

# Friedrich Gogarten's Theology of Secularization

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In a subtle text analysis, Hermann Götz Göckeritz demonstrated that Friedrich Gogarten's understanding of secularity underwent a decisive reversal in 1938.<sup>1</sup> According to Göckeritz, in that year Gogarten shifted "from being the denouncer of modernity to its defender ... without, however, ever giving up being its critic."<sup>2</sup> This observation is so striking because it illustrates that Gogarten's mature secularization theory (which he advanced in the Federal Republic of Germany) owed much to his own examination of his errors during the Third Reich. Notably, Gogarten did not "come to this self-correction only when facing the end of National Socialist rule."<sup>3</sup> The following analysis orients itself around these considerations and traces the development of Gogarten's theology. In the process, it addresses the pressing question of Gogarten's ecclesial-political role in the early years of the German Church Struggle. Furthermore, it engages how Gogarten specifically interpreted Martin Luther and Luther's theology.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by James Strasburg.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann Götz Göckeritz, preface to Friedrich Gogarten, *Gehören und Verantworten: Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, ed. Hermann Götz Göckeritz, in collaboration with Marianne Bultmann (Tübingen: Mohr: 1988), v–xvi, xiii; see also: Hermann Götz Göckeritz, "Biographische Skizzen mit bibliographischen Hinweisen," in *Rudolf Bultmann – Friedrich Gogarten: Briefwechsel 1921–1967*, ed. Hermann Götz Göckeritz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 310–39, 336 f. The background to this accentuation is the sharp difference between Gogarten's early and late phase, denoted by Hermann Fischer in his work *Christlicher Glaube und Geschichte*: "roughly put ... the early work posed a protest and challenge against the modern worldview and understanding of humanity that the later work justifies as a legitimate result of Christian belief," Hermann Fischer, *Christlicher Glaube und Geschichte* (Gütersloh: Verlagshaus G. Mohn, 1967), 117. Identifying 1938 as a turning point fits with the observation that from 1938 to 1947, aside from a few sermons and his response to A. W. Macholz, Gogarten was no longer active as a writer, see Alexander Schwan, *Geschichtstheologische Konstitution und Destruktion der Politik: Friedrich Gogarten und Rudolf Bultmann* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973), 224. The texts which Göckeritz references were lectures.

<sup>3</sup> Göckeritz, *Friedrich Gogarten, Gehören und Verantworten*, vii.

## Gogarten's Understanding of the Relationship between Christianity and the World in the Weimar Republic

As is well known, Gogarten came from a group of theologians that sought to distinguish itself from the liberal theology of its previous generation. As theologians "between the times," they made differing diagnoses of their era's political and social crisis. Gogarten's chief contribution was to argue for a tense relationship between "Faith and Reality." His collection of articles, published in 1928 in Jena, bore this exact title.<sup>4</sup> As he argued in the introduction, the concept of "reality" had disappeared from Christianity, primarily because his era's understanding of Christianity had embraced "the life of the mind of an intellectual bourgeoisie."<sup>5</sup> This self-understanding overlooked reality in an idealistic way just as much as pure materialism did.<sup>6</sup> In his view, the Christian faith could not accept this bourgeois attitude. Rather, its actual task entailed exposing "the lie, delusion, and parasitical aspect of the idea of modern autonomous human personhood."<sup>7</sup>

Gogarten naturally identified the sources for this faith in the Bible and the Reformation.<sup>8</sup> He argued that engagement with the Reformation should not follow a historical and contextual method of interpretation. Rather, one needed to take a hermeneutical approach to these sources. Through this technique, the Reformers would open one's eyes to the present: "we must then see reality for ourselves."<sup>9</sup> This vision would de-objectify and personalize the faith relationship. In place of an "I-It-Relationship" there would emerge an "I-Thou-Relationship,"<sup>10</sup> which followed the philosophical insight of Martin Buber:<sup>11</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Gogarten, *Glaube und Wirklichkeit* (Jena: E. Diederichs, 1928).

<sup>5</sup> Gogarten, *Glaube und Wirklichkeit*, 2. These and many similar statements make it clear that the classification undertaken by Friedrich Wilhelm Graf possesses great merit: "Gogarten's theology developed in the context of the progressive reform movements of the early twentieth-century. These movements acted against the modern, occidental rationalism, the authority of a cold, technocratic and instrumental rationality, political liberalism, the opening of Germany to the political culture of the West, the capitalist modernization of the economy, and especially against the bourgeoisie," see Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, "Friedrich Gogartens Deutung der Moderne. Ein theologischer Rückblick," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 100 (1989): 169–230, at 173.

<sup>6</sup> Gogarten, *Glaube und Wirklichkeit*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>11</sup> See Martin Leiner, *Gottes Gegenwart: Martin Bubers Philosophie des Dialogs und der Ansatz ihrer theologischen Rezeption bei Friedrich Gogarten und Emil Brunner* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000). On the "I-It" Relationship, see especially p. 158–65 and 177–81. Leiner points out on p. 237 that Eberhard Grisebach's influence needs to be taken into account alongside Gogarten's early reflections on the I-Thou-Relationship. From 1923 onward, Grisebach came under the influence of Buber's philosophy of dialogue and as Professor in Jena worked in close proximity to Gogarten. On the beginning of their acquaintance, see Matthias Kroeger, *Friedrich Gogarten: Leben und Werk in zeitgeschichtlicher Perspektive – mit zahlreichen Dokumenten und Materialien* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1997), 198–202.

According to Protestant teaching, God and Humankind face one another as Thou and I, in the immiscibility of being which is found in this distinction and in this primal relationship. Humanity's relationship to God is strictly bound to this space that is filled by these two, I and Thou.<sup>12</sup>

For Gogarten, this predicative definition of the Protestant relationship to God led to an understanding of this divine-human connection as moral only in so far as it yielded a particular moral life.<sup>13</sup> This moral life was not to be understood, however, in the sense of an ethical quality humans could somehow derive. Rather, Gogarten drew upon Luther's own concept of faith, which Luther had developed in opposition to the *habitus* teaching. In Luther's view, faith was far from "a *qualitas* or a created or infused virtue."<sup>14</sup> Gogarten drew upon Luther here to demonstrate that faith was a "transformation" of the human person carried out through Christ alone.<sup>15</sup> He thus turned towards an effective understanding of justification, which stressed the externality of faith as a gift. In this regard, his thinking resembled that of the theologians of the Holl School, who were also active in this era.<sup>16</sup> Justification facilitated a fundamental and anthropological reversal in the life of the human being. Those who had been transformed by Christ were effectively no longer "lords" but rather "servants."<sup>17</sup> For those who were justified by faith, morality now consisted "of being confronted emphatically with one's neighbor."<sup>18</sup> With this understanding of justification, Gogarten also took aim at a self-understanding of modernity that prioritized human self-fulfillment.

