]1. The whole Christian religion consists in this: [firstly] that we learn to know ourselves, what we are, whence we have come, how we have gone from unity into disunity, evil and unrighteousness that we have awakened in ourselves; secondly, where we were in unity when we were the children of God;

278 Boehme, Way to Christ, 138-139.
thirdly, how we now are in disunity, in strife and antagonism; fourthly, where we are to go out of this fragile life (being); where we wish to go both with the immortal and with the mortal.

[8.2.1] In these four points consists our whole religion: to come out of disunity and vanity, and to go again into the one tree from which all of us, in Adam, came, which is Christ in us. We dare not strive about anything, nor have any strife. Let each one practice how he may enter again into the love of God and of his brethren.

[8.3.1] Christ’s testaments are throughout nothing other than a brotherly bond by which God in Christ binds Himself with us and we with Him. All teaching should teach this [as should] all willing, living and doing. What teaches or does otherwise is Babel and fable...279

Böhme wrote these words in 1622—four years into the Thirty Years’ War. Yet they speak not only to his antipathy towards the strife of his time, they also speak to his meaning for Christians: That we love one another as Christ; that we know who we are through and in Christ as the branches of His tree—or, like the flowers of a meadow, each showing forth the wisdom and powers unique to each, each delighting in the gifts of the other.280 As he states it:

[7.7.1] . . . Each grows according to its own essence and characteristic. So it is also with the children of God. They have many gifts and much knowledge, but all of one Spirit. They rejoice with one another in the great wonders of God and thank the Highest in His wisdom. Why should they argue long about Him in whom they live and are, and of whose being they themselves are?281

This meaning leads Böhme further to make what should be understood as a most radical claim for his time, and perhaps, still for our own:

[7.3.1] The Christianity in Babel argues over knowledge, how man is to serve, honour and know God, what He is in being and will, teaching simply [that] he who is not one and the same piece with them in knowledge and thought is no Christian but a heretic.

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279 Ibid., 167.

280 Ibid., 166.

281 Ibid., 165.
Now I eagerly wish to see how one is to bring all these sects together into one, which would call itself the Christian Church, because all of them now are despisers and each group denounces the other and decrives it as false.

A Christian however has no sect. He can dwell among the sects, even appear in their services, and yet hang on to none. He has only a single knowledge and that is Christ in him. He seeks only one way, which is the desire always eagerly to act and live correctly. He puts all his knowing and willing into the life of Christ.\(^\text{282}\)

Böhme’s Christianity and his “true Christian” are contrasted in this treatise with the Christianity of Babel, the church of stone, and the historical Christian. That is, with those who argue and perpetuate violent strife through their intolerance; with those who just go through the motions to be thought well of by others; and with those who believe that in the aftermath of Jesus’ historical presence on the earth, there is nothing more for them to do beyond acknowledge or have faith in that bare fact. Böhme’s “true Christian,” on the other hand—as we have seen—must be born anew. Again, this is no simple task.

One begins this task through the gatherings. When Böhme calls the practitioner to the series of considerations that begins with “consider man,” it can be said he calls that one to a gathering. This first gathering is of the world of the work. In the Fifth Treatise, Böhme himself calls one into this gathering by the retrieval of a question: How is a human being, mortal and sinful, “capable of the Godhead”\(^\text{283}\) through the new birth that the Scripture itself proclaims and calls us to? For Böhme, it is self-evident that the mortal remains mortal and sinful—which can be witnessed to by Scripture and the Saints who have been among us. Yet, as it is also revealed by Scripture, our new birth is in and

\[^{282}\text{Ibid., 164.}\]
\[^{283}\text{Ibid., 138.}\]
of Christ who is “perfect” and without sin, who further has overcome death. How can this be? Hence, we are “to consider man”—who has both hell and heaven in him, yet dwells in the external world.284

Böhme carries the gathering considerations forward thus:

[1.]12. If we wish to consider this now, we must consider time and eternity, how they are in one another, light and darkness, good and evil, but especially the human origin and cause.285

It is through this latest consideration that Böhme makes what I believe is both a startling and revealing declaration. This is a declaration that resonates profoundly through what has gone before in this dissertation, and with what will come. That is:

[1.]15. . . . Thus also man is created. According to the external humanity he is the time, and in time, and time is the external world, which is also the external man; and the internal man is also eternity, [that is] spiritual time, and the [spiritual] world that also consists of light and darkness . . . . Whichever is revealed in him, in it his spirit dwells, either in darkness or in light (inserts and emphases mine).286

What Böhme gives us to understand here is profound. It presages the Heideggerian understanding of temporality already addressed in Chapter Three: That self-affectivity is temporality is the “transcendental” imagination as opening and gathering. Here with Böhme, “man” and world make each other up as time. Moreover, with this time of the “external man” and her world, there is the “spiritual time” of the “internal man” with its worlds—heaven and hell, revealed through the light and darkness.

[1.]19 So also we are to consider man: He stands and lives in three worlds. The first is the eternal dark-world, the centrum of eternal nature, which begets

284 Ibid., 138-140.
285 Ibid., 140.
286 Ibid., 141.
the fire, the source of suffering; the second is the eternal light-world, which begets eternal joy and is the divine dwelling place in which the spirit of God dwells, in which the spirit of Christ takes on human being, and drives out the darkness so that it must be a cause of joy in the spirit of Christ to be in the light; the third world is the external visible [world], the four elements and visible stars. Each element has a star according to its own characteristic in itself out of which desire and characteristic rise, just as in a mind.²⁸⁷

And lest we be confused, we also are told: “Yet there are not three persons in one man, but only a single [one].”²⁸⁸

Therefore, what confronts the practitioner initially at the beginning of considerations in the Fifth Treatise is an understanding of rapidly unfolding complexities. They are complexities that, it may be said, confound and disrupt the world of the everyday, and that, further, only will become reconciled in “story”—as will be seen. Thus begins what I am characterizing as the gathering of world.

The importance of story, for the practitioner, in the gathering of world can be understood, I believe, in how story temporalizes and so gives body to considerations which otherwise could become sterile in their abstraction. Story imaginally gathers the practitioner and her considerations into a from-whence, wherein, and whither-to as the empowering of world. Even the world of contemporary science is storied in this way, if only as the from-whence of the big bang, and the where-in of the random effervescence of material processes in motion, and the whither-to of nowhere. Be that as it may, Böhme mobilizes his theosophical rendition of the Christian story, according to this characterization, at this early stage of the series of considerations in order to disclose the world of this practice.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 142.
²⁸⁸ Ibid., 140.
The practitioner is given here to consider Adam’s creation in Paradise. How humans were created in the image of God, out of “the verbo fiat, that is, in eternal desire, formed and created in an image out of time and eternity [spiritual time]” (insert mine). The broad strokes of this story have been given in Chapter Three. There however, the focus was on phenomenality. Here, the focus is “the threefold life of man.”

When God breathes life into Adam [original humanity of the story], as God’s image and likeness, God “breathes” this life as threefold—of dark-fire, light, and air. Adam’s single soul, as flame or fire spark, thus mirrors the three “Principles” of Godhead’s phenomenality. Adam abides thereby, through the three “worlds” that express or show forth the “Principles” of Ungrund’s Desire to manifestation—the “external world,” as well as the worlds of fire and light. Whereas Adam dwelt in the external world of Paradise to reveal God’s wonders therein, the dark-fire gave living nature to Adam’s particularity and the freedom of the light governed throughout.

There was no strife, at that time, between them as worlds. Until the Fall, when androgynous Adam brought her/his imagination, via desire, out of the Light and into the external world—having been seduced by the Devil’s own imagination through the influence of his hell in the darkness of the dark-fire. Thereby, Adam became two and was lost to the world of Paradise and the worlds as worlds became a strife within him. In other words, in Paradise, Adam and his world were one, and according to Böhme, he

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289 Ibid., 143.


291 Boehme, Way to Christ, 143-144.
knew no death. Further, Adam, while dwelling in the “external world,” also participated in and was governed by the freedom of the Light world of angels. He did not know these worlds as different. Neither did he know the world of the hell of the Devil and his angels in darkness, which, it can be said, was never even intended to be a “world.” However, through the Fall, these worlds became, for lack of a better way to speak it, separate and a strife within him.

Thus, through the story, are we given the from-whence to understand the wherein of how humanity “stands and lives in three worlds.” Our whither-to, which is our primary concern, is subsequently revealed in the treatise as the way to Christ, as will be witnessed. First, however, two interrelated points of clarification need to be addressed.

For one, there is the question of “world,” and what this word seems to signify for Böhme, and whether or not this application corresponds in any way with how I have used “world” hitherto. Concerning this question, it will certainly be recalled that I have followed Heidegger in understanding world—in its revealing/concealing “striving” with earth—as the wherein of Dasein’s dwelling. Pursuing this understanding I have characterized imagination as the whereby of this wherein—as the temporal horizon opening that gathers self and beings together into a world of significant and free involvements within its clearing.293

Taking this a step further, one must recall Dasein’s ownmost throwness into such world of involvements, which includes the recognition of our being-historical and the forgottenness of our throwness as we fall into preoccupations with beings. Yet our Being

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292 Ibid., 145.

293 Heidegger, Being, 120-121; [H] 87-88.
remains an issue to ourselves, and even our preoccupations are disclosed as rooted in the
pre-ontological understanding of such. This much and more is disclosed in the
Heideggerian considerations of world.

We find no such clear exposition of the term in Böhme’s The Way to Christ. By
apparently taking the meaning of world as self-evident, Böhme can be said to engender
considerable confusion with his notion of three worlds—that, or to perpetuate an outworn
cosmology. However, are such interpretations the only options? This question touches
also the second point of clarification. To pose the point as a question: Is not what
Böhme is expressing here onto-theological? That is, is he not, ultimately, just using God
as First Cause to ground his own “reasonable” speculations? Certainly some would
advance such a claim. Yet I maintain that on both accounts, something other can be
occurring.

What Böhme can be said to reveal, rather, through his theosophical rendition of
the Christian story of human creation is a dynamic and fluid understanding of world
rooted in and responsive to imagination, particularly, for my considerations, human
imagination. Granted, the context and traditional associations of Böhme’s use of the term
may suggest fixed and static realms as dwelling places for different classes of beings:
angels, devils, and men. Yet, habitual tendencies aside, the story itself speaks differently.
The Primordial world is the Light world—as described in Chapter Three. However, hell
and the postlapsarian “external world” are revealed as spontaneously manifest or created
in direct response to events of angelic and human imagination and desire. Further, the
story tells of how we are historically affected, as “inheritors,” by such events. This may
be so since, as Böhme also reveals, “man” and world—external or spiritual—are time.
At this point, it should be acknowledged that, following in Böhme’s wake, there is no reason to presume, having “fallen” into the “external world” and forgotten our ownmost home, which yet remains an issue for us, that the power of imagination and desire ceases to create and shape our worlds. My premise is that it has not, and we continue to create (both consciously and unconsciously, in grounded and ungrounded ways) our historical worlds here among us wherein we dwell. It thus becomes a short step to a Heideggerian interpretation.

Now, is this onto-theology? No, certainly not when one recalls that with Böhme we are called to hear in the “other tonality.” That is, in the tonality of ongoing creation as phenomenality—not the tonality of metaphysical cause. Taking this a step further, it should also be recalled that, with Böhme, we are disclosed as of the sway of the twofold (borrowing Heidegger’s terminology), as Ungrund and Grund—that is, of a difference that perdures. Which is to say, Böhme’s God is not the philosophical God of causa sui, which may be as something present-at-hand or which grounds beings, as Highest Being, in their totality. He is, however, still a God of life before whom one is called to dance and sing—or stand in guilt—as imponderable as that may seem at this time. And He is also a God of story.294

294 Ontotheology, as it is to be understood here, is characterized by Heidegger in his work, “The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics.” There, in “conversation” with Hegel, ontotheology is disclosed as that philosophical thought that, “as the free and spontaneous self-involvement with beings as such,” thinks Being metaphysically in terms of the wholeness of the whole of beings “that unifies as generative ground.” This is an identity born of a passing over of the difference manifest in the thought of the “Being of beings,” which is a thought of metaphysics itself. Through such thinking, according to Heidegger, God is allowed entry into its accounting and becomes thereby Highest self-grounding and ground-giving Being, which is ultimately understood metaphysically as First Cause and causa sui. This is the metaphysical God before whom, according to Heidegger, it is impossible to dance and sing. Following Heidegger further, such thinking can be seen as the outcome of an accounting of Being and beings that understands them in terms of their identity (pgs. 54-56). Heidegger’s thinking, in contradistinction, attends to the difference—a difference that perdures—as what has been unthought in metaphysics and way to its
Returning to the issue of story and world, I have been claiming here that Böhme weaves his story through the series of considerations in the Fifth Treatise as the way to the practitioner’s gathering of world. Perhaps what is meant by this claim can now be better understood. A practitioner is one who is already thrown and fallen into a world of involvements with beings. That is, into the historical world of that one’s everyday. As I also have claimed, this world is disclosed via the temporal horizon opening that gathers beings within its clearing—which world disclosure is imaginal. Böhme’s story, as “true” story—even or perhaps especially with its three “worlds”—shocks the everyday world and calls the practitioner into the clearing of its work—into its world, as I have characterized the term.

What is masterful in Böhme’s work is how the world of his story not only shocks but also encompasses the world of the practitioner’s everyday, even while calling the practitioner to a radical transformation. He accomplishes this by the communication of the story’s from-whence, wherein, and whither-to. That is, the wherein of the story is ultimately understood to be the same wherein of the practitioner’s everyday. The whither-to then speaks the radical transformation as opening into the Light world of angels and Saints—a world which has already also been disclosed as the ultimate from-whence.

Thus, it can be understood that the gathering of world claimed here is not so much that of the practitioner into the Light world—at least not at this time. Rather, it is that of the gathering of the practitioner’s world into the world of the involvements of the story

that calls one finally into those of the Light “world.” To enter the Light world requires not just the gathering of world through the story, but also the gathering of self through the practice—even unto death, as will be seen.

We have followed the story—at least as it is communicated in the Fifth Treatise—only as far as the Fall of humanity into the external world and the beginning, for humans, of the strife between “worlds.” For Böhme, this strife is between the dark (hell), light (heaven), and external worlds. The external world, moreover, becomes characterized, quite suggestively, as the world of Babel. The where-in of our dwelling, then, is primarily this “natural” world [or worlds] of suffering—as it is, no longer governed by the Light. Rather, the stars, the elements, the darkness, and our own natural reason govern us. We would be relegated completely to our own desire and imagination, in this state, but for, as Böhme tells us, God’s covenant, and the going of God’s imagination into the covenant. This covenant was that whereby God “promised Himself” again to humanity that we should be restored “in the heavenly world’s being” and “in the holy, divine life.”

