



Heidegger's Critique of Aquinas on Truth: A Critical Assessment

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Abstract

Few more sophisticated or more divergent treatments of the relation between truth and the divine are to be found than those offered in the writings of Thomas Aquinas and Martin Heidegger. This paper traces the differing approaches of these two thinkers in order to attempt a partial elucidation of that relation. One motivation for this contrastive analysis is the conviction that recent treatments of Heidegger's readings of Aquinas have tended too hastily to deny the possibility of fruitful or substantive dialogue between them. In contrast to these accounts, I argue that Heidegger's three central criticisms of Aquinas' conception of truth – that it posits a subject-oriented and representationalist theory of knowledge, an unwarranted intellectualism, and an ontotheological grounding of truth's objectivity – paradoxically expose vulnerable flanks in his own constructive account. The argument proceeds by way of: (i) an exposition of these three strands of Heidegger's critique, focusing *inter alia* on some overlooked lectures delivered during the composition of *Sein und Zeit*; and (ii) a critical assessment of those strands by reference to relevant passages in Aquinas' writings on truth.

Keywords

Aquinas, Heidegger, truth, being, representationalism, correspondence

I.

Few more sophisticated or more divergent treatments of the relation between truth and the divine are to be found than in the writings of Thomas Aquinas and Martin Heidegger. This paper traces the conceptual relationship between these two thinkers in order to attempt a partial elucidation of that relation. One motivation for this kind of contrastive analysis is the conviction that recent treatments of Heidegger's readings of Aquinas have tended too hastily to deny

the possibility of any fruitful dialogue between them.¹ In contrast to these accounts, I suggest not only that striking parallels are to be found, but also that Heidegger shows signs of having incurred a significant conceptual debt to Aquinas's reflections on truth, even if that debt was re-paid with *Destruktion*. Specifically, I argue that three of Heidegger's key diagnoses of Aquinas' account, namely truth's alleged complicity in the occlusion of the question of Being² (*Seinsvergessenheit*) – a mythical “representing” subject, an unwarranted intellectualism, and an ontotheological grounding of objective truth – paradoxically expose vulnerable flanks in his own constructive account. The first half of this study attempts an exposition of these three strands; the second undertakes a critical assessment of these by reference to the relevant texts in Aquinas' *Summae* and the *De Veritate*.

II.

Although the question of truth pervades Heidegger's entire corpus with constantly shifting and elusive inflections, Heidegger's explicit engagement with theological accounts of truth is more delimitable. Suggestively, the three references to Aquinas in *Sein und Zeit* (hereafter, *SZ*) include two citations drawn directly from Aquinas's *De Veritate* and a third illustrating the medieval identification of Being as a transcendental,³ an identification upon which Heidegger

¹ This is especially true of English-language scholarship: John Caputo, for instance, insists that because for Aquinas ‘truth is the name we give to Being when Being enters into relation with intellect,’ no rapprochement is possible between the two accounts (John Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), p. 202). Though he acknowledges that truth is a more promising topic for dialogue between them, Laurence Hemming is similarly resistant to the view that significant agreement is possible (*Heidegger's Atheism* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), p. 104) (see also his ‘In Matters of Truth: Heidegger and Aquinas,’ in Fergus Kerr, ed., *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation* (London: SCM Press, 2003), pp. 85–10); and Jan Aertsen has repeatedly stressed their asymmetry in matters of truth (see Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden, New York & Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996), pp. 264–265; and Jan Aertsen, ‘Truth in the Middle Ages: Its Essence and Power in Christian Thought’, in Kurt Pritzl, ed., *Truth: Studies of a Robust Presence* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), p. 140). By contrast, early German responses to Heidegger tend perhaps to overplay the commonalities between Thomistic *verum* and Heideggerian aletheiology (this is especially true in the treatments of Bernhard Welte, Gustav Siewerth and Johannes Lotz).

² “Being” will be capitalised where (i) a reference to Heidegger's notion of *Sein* is intended and/or (ii) the ontological difference has a bearing on the point that is being advanced.