This view opened up for Gogarten a historically transcendent dimension in his understanding of history, which later proved relevant for his theory of secularization.<sup>19</sup> For Gogarten, history was the decisive expression of humanity's self-empow-

<sup>12</sup> Gogarten, *Glaube und Wirklichkeit*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 83. Gogarten does not specify the quotation. Evidently, he was thinking about the Pentecost sermon on John 3:16–21 from Cruciger's *Sommerpostille*: "Darumb spricht er auch deutlich: 'Alle, die an jn glauben,' Das es sey solcher Glaube, der nicht sehe nach seinen wercken, auch nicht nach der stercke oder widrigkeit seines Glaubens, was es für eine Qualitas oder ein geschaffene oder eingegossene tugent sey, in seinem hetzen ligend, Wie die blinden Sophisten davon treumen und geuckeln, Sondern ausser sich selbs an Christum sich halte und jn in sich schliesse als sein eigen gegeben gut, gewis, das er umb des selben willen von Gott geliebt wird, nicht umb seine eigen wrock wirdigkeit oder verdienst, Denn solches alles ist je nicht der Schatz von Gott gegeben, Christus Gottes Son, daran man gleuben sol" (WA 21, 488, 18–26).

<sup>15</sup> Gogarten, *Glaube und Wirklichkeit*, 83.

<sup>16</sup> See Walter Bodenstein, *Die Theologie Karl Holls im Spiegel des antiken und reformatorischen Christentums*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 40 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968), 123. This tendency found a striking expression in Emanuel Hirsch's *Die Theologie des Andreas Osiander und ihre geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1919). It is noteworthy, however, that Karl Holl accused Gogarten of overlooking these effective aspects of Luther's justification doctrine. See Karl Holl, "Gogartens Lutherauffassung," *Die Christliche Welt* 38, no. 18/19 (Mai 1924): 307–14.

<sup>17</sup> Gogarten, *Glaube und Wirklichkeit*, 83.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>19</sup> Hermann Fischer, *Christlicher Glaube und Geschichte: Voraussetzung und Folgen der Theologie*

erment that defined modernity.<sup>20</sup> With this understanding of history, Gogarten mirrored Luther's critique of the presupposition of free will. Just as the question of the will was decisive to Luther, so too to Gogarten was history the problematic field "of the present age" in which theological anthropology had to express itself.<sup>21</sup> Although Gogarten in 1924 had already published the Jonas translation of *De servo arbitrio*,<sup>22</sup> the context of his sharp statements against free will suggested that he thought not only about Luther's debate with Erasmus but also Luther's Heidelberg Disputation. In that document, Luther explained free will to be *res de solo titulo*.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Luther had differentiated between the *theologus gloriae* and the *theologus crucis*.<sup>24</sup> In his 1930/31 essay, "The Religious Task of the Present," Gogarten applied Luther's critical statements against reason in the "battle against the prevailing highest ideals" of humanity.<sup>25</sup> With this treatment of history, particularly in his 1929 essay, "The Problem of a Theological Anthropology," Gogarten turned against the theology of glory, which he saw as embedded in his era's understanding of history. Since the Renaissance, human beings had understood the world as an objectification of their subjectivity, with history being the most significant objectification for humanity.<sup>26</sup> At the center of the problem of modernity stood "the human being as the subject of history, historical man in the sense of man making history, as a being that determines the content and form of history."<sup>27</sup>

Accordingly, Gogarten did not place the Reformation in the ordering of history. He rejected the idea that modernity was the "creature or the outcome of the Reformation."<sup>28</sup> In contrast to Ernst Troeltsch, however, Gogarten did not see the Ref-

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*Friedrich Gogarten's* (Gütersloh: G. Mohn, 1967), 74 f. This passage shows that in Gogarten's earlier phase, history had a dialectical meaning. On the one side, it is clear that revelation had an otherworldly magnitude compared to history. On the other side, Gogarten could also maintain the idea of a distinctly historical revelation.

<sup>20</sup> See here Michael Weinrich, *Die Entdeckung der Wirklichkeit im personalistischen Denken: Studien zu Buber, Grisebach, Gogarten, Bonhoeffer und Hirsch* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 147–50.

<sup>21</sup> Friedrich Gogarten, "Das Problem einer theologischen Anthropologie," in Gogarten, *Gehören und Verantworten*, 38.

<sup>22</sup> Martin Luther, *Vom unfreien Willen*, trans. Justus Jonas, edited and afterword by Friedrich Gogarten (München: Kaiser, 1924). For more on the significance of "de servo arbitrio" and Gogarten, see Leiner, *Gottes Gegenwart*, 242.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation These 13*: "Liberum arbitrium post peccatum res est de solo titulo, et dum facit quod in se est, peccat mortaliter" (WA 1, 354, 7f).

<sup>24</sup> Martin Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation These 21* (WA 1, 354, 21f).

<sup>25</sup> Friedrich Gogarten, "Die religiöse Aufgabe der Gegenwart," in *Gehören und Verantworten*, 61. These criticisms of rationality have their own background, which Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen especially covers in *Reformatorsche Vernunftkritik und neuzeitliches Denken: Dargestellt am Werk M. Luthers und Fr. Gogartens* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1980), 202–72. Thus, Gogarten developed out of an identity-philosophy perception of reality the critique of ethical reason into the critique of secular reason.

<sup>26</sup> Gogarten, *Problem einer Anthropologie*, 40.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Gogarten, *Glaube und Wirklichkeit*, 13.

ormation as an extension of late-medieval developments either but ascribed to it a very ambiguous position.<sup>29</sup> While Gogarten criticized Troeltsch's differentiation between *Alt-* and *Neuprottestantismus* and his classification of *Altprottestantismus* as being continuous with the medieval era,<sup>30</sup> he nevertheless saw credence in the idea that Protestantism contributed to the formation of modernity. Although he emphasized that modernity was not the "legitimate continuation and development of Protestantism,"<sup>31</sup> he admitted that the Reformation, through displacing the "claim of the church to rule over civic, worldly life and its institutions and families, its state and society,"<sup>32</sup> created "a breach in the medieval Catholic Church's iron wall which surrounded the world."<sup>33</sup> Already in *Glaube und Wirklichkeit*, Gogarten developed the idea that this bond was illegitimate because it "stipulated a sacred claim that bound the conscience."<sup>34</sup> At least, then, at this point we see the emergence of the idea of the Reformation as *Entsakralisierung* (desacralization). Gogarten only later placed this idea in the center of his considerations, however. In 1929, this process was still mainly identified as "fundamental *Entkirchlichung* (de-churching)."<sup>35</sup> With this phrase, Gogarten did not provide a rationale for Protestantism as a church-free religion – he saw and rejected such a rationale in *Neuprottestantismus*.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, an authentic Protestantism would not see the church as "a final reality" in the way that Catholicism did.<sup>37</sup> However, Gogarten still oriented himself around the church and shared the view of "outside the Church there is no salvation."<sup>38</sup> In Gogarten's analysis, then, and in line with the Reformation, the new constitution of laws for the civic world was not simply a release into autonomy; rather, it constituted an understanding of immanence that simultaneously reflected the "sinfulness of all human life."<sup>39</sup> According to Gogarten, awareness of this tem-

<sup>29</sup> Gogarten studied under Troeltsch in Heidelberg from 1910 to 1912. See Kroeger, *Gogarten*, 48–52. The important debate between the two unfortunately cannot be fully addressed here. For more, see Fischer, *Glaube und Geschichte*, 79–81.