The way of this restoration is accomplished, according to Böhme, by Jesus the Christ—the anointed who is our anointing. Yet for Böhme, Jesus only opens the gates. Each one must pass through. We are given here to understand that all of humanity after the Fall is first the inheritor of the covenant and then inheritor of the anointing/opening. We each—even “Jews, Turks, and heathens,” each in her own way—must bring our imagination via desire into the promise of restoration and then imaginally

295 Boehme, Way to Christ, 149-150.
296 Ibid., 151-152.
pass through the open gates into the living love of the Light world. We accomplish this by following the way of Christ. That is, by participating in His life of transfiguration, death, resurrection, and ascension.\textsuperscript{297} This is our new birth.

In Chapter Four of the Fifth Treatise, we thereby come to Böhme’s answer to the question of his own retrieval: How is sinful man capable of the Godhead? Böhme’s answer concerns the difference he discloses between the “external” and the “internal.” That is, between [external] time and eternity [spiritual time], which are yet in one another in human being. Böhme states:

\begin{quote}
[4.]1. Here we now understand what our new birth properly is, how we can be and remain a temple of God and still, (this time) also according to the external humanity [be] sinful, mortal men. Christ broke and opened in the human essence the gates of our internal, heavenly humanity that were locked in Adam. Nothing now lies in this except that the soul lead its will out of the vanity of the (corrupted) flesh and direct it into these open gates in the spirit of Christ.\textsuperscript{298}
\end{quote}

Further, concerning how the soul should lead the will:

\begin{quote}
[4.]2. There must be great and mighty earnestness, not only a learning and knowing, but a hunger and thirst for Christ’s spirit. Knowledge alone is no faith, but the hunger and thirst for that which the “I” desires, which I consider in myself, and take and grasp possessively with this consideration, that is faith.\textsuperscript{299}
\end{quote}

A most complex and interesting image of the human is being disclosed here. That is one in which we are potentially in the sway of an interrelated twofold imaginal horizonting—of time and “eternity.” Wherein time and “eternity” profoundly—and “historically”—impact one another, or even make each other up, and wherein human and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{297} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{298} Ibid., 152.
\textsuperscript{299} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
heavenly desire are intimately and mutually implicated, as well. To help clarify and carry this understanding further, consider:

[4.]13. This is the cause that the fiery soul at this time cannot come to perfection, because it stands bound fast to the external bonds of vanity by which the devil continually shoots his poisonous beams on it, and sifts it, so that it often bites and poisons itself. From this there rises up great sorrow and anguish, so that the noble Sophia hides Herself in Christ’s fountain in the heavenly humanity and cannot come near to vanity.

[4.]14. She knows how it went with Her in Adam when She lost Her pearl, which, out of grace, was given again to the internal man. (Therefore she is called Sophia, as the bride of Christ.)

[4.]15. Then She faithfully calls to the fiery soul as to Her bridegroom, and admonishes it to repentance, and to an unburdening of and departure from the abomination of vanity. Then strife begins in the whole man. The external, fleshly man seethes against the internal, spiritual, and the spiritual against the fleshly, and so man stands in strife, full of difficulty, care, anguish and need.300

In the Fifth Treatise, the practitioner is introduced here for the first time to Sophia, revealed as the bride of the soul in Christ. We are told she “hides” Herself in the practitioner’s heavenly humanity. She “calls” to and “admonishes” the soul. She Herself has a history with Adam, which she “knows.” Further, as will be seen shortly, the soul herself longs for Sophia, who in turn longs for the soul. The sway of the “twofold” horizoning thus becomes exponentially more personal. More will be said of this later.

So, Sophia admonishes the soul to repentance. This is Her call to the first movement of this practice’s transforming life. Yet it is a call that also ultimately consoles the soul with the heavenly “sonship,”301 whereby the practitioner becomes “a true dwelling of the Holy Trinity,”302 even in the “threefold life of man.”

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300 Ibid., 154-155.
301 Ibid., 158.
302 Ibid., 153.
[5.] 10. This consolation belongs to the repentant sinner who is in strife with sin and God’s wrath when the temptations come that the devil sets on the soul. Then the soul is to wrap itself completely in the suffering and death of Christ in His merit.

[5.] 11. Christ alone has truly merited salvation for us, but He has not merited it as a merit that is given as a payment out of His merits so that He gives us the sonship out of His merit externally and thus takes us into the sonship. No; He is Himself the merit. He is the open gate through death, through which we must go.303

And so we arrive, in this gathering of world, at the key issue of death—death (with its “strange” nature) through which the practitioner must go, and through the issue of which, in our considerations of repentance, we also must go.

Repentance

We also now come to the gathering of the other series of considerations. This series, as previously stated, is encountered by the practitioner in the preface to “The First Treatise on True Repentance.” This, as I am characterizing it, is the gathering of self through the practice. As entry to the series, the practitioner is asked, “before any prayer,” to “examine” her own mind.304 The series is presented then as a guide to such examination.

These considerations come in a list. I will give them here in an abbreviated form. First, the practitioner is encouraged to consider how her mind is “completely and wholly turned from God; . . . how it is ordered only in the temporal, fragile, earthly life.”305 Second, she should consider how, through Satan’s deceit, she has become an inheritor of

303 Ibid., 158.

304 Ibid., 27.

305 Ibid.
death. Third, “[s]he is to consider the three abominable chains by which our souls are bound fast to the time of this earthly life.” These are the chains: 1) “God’s stern wrath, the abyss and dark world that is the centrum and creaturely life of the soul;” 2) “the devil’s desire against the soul;” 3) one’s own flesh and blood with its “desires and inclinations.” She is to consider here how these threefold chains keep her captive to sin and from perceiving God’s covenant and the reconciliation of Christ. Fourth, she should consider death again, and how it “waits” in “every hour and moment.” Fifth, she is to consider how the judgment with the shame of its accounting waits as well. Sixth, she should consider how the godless lose the image of God and become “like a hellish worm.” Seventh, she is then to consider “the eternal punishment and pain of the damned.” How, “in their self-created abominations,” they “do not see the land of the saints.” Further, how she was created in the “beautiful and majestic image” of God “in which He Himself wished to dwell,” “that [s]he might dwell with the holy angels, with God’s children,” “on the new crystalline earth.” How this can be lost for vanity’s sake. How death can be an entrance to heaven or hell. Then eighth, “he is to consider the course of this world, how everything is a plaything by which he spends his time in restlessness” and distraction.306

The stated intent of this series of considerations, as a guideline to the gathering of self, is to awaken and so open the practitioner’s heart to a genuine sorrow and desire for mercy in order to find “within himself a hunger”—thereby, ultimately to become a worker “in Christ’s vineyard.” Having become so awakened and open, the practitioner need simply remember God’s promise in Christ, and then “wrap himself in Christ’s

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306 Ibid., 28-30.
suffering and death.” 307 This is the short form for those capable of it. However, most people are not so capable.

We are to bear in mind that there are different types of people who come to the practice. Böhme elaborates this point through the Ninth Treatise wherein he deals with the traditional humours. We need not concern ourselves with the humours at this time, as important as they may be. Yet at this point, it is instructive to note, as illustration, something Böhme does say in Treatise Nine about the melancholic person. That is, the melancholic should not “speculate about God’s wrath, nor be eager to be alone or with people who speak [about it].” 308 The reason for this is that the melancholic is easily brought to “dread.” The melancholic, then, could feed herself on the fantasy that God does not desire her—perhaps even that she is already hopelessly damned. 309 Such fantasy is destructive to the practitioner. It is also destructive of the practice.

The point of this brief illustration is to highlight, as we proceed into the “generalities” of the practice and the gathering of self, that in this practice each practitioner must attend to her ownmost self. It thus requires an intimate and deep self-understanding and honest self-disclosure. This understanding and disclosure begins with the call to the practitioner to examine her own mind.

What most people will discover through such an honest self-examination is that they do not really “hunger” for God—at least, not that much. It is to this type of person,

307 Ibid., 30-31.
308 Ibid., 267.
309 Ibid., 266.
specifically, that Böhme writes in the First Treatise.\textsuperscript{310} The initial series of considerations in the preface, then, are intended as guidelines for just such a practitioner to follow in order to begin generating the deep desire or hunger for God. As much as they may sound as such, they are not meant to be doctrinal or dogmatic statements of belief. They do reflect, however, how desire can be mobilized from within the world of the practice into which the practitioner has been gathered.

The practitioner is first asked here to consider how she is “completely and wholly turned from God,” and how she is instead, “ordered only in the temporal, fragile, earthly life.” A reorientation is called for here. This reorientation demands the gathering of self. That is, the practitioner needs to withdraw herself from her ordinary way of involvements in order to redirect herself towards God—or, perhaps better stated, the God who is to be known in the world of this practice. Moreover, as has been indicated, this reorientation calls for the redirection of desire.

In order to redirect the practitioner’s desire, this practice uses considerations meant to inspire the practitioner’s sorrow, shame, fear, and ultimately, guilt. That is to say that an intellectual reorientation of belief is not enough here. The intellectual reorientation, however, as a gathering of mind, can and should be used to generate—and gather oneself further through—those strong emotions which can, in turn, foster a working “mood” in this gathering of self.\textsuperscript{311} This mood begins as a sorrowful hunger for the redirection of one’s ownmost desire. This is the preparation for repentance.

\textsuperscript{310} Ibid., 31.

\textsuperscript{311} Heidegger, \textit{Being}, 315; [H] 270.
The sorrowful hunger must be cultivated through practice. Böhme makes this clear when he writes to “a man [who] finds within himself a hunger, so that he would eagerly repent, but finds in himself no proper sorrow for his past sins, and yet a hunger for sorrow.” When he encourages such a one “to make a powerful resolution” and “to gather sense, mind and all reason together into one and in that hour commence his first consideration.” Through such resolution and gathering, he is further encouraged to “wish to lead his mind obediently away from the beauties and pleasures of this world into the sufferings and death of Christ.”

Yet the practitioner is also instructed to maintain a balance of sorts through the considerations:

14. He [also] is strongly to consider, and completely wrap his soul [in the idea] that he has made the resolution to gain the love of God in Christ Jesus, and that according to His true promise God will give him the noble pledge of the Holy Spirit as a beginning so that in himself he might be reborn in Christ’s humanity, according to the heavenly divine being, and that the spirit of Christ might renew his mind in His love and power . . . .

Hereby, the practitioner, in the gathering of self, makes the whither-to of Christ her ownmost—by “wrapping” herself in the promise as “true.” This is to say, by fixing herself as the very place of striving in the clearing/concealing of this work. Such wrapping of oneself in the promise is critical to the sway of this practice. Not only is it critical as a making of the whither-to one’s ownmost, it is also critical as the antidote to that morbid fantasy characteristic of the melancholic.


313 Ibid., 32.

314 Ibid.
Through this balance point in the considerations, the practitioner is further instructed “to consider fully the great love of God, that God does not wish the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live;” “how Christ, in a friendly manner, calls poor sinners to Himself;” “that God in Christ Jesus will more readily hear [him] and receive him into grace than he himself wants to come to Him.” Thereby, “he should firmly imagine at this hour and moment he stands in the presence of the Holy Trinity, and that God is truly present in him and outside of him” (emphasis mine).315

18. Thus, he is to know and believe for certain that he stands, with his soul, before the face of Jesus Christ, before the holy Godhead, and that his soul has turned from God’s face; and that he now, this hour, wishes to turn his soul’s eyes and desire to God, and, with the poor, prodigal and returning son [desires to] come to the Father. With downcast eyes of soul and spirit, in fear and deepest humility, he is to begin to confess his sin and unworthiness.316

We return here, in the gathering of self, to the difficult issue of the differentiation of fantasy and imagination. As I would characterize it—and of course by this point this should be no surprise for the reader—this is the key issue for the practitioner. It is also an issue that must be wrestled with constantly in the context of the practice, insofar as it also can be said to vex this practice from top to bottom. This issue further concerns the authenticity and inauthenticity of the practitioner.

I have characterized the differentiation of fantasy and imagination in previous chapters. Yet in practice—as in life, in general—such differentiation is rarely clearly maintained or absolute. This is so since, as was previously disclosed, the ordinary workings of our “everyday” experiences of imagination and fantasy are themselves both rooted in what was named in Chapter Three the transcendental power of imagination.

315 Ibid., 33.
316 Ibid., 33-34.
The issue, as it was suggested there, is how we allow beings, gathered in any opened horizon or clearing, to be or not to be. To help clarify this notion, one should recall how it was suggested, in Chapter Three, that in fantasy, by subjecting beings to one’s own wishes, one strips them of being as living encounter of “other.” Imagination, on the other hand, as I am characterizing it here, even in “ordinary” experience, allows beings to come to stand in their being, and so show themselves in their “strife” of revealing/concealment.

The “dynamic” of imagination then, can be said to be the same as that of “work.” Further, we can be said to be beings who work. However, we are also clearly beings who abide in the self-deceptions of our fantasies—revealed and concealed, both consciously and unconsciously. We take now a step further into the complexities of this hermeneutic. Not only, as was suggested through my interpretation of Heidegger in Chapter One, can the horizoning of imagination in the opening of any clearing be subject to a kind of fluctuation from near to far—so to speak. We now also are called to recognize, as has been suggested through my interpretation of Böhme in this chapter, that we always already abide in the sway of multiple interrelating horizonings that may even blend, as it were, imagination and fantasy in any of our dealings.

This state of affairs is immediately disclosed within the context of a practice such as the one under present consideration. As has been witnessed, this practice begins with a person fallen into external involvements. One may even include fallen into what is commonly said concerning such involvements. In addition, this hypothetical person can only be said to want a proper sorrowful hunger for God. Yet we are instructed that proper hunger can be cultivated through the gathering of oneself out of one’s ordinary way of involvements in order to reorient oneself towards God. The practitioner then, in
order to accomplish such cultivation, actually imagines herself into each consideration so
to generate those strong emotions mentioned as the preliminary enactment of the
gathering of self into that working mood which facilitates her redirection of desire.

