

The Being of God: The Limits of Theological Thinking After Heidegger¹

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Why has Martin Heidegger assumed such proportions as a thinker, especially for Catholic theologians? Is it because Heidegger's concern with being seems so close to our own – so close to Erich Przywara's *analogia entis*, so close to what we have been taught St. Thomas Aquinas said of God and being? Is not being the foundation of everything, and is the promise that Heidegger will help us show how this might be? How could he undertake this task – this excoriating critic of Church Doctrine (*die Kirchenlehre*) – Catholic or protestant – who announced, even before he wrote *Sein und Zeit*, that with him and following Nietzsche, “philosophical research is and remains atheism”.²

What do Catholics want to say of being? It could not be summed up better than by the Holy Father in the recent encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio* when he says that the *intellectus fidei* itself demands the assistance of a philosophy of being.³ Moreover, are we not prompted in this direction by the Holy Father's other statement in *Fides et Ratio* concerning St. Thomas Aquinas and in connection with how a philosophy of being unfolds, that “his is truly a philosophy of being and not merely of appearing”.⁴

Catholics especially who have wanted to engage with the work of Martin Heidegger – and I can think of two pre-eminent examples in Jean-Luc Marion and Vittorio Possenti (whilst not forgetting Jean-Yves Lacoste, Ghislain Lafont, Johannes Lotz among others, but Marion and Possenti especially because of their desire to confront the *postmodern* reception of Heidegger), have experienced his work as a kind of limit, almost a ban on what they assume Heidegger has insisted may *not* be said

¹ This paper was first given in Rome for the Conference *Fondements et Fondamentalismes* organised in April 2002 by the Faculty of Philosophy of the Pontifical University of the Lateran.

² *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 20, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1992 (1979), p. 109 f. “Philosophische Forschung ist und bleibt Atheismus.” These lectures were originally given in the Summer Semester of 1925.

³ Cf. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Vatican, Typis Vaticanis, Vol. 91, 1999, pp. 1–88, §97. Translated by Meredith SJ, A. and Hemming, L. P. in Hemming, L. P. and Parsons, S. F. (eds.), *Restoring Faith and Reason*, London, SCM Press, 2002: “*intellectus fidei* postulat ut philosophia essendi partes quae in primis sinant . . .”

⁴ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, §44: “*eius vere est philosophia essendi et non apparendi dumtaxat*”.

in the light of his researches. This is exemplified by Marion's reading of Heidegger's comments at the very heart of this question of the relation, not just *between* theology and Heidegger, but where Heidegger himself seems to place it – between *himself* and *St. Thomas*.

Why does Heidegger place the relation here? Is it because this is in fact where he finds we have already placed it? Is it, rather, because of the most fruitful engagement of St. Thomas with Aristotle, where St. Thomas always refuses the name *philosopher* for a Christian, only ever willing to cede this lofty title above all to Aristotle, and then to pagan or at least non-Christian authors?⁵ In this case, is Heidegger seeking to draw our attention to a limit already set for us by one to whom we are already looking, and yet we overlook a limit that Aquinas himself had set? How can we dare to criticise and expose the violence done to theology as *sacra doctrina* in the wake of Hegel and German Idealism's fusion of philosophical and theological tasks unless we recover the limit that Aquinas took for granted as necessary – that is, that it was not reason that was at issue, so that all could fall under the sway of reason and be suborned to its requirements. Reason, *ratio*, thinking, νοεῖν, only brings the self to the fore as a theme, a self which even when taken hold of adequately as the proper task of philosophy still is required to be redeemed. Thus St. Thomas distinguishes between philosophical contemplation, which is pursued through a loving of the self, and Christian contemplation, which is contemplation of God.⁶

Thus in the so-called *Zürcher Seminar* of 1951, Heidegger is asked: "May being and God be posited as identical?"⁷ Heidegger's reply to this question is full of teasing, full of a dry, acridly ambiguous humour that plays with our own mishearings. He says that the

⁵ Cf. for a fuller discussion of this, Jordan, M., *The Alleged Aristotelianism of St. Thomas Aquinas* in *The Étienne Gilson Series*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediæval Studies, no. 15, 1990, esp. p. 6. "For Thomas, membership in a school of philosophy does not befit Christians. [...] Thomas speaks about philosophy, of course, as a habit of knowing necessary for an educated believer [...] I cannot find that the epithet *philosophus* is ever applied by Thomas to a Christian." See also pp. 32–37.

⁶ Aquinas traces two modes of contemplation, one belonging to the contemplation of the philosophers, which is concerned with the self, the other with an end exterior to the self and with an object in view. Interestingly enough the very warrant he takes for making this distinction is not itself philosophical, but scriptural, so that the eye which contemplates could only be given life and raised to the full insofar as it was fixed on its end in God. Cf. Aquinas, *In III Sententiarum*, DS. 35, Q. 1, art 2, resp. "Uno modo in quantum est perfectio cognoscentis; et talis affectatio operationis cognitivæ procedit ex amore sui: et sic erat affectio in vita contemplativa philosophorum. Alio modo in quantum terminatur ad objectum; et sic contemplationis desiderium procedit ex amore objecti: quia ubi amor, ibi oculus; et matth. 6, 21: ubi est thesaurus tuus, ibi est et cor tuum; et sic habet affectionem vita contemplativa sanctorum, de qua loquimur."

