

Why Heidegger's "History" of Metaphysics is Dead

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Abstract. I outline features of the emerging consensus that philosophy has now liberated itself from the horizon of onto-theology with respect to the history of metaphysics. I draw on Jean-Marc Narbonne, *Hénologie, Ontologie et Ereignis (Plotin-Proclus-Heidegger)*, conferences presented at *La métaphysique: son histoire, sa critique, ses enjeux* held at Laval University in 1998, and other recent work, showing why Heidegger's horizon does not encompass ancient or medieval Platonic or Aristotelian philosophy. Noting that both French Neoplatonic studies after Bréhier and Heidegger in *Identität und Differenz* were opposing Hegelian accounts of the history of philosophy, I suggest that: (1) both were reacting to the same problem, (2) French Neoplatonism was motivated by Heidegger's questions, (3) Heidegger's account of Being beyond the difference of Being and beings resembles the Neoplatonic account of the One.

I.

*What this Paper is and is not.*¹ Mark Twain had the good fortune to comment on a notice of his death, that it was "greatly exaggerated." While I hope to show that Heidegger's "history" of metaphysics has recently died, or is at least on its deathbed, I do not wish to exaggerate in any way what I propose to show, which is in fact something more modest than my title might suggest. I shall not propose any new disclosures about how Heidegger understood the history of metaphysics. Indeed, I shall not even endeavor to say exactly how he presented that history—this

¹ This paper was originally delivered as a series of lectures to the Contemporary Studies Program at the University of King's College, Halifax, Canada, and to the Collège International de Philosophie in Paris. I am grateful to Elizabeth Edwards at King's, to Anca Vasiliu and Christian Trottmann at the Collège International who were my hosts, as well as to those in both cities whose discussions improved the paper. I owe special thanks to Christian Trottmann for translating my paper into French.

being a matter so disputed that treating it would consume all my efforts. What I shall propose, partly from out of French writings and partly out of English ones, together with some German references, will depend upon many diverse, and even contradictory, representations of Heidegger's history of metaphysics. These assumed, I shall consider how that history determines some contemporary philosophical, theological, and even religious reflections and constructions, and I shall endeavor to plot their vector. In consequence, I shall speak very little about what Heidegger thought, and almost equally little about how his thought is represented. Rather, I shall center on reactions to these representations. My attention is quite specific. I shall attend to the connection between Heidegger's understanding of the history of metaphysics and its so-called onto-theological structure. Further, my concentration will be on the relations which that connection implies between metaphysics, theology, the gods, and faith.

My reflections do not come out of any proper consideration of contemporary philosophy for its own sake, and on this I pretend no expertise. Rather, they arose first out of a study of Thomas Aquinas, specifically of what is Neoplatonic in his thinking. From this beginning I went on to consider the history of Neoplatonism, and why Thomists had excluded Aquinas from it; I then noted a remarkable shift during the last century, during which Aquinas was more and more looked at through Neoplatonic structures. We observe a remarkable coincidence: During this same period, in the so-called "Continental" tradition of philosophy, the most important thinking about Aquinas' doctrine of God has rotated around Heidegger's inquisition of Western philosophical theology and the history of metaphysics under the figure of onto-theology.² The most important historical scholarship on Aquinas is found in the same tradition. Thus, we are brought to reflect on the relation between a Neoplatonic representation of Aquinas and the appearance of his thought within a Heideggerian framework.³ The concentration of my studies on Aquinas gave me an advantageous perspective: for better or worse, he is for very many the

² See Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 86.

³ For how Aquinas fits in it, see W. J. Hankey, *God in Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, Oxford Theological Monographs/Oxford Scholarly Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987; 2000), and idem, "Theoria versus Poiêsis: Neoplatonism and Trinitarian Difference in Aquinas, John Milbank, Jean-Luc Marion and John Zizioulas," *Modern Theology* 15/4 (October 1999): 387–415.

high point in the union of metaphysics as onto-theology and Christianity. In consequence, the most interesting questions Heidegger inspires occur concerning Aquinas. In addition, there is more generally, in our time, a connection between diverse retrievals of Neoplatonism and the influence of Heidegger's philosophy. The connection is, however, ironic. I hope to show in this paper that the historical reflections and retrievals which Heidegger inspires are also fatal for his representation of the history of metaphysics.

II.

The Ironic Connection between Neoplatonism and Heidegger's Influence. For much of the philosophical and theological world in the greater part of the last century, Heidegger both inspired positively and negatively the study of the history of philosophy and theology and also motivated various retrievals of moments from its past. Asking about this inspiration produces a paradoxical question: How it is that Heidegger's *Seinsfrage* did so much to inspire both the study and the retrieval of Neoplatonism while negatively misrepresenting it (mostly by neglecting its specific character)? Philosophers, theologians, and scholars either presented Platonism and its history in order to reveal the faults of Heidegger's account, or they turned to Neoplatonism, having accepted Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as onto-theology, in order to find an alternative way for Western philosophy, theology, and religion. Our understanding of Aquinas was much affected and tends to fall within a few alternatives: (1) Either these Neoplatonisms emerged in opposition to Thomism as the exemplar of the worst onto-theological metaphysics; (2) or, alternatively, Aquinas' own thought was reinterpreted in a Neoplatonic fashion, using his connection to the Pseudo-Dionysius in order to turn the thought of Aquinas into a negative theology, so as to make it appear as the very opposite of such ontological Thomism; (3) or, in a more balanced approach, Aquinas' thought was located with respect to a Platonic henology, on the one hand, and to an Aristotelian "metaphysics of pure being," on the other hand, both constructions of a history of metaphysics rethought through Neoplatonism.⁴ Whichever of these

⁴ See E. Tourpe, "Thomas et la modernité. Un point de vue spéculatif sur l'histoire de la métaphysique thomiste," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 85/3 (July 2001): 433–60; Wayne J. Hankey, "Le rôle du néoplatonisme dans les tentatives postmodernes

paths is taken in our time, Heidegger, the Neoplatonists, and Aquinas are intimately connected. Increasingly, however, the aim is not to make Aquinas or Neoplatonism conform to what Heidegger's history of metaphysics and onto-theology would require, but in contrast, to call the Heideggerian history itself, and the alternative fundamental philosophy to which it belongs, into question.