However, this does not just manifest instantaneously or mechanically. As with the melancholic, in the process of her imaginings, powerful fantasies often intrude which must be either abandoned or worked through. Further, the case generally is such that, in the process, the fantasy cannot necessarily even be recognized as such when it shows itself in the imagining—as in the case of the melancholic who takes her hopelessness as true. A critical component of this “deception” has to do with the “nature” of imagination. As it has been disclosed, imagination is not simply a static process of holding a being as an object clearly in mind. Rather, it is that happening of throwing out a horizon wherein beings are gathered to be the beings they are in the dynamic concealing/revealing involvements of a world striving with earth. Fantasy itself has just such a dynamic revealing/concealing character, being as it is, rooted in imagination. Fantasy and imagination simply thereby arise together. This speaks, indeed, a very dismal state of affairs concerning how one is to sort out fantasy from imagination. However, practice has its fruit.

We are beings who work. We are also beings for whom living being is an issue. Practice itself is work. It is also a work at which one practices—and practices hopefully in a being-towards-the-future—as the disclosure of self and beings in their being. The trend then, for the earnest practitioner who steadfastly “examines” her mind is towards “truth”—towards being. That is, away from fantasy that strips being. This is also to
suggest that when left to our own devices, our situation—in restlessness and distraction—is indeed rather hopeless.

It must be acknowledged here that in this hermeneutic preservation, I continue to move in the world of this work. That is, I am following Böhme’s “general assessment,” repeatedly disclosed, that “fallen” humanity—left to our own devices—are in a terrible fix; that we require help; that help is made—historically—available. And finally, that to be helped, for our part, requires work—hopeful work—which is itself transformative.

That said, we have come, in our considerations of this practice, to the point where the practitioner, having begun to cultivate a true sorrowful hunger, in the gathering of self, imagines herself standing in the presence of God in order to confess her sin. In light of the foregoing, it should be understood that this event of imagination will itself undoubtedly be mixed with fantasy. Hence, it must be borne in mind that in this, as in all points of the practice, the practitioner is to know that she is to come again and again to this imaginal event. The practitioner must practice it in conjunction with the examination of her own mind, thereby to cultivate not only the “truth” of her sorrowful hunger, but also the “truth” of the event itself. That is to say, through earnest and resolute practice, she will come to stand in the presence of the living God of this practice. This is a bold claim, but one that follows from what has already been disclosed.

Hence, Godhead, who is certainly beyond Being, as was discussed in Chapter Three, reveals/conceals Herself/Himself, in fulfillment of the promise, through the thrown projection of the practitioner’s imaginal horizon, wherein she herself is gathered, as—in this instance—being the Holy Trinity or, at least, the being of Jesus Christ. Hereby, God is “encountered” and “known.” Certainly, this is not the only way God is to
be encountered and known—Böhme himself makes this clear. Yet it is one way, and further, it is the specific way at this stage in the movement of repentance. In any event, at the very least, according to Böhme, the practitioner can take comfort in the knowledge that God will send to her the Holy Spirit “as a beginning” of her transformation.

The practitioner then begins her prayer of confession. At this point in the First Treatise, Böhme offers as a “short guide,” an example of a confessional prayer, encouraging the practitioner to change it “as the Holy Spirit teaches” and according to her own situation.317 Böhme offers such exemplary prayers throughout this treatise. In addition, the Third Treatise of The Way to Christ is little more than a collection of exemplary prayers. What is important to note at this time, concerning the collection of prayers in the Third Treatise, is how Böhme mobilizes prayer, through the gathering of self, for the turning of desire.

The unfinished Third Treatise is entitled “On Holy Prayer with an Order for Each Day of the Week.” It begins, in abbreviated form, with this exhortation:

How a man is continually to examine the office, position and way of life in which God has placed him; and how he is to commit the beginning, middle, and end of all his activities to God and continually do all his works with God . . . .

Together with a heartfelt consideration of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; how a man is continually to lead his soul’s hunger and desire through Christ’s death into His resurrection in God and press forward to the new birth so that he might pray in spirit and in truth and present himself before God.318

The prayers suggested for Monday offer an example of this gathering. There is a prayer for when one wakes; when one first rises; when one washes and dresses; and when

317 Ibid., 34.
318 Ibid., 71.
one goes to work. There are prayers for when one is moved to prayer throughout the
workday; a prayer for when one ends the work of the day; and one for when one
undresses for sleep.  

Hereby, Böhme demonstrates for the practitioner how every act can become an
opportunity of gathering herself from her ordinary world of involvements in order to turn
her desire to God from within the world of this work of practice. Again, what I consider
masterful is how Böhme grounds the everyday world as the initial wherein of the world
of the work. The practitioner, then, gathers herself through the considerations and turns
her desire in prayer without “going” anywhere. That is to say, in this practice there is no
need to withdraw oneself externally into a monastery or hermitage, or even a church, to
accomplish the transformation. The gatherings and fixing ourselves as the place of
striving in the work are everything. This is my claim.

Thereby, in this practice, we receive the direct aid and assistance of the Holy
Spirit in fulfillment of God’s promise. It is important to understand here that, according
to Böhme, this means more than just help in formulating proper prayers. The redirection
of desire through our prayer is here disclosed as, ultimately, the work of the Holy Spirit.

As Böhme states in another series of considerations, this time concerning prayer in the
Third Treatise:

8. We are fifthly to consider that of our own power we are not able to pray
correctly before God, as Christ says: Without me you can do nothing (John
15:5). And Saint Paul says: We do not know what we pray for [or] how it is
fitting before God, but the Holy Spirit presents Himself for us before God with
sighs too deep for words (Romans 8:26).

9. For this reason, if we wish to pray to God our heavenly Father, we are to call
upon Him in the name of His dear Son, Jesus Christ, for the illumination of the
Holy Spirit, so that He might forgive us our sins for the sake of His bitter

319 Ibid., 87-100.
passion and death, and give us what is good and holy for us. We are to place everything that is earthly in His knowledge and will, and not only come before God with naked breath and words if we want to pray correctly and be heard, but [we are to come] in proper earnest repentance and turn from our false way of life.11

10. And we [are to] wish to leave all pride, falsehood, wrath, envy and stubbornness and to give our whole heart and soul to God, the Holy Spirit, so that He might be our work of repentance and power in prayer; that He might grasp our will and desire in Himself, and lead them into God, and that we might put to death our false vanity and desire, which are inherited by us, in the death of Christ, and be born and rise up in the spirit of Christ with a new will, mind and obedience to God; and [that] hereafter we might walk [live] before God in our new will and birth in such a power of righteousness and purity, as His children, which He dearly bought12 through the blood and death of His dear Son, and be born again in His Spirit.320

Proper prayer, for this practice, thus begins with “naked breath and words.” It also may begin with silence, as Böhme instructs us further:

19. If a man wants to pray correctly, he must turn from all creatures and come before God pure in will and mind. He must be resolute and in earnest. . . . And if reason in flesh and blood speaks a pure “No, you will not be heard; your sins are too great,” . . . do not be mistaken; the power is in the internal ground, in the desire of the will and works with God. Remain silent and wait for the Lord. It will finally press through so that you will feel it in your heart and thank God.321

We hereby appropriately have come to repentance and its prayer of confession.

“Proper earnest repentance,” it now may be said, is that working mood that the practitioner’s sorrowful hunger—as a beginning—is intended to realize. That is, repentance is here the working mood of prayer as the first movement in the transforming life of the Böhmist Christian. Returning again to the First Treatise, recall that the

320 Ibid., 73-74. [Translator’s note 10: (alternate reading in Boehme’s manuscript) MS: He the Holy Spirit. Translator’s note 11: (alternate reading in Boehme’s manuscript) MS section 9 reads: For this reason we are not only to come before God with bare breath and words if we wish to pray correctly and be lifted up, but with proper earnest repentance and conversion from our false way of life. Translator’s note 12: (alternate reading in Boehme’s manuscript) MS omits: which . . . bought.]

321 Ibid., 76.
practitioner has been instructed to imagine herself standing “in the presence of the Holy Trinity.” She then is to begin her prayer of confession, in true repentance, thus:

19. O great, unsearchable, holy God, Lord of all being, who in Christ Jesus, out of pure love for us, revealed your holy being in our humanity, I, a poor, unworthy, sinful man, come before your revealed face, in the humanity of Jesus Christ, even though I am unworthy to raise my eyes to You, and [I] implore You, and confess to You that I have been faithless and disloyal to Your great love and grace that You have given us. . . . [I] have led my desire into the vanity of this world, and defiled my soul thereby, and made it completely bestial and earthly, so that, because of the mire of the sin, my soul does not know itself, and sees itself wholly as a strange child before Your sight, unworthy to desire Your grace. I lie as deep as my soul’s lips in the mire of sin and in the vanity of my corrupted flesh, and have only a small spark of breath in me that seeks Your grace. In vanity I have thus become dead to myself so that, in this vanity, I dare not raise my eyes to You.

O God in Christ Jesus, who for the sake of poor sinners became man so that You could help them, to You I cry; I still have a spark of refuge for You in my soul.322

I am confident, as I begin my hermeneutic preservation of repentance, that it has become apparent through the presentation of these initial evocations in this confessional prayer, why it has taken so much preparation to arrive at this point in the dissertation. These evocations, on face value, are virtually indistinguishable from those found in nearly any traditional Christian prayer. Yet to understand them appropriately—in the Böhmist sense—is already to be gathered into the Böhmist world. One can certainly appreciate that this is no simple thing. One must continue to keep this point in mind as I proceed.

What one immediately gleans through this prayer in its initial evocations, concerning repentance as the working mood of prayer for the turning of desire, is that the practitioner here is called to assume a sense of her ownmost being guilty. This is certainly interesting in light of what has hitherto been disclosed of the Böhmist world

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322 Ibid., 34-35.
concerning the inherited “nature” of sinful being via the Fall. Yet it may be said that, at this point in the confessional prayer, the “fact” of this inheritance is somewhat secondary to the gathering of self into the working mood. Further, I propose that for the full turning of desire, the self-gathering must be complete. All of one’s being must be authentically gathered here through guilt.

I believe one can begin to understand the full meaning of this proposal only in conversation with the Heideggerian hermeneutic of conscience. That this is so is my hermeneutic wager, and its importance will itself be disclosed in what follows. Suffice it to say, in the moment, the issue of concern here is that of one’s ownmost being guilty.

In the Heideggerian hermeneutic of conscience, as it is developed in *Being and Time*, the issue at stake is the authentic potentiality-for-Being of *Dasein* and how this might be attested in *Dasein* herself. Such attestation, according to Heidegger, having its roots in *Dasein* will give to *Dasein* her “self” itself to understand. This self, defined formally, is given as “a way of existing,” rather than as “something present-to-hand.” Yet, as a way of existing, the self of the “who,” who *is* *Dasein*, in her everydayness is generally that inauthentic Being of her falleness into the “they” (or the “one”) and what “they” say (what “one” says). The authentic self must then be disclosed, according to Heidegger, through a “modification” of this inauthentic Being, which “is” as a possibility of *Dasein*.323

With inauthentic *Dasein*, *Dasein*’s potentiality-for-Being is already decided upon in advance by the “they.” *Dasein* does not hereby take hold of her potentiality herself. As Heidegger would have it, it is even “hid” from her. In order to take hold of her

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ownmost potentiality-for-Being authentically, *Dasein* must bring herself back to herself from her lostness in the “they.” However, in order to so bring herself back she must be “shown” herself in her possible authenticity. This authenticity must be attested to. Then *Dasein* can choose such a way of existing.\(^{324}\)

The attestation of *Dasein’s* authentic potentiality-for-Being is accomplished by the call of conscience. This is Heidegger’s claim. This call, he goes on to say, is manifest as a summoning of *Dasein* to her ownmost being guilty. However, guilt, in the Heideggerian sense, must be understood through its existential-ontological disclosure.\(^{325}\)

Heidegger begins his analysis from the finding that conscience gives *Dasein* something to understand. It “thus belongs within the range of those existential phenomena which constitute the *Being of the ‘there’* as disclosedness.”\(^{326}\) Heidegger goes on to state:

Through disclosedness, that entity which we call “Dasein” is in the possibility of *being* its “there.” With its world, it is there for itself, and indeed—proximally and for the most part—in such a way that it has disclosed to itself its potentiality-for-Being in terms of the ‘world’ of its concern. *Dasein* exists as a potentiality-for-Being which has, in each case, already abandoned itself to definite possibilities.\(^{1}\) And it has abandoned itself to these possibilities because it is an entity which has been thrown, and an entity whose throwness gets disclosed more or less plainly and impressively by its having a mood. To any state-of-mind or mood, understanding belongs equiprimordially. In this way *Dasein* ‘knows’ what it is itself capable of [woran es mit ihm selbst ist], inasmuch as it has either projected itself upon possibilities of its own or has been so absorbed in the “they” that it has let such possibilities be presented to it by the way in which the “they” has publicly interpreted things.\(^{327}\)

\(^{324}\) Ibid., 313; [H] 268.

\(^{325}\) Ibid., 313-314; [H] 269-270.

\(^{326}\) Ibid., 315; [H] 270.

\(^{327}\) Ibid. [Translator’s note 1: (German original) ‘Das Seinkönnen, als welches das Dasein existiert, hat sich je schon bestimmten Möglichkeiten überlassen.’]
Dasein is able to heed the “they” and so fall since, as Dasein, she is a Being-with who understands. As such, Dasein hears and listens to the idle chatter of the “they.” However, in so doing, Dasein does not hear herself. The listening away from herself to what “they” say must be broken off for Dasein to return to her own authentic potentiality-for-Being. This listening away is broken off by the call of conscience.

To hear the call is not the heeding of any ordinary sort of utterance. It is, rather, an “abrupt arousal” that gives understanding of oneself as Being-in-the-world. According to Heidegger, this call comes from the uncanniness of Dasein’s own thrown individuation revealed in anxiety as fundamental mood. It is also from such uncanniness and anxiety that Dasein flees into the “they,” as from the “nothing” of the world. Hence the claim that conscience “calls us back in calling us forth” to one’s ownmost potentiality-for-being.

Yet what, more specifically, is given us to understand in the saying of conscience? Heidegger suggests that we find an answer in what is generally heard in the experience. That is, ‘Guilty!’ However, our hearing of such ‘Guilty!’ has commonly been interpreted in terms of lack. That is, of being responsible for a lack in another and thereby being indebted to that one. Or my personal lack in not satisfying a moral or social obligation, although I am able, thereby being less than I ought to be. This is also to say, according to Heidegger, that Dasein’s guilt is being understood in terms of a calculable or reckoned something present-at-hand.

