

**Dr. Sean J. McGrath**

Associate Professor, Philosophy  
Memorial University of Newfoundland  
St. John's, NL  
A1C 5S7  
sjoseph.mcgrath@gmail.com

**AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION**

Metaphysics, Philosophy of Religion, Hermeneutics and Phenomenology, Psychoanalysis

**LANGUAGES**

English, German, French.

**DEGREES, EDUCATION, TRAINING**

2002: Ph.D., Philosophy, University of Toronto.  
1999: M.A., Theology, University of St. Michael's College.  
1996: M.A., Philosophy, University of Toronto.  
1989: B.A., English, University of Ottawa.

**ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS**

2010–: Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Memorial University  
2007-2010: Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Memorial University  
2004-2007: Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Mount Allison University  
2003-2004: Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Mount Saint Mary's College, MD.  
2002-2003: Sessional Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto.

**MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS AND ACADEMIC AWARDS:**

2011: Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship (renewed) for research in Germany  
2008: SSCHR/Vice-President Research Grant, Memorial University  
2008: SSHRC Travel Grant, Memorial University of Newfoundland.  
2008/2009: Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship for research in Germany  
2006: J. E. A. Crake Teaching Award, Mount Allison University  
2005: DAAD Research Visit for DAAD Alumni, Bonn, Germany  
2004: Mount Allison Bell Research Fellowship.  
2002: Dissertation Essay Competition, Philosophy Education Society  
2000-2002: DAAD Research Scholarship, Freiburg, Germany.  
1999-2002: SSHRCC Doctoral Fellowship  
2000-2001: UT Joint Initiative for German and European Studies (JIGES) Research Award

## ***Publications***

### **Edited Volumes:**

1. 2010: With Andrzej Wiercinski. *A Companion to Heidegger's Phenomenology of Religious Life* (Rodopi, 2010).
2. 2010: *Questioning the Absolute. Analecta Hermeneutica* vol. 2. [www.mun.ca/analecta/](http://www.mun.ca/analecta/).
3. 2009: *Analecta Hermeneutica*, vol. 1. [www.mun.ca/analecta/](http://www.mun.ca/analecta/).

### **Monographs**

Forthcoming: *The Esoteric Unconscious* (Routledge, 2011).

4. In press: *The Dark-Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious* (Routledge, 2011).
5. 2008: *Heidegger. A Very Critical Introduction* (Eerdmans).
6. 2006: *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy: Phenomenology for the Godforsaken* (Catholic University of America Press).

### **Chapters in books:**

7. In press: "The Illustrations of Michael Andreaes in the 1682 Amsterdam Edition of Jacob Böhme's Collected Works," in *Similitudes of the Sublime: Esotericism and Magic in Images* (Ouroboros, 2012).
8. In press: "Heidegger's Readings of Augustine," in *A Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, ed. Karla Pollmann (Oxford University Press, 2012).
9. In press: "The Question Concerning Nature," in *Interpreting Nature: The Emerging Field of Environmental Hermeneutics*, ed. Brian Treanor and Forrest Clingerman (Fordham University Press, 2012).
10. 2011: "Gadamer and the Hermeneutical Problem of Biblical Revelation," in *Gadamer's Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation*, ed. Andrzej Wiercinski (Berlin: Lit), 323-338.
11. "Formal Indication, Irony, and the Risk of Saying Nothing," in *A Companion to Heidegger's Phenomenology of Religious Life*, ed. S.J. McGrath and Andrzej Wiercinski (Rodopi, 2011), 181-210.
12. 2009: "Hermeneutics and the Unconscious: The Mercurial Play of Interpretation in Phenomenology, Psychoanalysis, and Alchemy," in *The Task of Interpretation: Hermeneutics, Psychoanalysis, and Literary Studies*, ed. Dariusz Skórczewski, Andrzej Wiercinski, and Edward Fiawa (Catholic University of Lublin), 45-72.
13. 2008: "Jakob Böhmes Begriff des Bösen," in *Unheilvolles Erbe? Zum Verständnis der Erbsündenlehre*, ed. Helmut Hoping and Michael Schultz, *Quaestiones Disputatae*, ed. Peter Hünermann and Thomas Södung, vol. 231 (Herder, 2008), 50-76.
14. 2007: "The Excessive Truth of the Imaginal and the Need for Indirect Communication in Methodical Philosophy," in *Rescuing Insight*, ed. David and John Liptay (University of Toronto), 64-81.
15. 2005: "The Early Heidegger's Critique of Husserl," in *Between Description and Interpretation. The Hermeneutic Turn in Phenomenology*, ed. Andrzej Wiercinski (The Hermeneutic Press), 265-273.