⁷ Heidegger, M., *Seminare* in *Gesamtausgabe* vol. 15, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1986, p. 436. "Dürfen Sein und Gott identisch gesetzt werden?" I have written at length on this question and Heidegger's reply to it: cf. Hemming, L., *Reading Heidegger: Is God Without Being?* in *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 76, No. 895 (July/August 1995); Hemming, L. P., *Heidegger's Atheism: The Refusal of a Theological Voice*, Indiana, Notre Dame University Press, 2002, esp. the whole of chapter 8.

answer hangs together with the “Europeanisation of history”, and that being and God are not identical, and I would never attempt to think the essence of God through being”. He concludes I think very modestly about being with regards to its use to think the essence of God”.⁸ Marion concludes from this: “A single indication comes to us: the word *being* must not intervene in a theological discourse”.⁹

Vittorio Possenti has proceeded in the opposite direction to Marion, seeking not to erase being from God, and therefore to erase God in the places of being, but rather to take up and defend the term ‘ontotheology’. Possenti says “the criticism of ontotheology and of analogy, taken for granted as a commonplace in many currents of thought, is usually developed by adopting Heidegger as an inspiration”.¹⁰ Pointing to the very passage in the *Zürcher Seminar* that Marion examined as proof of his contention against Heidegger, Possenti argues *for* ontotheology and what it names, and says: “Only thinking God as *Esse* can one perceive the difference between being as *esse* and being as *ens*. This enormous development escaped Heidegger, who even here was unable to avoid the oblivion of being”.¹¹ Possenti names a gallery of authorities for his claim – Maritain, Augustine, Anselm, Bonaventure, and of course, Aquinas.

Let us set aside for the time being Possenti’s apparent ignorance of the fact that it was Heidegger himself who coined the term *ontotheology*, specifically in relation to the metaphysical triumphalism of the Hegel who sought to subsume the God of faith under the unfolding of the metaphysics of absolute *Geist*, or that the term *analogia entis* has no lengthy genealogy, and that it was von Balthasar himself who asserted it never existed as a formal principal before Erich Przywara’s work of the same name turned it into one.¹² Rather let us note that these two

⁸ Heidegger, M., *Seminare*, p. 436 f. “Europäisierung der Geschichte [...] Sein und Gott sind nicht identisch, und ich würde niemals versuchen, das Wesen Gottes durch das Sein zu denken. [...] Ich denke über das Sein im Hinblick auf seine Eignung, das Wesen Gottes theologisch zu denken, sehr bescheiden.”

⁹ Marion, J.-L., *Dieu sans l'être* (1982), p. 95. “Une seule indication nous parvient: le mot *l'être* ne doit pas intervenir dans un discours théologique” (Marion’s italics).

¹⁰ Possenti, V., *Filosofia e Rivelazione: Un contributo al dibattito su ragione e fede*, Rome, Città Nuova, 1999, Appendix I, Translated by Paparella, E. L. as *Philosophy and Revelation: A Contribution to the Debate on Reason and Faith*, Farnborough, Ashgate, 2001. Appendix II, p. 83. “La critica verso l’ontoteologia e l’analogia, divenuta quasi un luogo comune in numerose scuole, viene in genere condotta ispirandosi ad Heidegger.”

¹¹ Possenti, V., *Filosofia e Rivelazione*, p. 145. “Solo pensando Dio come *Esse* si può percepire l’essere nella sua differenza dall’essente. Questo grandioso sviluppo è sfuggito ad Heidegger, che anche *Dasein* tale lato non è riuscito ad evadere dall’oblio d’essere.”

¹² Cardinal von Balthasar, H. U., *Karl Barth: Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie*, Cologne, Johannes Hegner Verlag, 1951, p. 44. Translated by Oakes SJ, E. as *The Theology of Karl Barth* San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1992. “Wir werden bald hören, daß dieses Prinzip auf den Namen analogia entis getauft worden ist, in Übernahme aber auch einer Bewertung dieser analogia entis als eines ausdrücklichen Formalprinzips, zu welchem Przywara [und erst er!] es in seinen Schriften erhoben hat.” See especially note 2 on this page, pointing out that Przywara’s work *Analogia entis* was published as late (for this doctrine) as 1932. (cf. Przywara *Analogia entis* Munich, Kösel and Pustet, 1932. “Here for the first time the *analogia entis* is described as a formal «Prinzip», pp. 149–154.)

eminent Christian thinkers, who are in complete agreement amongst themselves about the extent to which Heidegger is the fomenter of the nihilism of our present situation, nevertheless proceed for their solution in entirely *opposite* directions. If one seeks to eradicate being from theological speech, the other rejoices in a triumph of their identity so escalated that God himself alone will authorise the meaning of the term *being*.

Let us begin to unravel this seeming paradox by asking the question which Heidegger himself points us to, and which deserves an answer: does thinking demand that God and being are the same? Indeed, let us ask it even as Heidegger asks it with regard to faith: did Aquinas think that God and being are the same? Surely the method to be employed here – the method of either Lotz or Caputo, for instance – is that we simply examine what Aquinas says being is, and what Heidegger says being is, and then compare them.¹³ And because we are good Catholic thinkers, we will of course discover that Aquinas is right and Heidegger the ‘nihilist’ wrong, and so all will return to a certain equilibrium in our lecture-rooms and within the Church. Except that both Heidegger and the Holy Father pose to us a question which, if we were to overlook it, would mean that our work never had any significance outside our universities nor even in our churches and the Church, and so the mission of the Church would remain unfulfilled precisely because of our inability to see further than the farthest tip of our noses. For Heidegger says, as I have already indicated, that this has something to do with the whole place of Europe in our history. The Holy Father says nothing less when he reminds us that: “Philosophy [...] arose in Greece and is therefore Eurocentric”.¹⁴ This is not to say that other nations and places do not each have a genius of their own – *Fides et Ratio* is most careful to assert that they do, nor even that Greek philosophy is *the* philosophy of the Church – it is not, and anyway, she has none such.¹⁵

¹³ Cf. Lotz, J. B., *Martin Heidegger und Thomas von Aquin*, Pfullingen, Neske, 1976; Caputo, J. D., *Heidegger and Aquinas*, New York, Fordham University Press, 1982.

¹⁴ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, §69. “philosophia [...] ex Graecia orta est quaeque Eurocentrica dicitur”.