<sup>30</sup> Gogarten, *Glaube und Wirklichkeit*, 15. Compare in particular Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1928), 32: "The most important factor is that from the perspective of religious and dogmatic history, Protestantism, and in particular its origins in the ecclesial reforms of Luther, is at first only a shake-up of Catholicism. Protestantism is the continuation of Catholic formulations, which are but granted new answers."

<sup>31</sup> Gogarten, *Glaube und Wirklichkeit*, 18.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 20f. On Gogarten's view of the Middle Ages, Luther, and Modernity, see Ermano Arrigoni, *Alla radici della secolarizzazione. La teologia di Gogarten* (Turin: Marietti, 1981), 85–92.

<sup>34</sup> Gogarten, *Glaube und Wirklichkeit*, 19. On page 93, Gogarten stresses that Protestantism has "no particular, enclosed sacred zone in the world."

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 21. On page 91, Gogarten noted a contemporary difference between Protestant and Catholic belief: "If one compares the Protestant faith with the Catholic faith, the most noticeable difference is a reduction of the cultic and hierarchical apparatus."

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 53f.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

poral boundary created by the "world beyond" aligned the concept of immanence with the convictions of the Reformation.<sup>40</sup>

### The Political Era: 1932–1934

Gogarten's statements of the 1920s make it difficult to understand how he could place *das Volk*, a social and historically situated concept, in the center of his considerations.<sup>41</sup> One also cannot counter that Gogarten was unaware of the socially constructive character of an idea like *das Volk*. The German theologian had begun to turn to this subject matter in his lecture "Schöpfung und Volkstum," which he gave on October 3, 1932 at the Berlin *Missionswoche*.<sup>42</sup> Max Hildebert Boehm's monograph *Das eigenständige Volk*, which had been published in April of 1932, evidently played an influential role for Gogarten.<sup>43</sup> Boehm was the leader of the *Institut für Grenz- und Auslandsstudien* and of the *Deutschseminars* at the *Deutsche Hochschule für Politik*. Moreover, he was one of the most important thinkers in the *völkische Bewegung* and the Young Conservatives<sup>44</sup> of the Weimar Republic.<sup>45</sup> Following Boehm's line of thought, Gogarten socially defined *Volk* as a "form of human life developed through history in the broadest sense and through its own self-assertion and self-transformation."<sup>46</sup> That insight prevented neither Boehm

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> On the difficulty of this shift in emphasis, see Fischer, *Glaube und Geschichte*, 108. The topic of *das Volk* was not new, however. In light of the start of World War I, Gogarten had already written in 1915 a leaflet on the theme of "Religion und Volkstum." In this work, he rather extensively followed the path of his reception of Fichte (see Kroeger, *Gogarten*, 110f). Interestingly, the idea that the *Volk* was a "revelation of godly life" also appeared in this piece, see Friedrich Gogarten, *Religion und Volkstum* (Jena: Diederichs, 1915), 25. See as well: Bernd Stappert, *Weltlich von Gott handeln: Zum Problem der Säkularität in der amerikanischen Theologie und bei Friedrich Gogarten* (Essen: Wingen, 1973), 115. In 1920, another lecture followed on the theme of "Religion und Volkstum?" (Kroeger, *Gogarten*, 292). However, in this lecture the idea of "Volkstum" did not stand "at first in the focus of Gogarten's argumentation," see Andreas Holzbauer, *Nation und Identität: Die politischen Theologien von Emanuel Hirsch, Friedrich Gogarten und Werner Elert aus post-moderner Perspektive* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 197. Arthur Bonus also had a fundamentally crucial significance within this set of questions (Holzbauer, 172–82).

<sup>42</sup> Friedrich Gogarten, "Schöpfung und Volkstum," in: *Gebören und Verantworten*, 97–116.

<sup>43</sup> For biographical details, see Max Hildebert Boehm, *Das eigenständige Volk: Volkstheoretische Grundlagen der Ethnopolitik und Geisteswissenschaften* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1932).

<sup>44</sup> On conservatism in the Weimar Republic, without reference to Boehm, however, see Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996).

<sup>45</sup> Annett Hamann, "Männer der kämpfenden Wissenschaft: Die 1945 geschlossenen NS-Institute der Universität Jena," in *"Kämpferische Wissenschaft": Studien zur Universität Jena im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Uwe Hofffeld (Köln: Böhlau, 2003), 202–34. On Boehm's gradual integration into National Socialism after Hitler's seizure of power, see Ulrich Prehn, *Max Hilbert Boehm: Radikales Ordnungsdenken vom Ersten Weltkrieg bis in die Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013), 248–73.

<sup>46</sup> Gogarten, *Schöpfung und Volkstum*, 107. See also Böhm, *Das eigenständige Volk*, 43, for more on the "historicity of *Volk*" and the *Volk* as "Werdewesen."

nor Gogarten,<sup>47</sup> however, from ascribing a high dignity to the concept of *Volk*. On the one hand, Gogarten saw the German national question as being contrived through the “national and nationalistic movement of the present.” On the other, he viewed it inter-theologically through reflection on the conditions of creation for theology.<sup>48</sup> Concretely, he referred to a contribution from Siegfried Knak in *Zwischen den Zeiten*.<sup>49</sup> The theological starting point for Knak’s line of thought did not simply follow the concepts of political German nationalism but was rather missional-theological.<sup>50</sup> Knak pondered the question of how the Gospel “is made intelligible within a foreign people.”<sup>51</sup> In this context, Knak developed the idea of “God’s revelation before the revelation of salvation,” a revelation which first made possible an understanding of mission.<sup>52</sup> This revelation expressed itself in “God’s orders,” through which individuals were displaced from their isolation. Knak also counted family and *Volk* as orders.<sup>53</sup> Against this backdrop, Gogarten developed an interpretation of the idea of *Volk* within the framework of an affirmative creation-theology, which was grounded in his historically oriented construction of *Volkstum*. *Volk* was not to be understood “as a natural and organic fact.”<sup>54</sup> Rather, in the strongest of terms, Gogarten denounced the idea that “this unity [of the *Volk*] is conditioned through blood and race” as a product of his era’s “ghastly thoughtlessness.”<sup>55</sup>

At this point, Gogarten was clearly far removed from the racial ideology of the National Socialists. With an astoundingly new approach, however, he could exalt the idea of the nation at a theological level, precisely because the nation’s non-naturalistic character matched the already applicable theological category of morality.<sup>56</sup> For Gogarten, this morality was a fact that was already predetermined for the

<sup>47</sup> Gogarten’s correlation to the conservative movement did not occur straightforward. Rather, it was “always formed through elements of critique and distance,” see Graf, *Gogartens Deutung der Moderne*, 201 f.