### **Papers in refereed journals:**

16. 2010: "Sexuation in Jung and Lacan," *International Journal of Jung Studies* 2, n. 1: 1-19.
17. 2010: "Schelling on the Unconscious," *Research in Phenomenology* 40: 72-91.
18. 2009: "Boehme, Schelling, Hegel, and the Hermetic Theology of Evil," *Philosophy and Theology* 18, n. 2 (issue back-dated to 2006): 257-85.
19. 2009: "The Interpretive Structure of Truth in Heidegger," *Analecta Hermeneutica* 1: 46-55. [www.mun.ca/analecta/](http://www.mun.ca/analecta/)
20. 2009: "Heidegger and Medieval German Mysticism," in *Heinrich Seuse Jahrbuch* 1: 71-100.
21. 2008: "Alternative Confessions, Conflicting Faiths: A Review of *The Influence of Augustine on Heidegger*," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82, no. 1: 317-336.
22. 2005: "The Facticity of Being Godforsaken: The Young Heidegger's Accommodation of Luther's Theology of the Cross," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79, No. 2: 273-290.
23. 2005: "Back to the Religious Roots of *Being and Time*: Questioning Heidegger's Formal Eschatology," *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion/Studia z filozofii Boga, religii i czlowieka* 3: 283-306.
24. 2004: "Die scotistische Phänomenologie des jungen Heideggers," in *Heidegger und die Anfänge Seines Denkens*, ed. Hans-Helmuth Gander, Holger Zaborowski, and Alfred Denker, *Heidegger-Jahrbuch* 1: 243-258.
25. 2003: "Heidegger and Duns Scotus on Truth and Language," *Review of Metaphysics* 57: 323-343.
26. 2003: "Towards a Technology that Allows the Beautiful to Occur," *Animus* 8: 11-20, <http://www2.swgc.mun.ca/animus/Articles/Volume%208/mcgrath8.pdf>
27. 2002: "The Young Heidegger's Problematic Reading of Augustine's Ontological Restlessness," in *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 3, no. 4 (<http://www.jcrt.org>).

### **Papers in refereed conference proceedings:**

Forthcoming: "The Dissociated Self," *Proceedings of the Academie du Midi*, 2011.

28. In press: "Madness as a Philosophical Problem in Hegel," in *Madness*, ed. Daniela Fargione and Jonathan Sunley (Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2011).
29. 2007: "Heidegger's Approach to Aquinas: Opposition, Destruktion, and Unbelief," in *Belief and Metaphysics*, ed. Conor Cunningham (SCM Press), 260-290.
30. 2004: "Das verborgene theologische Anliegen von Sein und Zeit: Die Luther Lektüre des jungen Heidegger," in Markus Enders and Holger Zaborowski (eds.), *Phänomenologie der Religion. Zugänge und Grundfragen* (Freiburg: Karl Alber), 271-286.
31. 2002: "The Forgetting of Haecceitas: Heidegger's 1915-1916 Habilitationsschrift," in Andrzej Wiercinski, ed., *Between the Human and The Divine: Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics* (The Hermeneutic Press), 355-377.