¹⁵ Cf. *Fides et Ratio*, §49. “Suam ipsius philosophiam non exhibet Ecclesia, neque quamlibet praelegit peculiarem philosophiam aliarum damno.” Cf. also Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Humani generis* in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Vol. 42, 1950, p. 566. “Liquet etiam Ecclesiam non cuiuslibet systemati philosophico, brevi temporis spatio vigenti, devinciri potest: sed ea quae communi consensu a catholicis doctoribus composita per plura saecula fuere ad aliquam dogmatis intelligentiam attingendam, tam caduco fundamento procul dubio non nituntur. Nituntur enim principiis ac notionibus ex vera rerum creaturam cognitone deductis...” The point here is that Pius XII is already distinguishing that knowledge drawn from things because they are created (and in their being-created, this profoundly alters the way in which they are already disclosed to thinking) and therefore from God, which frees them from the vicissitudes of philosophical fashion. Although the point is here being made negatively, or perhaps in reverse, it is the same point – the Church’s thinking, though related to philosophy and borrowing from it when necessary, is not thereby either authenticated by, or authenticating, philosophical thinking.

Rather, the history of thinking itself, both before, within, and alongside the Church is not accidental and is itself inter-twined with the ongoing work of revelation. Our history has not fallen out accidentally, but we have emerged in pilgrimage from a particular place, and the journey has itself been part of the content of the pilgrims' way.

In the question of how we take up the 'philosophy of being' something is at issue, *in the balance*, and cannot simply receive a 'final' or 'decisive' answer that allows us a certain sleepiness with regard to what it poses. It is overlooking this, the 'danger' and 'emergent need'¹⁶ that Heidegger himself so often adverted to, and that we too have begun to become awakened with all our bandying around of the term 'nihilism' like some playground insult (as if calling people names would reform for them the way they live their lives). Forgetfulness of being is also an issue of danger for men and women of faith, and for the life of faith itself. Do we dare overlook the extraordinary thing that our forebears took for granted, that the richest veins of Christian reflection emerged from a period that was itself among the richest in Europe's life of thinking – or that *now*, when everything has been turned into consumption and technique, we are consumed by the very things we delight to consume, and what we know grows daily less and less able to motivate us to lives worth leading, even though *full to the brim* of distractions from the anguish of that emptiness, so that *now* faith seems everywhere in threat of ruin? Are we Christians so exempt from the depravities of the market, so secluded from the raging fire of the consumer society? Or are we not ourselves as much a product of it as anyone else, though struggling to know what faith has to say in the midst of this tide of meaninglessness. A philosophy of being must be posed as a question about what it means for us as beings to *be* – to be living beings in the places in which we find ourselves. It can never descend to the level of metaphysical niceties and comforting thoughtfulnesses, nor denunciations intended to hold back a tide of nihilism that has long since engulfed far more than just our ankles.

For our first indicator of how we might take up this question, should we not be surprised that Possenti and Marion can proceed in opposite directions from the very same passage they each examine of Heidegger's work? Or, indeed, is that even what they do? For it seems to me that both take one thing for granted, which is that being is to be taken as ground – as foundational, and that this ground is, as Possenti says "a universal all-pervading First Cause, which at every moment activates every created existent".¹⁷

¹⁶ Cf. Heidegger, M.; *Die Gefahr in Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge in Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 79, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1994, pp. 46–67; *Beiträge zur Philosophie: vom Ereignis in Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 65, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1989. References to *die Not, notschaft* throughout, and especially §53.

¹⁷ Possenti, V., *Filosofia e Rivelazione*, p. 147. "Nella causalità onnipervadente della Causa prima, che instante per instante attiva ogni esistente creato."

Do we then doubt with Heidegger, that God is first cause? Except that Heidegger says that without doubt, without the possibility of unfaith, faith is not faith.¹⁸ Heidegger argues that the opening words of Genesis, “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”, are the matter of faith, not philosophy. Once Christian faith has been admitted, then we may speak of God as the cause of all things. Heidegger asks at *this* point however, do we *in faith* still need to configure God to being?¹⁹ In posing these questions he is in remarkably good company, above all with St. Thomas himself. Aquinas certainly does not believe that *for God*, God is the (temporal) prior cause of all things. God is not ‘prior’ to creation in that sense. This sense of temporal priority emerges only with Descartes and Newton, in a line which, no matter how much for each of them it testified to the place of God in creation, nevertheless led straight to Deism via the Arianism which Newton and his theologian Samuel Clarke were rightly accused of. God is only prior for *us*, for God, God is immediately contiguous with every temporal moment in creation.²⁰ Even here, however, Aquinas exercises great caution. He begins his discussion *De aeternitate mundi* with the statement that we suppose that the world has a beginning of its duration because this is what is in accord with the Catholic faith.²¹

The Holy Father notes that “as a consequence of the crisis of rationalism, something akin to *nihilism* has appeared”.²² It is in this context that a ‘philosophy of being’ must be undertaken. To what extent, therefore, must any future philosophy of being take into account and work through Martin Heidegger’s understanding that the discipline and practice of metaphysics has and holds within itself and from its very outset in Plato the propensity towards the very nihilism which comes to prevail in the history of philosophy. Heidegger captures this in a sharp and provocative phrase that

¹⁸ *Einführung in die Metaphysik in Gesamtausgabe* vol. 40, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1983 (1953), p. 9. “Glaube, wenn er sich nicht ständig der Möglichkeit des Unglaubens aussetzt, [ist] auch kein Glauben.”

¹⁹ Cf. Heidegger, M., *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 110. “*Die Seinsverlassenheit* ist am stärksten dort, wo sie sich am entschiedensten versteckt. Das geschieht da, wo das Seiende das Gewöhnlichste und Gewohnteste geworden ist und werden mußte. Das geschah zuerst im *Christentum* und seiner Dogmatik, wonach alles seiende in seinem Ursprung *erklärt* ist als ens creatum und wo der Schöpfer das Gewisseste ist, alles Seiende die Wirkung dieser seiendsten Ursache. Das Ursache-Wirkung-Verhältnis aber ist das Gemeinste und Größte und Nächste, was alle menschliche Berechnung und Verlorenheit an das Seiende sich zuhilfe nimmt, um etwas zu erklären, d.h. in die Klarheit des Gemeinen und Gewohnten zu rücken” (Heidegger’s italics). Heidegger’s point here is made with regard to causality as a *philosophical* topic, and therefore as a procedure of demonstration or proof, rather than as a topic in faith.

