Essays on
Gianni Vattimo

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Religion, Ethics and the History of Ideas

By

Matthew Harris

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PREFACE

As I write this preface, less than a week has passed since the events in Paris of Friday 13th November 2015. Beginning and ending the year in tragedy, the French capital is reeling from the attacks and is bravely coming to terms with the latest act from the extremist threat. While Hollande orders airstrikes on Raqqa and intelligence services search Europe-wide for the perpetrators, sponsors and supporters of terror, another fight is taking place. This is the cultural battle between the values of *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité* on the one hand, and the beliefs of the Islamist extremists on the other. The former values are representative of those held by the French nation, symbolic of the French Revolution. However, the philosopher Richard Rorty would go a step further in saying that, for him, their inauguration into European cultural consciousness came about through a "constellation of events" in history even more profound than the division between BC and AD.[1] While Rorty is a pragmatist who knows about the flaws of the Enlightenment project, he nonetheless sees that Europe has a role in "civilising" (to use Rorty's word) the world through spreading and embodying liberal values,[2] even if justification for them in the traditional philosophical sense cannot be found. These values work, allowing for responsible, civil coexistence of people with otherwise divergent views in a democracy. What, though, of the values of the Islamist extremists, particularly Islamic State? The values here are of reduction, of "black and white" thinking in which one is either with them, in submission to a transcendent source of authority, or against them and in need of conversion or destruction. Physical violence is contingent upon metaphysical violence, of fixed first principles and a refusal of conversation.

Here one can make an appeal to the importance of Gianni Vattimo's philosophical project. A number of reasons drew me initially to his philosophical style of "weak thought" (*pensiero debole*), but important among them was his identification of metaphysics with violence, and that

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[1] Richard Rorty, Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala, "Dialogue: What is Religion's Future After Metaphysics?" in Santiago Zabala (ed.), *The Future of Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 65.

[2] Ibid., 72.

he has attempted to provide a historical foundation for *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*. In fact, Vattimo goes not only further forward than Rorty, but also earlier back in time. For Vattimo, even these three romantic values of the French revolution have been made weaker through the ever-increasing number of interpretations brought into European cities through mass-immigration and mass-media. Instead, what we are left with is the value of charity (*caritas*), which for Vattimo functions like a kind of postmodern Categorical Imperative: the weak thinker should recognise their provenance in Europe of standing in a linguistic and cultural tradition which has the Bible at its root, and the main message of the Bible—to turn inward in faith—is the catalyst of the secularisation which has effected this hermeneutical bazaar of a situation into which we are thrown. By recognising one's own contingency in this thrownness, one should see that everyone else is in this same situation. As a result, one should be prepared at the very least to enter into conversation with them, with the possibility of generating new Being through what one of Vattimo's teachers—Hans-Georg Gadamer—would have called a "fusion of horizons." Weak thought is an interrogation, and encouragement, of the irreducible plurality which constitutes the "ontology of actuality" (the way things are) of the West in the latter stages of twentieth, and early parts of the twenty-first, centuries. Its opposite is strong thought, which is closed, metaphysical and reductionist. Given the situation in Paris in 2015 with the victims and the perpetrators, it is straightforward to impute these differing philosophical styles on the parties involved.

Even prior to recent political events, Vattimo's relevance to the way the world is today drew me to his thought and is reflected in some of the essays included here in this collection. "Gianni Vattimo on Secularisation, and Islam," an article I first started to write in 2013 and was published in *The European Legacy* in early 2015, deals with some of the issues which have taken centre stage as a result of events in Paris, including a discussion of the merits and demerits of the view that Islam will have to undergo a process of secularisation based on internal principles in order for political reform to transpire. Vattimo has been overtly political for his intellectual life, which is concurrent with his adult life. From Maoism in his earlier years as a young academic through to being a "hermeneutic Communist," Vattimo has interwoven his reflections on the age in which he sees the West living with theoretical insights about how this age has developed. The latter I explore in my thoughts on his distinction between modernity and postmodernity in the essay from the *Journal for Communication and Culture* included here, "Gianni Vattimo on Culture, Communication, and the Move from Modernity to Postmodernity," as well

as the historical roots of this shift in "Vattimo, Nihilism, and Secularisation: The 'Trojan Horse' Effect of Christianity," originally in *Parrhesia*. These two essays, along with the essay on Islam, form Section Three of this book, called "Vattimo and the History of Ideas."

The ethical corollaries of these ontological-political shifts are explored in other essays in this volume, especially "Vattimo and *Caritas*: A Postmodern: Categorical Imperative?" (originally in *Kritike*), "Metaphysics, Violence, and the 'Natural Sacred' in Gianni Vattimo's Philosophy" (from the journal, *Humanicus*) and "Vattimo and Otherness: Hermeneutics, Charity, and Conversation" (*Otherness: Essays and Studies*). These three essays form Section Two of this book, entitled "Vattimo's Religious Ethics."

Both Vattimo's views on the history of ideas and ethics depend upon "Vattimo's Return to Religion," which I discuss in Section One of this name. The second chapter is "Gianni Vattimo and Thomas JJ Altizer on the Incarnation and the Death of God: A Comparison," my first essay on Vattimo published concurrently with the start of my doctoral research in Autumn of 2011 for the journal *Minerva*. The two other essays in this section explore Vattimo's thoughts on the relationship between Christianity and Judaism in "God the Father in Vattimo's Interpretation of Christianity" (*The Heythrop Journal*) and "Vattimo, *Kenosis* and St. Paul" (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*). From an academic perspective, I hope these last two essays throw some light on an issue that has dogged Vattimo in recent years, namely that he is Anti-Semitic.[3] These essays show that if anything Vattimo has toned-down some of the "supersessionist" language in his return to religion over the last fifteen years when it was pointed out by John D. Caputo that his views on Christianity could appear as though it had superseded Judaism.[4]

Before Section One I will introduce more of Vattimo's biography and weak thought; I will not outline his return to religion as his return is described in various places in the essays of which this book is comprised anyway, and I do not see the need for duplicating what I have already written. As the three main sections of the book are comprised of essays I have written between 2011 and 2015, I will conclude with a reflective essay assessing the conclusions I came to in these various articles.