³ The first instance is to be found *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1953); trans. Edward Robinson and John Macquarrie, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), §4, p. 14 / p. 34 (the pagination for each text refers to the German and English editions

himself relies when emphasising the phenomenological intimacy of Being and truth.⁴ The present discussion attempts an excavation of some neglected texts drawn from two series of Marburg lectures that Heidegger delivered in the years leading immediately up to the publication of *SZ*, one containing a focused analysis of *DV* itself (hereafter, *Rückgang*)⁵ (1923–1924) and another that repeatedly alludes to *DV* (hereafter, *Logik*)⁶ (1925–1926). The light that these texts shed on Heidegger's treatment of truth in *SZ* has been neglected for too long.⁷ Penetrating and comprehensive accounts of Heidegger's views on truth exist elsewhere,⁸ so the purpose of this section is briefly to delineate the contours of Heidegger's conception of truth during this period⁹ in order to explain his specific hostility to the *theological* contribution to the traditional approaches.¹⁰

respectively); the second is in *SZ* §44, p. 214 / p. 257 (both of these refer to *De Veritate* q.1, a.1); and the third reference in *SZ* §1, p. 3 / p. 22, is to *ST* II q.94, a.2. No commentator seems to have drawn attention to this point, which is perhaps symptomatic of the tendency in comparative work on Heidegger and Aquinas to concentrate the debate on the concept of Being to the relative exclusion of truth.

⁴ E.g. *SZ*, §7, p. 38 / p. 62: 'Being is the transcendens pure and simple ... Phenomenological truth (the disclosedness of Being) is *veritas transcendentalis*.'

⁵ Martin Heidegger, "Rückgang auf die scholastische Ontologie: das *verum esse* bei Thomas von Aquin," in *Einführung in die Phänomenologische Forschung* (Gesamtausgabe 17; Frankfurt-am-Main: Klostermann, 1994); trans. Daniel Dahlstrom, "Going Back to Scholastic Ontology: the *verum esse* in Thomas Aquinas," in *Introduction to Phenomenological Research* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2005).

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Logik: die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (Gesamtausgabe 21; Frankfurt-am-Main: Klostermann, 1976); trans. Thomas Sheehan, *Logic: The Question of Truth* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010).

⁷ So far as I can tell, Rioux is the only commentator to mention *Rückgang* (though he does not discuss it in any detail): see Bernard Rioux, *L'être et la vérité chez Heidegger et saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 247.

⁸ See e.g. Daniel Dahlstrom, *Heidegger's Concept of Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), *passim*, and Mark Wrathall, *Heidegger and Unconcealment: Truth, Language, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 11–91.

⁹ An examination of the complex ways in which Heidegger's reflections on truth developed over the entire course of his career is beyond the scope of this discussion. Good accounts may be found in Mark Wrathall, 'Unconcealment,' in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall, eds., *A Companion to Heidegger* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp. 337–357, and Dahlstrom (*op. cit.*); Dahlstrom in particular argues for an organic consistency in his conception of truth and denies that the alleged recantation in 1964 should be taken at face-value (see Daniel Dahlstrom, 'The Prevalence of Truth,' in Kurt Pritzl, ed., *Truth: Studies of a Robust Presence* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), pp. 185–207 at pp. 204–207).

¹⁰ Since Heidegger (i) seems content to treat *DV* as an unproblematic representative of the scholastic approach to truth (see e.g. *Rückgang*, §29, p. 162 / p. 120) and (ii) makes no significant reference to any medieval theory except Aquinas's own discussions, this discussion will assume that his references to "scholasticism" may fairly be construed as directed towards Aquinas himself.

Heidegger's opening gambit is a polemical one. He insists that theories of truth based on a relation of correspondence between a proposition and that which it "mirrors" cannot sustain the weight that traditional – but especially high-scholastic – formulations require of them. In *Logik*, Heidegger observes that although propositional truth *can* consist in a mirroring relation between propositions and facts, often it can only do so because truth *belongs to the nature of a thing*. If one speaks of "true gold", the truth of that statement is not intrinsic to its expression, but rather a function of the extent to which the *thing itself* corresponds to its idea:

'When something *is* what it *should be* according to the idea of that thing only then can we say, for example, it is "true gold" and not . . . mere fool's gold.'¹¹

To this formal structure Heidegger applies the labels of "correspondence" (*Übereinstimmung*) and – synonymously – of "adaequatio."¹² It is this "theoretical-cognitive model" that he dismisses as paradigmatic of scholastic logic, 'a form of sloth tailor-made for instructors [who] parrot the same old stock of unchanging shop-worn propositions, formulas, rules, and definitions . . . [it] is an outrage to real philosophising.'¹³ By contrast, he contends that the result of authentic philosophising shows that 'Aristotle's logic . . . is quite different from the scholastic logic that likes to appeal to him.'¹⁴

Thus Heidegger's hostility to the high-scholastic account of truth¹⁵ – expressed still more trenchantly in the lecture hall than in print – is indisputable. What is especially striking about these passages is the move to re-instate Aristotle as the architect of a model of truth in which the function of a proposition (*logos*) is not to correspond with a thing but to *uncover* it (*apophantikos*).¹⁶ Leaving aside the

¹¹ This particular typology is set out in *Logik*, §2, p. 8. It would appear from this remark that Heidegger is alive to the fact that truth in the medieval understanding was ultimately a function of the degree to which an entity fulfilled its teleological structure.