²⁰ Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae: de Veritate*, Q. 2, art. 12, resp. “sed semper ordo divinæ cognitionis ad rem quacumque est sicut ordo præsentis ad præsens”.

²¹ Aquinas, *De aeternitate mundi*, §1. “Supposito, secundum fidem catholicam, quod mundus durationis initium habuit.”

²² John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, §46.

spans almost the entire history of philosophy in the West: “The metaphysics of Plato is not less nihilistic than the metaphysics of Nietzsche”.²³ Why, in the light of this, is it constantly asserted that Heidegger is himself *nihilistic*? In other words, why is what Heidegger himself is in fact trying to expose and bring to understanding and to light exactly what time and again he is himself accused of carrying out?

In the light of these considerations I want to examine three questions in turn that may suggest exactly what it means to experience the limit to which Heidegger is attempting to draw our attention, while at the same time disposing of the limits that we experience. The three questions are: first, what indeed *is* a philosophy of being and what has God to do with it?; second, what does it mean to say that God = Being, and that this is a truth to be taken *philosophically*?; third, what does it mean to say that the word being must not appear in any future theology?

Neither Marion, nor Possenti, nor indeed anyone who has argued that Heidegger is in any sense a nihilist has understood the extent to which Heidegger’s critique as a critique of the entirety of the whole of metaphysics does not seek to ‘eradicate’ or ‘eliminate’ the tradition of unfolding questions that metaphysics represents, but rather he thinks that this tradition must be understood and experienced in its fullness in the very working out of the question concerning being.²⁴ This experience is in fact our confrontation with nihilism – it is our own need to pass through nihilism in order to find our way to the question of the ground, the basis, the very foundation of being.²⁵ The guiding question of metaphysics has consistently been τὸ τί ᾗ ὂν – ‘what is the being?’, insofar as it is a being. Heidegger describes this as the ‘*Leitfrage*’, the guiding question of philosophy.²⁶ Metaphysics answers this question always without reference to the being for whom the question arises, for whom the question is its own concern. The question therefore becomes asked in terms of highest being, that which is most stable, most present, most permanent about beings. The being which above all possesses life, is without death and at the same time without movement and which always ‘is’ in its being is, as early as Aristotle, understood to be God.²⁷ The being of every particular being, of

²³ Heidegger, M., *Die seinsgeschichtliche Bestimmung des Nihilismus in Nietzsche*, vol. 2 (Gesamtausgabe vol. 6.2), Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1997 (1961), p. 309. “Die Metaphysik Platons ist nicht weniger nihilistisch als die Metaphysik Nietzsches”

²⁴ Cf. Heidegger, M., *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, §50. Heidegger suggests that it is working thoroughly to its very end the ‘first’ beginning from the Greeks to Nietzsche (and Hegel) that the ‘other’ or ‘new’ beginning itself begins at all, and takes up again “das Seyn in die Wahrheit seiner Wesung bringen” (p. 108).

²⁵ Cf. Heidegger, M., *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 119. “Die Seinsverlassenheit ist der Grund und damit zugleich die ursprünglichere Wesenbestimmung dessen, was Nietzsche erstmals als Nihilismus erkannt hat.

²⁶ Cf. Heidegger, M., *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, §2, p. 6.

²⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII, VII (1072b30). φαιμὲν δὴ τὸν θεὸν εἶναι ζῶον αἰδίου ἄριστον, ὥστε ζῶν καὶ αἰὼν συνεχῆς καὶ αἰδίου ὑπάρχει τῷ θεῷ

being taken in the broadest and most general sense, is the making possible of this being here, what is most ‘beingful’ about it. This understanding of being, from the divinity of the idea of ideas, the *ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* in Plato to the eternal recurrence of the same as the permanentising of pure presence in Nietzsche is, for Heidegger at least, the metaphysical understanding or concept of God. Such an understanding of being, however, only asks about the particular being, ὄν, *ens*, in its being, without reference to the being for whom the very question is a question, the being of being human.

In this regard Possenti (but it is equally possible to make the same case with regard to Marion, and I have done so elsewhere)²⁸ completely misunderstands Heidegger. Possenti suggests that Heidegger never takes into account with regard to the disclosure of things the “to whom?”²⁹ things are disclosed with regard to truth. Struggling to reconcile the difference between truth as *adequatio* in metaphysics and truth as ἀλήθεια, disclosure, in Heidegger, Possenti is forced to bring to the fore what he refers to as the ‘bridge’ that must exist between the realm of thought and the realm of the real, concluding that for Heidegger (whom he conveniently turns into a kind of Kant): “Nevertheless the nature of such a bridge was not reached”.³⁰

²⁸ Cf. Hemming, L. P., *Heidegger’s Atheism: The Refusal of a Theological Voice*, chapter 8.

²⁹ Possenti, *Filosofia e Rivelazione*, p. 156. “A chi?”