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[3] Severyn Ashkenazy, "A New Exodus?" *The European Magazine* 4.10.2014 http://www.theeuropean-magazine.com/severyn-ashkenazy/9073-resurgence-of-anti-semitism-in-europe Accessed 23.8.15.
[4] John D. Caputo, "Spectral Hermeneutics: On the Weakness of God and the Theology of the Event," in Jeffrey W. Robbins (ed.), *After the Death of God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 79.

Although I feel that Vattimo's work is very timely, I do not uncritically
accept his assumptions, methods and conclusions. Furthermore, I have also
tried to weave some of my own interests into Vattimo's arguments, partly
because this is the way I interpret him, and partly because I try to address
what I perceive to be some of the limitations in his approach to
Christianity. Despite being Italian born and bred, Vattimo's intellectual
heritage is primarily German, with Nietzsche, Heidegger and Gadamer
being his principal influences. In my formative years Nietzsche was one of
my main intellectual inspirations, but then my formal university education
was in the typically British Empiricist tradition, where at Oxford Locke,
Berkeley, Hume and (Strawson's) Kant were the order of the day.
Moreover, just over half of my undergraduate degree was in Theology,
with Medieval Church History as my specialty. My initial postgraduate
research at the University of Birmingham was a fusion between Medieval
History and the Philosophy of Science, particularly the work of Thomas
Kuhn. Eventually this was published as *The Notion of Papal Monarchy in
the Thirteenth Century: The Idea of Paradigm in Church History* in early
2011. By then I was teaching Religious Studies at QEH in Bristol and
reviewing books for various journals and speaking to my theologian
friends to keep me informed of life in the academic world. One friend in
particular—Dr Christopher Wojtulewicz—suggested we collaborate on the
reception of Meister Eckhart's quotations in Nietzsche's work. I had
recently reviewed Vanessa Lemm's *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy* for the
short-lived online journal *Academici*, Wojtulewicz's then-supervisor
Markus Vinzent's project (like a proto-Academia.edu) and had been struck
by the use of Eckhart by Nietzsche in a quote I found in Lemm's book.
Wojtulewicz and I wrote various drafts of our collaborative article, and it
became something of a running joke between us that we could not come
up with a clear angle and – as of writing—we have not even submitted the
article to a journal. However, in the course of the secondary research on
Nietzsche and the death of God, I discovered Vattimo's work; I read a
chapter from his book *Nietzsche: An Introduction* and was intrigued.
Shortly after the initial research for this collaborative article, I noticed
Thomas Guarino's book *Vattimo and Theology* on the list of books to
review on the *Theological Book Review* website. Recognising the name
"Vattimo" but not quite placing exactly how, I requested the book to
review and could not get enough of it. Surveying his work and then going
into more depth on his "return to religion," through Guarino I realised that
in Vattimo I had found at last a thinker who crystallised my interests in
Nietzsche, the history of Christianity, Kuhn and various other thinkers—
such as Joachim of Fiore—who had cropped up along the way in my study

of Philosophy, Theology and History. I promptly searched the UK for potential doctoral supervisors. At Staffordshire University I found Professor David Webb, who had translated some of Vattimo's works into English in the 1990s. From September 2011 I have therefore been studying part-time at Staffordshire University, researching Vattimo's "return to religion." The articles I have included in this volume constitute the best way I have found to develop my ideas on my thesis, and the result is a modified form of Vattimo's history of ideas which includes the ideas of John Gray and P. J. Fitzpatrick, two philosophers far removed from Vattimo's own intellectual biography.

INTRODUCTION

1. Il pensiero debole

Gianni Vattimo (b. 1936) is an Italian philosopher and cultural commentator. Vattimo was born and studied in Turin, Italy, with Pareyson, then in Heidelberg under Hans-Georg Gadamer. While Vattimo's philosophy very much reflects the existentialist and proto-postmodernist influences of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Kuhn, there is also a more "concrete" or politically engaged side to Vattimo which has made him visible outside of philosophical circles, including supporting gay rights and being a Member of the European Parliament. Since the early 1980s, Vattimo has become well known for his philosophical style of "weak thought" (*pensiero debole*), a term and style deriving from a volume of this name edited by Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti and containing the work of a number of other philosophers.[1] "Weak thought" is an attempt to understand and re-configure traces from the history of thought in ways that accord with the lack of centre and foundations characteristic of the postmodern in order to create an ethic of "weakness." The purpose of this Introduction is to outline the core principles of Vattimo's thought, analysing their philosophical roots along the way, focusing on Vattimo's initial statement of weak thought from the volume of that name, "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought." The essays in this volume explore other areas of Vattimo's work, especially his return to religion and his ethics. While these other essays do include some information on Vattimo's style of weak thought, they do not go into *pensiero debole* in much detail, something this Introduction seeks to redress.

Vattimo sets out his position as follows: "Weak thought presupposes that, contrary to the heavily metaphysical framework beneath the problem of beginnings (starting from the first principles of Being), and contrary moreover to a historicist metaphysics (in Hegel's sense, in which Being

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[1] Gianni Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti (eds.), *Il pensiero debole* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1983).

has no first principles but is rather a providential process: to think means to be up on the times), a third way may be possible."[2]

Before I explain what Vattimo means by "Being" or "historicist metaphysics," it is important to note what Vattimo says about the third way. The third way is based on "experience" which is "largely that of the everyday, which is also and always historically qualified and culturally dense."[3] Vattimo is talking here of Heidegger's notion of Dasein as a "thrown project," which in Vattimo's eyes is one's "hermeneutical foundation," that is, one of interpretation based on thrownness into the world. This notion of Dasein will be explained momentarily. Hermeneutics (interpretation) works like literary and art criticism: "critical discourse and evaluation always arise from a set of canons constituted historically by art and taste."[4] The idea that our experience is constituted somehow by texts will be important later so is worth noting now.