<sup>48</sup> Gogarten, *Schöpfung und Volkstum*, 97. For more on the meaning of Gogarten’s thinking on creation as a moment set against individualization, see Graf, *Gogartens Deutung der Moderne*, 192 f.

<sup>49</sup> Gogarten, *Schöpfung und Volkstum*, 97. The contribution was: Siegfried Knak, “Die Mission und die Theologie in der Gegenwart,” *Zwischen den Zeiten* 10 (1932): 331–55.

<sup>50</sup> On the inclusion of “Volksnomos” in Knak’s missional theological thinking, see Wolfgang Tilgner, *Volksnomos-theologie und Schöpfungsglaube: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 214, footnote 9.

<sup>51</sup> Knak, *Mission und Theologie*, 342. Knak’s reflections here are particularly pertinent to his engagement with Karl Barth (see p. 331 and 347f in particular).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>54</sup> Gogarten, *Schöpfung und Volkstum*, 107.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 113. Compare the rejection or at least the relativization of the racial definition of the *Volk* term in Boehm, *Das eigenständige Volk*, 17f, and more often Rudolf Bultmann, “Der Arier-Paragraph im Raume der Kirche,” *Theologische Blätter* 12 (1933): 359–70. Note 19 refers to the statements of Gogarten in the context of the rationale of the Marburg Review on the Aryan Paragraph. See also Göckeritz, Note 5, in Gogarten, *Schöpfung und Volkstum*, 113.

<sup>56</sup> Gogarten, *Schöpfung und Volkstum*, 108.

individual.<sup>57</sup> Hence, Gogarten did not derive *das Volk* as a direct order of creation; rather, he constructed an analogy:

In *Volkstum*, in our belonging to a *Volk*, meaning actually within our *Volk* itself ... a law has been given to us that is similar to the law in whose development creation takes place. It is similar to this development in the sense that it is not just static but rather dynamic.<sup>58</sup>

The law which Gogarten in 1932 saw governing the German *Volk* gained a far-reaching equivalence to divine law. Gogarten could move the category of *Volk*, which he had historically construed, closer to theology than his previous statements about history seemed to have allowed. He exaggerated this analogical thinking even further through two means. First, in a single train of thought, he ascribed to the law of the *Volk* a referential character to God; second, he made God the originator of this law:

All earthly law points to God and is grounded in God's all-powerful will. God gave this will to the world as a living law, and the world lives out of this will's eternal unfolding. He, the eternal Creator, is the subject of this will which through the law of the *Volk* and the living customs of a *Volk* governs over the people.<sup>59</sup>

Developed out of a missional-theological approach, which in principle had transcended national boundaries, Gogarten came to a new understanding of the nation in 1932, to which he gave this enormously dense expression. Despite its historical actuality, he understood the nation not as part of the historicity which had been earlier exposed to a radical Christological critique. Rather, he viewed the nation as an entity directed by God. Because the nation was defined as a moral entity, its morality fell in the area of human responsiveness within the I-Thou relationship. In his earlier work, the responsiveness of the human being had already been defined within a moral framework. These considerations involved a radical break with the era's crisis-theory while simultaneously and comprehensibly deriving new thinking out of the old. The sharp demarcation connected to this shift, and the fact that it was articulated in 1932 helps make clear that Gogarten was not just opportunistic in this change. Rather, his insight resulted from his wrestling with the contemporary challenges he perceived in his era.

Gogarten's development towards a religious elevation of the nation did not proceed in linear fashion.<sup>60</sup> He was clearly more cautious in a speech on January 18, 1933 in Breslau, when he placed the basic order of Creator and Creature in the center of his observations. Indeed, he did so in such a way that aimed to prevent

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 109. On the neologism "das Gesetz geschieht" and its outlandishness, see p. 101.

<sup>59</sup> Gogarten, *Ibid.*, 114 f.

<sup>60</sup> Indeed, Schwan's finding in *Geschichtstheologische Konstitution*, namely that Gogarten's 1933 statements flow "clearly out of his theology's basic position" (p. 198), proves to be basically correct. However, this process proceeded with more obvious interruptions than Schwan acknowledges.

the reversal of this correlation between the two *in re*.<sup>61</sup> Gogarten applied this relationship to the question of *Volk* and state. Both were characterized by their proximity to religion, and exactly therein was the “basic order of Creator and Creature not preserved”<sup>62</sup> and indeed also explicitly in the “national feeling of many of our contemporaries.”<sup>63</sup> In this context Gogarten grappled thoroughly with the idea of secularization, more specifically with Carl Schmitt’s idea that the modern doctrine of constitutional law had been shaped by “secularized theological terms.”<sup>64</sup> Gogarten vehemently opposed this conceptualization of secularization:

The secularization of theological terms means that these terms are depleted of their real content, which they have in their original meaning in the context of their factual circumstance. This is the subject matter of theology and is always characterized through its ordination above and confrontation with the sphere of earthly things.<sup>65</sup>

Through critical engagement with the nationalistic currents of his time, Gogarten had found in “secularization” an idea that captured what he had described at another point as the illegitimate result of the Reformation: the loss of the sacred, of no longer knowing an otherworldly counterpart to this world. At this point, secularization was therefore the deficient sibling of what Gogarten grasped in the Reformation as the process of the removal of the worldly out of sacred dominance.<sup>66</sup> With this reflection, Gogarten integrated as well his earlier anthropological considerations: this expression of secularization was also a modern idea of the autonomy of the human being<sup>67</sup> which had made humans themselves “the representatives of

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<sup>61</sup> Friedrich Gogarten, “Säkularisierte Theologie in der Staatslehre,” in *Gehören und Verantworten*, 126–141. Taking into mind a critical analysis of the text, this specific publication provides the extended print version of the speech from March 1933. The speech itself took place before Hitler’s seizure of power, its publication after.

<sup>62</sup> Gogarten, “Säkularisierte Theologie,” 127.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, in reference to M. H. Böhm, *Das eigenständige Volk: Volkstheoretische Grundlagen der Ethnopolitik und Geisteswissenschaften* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1932), 68. Böhm discussed here the “plague of modern humans, whose national feeling is placed at the border of religious hubris.”

