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# Josef Pieper on Medieval Truth and Martin Heidegger's *Wahrheitsbegriff*

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## Abstract

*Josef Pieper's critique of Martin Heidegger's *Wahrheitsbegriff* (concept of truth) has been virtually ignored in both Pieper and Heidegger scholarship; however, Pieper's critique of Heidegger is both lethal and affirmative. On the one hand, Pieper makes a strong case against Heidegger's *Wahrheitsbegriff* in "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit" and yet on the other he affirms his thesis that "the essence of truth is freedom." This paper attempts to mend this gap in the literature by first presenting Heidegger's "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit," the essay in which Heidegger explicates his concept of truth. Second, I exegete the critique of Josef Pieper found in his "Heideggers *Wahrheitsbegriff*." Third, I conclude the paper by contextualizing Pieper's critique within Pieper's *Werke*, and make a note of the philosophical insights derivative from Pieper's less than simple relationship to Heidegger.*

**Keywords:** Pieper; Heidegger; truth; medieval; critique

## I.

Contemporary analytic epistemology has invested itself in reviving, either in part or whole, medieval epistemology. Significant scholarly treatment has been specifically given to St. Thomas Aquinas and his concept of truth.<sup>1</sup> Despite the epistemological progress and advances in a "Thomistic" theory of truth, not every criticism of the Medieval concept of truth has been sufficiently addressed, especially beyond the purview of discussions within analytic epistemology. As a case in point, Josef Pieper's

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<sup>1</sup> Beyond the so-called "analytic Thomists," see especially Edward Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Heusenstamm: Editiones Scholasticae, 2014), 1-34, 154-156. This paper uses "theory"/"concept" to be roughly synonymous e.g., a concept/theory of truth.

(1904-97) critique of Martin Heidegger's (1889-1976) concept of truth (Wahrheitsbegriff) in defense of St. Thomas' concept of truth has gone virtually unnoticed in Heidegger and Pieper scholarship.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, this cannot be explained away on historical grounds, for Pieper and Heidegger were contemporaries (and in fact the former had even heard the latter debate in person).<sup>3</sup> This cannot also be explained on the basis that they had different projects. While this is to an extent true, both Pieper and Heidegger had occupied themselves with many of the same philosophical questions and themes—one of which the concept of “truth” and “being,” the focus of this paper. To remedy this lack of conversation, this paper concerns itself with exegeting Pieper's critique of Heidegger's concept of truth, and offers a contextualized, nuanced reading of Pieper's critique. This paper is divided into three parts. First, this paper exegetes Heidegger's 1943 “On the Essence of Truth” (Vom Wesen der Wahrheit), an essay in which Heidegger explicates his concept of truth. Second, this paper exegetes and substantiates Josef Pieper's critique of Heidegger's concept of truth in his “Heidegger's Concept of Truth” (Heideggers Wahrheitsbegriff). Third, this paper concludes with both a contextualization of Pieper's critique within his *Werke* to nuance his critique, as well as an appraisal of Pieper's philosophical relation to Heidegger.

## II.

Heidegger's “On the Essence of Truth” (Vom Wesen der Wahrheit) defends the following claim: “The essence of truth is freedom.”<sup>4</sup> Heidegger begins by

<sup>2</sup> Two caveats. First, there is one exception: James Orr, “Heidegger's Critique of Aquinas on Truth: A Critical Assessment,” *New Blackfriars* 95, no. 1055: (2013), 14. However, Orr's use of Pieper is for the purpose of showing how Heidegger's theory of truth is ambiguously (ambiguously in its motivation in Thomist and Scotist epistemology) “medieval.” As such, while Orr's contribution is significant, it does not put Pieper into constructive conversation with Heidegger, nor does it present the more decisive elements of Pieper's critique of Heidegger's theory of truth. Second, the closest approximation to a “Pieperian” critique would be Thomist interactions with Heidegger's theory of truth. Most recently Liran Shia Gordon, and Avital Wohlman, “A Constructive Thomistic Response to Heidegger's Destructive Criticism,” *The Heythrop Journal* 61 (2019): 1-17; John Knasas, “A Heideggerian Critique of Aquinas and a Gilsonian Reply,” *The Thomist* 58, no. 3 (1994): 415-39; Joseph Trabbic, “A Critique of Heidegger's Critique of Christian Philosophy in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*,” *Religious Studies* 53, no. 1 (2017): 71-86. However, in none of these major contributions has Pieper's contributions received significant philosophical treatment.