2. Historicist metaphysics and difference

Before coming to look at Vattimo's main argument in which he sets out his own position, it is important to outline briefly his treatment of dialectics. The latter concept has its most famous proponent in Hegel, to which Vattimo alludes in his phrase "historicist metaphysics." Hegel proposed that "absolute spirit" manifests itself gradually in the world in a process that involves a rational dialectic in which spirit will in the end achieve full unity and self-knowledge. History works dialectically, through thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Through his Marxist background, Vattimo refers to the work of a number of early twentieth century thinkers, such as Benjamin, Bloch and Adorno, who have followed Marx's dialectical materialism (the view that historical events are outcomes of opposing forces which have material needs as their underlying source of conflict) to an extent, albeit with what he perceives as a "dissolutive" gloss tendency with regards to dialectics.[5] For thinkers such as Benjamin, not only the historical process but also the totality constitute expressions of mastery, which in turn lead them to see traces of the past in a dissolutive way. Traces, for Benjamin for example, are "ruins that history has accumulated" at the feet of the angel in Klee's painting in Thesis 9 of his *Theses on*

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[2] Gianni Vattimo, "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought," in Gianni Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti (eds.), *Weak Thought*, trans. by Peter Carravetta (Albany: SUNY, 2012), 39.
[3] Ibid., 40.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 42.

History.[6] Nevertheless, Vattimo thinks that this dissolutive approach to dialectics represents difference in a way which is complicit with metaphysics as it is linked to the existential idea of "alienation,"[7] which is not only a yearning for totality, but also a form of humanism (which, following Heidegger, is also metaphysical). Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God (which Vattimo takes as the end of metaphysics), Vattimo thinks, has exposed the mastery behind metaphysics, for the latter—with its effects of creating feelings of certainty and consolation— are superfluous in the age of modern technology.[8] In dissolutive forms of difference, Vattimo sees substitutes for metaphysical consolation, such as Bloch's utopian thinking. Instead, Vattimo looks for a more "radical" notion of difference in the writings on Heidegger.

3. Being and ontological difference

Why is it a problem for Vattimo to think of something—such as a totality or humanism—as metaphysical? The latter is seen as violent, for Vattimo. This position is not explicitly put forward in "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought," but it is found in many other places throughout his work. Arguably the most developed assessment on the part of Vattimo on the connection between metaphysics and violence is his essay, "Metaphysics and Violence," included in the Santiago Zabala edited collection of essays, *Weakening Philosophy* (2007). Vattimo states that the link between metaphysics and violence is twofold: firstly, metaphysics constitutes a first principle on which "everything" depends.[9] Secondly, "once metaphysical beliefs are weakened, there is no longer anything that limits the conceptual nature of existence…but by the mere fact of the strong imposing themselves."[10] Concerning the former, the violence of metaphysics itself is philosophical, it is the "silencing of questions."[11] By positing objective truth ("the" truth) and by creating rational foundations which constitute the universal measure or standard against which knowledge is measured, metaphysics closes down debate. With regards to

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., 43.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Gianni Vattimo, "Metaphysics and Violence," in Santiago Zabala (ed.), *Weakening Philosophy*, trans. by Robert T. Valgenti (Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 403.
[10] Ibid., 404.
[11] Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala, "'Weak Thought' and the Reduction of Violence," *Common Knowledge,* 8:3 (2002), 455.

the second of the two reasons Vattimo provides for why metaphysics is violent, he knows that once metaphysics is weakened there are distinctions left between those stratified in society based on the traces of metaphysics, but without any "strong" reasons to reign-in the excesses of judgements passed and power exerted by those higher up in society on the weaker. As Martin G. Weiss points out,[12] violence is a speech act for Vattimo. It is not physical violence, even though Vattimo stresses that metaphysical violence can lead to physical violence, such as in the Inquisition where suspected deviation from metaphysically-guaranteed strict orthodoxy had physically painful consequences.

What is ontological difference and why is it more radical than negative or utopian thinking? Following Heidegger,[13] ontological difference is the difference between Being (*Sein*) and beings (*seinde*). The latter are not "self-evident," to us anymore as we are aware that they appear to us as a "result of a series of 'positions,' occurrences…historical-cultured 'destined' disclosures that, prior to the object-self-evidence of 'entity,' constitute the meaning of Being."[14] These "disclosures" come about through "horizons" being "constructed by a series of echoes, linguistic resonances, and messages coming from the past and from others."[15] Traditionally, metaphysics—the thinking of Being throughout the history of philosophy—has understood Being in the limited temporal sense of stability, of coming to presence. The *ontos on* in the case of Plato, influencing Aristotle's Prime Mover, Aquinas' God, Leibniz' monads and numerous other examples is the idea of constant presence, of eternity, not least for reasons as insecurity in less developed technological times. However, through the transmission of linguistic messages Being "is" not, but occurs, and it constitutes the *a priori* temporal (not, versus the Neo-Kantians, transcendental) horizon for Dasein. As a result, "True Being never is, but sets itself on the path and sends itself, it trans-mits itself."[16] It was mentioned that Being "occurs," and this is related closely to the idea of the *Ereignis* (or the "event of appropriation") in Vattimo's interpretation of Heidegger's thought. The very word *Ereignis* appears in

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[12] Martin G. Weiss, "What's Wrong with Biotechnology? Vattimo's Interpretation of Science, Technology and the Media," in Silvia Benso and Brian Schroeder (eds.), *Between Nihilism and Politics: The Hermeneutics of Gianni Vattimo* (Albany: SUNY, 2010), 244.

[13] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 22.

[14] Vattimo, "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought," 44.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 45.

"Dialectic, Difference, Weak Thought," and Vattimo admits that the term has many different meanings and uses in Heidegger's own significant body of work.[17] This is an important issue that, to do it justice, will need a larger section of its own so that it does not detract from the thrust of "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought." Nevertheless, it can be said now that Being occurs and appropriates Dasein, allowing things to come to being. What, though, is Dasein?

Dasein is a Heideggerian term associated most with his most famous work, *Being and Time*. From "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought" it is possible to ascertain what Vattimo takes over from Heidegger with regards to this concept, which will then be explained. The differences between Vattimo's position and Heidegger's will then be briefly outlined. Firstly, Vattimo says about Dasein that "Dasein is thrown project—thrown time and time again. The foundation, the setting out, the initial sending [*invio*] of our discourse cannot but be a hermeneutical foundation."[18] The term "sending" will be explained in due course, but the important thing to recognise here is the idea of "thrownness." Vattimo mentions this again later in the essay when he says "The analysis of Dasein, of its thrownness as well as of its continually resituated and qualified nature, leads Heidegger to radically temporalize the *a priori*."[19] Finally, he says that "truth" is the result of a "process of verification" that only takes place within "the project of the world that constitutes us as Dasein."[20] Here we have a number of terms which need to be explained: "Dasein," "thrownness," "project," "world" and the idea of a "temporal" *a priori*.