Our view of history is emerging out from under Heidegger's profoundly restricting horizon. Not the least of the signs of this development was the vector of the remarkable conjunction of philosophical, theological, historical, and philological work put together at Université Laval in 1998 for the twenty-seventh Congrès de l'Association des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française, whose complete proceedings were published in 2000.⁵ Subsequent to this congress, and drawing upon a good many of the communications given there, Jean-Marc Narbonne's *Hénologie, Ontologie et Ereignis (Plotin-Proclus-Heidegger)* appeared.⁶

d'échapper à l'onto-théologie," in *La métaphysique: son histoire, sa critique, ses enjeux. Actes du XXVII^e Congrès de l'Association des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française*, ed. Luc Langlois and Jean-Marc Narbonne (Paris: Vrin; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000), 36–43; idem, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold and Postmodern Hot," in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, ed. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), 139–84, at 139–64; idem, "Dionysian Hierarchy in St. Thomas Aquinas: Tradition and Transformation," in *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident. Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 151*, ed. Ysabel de Andia (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 405–38, at 405–16.

⁵ *La métaphysique: son histoire, sa critique, ses enjeux. Actes du XXVII^e Congrès de l'Association des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française*, ed. Luc Langlois and Jean-Marc Narbonne (Paris: Vrin; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000). The plenary sessions of this conference were published initially in a separate volume one year earlier under the same title. See *La métaphysique: son histoire, sa critique, ses enjeux*, ed. Luc Langlois and Jean-Marc Narbonne, Collection Zétésis (Paris: Vrin; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1999).

⁶ Jean-Marc Narbonne, *Hénologie, Ontologie et Ereignis (Plotin-Proclus-Heidegger)*, L'âne d'or (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2001). See also idem, "Heidegger et le néoplatonisme," *Heidegger e i medievali/Heidegger et la pensée médiévale/Heidegger und das mittelalterliche*

Narbonne considers henological Neoplatonism—primarily through texts of Plotinus and Proclus—and the other great Western tradition of philosophical theology emerging from antiquity, the ontological. This “metaphysics of pure being,” or a “negative theology of being,” which also has its origins with Parmenides and Plato, is associated with Aristotle. However, in the theologies of late antiquity (Christian and pagan), of the Arabic and Latin Middle Ages, and of the Renaissance, Aristotle was rethought in a Neoplatonic context by way of the very widespread doctrine of the First Principle as pure being, *einai* or *esse*, which probably originates in Porphyry’s modification of Plotinus.⁷ Narbonne chiefly treats its development through texts of Pico della Mirandola and Thomas Aquinas. Throughout his work, he critically examines both

Denken/Heidegger and Medieval Thought, Atti del Colloquio Internazionale Cassino 10–13 maggio 2000, ed. Costantino Esposito and Pasquale Porro, in *Quaestio* 1 (2001): 55–82 (for a review of this issue of *Quaestio* and an important gathering of criticism of the Heideggerian history, see R. Imbach, “Heidegger et la philosophie médiévale,” *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 49 [2002]: 426–34); Narbonne, “EPEKEINA THS GNWSEWS, le savoir d’au-delà à savoir chez Plotin et dans la tradition néoplatonicienne,” in *Metaphysik und Religion : Zur Signatur des spätantiken Denkens*, ed. Theo Kobusch and Michael Erler, (Munich/Leipzig: K. G. Saur, 2001), 477–90; idem, “‘Henôsis’ et ‘Ereignis’: Remarques sur une interprétation heideggérienne de l’Un plotinien,” *Les Études philosophiques* (1999): 108–21; idem, “Aristote et la question de l’être en tant qu’être. Réflexions à propos de *The Question of Being* of S. Rosen,” *Archives de Philosophie* 60 (1997): 5–24. Narbonne is in dialogue with Reiner Schürmann, “L’hénologie comme dépassement de la métaphysique,” *Les Études philosophiques* (1982): 331–50.

⁷ On historical and philosophical foundations laid by Pierre Hadot and Pierre Aubenque, see, for example, Mark D. Jordan, “The Grammar of *Esse*,” *The Thomist* 44 (1980): 1–26; W. J. Hankey, “Aquinas’ First Principle, Being or Unity?” *Dionysius* 4 (1980): 133–72; K. Corrigan, “A Philosophical Precursor to the Theory of Essence and Existence in St. Thomas Aquinas,” *The Thomist* 48 (1984): 219–40; A. de Libera and C. Michon, *L’Être et l’Essence. Le vocabulaire médiéval de l’ontologie. Deux traités De ente et essentia de Thomas d’Aquin et Dietrich de Freiberg* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 29–36; and D. Bradshaw, “Neoplatonic Origins of the Act of Being,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 53 (1999): 383–401.

Heidegger's representation and assessment of the history of metaphysics, as well as his *Ereignis* as an alternative account of the foundation.

Crucially, and in contrast to the character of very many earlier studies in the last sixty years, Thomas' theology is illuminated within the poles of Narbonne's monograph, because it adopts a critical relation to Heidegger's representation of the history of metaphysics, to his judgments about its onto-theological structure, and to his alternative foundation, which justifies the judgments. Narbonne is explicit—and in my view he is correct—that, in a significant way, the structure of Thomas' theology is onto-theological. Moreover, he concedes that even the henological Neoplatonic systems have a “katholou-prôtologique” metaphysical structure. Despite all the endeavors to mark the difference between the First Principle and all else, it remains a separate, subsistent, and universal cause. The questions are, (1) as between systems, whether one or another is fatally metaphysical because it reduces the Principle to rational intelligibility; (2) whether for theology or metaphysics to be onto-theological is fatal; and (3) whether the perspective from which these judgments are made is adequate. If these questions are not asked, and if Thomas' theology is represented so as to deny its onto-theological structure, or adjusted so as to escape Heidegger's criticism—tactics adopted by many—his teaching is badly distorted. Further, by such tactics Heidegger's philosophy and the history which belongs to it are further entrenched as unquestionable assumptions. The same can be said when henological systems are retrieved, as they often are at present, so as to conform to the alternative Heideggerian “metaphysics.” Then, the step-by-step Neoplatonic mediations through which we rise to the One via soul and mind, and through which it descends by the same ways, are reduced to immediate actions by the absolute ground. The post-Heideggerian theologies of Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, John Milbank, and Catherine Pickstock have this character, even if they would not identify themselves with henological Neoplatonism.