³⁰ Possenti, *Filosofia e Rivelazione*, p. 158. “Tuttavia la natura di tale ponte non venne attinta.” The entire passage is most interesting in its radical inability to read Heidegger at all. Taking as its guiding position Heidegger’s 1930 lecture *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (in *Wegmarken, Gesamtausgabe* vol. 9, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1996 [1967]), pp. 177–202 and some remarks in *Sein und Zeit* (*Gesamtausgabe* vol. 2, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1977 [1927]) he attempts to force a distinction between truth as unconcealment and truth as *Wahrheit* and *adequatio*. Such a distinction is without foundation in any of Heidegger’s works. In fact in *Sein und Zeit* there is a strong implicit critique of Aquinas’ notion of truth as *adequatio*, most particularly in the reference to Question 1 – de veritate – of the *Questiones disputatae: de veritate*. Even a cursory glance at the first few articles of St. Thomas’ question reveals its primary concern to be the *being* of truth. Thus the *respondeo* to Article 1 has almost at the very beginning “Illud autem quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum, et in quo omnes conceptiones resolvit, est ens . . .”. Heidegger has a full critique of the correspondence understanding of truth – the *adequatio intellectus et rei* – in his 1937 lecture course *Grundfragen der Philosophie* (in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 45, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1992 [1984]). Here (§§6–9), and with explicit reference to Kant as the one who takes for granted the *adequatio* and common ground upon which both realism and idealism stand (Possenti’s stock-in-trade), Heidegger argues that what must be done as far as the *adequatio* is concerned is ask the question with regard to its *ground*. The lectures take off from the following ‘prospectus’: “Was dies [Grund] nun eigentlich ist, das der Richtigkeit zugrunde liegt, wo und wie diese vielfache und doch einige Offenheit selbst ihr Wesen und ihren Bestand hat, bleibt dunkel (p. 22).” The lectures then unfold as a way of bringing light to this very thing that lies in darkness – the ground of the *adequatio* as the essence of the being of being-human. It is clear from the remarks from the first outline for the lectures at the end of the published text (pp. 195–223) that the ground is *Da-sein*, the being of being-human. For reasons which are made clear in the outline, the words *Da-sein* and *Dasein*, are, however, never mentioned in the course of the lectures themselves.

Heidegger argues that the guiding question of metaphysics, τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, in the overcoming of metaphysics brings to the fore the grounding question – the question of that being for whom the guiding question can become, and historically is, a question, as a question that brings the being of the one asking the question before him or herself as a question. Such bringing-to-the-fore exposes, not the to-whom which Possenti seeks, which produces (in consequence of Descartes and Kant) the subject-object distinction, subjectivity as such, where subjects address and are addressed by objects which stand-against (*Gegenstand*, ob-iectum) them. Rather the the guiding question calls forth the *for-whom*, the ground of the one asking the question. This is not the subject, but the *ground*, the very basis of being itself, and so of any question concerning being. For Heidegger the first being for whom being is an issue turns out to be, not the self-in-general, the subject, but *my-self*, to whom I can never become an object, but *for* whom I am always primarily concerned.

However, the ground as such is not the self, but rather the *there* (*Da*) wherein the self takes up its place and finds itself, not seeking to constitute the bridge between itself and other subjects (to whom it is an object, and whose ‘to whom’ also produces others as objects), but finding myself already together-with, alongside, enbridged-to, others. In the construction of Possenti’s bridge between the realm of thought and the realm of the real – between subject and object (but exactly as Marion has attempted to do in his investigations of Husserl’s phenomenology, whilst already taking into account the question of the wider context of the realms within which subjects and objects appear) – what is really at issue is the character of bridging itself. Heidegger himself refers to this as the yoke named in Plato’s *Republic*, in the allegory of the cave. Heidegger says that Plato asks: “What makes the thing seen and the act of seeing what they are in their relation? What spans the gap between them? What yoke (ζυγόν) holds the two together?”³¹ In the allegory, the sun supplies the yoke, but as a figure for an idea. Not any idea, but the idea of ideas itself, the ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ. Moreover, the allegory of the cave arises specifically after Plato has drawn attention to the connection between the sun as the making possible the visibility of all things and its fundamental connection with divinity.³² Thus the bridge, which is itself an aim to be constructed and produced, always poses the question of transcendence. Truth, therefore, and strictly speaking, is the consequence of this constructing event.

What happens when it can no longer be taken for granted that the yoke holds the divine at its end – what happens, in other words, when

³¹ *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit* (*Wegmarken* [GA9]), p 226. “Wodurch sind das Gesehene und das Sehen, was sie in ihrem Verhältnis sind? Worin besteht die Bogenspannung zwischen beiden? Welches Joch (ζυγόν) hält beide zusammen?” Cf. *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (GA34), p. 111 f.

³² Cf. Plato, *Republic*, VI, XIX (508a, 508b).

Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God becomes just that way in which we take it for granted we may think? Is the yoke disassembled? Or is it not rather that we become the ones on whom the assembly of the yoke depends? We estimate, value, evaluate, the truth of the beings that appear. Because we have placed God in this relation to truth, as truth's guarantor, do we not thereby place ourselves in the place of God when it is taken for granted that God is dead? Is the situation not even worse for those of us who then pit ourselves against this universalisation of the death of God, we Christian philosophers who will not let this god become a corpse? Do we then not have to resurrect constantly the god at the far end of the yoke, and do we not thereby transform our thinking into a productive will to power, which must then at every moment reproduce the god who must not be thereby allowed to die, even though already taken for dead in every other corner of thought apart from ours?

Is this not what Possenti's, and Marion's, (and John Milbank's, for that matter) constant denunciations of nihilism have come to? For what is more annihilating than a dead god brought back to life for the sake of the health of truth? Indeed, I would go even so far as to say that our liturgy is now in danger of transferring this fundamentally metaphysical position to the very heart of Christian life itself, for do we not now to some terrible extent understand ourselves to be theurgically and productively *making* God present to ourselves instead of allowing the liturgy to draw us into the sacrificial presence of the one who alone might save us? Possenti's observation, that Heidegger does not complete the bridge (by which he means, refuses to place God at the end of it, refuses to make truth a bridge to the being of God) is quite accurate, but he has missed the force of Heidegger's critique.