## PAPERS READ

1. 2011: “Melancholy, Death, and the Longing for Being in Schelling’s *Clara*,” at the Second International Meeting of Hermeneutics, Psychoanalysis, and Literary Studies, Catholic University of Lublin, 23 May 2011.
2. 2011: “The Marginalization of Imagination and the Forgetting of Nature in Structuralism and Hermeneutics,” at the *Environmental Hermeneutics Conference*, 25 January 2011.
3. 2010: “Michel Henry and the Hiddenness of Life,” at the *American Catholic Philosophical Association*, Baltimore, Friday, 5 November.
4. 2010: “Nature’s Coming Back and its Nasty: The Second-Wave of Eco-Anxiety,” at the annual meeting of the *International Association of Environmental Philosophy*, Montreal, 7 November 2010.
5. 2010: “Hegel’s Theory of Madness,” at *Madness—Probing the Boundaries* conference at Oriel College, Oxford, Thursday 14 September, 2010.
6. 2010: “The Dissociated Self,” at the annual meeting of the *Académie-du-Midi*, Alet-les-Bains, France, 27 May 2010.
7. 2009: “Schelling on Responsibility and the Unconscious,” at the annual meeting of the *Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy*, Arlington, Virginia, 29 October 2009.
8. 2009: “Lacan’s Critique of Controsexuality,” at *Psyche, Power, and Society. The Second International Conference of the International Association of Jungian Studies*, Cardiff University, 12 July 2009.
9. 2008: Paper: “The Illustrations of Michael Andreas in the 1682 Amsterdam Edition of Jacob Böhme’s Collected Works,” at the annual meeting of the *American Academy of Religion*, Western Esotericism Group, Chicago, 9 November 2008.
10. 2008: “Heidegger. A Very Critical Introduction,” panel discussion of my book of the same title at the *Grandeur of Reason. Conference of the Centre of Philosophy and Theology*, Rome, 1 September 2008.
11. 2008: “Schelling and Jung,” at the *Third Academic Conference of the International Association of Analytical Psychology and International Association of Jungian Studies*, ETH Zurich, 4 July 2008.
12. 2008: “Hermeneutics and the Unconscious: The Mercurial Play of Interpretation in Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis,” at the *Hermeneutics, Psychoanalysis, and Literary Studies* conference, Catholic University of Lublin, 2 April, 2008.
13. 2008: “Psychoanalysis as a Human Science,” at the *Hermeneutics and the Humanities* conference, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, 27 March 2008.
14. 2007: “Boehme, Schelling and the Hermetic Theology of Evil,” at the annual meeting of the *American Catholic Philosophical Association*, Marquette University, 10 November 2007.
15. 2006: “Heidegger from 1919 to 1927: Groundwork Towards a Phenomenology for the Godforsaken,” at the annual meeting of the *American Catholic Philosophical Association*, Denison University, Granville, Ohio, 27 October 2006.
16. 2006: “Aquinas and Scotus on Aristotle’s Theory of Knowledge,” at the *Aristotle De*