The "existential analytic" of Dasein is at the heart of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. There have been numerous detailed explanations of the background and argument of this book, so I will not repeat what they have already written. Nevertheless, I will mention enough important points to explain Vattimo's use of Heidegger. Prior to *Being and Time* Heidegger had worked along more conventionally phenomenological lines, using the phrase "hermeneutics of facticity" instead, which was a "switch of paradigms…from an intentionally oriented consciousness to a historically situated ex-sistence."[21] In English "Dasein" sounds like a technical term, but Rée reminds us that "the German word Dasein is as colloquial as can be. It is not a technical term, and as Daseins, we are simply entities with an

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[17] Ibid., 47.
[18] Ibid., 40.
[19] Ibid., 44.
[20] Ibid., 50.
[21] Theodore Kisiel, "Hermeneutics of Facticity," in Bret W. Davis (ed.), *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 25.

ontological attitude."[22] Heidegger's main question is the ontological question of the meaning of Being, a topic for investigation which he believed had been neglected: "Do we in our time have an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word "being"? Not at all. So it is fitting that we should raise anew *the question of the meaning of Being*."[23] Everything "is," but Being is not another thing or anything like a universal (such as a Platonic form).[24] But enquiring about the meaning of Being presupposes a vague understanding which guides our everyday activities, but which nonetheless must start from entities which "are."[25] What, though, about that which is doing the enquiring? Here one gets to Dasein—"there is"—as Heidegger's starting point, something unique: "Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it."[26] By "ontically," Heidegger means concerning beings (or things), to distinguish from the more fundamental ontological question. Dasein, unlike other things, is ontological, for every Dasein has at least a "pre-ontology," that is, an understanding of Being.[27] Dasein's essence cannot be neatly defined, and instead can be understood in terms of its existence, the possibilities open to it.[28] Dasein always already belongs to a "world," which is a context and a pre-ontological understanding of it. This world is made up not only of other Daseins, but also of ready-to-hand equipment with which we engage primarily as tools (such as doors to open, rather than a hinged geometric shape); we are absorbed in this world and are not neutral entities taking a "view from nowhere." This absorption can, and frequently is, expressed in ways taken from others ("the they") and not authentically, although Heidegger is at pains to show that these two notions are two sides of the same coin and his seemingly disparaging attitude towards "the they" is nothing moral in character.[29] Perhaps this is because of our "thrownness," that we are born into a world which already has concerns and values and although Dasein is always "mine," the cares and concerns are inherited and shared with others in the world. What we inherit is not a passive tradition, but a set of concerns which affects our moods, understanding and projects for the future. Nevertheless, if Dasein

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[22] Jonathan Rée, *Heidegger* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998), 8.
[23] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 19.
[24] Ibid., 22-23.
[25] Ibid., 26-27.
[26] Ibid., 32.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 32-33.
[29] Rée, *Heidegger*, 24.

completely submits to "the They," then he or she will be divesting themselves of their responsibility for their own existence, which is what Heidegger called "falling." Dasein can come back from fallenness through experiencing "angst," which is an awareness of the contingency of one's own situation: "Anxiety thus shows up as unifying our thrownness into a world, our particular way of finding ourselves in the midst of entities in the world, with our existential freedom to pursue new possibilities."[30] Authenticity, though, for Dasein can only come from the individualising awareness—linked with angst—of "being-towards-death," that death individualises Dasein and invites Dasein to take responsibility for its own existence. Here the links with time—which Heidegger takes as "the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of Being"—become clearer.[31] Heidegger discusses what he calls "ecstatic time" in relation to Dasein, by which it means "standing out." This is why Heidegger says that the "ontological meaning of 'care' [which is Dasein's Being, as it is absorbed in things in the world as a thrown-project] is temporality."[32] Dasein will look forward towards its death which individualises it, having projects for the future, as well as looking back to take responsibility for the traditions and the horizons into which it has been thrown, and stand resolutely in the present allowing the current state of affairs to disclose itself.

In an essay entitled "Hermeneutical Reason/Dialectical Reason," included in the collection *The Adventure of Difference*, Vattimo explains that Heidegger in *Being and Time* thought of hermeneutics pertaining to Dasein along the lines of "authenticity/fallenness." However, "In his subsequent works the affirmation of the Being-language nexus is always linked with the problem of metaphysics as a historical presentation of Being, a presentation that involves an unconcealing/concealing…[which] belongs above all to Being."[33] Being and language are more directly linked to historical destining in works after *Being and Time*; Vattimo is overstating his case somewhat as the notion of "*Ge-schick*" (destining) can be found in *Being and Time*,[34] even if it is not a developed here (especially along the lines that the focus is gradually shifted away from Dasein to the

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[30] Mark A. Wrathall and Max Murphey, "An Overview of Being and Time," in Mark A Wrathall (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 20.

[31] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 19.

[32] Ibid., 416.

[33] Gianni Vattimo, *The Adventure of Difference*, trans. Cyprian Blamires and Thomas Harrison (Cambridge: The Polity Press, 1993), 28.

[34] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 436.

history of Being in Heidegger's thought). It is important to note that Vattimo here wrote that this notion of concealing/unconcealing (particularly the idea of concealment) prevented Heidegger from doing what Gadamer later did, which was to identify Being with language. Later, in another essay within *The Adventure of Difference* entitled "The Decline of the Subject and the Problem of Testimony," Vattimo writes: "According to *Being and Time* Dasein is to be found always, already, primordially, in authenticity. In the ontological perspective that is later developed, this means that truth arises and is disclosed always and only in a setting of non-truth, of *epoché*, of suspension and concealment."[35] After the so-called "*Kehre*" (turn) in Heidegger's thought, common opinion (the "they") becomes less important now than historical destining. For Heidegger after the *Kehre*, authenticity is not now a matter of personal choice or responsibility, but a modification of this world through the transformation of one epoch of Being into another.[36]