Narbonne shows beyond doubt that Heidegger misinterpreted Neoplatonism. With violent hands he forced it within a history of the confusion of Being with beings, a forgetting of the difference which, for him, was given a definitive and fatal form by Plato. By Heidegger's account, in Plato, Being is given in true or universal being, in the idea or form, in what is present for thought and can really be known. The universal exists separately from particulars, which are in the realm of becoming; these particulars both are and are not. In these two kinds of beings, universal and particular, and in their relations, Being is exhausted. Transcendence, even the

transcendence of the Good beyond thought and being, is no more than the transcendence of universal true being in respect to the particular. Whether or not this is an adequate interpretation of Plato, it is without doubt a misrepresentation of Plotinus and his successors, for whom the transcendence of the One in respect to *Nous* is of an altogether different kind than the transcendence of the universal, the truly knowable object of thought, in respect to the sensible particular.

This difference is evident to those who approach Neoplatonic texts through more than sixty years of scholarship in which this difference is the one most emphasized. The same emphasis is present in the philosophy and theology which belongs to, receives, motivates, and comprehends these scholarly results. In consequence, Emmanuel Levinas, commenting on the *Enneads*, can write: “The unity of the One excludes, in effect, all multiplicity, whether it be that which takes shape already in the distinction between thinker and thought or even in the identity of the identical conceived under the guise of self-consciousness where, in the history of philosophy, one will go someday to find it.”⁸ Levinas, as Jacques Derrida also recognized, can write this in virtue of a moment which Derrida described as “the dawn of a new Platonism, which is the day after the death of Hegelianism.”⁹ Paradoxically, this dawn, which required

⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, “De l’un à l’autre: transcendance et temps,” in idem, *Entre nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l’autre* (Paris: Grasset, 1991), 143: “L’unité de l’Un exclut, en effet, toute multiplicité, fut-celle qui se dessine déjà dans la distinction entre pensant et pensé, et même dans l’identité de l’identique conçue en guise de conscience de soi où, dans l’histoire de la philosophie, on ira, un jour, la chercher.” See Eli Diamond, “Hegel on Being and Nothing: Some Contemporary Neoplatonic and Sceptical Responses,” *Dionysius* 18 (2000): 183–216, at 196–8; and Jean-Marc Narbonne, “L’héritage de l’*epekeina* dans la pensée d’Emmanuel Levinas,” in *New Images of Plato, Dialogues on the Idea of the Good*, ed. Giovanni Reale and Samuel Scolnicov (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 2002), 333–46 and idem, *Lévinas et L’héritage Grec*, suivi de *Cent Ans De Néoplatonisme En France: Une Brève Histoire Philosophique*, by Wayne Hankey (Paris/Québec, Collection Zêtêsis, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin/Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 2004).

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *La dissémination* (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 1972), 122–3; and Pierre Aubenque, “Plotin et le dépassement de l’ontologie grecque classique,” in *Le néoplatonisme*

overcoming the Hegelian interpretation of the One as the self-conscious *Nous* of Aristotle simplified, is in great part owed to the Heidegger who misrepresented Neoplatonism. The greatest fault of Heidegger's history is to have looked at Plato and Aristotle through Hegel. Those inspired by him have brought about the difference he neglected.

The quest for Being to which Heidegger would awaken us by showing the difference of Being from beings requires that the language of negation be given a positive import. Being *is* not, Being is not defined as the object for thought, and Being is unspeakable within the structures of objectifying speech. Being does not stand alongside beings even as their cause so as to become one among them. Heidegger's quest became or expressed the quest of many for whom metaphysics had become the objectifying rationality which expressed or caused our blindness. In fact, Heidegger's quest awakened philosophers and theologians to the character of the Neoplatonic One or Good. After this recognition, they became free also to see that, in virtue of his misinterpretation of Neoplatonism and its tradition within Western metaphysics, Heidegger's account of the fatal history of the Occidental forgetting of Being was mortally defective. In consequence, we witness in Narbonne's historical studies, and others like them, an understanding of the transcendence of the One/Good enabled by Heidegger's quest for Being. Now, however, the heuristic framework is itself overturned. Philosophy, which requires an account of its history as essential to its own construction, is also creatively overcome by the historical undermining of the very universal judgments which made it philosophy and history simultaneously.

III.

When does the Death of God begin? The heading for this section is intended to suggest that of one of Heidegger's important treatments of the history of metaphysics: "The Word of

(Royaumont 9–13 juin 1969), Colloques internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche scientifique, Sciences humaines (Paris: CNRS, 1971), 101–8, at 108, where Aubenque refers to *De la grammatologie*, which had just appeared in 1967, noting that Derrida's deconstruction as "dépassement de la métaphysique" "finds its exact prefiguration in Neoplatonism."

Nietzsche: ‘God Is Dead’.”¹⁰ This paper, which was delivered in 1943 and published in *Holzwege* in 1952, does not, by Heidegger’s own account, give either his fully developed understanding of metaphysics or of its history. For these we need at least “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” in *Identität und Differenz*.¹¹ I also use treatments of the “end of philosophy” from his works collected in the Nietzsche volumes and from *Vorträge und Aufsätze*.¹² *Identität und Differenz* was published in 1957, and Heidegger regarded it as the most important of his works since *Sein und Zeit*. In *Heidegger’s Atheism*, Laurence Hemming uses recently published lecture notes to show that, far earlier than 1943, Heidegger was treating the history of metaphysics, its onto-theological structure, and the consequences for the West of the union of Christianity with metaphysics as onto-theology. The specification of the structure of metaphysics as onto-theological, and a preoccupation with the effects of the Christianization of God within that context, seem to begin in 1928 and to continue through the 1930s.¹³ Hemming maintains that the later treatments are consistent with the earlier ones. Nonetheless, there are important developments, at least in the form of specifications and precisions.