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* For further reference, Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie: Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität* (München: Duncker & Humblot, 1922), 37: “All concise terms of modern political science are secularized theological terms.” In this context, it is also interesting that Stapel similarly explains: “Ethics is secularized religion,” see Wilhelm Stapel, *Der christliche Staatsmann. Eine Theologie des Nationalismus* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanst., 1932).

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*: “If these terms are secularized, then one indeed gives the entity at hand a final, no longer transcending meaning, but for its part it would now no longer be ordained above or transcendent over against the sacred.”

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 128. Gogarten refers to Ernst Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Überwindung: Fünf Vorträge* (Berlin: Heise, 1924), 77. Troeltsch: “The European idea of Personality, of its eternal divine right, of the advancement to a higher kingdom of spirit and god, the tremendous energy of the proliferation and connection of the spiritual and worldly, our social order, our science, our art: all this stands known and unknown, gladly and reluctantly on the ground of this entirely de-orientalized Christianity.”

the divinity of the world.<sup>68</sup> Thereby, human beings ignored their existence in sin under the wrath of God.<sup>69</sup> Their foundational "sinfulness by nature" stood in opposition to the modern idea of their "goodness by nature."<sup>70</sup> As Gogarten put it, "this autonomization of the human appears to me to be the deepest sense of the secularization of theological concepts that has taken place in modern intellectual history."<sup>71</sup> For this reason, Gogarten saw in Georg Jellinek's rationale for human rights, namely in his idea of a "superiority of the individual over against the state,"<sup>72</sup> a divinization of the individual that "claims for itself the role of the Creator over against the state and *Volk*."<sup>73</sup>

Nevertheless, against the same backdrop Gogarten warned of an exaggeration of state and *Volk*. Indeed, he laid out his critique in a two-step fashion. First, he criticized the transfer of the idea of personal autonomy to the state.<sup>74</sup> Then, in the face of modern national statehood, he targeted the transmission of this same type of thinking to the *Volk*.<sup>75</sup> These considerations had a strong anti-republican thrust. Gogarten turned against the idea of popular sovereignty, which in contrast to the understanding of early modern authority, implied that order no longer extended outward from God but rather from the people. In this case, an inappropriate level of independence was appropriated to the people.<sup>76</sup> With this line of thought, which aligned Gogarten with the old state constitution extant before the Weimar Republic, Gogarten also criticized the emerging nationalist movements. In particular, Gogarten turned against Alfred Rosenberg. Gogarten saw a genuine expression of the national form of secularization in Rosenberg's comments about Nordic blood as a substitution of the old sacraments.<sup>77</sup> In a passage borrowed from Max Hildebert Boehm, Gogarten quoted Rosenberg:

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 138. Gogarten takes up here the idea that he had developed the year before in his political ethics, see Gogarten, *Politische Ethik* (Jena: Diederichs, 1932), 214.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>72</sup> Georg Jellinek, *Die Erklärung der Menschen- und Bürgerrechte. Ein Beitrag zur modernen Verfassungsgeschichte* (München: Duncker & Humblot, 1919), 75. Here Jellinek writes in reference to the discussion in early modern England.

<sup>73</sup> Gogarten, *Säkularisierte Theologie*, 140.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 131 f.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 132. See also Gogarten, *Politische Ethik*, 210 f.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 134. The following quotation, "that Nordic blood constitutes every mystery, which replaces and has overcome the old sacraments," which Göckertiz could not identify, is found in Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit* (München: Hoheneichen-Verl., 1936), 114. For a historically appropriate classification, it is important to consider that this critique of Rosenberg did not necessarily mean an additional critique on National Socialism. Erich Vogelsang, himself a SA member, had also criticized Rosenberg at several points. See Volker Leppin, "In Rosenbergs Schatten: Zur Lutherdeutung Erich Vogelsangs," *ThZ* 61 (2005): 132–42.

The man of crisis stands in the middle of an unsettled social order. Traditional societal forms falter; the nobility appears to have almost completely disappeared; the bourgeoisie is in disintegration; the proletariat of socialism announces its historical pretensions. Already the turn to the *Volk* becomes irrefutable. Fascists, National Socialists, the “new nationalism” of the “Front Generation” attempt to nationalize the demonic spirit of the masses characteristic of our late era.<sup>78</sup>

Significantly, this passage appears in Gogarten’s speech manuscript of January 18, 1933 but not in the published version following Hitler’s seizure of power on the second and third of March of that year.<sup>79</sup> Very soon thereafter, Gogarten revised his open opposition against these kinds of National Socialist ideas.

In his text “Einheit von Evangelium und Volkstum?,” Gogarten actually stated that law through National Socialism “once again concretely” encountered “state and *Volk*.”<sup>80</sup> He composed this text in 1933 in light of the developing *Reichskirche*<sup>81</sup> and shortly after he joined the *Deutsche Christen* (German Christians) on August 4, 1933.<sup>82</sup> In the text, he resorted to his considerations, which had been developing since 1932, that the preconditions of “*Volkstum*” over against the individual exhibited a form of law in themselves. He furthermore continued to reject the “strange mythologumena of *Volkstum*” present in many German Christian circles,<sup>83</sup> which entailed a naturalistic understanding of the *Volk*.<sup>84</sup> Yet in 1932 Gogarten still explained in an unprecedented phrase that “race and blood” were “certainly not to be separated from *Volkstum*.” Rather inexplicably, however, he argued for a moral understanding of these categories instead of a naturalistic comprehension. This traditional engagement with the category of morality yielded an odd result here as Gogarten adopted National Socialist racism. Yet Gogarten now finally blurred the differentiation between the law of the *Volk* and the law of God. He explicitly affirmed Wilhelm Stapel’s concept of *Volksnomos*,<sup>85</sup> and theologically integrated

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 133 f. compare with Boehm, *Das eigenständige Volk*, 314. This elitist rejection of definitive aspects of National Socialism did not prevent Boehm from rising in the Third Reich to the *Lehrstuhl für Volkstheorie und Volkstumssoziologie* in Jena, see Hamann, *NS-Institute*, 204. Thereby, however, one would notice in his career and in later disputes the differentiation of his sociological-historical *Volkstumstheorie* with National Socialist racial ideology, see Carsten Klingemann, “Wissenschaftsanspruch und Weltanschauung: Soziologie an der Universität Jena 1933 bis 1945, in *Kämpferische Wissenschaft*,” ed. Hofffeld, 679–722.

<sup>79</sup> For a literary criticism of the text, see the Göckeritz’s annotation in Gogarten, *Gehören und Verantworteten*, 126.

<sup>80</sup> For more context, see Gogarten, *Einheit von Evangelium und Volkstum?* (Hamburg: Hanser, Verlagsanst., 1933), 21.

<sup>81</sup> For more context, see Gogarten, *Einheit von Evangelium und Volkstum?*, 5 f.

<sup>82</sup> Gogarten referred to this historical progression in *Ist Volksgesetz Gottesgesetz?* (Hamburg: Hanser, Verlagsanst., 1934), 7.