¹² *Logik*, §2, p. 9.

¹³ *Logik*, §3, p. 10. Heidegger's criticisms seem here to be directed at Leonine Thomism, which tended to mine the *Summae* for catechetical and apologetic purposes alone; this interpretation of Aquinas would have been the dominant one in the intellectual atmosphere of the seminaries he attended in his formative years.

¹⁴ *Logik*, §3, p. 11.

¹⁵ I grant for the sake of argument that Heidegger's assumption that Aquinas' theory of truth is indeed representative of the high-scholastic approach. The accuracy of this assumption is – needless to say – especially controverted, but must be left to one side for the purposes of this essay.

¹⁶ *Logik*, §11, p. 112. Cf. *Logik*, §13, p. 137: '[E]ven less did [Aristotle] invent anything like a copy-theory (*Abbildtheorie*) of truth. Rather, he stuck to the phenomena and understood them as broadly as possible.'

merits of his highly contested interpretation of Aristotle,¹⁷ it is one that supplies the broad outlines of the approach to truth that Heidegger will advance in his major excursus on truth in *SZ*. Here too his approach is developed as much in opposition to Aquinas as it is inspired by the Stagirite, who – he claims again – identified the task of philosophising as ‘exhibiting something and letting it be seen with regard to the “truth.”’¹⁸ The extensive section devoted to questions of truth in *SZ* opens with an appeal to the long philosophical tradition of emphasising the equiprimordiality (*Gleichursprünglichkeit*) of Being and truth; and since Being and truth ‘necessarily go together,’ the task of understanding truth falls within the arena of fundamental ontology.¹⁹ But the phenomenological conjunction of Being and truth is subsequently destroyed by Aquinas’s founding of truth in correspondence (*adaequatio intellectus et rei*), a move which perpetuates – and indeed crystallises – the Western tradition’s mistaken assumption that Aristotle’s primary definition of truth did not locate it in Being itself, but rather in the correspondence of the soul’s “experiences” with “things.”²⁰

It is not that Heidegger straightforwardly rejects what – as we shall see – he claims to be a theologically contaminated understanding of truth; what he denies is that the essence of truth should consist in an intellectual relation that *structurally* excludes the apprehension of Being through truth. Instead, the question he insists must be raised is what makes such a relation *possible in the first place*.²¹ He illustrates the problem with the example of a man accurately asserting to another that a picture on the wall behind them is askew; on turning to face the picture, he argues that what is demonstrated is *not* a correspondence relation between perceiver and mental representation (*Vorstellung*) or picture (*Bild*) of the real thing, but rather one between the perceiver

¹⁷ As a result of the significant hermeneutical tensions between *Metaphysics* VI.4 (truth and falsity reside not in things but in the mind) and *Metaphysics* IX.10 (“in the strictest sense” being and non-being denote truth and falsity), interpretations of Aristotle on this point are especially vexed. For discussions addressing the Heideggerian interpretation, see Christopher Long, *Aristotle on the Nature of Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 21–48, and Ted Sadler, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Question of Being* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 1996), pp. 116–121.

¹⁸ *SZ*, §44, p. 213 / p. 256.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *SZ*, §44, p. 214 / p. 257. As with many of his appeals to Greek etymology, Heidegger’s rendering of Aristotle’s *pathemata* (lit. “affections” or “experiences”) as *noemata* (perhaps best rendered as “mental representations”) is tendentious (see H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996 (9th ed.)), ad loc.). The purpose of this sleight-of-hand is to allege that the alleged representationalism presupposed in correspondence theories is rooted in mistakenly identifying this text as containing the primary Aristotelian definition of truth.

²¹ *SZ*, §44, p. 216 / p. 259.

and the picture *itself*. Heidegger briefly sketches an account of the cognitive process underlying such a demonstration:

'What one has in mind is the Real picture, and nothing else. Any Interpretation in which something else is here slipped in as what one supposedly has in mind in an assertion that merely represents, belies the phenomenal facts of the case as to that about which the assertion gets made.'²²