<sup>3</sup> Josef Pieper, *No One Could Have Known: An Autobiography: The Early Years 1904-1945*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 81.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth,” in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), 123. A prefatory note with respect to translation, texts and methodology. Although I will be using English translations in this paper, I will be abiding by the German texts of both Heidegger and Pieper closely. I will be using Martin Heidegger, “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit,” in *Wegmarken*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt/Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 1976), 73-97, as well as Josef Pieper, “Heideggers Wahrheitsbegriff,” in

pointing out that “essence” refers heterogeneously to “the one thing that in general distinguishes every “truth” as truth.”<sup>5</sup> To pursue the essence of truth, he exegetes the medieval concept of truth, rooted in the Greek philosophical tradition<sup>6</sup>: “A statement is true if what it means and says is in accordance with the matter about which the statement is made.”<sup>7</sup> The notion of “in accord” is to be found, Heidegger says, in the “proposition,” the non-material content of sentences.<sup>8</sup> However, both “being” and “truth” signify “accord” in two senses. First, the consonance of the matter with what is supposed in advance regarding it. Second, the accordance of the statement with the matter.<sup>9</sup> It is from this that Heidegger says the Medieval understanding of “truth as agreement [matching, approximation] of thing and intellect” (*veritas est adequatio rei et intellectus*), a statement from Thomas Aquinas, can be understood.<sup>10</sup> Heidegger delineates the medieval definition, writing that

it implies the Christian theological belief that, with respect to what it is and whether it is, a matter, as created (*ens creatum*), is only insofar as it corresponds to the idea preconceived in the *intellectus divinus*, i.e., in the mind of God, and thus measures up to the idea (is correct) and in this sense is “true.”<sup>11</sup>

For Heidegger, this expresses the Christian theological understanding of how truth functions as “agreement with the Creator.”<sup>12</sup> Having unpacked the medieval concept of truth, Heidegger demarcates *propositional* truth from *material* truth. The former is constituted by the correctness of statements. The latter means “the consonance of something at hand with the ‘rational’

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*Schriften zum Philosophiebegriff*, ed. Berthold Wald (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1995), 186-198. Methodologically, this paper treats the “On the Essence of Truth” as a stand-alone text offering a view of the essence of truth since this was both Heidegger’s intention and how Pieper read Heidegger’s text. As Dr. Michael Blezy has pointed out to me, further resources to motivate and articulate a Heideggerian theory of truth might be found elsewhere, i.e., Heidegger’s earlier work. However, even if true, this overlooks Heidegger’s intent to specifically answer the question of the essence of truth within the confines of “On the Essence of Truth.”

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 4: 1011b25; Plato, *Cratylus*, 385b2; Plato, *Sophist*, 263b.

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth,” 117.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 117, 120.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 117; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ques. xvi, Art. 1, 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

concept of its essence.”<sup>13</sup> Heidegger reverses the truth-structure of truth and says of untruth (falsity, falsehood) that it consists in “nonagreement of a being with its essence.”<sup>14</sup> Heidegger writes that

if we take the tracing back of propositional truth to material truth to be what in the first instance it shows itself to be, namely a theological explanation, and if we then keep the philosophical definition completely pure of all admixture to theology and limit the concept of truth to propositional truth, then we encounter an old—though not the oldest—tradition of thinking, according to which truth is the accordance (*homoiōsis*) of a statement (*logos*) with a matter (*pragma*).<sup>15</sup>

Heidegger’s contention here is that in divorcing theological explanations from philosophical concepts, genuinely philosophical, that is, non-theological, discourse is possible.<sup>16</sup> Having drawn this explanatory distinction, Heidegger goes on to evaluate the possibility of “accordance,” understood as the accordance between a “statement” and “a thing.”<sup>17</sup> He argues that the “accord” is completely dissimilar, and hence such correspondence “cannot signify a thing-like approximation between dissimilar things.”<sup>18</sup> Instead, it must be in “the kind of relation” that the correspondence holds.<sup>19</sup> However, for Heidegger the indeterminacy and groundlessness of the essence of the relation results in a lack of correspondence altogether. As such, it is the statement which presents the matter, and says in what the matter consists.<sup>20</sup> As Heidegger says: “What is stated by the presentative statement is said of

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger’s relation to Christian philosophy – biographically, historically and theoretically – has been well-documented in Trabbic, “A Critique of Heidegger’s Critique,” 72. Setting aside Heidegger’s rejection of the union of philosophy and theology, Heidegger *presupposes* that there is “the” Christian theological understanding of truth. Specifically, Heidegger’s bounding together divine conceptualism with Christian theology overlooks not only the disputed nature of the legitimacy of divine conceptualism (and its varieties), but also theologically consistent alternatives. See William Lane Craig, *God and Abstract Objects: The Coherence of Theism: Divine Aseity* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth,” 120.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

the presented thing in just such a manner *as* that thing, as presented, is.”<sup>21</sup> The verb “to present” thus means “to let the thing stand opposed as object.”<sup>22</sup> Heidegger introduces two concepts to move philosophically from exegesis of the medieval concept of truth to analysis: “open region” (*das Offene*) and “comportment” (*Verhalten*).