In "Dialectic, Difference, Weak Thought," Vattimo explains how Heidegger's thought developed in the 1930s to place more emphasis on "the relationship between being and language."[37] Vattimo spells it out when he states that: "What is more radical about Heidegger is the fact that his discovery of the linguistic character of being's occurrence carries over into his concept of Being itself. Being now ends up stripped of the strong traits attributed to it by metaphysics. Being that can occur does not have the same traits as metaphysical Being with the simple addition of 'eventuality.' It offers itself to thought in a radically different way."[38] Liberation can occur through remembering ontological difference as occurrence, by thinking being as a "reappropriation that no longer deals with Being as stability."[39] The latter notion refers to Being "eventuating," but how does this relate to language? I will look at the importance of language for Vattimo first, tracing how he has taken elements of his understanding from Heidegger: "A historical world—a given order and 'meaning' of beings and of man among them—is always born through the institution of language. The sign-meaning relationship can occur solely within an already instituted opening because the establishment of linguistic conventions always comes after the birth of language, which in its origin is never a sign but the becoming world of the world. The

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[35] Vattimo, *The Adventure of Difference*, 49.
[36] Ibid., 50.
[37] Vattimo, "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought," 45.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

eschatological character of openness onto the future is worked out by virtue of the artwork's founding a language and a world."[40]

These words of Vattimo's are taken from his book *Art's Claim to Truth*, and they refer to the idea of Being "happening" through language. I have briefly alluded to the idea in Heidegger's thought that Being "occurs" through openings through which things come to presence. For Vattimo, things come to presence through "the birth of language" which he sees as having its origin in artwork. Before looking at the links to Heidegger's work, three things need to be said here: 1. The role of "art" and the "artwork" will be discussed in more depth later in the Introduction; 2. Vattimo distinguishes between more and less influential works of art, and even in this text from 1967 (revised in 1985), he sees the Bible as having a privileged role in the history of the West in terms of founding a world and a language[41]; 3. There is a subtle distinction here between the "birth of language" and the "establishment of linguistic conventions." Much later in Vattimo's thought,[42] albeit hinted at in *The End of Modernity*,[43] Vattimo makes the link between Heidegger's notion of the event and the paradigm concept in Thomas Kuhn's thought, that is, the occurrence of the "birth of language" is the scientific revolution and the working out of convention is "normal science." The working-out of this ill-fitting Kuhnian-Heideggerianism in Vattimo's more recent thought will be outlined later in Chapter Three and discussed in the Conclusion. The specifically Heideggerian roots of Vattimo's identification of Being with language can be found in Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism," in which he said "language is the house of Being."[44] Davis puts it slightly differently, that "language demarcates the parameters of a realm wherein humans can meaningfully dwell."[45] How does language demarcate the parameters of the dwelling realm for humans? In the essay "The Turning," Heidegger writes, "Language is the primal dimension within which man's essence is first able to correspond at all to Being and its claim, and, in corresponding,

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[40] Gianni Vattimo, *Art's Claim to Truth*, trans. by Luca D'Isanto (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 121.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Gianni Vattimo, *Della realtà: Fini della filosfia* (Milan: Garzanti, 2012); Gianni Vattimo, *Heidegger* (Milan: Booktime, 2013).

[43] Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, trans. by John Snyder (Cambridge: The Polity Press, 1988), Ch. 6.

[44] Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in David Ferrell Krell (ed.), *Basic Writings* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 161.

[45] Bret W. Davis, "Introduction," In Bret W. David (ed*.*)*, Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2014), 10.

to belong to Being. This primal corresponding, expressly carried out, is thinking. Through thinking, we first learn to dwell in the realm in which there comes to pass the restorative surmounting of the destining of Being."[46] Man "*ek-sists*" by dwelling in language which is the house of Being, as Being corresponds to the essence of man by pervading language.[47] The mention of ecstatic temporality is important here, as is the idea that man is "guarding" language, and therefore Being. One can relate it to what Heidegger writes elsewhere about man being the "shepherd" of Being.[48] Taking the "guarding/shepherding" references and the allusion to ecstatic temporality together, one can link what Heidegger says about language in relation to Dasein to the notions of "transmission" of messages and *Andenken*, the thoughtful remembrance of traces of Being which Dasein inherits through language in such a way that it relates these traces to their own projectuality. The ideas of "transmission" and "*Andenken*" will be looked at in more detail in due course.

At this point, it is worth noting the contribution Hans-Georg Gadamer had on Vattimo's thought, something he seems keen to downplay. Jean Grondin puts it as follows: with the Nietzschean axiom adopted by Vattimo, "There are no facts, only interpretations," Gadamer would rephrase it "There are only facts through interpretations."[49] For Gadamer, "there are no facts without a certain language that expresses them. But he is adamant that it is the *Sache*, the thing itself (or the 'facts'), that comes to light through this linguistic unfolding."[50] In Gadamer's own words: "From the relation of language to world follows its unique factualness (*Sachlichkeit*). It is a matter of fact (*Sachverhalte*) that comes into language. That a thing behaves (*eine Sache verhalt sich*) in various ways permits to recognize its independent otherness, which presupposes a real distance between the speaker and the thing."[51]

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[46] Martin Heidegger, "The Turning," in Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. by William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 41.

[47] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 161.

[48] Ibid., 159.

[49] Jean Grondin, "Vattimo's Latinization of Hermeneutics: Why did Gadamer Resist Postmodernism?" in Santiago Zabala (ed.), *Weakening Philosophy* (Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 207.

[50] Ibid., 208.

[51] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Sheed and Ward, 1989), 445.

Interpretations are of things, but are not external to them. Grondin mentions that Gadamer's hermeneutics derives from the performing arts, and to interpret a play, for instance, is "to play out the work itself."[52] For Vattimo, this notion of a "work itself" is insufficiently nihilistic. Therefore, with Gadamer's famous sentence "Being, that can be understood, is language,"[53] Vattimo "puts the emphasis on language, which ends up absorbing Being in what can be called a linguistic ontology."[54] When Vattimo was translating *Truth and Method* into Italian, he made some interesting philosophical choices with this sentence of Gadamer's. Ashley Woodward notes that "Vattimo chose to translate this phrase maintaining the commas of the original German omitted in the English translation, so that the phrase is effectively: 'Being, that can be understood, is language.' This choice allows a reading which radically identifies Being with language."[55] For Vattimo, "there is nothing left of Being as such," and Being that can be understood is absorbed into language. Therefore, when Gadamer says that "man's being-in-the-world is primordially linguistic… hermeneutic experience is verbal in nature,"[56] for Vattimo this is all there is, for there is not a "*Sache*" which is worked out through interpretation (for there are nothing but interpretations for Vattimo).