Heidegger's antipathy towards representationalist theories cognition is unmistakable, and to that extent his criticisms of correspondence strikingly anticipate certain early complaints on this topic in analytic philosophy. In an influential article declaring that correspondentist theories should be sentenced not to 'purification but elimination,' Strawson objected to the idea that statements could pick out facts or states-of-affairs independently on the basis that the latter were capable of elucidation only *by means* of such statements. The theory could not, therefore, achieve the purchase on reality that had for so long accounted for its appeal over rival theories.²³ This intriguing convergence across the continental divide should not of course be overplayed, not least because Strawson's own "performative" theory of truth – an important catalyst in the rise of deflationary theories of truth to their current position of ascendancy in Anglo-American philosophy – presupposes a much starker notion of truth than Heidegger countenances in *SZ*.²⁴ Nevertheless, the parallel seems sufficiently close to suggest that if the critique of correspondence led the analytic tradition towards deflationism, it led Heidegger himself in an equally nihilist direction, since his conception of truth ultimately leads – as we shall see – to what amounts to reducing Being to truth.

²² *SZ*, §44, p. 217, p. 260.

²³ P.F. Strawson, 'Truth,' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society (Supplement)* 24 (1950), pp. 129–156 at p. 129. Heidegger's critique of what one might term the "ontological insulation" of truth endemic to representationalist versions of correspondence theory (which insist that truth is fundamentally propositional in character) – can be supported with other standard analytic objections. After all, with what proposition is the proposition that 'truth is a function of the correspondence relation between P and F' *itself* intended to correspond? And even if such a proposition were to be found, how could it provide its own account of a truth-making correspondence relation with respect to itself that did not trigger an infinite regress of serially corresponding propositions?

²⁴ The analytic tradition may fairly be said to owe its conceptual genesis to the development by Russell and Frege of first-order predicate calculus, a system of formal logic substantively reliant on the existential qualifier derived from the Kant's attack on the ontological argument's mistaken assumption that existence is a real predicate. To that extent, I would argue that deflationism's nihilistic denial that *truth* is a real predicate (on this reading *P* is true if and only if *P*), together with the nominalist reduction of truth to truths which attends this move, represents a moment of consummation for the analytic tradition, one more instance of that same prejudicial mood against the medieval transcendentals that partially motivated Kant's criticisms of scholastic theology in the *Transcendental Dialectic*.

Heidegger follows his exposition of the deficiencies of correspondentism with the famous claim that the truth of an assertion derives from nothing less than its 'uncovering' of entities as they are in themselves.²⁵ Since they lie in an ontological state of uncoveredness (*Entdecktheit*), even these entities are 'true' only in a derivative sense. What is true in a primary sense is *that which uncovers*, namely Dasein.²⁶ What makes this possible is the reciprocal relation of transparent disclosedness (*Entschlossenheit*) between Dasein and its world: 'Dasein is in the truth.'²⁷ The unifying characteristic in the structure of Heidegger's account can therefore allegedly be captured by the etymology of the Greek word *aletheia*, which Heidegger believed embodied the idea of 'manifestation-from-hiddenness.'²⁸

Here one begins to see that given his attempts to move away from an understanding of truth determined by the 'subjective' assertions mirroring 'objective' reality towards a more 'originary' conception of truth as synonymous with Being, the indisputably central role that Heidegger assigns to Dasein is highly problematic. In the closing paragraphs of his excursus on truth in *SZ*, he lays the blame for this idealisation of the subject squarely on *Christian* thought:

[T]he jumbling together of Dasein's phenomenally grounded "ideality" with an idealised absolute subject, belong[s] to those residues of Christian theology within philosophical problematics which have not as yet been radically extruded.²⁹

Similarly, in *Rückgang*, Heidegger argues that because Aquinas conceives of the intellect as determining the correspondence relation, 'knowledge and the being of the truth are transferred into the "subject."³⁰ Yet it is difficult not to notice that the logic of his own account of truth as the uncoveredness of entities by means of Dasein's uncovering compels him to claim the following:

"There is" truth only in so far as Dasein is and so long as Dasein is . . . Newton's laws, the principle of contradiction, any truth whatsoever – these are true only as long as Dasein is. Before there was any Dasein, there was no truth; nor will there be any after Dasein is no more . . . That there are "eternal truths" will not be adequately proved until

²⁵ *SZ*, §44, p. 218 / p. 261.

²⁶ *SZ*, §44, p. 220 / p. 263.

²⁷ *SZ*, §44, p. 221 / p. 263 (Heidegger's italics).

²⁸ It is important to note that the appeal to the original meaning of *alētheia* as "un-hiddenness" (by combining the alpha privative with *lanthanein* meaning "to lie hidden") has since been conclusively rebutted (see Paul Friedländer, *Platon: Seinswahrheit und Lebenswirklichkeit* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964), p. 223).

²⁹ *SZ*, §44, p. 229 / p. 272. Taken alongside his remarks in *Rückgang* and *Logik*, it seems reasonable to suppose that it is Aquinas who is the hidden target in this passage.