“Open region” refers to the space in which the “opposedness” between the thing and what stands opposed to it occurs, “the openness of which is not first created by the presenting but rather is only entered into and taken over as a dominion of relatedness.”<sup>23</sup> “Comportment” refers to the accomplishment of the relation between the presentative statement and the thing, understood as a *bearing*.<sup>24</sup> Comportment thus stands in the open region, adhering to something “opened up *as such*.”<sup>25</sup> Comportment refers to “what is thus opened up,” namely *being*, which “stands open to being.”<sup>26</sup> He then specifies that “every open relatedness is a comportment” to the effect that

this can only occur if beings present themselves along with the presentative statement so that the latter subordinates itself to the directive that it speak of beings *such-as* they are. In following such a directive the statement conforms to beings. Speech that directs itself accordingly is correct (true). What is thus said is the correct (the true).<sup>27</sup>

The “such-as” refers to, it should be re-called, the “manner *as* that thing, as presented, is.”<sup>28</sup> There is a “letting be” of the thing whose integrity is only preserved by the presentative statement corresponding to the “letting be.” Heidegger then says that if “this openness of comportment” is the ground for the possibility of the truth of statements, “what first makes correctness possible must with more original right be taken as the essence of truth.”<sup>29</sup> Heidegger concludes that the notion that truth resides exclusively to statements, and is thereby the locus of truth, is incorrect.<sup>30</sup> The language of

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 121-122.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Heidegger here suggests that he does not reject truth residing in statements. Instead, he rejects two central notions integral to the medieval concept of propositional truth. First, he rejects that it is *only* in statements that truth resides. Second, he rejects that the locus and essence of truth resides in the statement. The German term that is being translated as “locus” is *Wesensort*, comprised of “essence” (*Wesen*) and “region” (*Ort*). Heidegger is saying that the region in which the essence of truth is located is not *merely* in the proposition. Heidegger then interrogates “the ground of the inner possibility of the open comportment that pre-gives a standard” whose “possibility alone lends to propositional correctness the appearance of fulfilling the essence of truth at all.”<sup>31</sup> In this sense, the essence of propositional correctness is grounded by a deeper comportment of the presentative statement to what is presented, the latter of which – standing in “open comportment” – requires itself a ground for its inner possibility.

Heidegger then asks: “Whence does the presentative statement receive the directive to conform to the object and to accord by way of correctness?”<sup>32</sup> In other words, from what does the presentative statement receive directive to conform to the object, and why would it accord by way of correctness? Heidegger writes that it is only if this “pre-giving” – referring to the “ground of the inner possibility of the open comportment that pre-gives a standard” – “has already entered freely into an open region for something opened up which prevails there and which binds every presenting.”<sup>33</sup> Heidegger then incorporates freedom (*Freiheit*): “To free oneself for a binding directedness is possible only by being free for what is opened up in an open region.”<sup>34</sup> This *bindende*, though appearing like the English gerund “binding,” includes within itself not only a “binding,” but a *thickening*.<sup>35</sup> *Bindende* thereby requires experiencing the *thickness* of being, namely, allowing presentative statements to let the object *be* without ontological compromise.<sup>36</sup> In Heidegger’s terms, “freedom [...] lets beings be the beings they are.”<sup>37</sup> Heidegger then says that this “being free points to the heretofore uncomprehended essence of freedom.”<sup>38</sup> Hence, the freeing of oneself for what is opened in the open

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Desmond Nuttall Costa, and Mary Herbert, *Langenscheidt Compact German Dictionary* (Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1993), 114.

<sup>36</sup> Heidegger comes strikingly close to the notion of *acedia* as the flattening of the thickness of being. See R. J. Snell, *Acedia and Its Discontents* (New York: Angelico Press, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth,” 125.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 123.

region is precisely what the essence of truth consists in, and therefore “*the essence of truth is freedom*.”<sup>39</sup>

Differing from the definition of “essence” in the Greek philosophical tradition (e.g., *hypokeimenon*, *ousia*, *hypostasis*) and the medieval philosophical tradition (e.g., *essentia*), Heidegger uses the term “essence” to signify “the ground of the inner possibility of what is initially and generally admitted as known.”<sup>40</sup> While Heidegger notes that “truth is here driven back to the subjectivity of the human subject,” he says that “an objectivity is also accessible to this subject [...] along with subjectivity [...]”<sup>41</sup> From this, Heidegger draws a paradox: If metaphysics is concerned with eternal truths which are imperishable (not founded on man, *status viatoris*), how can the essence of truth be anchored in freedom? Heidegger writes: “[...] freedom is the ground of the inner possibility of correctness only because it receives its own essence from the more original essence of uniquely essential truth.”<sup>42</sup> Such freedom for “what is opened up in an open region lets beings be the beings they are.”<sup>43</sup> Such “letting be,” Heidegger says, is open to being interpreted to mean indifference, neglect, isolation; however, what Heidegger intends by “letting be” is “to engage oneself with beings” and therefore “with the open region.”<sup>44</sup> Heidegger’s next move is then cloaked in phraseological difficulty: “To let be [...] means to engage oneself with the open region [...] bringing that openness [...] along with itself.”<sup>45</sup> As such, Heidegger arrives at the Ancient Greek philosophical term traditionally translated as “truth,” contending that the “open region” he has been talking about has been called *ta alēthea*, “the unconcealed.”<sup>46</sup>