Heidegger's argument is at this point, I think, extremely difficult to understand, because it requires an inversion of what we normally take, and have always been taught to take, as the case. The god of metaphysics is, Heidegger says, 'constructed', and exists out of what he calls "Machenschaft": "In machination there lies at the same time the *Christian-Biblical* interpretation of beings as *ens-creatum*, irrespective of whether this becomes taken in a religious or secularised way".³³ Heidegger's point is that something belonging to revelation, to faith as such, has now become operative in metaphysics, in such a way that it no longer matters whether faith is present, but remains at work even in an entirely secularised context. We reach this god by virtue of completing the bridge which thereby brings us to understand this god already to be there, at the end of the bridge or yoke that holds the ideal and the real

³³ Heidegger, M., *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, §67, p. 132. "In der Machenschaft liegt zugleich die *christlich-biblische* Auslegung des Seienden als *ens creatum* mag dieses nun gläubig oder verweltlicht genommen werden" (Heidegger's italics).

together. This is exactly the structure of Descartes' subject: the self, having demonstrated its indubitability to itself, then proceeds to discover by taking up an aim, by a constructive process, a self-making as self-disclosing, that only the greatest, highest, most infinite being could have made this indubitable self possible in the first place. God is thereby made dependent on the secured indubitability of the self. An intentional aim, a trajectory, the working-out of the existence of the bridge or yoke brings this to light.³⁴ When the understanding of God to which Descartes was able to make immediate and unthinking appeal is no longer operative, then (metaphysically) the god who made each of us as an *ens creatum* must itself be re-created, even if thereby posited in its recreation as already-creating. Creativity, *ποίησις*, *τέχνη*, these are the dominant modes of truth within which the god of metaphysics is able to come to light. Such a god need have nothing to do with the God of faith. However, the will – either the will of the god of metaphysics to create us, or our creative will which replaces this dead god and so resuscitates it – becomes paramount. The will becomes the constitutive dominant mode of the unfolding of *τέχνη* and *ποίησις*.

Read like this, Heidegger's refusal of the bridge or yoke looks like a failure of the will. What, then, of my assertion that for Heidegger no yoke needs to be brought to light because he seeks to unfold the grounding question – the question of the 'for whom?' in asking who is it for whom the question *τι τό ὄν* has been the leading question, the bringing to light of the being of being-human wherein I find myself already together-with, alongside, others? If we simply transfer to this question the setting up of an aim, an intentional structure, then this 'for whom' will simply become the construction of other subjects, others alongside me whom I will come to discover.

My suggestion is that this is nothing other than the intersubjectivity which is so popular, especially among contemporary Catholic theologians – not least because of all the baggage of ethical imperatives that these interpolated subjects bring with them. Heidegger's question is different, and requires no aim, but rather requires that I discover myself *already* alongside, *already* together-with. It is here that the question of the *place* (the *Da* of *Da-sein*) wherein the question of being is asked – and here he means the *πόλις* – is raised. The *πόλις* is that which is already present, already the place wherein the grounding question of the 'whom' with regard to being is situated. In intersubjectivity this site has constantly to be constructed and produced, it is never taken as already-present. The *πόλις*

³⁴ Descartes, R., *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* in Adam, C. and Tannery, P., *œuvres de Descartes*, Paris, Vrin, vol. 7, III, p. 40. "Nam proculdubio illæ quæ substantias mihi exhibent, majus aliquid sunt, atque, ut ita loquar, plus realitatis objectivæ in se continent, quàm illæ tantum modos, sive accidentia, repræsentant; et rursus illa per quàm summum aliquem Deum, æternum, infinitum, omniscium, omnipotentem, rerumque omnium, quæ præter ipsum sunt, creatorem intelligo, plus profecto realitatis objectivæ in se habet, quàm illæ per quas finitæ substantiæ exhibentur."

however is not a construct, but is, as that place wherein I find myself already in being. Being-together-with is something which has to be demonstrated and unfolded – brought to light, not produced or constructed.

In *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger undertakes this demonstration with recourse to time: *Miteinandersein*, *Mitsein* (being-with-one-another, being-with) is disclosed through the fundamental temporal structures of *Dasein*. There is, however, a structure which Heidegger says is itself the originary ground of time as such: he makes this remark in two places: one, some fifteen years after the publication of *Sein und Zeit*. Here he says: “In *Sein und Zeit*, no matter how strange it must sound, ‘time’ is the given name of the originary *ground* of the word”.³⁵ Speaking, and being held by the word as such, is the timing of time, or put another way, our belonging together and *already being-with-one-another* is itself disclosed by our being-speaking.

This may sound suspiciously like a ‘later’ Heidegger who has abandoned the structural analytic of *Dasein* for the thinking of being itself, however this view would be completely inadequate, for the other place where Heidegger makes explicitly the same point is in his 1925 lectures on Plato’s dialogue, the *Sophist*. Here he shows that, for Aristotle and for Plato (indeed he argues that in this regard Plato is himself in this part of the *Sophist* [260a–268d] commenting on Aristotle!), speaking, λέγειν, in its relation to rest and motion, στάσις and κίνησις, brings the possibility of a philosophical determination of rest to light, as the ὄει, ὄν, “das Immerseiende”, being-always.³⁶ He concludes: “Thus you see, that in this concept of permanence, of the perpetual, factually, although not expressly, but according to the matter itself, for Plato the concept of *time emerges*, as the *phenomenon* which determines beings in their being: the present, παρουσία, which is often simply shortened simply to οὐσία. And λέγειν, the addressing disclosure of beings, is nothing other than the making-present of the visibility of beings themselves and therewith that in them as what it is; as presented disclosure it brings the present to appropriation”.³⁷

It is possible to see here in its very root both the fundamental connection with God and why, curiously, in the whole of these lectures, Heidegger shies away from commenting on it. For toward the end of the *Sophist* the

³⁵ Heidegger, M., *Parmenides in Gesamtausgabe* vol. 54, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1992 (1982), p. 113. “‘Zeit’ ist in ‘Sein und Zeit’, so befremdlich das klingen muß, der Vorname für den Anfangsgrund des Wortes” (Heidegger’s italics).

³⁶ Heidegger, M., *Platon: Sophistes in Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 19, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1992, p. 580. “the sempiternal”

³⁷ Heidegger, M., *Platon: Sophistes*, p. 579 f. “So sehen Sie, daß in diesem Begriff der Ständigkeit, des Immer, faktisch, obzwar unausdrücklich, aber der Sache nach, für Plato das *Phänomen der Zeit* auftaucht, als das Phänomen, das das Seiende in seinem Sein bestimmt: die Gegenwart, παρουσία, was oft verkürzt einfach als οὐσία gefaßt wird. Und das λέγειν, das ansprechende Aufschließen des Seienden, ist nichts anderes als das Gegenwärtig-machen der Sichtbarkeit des Seienden selbst und damit dieses in dem, was es ist; es bringt als gegenwärtigendes Erschließen die Gegenwart zur Aneignung” (Heidegger’s italics).