³⁰ *Rückgang*, §30, p. 174 / p. 129.

someone has succeeded in demonstrating that Dasein has been and will be for all eternity.³¹

This passage is forcefully expressed, and the spectre of idealism – even solipsism – looms large. Although Heidegger vehemently denies that this construal of truth entails a return to the subject,³² there are other reasons to find the claim that Dasein is the transcendental condition for truth philosophically questionable. When rejecting the charge of subjectivism, for instance, he argues that entities would continue to exist in the *absence* of Dasein. Yet what implications does this have for Heidegger's earlier insistence on Dasein's indispensability to truth as the disclosure of Being to beings? However one settles the vexed question of Heidegger's understanding of Being, how could beings *be* without it? What these passages imply – as William Vallicella rightly notes in a much overlooked article³³ – is that Heidegger seems to suggest that the relation between Being and beings is *dependent* on the process of manifestation. This in turn entails that a central claim in *SZ* – namely that the onto-ontological connection between beings and Being is an indissoluble but lamentably forgotten connection – is mistaken: it is, it turns out, a purely contingent and extrinsic link.

According to Heidegger, Aquinas's third – and most egregious – contribution to correspondentist theories of truth consists in grounding correspondence in the metaphysics of creation. It is a form of doctrinal thinking, he claims, that extrapolates the correspondence relation to the divine level in such a way that truth comes to be a function of the divine plan of creation. Furthermore, the doctrine of creation entails that Aquinas's primary concept of truth 'ultimately falls back on the relation of *causare* and *causari* in the sense of *making by way of producing*.'³⁴ It may be the case that Aquinas understands truth as a mode of existence (*modus essendi*), but that existence is specified as *created* existence (*esse creatum*), and this is understood in turn as an object of the *intellectus divinus*.³⁵ Thus we are led, claims Heidegger, to a consideration of how God's being is determined 'as a *causa efficiens*, as *ens creans*.'³⁶ Truth is a

³¹ *SZ*, §44, pp. 226–227 / pp. 269–270 (Heidegger's italics).

³² *SZ* §44, p. 227 / p. 270. The claim that Heidegger fails *malgré lui* to escape a subject-oriented philosophy in *SZ* has been made by a number of scholars – see e.g. William D. Blattner, *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 230–310; for a more sympathetic rendition, see J.E. Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 155–175.

³³ William F. Vallicella, 'Heidegger's Reduction of Being to Truth,' *The New Scholasticism* 59/2 (1985), pp. 156–176 at p. 175.

³⁴ *Rückgang*, §32, p. 185 / p. 139.

³⁵ *Rückgang*, §33, p. 190 / p. 143.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

“product” of divine creation, just as the human intellect “produces” representations in abstractive cognition that purport to mirror reality in a manner that delivers objective truth.

Aquinas’ error exacerbates this misplaced emphasis on subjectivity by idealising the human subject and projecting it into what is (a fortiori) an *ontic* god, a purely conceptual entity introduced by metaphysics to underwrite truth’s objectivity. Thus Heidegger implies that this approach to truth is caught in a vicious *ontotheological* circle: (1) a divine entity is illegitimately conceptualised as the efficient cause of created reality; (2) it is subsequently posited as the ground of the correspondence relation between created intellect and created entity; and (3) the alleged solidity of this relation in turn corroborates belief in divine power, thereby closing the circle.³⁷ Heidegger insists that the circle must be broken by recognising that it is *only* Dasein that can stand ontologically ‘in the truth’ because truth ‘in the most primordial sense belongs to the basic constitution of Dasein.’³⁸ It is here that one can begin to glimpse a spectral resemblance between (on the one hand) the “equiprimordial” unity of Being with Dasein’s self-transcendence and (on the other) Aquinas’s vision of the ineffably simple coincidence of the divine *esse* with the divine mind, in which all reality participates.³⁹

The foregoing analysis goes some way to accounting for Heidegger’s hostility towards theological speculations on truth. First, we have seen that he accuses Aquinas of according a mistaken priority to Aristotle’s treatment of propositional truth and of overlooking the Stagirite’s emphasis on the ‘apophantic’ character of propositions. The alleged mis-reading leads to a displacement by ‘logical’ truth of ‘ontological’ truth from its rightful position of primacy. Linked to this are certain mistaken representationalist assumptions that Heidegger diagnoses at the heart of correspondence theories. Second, we noted his contention that the intellectualism implicit in these theories sets up the subject in opposition to the world that inevitably triggers a withdrawal from it. Finally, we saw that Heidegger insists this illusory anthropocentric subjectivity metastasises into a theocentric subjectivity that serves to ground and “measure” the correspondence relation between ontic entities.