328 Ibid., 316; [H] 271.
329 Ibid., 321; [H] 276.
330 Ibid., 326; [H] 280.
This, though, is to misunderstand Dasein’s Being. Be that as it may, there is still a “not” character to guilt that is given us to understand in the saying of conscience. And in light of guilt’s taking hold of responsibility, this becomes, for Heidegger, Dasein’s “Being-the-basis for a Being defined by a ‘not,’” or “Being-the-basis of a nullity.”

However, Dasein herself is defined by the not (itself not a lack) of not Being-the-basis of that throwness whereby she is delivered over to Being-the-basis for her potentiality-for-Being. Hence, for Heidegger, Dasein’s Being-guilty becomes as the “null Being-the-basis of a nullity.” This discloses Dasein’s existential situation.

Heidegger states it thus:

The character of this “not” as a “not” may be defined existentially: in being its Self, Dasein is, as a Self, the entity that has been thrown. It has been released from its basis, not through itself but to itself, so as to be as this basis. Dasein is not itself the basis of its Being, inasmuch as this basis first arises from its own projection; rather, as Being-its-Self, it is the Being of its basis. This basis is never anything but the basis for an entity whose Being has to take over Being-a-basis.

He goes on to say:

Dasein is its basis existently—that is, in such a manner that it understands itself in terms of possibilities, and, as so understanding itself, is that entity which has been thrown. But this implies that in having a potentiality-for-Being it always stands in one possibility or another: it constantly is not other possibilities, and it has waived these in its existentiell projection. Not only is the projection, as one that has been thrown, determined by the nullity of Being-a-basis; as projection it is itself essentially null. This does not mean that it has the ontical property of ‘inconsequentiality’ or ‘worthlessness;’ what we have here is rather something existentially constitutive for the structure of the Being of

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331 Ibid., 329; [H] 282-283.
332 Ibid., 353; [H] 305.
333 Ibid., 330-331; [H] 284-285. [Translator’s note 4: (German original) ‘... Selbst seien ist das Dasein das geworfene Seiende als Selbst. Nicht durch es selbst, sondern an es selbst entlassen aus dem Grunde, um als dieser zu sein. Das Dasein ist nicht insofern selbst der Grund seines Seins, als dieser aus eigenem Entwurf erst entspringt, wohl aber ist es als Selbstsein das Sein des Grundes.’]
projection. The nullity we have in mind belongs to Dasein’s Being-free for its existentiell possibilities. Freedom, however, is only in the choice of one possibility—that is, in tolerating one’s not having chosen the others and one’s not being able to choose them.\(^{334}\)

Hereby, we are given to understand, in the Heideggerian hermeneutic of conscience, that Dasein—in its Existenz—is essentially guilty.\(^{335}\) To heed the call of conscience, then, brings one to this understanding as one’s ownmost authentic potentiality-for-Being.\(^{336}\) One may even say, in Being-guilty, one is gathered back to oneself. The disclosure that goes along with such Being, Heidegger names “resoluteness,” as the primordial truth of Dasein.\(^{337}\)

Heidegger develops this disclosure of guilt as Dasein’s authentic potentiality-for-Being further through his interpretation of “anticipatory resoluteness.” Heidegger here gives us to understand that in anticipation, as a being-towards-death, Dasein is towards her ownmost and uttermost end in such a way that her authentic potentiality-for-Being, as the truth of Dasein, can be understood as a whole. That is, in being towards death as that impossibility [or end] of possibility which is one’s ownmost, indefinite, and yet cannot be outstripped, one has revealed to oneself, in an immediate way, that nullity which so thoroughly dominates and defines one’s existence as Dasein. Thus, anticipatory resoluteness is said to disclose the truth of Dasein authentically and as a whole.\(^{338}\) It may

\(^{334}\) Ibid., 331; [H] 285.

\(^{335}\) Ibid., 331-332; [H] 285-286.

\(^{336}\) Ibid., 333; [H] 287.

\(^{337}\) Ibid., 343; [H] 296-297.

\(^{338}\) Ibid., 354; [H] 306.
also be said that it gathers *Dasein* to herself and for herself authentically and as a whole.\(^\text{339}\)

Such gathering of self, authentically and as a whole, is what is at stake in Böhme’s confessional prayer of repentance. This is my claim. However, to understand properly what I am claiming, one must not assume here that I am equating Böhmist repentance with Heideggerian anticipatory resoluteness. No. There may be a “sameness,” but they are different in their sameness. This difference is critical. And it is not just the rather banal difference between a “mood” and a “disclosure.” The difference is fundamental, as will be witnessed. For the moment, let it be said that the Heideggerian concern is to be authentically in the world into which one is thrown. He states:

Thrown into its ‘there,’ every Dasein has been factically submitted to a definite ‘world’—its ‘world.’ At the same time those factical projections which are closest to it, have been guided by its concernful *lostness* in the “they.” To this lostness, one’s own Dasein can appeal, and this appeal can be understood in the way of resoluteness. But in that case this *authentic* disclosedness modifies with equal primordiality both the way in which the ‘world’ is discovered (and this is founded upon that disclosedness) and the way in which the Dasein-with of Others is disclosed. The ‘world’ which is ready-to-hand does not become another one ‘in its content,’ nor does the circle of Others get exchanged for a new one; but both one’s Being towards the ready-to-hand understandingly and concernfully, and one’s solicitous Being with Others, are now given a definite character in terms of their ownmost potentiality-for-Being-their-Selves.\(^\text{340}\)

Böhme’s concern, as is known, is more radical. It is new birth and being in the Light world, whereby the “content” of what or who one may encounter is potentially transformed. This is the transformation of world accomplished through the death in Christ to which I now must turn.

\(^{339}\) Ibid.; [H] 307.

\(^{340}\) Ibid., 344; [H] 297-298.
Böhme’s practice of the way to Christ begins, as I have characterized it, with gatherings. These are, as has been presented here, the gathering of one’s world into the world of the practice and the gathering of one’s self into a working mood for the turning of one’s desire fully to God, as imaginally revealed through the practice. This working mood is understood here as the movement of repentance.

As it has been witnessed through the initial evocations of Böhme’s exemplary confessional prayer, repentance, in this practice, calls the practitioner to her ownmost being-guilty. As has also been witnessed by the Heideggerian hermeneutic of the call of conscience, such being-guilty can fundamentally gather the practitioner authentically and as a whole, through the practice, so to turn her desire. This is roughly how the issue currently stands.

However, Böhme’s practice of the way to Christ, as he himself discloses it in this initial movement, demands of the practitioner a further step. That is to die in Christ’s death. Examples of how Böhme calls the practitioner to this step have already been presented. It may also be claimed that it runs as a theme throughout Böhme’s work. And one finds it yet again in the confessional prayer under consideration. Picking up the prayer where it left off, and leaping forward through it, one reads:

I have not regarded Your purchased inheritance that through Your bitter death You purchased for us, and I have shared the inheritance of vanity in Your Father’s wrath, in the curse of the earth, and am trapped by sin and half dead to Your kingdom. I lie in weakness before your power, and angry death waits for me. . . . Although I am not worthy, take me into Your death and let me die Your death in my death. Strike down my assumed “I” and destroy by Your death my “I,” so that I no longer live, since in myself I only sin. Kill the evil beast full of false cunning and self-desire, and redeem the poor soul from its heavy bondage. . . . I have no other road by which to come to You than [by] Your suffering and death, because You have made our death life by means of Your humanity.
and have broken the chains of death. Therefore I sink my soul’s desire into Your death, into the broken gates of Your death (emphasis mine).

O deepest Love of all, take my soul’s desire into You, and, by Your death, lead it into You out of death’s bonds through Your death into Your resurrection. Revive me in Your power so that my desire and will begin to grow anew.

. . . Lord, I wait on Your promise, for You have said, As I truly live, I have no desire in the death of the sinner, but that he turn and live [Ezekiel 33:11]. I sink myself into the death of my Saviour Jesus Christ, and wait on You, Your word is truth and life. Amen. 341

In the movement of Böhmist repentance, death must occur for the practitioner. Hereby, one understands the fundamental difference between Heideggerian “anticipatory resoluteness” and Böhmist “repentance.” In anticipatory resoluteness, one is authentically being-towards-death. In repentance, one authentically dies. Yet how is one to understand such death?

To be perfectly clear, I must emphasize up front, in accordance with my hermeneutic preservation, that this occurrence of death for the practitioner is not just metaphorical. Yet it also must be certainly self-apparent that the practitioner here is not dying in such a way that would meet or match any physical or biological criteria or definition. Death then must signify in this practice something different—and yet be death. One finds one’s direction forward in this through what has gone before in the developing conversation between Böhme and Heidegger.

Through this conversation, we have come to know imagination as the horizon opening that gathers self and beings together in a world within its existential clearing. Being primordial temporality, it is not only the whereby of my wherein; it is also that whereby I am and I am who I am. Further, it is that whereby I encounter beings other than myself. Therefore, my existential experience of myself as a finite being-in-a-world

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who is freed to my ownmost possibilities is essentially imaginal. Such possibilities include that indefinite possibility which cannot be outstripped—my death as the end of my ownmost possibilities in a world of involvements. I propose that in this light, death very straightforwardly can be understood as the collapse or dissolution of my imaginal horizoning. Hereby, I die.

Through the movement of repentance in the practice of the way to Christ, then, by sinking into the death of Jesus Christ, the practitioner who has gathered herself in this world authentically dies. Such death comes when it comes, yet come it does. It may happen suddenly, or over the course of years; however, one way or the other, it will happen. This is the promise of the practice. It is the further promise of this practice that the practitioner will be reborn or resurrected in Christ and to the Light world. This is to say, that through such death one’s ownmost imaginal horizoning is rethrown whereby one is regathered as reborn in a new world of involvements.

I will take this a step further, alluding to what has been presented earlier in Chapter Three. Through being gathered into the Böhmist world of practice, one is gathered into a world that announces this possibility of dying in Christ as a possibility. The practitioner then, in heeding the call of this announcement gathers herself wholly and completely, so to turn her desire fully, through her imagination, to God and into Christ’s death. Thereby, dying in Christ, one dissolves in desire into Ungrund’s Desire—which is into the source from whence one is sprung—like “flame in fire.” Such dying in Christ is fundamentally transformative.

Dissolving in the excessing of Ungrund’s primordial Desire to manifestation, one “is” thereby imaginally rethrown from [its] “Nothing” through the “Other” will of the
Word that one is then reunited with in Christ. One thus is born or awakened to the Light world as a new world of encounters. However, in this practice, one also is generally rethrown and reborn to the external world from whence one has died. Hereby, one becomes alive to the threefold life discussed previously in this chapter. That one may be thus reborn or resurrected to a “remembrance” of oneself, even though transformed—albeit seemingly absurd—actually should not be considered “strange”. All remembrance is of imagination—as is this. Besides, we experience something comparable every morning upon awakening from sleep. This death really is not so strange.

It is important to emphasize that the understanding of self being communicated here is not that of a strong reification. That is, the self, in so dying, does not perdure as some kind of “thing”—whether caused, created, emergent, or self-existent—that moves through a process fundamentally unaltered. The self, as I am trying to bring “it” to discourse, abides always in imaginal transformations. Further, rooted in desire, “it” is imaginal transformations, whether witnessed in the “external” time of what naïvely may be called “this” world or in the “spiritual” time of the Light world.

Thus, dying in Christ, as I am characterizing it, one “is” dissolved into Ungrund’s Nothing—desire to Desire which gives desire’s excess as imagination’s opening and gathering in the sway of “Its” twofold. The self, then, in this developing discourse should not be thought as a thing. Rather, we are closer to workers in a work who are given to working. Hereby, we perhaps may hear anew, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17 NRSV).
Returning to the movement of repentance, it must be recognized that for the practitioner, this dying in Christ must be practiced. Certainly, there will be many fantasies of dying that must be abandoned or worked through. Yet this death authentically will come to one who is gathered and who gathers herself into this work. Again, that is the promise of the practice. Moreover, as Böhme has also given us to know, each practitioner, in truth and in death, must find her ownmost way, with the help of the Holy Spirit. As he states, upon concluding the confessional prayer under consideration:

20. In this, or a similar manner, as each one feels in his conscience what sins he led his soul into, may he confess. Although [I say], if his resolution is truly earnest, he needs no formula, for the spirit of God who is soon in the will of the mind will make [one] for Himself, for it is He Himself who in true earnest desire works repentance and represents the soul before God through the death of Christ.

21. But I do not wish to hide from the dear reader, who stands in Christian resolution, how it usually goes with those who have such a firm resolution. Indeed, [it is] different with one than with another, according to how earnest and great his resolution is. For the spirit of God is not bound and it customarily uses many methods as He knows each [person] individually. It is just the same as when one who has been in battle can give an account of it and how it went with him [even though each account will be different].

And so concludes my hermeneutic preservation of the movement of repentance in the Böhmist practice of the way to Christ, which has brought us through the death in Christ unto new birth in the Light world as a new world of involvements and encounters. This, however, does not conclude the practice. My preservation must now enter the movement of “resignation.” Through this movement, I will continue the developing

\[\text{342 Ibid., 37-38.}\]
“conversation” between Heidegger and Böhme. This will include a discussion of the soul’s encounter with Holy *Sophia*, and how the soul’s relationship with *Sophia* itself develops through the practice of Böhme’s way to Christ, whereby the movement of contemplation dawns.
CHAPTER FIVE
SOPHIA, RESIGNATION, AND CONTEMPLATION

My hermeneutic preservation of Böhme’s movement of repentance, as it was developed in the preceding chapter through the “conversation” between Böhme and Heidegger, has helped disclose a significant dynamic in the relation of imagination to religious practice relevant to a radical transformation of the practitioner’s world. It has also struck upon a fundamental difference in Böhme’s and Heidegger’s respective discourses. This difference was revealed as that between Heidegger’s being-towards-death and Böhme’s dying in Christ’s death.

One may imagine, then, that an insurmountable abyss has opened between their respective discourses in such a way that further “conversation” becomes impossible. This would be to say their discourses have thus become incommensurable. Yet is this absolutely the case? True indeed, the abyss of death yawns between them. Nevertheless, there still remain points of common discourse in Heidegger’s philosophy and Böhme’s theosophy.