In the present situation, where I regard philosophy, theology, and religion as being on the verge of having overcome Heidegger’s “history,” and passing into the twenty-first century—the twentieth having been dominated by him—the precisions in the later essays are crucial. One of the strategies for gaining freedom from Heidegger’s history has been to specify the criteria of onto-theology precisely. Although this strategy accepts the criticism of metaphysics implicit in the category, it finds that most of the history of Western thought, certainly its ancient or

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God Is Dead’,” in idem, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 53–112.

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” in idem, *Identity and Difference*, trans. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 42–76.

¹² Important essays, taken from volume II of *Nietzsche* (published in 1961) and from *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (1954), are found in *The End of Philosophy*, trans. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

¹³ See Laurence Paul Hemming, *Heidegger’s Atheism: The Refusal of a Theological Voice* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 18–20, 109, 184.

medieval history, does not fulfill the criteria. It is only fulfilled by post-Scotistic philosophy and theology, especially as developed by Suárez. Heidegger himself mentions Suárez more than once in this context,¹⁴ and Oliva Blanchette proposes that Heidegger ought to join himself to Wolff, Kant, and Hegel “when he wrote of Suárez as ‘putting the ontological problems into a systematic form for the first time, a form which determined a classification of metaphysics which lasted through subsequent centuries ...’.”¹⁵ Scotus is crucial because of his doctrine, adopted against Aquinas, of the univocity of being; Suárez reduces the science of God to a category within ontology.¹⁶ In sum, Heidegger is judged as a thinker in the succession of Wolff, and as

¹⁴ In “Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins” (1941), translated in *The End of Philosophy*, and in *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik* (1929)—on this point, see Hemming, *Heidegger’s Atheism*, 194–5 n. 41.

¹⁵ Oliva Blanchette, “Suárez and the Latent Essentialism of Heidegger’s Fundamental Ontology,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 53 (1999): 3–19, at 3.

¹⁶ For the strict specification of the criteria of metaphysics as onto-theology, see Jean-Luc Marion, “Saint Thomas d’Aquin et l’onto-théo-logie,” *Revue thomiste* 95/1 (1995): 31–66; for the argument that the move by Scotus is crucial to fulfilling it, see Olivier Boulnois, “Quand commence l’ontothéologie? Aristote, Thomas d’Aquin et Duns Scot,” *Revue thomiste*, 95/1 (1995): 85–108; on the role of Suárez, Jean-François Courtine, *Suarez et le système de la métaphysique*, Épipiméthée (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990) is classic; for a survey of the literature, see Robert Miner, “Suárez as Founder of Modernity: Reflections on a *topos* in recent Historiography,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 18/1 (2000): 17–35; on Descartes and the transition to modern onto-theology generally, see Jean-Luc Marion, “The Idea of God,” in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayres, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 265–304; idem, *On Descartes’ Metaphysical Prism: The Constitution and the Limits of Onto-theo-logy in Cartesian Thought*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 128–42; for an analysis, see Paul DeHart, “The Ambiguous Infinite: Jünger, Marion, and the God of Descartes,” *The Journal of Religion* 82/1 (2002): 75–96; as with Marion, John Milbank and others, Hemming, *Heidegger’s Atheism*, 198–99, blames Suárez for producing a metaphysical Thomism which is fatally onto-theological; the historical judgment is fundamentally that of Gilson. On

misrepresenting the history of metaphysics by seeing it in terms of structures only developed in the later Middle Ages and modernity. This judgment allows for the retrieval of pre-modern metaphysics. So far as it involves accusing Heidegger of understanding the rest of the history through its Hegelian conclusion, it will be repeated again and again.

IV.

Heidegger's Judgments. Primary, both for Heidegger and for those attracted to his thought and to his “history” of metaphysics, is his analysis of the metaphysics of our world as one in which “[t]he earth itself can show itself only as the object of assault, an assault that, in human willing, establishes itself as unconditional objectification. Nature appears everywhere—because willed from out of the essence of Being—as the object of technology.”¹⁷ His history of metaphysics both explains how this came to be and gives the alternative, in the way that we feel it, that is, not as present and active in our reality, but as hidden by it. The “history” is told and accepted as the representation of the past which belongs to how we perceive our world. Thus, this “history” belongs to our world and is itself a form of our objectification of the world. Insofar as Heidegger’s “history” can be shown to lack theoretical truth and contemplative detachment, we thereby also come to know that there is something more in our world than Heidegger understood. We can agree with Heidegger that history is part of our present. The struggle about

Malebranche, see Jean-Christophe Bardout, *Malebranche et la métaphysique*, Épipiméthée (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999). For outlines of the developing new consensus, see my “Self-Knowledge and God as Other in Augustine: Problems for a Postmodern Retrieval,” *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 4 (1999): 83–127. For a critical consideration of the account of the supposed Scotist and Ockhamist rupture in the relations of metaphysics and theology by Radical Orthodoxy, of its adequacy as an account of the history of philosophy, and of its usefulness for dealing with Heidegger’s onto-theological reading of philosophy, see Adrian Pabst, “De la chrétienté à la modernité? Lecture critique des thèses de *Radical Orthodoxy* sur la rupture scotiste et ockhamienne et sur le renouveau de la théologie de saint Thomas d’Aquin,” *Revue des sciences théologiques et philosophiques* 86 (2002): 561–99.

¹⁷ Heidegger, “The Word of Nietzsche,” 100.

how history is to be told is a struggle about our present and its possibilities. Equally, so far as this history is a reductive distortion, it reinforces a fatal entrapment in our self-objectification. It would be naïve and wrong simply to oppose Heidegger's "history" with "objective" history, as if it were known in some neutral a-historical vision. It would be equally wrong either to diminish Heidegger's achievement by refusing to dispute the interpretation of texts and the shape of the history with him—as if his judgments were only those of prophet or poet—or to elevate his understanding of our present and thus our past as beyond supplement and correction.¹⁸

Crucial to Heidegger's history is a move from substance to subjectivity as characterizing the move from the ancient to the modern metaphysics; for example, "the change of *idea* from *eidos* to *perceptio*."¹⁹ This change is associated by Heidegger with Descartes and Leibniz. Placing the change where he does is important to Heidegger's argument because it becomes the basis of the shift to the will to power as the consummation of modernity. Those who follow Heidegger in his characterization of modernity, but who want to retrieve pre-modern forms of philosophy or theology (or both)—people like Jean-Luc Marion and John Milbank and their many fellows—also want to place this move as late as possible. As a matter of fact, the shifts to the subject as the fulcrum, and to *perceptio* as constitutive of reality, occur already in late antiquity and are fundamental to Neoplatonism, both pagan and Christian (for the latter see especially Boethius and Eriugena). Discovering this locus of Heidegger's blindness to the actual history helps to identify where problems with the history overall will be found.