- Anima Conference*, Bishops University, Quebec, 26 September 2006.
17. 2006: "Readings in the Shadow Canon: Paracelsus and Boehme on the Problem of Evil," Faculty Research Day, Mount Allison University, New Brunswick, 31 August 2006.
  18. 2006: "The Objection from Evil," at the *International Philosophy of Religion Workshop*, Mount Allison University, New Brunswick, 19 August 2006.
  19. 2006: "Breaking in to the Hermeneutic Circle: Gadamer and the Possibility of Absolute Alterity," at the annual meeting of the *International Association for Philosophy and Literature*, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Germany, 5 June 2006.
  20. 2006: "Formal Indication, Metaphor, and the Way Poetry Means," at the annual meeting of the *Heidegger-Forschungsgruppe*, Meßkirch, Germany, 25 May 2006.
  21. 2006: "The Esoteric Context of Hegel's Ontology of Contradiction," at the annual meeting of the *Ontario Hegel Society*, McGill University, 1 April 2006.
  22. 2005: "Jean-Luc Marion's Contribution to von Balthasar's Theological Aesthetics," at the annual meeting of the *American Catholic Philosophical Association*, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, 29 October 2005.
  23. 2005: "The Interpretive Structure of Truth in Heidegger," at the annual meeting of the *Canadian Philosophical Association*, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, 29 May 2005.
  24. 2005: "Derrida on the Impossibility of the Gift," at the annual meeting of the *Canadian Society for Continental Philosophy*, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, 30 May 2005.
  25. 2004: "The Young Heidegger's Approach to Aquinas: Sorting out the Confusion of Opposed Horizons," at the annual meeting of the *American Catholic Philosophical Association*, Miami, Florida, 5 November 2004.
  26. 2004: "Formalizing (or Formal Indicating?) the Apocalypse: The Young Heidegger's Reading of St. Paul," at the annual meeting of the *Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy*, Memphis, Tennessee, 30 October 2004.
  27. 2004: "Phenomenology of Religions: Methodological Cues from the Young Heidegger," at the annual meeting of the *Atlantic Regional Philosophical Association*, Dalhousie University, Halifax, 16 October 2004.
  28. 2004: "The Act of Insight and the Excessive Meaning of the Symbol," at the second *International Lonergan Workshop*, Regis College, Toronto, 5 August 2004.
  29. 2004: "Phenomenology of Religion as Hermeneutic Source of Scientific Data," at the *International Christian Studies Association*, Sixth World Congress, Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA, 30 July 2004.
  30. 2004: "The Excessive Truth of the Imaginal," at the *West Coast Methods Institute*, Loyola Marymount College, CA, 16 April 2004.
  31. 2003: "Towards a Phenomenology of Mysticism: The Young Heidegger's Explorations of the Other Side of the Middle Ages," at the annual meeting of the *American Philosophical Association*, Eastern Division, Washington, D.C., 28 December 2003.
  32. 2003: "Formal Indication as Hermeneutical Method in the Young Heidegger," for the *Canadian Society for Hermeneutics and Postmodern Thought*, at the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities, Dalhousie University, Halifax, 30 June 2003.

33. 2003: "Das verborgene theologische Anliegen von Sein und Zeit," at the *Internationale religionsphilosophische Konferenz anlässlich des 20. Todestages Bernhard Weltes*, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Germany, 14 May 2003.
34. 2003: "From Reflective to Hermeneutical Phenomenology: The Early Heidegger's Critique of Husserl," at the annual meeting of the *American Philosophical Association*, Central Division, Cleveland, Ohio, 26 April 2003.
35. 2000: "Technology, Truth, and the Imagination: Toward an Ethos of the Beautiful," paper presented at the *De Paul Graduate Philosophy Conference*, De Paul University, Chicago, 15 May 2000.
36. 1998: "Schleiermacher and Lonergan on the Foundations of Theology," paper presented at the *Lonergan Research Institute*, Regis College, Toronto, 8 January 1998.

**Invited lectures:**

37. 2011: "The Schellingian Unconscious." Keynote address at the "In the Aftermath of German Idealism" conference, Wuppertal, Germany, 14 May 2011.
38. 2010: "The Second Wave of Eco-Anxiety: Nature's Coming Back and It is Nasty." St. John's Public Philosophy Lectures, The Ship Inn, St. John's, Newfoundland, 30 November 2011.
39. 2010: "Heidegger and National Socialism." Invited lecture to the History Club, Holyrood, NL, Saturday 30 October 2010.
40. 2010: "Madness as a Philosophical Problem in Hegel." Invited lecture to the Departments of Philosophy and German, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Monday 5 April 2010.
41. 2010: "The Genealogy of the Unconscious." Public faculty-wide lecture at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Tuesday 6 April 2010.
42. 2010: "The Marginalization of the Image in C20th. Philosophy." Public lecture given at Memorial University of Newfoundland Philosophy Colloquium, 19 January.
43. 2009: "Introduction to Spiritual Alchemy." Three-day workshop held at the Jung Centre for Spiritual Sciences in Waterbury, Vermont, 24-26 September 2009.
44. 2009: "Bemerkungen über Oetinger, Boehme, und Baader, in Bezug auf Schellings *Freiheitschrift*." Presentation given during the concentrated Hauptseminar, "Schellings *Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*," Theologische Fakultät, Universität Freiburg, 17-18 July 2009.
45. 2009: "Einführung in die Theosophie Jacob Böhmes in Bezug auf den 1682 Illustrationen Michael Andreas." Lecture given to the Theologisches Proseminar, "Die Vergöttlichung bei neuzeitlichen Mystikern: Jakob Böhme und Angelus Silesius." Theologische Fakultät, Universität Freiburg, 30 April 2009.
46. 2009: "The Limits of Theory and the Logic of Indirection in Aquinas and Heidegger." Lecture given at the Dominican University College, Ottawa, 30 March 2009.
47. 2009: "Schelling on Responsibility to the Unconscious." Public lecture given at Memorial University of Newfoundland Philosophy Colloquium, 10 February 2009.
48. 2008: "Does Anybody Still Have a Soul? An Inquiry into Life, Death, and Everything in Between." St. John's Public Philosophy Lectures, The Ship Inn, St. John's, Newfoundland, 25 November 2008.