One such point concerns the common root that helps name their respective “disciplines”: Sophia. Another such point, intimately related to the former, deals with that most fundamental of movements or disclosive “moods”—which they each converge upon while in independent pursuit of Sophia as practitioners in their own disciplines.
This “mood” is resignation (*Gelassenheit*). I turn now to these interrelated points of mutual discourse—as well as Böhme’s movement of contemplation—in order to conclude my hermeneutic preservation of Böhme’s practice of the way to Christ.

**Sophia**

Whether through the works of Jacob Böhme or through those of Martin Heidegger, *Sophia* presents a mystery. As to Heidegger, one should bear in mind here that I take him at his word when he names *Sophia* “Being” at the end of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. This is to say the question of *Sophia*—“the grounding question of philosophy,” as Heidegger himself names it—gathers the Heideggerian canon into its purview.343

That said, it is also to be acknowledged that this question remains an open question for Heidegger, as it does for me. One can understand how this must be, in a manner of speaking, since the question of Being/Sophia is also the question of the Nothing.344 Concerning which question one may say in answer, as Heidegger does, Nothing and Being: the Same, or, tailoring such answer to the present discourse, Nothing and *Sophia*: the Same.345

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343 Heidegger, *Kant*, 173. I am fully aware that Heidegger is ending this work with a rhetorical flourish. However, as with jest, many a truth is spoken in such rhetoric.


345 Ibid., 91n. c.
So, how is it in this discourse with the Nothing of Sophia? At present, it is with a “dropped stitch”—a stitch, which at this time, I must pick up. It will be recalled from the previous chapter that in the practice of the way to Christ, as Böhme discloses it, Sophia “calls” the practitioner to repentance. Not only does She “call,” but one will also remember that She “hides,” She “admonishes,” and She “knows.” We are hereby confronted with a seeming absurdity. However, before one judges too quickly or harshly—thereby dismissing what may be of value here—I would like to return to the practice so that it can begin to disclose its own meaning through its preservation.

In “The First Treatise on True Repentance,” Böhme very characteristically concerns himself and the practitioner with much more than just the movement of repentance. In this Treatise, as he often does in any particular work, Böhme attempts to gather the whole in his exposition of its stated part. Thus, as the First Treatise continues to unfold beyond the issue of death and new birth (disclosed in my previous chapter), we are already introduced to resignation and what transpires in its movement ahead of it’s stated exposition in “The Fourth Treatise on True Resignation.”

The case is the same with contemplation, which, albeit announced as the topic of the unfinished “Seventh Treatise, The Precious Gate on Divine Contemplation,” is nonetheless presented here in the First Treatise, as well. The way the practitioner is specifically introduced to these movements is through Böhme’s treatment of the soul’s relationship to Sophia—as the bride of Christ—and through how this relationship is developed. Böhme includes the following warning as an essential part of his treatment:

52. Dear reader, do not treat this an uncertain story. This is the true ground and contains the whole Holy Scripture for in this book is the life of Jesus Christ

346 This is an overt allusion to “What is Metaphysics?”
clearly depicted, even as it is known by the author himself, for this was his way. He gives you the best that he has. May God give the increase. There is known to be a heavy judgment on the one who scorns this. Let him be warned.\textsuperscript{347}

We are so cautioned. I include this warning not simply because the “dear reader” needs to be aware of a certain risk involved here, but rather to highlight how vital for Böhme is the soul’s relationship to Sophia. It is as stated, “the best that he has.” This should not be taken as hyperbole.

As depicted in The Way to Christ, the unfolding drama of the relationship between the soul and Sophia begins with the new birth—as does Böhme’s movement of resignation—although “technically” speaking, that the relationship begins here, is clearly not the case. Nevertheless, the new birth in the life of the Böhmist Christian changes everything in a most fundamental way. This fact should be clear from my previous chapter. Therefore, to use the new birth in this way as a milestone has significant heuristic value for the practitioner.

The event of the new birth, as disclosed, heralds the practitioner’s union with Christ and corresponding awakening to—or horizoning in—the Light world. This should also be understood as the radical transformation whereby the practitioner is actually born to the Böhmist Christian life and the inner Church. And certainly, as stated, it is no simple thing. It follows, then, that such a life only begins here. In a manner of speaking, one is only a babe in Christ at this time. This is also, or perhaps even especially, the case for one who is reborn or rethrown to “self” remembrance in the “external world” of the threefold life. It is with such a practitioner that we will concerns ourselves now.

\textsuperscript{347} Boehme, Way to Christ, 62.
Böhme gives us to witness in the First Treatise that, through the new birth, the practitioner immediately encounters “noble Sophia.” In this encounter, among other things, Sophia “kisses” the practitioner, bestows upon her a victor’s crown, and promises Herself to marriage with her soul in Christ. She then withdraws with the crown, leaving the soul to mature and be tested, with the additional promise that She will revisit the soul in the external world from time to time. Such is the short form of the encounter. The practitioner after Sophia’s withdrawal, among other things, must come to abide in true resignation and stand the tests of temptation, all the while walking the way revealed by the Holy Spirit and the Gospels of Jesus Christ’s life among us. Thus, it is witnessed for the soul in the new birth.

It is instructive to communicate somewhat more specifically what Böhme discloses in the First Treatise concerning this encounter, and further, how he comes to disclose it.\(^{348}\) From the outset however, it must be acknowledged again that this practice—particularly at this very point of encounter with Sophia—may, of course, be subject to a critical hermeneutic. It is a given that such a critique would and should include a multitude of varying feminist perspectives. Nonetheless, it is also important to remember that such a critique is not my task in this hermeneutic preservation.

Yet for those who are called to the critique, I would recommend Elliot Wolfson’s \textit{Language, Eros, Being} as a source for an appropriate critical beginning in just such a

\footnote{\textsuperscript{348} I would like to note for the reader that what follows will incorporate several long quotations in fairly rapid succession. Rather than force an abbreviated summary or restatement, it is necessary to retain portions of the full text in order to communicate the practice appropriately without doing significant violence to it.}
I indicate this text as an appropriate beginning since it is still relatively rare to discover a critical hermeneut with the requisite background in esoteric studies. Wolfson has this background, and more. For my part and purposes, I must instead return to my own task of hermeneutic preservation.

Böhme introduces *Sophia* in the First Treatise very shortly after the confessional prayer discussed in my previous chapter. In the section entitled “A Short Suggestion,” he makes this introduction:

26. Dear soul, for this [undertaking] earnestness is required. There must not simply be a repetition of such words. An earnest, resolute will must pursue this or it will not be attained, for if the soul wishes to obtain Christ’s conqueror’s crown from the noble Virgin Sophia, [it] must court Her with great love-desire. It must pray for it to Her in Her holiest of Names and must come before Her in highly chaste humility, not as a lustful bull or wanton Venus. As long as it is such, it ought not to desire such [things], nor will it receive them. And although something may be received during this time, it is only a ray compared to such [things].

27. But a chaste mind may well attain to it, so that the soul in its noble image, which died in Adam, might be alive. [This is to be] understood in the heavenly corporeality, according to the inner ground, so that She sets a victory-crown on [it] which, if done, is again taken away from the soul and as a crown laid aside, as one crowns a king and afterwards the crown is secured. Thus it also happens to the soul since it is still surrounded with the house of sin, so that if it should fall again, its crown would not be dirtied. To the children who have known and experienced this it is said clearly enough. A godless (pig-man) is not worthy to know more about this.\footnote{Boehme, *Way to Christ*, 39-40.}

The specific context of the practice under discussion in the above text is that of the new birth. There are several points in this “suggestion” that I would like to highlight at this time. The first is that leading to the new birth, one must engage or gather one’s will. This issue was disclosed in the previous chapter, and it is reflected again in the

above quotation. However, as will be witnessed shortly, after the new birth, the practitioner’s relationship to the will shall change. One must bear this in mind. The next point, related to the first, is that Böhme now gives us to understand that in the act of turning one’s desire to God, such turning to must include *Sophia*. Not only must the practitioner include Her, one “must court Her with great love-desire.” Further, the practitioner must pray to Her for the victor’s crown that is of the new birth. The final point I would like to highlight here is that in such turning and praying to *Sophia*, the practitioner must be chaste and humble before Her.

What is disclosed here of the human-Divine drama is that *Sophia* gives the new birth. Further, although “She wishes to crown you more than you want [to be crowned],” She nonetheless cannot be willed or coerced. Even though the practitioner who is gathered into the Böhmist world must gather herself—thereby self-willing such gathering unto Christ’s death—self-willing before *Sophia* is to no avail. Yet *Sophia* responds to the soul. More specifically, She responds to the living-Word in the soul and *Ungrund’s* Desire to manifestation. Ultimately, it also may be said, *Sophia* gives the Divine Life.

Lest I leap too far ahead, I must return again to the practice and to what more it reveals. After *Sophia*’s introduction in the First Treatise, Böhme offers a prayer as an exemplar to be uttered at the new birth. Hereby, one sees directly expressed the transformation being claimed. Böhme prays:

30. . . . Therefore my soul wraps itself now with its desires in the Word that became man, that became flesh and blood, that broke sin and death in my humanity, that transformed wrath into love in my soul, that took the power from death and the victory from hell in soul and body, and that made an open gate to the clear presence of Your power for my soul. I have directed my soul’s hunger

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351 Ibid., 44-45.
and desire into this most holy Word O great, most holy God, and I come now before You and cry in my hunger through the Word that was made flesh and blood. O living Source, because Your Word has become the life in our flesh, I grasp it, in my soul’s desire, as my own life and I press it to You in my soul’s desire by Your Word in Christ’s flesh . . . .

O life of my flesh and soul, in Christ my brother, I cry to You in my soul’s hunger and pray to You with all my powers, although they are weak. Give me what You have granted and promised me in my Saviour Jesus Christ . . . .

. . . I call through Your holy blood and death within me.352

As claimed, one enters thereby the new life in Christ. Böhme subsequently discloses this new life in the following section of the First Treatise that is simply called “Guide”:

34. Christ was tempted in the wilderness. If you wish to clothe yourself in Him, you must follow His whole way from His incarnation to His ascension. Even though you cannot nor dare not do this as He did, you must nevertheless enter His way completely, and ever die to the soul’s vanity, for in this way the Virgin Sophia weds Herself to the soul only by this characteristic that sprouts in the soul through Christ’s death as a new growth that is [rooted] in heaven.353

Böhme thus leads the practitioner in the First Treatise along the way she must traverse. The way is revealed as both the way to Christ and the way of Christ. Further, we now also come to understand this is the way to marriage with Sophia—“the marriage of the lamb”:

38. If the soul remains firm here and conquers the devil in all his attacks, and pays no attention to temporal things for the love of the noble Sophia, the precious conqueror’s crown will be given to it as a sign of victory. Then the Virgin [Sophia] will come to the soul. She has revealed Herself in the precious Name JESUS as Christ the serpent-treader, as the anointed of God. She kisses [the soul] completely inwardly with her sweet love and presses love into its desire as a sign of victory. Here Adam according to his heavenly part is resurrected from the dead in Christ. Of this I cannot write; there is no pen in the world with which to do it for this is the marriage of the lamb when the noble

352 Ibid., 41-42.
353 Ibid., 44.
pearl is sown with great triumph, although it is first but small, like a mustard seed, as Christ says [Matthew 17:20].

Hereby, the practitioner is given to understand that this is ultimately where her practice leads. Having become Christ, she is then to marry her bride Sophia—of which no more may be said.

Although one may speak no more of the marriage of the lamb, more certainly may be said concerning the practice and Sophia, and Böhme does just that in the First Treatise. Before closing this Treatise with a short Morning and then an Evening Prayer (for the practitioner’s edification), Böhme offers what I believe is a most radical disclosure. This occurs in the section entitled “A Little Prayer, or Conversation.” Böhme introduces it with the following:

45. When Christ the cornerstone moves in the corrupted image of man in his deep conversion and repentance, the Virgin Sophia appears in the movement of Christ’s spirit in the corrupted image in Her Virginal clothing before the soul. Before Her the soul is frightened in its impurity so that all its sins are first awakened and before Her they are horrified and trembling. Then judgement [sic] comes over the sins of the soul so that it turns back in its unworthiness ashamed of its beautiful lover [ashamed of itself before its beautiful lover] [insert mine]; it turns into itself and rejects itself as altogether unworthy to receive such a treasure. We who have tasted this heavenly treasure understand this but no one else does. But the noble Sophia draws Herself near to the soul’s being and kisses it in a friendly manner and tinctures the dark fire of the soul with Her love beams and penetrates the soul with Her loving kiss. Then the soul leaps in its body for great joy in the power of this virginal love. It triumphs and praises the great God, by virtue of the noble Sophia.

I will now present a short introduction as to what happens when the bride takes the bridegroom to the heart. [It is presented] to the reader who may not yet have arrived at this place for his consideration if he desires to travel after us and to tread the paths where one plays with Sophia.

If this happens, as is described above, the soul rejoices in its body and says:

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354 Ibid., 45.

355 Ibid., 56-57.
Then the little prayer begins as a conversation between the soul and *Sophia*. I offer it here in an abbreviated form:

**Soul:** O great God, now may my praise, thanks, strength, glory and honour be to You . . . because You have redeemed me from the instigator of anguish. O beautiful Love, my heart grasps You. Where have You been so long? . . . I give myself unto Your love. Ah, before You I am dark. Make me light. O noble Love, give me but Your sweet pearl. Lay it in me.

O great God in Christ Jesus . . . You have forgiven me my sins and have filled me with Your power. . . . My bones rejoice in Your power; my heart plays in Your love. Eternal thanks be to You because You have redeemed me from hell and made death in me to be life. . . . O sweet Love. Let me not bend from You again. Give unto me Your crown of pearls and stay with me.

**Then the Virgin Sophia Speaks to the Soul:** My noble bridegroom, my strength and might, be always welcome to me. How have you forgotten me so long that I, in great sorrow, had to stand before your door and knock? . . . you turned your face from me; your ears had left my land. . . . You had taken the devil as a lover, . . . you have broken my marriage, and have had a strange love affair, and lost me, your God-given bride, [and caused me] to stand, a crushed being, without the strength of your fire’s might. Without your fire’s might I have not been able to be happy, for you are my husband; by you my own brightness is revealed. You are able to reveal my hidden miracles in your fire-life . . . . Apart from me you are a dark house in which is only anguish and pain and an enemy’s torment. . . . Lead your desire into me, and ignite me. By my meekness, I shall then change your fire-beams into a white-light, and direct my love through your fire-beams into your fire’s essence . . . .