It is crucial to remember that the move to the subject is already a development within antiquity, and is essential to the skeptical schools which are only answered by the Neoplatonists

¹⁸ On this problem in the works of Heidegger's postmodern heirs, see my "Between and Beyond Augustine and Descartes: More than a Source of the Self," *Augustinian Studies* 32/1 (2001): 65–88, idem, "The Postmodern Retrieval of Neoplatonism in Jean-Luc Marion and John Milbank and the Origins of Western Subjectivity in Augustine and Eriugena," *Hermathena* 165 (Winter 1998): 9–70, and "'Poets tell many a Lie': Radical Orthodoxy's Poetic Histories," *Canadian Evangelical Review: Journal of the Canadian Evangelical Theological Society* 26-27 (2004): 35–64. On Heidegger's history as "l'historialisme destinal," see D. Janicaud, *L'ombre de cette pensée, Heidegger et la politique* (Grenoble: J. Millon, 1990), 131.

¹⁹ Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," 72.

so far as they proceed to God and the world from within the self. This turn to the subject, and to objective reality as fundamentally determined by the perspectives of diverse subjects, is fundamental to Neoplatonism, and to the philosophies and philosophical theologies of its Jewish, Islamic, and Christian heirs, even those called “Aristotelian.”²⁰ Philosophy, as the care of the self, and its *exercices spirituels* are inherited from the Platonists and Stoics by the Christians; they become essential to the orientation of Christianity to personal salvation, and they are its spiritual means.²¹

There is a similar problem with Heidegger’s treatment of subjectivity, Being, self-knowledge, and will.²² Within an Augustinian treatment of being as ultimately a moment in the Trinitarian self, love or will is final and unites being and thought. Within Aquinas’ more Proclean logic, we move from simple being as incorporeal, completely returned upon (or present to) itself as knowing, and then, as its own good, related to itself as self-willing (Aquinas’ logic in the questions on the divine being, knowing, and willing in the *Summa Theologiae*).²³ Here again the whole is summarized and gathered up in will. Thus, Heidegger’s judgment on modernity—

²⁰ See my “The Postmodern Retrieval of Neoplatonism”; “Self-Knowledge and God”; “Between and Beyond Augustine and Descartes”; “*Secundum rei vim vel secundum cognoscentium facultatem*: Knower and Known in the *Consolation of Philosophy* of Boethius and the *Proslogion* of Anselm,” in *Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition in Islam, Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John Inglis (Richmond, England: Curzon Press, 2002), 126–50; and “Aquinas and the Platonists,” in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach*, ed. Stephen Gersh and Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen, with the assistance of Pieter Th. van Wingerden (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2002), 279–324, at 308–9 and 321–2.

²¹ See Pierre Hadot, “La fin du paganisme,” reprinted in idem, *Études de philosophie ancienne*, L’ane d’or (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1998), 341–74; “Exercices spirituels antiques et ‘philosophie chrétienne’,” in idem, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1981), 59–74; and my “Philosophy as Way of Life for Christians? Iamblichan and Porphyrian Reflections on Religion, Virtue, and Philosophy in Thomas Aquinas,” *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 52/2 (2003): 193–224.

²² See Heidegger, “The Word of Nietzsche,” 88.

²³ See my “*Theoria versus Poiêsis*” (cited in n. 3 above), 401–6.

“in the subjectness of the subject, will comes to appearance as the essence of subjectness”²⁴—applies to what is far earlier. The only activity Plotinus will ascribe to the One is love or free will: “And he, that same self, is lovable and love and love of himself . . .” (*Ennead* 8.8.15). Therefore, once we take Neoplatonism into account, there is a problem with Heidegger’s formulation: “Modern metaphysics, as the metaphysics of subjectness, thinks the Being of what is in the sense of will.”²⁵ It is difficult to know how or why Heidegger takes this feature as peculiar to modern thought. No doubt both subjectivity and will have different characteristics in different epochs, but if the shape of Heidegger’s history is wrong, then we will not accurately understand our own situation through it.

Largely, but not exclusively, the most effective criticism of Heidegger’s “history” of metaphysics is that it leaves out Neoplatonism. Significantly, the **Being** of Heidegger, of everything else in the history of philosophy, most resembles the Neoplatonic One or Good. Pierre Hadot’s work on Neoplatonism, like that of Jean Trouillard, Henry Duméry, and Joseph Combès—“la triade néo-platonicienne de France” (to quote Stanislas Breton, who makes it a quadrilateral)²⁶—was in part inspired by Heidegger.²⁷ Hadot writes one of the first criticisms of Heidegger’s treatment of Platonism in the course of judging both that Heidegger is “the prophet of this end of Platonism, which is at the same time, the end of a world” and that “one might be tempted to interpret the thought of Heidegger as a kind of neo-Platonism.”²⁸ By demanding of philosophy and theology that it rediscover the difference hidden in the difference, Heidegger has been the greatest stimulus to the contemporary retrieval of Neoplatonism.

²⁴ Heidegger, “The Word of Nietzsche,” 88.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Stanislas Breton, *De Rome à Paris. Itinéraire philosophique* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1992), 152–3.

²⁷ See Pierre Hadot, *La philosophie comme manière de vivre. Entretiens avec Jeanne Carlier et Arnold I. Davidson* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001), 44, 47, 171, 204–5.

²⁸ Pierre Hadot, “Heidegger et Plotin,” *Critique* 15 (1959): 539–56, at 540–42: “le prophète de cette fin du platonisme, qui est, en même temps, la fin d’un monde . . . on pourrait être tenté d’interpréter la pensée de Heidegger comme une sorte de *néo-platonisme*.”