Stranger is keen to point out to Theaetetus the connection between this determination of speaking, λέγειν, and divinity. The connection, however is established in the dialogue through ποιήσις, through the making-creating which Heidegger seeks to resist, and which becomes established by the way in which the αἰεί ὄν, being-always (sempiternity), is secured.³⁸ What is central for Heidegger, however, is the way in which Plato brings something to light which already lay as the grounding possibility for being itself: not λέγειν, speaking as such, but διαλέγεσθαι (the middle voice), speaking-together-with, where there is one speaking with me always implied (even in that speaking-together-with which I undertake when I speak to myself ‘in the soul’ as Aristotle says): *conversatio* in Latin, being turned-together-towards. He avoids the question of divinity, not because it is not relevant, but because he himself believed it to be also disclosed for us in a different way: not as the sempiternal, but as what also belongs in its disclosure (but insofar as it is disclosed) to the being of being-human. Speaking-together-with, which discloses the fundamental temporal structures of *Dasein* is, at the same time, only disclosive of these structures because it simultaneously discloses human *Dasein*’s being in the world. Thus speaking-together-with turns out at the same time to be indicating the world as the world that it is – in Greek, δηλοῦν. Thus Heidegger says: “Δελοῦν, in which the possibility of speaking, is a constitutive determination of *Dasein* itself, which I prefer to indicate through ‘being-in-the-world’, ‘being-in’ ”.³⁹

Precisely because being is primarily concerned with world, and speaking is primarily concerned with the truth of being, it cannot have the specific reference to God that traditional metaphysics wants to give it. (It is *silence* that is proper to the place of God, not speaking.)

To understand how this is, and indeed, how it might relate to St. Thomas, we have to move on to the question of why the *analogia entis* becomes the weapon in the hands of those who sound the battle-cry against nihilism. To take our second question, ‘what does it mean to say that God = Being, and that this is a truth to be taken *philosophically*?’ I defy Vittorio Possenti or anyone else for that matter to show me the passage in St. Thomas Aquinas where he simply says, or intends, anything like ‘Deus est esse’. It is possible to find in Eckhart, in the *Opus Tripartitum* the expression “Esse est Deus”, but this is a quite different statement, and needs to be measured against Eckhart’s understanding that in God knowing is prior to being.⁴⁰ St. Thomas says that

³⁸ Plato, *Sophist*, 266c 5–7. Δύο γὰρ ὄν ἐστι ταῦτα θείας ἔργα ποιήσεως, αὐτὸ τε καὶ τὸ παρακολουθοῦν εἶδωλον ἕκαστον. 266d 2-3. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τᾶλλα οὕτω κατὰ δύο διττὰ ἔργα τῆς ἡμετέρας αἰ ποιητικῆς πράξεως.

³⁹ Heidegger, M., *Platon: Sophistes*, p. 594. “Das δελοῦν in dem die Möglichkeit des Sprechens liegt, ist eine konstitutive Bestimmung des Daseins selbst, die ich durch das In-der-Welt-sein, das In-sein zu bezeichnen pflege” (Heidegger’s italics).

⁴⁰ Cf. Eckhart, *Prologi in opus tripartitum*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer Verlag, 1987, §12, p. 31; *Quaestiones Parisiensis*, Stuttgart-Berlin, Kohlhammer Verlag, 1936, Question 1, “Utrum in Deo sit idem esse et intelligere”, p. 40. “Tertio ostendo quod non ita videtur mihi modo, ut quia sit, ideo intelligat, sed quia intelligit, ideo est.”

God is the *actus essendi* as *actus purus*,⁴¹ and that *Deus est suum esse*.⁴² Neither of these statements say that God = Being.⁴³ It is here that Possenti, Marion, and many others have invoked the *analogia entis* as a way through. Being unites God and creation analogically, not univocally. This has, I believe introduced a huge confusion into theological thinking. In the first place, I do not believe St. Thomas ever thought that analogy was particularly important for the development of Christianity's engagement with philosophy. The word *analogia* only appears a handful of times in the two *Summas* and elsewhere. In the *Summa Theologiae* it appears only in a few places in the first sixteen questions of the *prima pars* and not where it would be needed for most of the work analogy has been made to do, especially by English speaking writers, which is in the discussion of the sacraments in the *tertia pars* or the discussion of the Incarnation. Above all, therefore, the sacraments are not *analogical* in structure. This is because they are known and understood (literally, *intellectus*) through faith, even though the faith which discloses them is susceptible to reflective thought (*intelligere*). They are *not* worked out through reason, but the full truth of their being is disclosed in faith, through the intellect, that is through the speaking-together-with of reflective thinking.⁴⁴

If the ground of the being for whom the guiding question is τὸ ὄν is disclosed through speaking, and that speaking which is both a speaking-alongside-and-together-with, and the speaking to the self which characterises the soul (Aristotle), then the being of this being can be fully disclosed without reference to God as highest being. Paradoxically to make God highest being, and so the ground of the being of beings as such is to strip human *Dasein* of its capacity for self-disclosure. I think St. Thomas never said differently – or rather

⁴¹ Aquinas: *In I Sententiarum*, DS 2, Q. 1, art. 1, resp. ad 2; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, Cap. 26, n. 6; *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, Q. 14, art. 1, resp. ad 1.

⁴² Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia: Q. 2, art. 1, resp; Q. 3, art. 4, resp.

⁴³ For Aquinas the common being of things is always described as *esse commune* which is entirely distinct from the *esse* of God. For a full discussion of this see te Velde, R., *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1995, p. 188 f. “*esse commune* coincides with created being. The *commune* is added in order to distinguish the being that all beings have in common from the divine being that is self-subsistent and therefore radically distinct from all other things. The reason for making this distinction is to exclude the pantheistic error which might arise from the thesis that God is ‘being’ without any addition”; te Velde supplies an extended discussion of the problematic term *esse commune* in Chapter Ten of this book.