. . . Kiss me, then, with your desire . . . . Then will I show you all my beauty. . . . All holy angels rejoice with us now . . . . remain faithful . . . . Work your miracles in my love, for which God awakened you.

**Soul:** . . . In You I see God’s mercy that earlier my foreign love had hidden. . . . Ah gracious Love, give me Your pearl so that I may remain in such joy forever.

**Sophia:** My dear lover and great treasure, your beginning gives me the greatest joy. Through the deep gates of God, through God’s wrath, through hell and death I have broken into the house of your misery, and I have given you my love out of grace, and released you . . . . I have kept my faith with you, but you beg me now for a serious thing, which I do not eagerly wish to risk with you. . . . think how you previously lost it . . . .

I shall keep my pearl to myself and shall dwell in your corrupted humanity now again made alive in me in the heaven within you . . . .

. . . You must work and beget in this time. . . . I press through your branches into the sap and bear fruit on your boughs, and you do not know it.

. . . I shall often visit you . . . . But my pearl I will not give you at this time as your own. You must remain in resignation and hear what the Lord plays in your
harmony. Moreover, you must give Him the sound and essence of your tone by my power, for now you are a messenger of His mouth . . . .

. . . Work in your fiery characteristic . . . . We wish to build Christ’s vineyard. . . . We shall bring about in this world what God has foreordained for us [to do]; we shall serve Him in His temple which we ourselves are. Amen.356

Böhme thus brings the practitioner, who has been gathered into this world and who has gathered herself within it—even unto death and the new birth in the threefold life—to witness the farthest reaches of what may be said concerning the practitioner’s course in this “external” world. It is interesting to note in this context that this farthest reach of the practice is disclosed through prayer as conversation—moreover, a conversation with Sophia.

Having followed the course of this hermeneutic preservation to this point, it should be no surprise that I now claim to understand this conversation as an “actual” event of prayer. Furthermore, I also claim that we are introduced here directly to the fruit of contemplation. More will be said of that later. For now, let me clarify my first claim.

In “A Little Prayer, or Conversation,” according to my interpretation in this preservation, Böhme is not merely creating a stylized medium for communicating certain “truths” of this practice that otherwise would be problematic in terms of bringing them to voice. Neither is it a simple sublimation of his infantile fantasies nor a psychotic hallucination. Rather, this conversation is more a transcription of a conversational event that has occurred in Böhme’s life of prayer. This is an event that the practitioner, who follows the way disclosed by Böhme, may herself, in her own way and voice, come to experience. This interpretation is not only supported by my particular hermeneutic

356 Ibid., 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62. [For purposes of readability, verse numbers have been removed, and original text headings have been reformatted and reproduced as above.]
preservation presented here. It is also supported by the text of *The Way to Christ*. But how can one come to understand how such an event may be?

Succinctly, and in terms of what has gone before, via the collapse and recasting of the practitioner’s ownmost ontological/imaginal horizoning, new possibilities of ontic encounter have become actual through its nascent gathering. Hereby, *Sophia* (as well as Saints and angels) may appear to the practitioner.\(^{357}\) This is not through the ontic casting of “my” imagination, but it is rather within that imaginal ontological horizoning whereby I am as Being-with. Thus, the earlier claim that *Sophia* will not be willed or coerced—clearly demonstrated in the conversation—can also be understood in a deeper way. Nonetheless, this is only part of the answer regarding how one can come to understand how such a prayer event may be.

Not for the last time, I must ask the question again: How is it in this discourse with the Nothing of *Sophia*? I would say in answer for the practitioner, it is progressively more personal in intimacy and meaning. As absurd as this may seem as an answer, it can suffice for the practitioner who lives this practice. However, for the theosophist—or the philosopher, for that matter—such an answer most likely will not be satisfying without further clarification. Therefore, I must turn again to Böhme’s more particularly theosophical discourse.

It will be recalled from Chapter Three of this dissertation that in Böhme’s Theosophical disclosure of phenomenality, *Sophia* is first understood as *Ungrund*’s “Other.” She is that Nothing of excessing Desire’s originary “contraction” that shows, or perhaps better, opens a clearing for showing. As such, She is often characterized as a

\(^{357}\) Ibid., 30.
mirror—a “clear brightness.”\textsuperscript{358} Or, as one can characterize Her further, She is the empty luminosity of the Nothing mirroring \textit{Ungrund}’s primordial wakefulness as well as what is then separated of the Word through the Anguished Wheel of Essences in the subsequently disclosed Will\textsuperscript{359}—which further mirroring, gives the Being of manifestation as phenomenality. One finds a ready example of just such a characterization of \textit{Sophia} as mirror in the First of Böhme’s \textit{Six Theosophic Points}.\textsuperscript{360}

What may follow from this is an understanding of \textit{Sophia} as first “Other” who “is” as othering. As such, She does not create, but She “gives” being-as-other. Further, I propose that this mirroring othering be understood in terms of giving semblance as the same, which one should hear now as “image and likeness” given to be free excessing desire ultimately as beings. Hereby, it may be said, the play of phenomenality is manifest of and as the sway of the twofold as \textit{Ungrund} and \textit{Grund}—even in imaginal opening and gathering to revealing concealment.

Still harkening back to Chapter Three, it will also be recalled that understanding the Nothing of \textit{Ungrund} as Excessing Desire further discloses \textit{Ungrund} as “Pure” Person. “Pure” Person though, not to be misunderstood as a person, can still be addressed most appropriately as “who.” The Nothing of \textit{Sophia}, as \textit{Ungrund}’s “Other” that gives semblance as the same, even as \textit{Ungrund}’s semblance and same, is likewise most appropriately addressed as “who”—even as She who gives beings to their being.

\textsuperscript{358} Boehme, “First Point” in “Six Theosophic Points,” 7.
\textsuperscript{359} See the “Source Spirits” in Chapter Three above.
\textsuperscript{360} Boehme, “First Point” in “Six Theosophic Points,” 5-22.
However, if we approach *Sophia* from the other side of her mirroring, according to Böhme, we witness (as we have seen), a difference—even in the sameness. *Sophia* can then show Herself as semblance of our sameness. That is, as a being who, into the new born horizoning in the Light world, can come to the practitioner in the threefold life to kiss her and speak to her and, ultimately, to “marry” Herself to her.

Thus, we have an intimation of *Sophia* as the Bride of Christ. That is, even as the Nothing of the Word—the Heart of Ungrund’s Will to manifestation—manifests in Christ as a being through the mystery of the Incarnation, so we see it here with *Sophia*, who “incarnates” in the Light world to be His bride. Furthermore, as we are given to understand this by Böhme, She is to be the bride of every soul who becomes a branch of His vine through the new birth.

However, it must also be acknowledged that attempting to grasp *Sophia* as a mere being is altogether to miss Her mark. Similarly, as claimed in traditional or orthodox Christianity, to understand Jesus as a mere man is altogether to miss His mark. Thus, as we continue to struggle to bring His Incarnation to “reasonable” language, so it is also with *Sophia*. Perhaps in Her case, the most appropriate way of bringing Her to discourse is through each one’s ownmost encounter with Her—whether as Being or as seemingly being.\(^{361}\)

Now I ask the question again: How is it in this discourse with the Nothing of *Sophia*? I am hopeful this question will resonate in a new way when I answer again—that it is progressively more personal in intimacy and meaning. This intimacy only deepens when one considers again Böhme’s “Little Prayer, or Conversation.” Through

\(^{361}\) What I am attempting to give voice to is *Sophia’s kenosis* as a radical abasement of Being. One should be hearing an extension of Vattimo’s weakening ontology in this.
this prayer’s conversation, Sophia tells the soul that She will dwell in the soul’s corrupted humanity now made alive in Her. She will dwell in the soul in the heaven imaginally opened to the soul via the new birth in the threefold life. Thus, it is Sophia in the soul and the soul in Sophia, yet each face-to-face, lovingly addressing the other.

Further, we witness here in this mutual indwelling that there is also great mutual longing. Setting aside for a moment the soul’s longing, which it may be said is for the soul’s ownmost being-with, Sophia here directly reveals the source of her longing. She desires and needs the soul—as fire-source of desire—in order to reveal fully Herself. Without such revealing, She cannot be happy. This is to say that we are the source of Sophia’s ownmost self-revelation and, thereby, happiness—even as She is the source of our being, and Her revelation is through our being as beings in the play of the Divine life. This is intimate, indeed. However, before Sophia will reveal the fullness of all Her beauty, She instructs the soul that she (the soul) must remain in resignation. Therefore, it is to resignation that I must now turn.

Böhme’s Resignation

I have characterized resignation, the second movement of Böhme’s practice of the way to Christ, earlier in this preservation as the fundamental “mood” of the practitioner in this world. I would like here to clarify this characterization. In the previous chapter regarding the movement of repentance, through my hermeneutic preservation, repentance was disclosed as the “mood” whereby the practitioner—in appropriating her ownmost being-guilty—could gather herself authentically and as a whole unto her death in Christ’s
death. Through this death, the practitioner and her threefold worlds are fundamentally transformed in the new birth.

It should be clear from Heidegger’s analytic of conscience—which was engaged to help clarify this movement—that such new birth in no way absolves the practitioner from her ownmost being-guilty. To be as Dasein, according to this analytic, is to be guilty as the null basis of a nullity. This situation has not changed. Neither, as I would have it, has changed the importance for the practitioner of being gathered authentically and as a whole into the world of the practice.

However, through death, the new birth, and the practitioner’s transformation—as opening and being gathered into the Light world in the threefold life—the dynamics of the practice do change. This change has been characterized as an alteration of the practitioner’s relationship to her will as the whereby of her ownmost giving direction to her imagination and desire. As will be seen, this alteration further gives rise to a transformation of understanding, and ultimately, of discourse.

Böhme discusses the movement of resignation in “The Fourth Treatise on True Resignation.” He begins this Treatise with what may be considered a cautionary tale. That is, he reminds the practitioner how things went with the devil and Adam, and how it was that they fell from “resignation” in the Divine life. He cautions the practitioner that the same has occurred to many who are new born to the threefold life. Further, he informs the practitioner just how this occurs. Succinctly, this occurs because one allows

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363 Ibid., 121.
“the light of understanding to shine in the self.” To understand this appropriately, one must consider Böhme’s image of the human as he gives it to us here in the Fourth Treatise.

This image of the human begins with the assumption of the interpenetration of Böhme’s three “worlds” in the threefold life. As characterized in my previous chapter, the practitioner abides in multiple interpenetrating horizonings. Building on this assumption, Böhme discloses the “danger” concerning one who falls. It is that when such a practitioner is born to the Light world, and “the sun of the great look of God’s holiness shines . . . reason mirrors itself in it and the will enters into self, that is, into its own search, and wishes to probe the centrum out of which the light shines and to overcome it in its self.” This is to say that the Light of the Light world enters the practitioner’s reason in the external world.

Hereby, according to Böhme, reason elevates itself in the self of the practitioner who, in a manner of speaking, misappropriates the reflected light of reason and mistakes it for the source of the Light in the Divine life. The self then takes up its own will in the external world to seek out its own center in its “natural” life according to what its reason reveals. Then pride grows in the practitioner, whereby the devil in the darkness of the dark-fire world gains access to her.

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364 Ibid., 115.
365 Ibid., 115-116.
366 Ibid., 116-117.
According to Böhme, the difficulties for such a practitioner in the threefold life of interpenetrating worlds do not end here. When the light of reason is thus ignited, its light draws even the stars. Böhme explains it thus:

13. And when the willing spirit of the creature swings up with the rational light into the *centrum*, as into the self, and enters its own delusion, it once again leaves God’s light. Now the devil finds an open door into it [the will], and a beautifully decorated house, rational light, as a dwelling, and he takes the seven forms of the life characteristics, which have gone out from God into the self like a hypocrite. Then he [the practitioner] turns inward and sets his desire to the trust of his self and into a false imagination. When the willing spirit sees itself in the forms of the life characteristics in the external light, then it sinks into it as if it were drunk and then the stars grasp it and lead their mighty constellation into it to search out the wonders of God in it and to be able to reveal themselves in them. All creatures long for God, and even if the stars are not able to grasp God’s spirit, they would much rather have a house of light in which they can find pleasure than a locked house in which there is no stability.

14. Thus this man goes on as if he had become drunk with the constellation. He conceives great wonderful things and has a continual leader in the constellations. The devil always notes where a gate is open for him, by which he may ignite the life *centrum* so that the willing spirit in its pride, in its presumption (or even in greed), may travel to the heights. Out of this, one’s own honour stands forth so that the rational will wishes to be honoured. For he thinks that he has the meat of salvation since he has a rational light, and he can set in order the locked house, which God easily can unlock. He thinks that honour belongs to him since he has reached rational understanding.

Through the above, Böhme provides the practitioner with an understanding of how things can go wrong in the new birth. He also, hereby, provides an example of how reason—at the birth of modernity—was critiqued by the “other tonality.” Reason, though an “eye of time” or “mirror of the external,” never escapes the horizoning in the

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367 These are of the Seven Source Spirits [*Quellgeister*]. See Chapter Three above.

368 Böhme, *Way to Christ*, 117-118. [Translator’s note 8: (alternate reading in Böhme’s manuscript) MS: *and finds*.]

369 Ibid., 119 and 116.
external world. Moreover, its tendency is to elevate itself, which draws not only the stars, but also the will, desire, and imagination into its ordering.

Thereby, the practitioner falls back to the state of her being as before the new birth. Only now, with reason having been so ignited, it becomes more difficult for the practitioner to attain the Light of the Divine life, since reason now weaves the wonders revealed by the stars and the processes of the “natural” world, which then hold the practitioner in her pride of such rational understanding to the “external” world.  

Böhme continues “The Fourth Treatise” by disclosing another way. Rather tellingly, he begins the section entitled, “A True Christian’s Processus, How He Is To Go” with the following:

19. Reason stops me and says, “It is proper and good that a man reach God’s light as well as the light of external nature and reason, so that he might order his life wisely, according to Holy Scripture.”