In the essay “The Word of Nietzsche,” metaphysics is characterized as “the fundamental structuring of that which is, as a whole, insofar as that whole is differentiated into a sensory and a suprasensory world and the former is supported and determined by the latter.”²⁹ This is too general and does not specify what Heidegger judges as peculiar to and fateful for the West.³⁰ A more adequate treatment is found in “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics” where the dialogue is with Hegel, Being is given over to thought and history together, and the essence of metaphysics is to render being and God accountable to the *logos* or science at once, and thus to make both of them intelligible and for the subject. It is significant that the shift from an account of Neoplatonism which stands within such a history to one which stands against it, has a crucial turning point in the work of A. M. J. Festugière, work which opposes that of his Hegelian teacher Émile Bréhier. The postmodern retrievals of Neoplatonism by such figures as Levinas and Marion belong in the wake of Festugière with his work on theurgic Neoplatonism, where the Principle, transcendent beyond thought and being, is approached religiously and evades all reduction to concept.³¹ When, as in “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” Heidegger is looking at Hegel, we must ask whether the structure discovered here can in truth be applied to the earlier history. Pierre Aubenque concludes :

What seems truly to render impossible the application to Aristotelianism of the onto-theological schema resides in ... two fundamental propositions ... that (1) “Being is said in many ways” and (2) “Being is not a genus.”³²

²⁹ Heidegger, “The Word of Nietzsche,” 65.

³⁰ See Jean-François Courtine, “Heidegger et saint Thomas d’Aquin,” *Quaestio* 1 (2001): 213–33, at 218.

³¹ See my “Le rôle du néoplatonisme”; and “Neoplatonism and Contemporary Constructions and Deconstructions of Modern Subjectivity,” in *Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull*, ed. David G. Peddle and Neil G. Robertson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 250–78, and my *Cent Ans De Néoplatonisme En France: Une Brève Histoire Philosophique*, published with Narbonne, *Levinas et L’héritage Grec* (cited in n. 8 above), 185-191.

³² Pierre Aubenque, “La question de l’ontothéologie chez Aristote et Hegel,” in *La question de dieu selon Aristote et Hegel*, ed. Thomas de Koninck and Guy Planty-Bonjour (Paris: Presses

We may use this judgment as a way of passage to the consideration of how well Heidegger's "history" deals with Plato and Aristotle.

V.

Criticisms of the Account of Platonism in the "History." As indicated above, the most fundamental criticism of Heidegger's "history" arises from the development of a new understanding of Platonism generally,³³ and of Neoplatonism specifically, together with fundamentals of its theology and religious approaches, undertaken in opposition to Hegel (as is also Heidegger's "The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics"). The result is an account of beings in their relation to Being, and of what is beyond both, which resembles as well as sharply differs from, Heidegger's. However, there is no rapprochement from Heidegger's side.

In "The Word of Nietzsche," Heidegger's treatment of the Platonic allegory of the sun renders the sun as what "forms and circumscribes the field of vision wherein that which is as such shows itself."³⁴ He moves on to maintain that modernity absorbs this horizon into subjectivity. Neoplatonism opposes exactly this. The Good is the very opposite of a horizon which the rational or intellectual self can grasp. The Neoplatonic doctrine of the transcendent One has a basis in Plato's Good as the *epekeina* of the *Republic* and in the One-Nonbeing of the *Parmenides*, even if it does, nonetheless, go beyond Plato. It depends upon a hermeneutic of Platonic dialogues which specifically characterizes Neoplatonism, where the Good and the One

universitaires de France, 1991), 259–83, at 281: "Ce qui semble bien rendre impossible l'application à l'aristotélisme du schéma ontothéologique réside dans ... deux propositions fondamentales que 1/ «L'être se dit en plusieurs sens»; 2/ «L'être n'est pas un genre»."

³³ See Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonisme et idéalisme*, revised and corrected edition with a new postface, trans. Marie-Christine Chailiot-Gillet, Jean-François Courtine, and Pascal David, *Histoire de la philosophie* (Paris: Vrin, 2000). Beierwaltes lies behind Narbonne's *Hénologie, Ontologie et Ereignis*, having devoted himself to an account of Platonism which freed it from Heidegger's history.

³⁴ Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," 106–7.

non-being are identified. The great problem for henological Neoplatonism is to prevent the construal of the non-being of the One as non-subsistence, making it nothing—rather than no particular thing—and, thus, depriving it of separateness. Henologists are driven from one paradox to another in order to prevent the One from becoming a being without its thereby becoming nothing. Some of the paradoxes involved are like those used by Heidegger in trying to raise the question of a universal ground not constituted in the forgetting of difference between Being and beings. The anxiety that prevents the Neoplatonic ascent to what appears to be nothing resembles the anxiety that, according to Heidegger, prevents our recollecting the ground of the ontic. The One and Good is not a being at the top of an ontological chain.³⁵

While Heidegger represents Plato's teaching in a way which the Neoplatonists would oppose, he shares with Neoplatonists an insensitivity to the character of Plato's writing, turning the dialogues into doctrinal treatises. In general, there is a very remarkable opposition between the importance which Plato has for Heidegger's history and his lack of attention both to the content and to the method of Plato's teaching. Francisco Gonzalez demonstrates that Heidegger never rectified his initial interpretations in which a phenomenological stance assumed the superiority of Aristotelian theory that had access to the things themselves. In this perspective, Heidegger denigrated the dialectic of the dialogues as "philosophical embarrassment," and set up an opposition between *theoria* and dialectic that makes the dialogues unintelligible.³⁶ Significantly, Gonzalez reaches a conclusion which echoes Aubenque's: "Heidegger as usual makes no effort to think through the great differences between Plato's dialectic and Hegel's."³⁷ In antiquity, the elevation of the One and Good does not make the gods disappear, by means of the reductionism of a demythologizing science, into an intellectual horizon which can then be

³⁵ On this generally, see Narbonne's *Hénologie, Ontologie et Ereignis*. For specific criticism of Heidegger's treatment of the Cave analogy, see the bibliography in Francisco J. Gonzalez, "Dialectic as 'Philosophical Embarrassment': Heidegger's Critique of Plato's Method," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 40/3 (2002): 361–89, at 376 n. 41.