49. 2008: "The Question of the Self." Presented to the faculty and students at the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art / Design / Technology, Ireland, 27 May 2008.
50. 2008: "Toward a Technology that Allows the Beautiful to Occur." Public lecture given at the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art | Design | Technology, Ireland, 26 May 2008.
51. 2008: "Jakob Böhme and the Theological Sources of Psychotherapy." Presented to the doctoral candidates of the Katholisch-Theologische-Fakultät / Dogmatisches Seminar, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 5 May 2008.
52. 2008: "The Early Heidegger and the End of the World." Public lecture given at Memorial University of Newfoundland Philosophy Colloquium, 14 February 2008.
53. 2006: "The Limits of Theory in Aquinas's Negative Theology and the Early Heidegger." Public lecture given at the Department of Philosophy, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 11 December 2006.
54. 2005: "Die theologischen Wurzeln der frühen Ontologie Martin Heideggers." Presented to graduate students of the Katholisch-Theologische-Fakultät/Dogmatisches Seminar, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 28 June 2005.
55. 2001: "Heidegger on Being, Time, and St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians." Lecture given to the monks at Holy Hill Hermitage, Skreen, Co. Sligo, Ireland, 20 June, 2001.

## Reviews

Reviews of my first book, *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy*, appeared in the following journals:

*Bijdragen, International Journal in Philosophy and Theology* 68 (2007/3 )  
*Les Études Philosophiques* (2008/1).  
*Journal of the History of Philosophy* 45 (2007/4)  
*The Medieval Review* (September 2007)  
*Philotheos: International Journal for Philosophy and Theology* (2007/7)  
*The Thomist* (October 2007)

The following excerpt is from the review of *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy* in *The Medieval Review* (September 2007):

The book is characterized by a very stimulating mixture of positive reconstruction and a negative attitude towards Heidegger's critique of Scholasticism. In his reading of Heidegger McGrath shifts back and forth between, on the one hand, open admiration for the force of Heidegger's thought and, on the other hand, a critique of Heidegger's phenomenological interpretations of the tradition. For example, after an impressive reconstruction of Heidegger's reading of Eckhart and Clairvaux, McGrath criticizes Heidegger's interpretation of mystic philosophy as expressing a form of life, which can be described and laid out in general structures of the self and human life. According to McGrath, Heidegger covers up the *specific* theological positions that are worked out by the mystic authors. As McGrath claims, the price Heideggerian phenomenology has to pay for its radical interpretations, is the total loss of *specific* theological possibilities of laying out the religious dimension of human life... McGrath's book is an impressive study of Heidegger's philosophy, which sheds light on almost all aspects of the early Heidegger and undoubtedly the book is an important contribution to the understanding of the relationship between Heidegger's philosophy and theology. *Christian Lotz*

Excerpts from the review of *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy* which appeared in *The Journal of the History of Philosophy* (2007/7):