<sup>83</sup> See Friedrich Gogarten, *Einheit von Evangelium und Volkstum?*, 17.

<sup>84</sup> See the critique on the naturalistic understanding of race and blood in Gogarten, *Einheit von Evangelium und Volkstum?*, 22.

<sup>85</sup> Gogarten, *Einheit von Evangelium und Volkstum?*, 18. Compare the statements of Wilhelm Stapel in *Der christliche Staatsmann*, 209f: “That the peoples are communities of values or kernels

this idea through calling upon the church to ensure that the law of the (emerging National Socialist) state would be "recognized as God's law and be purely preserved."<sup>86</sup> The distance to historical-worldly conditions, which his earlier theological considerations had emphasized as absolutely necessary, was now no longer articulated in a twofold understanding of the law. Rather, it was expressed in an unclear formulation of the Gospel. While this Gospel should be a "Gospel in unity with the *Volkstum*," it also should "remain pure in its oppositeness to the law."<sup>87</sup> It was "not one and the same as the German people and ... even less something like a *völkisch* gospel message."<sup>88</sup> Because the entire text was not a critique but rather an interpretation of the German Christian slogan "Unity of Gospel and *Volkstum*,"<sup>89</sup> it was impossible to avoid a reception of the document that set this unity far in the foreground in opposition to the articulated dialectic.<sup>90</sup> In this short piece, Gogarten also intentionally emphasized that the law endowed to German *Volkstum* should become as powerful and noticeable as possible in public life. As he wrote, "For the Gospel can only reveal its meaning where the human is placed under the sharpest of law."<sup>91</sup> The task of proclamation was to make the law recognizable as a sign of human sinfulness and therefore also to preach of salvation through Christ. Such preaching also showed the total state its finitude in this world.<sup>92</sup> For Go-

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thereof explains itself through the reality that they were originally communities of cultures. As communities of cultures, they received a godly law (*Nomos*) that determines their moral behavior. First, in its most progressive manifestation of the people's character, which is always connected with rationalization and hardening of limits, this godly law, the *nomos* in its strictest sense, is reinterpreted independent of religion (which is overcome as a condition of the people's forbearers) as a differentiated morality and finally withered into a purposeful system of values and ways of behavior." Compare with Stapel's *Volksnomos-theologie* in Tilgner, *Volksnomos-theologie*, 89–130, in particular 113–22. On the connection between Stapel and Gogarten, see Dietrich Braun, "Carl Schmitt und Friedrich Gogarten: Erwägungen zur 'eigentlich katholischen Verschärfung' und ihrer protestantischen Entsprechung im Übergang von der Weimarer Republik zum Dritten Reich," *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift* 11 (1994): 219–42, 230 f. To claim that Gogarten "developed the Volksnomos-Theory," (cf. e. g. Alfred Dubach, *Glauben in säkularer Gesellschaft: Zum Thema Glaube und Säkularisierung in der neueren Theologie, besonders bei Friedrich Gogarten* (Bern: Lang, 1973), 13) isolates him too much from this explicit reception process. In his 1934 piece "Ist Volksgesetz Gottesgesetz?" Gogarten explains in an explicit way that deviated from his earlier considerations: "there cannot be a twofold law, because there is only one God. But arguably there is a twofold realization and the same law of God," see Gogarten, *Ist Volksgesetz Gottesgesetz?*, 11.

<sup>86</sup> Gogarten, *Einheit von Evangelium und Volkstum?*, 22.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 f.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>90</sup> This exhibits itself to this day in Holzbauer, *Nation und Identität*, 267.

<sup>91</sup> Gogarten, *Einheit von Evangelium und Volkstum?*, 22.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 f. Braun rightly raises a key difference between Gogarten and Schmitt. Although Schmitt understood the National Socialist state as a "secular church," Gogarten saw the Nazi state and the National Socialist movement "not as a religious phenomenon ... but rather a worldly," see Braun, *Schmitt und Gogarten*, 234. In this context, it is striking that Bultmann argued critically against Gogarten and "against such a totalitarian claim," namely "against the totalitarian claim of a state, which wanted to rule not only the political reality but also over the existence of belief it-

garten, calling upon the church to carry out its proclamation to the totalitarian state also served as an exceptional example of showing the limitedness of modern autonomy. Precisely because he saw in National Socialism a movement that carried this claim of autonomy to an extreme, he saw an opportunity for the clear proclamation of the Gospel. That claim, moreover, corresponded with the church's institutional independence:

The demand of the church for independence can have justification and meaning over against the total claim of the state upon humanity not when the church wants to be independent within the totality of the state's claim but rather when the church totally claims the human being in a way different from the state.<sup>93</sup>

According to Gogarten, this claim correlated to an obvious demand of the church for "freedom and independence for itself and for its proclamation."<sup>94</sup> As an expression of the difficult situation in the summer of 1933, Gogarten presumably meant to find his place in the *Deutsche Christen* (German Christian) movement with this viewpoint. Gogarten disagreed with Karl Barth above all in Barth's refusal to accept in *Theologische Existenz heute* the April 28, 1933 call of the *Dreimännerkollegium* to "recognize in the great events of our day the bequeathal of a new mission of our Lord upon the church."<sup>95</sup> At stake was the question that Gogarten had hermeneutically interpreted in the 1920s, when he explained that the Reformation could indeed help open one's eyes to present realities while maintaining that contemporary actors needed to do the seeing for themselves. Gogarten felt it was his duty to seize upon the modern political situation. In doing so, he had part of his fundamental view: taking up the Gospel's opposition to the self-empowerment of the human being. Simultaneously, he considerably transformed his principal assertion in that he now could recognize God's law at work in historical events.

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self," see Bultmann to Gogarten, June 26, 1933, in: *Bultmann – Gogarten Briefwechsel*, 209 f. Gogarten's position was now also aimed at a corresponding differentiation within the term of totality. Holzbauer rightly emphasized that Gogarten turned against "the overreaching totalization of the emerging Nazi dictatorship into the church" (*Nation und Identität*, 266). Yet Holzbauer's view that this view was no longer present in "Einheit von Evangelium und Volkstum?" portrays an oversimplified reading of this piece and its internal inconsistencies. Graf's insight also applies nonetheless for the overall findings: "Gogarten's relationship to National Socialism is characterized through a paradoxical simultaneity of high agreement and principled distance," see Graf, *Gogartens Deutung der Moderne*, 209.