Heidegger’s argument summarized in conjunction with the following: truth is that which is unconcealed in the open region, the “uncomprehended disclosedness and disclosure of beings.”<sup>47</sup> This disclosure is revelatory, for it is not in “letting be” that one “lose[s] oneself in them,” but instead allows beings to “reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are [...]”<sup>48</sup> This

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 123, Heidegger’s italics.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



makes the ontological space for a “presentative correspondence.”<sup>49</sup> The letting be, further, is *ek-sistent*; if this is to mean the “ecstatic character of freedom,” then it means an ecstasy from letting-be. This ecstatic character freedom, it should be noted, is “rooted in truth.”<sup>50</sup> This freedom, for Heidegger, is radically separated from the traditional sense of freedom in the sense of choosing between various alternatives i.e., the principle of alternative possibilities (PAP). For Heidegger, freedom resides in “engagement in the disclosure of beings as such.”<sup>51</sup> Unconcealment occurs when “historical man,” as Heidegger says, asks the question of what beings are, “beings” as “nature,” “beings as such as a whole,” “upsurgent presence.”<sup>52</sup> The freedom within letting-be – for *ek-sistent*, disclosive Dasein – “possesses man” and “secures for humanity that distinctive relatedness to being as a whole as such [...]”<sup>53</sup> On this account, “truth is disclosure of beings through which an openness essentially unfolds.”<sup>54</sup> In this openness Dasein is *ek-sistent* – *existing in ecstasy*.

While Heidegger rejected the notion that freedom was constituted by PAP, he invokes this sense of freedom in his analysis of our decision/choice to let-be: “[...] because truth is in essence freedom, historical man can, in letting things be, also not let beings be the beings which they are and as they are.”<sup>55</sup> This can involve a covering up of beings – under the rubric of power, for example – as well as a distortion of beings i.e., industrialization, technologically centering the world, et cetera.<sup>56</sup> It is in this distortion that the *nonessence of truth* is presented. Heidegger says that the question of the nonessence of truth both derives from the essence of truth and is “the decisive step toward an adequate posing of the *question* concerning the essence of truth.”<sup>57</sup> For Heidegger, before inquiring into the nonessence of truth we have not even *posed* the question regarding the essence of truth. Heidegger then says that “freedom has already attuned all comportment to being as a whole.”<sup>58</sup> “Attunement” is not a feeling or an experience, Heidegger writes. Likewise, it is also not a mood or disposition.<sup>59</sup> Heidegger clarifies what he means:

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> As the translator (128) writes.

Being attuned, i.e., ek-sistent exposedness to beings as a whole, can be “experienced” and “felt” only because the “man who experiences,” [...] is always engaged in being attuned in a way that discloses beings as a whole.<sup>60</sup>

It is in the letting-be of Dasein that attunement occurs; however, Heidegger notes that this happens only inasmuch as Dasein is not “aware of the essence of the attunement.”<sup>61</sup> Heidegger then uses this analysis as a critique of the technologically-centered mentality which sees “omniscience” as a limitless technical mastery over being:

Precisely in the levelling and planning of this omniscience, this mere knowing, the openedness of being gets flattened out into the apparent nothingness of what is no longer even a matter of indifference, but rather is simply forgotten.<sup>62</sup>

Heidegger’s understanding of “mere knowing” as distinct from truth as letting-be is instructive as the former attempts to technologize the world. As he says, “letting beings be [...] is an attuning [...].”<sup>63</sup> “Concealment” for Heidegger amounts to a letting-be, though it is also *undisclosedness*.<sup>64</sup> For Heidegger, we can infer from the nonessence of truth “the still unexperienced domain of the truth of Being (not merely of beings).”<sup>65</sup> Indeed, comportment is grounded in a bearing which does “not close up in itself,” and which “receives from it directedness towards beings and disclosure of them.”<sup>66</sup> He reflects: “Man clings to what is readily available and controllable even where ultimate matters are concerned.”<sup>67</sup> Put otherwise: “[...] to reside in what is readily available is intrinsically not to let the concealing of what is concealed hold sway.”<sup>68</sup> Heidegger then continues his critique of such a predicament:

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

By disavowing itself in and for forgetfulness, the mystery leaves historical man in the sphere of what is readily available to him, leaves him to his own resources. Thus left, humanity replenishes its "world" on the basis of the latest needs and aims, and fills out that world by means of proposing and planning. From these man then takes his standards, forgetting being as a whole.<sup>69</sup>

Heidegger's rejection of a relativistic attitude towards being is then put explicitly: "He is all the more mistaken the more exclusively he takes himself, as subject, to be the standard for all beings."<sup>70</sup> Heidegger concludes his essay by turning to *untruth as errancy*: "Man's flight from the mystery toward what is readily available, onward from one current thing to the next, passing the mystery by – this is *erring*."<sup>71</sup> In other words, "errancy is the essential counter-essence to the primordial essence of truth."<sup>72</sup> This errancy is manifested and embodied in various forms. One such example would be in the consumption of pornographic material. Within this sphere, the mystery of the human being—in her/his entirety and ontological depth – is overlooked (objectified), unrevealed (exposed as object-to-be-used) and flattened (to use Heidegger's term).<sup>73</sup> Heidegger says that this happens fundamentally in a consumptive attitude towards being "onward from one current thing to the next" as well as "passing the mystery by;" again, this occurs too in an "ordinary wasting of time."<sup>74</sup> One need only reflect on the English phrase "killing time" – which, since there is intent, should be "murdering time." Heidegger concludes:

Freedom, conceived on the basis of the in-sistent ek-sistence of Dasein, is the essence of truth (in the sense of the correctness of presenting) only because freedom itself originates from the primordial essence of truth, the rule of the mystery in errancy. Letting beings be takes its course in open comportment [...]. This questioning thinks the question of the *Being* of beings [...].<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> See Rashad Rehman, "Love as a Divine Gift in Pieper and Kierkegaard: A Phenomenological Analysis," *MJUR* 9 (2018): 105-132.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 134-135.

## III.

By way of background, Pieper's first scholarly interaction with St. Thomas is found in his doctorate (Habilitationsschrift) entitled *The Ontological Foundation of Morality in Thomas Aquinas* at the University of Münster in 1929.<sup>76</sup> While primarily a scholar of Western philosophy, Pieper was also formally trained in law and sociology, studying under sociologist Johann Plenge (1874-1963) at The Research Institute for Organization Theory and Sociology between 1928-1932. For the rest of his long career, Pieper taught philosophy at the Gymnasium Paulinum, the University of Munster and the Pedagogical Institute of Essen. As evidenced in his Complete Works (Gesammelte Werke),<sup>77</sup> Pieper is best described as a "global" philosopher whose attitude towards philosophy and philosophical education was not confined by any one particular methodology or set of philosophical themes/questions, even if broadly aligned with the central tenants of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.<sup>78</sup> In what follows, I briefly provide a five-fold itemized philosophical contextualization of Pieper – leaving aside Pieper's specific concept of philosophy for the conclusion of the paper. First, philosophy is for everyone and not only those who were financially privileged and can afford university education.<sup>79</sup> Second, philosophy cannot not be separated from tradition and theology, since it emerges from, and is enriched by, them.<sup>80</sup> Third, philosophers' teaching, writings and speaking ought to be responsive to historical and socio-political circumstances.<sup>81</sup> Fourth, philosophical questions can never omit differing methodologies, principles and theories.<sup>82</sup> Fifth,

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<sup>76</sup> Josef Pieper, *Die Ontische Grundlage des Sittlichen nach Thomas von Aquin* (Münster: Verlag, 1929). This work is not included in the complete works of Pieper, plausibly because Pieper later revised and popularized it into *Living the Truth*, trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989). The thesis of both his initial scholarly dissertation and later popular, revised book was based on and inspired by Pieper's teacher Romano Guardini's "Von Goethe und Thomas von Aquin und vom klassischen Geist," in *In Spiegel und Gleichnis* (Mainz: Verlag, 1932), 20-25.

<sup>77</sup> Josef Pieper, *Gesammelte Werke in Acht Bänden*, ed. Berthold Wald (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2008).

<sup>78</sup> In defense of this "global philosophical attitude," see Josef Pieper, *In Defense of Philosophy: Classical Wisdom Stands up to Modern Challenges*, trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992).

<sup>79</sup> Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru (Toronto: A Mentor Book, 1956).

<sup>80</sup> In defense of tradition, see Josef Pieper, *Tradition: Concept and Claim*, trans. E. Christian Kopff (Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2010), as well as Pieper's *Tradition as Challenge: Essays and Speeches*, trans. Dan Farrelly (Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2015).

<sup>81</sup> Pieper, *Leisure*, 25-29.

<sup>82</sup> Josef Pieper, *What Does "Academic" Mean?*, trans. Dan Farrelly (Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2015).

philosophers should aim to find out the truth of things without privileging certain groups, individuals or methodologies, et cetera. Pieper's writings, though largely preoccupied with the writings of Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas and St. Augustine, display an unwavering commitment to each of these five theses. Included within these commitments are also a commitment to including Eastern philosophical traditions within his work,<sup>83</sup> interrogating the narrowness of "Western" philosophical practices<sup>84</sup> and a pedagogically-driven desire to make philosophical practice accessible.<sup>85</sup> With his philosophical background briefly documented, Pieper's criticism of Heidegger's concept of truth arises early in his career, close to the year 1946.

In his "Heidegger's Concept of Truth" (Heideggers Wahrheitsbegriff), Pieper begins by correcting Heidegger's historical exegesis of the medieval concept of truth, understood in dual character as *adequatio intellectus ad rem* and *adequatio rei ad intellectum* (propositional and material truth).<sup>86</sup> Pieper argues that Heidegger makes two "common misrepresentations and misunderstandings," "from which Heidegger's own conception of truth derives as well."<sup>87</sup> For Pieper, Heidegger's claim that the "medieval" – problematically not specifying in "On the Essence of Truth" *who* he was talking about<sup>88</sup> – understanding of truth involves a reduction from *propositional* truth to *material* truth is mistaken:

Never did the medieval theory of being attempt to reduce in this way the logical truth of the statement to the ontological truth of the *intellectus humanus*; never during the Middle Ages was

<sup>83</sup> Pieper, *Living the Truth*, 44.