Taking its clues from the scholarly work of Kisiel, van Buren, and others on the religious origins of early Heidegger's phenomenology, blending philosophical interpretation and biographical insight, and drawing fruitfully from a wide range of historical and philosophical sources, McGrath's *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy* offers a wide-ranging account of Heidegger's complex and evolving (and in the long run antagonistic) relationship to the Scholastic tradition. In a series of chapters dealing with, among other things, Heidegger's philosophical and religious development and his early phenomenology (or "hermeneutics of facticity"), the significance of the *Habilitationsschrift* on Duns Scotus (and Thomas of Erfurt, as it turned out), Heidegger's engagement with mystical literature and the writings of Luther, and the two lecture courses dealing explicitly with religious themes (on Paul's eschatological letters, in 1920–21, and the tenth book of Augustine's *Confessions*, in 1921), McGrath argues persuasively that, however skeptical about the significance of Heidegger's religious roots some of us might be, those of us who care about early Heidegger's philosophy and the convoluted path that led to *Sein und Zeit* (and beyond) cannot afford to ignore the philosopher's theological and religious (at first Catholic, then Protestant, and finally pagan) agenda. Heideggerian ontology is no neutral description of essential structures of human life, but a philosophical interpretation of what we might, with Heidegger, call "ontic" issues and concerns (theological, religious, even ethical). McGrath's primary thesis is that Heidegger arrived at his mature "Godless eschatology" by way of "a systematic, if covert, overthrowing of the medieval theological paradigm" (4). There are theological and (personal) religious struggles hidden beneath much of what Heidegger has to say about the human condition.

McGrath develops this overarching thesis fully in several helpful historical analyses. The Chapter on Heidegger's early work on Scotus (and Thomas of Erfurt), written under the influence of Husserl and the neo-Kantians (especially Lask), is possibly the best in the book. McGrath argues clearly and compellingly that, during Heidegger's comparatively short-lived Catholic phase, Scotus helped open the young philosopher's eyes to the pre-theoretical nature of our understanding of being, the close ties uniting modes of signification, intentional forms, and ontological structures, and the "derivative nature of abstract and theoretical language" (117). And Scotus's provocative work on *haecceitas* clearly prefigures Heidegger's early obsession with facticity and, eventually (although this is missing in Scotus himself), "the understanding of historical life" (105).

In another solid chapter on early Heidegger's work on Luther, the author argues that the philosopher's break with the Catholic theology of his youth took shape in dialogue with "Protestantism, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and above all, Luther" (151). And he suggests that several crucial themes and preoccupations in the mature hermeneutic phenomenology of *Sein und Zeit* can be traced back to Heidegger's Luther research, including *Vorlaufen zum Tode*, *Desktruktion*, fallenness, and conscience...

McGrath should be commended for having tackled a controversial topic, still largely ignored in the literature on Heidegger in English, and for courageously defending in the book's final chapters aspects of medieval theology at a time when it has become fashionable to embrace Heidegger's critique of the onto-theological tradition. *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy* shows us that neither Heidegger nor the traditions he sometimes scorned belong to an irrecoverable past; and it underscores as well that, in the words of Heidegger's beloved poet, *wir sind ein Gespräch*. James D. Reid.

Reviews of my second book, *Heidegger. A (Very) Critical Introduction*, have appeared in the following journals:

*The Expository Times*, Vol. 121, No. 1, 33 (2009)  
*Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (2009.03.17)  
*The Church Times* 7624 (1 May 2009)

The following excerpt is from the review of *Heidegger. A (Very) Critical Introduction* in *The Church Times* 7624 ([www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=74267](http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=74267))

S. J. McGrath's account of the notoriously difficult philosophy of Heidegger is one of the clearest and most elegantly written I have come across. He contextualises the philosophy in a brief account of Heidegger's life, including his relationship to Catholicism and Nazism. Chapters on Phenomenology and Ontology explore the early Heidegger of Being and Time and the more mystical and poetic later Heidegger. From this introduction, which should be useful to those who have never read any Heidegger, McGrath moves on to his own critique in chapters on axiology (the implicit ethics of Heidegger's philosophy), theology, and "Why I am not a Heideggerian".