³⁷ It is worth noting that the formal critique of ontotheology does not come till some time later in the development of Heidegger’s thought; but the *shape* of his criticisms here seem to me to foreshadow this later critique in a number of intriguing and inescapable ways.

³⁸ SZ, §44, p. 226 / p. 269.

³⁹ Rioux (*op. cit.*), p. 240: ‘L’*adaequatio rei et intellectus*, vécue par l’esprit humain comme ordination à manifester l’être, n’atteint sa perfection entière justifiant sa participation imparfaite dans l’homme, que dans l’identité de l’Être et de l’Esprit en Dieu.’

Heidegger exhibits a number of other misgivings that cannot be addressed here; but it is clear at least that if Aquinas's account cannot be defended against each of these three trenchant objections, one of the most sophisticated attempts in Christian thought to articulate the indispensability of God to a coherent theory of truth would be seriously undermined. It is to an outline of such a defence that I now turn.

III.

Heidegger's mis-reading of Aquinas's orchestration of the different components of his account of truth is especially evident in the implicit charge of representationalism he levels at Aquinas. As we have seen, Heidegger's hostility to *adaequatio* is rooted in his distaste for the mis-placed emphasis on the role of the intellect and the representationalist model of cognition with which he alleges it is structurally complicit.

This might strike a Thomist as a puzzling charge to level at Aquinas. It is true that some medievalists⁴⁰ have attempted to paint Aquinas as a forerunner to the epistemology of British empiricism, which tended to conceive of sense-data reaching the senses exclusively in terms of efficient causation. Nevertheless, most contemporary accounts of Aquinas' epistemology⁴¹ insist that central to his theory of truth is the cognitive assimilation by sense and intellect of the sensible and intelligible forms intrinsic to external objects by means of *formal* causation.⁴² What undergirds this assimilative process is not – as later versions of the correspondence theory would suppose – a shaky epistemological bridge between two otherwise distinct *relata* reliant solely on the dynamics of efficient causality. Rather it is a process that results in an ontological condition of absolute formal *identity* between knower and known. The same form inheres “naturally” through one mode of existence in the known (*esse naturale*) and “intentionally” through another mode of existence in the knower (*esse intentionale*).⁴³ The *species intelligibilis* is not so

⁴⁰ The most well-known recent treatment is Robert Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 195–219.

⁴¹ For persuasive criticisms of Pasnau's account, see John O'Callaghan, *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Towards a More Perfect Form of Existence* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), chapter 6, and Paul A. Macdonald, *Knowledge and the Transcendent: An Inquiry into the Mind's Relationship to God* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), p. 114 n. 82. O'Callaghan provides the most lucid treatment available of Aquinas' account of the mechanics of cognition.

⁴² Macdonald (*op. cit.*), p. 83. For a contemporary version of this argument, see John Haldane, 'A Return to Form in the Philosophy of Mind,' *Ratio* 11/3 (1998), pp. 253–277 at pp. 267–269.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 85. As Charles Taylor points out, very little of this account would be congenial to a metaphysics that finds no place for forms or formal causality (see *Philosophical*

much the object of cognition (*id quod*) as that by which (*id quo*) cognitive access to reality is made possible.

This is why adequation is symmetrical: truth resides in the conformity between mind *and* world; in the analytic idiom, each is a truth-bearer. It is also why formal identity can be understood – in the context of what one might term an *analogia veritatis*⁴⁴ – as the dimmest apprehension of truth's pre-eminent existence in that perfect simplicity which for Aquinas marks the coincidence of divine intellect and divine being in the ineffable unity of Knower and Known as metaphysically ultimate.⁴⁵ For only then does it make sense for Aquinas to imply that “epistemological” and “ontological” versions of truth can be collapsed by the claim that *God is truth*, and thereby to transcend the dialectical impasse between Heidegger and the “traditional” accounts he targets.⁴⁶ What emerges, then, is that far from exacerbating the flaws inherent in correspondentism, it is *only* the theological underpinning of that approach that can offer some resolution to the otherwise puzzling ambiguities arising within secular debates over whether to construe truth as fundamentally semantic or ontological.⁴⁷

As noted above, Heidegger traces a conceptual connection between Aquinas's alleged representationalism and the subjectivism that he

Arguments (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 3). Yet for present purposes it is enough to demonstrate that whatever the strengths or weaknesses of Aquinas' account, it is emphatically not a construal of truth that excludes the question of Being.