To this, Böhme replies, “Yes, it is proper . . . . But listen to how you are to use it [the light].” Böhme continues by instructing the practitioner that when reason is illumined in the new birth and one comes to know oneself “immediately in the self that is good and useful,” in that moment:

23. The will of the creature with all reason and desire should completely sink into itself, like an unworthy child that is not worthy of this high grace, taking to itself no knowledge or understanding, nor praying for nor desiring any knowledge from God in the creaturely self. Rather, it is only to sink itself unaffected and simply into the love and grace of God in Christ Jesus, and [being] dead to its desires, give itself completely to the life of God in love, so

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370 Ibid., 116.
371 Ibid., 118.
372 Ibid., 118-119. This is not the only time Böhme engages in “conversation” with Reason. “The Seventh Treatise, The Precious Gate on Divine Contemplation” includes an extended version of just such a “conversation,” in which one can see exactly how reasonable Böhme’s Reason can be.
that He might use it as His instrument in whatever way or however He wishes. 373

If reason attempts to raise itself up, “the will of the desire must bow to earth, and bring itself into the deepest humility and most absurd ignorance.” 374 This is the practitioner’s introduction to resignation.

The practitioner hereby begins to develop resignation as fundamental “mood.” In true resignation, as Böhme further discloses it, the practitioner must perpetually “sink” her will “into the nothing.” 375 By thus dissolving her self-will, the practitioner then does not enter into reason’s elevation with its pride and delusions in a self-willed life. 376 She abides rather in the nothing of humility whereby God can move her as His instrument—even to the study of the “natural arts,” as incongruous as that may sound. 377

Through perhaps years or decades of practice—enduring temptations and maturing in Christ’s life—by abiding in the deepening development of the nothing of self-will and most absurd ignorance, the practitioner may awaken to that true understanding which is the dawning of contemplation. According to Böhme, this occurs as an event or activity of the Holy Spirit, by which “He ignites the life-forms with His love-flames.” 379

373 Ibid., 119.
374 Ibid., 119-120.
375 Ibid., 121.
376 Ibid.
377 Ibid., 122.
378 Ibid., 49.
379 Ibid., 120.
In one of Böhme’s characterizations of this activity, he states:

36. The more reason sinks into absurd humility before God, and the more
unworthy it holds itself [to be] before God, [so much] more it dies to its own
desire; and [so much] more it is pierced through by God’s Spirit, who brings it
to the highest knowledge, so that it may see the great wonders of God. God’s
Spirit acts only in resigned humility, which neither seeks nor desires itself,
which in itself desires to be simple before God. This [it is] that God’s Spirit
grasps and leads into His wonders.

37. God has not created us for self-dominion but as instruments of His wonder
by which He Himself wishes to reveal His wonders. The resigned will trusts
God and hopes for all good from Him, but self-will orders itself for it has broken
off from God.380

Thus, Reason is redeemed—but as we see, only in true resignation. This is Böhme’s
claim. In “The Fourth Treatise,” he thereby lays the ground for the practitioner’s
understanding of resignation. This understanding, it may be said, develops through one’s
being of the sway of the twofold. It also develops—or is achieved—through practice.
This latter point cannot be overemphasized.

I will elaborate these points further. It has already been witnessed from the
Fourth Treatise that, in Böhme’s discourse, both the devil and Adam fell from
resignation.381 What this clearly expresses is that resignation is acknowledged as the
fundamental “mood” of beings vis-à-vis the Divine. It is the prelapsarian state. As such,
on the basis of all that has gone before, resignation can be characterized as an originary
abiding—or “dwelling”—in the wherein of one’s ownmost Divine self-revelation as the
being one is called to be. Or better yet, as suggested by Sophia in Her conversation with

380 Ibid., 122.
381 Ibid., 114-115.
the soul, one is hereby to be “the sound and essence” of one’s ownmost “tone” offered in harmony with the Divine Life as the Being-with of phenomenality. 382

With regard to phenomenality, we see again in the Fourth Treatise, as we did in the First Treatise (there concerning *Sophia*), that the soul is to be a manifest center or fire-source of Divine desire, whose being is given to reveal Divine wonders in and as the play of phenomenality.  This is to say, we are to abide in resignation in and as the sway of the twofold of *Ungrund* and *Grund*.

Nonetheless, such abiding proves to be difficult.  As already disclosed, even in the new birth, reason tends to self-elevation.  That is, we tend toward self-grounding. Thereby, we fall from the sway.  Certainly, one never escapes it.  All phenomenality, according to this hermeneutic, is of the sway.  Yet our fall can be said to be into an assumption of Ground as absolute, and into a life self-willed on the presumption of such Ground—particularly in terms of what “one” says concerning it.  Taking this a bit further, we also tend hereby to reify the horizoning of the “external” world and our being in it. This reification, then, obscures—or even initially hinders—our opening or being born to the Light world.

The practice of “resignation”, leading to *true* resignation counteracts these trends. When the practitioner brings herself into “most absurd ignorance,” reason’s elevation is frustrated, as has been disclosed.  However, as important, or even more important, to the practitioner is the sinking of her will “into the nothing.”  In so doing, the practitioner comes to abide in the sway by rooting her will in the nothing of *Ungrund*’s Desire to

382 Ibid., 61.
being. Thereby the practitioner ultimately becomes the instrument of God’s wonders in the threefold life.

This occurs in its fullest sense when the practice attains to true resignation as the originary abiding and fundamental “mood.” When true resignation is thus achieved, the Holy Spirit “ignites the life-forms” of the Seven Source Spirits “with His love-flames” and brings the practitioner to “highest knowledge.” The practitioner then is made ready for the marriage to Sophia. The practitioner also thereby attains the movement of contemplation. It may now be said that contemplation is better typified here as understanding and discourse than as “mood.”

**Contemplation**

The movement of contemplation is less “defined” than it is “demonstrated” [or performed] through the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Treatises of Böhme’s *The Way to Christ*. This demonstration, along with what was disclosed concerning true resignation as fundamental “mood,” constitute the basis of my claim that contemplation is better characterized in this practice as understanding and discourse than as “mood.”

Contemplation is demonstrated and so disclosed in each of these Treatises, quite tellingly, through the discourse of *conversation*. These conversations are specifically intended to illumine the understanding of different types of readers. In the Sixth Treatise, there is a conversation between a Teacher and a Student.384 The Seventh Treatise

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383 It is to be noted that, according to this characterization of the movement of contemplation in the practice of the way to Christ, contemplation is the fruit of practice, per se. It does not then, as one might presume, entail a specific injunction to practice.

384 Ibid., 171-193.
includes an edifying conversation between Böhme and Reason.\textsuperscript{385} And in the Eighth is a conversation between an Enlightened Soul and an Unenlightened Soul.\textsuperscript{386}

At the outset of this brief section on contemplation, it should be noted that the specific illuminating content of these conversations will not be the focus in this preservation. To engage this content would take me far from the stated task of this dissertation. My task has been to retrieve the question of imagination and its relation to religious practice through the preservation of Böhme’s practice of the way to Christ in conversation with Heidegger.

Having arrived at the movement of contemplation—the culmination and limit of the practice as presented in \textit{The Way to Christ}—this preservation is complete. Nonetheless, it is also important to acknowledge that in characterizing contemplation as understanding and discourse, I have struck upon a particularly complex problem. I will elaborate this point.

In attaining contemplation, the practitioner in true resignation is brought to “highest knowledge” by the Holy Spirit. This constitutes an illumination or transformation of the practitioner’s understanding, which initiates the practitioner’s own particular apprehension of the deep workings of the Divine in the threefold life.\textsuperscript{387} This includes the sounding of one’s ownmost tone in harmony with the tone of others. It includes “hearing” and “seeing” God with the same “hearing” and “seeing” with which

\textsuperscript{385} Ibid., 194-212. It should be acknowledged that “The Seventh Treatise, The Precious Gate on Divine Contemplation” is not composed in its entirety as a conversation. Yet the conversation does initiate the developing illuminative discourse of this Treatise’s monologue.

\textsuperscript{386} Ibid., 227-244.

\textsuperscript{387} This point can be thoroughly verified through a complete reading of the Seventh Treatise.
God hears and sees oneself.\textsuperscript{388} Further, as has been seen, it includes entering into intimate conversation with Sophia, as well as with others, in the multiple imaginal horizonings of worlds.

What one witnesses here is a profound transformation from the practice of “resignation” (with its most “absurd ignorance” and associated silence) to true resignation (with its illumined understanding), which can, and often does, come to language in a flood. One may recall the flood of works composed by Böhme in the final years of his life. Thus, we come to the problem. It is the problem of the question of language.\textsuperscript{389} This is certainly a problem and a question that have captivated contemporary discourse with their complexities.

Herewith I arrive at a limit as well. To move beyond this limit, I must retrieve the question of language relative to a preservation of Böhme’s discourse on language and its “relation to” Being, in conversation with Heidegger. Such a retrieval, preservation, and conversation require a separate work altogether. This is certainly so, since there is much that Böhme can offer in terms of opening a radically different direction for our discourse on language—just as he has done, in my estimation, for our discourse on imagination and its relation to religious practice.

Nevertheless, having acknowledged said limit does not mean that I have exhausted what may be said in this dissertation. There is yet one small task. I see this task as important, not necessarily for its strong evidentiary potential at this time, but

\textsuperscript{388} Boehme, \textit{Way to Christ}, 171.

\textsuperscript{389} A curiosity concerning the “strange” nature of this preservation of Böhme’s practice should be brought to light at this point. That is, it would seem that in tracking the practitioner’s transformation we move here from “mirroring” to “symbolization,” thus “recapitulating” stages of development well known to psychoanalytic discourse. This “sameness” notwithstanding, I am hopeful that the rather radical “nature” of the transformation Böhme is articulating is not thereby obscured.
rather for its strong suggestive potential. I am referring of course to the continuation of
the “conversation” with Heidegger.

Throughout this dissertation, Heidegger has been engaged to help clarify obscured
dynamics in Böhme’s practice, so to further and deepen this dissertation’s discourse.
Such remains the case here. The present issue at hand concerns the bare possibility of a
different type of understanding and discourse—or, if I may state it thus, the possibility of
a different way of “thinking”—achieved as contemplation. Heidegger can help disclose
this possibility.

Heidegger addresses this issue in his short “Conversation on a Country Path
About Thinking” (the “Conversation”). Of course, this is not the only work of his that
addresses the issue. However, this specific work resonates deeply with Böhme’s
discourse, in that through this work, Heidegger discusses a radical possibility of thinking
in relation to “resignation,” or “releasement.” Discourse on Thinking (of which the
“Conversation” is a part), is John M. Anderson’s and E. Hans Freund’s translation of
Heidegger’s short work titled Gelassenheit. The term “Gelassenheit” is translated and
understood in their work as “releasement.”

Further background concerning the “Conversation” is in order here. It should be
acknowledged that I follow Anderson’s assessment of this work as he presents it in his
introduction to Discourse on Thinking. Anderson proposes that the “Conversation” be
understood in relation to the sweep of Heidegger’s work concerning the question of
Being. That is, to understand that although Heidegger does not name Being in the

390 See Martin Heidegger, “Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking,” in Discourse on
Thinking, A Translation of Gelassenheit, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund, with an
“Conversation,” the question of Being is nonetheless at issue.\textsuperscript{391} Understanding the “Conversation” in this light allows Anderson to characterize this work in a specific way.

Briefly, as Anderson portrays it, Heidegger’s project in \textit{Being and Time} of moving from \textit{Dasein}’s temporality to Being, is fundamentally frustrated by the very horizon of human experience itself. Rather simplistically, this is to say that representational thinking, which is understood as arising in relation to the horizon, imposes a limit whereby discourse concerning apprehension or understanding of the beyond-the-horizon becomes highly problematic.\textsuperscript{392}

Therefore, in the “Conversation” and other later works, Heidegger turns to the articulation of the understanding of another type of thinking. This is “meditative” or “mindful” thinking—\textit{besinnliches Denken}. This then, is differentiated from representational or “calculative” thinking—\textit{rechnendes Denken}. Whereas calculative thinking relates in a specific way to beings within the horizon, mindful thinking could be said to include “an awareness of the horizon.”\textsuperscript{393} One witnesses then, through the “Conversation,” how this differentiation can open the way to Being.

This work is as it is titled, a conversation about thinking among a “Scientist,” a “Teacher,” and a “Scholar.” It is constructed in a way such that the reader enters the conversation seemingly in midstream. Further, it appears that these three “protagonists”

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\textsuperscript{392} Ibid., 16-17.

\textsuperscript{393} Ibid., 24.
\end{flushright}
have been in conversation before. One finds oneself therefore feeling somewhat at a
disadvantage.

Be that as it may, as this conversation unfolds, one quickly comes to one of the
principle ways that mindful thinking is differentiated from representational thinking. The
Scholar tells us that, “understood in the traditional way, . . . To think is to will, and to will
is to think.” The Scientist then proposes to the Scholar, “You want a non-willing in
the sense of a renouncing of willing, so that through this we may release, or at least
prepare to release, ourselves to the sought-for essence of a thinking that is not a
willing.”

We hereby strike upon a point of deep co-resonance between Heidegger and
Böhme concerning the issue of resignation or “releasement.” That is, for either, will
must be renounced. Further, I believe it is fair to say that for both, Sophia/Being has
called them to it. Affirming that, Heidegger continues in the “Conversation”:

Scholar: So far as we can wean ourselves from willing, we contribute to the
awakening of releasement.
Teacher: Say rather, to keeping awake for releasement.
Scholar: Why not, to the awakening?
Teacher: Because on our own we do not awaken releasement in ourselves.
Scientist: Thus releasement is effected from somewhere else.
Teacher: Not effected, but let in.

Heidegger then sets up the way to Being through pointing out a pivotal sameness:

Teacher: We say that we look into the horizon. Therefore the field of vision is
something open, but its openness is not due to our looking.

395 Ibid., 59-60.
396 Ibid., 60-61.
Scholar: Likewise we do not place the appearance of objects, which the view within a field of vision offers us, into this openness . . .

Scientist: . . . rather that comes out of this to meet us.

Teacher: What is evident of the horizon, then, is but the side facing us of an openness which surrounds us; an openness which is filled with views of the appearances of what to our re-presenting are objects.

Scientist: In consequence the horizon is still something else besides a horizon. Yet after what has been said this something else is the other side of itself, and so the same as itself. You say that the horizon is the openness which surrounds us. But what is this openness as such, if we disregard that it can also appear as the horizon of our representing?

Teacher: It strikes me as something like a region, an enchanted region where everything belonging there returns to that in which it rests.397

We see then that the other side of our horizoning is the openness of the regioning, “as that which comes to meet us,” which regioning it may be said, then withdraws in the appearance of things as objects.398

Further, of the region, it is also disclosed:

Teacher: The region gathers, just as if nothing were happening, each to each and each to all into an abiding, while resting in itself. Regioning is a gathering and re-sheltering for an expanded resting in an abiding.