Despite the conclusion, this is a sympathetic reading of Heidegger, appreciating his achievement, and refusing simply to dismiss him for his politics. The critique is particularly sensitive to Heidegger's relationship with medieval philosophy, and argues that Heidegger's insistence on keeping ontology separate from the "ontic" realms of religious and political practice is not sustainable. *The Rev Dr John Hughes is Chaplain of Jesus College, Cambridge.*

A short review of *Heidegger. A (Very) Critical Introduction* from *Religious Studies Review* 35 (2009/ 2):

Heidegger remains one of the pivotal figures in philosophy, not only for his penetrating analysis of ontology and being, but also because of the continuing controversy surrounding his life and the continuing appropriation of Heidegger in theological circles. In this latest volume from the *Interventions* series, edited by C. Cunningham and P. Candler, S. J. McGrath engages the theological project of Heidegger not only with the purpose of explicating Heidegger for those unfamiliar with his project, but in order to assess the importance of Heidegger for the thinking of a Christian ontology. Beginning with Heidegger's early work on Duns Scotus, through the late works in post-Husserlian phenomenology, McGrath works through four themes of Heidegger's work: phenomenology, ontology, axiology, and theology. The division of Heidegger into these categories is helpful insofar as it provides handles for delving into Heidegger's work at specific junctures, although Heidegger's work notoriously overlaps these boundaries at most turns. McGrath works against the historical background of Heidegger's life, showing that the overlap and conjoining of these areas again illustrates the necessity of thinking clearly about one's theology, as inevitably one's politics and one's life are at stake. Succinct and clear, McGrath's work stands as an excellent introduction to the theological claims at stake in Heidegger. *Myles Werntz, Baylor University*

A full review of *Heidegger. A (Very) Critical Introduction* from *Heythrop Journal* 50 (2009/2):

In what hopefully signals a salutary new trend in Heidegger scholarship, Professor McGrath conducts a series of incisive forays into Heidegger's philosophy. Though appreciating the depth and originality of Heidegger's thought, McGrath is no Heideggerian. His book strikes the proper balance between charitable interpretation and critical evaluation. Imagine an unabashedly Christian Voltaire presenting a brilliant *aperçu* of his opponent's views before pitilessly dissecting them and you'll get the feel of it. If, as I will suggest, McGrath has not quite located Heidegger's Achilles' heel, this drawback hardly mitigates the power of his work to elucidate and to provoke.

A brisk opening chapter reviews the biographical and political context of Heidegger's thinking. The book then turns to the early phenomenology and the fundamental ontology of Dasein it reputedly uncovers. McGrath is largely sympathetic to the phenomenology, which he takes to upend traditional notions of a human being as a soul, substance, or subject in favor of a thoroughly temporal Dasein that finds itself thrown into projects taken over from the past and that is individualized by the ultimate facticity of its

own death. However, McGrath observes, in its account of authenticity Heidegger's phenomenological ontology blurs the distinction between the ontological/existential, which concerns the formal structures of human being, and the ontic/existential, which pertains to particular human beings and the specific ways they choose to be-in-the-world. McGrath objects that Heidegger offers no justification for his own ontic/existential, elitist ideal of 'resolute anticipation.' Other possible ideals, such as Christian humanism, are prejudicially dismissed.

Something has gone wrong here. What Dasein allegedly sees in its 'moment of vision' (*der Augenblick*) is that there is no 'ideal' or 'transcendental ethics' whatsoever – humanist or anti-humanist – that ultimately justifies Dasein in pursuing certain projects rather than others. There is only the thoroughly temporal, baseless being of Dasein caught between a 'throw' it can't release and a death it can't escape. Dasein is then free to choose any available projects; it remains authentic by resolving to live in the realization that no real basis exists for choosing as it does. Authentic Dasein could choose to sup with the masses or to practice selfless love, provided that it remains under no illusion that these projects are justified by fixed facts about 'the self' or what is morally correct. More disturbingly, an authentic community could opt for National Socialism as a collective project or a 'situation' free of both capitalist and communist metaphysics ('individual liberties,' 'forces of production') – so long as its members don't pretend that their Nazism is underwritten by some metaphysics of the Volk. (Rector Heidegger's own remarks about 'the Germans' Western historical essence' apparently 'fall prey' to such metaphysical backsliding.)