Arguably the clearest exposition of the linguistic nature of Being found in Vattimo's work is located in the "Dialogue" between Vattimo, Rorty, and Zabala in *The Future of Religion*. In an extended contribution from Vattimo in this exchange, he exclaims: "When we think that (1) "Being" is an event of the Logos, (2) the Logos is 'dialogue,' and (3) dialogue is the sum of inter-subjective discourse; then our ontological worry is to be able to 'found' Being, not to try to find something that is already there, but construing something that holds, that resists in time."[57] In using the term "Logos," a term with a varied etymological and philosophical background in ancient Greek thought, Vattimo is again consciously drawing upon the work of Gadamer. "As the place of total mediation," Vattimo writes, "language is precisely this kind of reason and this logos that lives in the

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[52] Grondin, "Vattimo's Latinization of Hermeneutics," 208.
[53] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 474.
[54] Grondin, "Vattimo's Latinization of Hermeneutics," 211.
[55] Ashley Woodward, "'Weak Thought' and its Discontents: Engaging the Philosophy of Gianni Vattimo," *Colloquy: Text, Theory, Critique,* 15 (2008), 181.
[56] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 443.
[57] Gianni Vattimo, Richard Rorty, Santiago Zabala, "Dialogue: What is the Future of After Metaphysics," in Santiago Zabala (ed.), *The Future of Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 66.

collective belonging to a web of living tradition or an ethos."[58] Vattimo's use of Logos in this Gadamerian context emphasises the social role of language, that tradition is part of the collective consciousness. A living tradition is also one in which interpretation is not merely a passive receiving of tradition, but a dynamic inheritance within an interpretative family, that the collective consciousness is working out new truths through the worn garments of the traditions that have been passed down. With new interpretative events goes new generation of Being.

The Logos is not meant to be understood in an objective way as the rational Logos of ontotheology. While the primacy of language "has a kind of metaphysical pre-eminence,"[59] it is because we are each thrown into a horizon that is a linguistic tradition; we can understand other people because they use language, too. In *The Future of Religion*, Vattimo writes, "Being is nothing but the Logos interpreted as dialogue, (*Gespräch*) as the actual discussion among people."[60] Language, shaped through the tradition which is the heritage into which we are thrown, is Gadamer's way of resolving the Heideggerian problem of the way in which we can conceive of our pre-understanding as Dasein without resorting to a Kantian *a priori*. As such, language is required not only for experience, but also as the possibility of thought. Both interlocutors will have language in common behind their own particular horizons, and "the fusion of horizons that takes place in understanding is actually the achievement of language."[61] When interlocutors engage in dialogue (or, as Vattimo prefers to say, a conversation), an "event" of interpretation occurs, generating new Being. The continuity of one's own horizon is broken by the novelty of the other. More than a simple exchange of ideas occurs, but a "fusion of horizons," "in which the two interlocutors recognize each other not as they were before but as discovered *anew*, enriched and deepened in their being."[62] What is important to recognise is that truth is not found, but created in a community.

4. Thinking Being weakly

The coming to consciousness of Being as unstable, as groundless does not lead merely to a liberation of difference (what Nietzsche called the liberation of metaphor): "the illusions of dialectics are not simply

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[58] Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, 133.
[59] Vattimo, *Art's Claim to Truth*, 148.
[60] Vattimo, Rorty, Zabala, "Dialogue," 58.
[61] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 378.
[62] Vattimo, *Art's Claim to Truth*, 133; emphasis Vattimo's.

abandoned in favor of difference."[63] This is where Vattimo introduces the notion of *Verwindung* into his thought as "The dialectical heritage through which difference is declined."[64] Before *Verwindung* is explained, it is important to understand what is meant by "dialectical heritage." Here Vattimo draws upon three related terms: *Überlieferung*, *Ge-schick* and *Andenken*.[65] As already alluded to, the former term refers to transmission, and is mainly a term Vattimo gets from Gadamer. This term is important as it is the link between openings that allows traces of tradition to link between past and present. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer writes, "Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated."[66] The mediating, in Vattimo's interpretation of Gadamer and Heidegger, takes place through the language games in which Dasein is involved which in turn are framed in accordance with the sending (*Ge-schick*) of the age, which in the case of late-modernity is living after the death of God. In *The End of Modernity*, Vattimo explicitly states that the "hermeneutic constitution of Dasein" has a "nihilistic character" due to being founded in an epoch in which man rolls from the centre towards X, in other words in which Being "tends to identify itself with nothingness."[67] For Vattimo "tradition" in terms of *Überlieferung* (transmission) "linguistic messages" which has its importance because "Being, as a horizon of disclosure in which things appear, can arise only as a trace of past words or as an announcement that has been handed down to us."[68] Traces of tradition have an "effective history" (*Wirkungsgeschicte*) which encompasses not only their power today, but also the way in which tradition has been interpreted in the past.[69] This is particularly important when one considers the case of the Bible, not least when I will come to look at Vattimo's use of the stages of history and "ways" of interpreting scripture according to his reading of the medieval theologian Joachim of Fiore. *Wirkunggeschicte*, together with the idea of Dasein responding to a series of announcements which constitute the horizon of disclosure in which things appear, will be significant when I come to look at the case of the Bible in Vattimo's thought.

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[63] Vattimo, "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought," 45.
[64] Ibid., 46.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 290.
[67] Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, 121.
[68] Ibid., 120.
[69] Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 282-283.