Scholar: So the region itself is at once an expanse and an abiding. It abides into the expanse of resting.399 It expands into the abiding of what has freely turned toward itself. In view of this usage of the word, we may also say “that-which-regions” in place of the familiar “region.”399

Teacher: That-which-regions is an abiding expanse which, gathering all, opens itself, so that in it openness is halted and held, letting everything merge in its own resting.400

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397 Ibid., 64-65.

398 Ibid., 65.

399 The curious “fact” that “Rest” is Böhme’s seventh Source Spirit should be noted in this.

400 Heidegger, “Conversation,” 66. [Translator’s note 1: The German word for region is Gegend. What is in question here, however, is not region in general, but as Heidegger says, “the region of all regions” (“die Gegend aller Gegenden”) or the region. Heidegger uses an old variant of Gegend as the word for the region: die Gegnet—a word that still occurs in spoken German although only in South German dialects. Since an analogous variant is not available for the English counterpart, die Gegnet has been rendered in the text by the phrase that-which-regions. That-which-regions reflects a movement]
Thereby, in the “Conversation,” a new characterization of things that appear is achieved. Showing forth in “that-which-regions,” they “no longer have the character of objects.” That is, they “no longer stand opposite us” for our representing. Rather, as the Teacher states, “They rest in the return to the abiding of the expanse of their self-belonging.”

Yet it must still be questioned how has this new characterization—or better, this new thinking—been achieved? One may answer that it is through non-willing and a non-representing that nonetheless names. One may also answer that it is through a conversation that “waits” in remaining open to the openness of that-which-regions. Thereby, resignation can be achieved as releasement into the openness of Being that gathers beings into the abiding of belonging-together.

However, as it is also disclosed, we “belong to” that-which-regions as well as the other side of our horizoning. Thus, it may be claimed:

**Scientist:** But if heretofore the reigning essence of thinking has been that transcendental-horizontal re-presentation from which releasement, because of its belonging to that-which-regions, releases itself; then thinking changes in releasement from such a re-presentation to waiting upon that-which-regions.

**Teacher:** Yet the nature of this waiting is releasement to that-which-regions. But because it is that-which-regions which then lets releasement belong to it, since resting in it, the nature of thinking lies, if I may say so, in the regioning of releasement by that-which-regions.

**Scholar:** Thinking is releasement to that-which-regions because its nature lies in the regioning of releasement.

attributed by Heidegger to *die Gegnet* and further emphasized by his use of the verb *gegnen* (to region). (Tr.)

401 Ibid., 67.

402 Ibid., 67-70.
Teacher:  But by this you say that the nature of thinking is not determined through thinking and so not through waiting as such, but through the other-than-itself, that is, through that-which-regions which as regioning first brings forth this nature. 403

Thereby, we are led ultimately to an essential admission—insofar as “thinking is what distinguishes man’s nature”:404

Scholar:  Evidently the nature of man is released to that-which-regions because this belongs to it so essentially, that without man that-which-regions can not be a coming forth of all natures, as it is.405

Or, as it may be restated, Sophia/Being “needs” human nature. It is then naught but a small step to the claim that Sophia “needs” the practitioner of resignation for Her ownmost self-revelation in contemplation or mindful thinking.

I herewith will conclude my developing “conversation” between Heidegger and Böhme in this dissertation. Here at the end, Heidegger has clarified and so opened the possibility of a transformed understanding and discourse in relation to “true resignation”—at least insofar as it concerns Sophia/Being. This is not to say that Heidegger would have “approved” of Böhme’s characterization of the encounter with Sophia—or mine, for that matter. Our characterizations may be altogether too “barbaric,” in that they are so “sensually personified.” However, to this type of criticism—though in my words—Böhme certainly could have countered, “You have not gone far enough. You have received only the little ‘something’ I referred to in my

403 Ibid., 74.
404 Ibid., 58.
405 Ibid., 83.
introduction of *Sophia*. You must press on further into Christ’s death and life to win Her pearl in marriage.”406

Jacob Böhme and Martin Heidegger—the theosophist and the philosopher—in the end may continue to dwell in different worlds of discourse and of practice. Nevertheless, this does not preclude what I believe to be worthwhile “conversation.” Furthermore, as has been stated, I believe their continuing conversation in relation to language will prove fruitful as well. But that is for another day.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to offer one final selection from each of their texts—lest someone here too quickly be left as “barbaric.” First, consider how Heidegger finishes the “Conversation”—overtly referring to “that-which-regions” through the rapidly enveloping night near the end of their walk:

*Teacher:* Ever to the child in man, night neighbors the stars.

*Scholar:* She binds together without seam or edge or thread.

*Scientist:* She neighbors; because she works only with nearness.

*Scholar:* If she ever works rather than rests . . .

*Teacher:* . . . while wondering upon the depths of the height.

*Scholar:* Then wonder can open what is locked?

*Scientist:* By way of waiting . . .

*Teacher:* . . . if this is released . . .

*Scholar:* . . . and human nature remains *appropriated* to that . . .

*Teacher:* . . . from whence we are called.407

Apparently, Heidegger also cannot resist Person.

Now consider the beginning to Böhme’s Sixth Treatise that concerns contemplation:

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1. The student said to the master: “How may I come to the supersensual life so that I can see God and hear Him speak?” The master said: “If you can sweep up for a moment into that in which no creature dwells, you can hear what God speaks.”

2. The student said: “Is that near or far?” The master said: “It is in you. If you could be silent from all willing and thinking for one hour you would hear God’s inexpressible words.”

3. The student said: “How can I hear when I remain silent in thinking and willing?” The master said: “When you remain silent from the thinking and willing of self, the eternal hearing, seeing and speaking will be revealed in you, and God will see and hear through you. Your own hearing, willing and seeing hinders you so that you do not see and hear God.”

4. The student said: “With what shall I see and hear God, since He is above nature and creature?” The master said: “When you move silently then you are that which God was before nature and creature, [that] out of which He created your nature and creature. Then you will hear and see with that with which God saw and heard in you before your own willing, seeing and hearing began.”

Perhaps thus, we may sweep up beyond the “barbaric,” truly to who is the Divine, through our person.

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CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

It was stated in the Introduction that, according to the characterization by Don S. Browning, Religion and Psychological Studies (RPS) is an interdisciplinary and hermeneutic enterprise which focuses its discourse on images of the human in dynamic encounter—which discourse further finds its center of gravity in the concern and care for the religious person. It follows that this dissertation, offered as a work of original scholarship in the field of RPS, has attempted to stay true to the spirit of this characterization.

Hence, the theosophical hermeneutic of Jacob Böhme and the philosophical hermeneutic of Martin Heidegger have been engaged in “conversation.” Through this conversation, in the context of a preservation of Böhme’s transformative practice as it is articulated in The Way to Christ, I have attempted to retrieve the question of imagination’s relation to religious practice—specifically in light of the potential for world transformations.

As it was also stated in the Introduction, this retrieval has been deemed necessary due to the apparent dearth of hermeneutic options for the interpretation of the dynamics of imagination and desire in religious practice. To date, psychoanalytically oriented hermeneutics have been not just the preferred choices, but certainly among the only
viable choices, for the disclosure of such dynamics available to the RPS hermeneut. I am hopeful that with the offering of this dissertation a new option is now available.

Imagination, as it has been presented here, is understood as rooted in, and equiprimordial with, desire characterized by the excessing of phenomenality. Being so understood, imagination can be said to “show forth” both “ontologically” and “ontically.”

Ontologically speaking, I have characterized imagination as the whereby of our wherein. That is, following in the wake of Heidegger, imagination has been said to open the horizon—or better, be the horizoning—that gathers beings in their belonging-together to be the beings that they are, and so are in mutual involvements and encounter. That is, imagination opens the horizons of the worlds wherein we dwell. Being primordial temporality, as the clearing opening, imagination (ontologically characterized) can further be said to gather beings in and as their finitude.

However, as I also have attempted to show, such understanding can disclose the possibility of multiple horizonings, and thereby worlds. Worlds which, following in the wake of Böhme, can be said to be dynamic in their ongoing ontological and historical interactions or “inter-Being.” Hence, the possibility opens for the understanding and discourse of radically transformative and transforming worlds.

Ontically speaking, imagination opens for desireful Dasein a space for gathering within any given world. Again, this is not due to any lack, but rather to desire’s ownmost excessing. Further, as I have characterized it—engaging however briefly and in embedded fashion in “conversation” with psychoanalysis—such imagination can also be

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seen to be subject to the influences of one’s own willful wishing, whether consciously or unconsciously manifest. Hereby, such ontically imaginative gathering can become “fantasy.” Thus, in the development of this hermeneutic—as I have struggled in good faith to bring it to voice—this hermeneutic is not only differentiated from psychoanalytic hermeneutics of imagination and desire, but the way also becomes open for the inclusion of various psychoanalytic discourses within it.

The understanding of imagination so articulated was developed through the opening of the “conversation” between Böhme and Heidegger. The same can be said to be the case with the understanding of world as the wherein of one’s dwelling, even through the acknowledgment of Böhme’s and Heidegger’s different elaborations of this term. Be that as it may, the understanding of imagination was here also tracked and deepened in its development through the preservation of Böhme’s practice of the way to Christ which helped to disclose, through its working context, a fuller spectrum of the dynamics of imagination and desire manifest in practice.

This led to the additional disclosure of a radical transformative possibility for the practitioner of Böhme’s “way,” and in particular, her worlds through the “movement” of repentance, death, and the “new birth.” This in turn, disclosed a radical possibility of encounter between such a practitioner and Sophia, as well as further transformative possibilities through the movements of resignation and contemplation.

For the sake of full disclosure, it must also be recognized here that by developing this hermeneutic within the context of a preservation of Jacob Böhme’s way to Christ, this hermeneutic is revealed as springing from, and so further developing, a discourse that understands the Nothing—whether of Ungrund or Sophia/Being—as “who.” For
many—whether they are of a modern or a post-metaphysical discourse—this will be a hard pill to swallow. This is understandable.

Yet it must also be acknowledged and emphasized that such is the outcome of this particular preservation. I must question then, what if a different work of practice from a different world of belonging-together had been engaged as the starting point for the development. Would this outcome of ultimate origin—of necessity—be the same? This is a question that remains open. I can only hope that an other will take up the call through the preservation of another practice to see if such is indeed the case.

In the end then, this work is still a mere beginning. Nevertheless, I propose that enough of the way has been cleared to justify its use as a hermeneutic option. As an example, one might consider how this hermeneutic could open new possibilities for our academic discourse when brought into conversation with—or applied to—the Deity Yoga of Vajrayana Buddhism. How then might we understand Buddha realms? This question speaks directly to a transformative possibility for our academic world. This, in part, is what is at stake here.

Concerning our transformative possibilities, it must also be questioned, what if—as this dissertation has attempted—we were to continue to open our discourse to the “esoteric” traditions in a serious way? I propose that, among other things, it would become progressively more difficult to maintain the common narratives, with their attending discourses, that rather naively and rigidly set religion into varying bipolar relations to science in a closed or dialectical system as the story of our history and background for certain contemporary debates.
If we were so to continue (bracketing for the moment other voices marginalized through our common discourses), it may perhaps again be affirmed—as I tried to affirm in Chapter Two of this dissertation—that the esoteric traditions have been and still are a third voice in our “western” historical transformations. Further, they remain a voice of the “other tonality.” This issue is also, in part, what is at stake in this dissertation. That is, so to open—even by a little bit—the boundaries of legitimate, and legitimizing, discourse.

Returning to a more practical concern, it was also noted in the Introduction that there have been curiously few works in the field of RPS that focus specifically, and in a sustained way, on the practitioner in practice. Again, what seems strange in this is that such works have a profound potential in helping to disclose the “who” of the religious person. I am hopeful that in some small way this potential has been demonstrated through this dissertation.

Concerning the “who” of Böhme’s particular practice, it may justifiably be asked, who now practices his “way?” Is not the “who” disclosed here a “who” that no longer exists? This is a valid question. Surely, one can assume there are very few today who preserve Böhme’s practice as it is specifically given in *The Way to Christ.*

However, it should also be acknowledged that we—particularly in the United States—are not far removed from the influence of this practice. Our nation is rooted in the discourses and practices of Protestant Pietism. This Pietism—as was disclosed—in its inception was profoundly influenced by Böhme’s *The Way to Christ,* at least in some circles.
Currently, we are witnessing a resurgence of “pietist” interest and expression through the evangelism of certain “born-again” Christians. It would seem that many, in their thirst for a deep and personal spiritual connection, still gravitate to the “familiar”—whether this is in their best interest or not. It may be said then, that we are somewhat primed for a return to this practice of the way to Christ. One clear benefit of such a return, I believe, would manifest through an increase in pietists of a heightened and heartfelt tolerance—even acceptance—of practitioners in other traditions. This would certainly include more open and friendly conversation. A return to this practice then, could bear good fruit.

It will be recalled that the Böhmist Christian, understanding herself as of the community of the “inner church,” can move among the sects, and even participate in their services. She is not afraid to study respectfully the works and practices of other traditions—including those of science or the “natural arts.” And rather than “argue” with others or proselytize them, she sinks herself into the loving life of Christ. Thus, she becomes just and generous in charity.

Along with Sophia—with whom she becomes personally and intimately connected—she is a true worker in God’s vineyard. Further, she knows that she is in transformation, and so resigns herself in true humility. Yet she is also strong in her independence, for she knows that she must find her particular way—and that it is ultimately for herself alone. Thus, she can respect the ways and “gifts” of others.

Certainly, there is much in the Böhmist Christian that expresses the mythos of what have long been familiar and cherished Protestant American “ideals.” This practice, although—like the ideals—certainly not for all, nonetheless truly is near in its apparent
distance. It can offer a viable alternative to some with pietist leanings who otherwise might feel they have no other option for their practice than the unexamined emotional effusiveness and intolerant Biblical literalism which, in my estimation, have become the “customary” fare—or ways of “gathering”—for much of the contemporary evangelical world. This issue is also, in part, what is at stake in this dissertation.

I am hopeful then, that this dissertation will spark some interest in Jacob Böhme and his practice of the way to Christ. I believe that Böhme and this practice are still relevant and have much yet to offer. This includes, as stated in Chapter Five, my hoped-for retrieval of the question of language, through a preservation of Jacob Böhme’s discourse on this issue—yet again, in “conversation” with the work of Martin Heidegger. Thereby, I believe a radical and a “new” way forward in our discourse concerning this critical issue also may ultimately be attained.
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