On McGrath's reading, Heidegger disarms theology through a shrewd inversion of Luther's *theologia crucis*. For Luther, the radical inaccessibility of faith to reason renders philosophy impotent to grasp God; for Heidegger, the radical repudiation of faith renders phenomenology the final authority on human existence. Pace McGrath (and Derrida), the fact that the jargon of authenticity is shot through with theological terminology ('fallenness,' 'being-guilty,' etc.) doesn't mean that Heidegger smuggles in religious assumptions, any more than a pacifist's rhetoric of 'defending' her integrity by 'resisting' and 'struggling against' her temptation to wage war means that she tacitly assumes militarism. Nevertheless, McGrath raises an important issue: Doesn't Heidegger beg the question at the outset of his inquiry by repudiating without justification belief in a Creator?

I believe Heidegger takes his phenomenological analysis of Dasein to justify this repudiation. If Dasein is thoroughly temporal, then Dasein possess no 'present-at-hand' nature. Even if a Creator exists, no fixed essence in Dasein is fully realized by entering into a proper relationship with Him. Consequently, the existence or non-existence of a Creator is no more relevant to 'thrown being-in-the-world' than is the Big Bang. McGrath sacrifices too many hostages to fortune by basically conceding Heidegger's phenomenology of Dasein. A more principled skepticism might challenge Heidegger's claim that Dasein lacks a fixed essence. After all, Dasein is intrinsically capable of understanding possible projects and choosing among them. Dasein thus possesses schematic rational and volitional capacities which it does not choose. It is then an open question whether these capacities are ultimately fulfilled through union with a divine being who created them – a question that Heidegger the phenomenologist simply ignores.

My reservations about McGrath's critique in no way diminish my admiration for his book. His is the sort of fresh approach the study of Heidegger has needed for a long time. Well done. *Peter S. Dillard*

### Endorsements for *Heidegger. A (Very) Critical Introduction*:

In this gracefully written text Professor McGrath provides a clear reading of Heidegger and an incisive critique of his ontology, ethics, politics, and theology. The critique is anchored in two positions that Heidegger himself claimed to have surpassed: classical metaphysics and Christian humanism. Although the work may not convince mainstream Heideggerians, it opens a discussion that merits serious attention from post-metaphysical and post-modern thinkers. *Thomas Sheehan, Stanford University*

This informed and informative book is an admirably compact and clear introduction to the essentials of Heidegger's thought. It will be very helpful for the beginner, and for the more advanced reader it offers an honorable critical interpretation. McGrath exhibits a sharp sense for the often-recessed religious preoccupations of Heidegger: out of sight is not quite out of mind, which sometimes leads to convoluted

results in Heidegger's expressed thought. For the theological reader this book offers an exemplary critical engagement, attuned to Heidegger's religious equivocality and what remains hidden in the Heideggerian unsaid. *William Desmond, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.*

In this remarkably lucid introduction...McGrath uses both biographical and existential information and the writing of Heidegger himself, especially in its earlier stages, to illuminate where this preeminent philosopher of the twentieth century was coming from in his questioning and where he was trying to go. The life of Heidegger sheds light on his philosophy, just as his philosophy sheds light on his life, with all its existential ambiguities, which were as conservative as they were radical against the inauthentic and the technological in modern mass society. In the end we learn how or why Heidegger was unable to resolve these ambiguities in his own philosophy, especially in axiology and in theology, which were never entirely absent from his thinking, and why also McGrath will not, as Heideggerians do, settle for such nihilistic ambiguities. *Oliva Blanchette, Boston College.*

My work has been cited in the following online reference books:

*Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexicon* – On Böhme

([www.kirchenlexicon.de/b/boehme\\_j.shtml](http://www.kirchenlexicon.de/b/boehme_j.shtml))

*The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* – on Thomas of Erfurt

(<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/Erfurt/#Bib>)

16 September 2011