<sup>84</sup> Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas*, trans. John Murray, S.J., and Daniel O'Connor (Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 1957), 75-90. Although it should be noted that Pieper differentiates the "West" from the "Christian West." Pieper's criticism is not towards the Christian West's claim to "theologically grounded existence in the world" (Pieper, *Tradition*, 27), but instead towards various Western philosophers and their philosophical practices. See the transcribed radio talk "What is Meant by the 'Christian West?'" in *Tradition*, 20-28.

<sup>85</sup> Josef Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight: An Autobiography 1945-1964*. (Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2017), 10.

<sup>86</sup> Josef Pieper, "Heidegger's Concept of Truth," in *For the Love of Wisdom: Essays on the Nature of Philosophy*, ed. Roger Wasserman (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 186.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 187. A reviewer of *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* has raised the following question: does Pieper's rejection of Heidegger's understanding of Medieval truth imply or logically entail that Heidegger's thesis is mistaken? As Pieper himself says, if Heidegger's theory of truth results from – "results from" in both the sense that it is *motivated* by its rejection and *founded* on its presumption as false – then it follows that Heidegger's thesis is at best presumptuously dismissive of the Medieval concept of truth – even if not outright false. This reading of Pieper is consistent with Pieper's acceptance of Heidegger's thesis.

<sup>88</sup> However, as I supply for the reader above, I source the thesis in St. Thomas' *Summa*.

propositional truth justified with reference to man's faculty of knowing, where being in conformity with its idea would have consisted in just this—realizing true knowledge.<sup>89</sup>

Pieper instead corrects Heidegger by pointing out that the truth of a proposition, in the Middle Ages, was grounded in “recourse to the *ipsa res*, whose intelligibility, however, rested on its having been known previously by God the Creator.”<sup>90</sup> Put succinctly, it was God's recognition which produced intelligibility for man, resulting in material truth (from which logical truth was reduced).<sup>91</sup> As Pieper puts it, “propositional truth holds in logic because the object of knowledge, Being itself, is ontologically true.”<sup>92</sup> Pieper's second objection to Heidegger on his understanding of the medieval concept of truth challenges Heidegger's understanding of the *adequatio*. Pieper's two objections are as follows. First, Heidegger overlooks the historical point that the equation of Being-true and Being-unconverging is a *medieval* thesis. Pieper cites St. Augustine's “*veritas est qua ostenditur* [show, expose to view, exhibit, display] *id quod est*” as well as Hilary of Poitiers' “*verum est manifestativum* [plainly apprehensive, clear, apparent, evident] *esse*” as evidence.<sup>93</sup> Second, Heidegger's contention that truth as disclosure and truth as *adequatio* are contradictory or unrelated overlooks how the medieval understanding of truth united them:

...the knowing mind “un-covers” something real, it receives its measure from just this real thing; insofar as reason comes to know being, it is inwardly molded by the latter so that knowledge is a matter, not simply of accommodation, but of outright identity.<sup>94</sup>

In this sense, the medieval concept of truth united truth as disclosure with truth as *adequatio*. However, Pieper notes that St. Thomas' understanding of *convenientia*, the ability of the soul to come together with the whole of reality, is not far from Heidegger's invocation of Dasein's *disclosedness*.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Pieper, “Heidegger's Concept of Truth,” 187.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 187-188.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, my italics.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 191. Further, an anonymous suggestion has been made that St. Thomas' definition of truth (cited above) can substitute “correspondence” (*correspondentia*) and “harmony/conformity” (*convenientia*) for “agreement” (*adequatio*).

Pieper then highlights how “affirmation” is missing in Heidegger’s notion of “letting-be”:

The relation of Being postulated by Heidegger has nothing of the straightforwardness of that receptive way of looking at things, nothing of the easy unaffectedness and accepting simplicity associated with immersion of Being – something that can flourish only on the basis of an affirmation of Being as a whole.<sup>96</sup>

Pieper says elsewhere that the highest form of affirmation resides in an affirmation of the world and God.<sup>97</sup> On my reading of Pieper, it is the existence of God which gives *ground* for affirmation inasmuch as reality is fundamentally good inasmuch as it is *creatura*,<sup>98</sup> and that Heidegger’s omission of affirmation of God is therefore ontologically suspicious.