Andenken is recollective thought, "it never renders Being present but always recalls it as already 'gone'."[70] Being is not a presence, but can only be recalled by recalling that which has been passed on. This, Vattimo points out, means that dealing with metaphysical concepts is unavoidable but that one must "twist" them. If "transmission" brings inherited traces of words and concepts from past openings to mind which have an "effective history," *Andenken* is recollective thought by which one aims to think Being in its history by meditating on its eventual nature. As Peter Warnek writes, "the history of Being can only be thought of by way of meditative recollection (*besinnliches Andenken*), and it is inevitably distorted when it is subjected to any kind of pragmatic planning or calculative control."[71] Remembrance is thinking which is also a thanking (Heidegger's play on "*denken*" and "*danken*"), and it is intimately related to his understanding of poetry. Nevertheless, it can be said that *Andenken* as a meditative, recollective thought at the end of metaphysics is one in which one is grateful for the traditions into which one has been thrown and one responds accordingly, not engaging in attempts to replicate or renew metaphysical thought, but in letting Being be, to come to disclosure in hermeneutical, interpretative thought which takes the traces of tradition which constitute Dasein's horizon and thinking forward in ecstatic projectuality. Vattimo sees Heidegger's philosophical project after *Being and Time* as representing *Andenken*: "It is by retracing the history of metaphysics as the forgetting of Being that Dasein decides for its own death and in this way founds itself as a hermeneutic totality whose foundation consists of a lack of foundation."[72] One can see this, for instance, in the way that Heidegger was able to go back to the pre-Socratics in his philosophical thinking. Indeed, as Vattimo wants to get beyond the language of "authenticity" and "fallenness" of *Being and Time*, he wrote that he sees *Andenken* as the way to think after the end of metaphysics rather than anticipatory resoluteness.[73]

As for *Ge-schick* ("sending," or "destining"), this refers to how Being is sent in an epoch. Although how one thinks is dependent upon whether one thinks and speaks as "they" speak or instead authentically in *Being and Time*, after the "turn" (*kehre*) in Heidegger's thought in the 1930s he

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[70] Vattimo, "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought," 47.

[71] Peter Warnek, "The History of Being," in Bret W. Davis (ed.), *Heidegger: Key Concepts* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), 165.

[72] Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, 119.

[73] Gianni Vattimo, "Hermeneutics and Nihilism: An Apology for Aesthetic Consciousness," in Y. Yovel (ed.), *Nietzsche as Affirmative Thinker* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), 451.

places more emphasis on Logos being "destined" by the epoch into which one is thrown. For example, in the essay "The Age of the World Picture," Heidegger talks about the incommensurability of historical destinings,[74] and that "Metaphysics grounds an age, in that through a specific interpretation of what is and through a specification comprehension of truth it gives to that age the basis upon which it is essentially formed."[75] In this essay, Heidegger contrasts the modern way of thinking of Being as a "world picture" (a representation of something brought before oneself as an object of calculation),[76] compared with earlier sendings of Being as the *ens creatum* in the Middle Ages, or as "that which is" for the Greek man (albeit the notion of the image as *eidos* is a dormant idea placed in concealment in the thought of Plato, later to be brought into unconcealment in the modern epoch).[77] In other words, historical irruptions take the place of the more "*a priori*" structures found in the analytic of Dasein in *Being and Time*.[78] In addition to the notion that Dasein is the primary locus of the true through disclosedness based upon the existential analytic of *Being and Time*, this idea of truth as historically-destined openings is very important to Vattimo as shall be shown in his arguments concerning secularisation and that thought in the epoch after the death of God is fundamentally different to before. Again, more will be said in due course about "events," particularly the difficulty in distinguishing between "events" and "the *Ereignis*."

Now that "dialectical heritage" has been explained through looking at *Andenken*, *Ge-schick* and *Überlieferung*, it is now time to look at *Verwindung*. In the words of Giovanna Borradori in her exposition of Vattimo: *Verwindung* is "*Andenken* (to recollect), which allows one to look at the tradition from the point of view of the *Ge-schick*, destiny or historical destination."[79] Vattimo contrasts *Verwindung* with an *Überwindung* (overcoming) of modernity or an *Aufhebung* (dialectical overcoming in the Hegelian sense). To leave metaphysics behind altogether would be to create a new foundation, whether "locally" or as some sort of new global epistemological foundation, one would be

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[74] Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. by William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 117.

[75] Ibid., 115.

[76] Ibid., 132-135.

[77] Ibid., 131.

[78] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 272.

[79] Giovanna Borradori, "'Weak Thought' and Postmodernism: The Italian Departure from Deconstruction," *Social Text*, 18 (1988), 44.

repeating the metaphysical tendency to create foundations. Therefore, rather than a dialectical overcoming, Vattimo thinks interpretation should be a *Verwindung*. This term, little-used by Heidegger, refers to a "convalescence-alteration," a "distortion" which is also a "resignation."[80] *Verwindung* means many things for Vattimo, such as being resigned to tradition, yet also distorting or "twisting" it and—as a result—getting better from it as a form of "convalescence."

If metaphysics is not to be overcome, but "twisted," what does this really mean and how does it happen? Lexically, *Verwindung*: "is a convalescence (in the sense of '*ein Krankheit verwinden*': to heal, to be cured of an illness) and a distorting (although this is a rather marginal meaning linked to '*winden,*' meaning 'to twist,' and to the sense of a deviant alteration which the prefix '*ver*—' also possesses). The notion of 'convalescence' is linked to another meaning as well, that of 'resignation'…Besides these meanings of the term, there is that of 'distortion' to consider as well."[81] This notion of *Verwindung* is related to nihilism as our "sole opportunity." Vattimo follows Nietzsche in referring to an "accomplished nihilism," one which aims at creating one's own values after the highest values have been dissolved. The opportunity of accomplished nihilism is limited by language, and this is where *Verwindung* comes in: "Tradition is the transmitting of linguistic messages that constitute the horizon within which Dasein is thrown as an historically determined project: and tradition derives its importance from the fact that Being, as a horizon of disclosure in which things appear, can arise only as a trace of past words."[82]

What do metaphysical concepts become once they are recollected and twisted? How should we react to them? Vattimo, recalling Benjamin's "ruins," calls the traces of metaphysical heritage as "monuments," and the attitude towards them being "*pietas*," which should evoke an attitude of nostalgia, but "primarily mortality, finitude, and passing away."[83] It is worth noting that Vattimo sees monuments as transmitting the form of messages in works of art (in a largely unspecified sense, but working best with poetry). In successive generations these monuments not only carry and bear, but also lose, interpretations as these generations come and go.[84] The main implication of *pietas* is the recognition that "the

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[80] Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, 172.

[81] Ibid., 172-173.

[82] Ibid., 120.

[83] Vattimo, "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought," 47.