⁴⁴ In this, and especially with regard to the Eucharist, St. Thomas adverts to the form of truth discussed in Aristotle's *De anima* which does not have to do with the dialectic of truth and falsehood, but is understood as simply true through ‘seeing’. Clearly the seeing at issue is a reflective visuality, the seeing of the mind, of Greek $\nu\omicron\lambda\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$, Latin *intellectus*. (Cf. Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*, IIIa: Q. 76, art. 7, resp. “duplex est oculus: scilicet corporalis, proprie dictus: et intellectualis, qui per similitudinem dicitur”; Q. 76, art. 7, resp. “Substantia autem, inquantum huiusmodi, non est visibilis oculo corporali, neque subiacet alicui sensui, neque imaginationi, sed soli intellectui, cuius obiectum est quod quid est, ut dicitur in III *de Anima*.” Aristotle, *De anima*, III, VI, 430 b 27. ὁ δὲ νοῦς οὐ πᾶς, ἀλλ’ ὁ τοῦ τί κατὰ τό τί ἦν εἶναι ἀληθές, καὶ οὐ τί κατὰ τινοῦς. ἀλλ’ ὡσπερ τὸ ὄραν τοῦ ἰδίου ἀληθές.

he understood the difference between the constitutive modes of thoughtful self-disclosure of the human being's dwelling in truth, and the fulfilment of that truth in the life of faith. In this sense God 'is' beyond the self-disclosing speaking of being – or rather, as St. Thomas says, the being of God is fully known only to God, and to us only insofar as God chooses to reveal himself. St. Thomas' theology is therefore and *always* a theology of revelation which requires reason to reflect on the revelation that has been given.

The reason that the sacraments do not fall under this is that the sacraments are disclosed through Christ (and Christ is himself above all a sacrament in this way), through the forms of beings that Christ chooses to disclose them in their everydayness – thus the Christ appears as a man amongst men,⁴⁵ though fully divine; the Eucharist looks and behaves like bread, except that in faith we are given to know that it is fully and completely the body of Christ. Not through reason, but in faith alone. Moreover, the objectivity of these truths is not *dependent* on our faith, but on the infinite power of God.⁴⁶

The equation God = Being is warranted only as a way of speaking in the order of faith, and of the reflective, intellective consideration of God's self-revealing. It is above all derived from scripture, as even Étienne Gilson affirmed.⁴⁷ To make the (unwarranted) equation in the order of philosophy is, however, to make the move that Heidegger asserted ontotheology itself is – above all in the work of Hegel. Here the Incarnation becomes woven into the very structure of reason, so that it is the culmination of human *Geist* and at the same time entirely susceptible to reason's conditions. It destroys the freedom of the unbeliever not to believe – that is, to take Jesus as a mere man – in which very freedom is the possibility of our not being overwhelmed by God in his desire to redeem us.

Which brings us to the third of our questions, 'third, what does it mean to say that the word being must not appear in any future theology?'. In Heidegger's enigmatic statement to the Zürich seminar of 1951, he was at pains to stress that "I believe that being can never be thought as the ground and essence of God, but that nevertheless the experience and manifestness of God, insofar as they meet with humanity, eventuate in the dimension of being, which in no way signifies that being might be regarded as a possible predicate for God".⁴⁸ This is exactly not the same as saying that the word being must not appear in any future theology, but rather, as Heidegger

⁴⁵ Cf. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, §11, citing John 3³⁴.

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIIa, Q. 77, a. 1, resp. "per infinitam [Dei] virtutem."

⁴⁷ Cf. Gilson, É., *God and Philosophy*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992 (1941), p. 40.

⁴⁸ Heidegger, M., *Seminare*, p. 437. "Ich glaube, daß das Sein niemals als Grund und Wesen von Gott gedacht werden kann, daß aber gleichwohl die Erfahrung Gottes und seiner Offenbarkeit (sofern sie dem Menschen begegnet) in der Dimension des Seins sich ereignet, was niemals besagt, das Sein könne als mögliches Prädikat für Gott gelten."

stresses, and I have already quoted, but which has always been overlooked in every consideration of this passage I have ever come across: ‘I think very modestly about being with regards to its use to think the essence of God’. Why is Heidegger modest with regard to this question? Surely because the being for whom God manifests himself amongst beings, as entering the realm of being to encounter humanity, is not God, but Heidegger himself and myself. Who would not be modest before God? How, above all for Christian men and women is this encountered to be understood, or rather *with whom* does it take place, except with that one who himself in all modesty enters the realm of being to save us, Jesus the Christ – before whom, who among us would not seek to be modest?

The foundation, the ground of being is to come into oneself as the being who asks the question, τὴν τὸ ὄν. To address Jesus the man with this question is to step reflectively into the request for an answer for the gift of faith, not a rational deduction of God as highest being. Who are you that you are? Who are you, O Lord, that you will save me? Or as Anselm knew this question: O Lord who promises me salvation, “Lord, you who give understanding to faith, grant that I may understand, as much as you see fit, that you are as we believe (you to be), and that you are what we believe (you to be).⁴⁹ When asked as much as a question about who I am – who is it that believes – as a question about the extent to which God is disclosed and to be found in me – this then, is no prelude to a rational deduction of the existence of God, but truly, is my prayer to the non-metaphysical God who is my delight and my salvation.

The ground of the being of God is the being of being human – which leaves God free to be God with regard to us. Who would have known that God would seek to encounter us in the person – the being – of Christ? Thus the limit of theological thinking is described in the being of being human, but precisely interrupted in the order of faith by the promise that through Christ we might share in the divine life. The limit, insofar as it is known as a limit, can be known to be interrupted.

⁴⁹ Anselm, *Proslogion*, II. “Qui das fidei intellectum, da mihi, ut quantum scis expedire intelligam, quia es sicut credimus, et hoc es quod credimus.”