³⁶ Gonzalez, "Dialectic as 'Philosophical Embarrassment'," and idem, "On the Way to Sophia: Heidegger on Plato's Dialectic, Ethics, and Sophist," *Research in Phenomenology* 27 (1997): 16–60.

³⁷ Gonzalez, "Dialectic as 'Philosophical Embarrassment'," 383.

surpassed by the human as subject. Rather, it maintains them as the omnipresent intermediaries by which we are opened to the universal presence and activity of the One within and without.³⁸ It is of great importance for my thesis that, in a different manner, the gods do not disappear either in the face of the Platonic forms and of Aristotle's metaphysical theology. I will say a word about Aristotle in a moment, but here we must note not only the religious interest in the revival of henological Neoplatonism in our days, but also, with the reassessment of the diverse roles of myth and religion in the writings of Plato, the return of the gods in a great multitude of forms.³⁹ Beyond the host of Hellenic teachers in the henological tradition from the second to the sixth centuries, we need to remind ourselves of a few of the later Western metaphysicians in this tradition so that we do not suppose that it is either a dead or a marginal way of philosophizing: Boethius, Dionysius, Eriugena, Bonaventure, Eckhart, the mystics of the Rhineland (for example, Berthold of Moosburg), Cusanus, Ficino, etc.⁴⁰

VI.

Criticisms of the Account of Aristotelianism in the "History." Some account must be given of the efforts (generally effective, or at least effective in sum) to rehabilitate ontology and the Aristotelian tradition of metaphysics, so that Aristotle himself, and his followers like al-

³⁸ See the "Liminaire" by Segonds, in *Proclus et la théologie platonicienne. Actes du Colloque International de Louvain (13–16 mai 1998) en l'honneur de H. D. Saffrey et L. G. Westerink*, ed. A. Ph. Segonds and C. Steel, Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, Series I, 26 (Louvain: Leuven University Press; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2000), ix–xxvi, at xix–xxi, directed against Hegel's judgment that later Neoplatonism was religiously dead.

³⁹ George Leroux's conference on "Mythologie et philosophie chez Platon" (given at the colloquium on *La philosophie et la question de Dieu. Histoire, développement, perspectives*, Université Laval in April, 2003), developed in dialogue with recent work by Luc Brisson, is typical. The conference will be published in the proceedings of the colloquium.

⁴⁰ There are lists at Narbonne, *Hénologie, Ontologie et Ereignis*, 236, and Jean-François Courtine, "Métaphysique et onto-théologie," in *La métaphysique: son histoire, sa critique, ses enjeux* (1999, cited in n. 5 above), 137–57, at 157.

Fārābī, Moses Maimonides, Aquinas, and Pico della Mirandola may also stand as witnesses against Heidegger's "history." I note some of the points made.

First there are all the questions, treated in Werner Jaeger's classic, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development*, concerning whether the *Metaphysics*, which acquired its name after Aristotle from the editors of his corpus, and originally designated only the ensemble of treatises which come "after the physical treatises," is a unified science. Is there, in fact, a unity of a science of causes, of being as being, and of god in this ensemble? Further, when to the question of the unity of metaphysics is explicitly added the problem (by Moses Maimonides or Aquinas or Schelling, for example) that the revealed knowledge of God is of a different genus than "the theology which is part of philosophy," can we speak of onto-theology?⁴¹

This problem can be approached from the divine side when we ask what Aristotle meant by god. Heidegger's "history" assumes that we can make a transition from Aristotle's theology to the theologies of the transcendent divinity of the religions of "the Book," and that the Hellenic gods are reduced to the self-thinking thought of Book Lambda. Richard Bodéüs has made these assumptions questionable in his *Aristote et la théologie des vivants immortels*, and other recent scholarship takes the same course.⁴²

⁴¹ On these questions see Jean-Luc Marion, "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'onto-théologie"; idem, "La science toujours recherchée et toujours manquante," in *La métaphysique: son histoire, sa critique, ses enjeux* (1999, cited in n. 5 above), 13–36; Jean-François Courtine, "Métaphysique et onto-théologie," which gives a detailed consideration of the debate between Jaeger and Heidegger; idem, "La critique schellingienne de l'ontothéologie," in *La question de dieu selon Aristote et Hegel* (cited in n. 32 above), 217–57, especially 226–7; and my "Why Philosophy Abides for Aquinas," *Heythrop Journal* 42/3 (2001): 329–48, at 341–5.

⁴² See Richard Bodéüs, *Aristote et la théologie des vivants immortels* (Montréal: Bellarmin, 1992), English: *The Theology of the Living Immortals*, trans. Jan Garrett (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000); Enrico Berti, "Y a-t-il une théologie d'Aristote," for the colloquium *La philosophie et la question de Dieu. Histoire, développement, perspectives*, Université Laval (April 2003), developed in the dialogue with Bodéüs. Similar problems will be unavoidable for readers of

Another problem, related to the preceding ones, has to do with the late appearance of the term “metaphysics.” Luc Brisson has occupied himself with this. His article “Un si long anonymat” shows that “[t]he first passage where a term presenting the form *μεταφυσικ-* is presumed to appear is in Basil of Caesarea (A.D. 330–379),” and concludes: “In speaking of ‘metaphysics’ in order to invoke an area of philosophy in ancient Greece, we project from the first moment of play a modern interpretation on the subjects which we tackle.”⁴³ This we might use as our conclusion regarding Heidegger’s whole “history” of metaphysics.

If Aristotle’s theology is not that of Aquinas, so that any onto-theology which might try to embrace the two would be an equivocation, the same holds within medieval philosophy itself. This is the conclusion of Alain de Libera’s article “Genèse et structure des métaphysiques médiévales.” He maintains that we can be open to the diversity of the metaphysical structures in the period only by liberating our minds “de l’horizon de l’onto-théologie.”⁴⁴

Finally, there is the character of the First Principle in this tradition which treats *esse* as “pure act.” In a crucial article distinguishing ontology and henology and tracing both back to the Neoplatonists (the ontological tradition is regarded as having its origin in the anonymous commentary on the *Parmenides* attributed by its editor, Pierre Hadot, to Porphyry), Pierre Aubenque designated the ontology with which the Aristotelian tradition becomes merged as a negative theology of being.⁴⁵ In a series of articles, Pierre Hadot sketched how this negative theology of being as pure act, designated by the infinitive “to be” (*einai*, or *esse*), is transmitted

Aristotle’s Metaphysics Lambda. Symposium Aristotelicum, ed. M. Frede and D. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

⁴³ Luc Brisson, “Un si long anonymat,” in *La métaphysique: son histoire, sa critique, ses enjeux* (1999, cited in n. 5 above), 37–60, at 38 and 54.