[84] Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, 74.

transcendental…is nothing less than transience."[85] Objects are only such because they appear in the open region as described in *Being and Time's* existential analytic, and the metaphysical characteristics which used to pertain to these objects strongly have been passed down through tradition according to historical destinings of Being of which we are now aware due to the *Ereignis*, the event of appropriation.[86] Interestingly, in "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought," Vattimo sees in *pietas* the possibility of an ethic based not on imperatives, but on "deeds."[87] He only discusses it in a handful of places and only cryptically. In *The End of Modernity*, he brings up *pietas* in the context of discussing the consequences of the recognition that all there is happens to be a history of "sendings" (or "destinings"); would this not lead to thoroughgoing, destructive relativism? "This historicism," writes Vattimo, "is nevertheless tempered and *verwunden* by an awareness that the history of such overtures is not 'only' the history of errors…but rather is Being itself."[88] Likening this attitude to Nietzsche's man of "good temperament," Vattimo states that "The word that best defines this approach to the past and to everything that is transmitted to us (even in the present) is *pietas*."[89] *Pietas* as an ethic never really materialised in Vattimo's thought, perhaps because it is so vaguely expressed in "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought" and *The End of Modernity*. Nevertheless, this remark by Vattimo shows how even early on in weak thought he held the desire that his "programme" of philosophy should yield an ethic, something to which he returned in his writings on Christianity.

5. Truth

The transience of Being and contingent presencing of beings does not mean that truth has to be jettisoned altogether. Vattimo recalls Heidegger's distinction in section 44 of *Being and Time* between truth as correspondence and the openings which allow one to make judgements about correspondence. In this section Heidegger distinguishes between the "traditional" conception of truth (in the Thomistic sense of *adequatio* between idea and thing) and a more fundamental one. Properly speaking, Dasein is primarily true and only secondarily there is truth as Being-uncovering (*aletheia*). The latter is an *existentiale*, and is a characteristic

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[85] Vattimo, "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought," 47.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., 50.
[88] Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, 175.
[89] Ibid., 176-177.

of Dasein and is based around the existential analytic. What is uncovered depends upon the care structure of Dasein, about that about which it is concerned based on how it is thrown into the world, whether it is fallen or authentic, and its project, which is more primordial than a relationship between idea and a thing: "*The most primordial phenomenon of truth is first shown by the existential-ontological foundations of uncovering.*"[90] The primordial uncovering is articulated in discourse as a relationship which is both ready-at-hand which can either be fallen (talking about something that has been uncovered in derivative ways) or authentic. Nevertheless, the traditional concept Logos (assertion) does obtain when one talks about that which has been uncovered as present-at-hand, as an object. Heidegger is emphatic that truth can only occur because Dasein is primarily true, that there was no truth—not even Newton's laws—before Dasein.[91] At its heart, Vattimo's philosophical style depends upon this understanding of truth, albeit with a significant modification. In *The Adventure of Difference*, Vattimo writes: "According to *Being and Time* Dasein is to be found always, already, primordially, in authenticity. In the ontological perspective that is later developed, this means that truth arises and is disclosed always and only in a setting of non-truth, of *epoché*, of suspension and concealment."[92] In other words, Vattimo thinks the *Geschick* of the epoch into which one is thrown is more crucial for what counts as truth than being "authentic" or "fallen."

The sending alone does not determine how one is able to make judgements pertaining to truth or falsity completely. There are also "forms of life" to consider, too. With regard to making judgements about correspondence, Vattimo likens these open regions to Wittgenstein's language games. There is correspondence within each "form of life," but none of these forms of life inhere in some underlying substratum.[93] With these forms of life, with their rules and monuments passed down through tradition and sendings, Vattimo sees truth as being "rhetorical," of an aesthetic sense to truth in which one tries to persuade people from within—and between—forms of life.[94] This is a consistently held view of Vattimo's, for in a much later work—*A Farewell to Truth*—he writes, "The relation of thought to the truth of Being, to the original aperture of truth, to the milieu into which Dasein is thrown, is in no sense a cognizance, a theoretical acquisition. Rather, it is what Wittgenstein would

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[90] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 263.
[91] Ibid., 269.
[92] Vattimo, *The Adventure of Difference*, 49.
[93] Vattimo, "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought," 49.
[94] Ibid., 50.

call the sharing of a 'form of life'."[95] Vattimo is at pains to say this does not entail some irrationalism, but that the form of life involves "assuming the heritage of the tradition into which we are thrown as a horizon of possibility."[96]

Later, Vattimo downplays the aesthetic and rhetorical elements of persuasion and reconfigures the latter notion by wedding it to ideas of consensus and conversation. Vattimo does not foreground his debt to Gadamer, but the latter thinker's views on a fusion of horizons underlies Vattimo's ideas on truth, at least in his more recent writings. Truth, for Vattimo is neither correspondence, nor coherence, but consensus created through conversation. Although Vattimo rejects "vertical" transcendence, of the "Wholly Other," he accepts the necessity of this kind of "horizontal transcendence,"[97] of the salvific possibility of the event coming from without historically in order to bring people beyond their own horizon by fusing them closer together. The fusion re-establishes the continuity of the horizon, which is similar and yet different after the dialogue. Of course, in the postmodern age of world pictures, is continuity even possible (or desirable)? Perhaps this is why, influenced by his pupil Santiago Zabala,[98] and a debt to Rorty, more recently Vattimo has chosen to use "conversation" than "dialogue." The latter term in philosophy is reminiscent of the Socratic dialogues in which truth is presupposed from the outset, and continuity is more of an aim than convergence.[99] Moreover, dialogue may not be possible with some people because they only want to talk, not listen: apparent dialogue would be a monologue. By contrast, Vattimo and Zabala argue that conversation occurs when truth is not presupposed from the beginning.[100] Where there is no epistemic centre and no shared, universal *Grund*, there are competing traditions with their own claims to truth. Here Vattimo's primary understanding of truth comes through, and that is of "friendship" and the practice of "persuasion." Vattimo's notion of friendship (which shall be interwoven with the idea of *caritas* in his return to religion), is linked to his reading of Gadamer.

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[95] Gianni Vattimo, *A Farewell to Truth*, trans. by William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), xxxi.

[96] Ibid., xxxii.

[97] Gianni Vattimo and Carmelo Dotolo, *Dio: la possibilità buona* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbetino, 2009), 17.

[98] Santiago Zabala, *The Remains of Being: Hermeneutic Ontology After Metaphysics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 79.

[99] Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala, *Hermeneutic Communism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 25-26.

[100] Ibid.