⁴⁴ *DV* q.1, a.2; *DV* q.1, a.2. Note that these are analogies of attribution and not therefore equivalent to the *analogia entis*. Cf. however *In Sent.* d.1, q.19, a.2, ad 1, in which Aquinas establishes the difference between an analogy of predication, an analogy of existence and an analogy of predication *and* existence. It is in the third sense, he claims, that truth applies to God and creatures (see further John Wippel, 'Truth in Thomas Aquinas (Part One),' *Review of Metaphysics* 43/2 (1989), pp. 295–326 at p. 304).

⁴⁵ Yves Floucat, 'La vérité comme conformité selon saint Thomas d'Aquin,' *Revue Thomiste* 104 (2004), pp. 49–102 at p. 54. In short, God's knowledge, the objects of that knowledge, God's self-knowledge and knowable forms are one and the same in Him (*ST* Ia, q.14, a.4: 'in Deo intellectus, et id quod intelligitur, et species intelligibilis, et ipsum intelligere, sunt omnino unum et idem').

⁴⁶ See previous note and *ST* Ia, q.16, a.5, resp.2: truth in God meets Augustine's requirement that truth must be “likeness to a source” because God's being and intellect are identical ('suum esse non est suo intellectui dissimile'). On Aquinas's claim that God is truth, see the – largely analytic – inquiry undertaken by John Peterson, 'God as Truth,' *Faith and Philosophy* 12/3 (1995), pp. 342–359).

⁴⁷ *DV* q.1, a.8: 'Veritas in rebus creatis . . . nihil aliud potest comprehendere quam entitatem rei, et adaequationem rei ad intellectum vel aequationem intellectus ad res vel ad privationes rerum; quod totum est a Deo.' That the symmetrical coinherence in Aquinas of intensive *Richtigkeit* and ontological *Unverborgenheit* implies a rejection of isolated subjectivity is well brought out by Johannes Lotz, 'Aletheia und Orthotes: Versuch einer Deutung im Lichte der Scholastik,' *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 68 (1959), pp. 258–268 at p. 267: 'Bei Thomas . . . gibt es keine isolierte Subjektivität hinaus, weil zur Konstitution des menschlichen Geistes die Ausrichtung auf das Sein und daher schließlich das Sein selbst gehört.'

claims arises from the latter's explicit location of truth in the divine mind. It is therefore especially striking when he then claims that *congruence* exists between Aquinas' theological anthropology and his *Daseinsanalytik* on the basis of Aquinas's emphasis on the radical openness of human nature to the world.⁴⁸ For Aquinas, observes Heidegger, conceives of the soul as something that can come together with (*convenire*) all things in a manner completely at odds with a 'vicious subjectivising.'⁴⁹ What he fails to notice, however, is that Aquinas's anthropology is *axiomatic* to his account of truth, for it is precisely this capacity of the soul which allows him to construe truth as a proportionate harmony (*convenientia*) between entities.⁵⁰

Although Heidegger's far more critical claim that for Aquinas truth resides in the mind is correct, it is one that might easily mislead an unsuspecting reader without supplying more careful elucidation of this claim than he chooses to provide.⁵¹ More precisely, truth is *primarily* in the mind because it is at the intellectual stage of the cognitive movement delineated above where conformity between knower and known becomes possible and where truth therefore reaches its completion.⁵² But it is vital to note that by "conformity" Aquinas means the ability of a *thing* to bring about knowledge of itself in the intellect; as Wippel notes, this seems strongly to imply that his focus is resting on the truth of being itself.⁵³ And this is of a piece with Aquinas's claim elsewhere that 'truth and being do not differ essentially.'⁵⁴

⁴⁸ He cites with approval Aquinas's allusion to Aristotle's maxim that the soul is in a manner all things (SZ, §3, p. 14 / p. 34, citing DV q.1, a.1, resp.).

⁴⁹ SZ, §3, p. 14 / p. 34. See Aertsen (*op. cit.*), p. 137: 'A philosophically important aspect of [Aquinas's] doctrine is the idea that "being" and "the mind" do not belong to opposite domains, but are, so to say, "convenient."'

⁵⁰ DV q.1, a.1, resp.

⁵¹ DV q.1, a.2, resp. ('invenitur verum . . . per prius autem in intellectu'); cf. ST q.16, a. 2, resp. This does not seem to have been the universal medieval view: Aertsen notes elsewhere that Philip the Chancellor, for instance, rejected Hilary of Poitiers' definition of truth on the basis of its dependence on a knowing subject ('verum enim *sine respectu ad intellectum*') (Jan Aertsen, 'Truth as Transcendental in Aquinas,' *Topoi* 11 (1992), pp. 159–171 at p. 160 and p. 170 n. 6). In any event, it is not obvious to me how Heidegger's claim that truth resides primarily with Dasein significantly differs from Aquinas's position on this point, nor indeed whether it does not suggest a subterranean theological *influence*, especially in light of the affirmation of the resemblance condition cited in n. 46 above.