<sup>93</sup> Gogarten, *Einheit von Evangelium und Volkstum?*, 22.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 7. The passage relates evidently to Karl Barth's piece, "Theologische Existenz heute!" *Theologische Existenz heute* 1 (München: Kaiser, 1933): 10–12. Compare as well Gogarten's "Gericht oder Skepsis: Eine Streitschrift gegen Karl Barth," (Jena: Diederichs, 1937), 8. Gogarten emphasizes here that he opted for the German Christians because he saw in them an opportunity "for the church" to safeguard "its openness over against the world and its historical life." Rudolf Bultmann's reaction to the work is striking. He explicitly identifies himself as in "thorough agreement" with this response to Barth while simultaneously emphasizing that the political attitude of Gogarten had become "less understandable," see Bultmann to Gogarten, April 18, 1937, in: *Bultmann – Gogarten Briefwechsel*, 211).

## A Turning Point? 1938

Hermann Götz Göckeritz links Gogarten's 1938 shift in his understanding of secularization to two published lectures: "Kirche des Glaubens und Kirche als Ordnung im Volk,"<sup>96</sup> given January 4, 1938 at the Pastor's Meeting of Dünne, Westphalia,<sup>97</sup> and "Die Wahrheit der Geschichte" held March 17, 1938 at the Bremen Scholarly Society.<sup>98</sup> In these lectures, Gogarten shifted his points of emphasis. As indicated above, Gogarten attributed the desacralization of the medieval world to the Reformation. Concurrently, he criticized secularization for its trust in the final definitiveness of the "here and now." In these two talks, Gogarten developed these thoughts further.

As already exhibited in the 1920s, Gogarten took up the idea that the Reformation had "destroyed the pagan difference between the profane and the holy, the church and the world, the priest and the lay believer, the divine order of worship and the earthly order of life."<sup>99</sup> The Reformation's particular accomplishment consisted of it having "made absolutely implausible every secularization of particular laws, institutions, and historical significance."<sup>100</sup> That observation fell in line with what Gogarten had previously said about the sacred. Somewhat more optimistically than before, Gogarten delineated the consequences of these events in "the Enlightenment and technical mastery of the human environment."<sup>101</sup> Above all, however, Gogarten saw the relationship between modernity and Reformation Christianity more positively. He no longer opposed the Reformation's process of desacralization as a deficient form of secularization. Rather, he saw in desacralized modernity a given state in which "Christianity, with its desacralizing tendency, attained a full impact upon the ideological sphere."<sup>102</sup> To speak here of a "self-correction" in view of his errors in 1933 and 1934 comes across as a belittlement of the complex process of transformation that Gogarten's theology underwent.<sup>103</sup> Such a self-correction took place at most in the form of a generalizing language. In light of the context and his obvious allusions to the results of the German Church Struggle,<sup>104</sup> it is clear that the modernity Gogarten discusses is the modernity of Nation-

<sup>96</sup> Gogarten, *Gehören und Verantworten*, 206–18.

<sup>97</sup> Compare the minutes of this theological gathering of January 3–5, 1938 (Landeskirchliches Archiv Westfalen: Generalia Cs-231); on the convention discussion and its context, see Edith Stallman, *Martin Stallmann: Ein Westfälischer Pfarrer im Kirchenkampf, 1934–1948* (Bielefeld: Luther-Verl., 1996), 296 f. I am especially indebted to Jürgen Kampmann of Tübingen for making this record available and explaining to me the historical situation surrounding the convention.

<sup>98</sup> Gogarten, *Gehören und Verantworten*, 219–34.

<sup>99</sup> Gogarten, *Kirche des Glaubens*, 207.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>103</sup> Göckeritz, "Vorwort," VII.

<sup>104</sup> Gogarten, *Kirche des Glaubens*, 206. This context strengthened itself further in light of the minutes: in connection to the lecture, the attendees undertook an intensive debate over "the

al Socialist Germany. Not only can one find correlations here to Gogarten's statements after the Second World War,<sup>105</sup> but one must also note that the idea of the full realization of this desacralization tendency in society also correlates to what Gogarten in 1933 had ascribed to the National Socialist seizure of power and its realization of laws. Either way, society proves to be an expression of the law. This conclusion is also reflected in Gogarten's description of the task of the church in exactly the same terms he used in 1933. The church possessed "freedom" to pronounce liberation to captive humans.<sup>106</sup> In this line of thought, the task of the church remained clearly the same: it continued to be the site of the proclamation of the Gospel in relationship to the law.

### Gogarten's Secularization Thesis after the Second World War

After 1945, Gogarten advanced the position he had formulated in 1938, at which point he had actually developed a positive concept of secularization. The early differentiation between desacralization and secularization continued but was at the same time also modified. His lecture "Glaube und Schicksal,"<sup>107</sup> held in 1947 at a private meeting at the Göttingen home of Percy Ernst Schramm (Schramm was still barred from teaching at this time), demonstrated these trends.<sup>108</sup> In contrast to his earlier devaluation of the modern emphasis on humanity, he now saw something positive in the "self-assertion of humans." Yet it was positive only insofar it was a "self-assertion of the human being over against the world."<sup>109</sup> The historical agency of humanity gained its own dignity vis-à-vis a world that was generally devalued. This proves both a clear result and a generalizing transformation of Gogarten's revaluation of historical space in the form of the *Volk*, which he undertook in the years of 1933 to 1934. At that point, he had explicitly named the *Volk* – not naturalistically understood, but historically changing – as a positive entity. Now, human action as a whole was transferred to this status.

Nonetheless, the critical aspects were preserved in Gogarten's thinking, and one can still recognize the earlier formations he had developed. According to Gogarten,

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question of the relationship between the National Socialist worldview and the preaching of the Gospel." Thereby, as Gogarten's statements in 1933 indicated, the "German of the present" could "know again the seriousness of laws rather than a German before 1933" (Protokoll, Anmerkung, 9), in Göckeritz, "Vorwort," XIII.

<sup>105</sup> Göckeritz, "Vorwort," XIII.

<sup>106</sup> Gogarten, *Kirche des Glaubens*, 312.

<sup>107</sup> For the lecture: Friedrich Gogarten, "Glaube und Schicksal," in *Gehören und Verantworten*, 235–52.

<sup>108</sup> Regarding the ban, see Sebastian Conrad, *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Nation: Geschichtsschreibung Westdeutschland und Japan 1945–1960* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 188.

<sup>109</sup> Gogarten, "Glaube und Schicksal," 244.

the self-assertion of the human being was negative when it understood itself "as the encompassing solution to the entire problem of human existence."<sup>110</sup> The human being's relationship to the world could be named as positive, however, when the individual was aware that human "personhood was derived from God."<sup>111</sup> Clearly, the differentiation lived on between a pure this-worldly determination of desacralization and a determination limited through the inclusion of a transcendent realm.