Pieper then points out that Heidegger’s understanding of the essence of truth as freedom is reminiscent of Duns Scotus’ concept of truth on which truth is dependent on the will (*voluntas est superior intellectu*).<sup>99</sup> Pieper contrasts this with St. Thomas who held that freedom is grounded in knowing.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, in his “The Question Concerning Technology,” Heidegger himself says “the essence of freedom is *originally* [Heidegger’s emphasis] not connected with the will or even with the causality of human willing.”<sup>101</sup> Pieper concludes that such a *voluntas*-based understanding of freedom is not dissimilar to the *modi volendi* characteristic of Descartes’s understanding of logical affirmation and negation.<sup>102</sup> While this is not necessarily an objection to Heidegger, it points out that Heidegger’s analysis is closer to the early modern philosophical project he had been trying to re-shape. It is for Pieper mysterious that Heidegger answers the origin of Dasein’s primal orientation towards being by pointing out that Dasein is oriented towards Being from its inner nature as Being-oriented.<sup>103</sup> Pieper points out that, contrary to Heidegger, the major representatives of the medieval and Greek philosophical tradition, Plato and St. Thomas, provided answers which were at least *accounts*.

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>97</sup> Pieper, *Leisure*, 56.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 123-124.

<sup>99</sup> Pieper, “Heidegger’s Concept of Truth,” 194.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), 330.

<sup>102</sup> Pieper, “Heidegger’s Concept of Truth,” 194.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

In the case of the former, the Idea of the Good,<sup>104</sup> for the latter the *intellectus divinus*.<sup>105</sup> Pieper argues that Heidegger's understanding of the primal orientation to Being cannot be done, for Heidegger's answer that Dasein's directedness to being is resultant from freedom amounts to Heidegger's next statement: that this is from *Dasein's freedom*. Dasein's directedness towards being – and hence the question “why is there something rather than nothing” – is theological,<sup>106</sup> if it is to be intelligible at all.<sup>107</sup> This aside, for Pieper there is a dimension of Heidegger's analyses that are not to be left overlooked, namely, its theological impulse (*Impetus*):

Precisely herein lies, it seems to me, the exciting, affecting, and explosive character of Heidegger's philosophizing, that is, in the fact that, motivated by what is at bottom a theological impulse, questions that in themselves would require a theological answer are posed with a provocative radicalism and that, at the same time, such a response is just as radically rejected, without the theological answer finding its replacement in a confession of ignorance and in what Goethe calls that calm reverence before the unfathomable.<sup>108</sup>

He concludes that “in Heidegger's work [...] the question of truth – the question of its *essence* – has been left unanswered.”<sup>109</sup>

#### IV.

Having exegeted Heidegger's “On the Essence of Truth” and Pieper's “Heidegger's Concept of Truth,” this paper concludes with the constructive

<sup>104</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 65d-e.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 196; Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate* I, 2.

<sup>106</sup> This dilemma, that Heidegger's claim is either philosophical and unintelligible or theological and intelligible, alleviates the worry that Pieper's argument against Heidegger is not (formally) philosophical. Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for raising this objection.

<sup>107</sup> Beyond misconstruing the meaning of “faith,” Pieper says the following of philosophy as “questioning:” “Am I myself not saying the same thing [as Heidegger]? Have I not already explicitly discussed philosophy's intrinsic structure of hope as well as the questioning reflection on reality as such, a questioning that can never be stilled by any final or exhaustive answer? Yes, I have. Any similarity, nonetheless, exists only in appearance. The difference, to put it bluntly and somewhat aggressively, lies in this: for me, “questioning” means to be aware of the elusiveness of any final answer yet nevertheless to pursue such an answer and remain open to it. For Heidegger, in contrast, “questioning” seems to mean the absolute exclusion and rejection of any possible answer (which answer, in fact, would infringe on the purity of questioning itself).” Pieper, *In Defense of Philosophy*, 114-115.

<sup>108</sup> Pieper, “Heidegger's Concept of Truth,” 196.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.



task of understanding the relationship between Pieper's critique of Heidegger's theory of truth, as well as his acceptance of his thesis elsewhere and, moreover, what this means philosophically and for Pieper's philosophical relationship to Heidegger. Consider an anecdote from Pieper's autobiography:

For my colloquium lecture the faculty had chosen the topic "Heidegger's concept of truth." I had, of course, suggested it myself; but from the start it did not sit well with me, and I never thought of publishing this text. Not only was I not sure that I really understood what Heidegger meant ("The being [essence] of truth is freedom:" what kind of "definition" is that, in which the definition is less known and clear than what should be defined?); in truth, at that time my initial fascination gave way to a deep distrust, I simply could not trust the language of this author, and as a result I could not trust the author himself. "I just don't trust him" was later the answer I sometimes gave to American friends when they absolutely insisted on hearing my opinion about Heidegger.<sup>110</sup>

While one might have suspected Pieper to shortly thereafter dismiss Heidegger's convoluted work,<sup>111</sup> this is exactly what did not happen. In Pieper's *Abuse of Language, Abuse of Power*, he agrees with the thesis of Heidegger he had formerly criticized, writing that

[...] *man himself* is all the more free, the more he engages in the pursuit of theoretical knowledge, aimed at the truth and nothing else [...]. Martin Heidegger, too, speaks within the context of this tradition when he sees the very essence of truth anchored in freedom.<sup>112</sup>

What are we to make of these statements? Pieper displays both a deep *distrust* of Heidegger as well as an *agreement* with his thesis he had formerly criticized. This paper briefly concludes with an interpretation of this dilemma, and appeals to Pieper's concept of philosophy for its inspiration and defense. For Pieper, there is nothing to be left out, nothing ignored in the philosophical

<sup>110</sup> Josef Pieper, *Not Yet the Twilight*, 10.