⁵² DV q.1, a.1, resp. ('verum . . . in quo formaliter ratio veri perficitur').

⁵³ Wippel, 'Truth in Aquinas (Part One)', pp. 310–311, and p. 314. Cf. John Wippel, 'Truth in Thomas Aquinas (Part Two),' *Review of Metaphysics* 43/3 (1990), pp. 543–567 at p. 543: 'Thomas holds that truth is formally and intrinsically present in things themselves . . . [though] only when it is taken broadly (*improprie*), not when it is taken strictly (*proprie*).'

⁵⁴ DV q.1, a.1, ad 6: 'verum et ens . . . [non] per essentiam differunt.' Cf. DV q.1, a.1, ad 7 ('patet quod *omne* verum est aliquo').

Indeed Aquinas' account makes ample room for the guiding Heideggerian metaphor of manifestation, a metaphor that is – as Pieper observes – an unmistakably *medieval* one for truth.⁵⁵ Given Heidegger's assumption that the doctrine of creation merely describes a kind of divine production, there is a certain irony in the fact that it is *this* doctrine that is indispensable to the construal of the truth as manifest being, a definition that Aquinas develops from Augustine and Hilary of Poitiers.⁵⁶ Aquinas indeed forestalls Heidegger's charge by making it clear that his view of truth denies that created truth is efficiently caused by God, but insists rather that it is an *exemplification* of uncreated truth.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Heidegger's caricature is barely comprehensible within Aquinas's analogical framework, which specifically forestalls a univocal conception of God as an ontic entity "measuring" the correspondence between its "products".

IV.

The paradox of the foregoing analysis is that Heidegger's critique of Aquinas unwittingly invites us to reflect upon at least three debilitating flaws in his own account. First, despite his laudable recovery of the ontological dynamics of truth, his refusal of any genuinely transcendent, analogical anchor for it collapses his conception into an *égoïsme à deux* of Dasein and its world. Second, the centrality of the role of Dasein in his account invites an obvious *tu quoque* from the Thomist, since it is far from clear – inter alia – how he can evade countervailing accusations of subjectivism and idealism. Third, the initially promising return of truth to Being ultimately issues in a nihilistic reduction of Being to truth, for if Being's connection to beings is mysteriously but inescapably *dependent* on truth for its disclosure to Dasein, Heidegger's logic leads inexorably to the conclusion that, in the absence of truth's disclosure to Dasein, *Being is not*. It need hardly be emphasised how troubling an outcome this represents for

⁵⁵ Josef Pieper, 'Heideggers Wahrheitsbegriff,' in Berthold Wald, ed., *Schriften zum Philosophiebegriff* (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1995), p. 189: '[D]ie Heideggersche These vom Wahrsein als Entdeckendsein formell und ausdrücklich eine *mittelalterliche* These *ist*' (Pieper's italics). Pieper also argues (p. 190) that it is with Scotus' increased emphasis on the subject's role in the cognitive process that the *veritas rerum* loses its form-bestowing function. In his broad-brush dismissal of "scholasticism", it is clear that Heidegger's failure to make any distinction between Thomistic and Scotist strands in medieval thought gravely undermines the plausibility of his critique (on this point, see also John P. Doyle, *Collected Studies on Francisco Suárez, S.J. (1548–1617)* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2010), pp. 99–105). For an excellent analysis of Scotist influences on Heidegger's account of truth, see Sean McGrath, 'Heidegger and Duns Scotus on Truth and Language,' *Review of Metaphysics* 57/2 (2003), pp. 339–358.

⁵⁶ DV q.1, a.1, resp. (Hilary: 'verum est . . . manifestativum esse'; Augustine: 'veritas est qua ostenditur id quod est.').

⁵⁷ DV q.1, a.4, sed contra 5: 'refertur ad Deum . . . veritas ut ad causam exemplarem.'

a project predicated on recovering Being from the obliviousness of metaphysics. Conversely, I have suggested that a closer reading of Aquinas can resist these difficulties precisely because his is a *theological* vision that can envisage truth in the mind as well as in things alone on the basis that mind and world jointly participate in God as transcendent source of reality. Aquinas's construal of truth is not, therefore, so much a "theory" which might be applied to God as one remarkable corollary of his vast and complex metaphysical vision.⁵⁸

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