⁴⁴ Alain de Libera, “Genèse et structure des métaphysiques médiévales,” in *La métaphysique: son histoire, sa critique, ses enjeux* (1999, cited in n. 5 above), 159–81, at 181; see also R. Imbach, “Heidegger et la philosophie médiévale,” *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 49 (2002): 426–34.

⁴⁵ See Aubenque, “Plotin et le dépassement de l’ontologie grecque classique” (cited in n. 9 above).

to the Latin metaphysical tradition.⁴⁶ The net result in figures like Aquinas, who follows Iamblichus, Syrianus, Proclus, Simplicius, and the Arabs in unifying the Peripatetic and Neoplatonic modes of thinking, is that the First, although named *esse* rather than the One, is not at all a being in the ontological chain, and is equally strongly distinguished from *ens commune*, the common or universal being. The first name given it is “simplicity” and we cannot know what it is, but only what it is not. No more than the Neoplatonic One is this a God which will render Being or beings graspable and disposable.⁴⁷ This is not metaphysics on the way to the will to power but in opposition to it.

VII.

Where we are. It is clear that the French philosophical world, which so long labored within the horizon of Heidegger’s “history” of metaphysics as onto-theology, is now accomplishing a *dépassement*.⁴⁸ Because that French world is ultimately so intimately self-involved, we are able to observe changes there which would escape us if they occurred among thinkers less tightly connected. Because the *rayonnement* of French philosophy is global (and especially strong in North America), the shift has far-reaching consequences. Since Jean-Luc Marion is one of the apostles of French thought to the Anglophone world, his 1995 “retractatio” of his inclusion of Aquinas in Heidegger’s “history” represents an especially important moment. His *Dieu sans l’être* operated within the Heideggerian “history” and harshly rejected Aquinas’ theology of *esse* as metaphysically determined in a pejorative sense. In principle, a “recantation” is present in the introduction to its English translation, *God without Being*, but it is altogether explicit and worked through, relative to a precise understanding of what counts as onto-theology,

⁴⁶ For references, see my *God in Himself* (cited in n. 3 above), 3–6.

⁴⁷ On Thomas’ theology in this context, see my *God in Himself* and Narbonne, *Hénologie, Ontologie et Ereignis*, 235–44.

⁴⁸ On Heidegger’s enormous influence, see Dominique Janicaud, *Heidegger en France*, 2 vols., *Idées* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001).

in the *Revue thomiste* article.⁴⁹ Formerly, this student of Levinas, as well as of the French Catholic scholars, theologians, and philosophers who turned to Neoplatonism, had avoided a confrontation with Heidegger and his “history” by getting around it through a phenomenology, ethics, and theology grounded in donation, the gift, or charity. Now, in cooperation with many of his colleagues, the rejection of the framework requiring this circling seems at hand. He proposes to use the Heideggerian “history” “in a non-dogmatic manner, heuristically, hermeneutically.”⁵⁰ What is moving the philosophy formerly under Heidegger’s spell?

First, there is the reworking of the history of philosophy, and the reinterpretation of Neoplatonism motivated both by the same reaction against Hegel which inspired him, and by his own posing of the *Seinsfrage*. Second, our new century starts with a presupposition opposite that of Heidegger’s century.

Within the metaphysics of the will to power which, for Heidegger, concluded metaphysics as a whole, the West witnessed the death of God in modernity, and either endeavored to annihilate religion and the divine as a consequence, or ushered them to the ineffectual margins. Heidegger assumes the death, witnesses to it, and seeks a way beyond it.⁵¹ We now face the survival of both religion and the divine, and we witness the return of gods who have immunized themselves from the rationality of the old metaphysics. Onto-theology has not succeeded in overcoming religion by way of a god to whom “man can neither pray nor sacrifice,” so that Jacques Derrida distinguishes himself from Heidegger by ceaseless prayer.⁵²

⁴⁹ See Jean-Luc Marion, “Saint Thomas d’Aquin et l’onto-théo-logie,” 65 n. 82; idem, *Dieu sans l’être* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1982); English: *God without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁵⁰ Marion’s *Entretien* with Janicaud, *Heidegger en France*, vol. 2, pp. 210–27, at 217; see the whole interview for his complex and evolving relation to Heidegger’s “history.”

⁵¹ See Hemming, *Heidegger’s Atheism*, 20, 41–73.

⁵² See *Circumfession*, in Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 55–6, and Jacques Derrida, “How to Avoid Speaking: Denials,” in *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. S. Budick and W. Iser (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 3–70, at 60.

Whether or not onto-theology is the truth about metaphysics, it is not the truth about the divine, and if it has reached its conclusion, its end is not the fate of the gods. In our witnessing the return of the gods we begin to see, against Heidegger, that for much of our history metaphysics as onto-theology did not contain or subdue the divine.

Even for his most sympathetic interpreters, frequently Christians who depend upon and continue to use the criticism implicit in his “history” to refound Christianity in a new faith beyond Greek theology and metaphysics, Heidegger’s whole concern is with Christianity and the fateful result of the Christianization of God. Heidegger’s atheism is Christian, and his history is Eurocentric and imperialist.⁵³ The fate of the West within the fate of Western metaphysics is the fate of the earth. The twenty-first century has begun in a conflict about just this. In this conflict, the divine appears both inside and outside the West, in ways which bring into question the character and destiny of Western modernity. In this situation Heidegger’s history tells us a great deal less about ourselves and our world than we need to know, and probably less than we actually know.

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⁵³ I adopt Hemming’s interpretation of Heidegger’s “atheism” here; his solution is to reiterate Bultmann. In this solution, despite his polemic against Marion’s interpretation of Heidegger, he is close to Marion.