<sup>111</sup> Consider Pieper's thesis that convoluted jargon in philosophy, which concealed ideas rather than expressed them, was akin to (academic) sophistry. See Josef Pieper, *Abuse of Language, Abuse of Power*, trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

act.<sup>113</sup> Pieper did not consider philosophy to be an “academic discipline” at all (in the modern sense); instead, he argued that philosophy was an orientation towards reality.<sup>114</sup> This orientation towards reality is predicated upon the philosophical anthropological thesis that the human spirit (*Geist*) “is fundamentally nothing but the capacity for relating to the totality of what is real,” that is, “it is capable of and oriented to coming in contact and remaining in contact with absolutely everything that is.”<sup>115</sup> Pieper likened his account of philosophy to the Ancient Greek philosophical conception of “sight, beholding” (*theoria*). He writes that *theoria* is “a relationship to the world, an orientation toward reality characterized entirely by the desire that this same reality may reveal itself in true being.”<sup>116</sup> Thus: “[...] the philosophical *theoria* is something distinct and special which is not simply the same as the scientific way of looking at things.”<sup>117</sup> More specifically,

[...] philosophical *theoria* can be “pure” in an incomparably higher way than *theoria* in the sciences. It is of the nature of the sciences that they view reality under a particular “aspect.” But that means that they approach it with a formulated question... want[ing] to know something definite.<sup>118</sup>

As such,

[...] it is in fact not meaningful to say: just as the chemist looks at things under the aspect of their atomic and molecular structure, so the philosopher, in exactly the same way, looks at things under the “aspect” of their being real. When a person considers things as something real, as a form of being, as *creatura*, he is not considering them “under a particular aspect.” Philosophizing has so much to do with pure awareness that, in this being aware, questioning falls silent. The best and most essential attribute of philosophical *theoria* is the speechless wonder that looks down into the abyss which is the light of being [...] hardly distinguishable from contemplation [...]. A “purely theoretical” attitude must not

<sup>113</sup> It is a general philosophical point that two philosophers can arrive at the same conclusion from different premises, even if the conclusion is understood differently by each philosopher – what seems to have happened in the case of Pieper and Heidegger.

<sup>114</sup> See Josef Pieper, *What Does “Academic” Mean?*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>116</sup> Josef Pieper, *In Defense of Philosophy*, 45.

<sup>117</sup> Pieper, *What Does “Academic” Mean?*, 40.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

be confused with the “objectivity” of a disinterested recording of facts. On a lower level of act (of knowing) and object (of knowledge) some kind of grasp of reality may be achieved – perhaps.<sup>119</sup>

On this reading of Pieper, the “aspect” that concerns philosophical *theoria* (or philosophizing, philosophical act), whether it is a formulated question or not, is never independent of the totality of reality. Consequently, the specific difference (*differentia specifica*) of true philosophy is “openness for the whole.”<sup>120</sup> Although Pieper often uses the term “attitude” in this context i.e., attitude towards the totality, he clarifies that this orientation towards reality is “not so much an attitude or virtue of the human mind,” “but rather its very essence, its nature itself.”<sup>121</sup> Consequently, it is integral to Pieper’s conception of philosophy to interact with language which is suspect, unclear and obscure – even if such language does not possess the “seal of truth” characteristic of clear, natural language.<sup>122</sup> Pieper’s claim is that “the closer a writer remains to the natural speech of the people and the simpler [their] language, the more it will be loaded with reality.”<sup>123</sup> This is not to reject “extremely difficult statements which are comprehensible only to the few experts,” but is a warning that “anyone who is prepared to be impressed by the fraudulent pomp of style and diction will, for this very reason, not have an eye for the insights that come with genuine simplicity.”<sup>124</sup> While Pieper’s engagement with Heidegger is one of systematic distrust in virtue of the latter’s language, Pieper’s metaphilosophical commitments about the nature of philosophy committed him to interact with Heidegger. However, as the end of Pieper’s criticism of Heidegger showed, interaction with Heidegger is at bottom valuable, if only for the only reason that a theological impulse is lurking behind an allegedly “purely philosophical” analysis of human existence and Being itself.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>120</sup> Pieper, *In Defense of Philosophy*, 49.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>122</sup> Josef Pieper, “On Plainness of Language in Philosophy,” in *Tradition as Challenge: Essays and Speeches*, ed. Dan Farrelly (Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2015), 212.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 212-3. Pieper substantiates this argument by suggesting that the simple written word is closest to oral knowledge/listening (215-216); however, this argument is a subsidiary and peripheral argument to his main argument for simple language as the “seal of truth.”

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