Given Gogarten's course-setting in the early years after the Second World War, it is no surprise that he updated and modified his fundamental differentiations of the 1920s in the book he dedicated to articulating his secularization theory. The theory appeared in the 1953 work *Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit*.<sup>112</sup> In that work, he did not differentiate between desacralization and secularization as he had in earlier writings, but rather he developed a contrast between secularization and secularism.<sup>113</sup> The difficulty of defining these terms in Gogarten's thought lay in the fact that in the new nomenclature, secularization, which once was an illegitimate legacy of the Reformation, now took up the position of a legitimate inheritance of that landmark event. In contrast, secularism was now classified as the illegitimate heritage of the Reformation.<sup>114</sup> Gogarten noted that he worked counterintuitively with this concept, because what he characterized as secularism is grasped "ordinarily" by the concept of secularization.<sup>115</sup> At this point as well, Gogarten clearly had the post-1945 ecclesial critique of secularization in view.<sup>116</sup> While secularization in Gogarten's new terminology was characterized by a knowing of the world's own limitations, secularism was characterized by giving up this awareness of one's ultimate "ignorance," either by placing the secular outlook itself in the position of

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Friedrich Gogarten, *Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit: Die Säkularisierung als theologisches Problem* (Stuttgart: Vorwerk, 1953).

<sup>113</sup> On the genesis of this terminology in this 1953 work, with additional intellectual background, see Dubach, *Glauben*, 38. Without dissociation, however, from a characterization of secularism as degenerate, a significant lack of sensibility is expressed in a rather delicate area. It is problematic when Manfred Walther, in light of the history of this concept, takes this differentiation from 1953 as the interpretive key for Gogarten's earlier writings, see Manfred Walther, "Friedrich Gogartens Theologie der Säkularisierung oder Die Entlastung der Politik von Absolutheitsansprüchen," in *Säkularisierung und Resakralisierung in westlichen Gesellschaften: Ideengeschichtliche und theoretische Perspektiven*, ed. Mathias Hildebrandt (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2001), 117–38, p. 121. The postulation of a "large structural unity ... over three eras of German state history" blurs the problem even further (p. 123). For a contextualization of the term "secularization" in Gogarten's development after 1945, see now Timothy Goering, *Friedrich Gogarten (1887–1967): Religionsrebell im Jahrhundert der Weltkrieg* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), 352 f.

<sup>114</sup> Heinrich Assel rightly notes that secularism is "not history" but rather "polemical fiction" which serves to highlight *Hoffnungstheologie*. Heinrich Assel, "Das Maultier sucht im Nebel seinen Weg!" Gogartens Neuzeittheorie als Versuch, sich im Hoffen zu orientieren," in Irmfried Garbe, *Kirche im Profanen: Studien zum Verhältnis von Profanität und Kirche im 20. Jahrhundert*, FS für Martin Onnasch (Frankfurt: Lang, 2009), 507.

<sup>115</sup> Gogarten, *Verhängnis und Hoffnung*, 138.

<sup>116</sup> Graf, *Gogartens Deutung der Moderne*, 216.

the final answer or suppressing the question of the ultimate to the point of sliding into nihilism.<sup>117</sup>

Secularization was thus Paul's attitude of a Christ-established freedom from the law. This likewise entailed a freedom from the world. Romans 8:38 became central here for Gogarten: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."<sup>118</sup> This promise gave freedom from the world, which Gogarten also found expressed in 1 Corinthians 6:12: "All things are lawful for me." In this way, Gogarten argued "the space of all human life and the entire world and all possible action therein" became a space of creativity through faith.<sup>119</sup> Gogarten continued here what he had described in the 1920s as a rationale for a new morality through the "I-Thou" encounter. In contrast, however, his approach differed from the previous through not opposing historicity. Rather, this line of thought led human beings into "the historicization of human existence and the world."<sup>120</sup> Without this category, the 1933 positive turn to history through the category of *Volk* remained in place. As at that time the *Volk* in its formation through National Socialist ideology had gained a positive meaning, the Gogarten of 1953 was convinced that secularization was a "post-Christian" phenomenon. Secularization also presented, however, "a challenge to faith" that was needed so that faith "can remain faith."<sup>121</sup> Muddled by the conditions of 1933, this logic that human autonomy needed to be realized to its fullest extent in order to enable the powerful proclamation of the gospel carried on in the idea that secularization was a legitimate consequence of Christianity. The task of faith was therefore to maintain this awareness of how the world lacked wholeness,<sup>122</sup> in that faith points in hope<sup>123</sup> to God's wholeness.<sup>124</sup> In traditional parlance, faith was to sustain an awareness of the hereafter in the "here and now." Through this task, faith could help secularization be no more than a secularization, in contrast to secularism, that assumed the place of what it rejected.

<sup>117</sup> Gogarten, *Verhängnis und Hoffnung*, 138 f.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>123</sup> On hope as a central category in Gogarten's thought, with particular relationship to his writings after 1945, see Assel, "Das Maultier sucht im Nebel seinen Weg!," 497–513.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 125. On this horizon, Gogarten saw the actual function of the Gospel in that it "holds Christian belief open for historical life," see Friedrich Gogarten, *Der Mensch zwischen Gott und Welt* (Stuttgart: Vorwerk, 1967), 131. This exact formulation makes the lasting continuity in Gogarten's thought particularly clear. In 1937, he explained to Barth his decision to join the German Christians through arguing he wanted to protect "for the church its openness to the world and its historical life" (Gogarten, *Gericht oder Skepsis*, 8).

## Conclusion

Above all, these observations demonstrate that the development of Gogarten's secularization theory contained no abrupt breaks with his previous thinking, including his reflections from 1933 to 1934. Rather, Gogarten developed these considerations in a continuum that was shaped by the relationship between concretion and generalization. In the 1920s, Gogarten developed out of his Lutheran anthropology a general skepticism towards modernity. In 1933, he gave this skepticism a surprisingly concrete form and took a remarkably affirmative turn: he saw in National Socialism modern humanity's striving for autonomy, yet at the same time, he also saw God's law reaching its telos in the Nazi state. In the following years, he left these convictions behind but kept the positive valuation of history connected to these insights. It was this positive valuation of history that most demonstrated how his thinking changed from the 1920s. Modernity was no longer an illegitimate but rather a legitimate legacy of the Reformation's desacralization. Although still clearly distinct in his lecture at Breslau in January 1933, the desacralization of the Reformers and modern secularization now were seen to be intertwined as one process which Gogarten regarded as positive. This modern secularization was considered to stand in opposition to the ideologically and nihilistically distorted attitude toward the world, i. e. to secularism. The starting point of his mature secularization concept therefore was not just his self-correction of his *Deutsche Christen* ("German Christian") phase, but even this phase itself. This genesis does not necessarily delegitimize his later convictions. However, a theological and historiographical appreciation of Gogarten's contribution to our understanding of the Reformation and its aftereffects also poses the question of whether his development of terminology in the 1920s, which differentiated between desacralization and secularization, is actually more precise. Such an insight does not need to be connected with every theological assessment that Gogarten drew out of this difference, but it can support the idea that worldliness in Reformation thought was conceivable solely in relationship to God and the limitations posed by God.