

GOD'S BEING IS IN BECOMING: AN ESSAY IN THEOLOGICAL IDEALISM

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Abstract. God's being is becoming – the title is the thesis. The first section of this paper will be dedicated to the problem of radical historicity in sketching three dogmatic approaches dealing with the relation between God and history. After critically introducing the concept of relational – in contrast to intrinsic – properties in the second section I will apply a revised version of this concept theologically in integrating it into the architecture of Trinitarian thinking. Accordingly, and on that basis, the last section can address the ambivalent as well as precarious question in which sense God's ultimate being is in real (be) coming.

Theologians nowadays are 'idiots concerned with salvation'. That's at least what the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk holds – leaving the closely related question, unfortunately, open, as to what kind of 'idiots' philosophers currently are.¹ Theological 'idiots' show their true character not only by being concerned with salvation, but rather in speaking of God, i.e. not only by being focused on the effects of religion, but mainly in being engaged in thinking about the 'happiest and most lovely substance', as Leibniz once called God as the ultimate.²

Now, it might turn out to be an unhappy starting point to distinguish sharply between God and what God does, between the divine reality and its bearing on its true believers. It is one of the most relevant issues

¹ Peter Sloterdijk, *Zeilen und Tage. Notizen 2008–2011* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2012), p. 103; trans. mine.

² Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'Vernunftprinzipien der Natur und der Gnade', in idem, *Vernunftprinzipien der Natur und der Gnade. Monadologie*, ed. by Herbert Herring (Hamburg: Meiner, 1969), pp. 2–25 (p. 23).

in Christian dogmatics and its philosophical company to settle, clarify and elaborate on that very topic. One classical label under which this topic is dealt with is the radical historicity that faith in the Christian tradition endorses, embraces, or presupposes. The first section will very briefly be dedicated to this problem in sketching three approaches dealing prominently with God and history (1). This makes the subsequent question unavoidable whether this historicity also concerns and touches on God Himself. After and by introducing and discussing critically the concept of relational – in contrast to intrinsic – properties (2) I will apply a revised version of this concept theologically in integrating it into the architecture of Trinitarian thought and, accordingly, in meeting the complicated as well as ambivalent question in which sense God's being is in (be)coming (3). However, before I begin, I have to confess, that the emphasis in the title is neither put on 'idealism' nor on 'theological', but on 'essay', which turns this paper into a tentative outline to a dogmatic problem whose further ramifications exceed the capacities of the modest pages that are following now.

I. RADICAL HISTORICITY

According to the Christian understanding God does not only and necessarily relate to history and His creatures and creation, but is Himself – in the twofold sense of almost every genitive – a *God of history*.³ Hence, historicity is, then, not only the human condition beyond which God is leading His solitary 'existence', but God too is essentially subjected to that very change. Whereas 'historicity' means that all earthly things, facts, and beings have a tradition – coming from somewhere, going anywhere ('anything goes') – 'radical historicity' amplifies this 'traditional' approach by including literally everything, also God, into this constant open-endedness.

There are different and at least three prominent projects attempting to come to terms with this precarious scenario that, obviously, lead us into a realm *after* (or *post*) classical metaphysics.⁴ The first of these endeavours

³ As *locus classicus* see Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Dogmatische Thesen zur Lehre von der Offenbarung', in *Offenbarung als Geschichte*. In Verbindung mit R. Rendtorff, U. Wilckens, T. Rendtorff hrsg. von Wolfhart Pannenberg (Beiheft 1 zu *Kerygma und Dogma*) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), pp. 91–114.

⁴ Insofar as 'classical metaphysics' is taken to be an attempt to identify an invariant structure beyond temporal and cultural change; cf. Hartmut von Sass and Eric Hall,

is the Hegelian framework whose emphasis lays on a processing dynamics of counterbalance and its hopefully higher resolution.⁵ This kind of dynamics is a *structural* one based on either real or substantial respectively virtual or conceptual items mediating theologically the thinking of God into God's self-thinking as the divine essence.⁶

The second project carries its ambition in its name: process thinking in the wake of Alfred North Whitehead. Here, God is identified with His history of self-completion or self-perfection at the price that God is no longer temporally before His creation. It is, then, only consistent, as Whitehead actually does, to infer from this premise that it is equally true that God created everything as well as holding that God was created by the world.⁷ This dynamic is a *cosmological* one integrating God into the process of everything in a revitalization of a Spinozian panentheism.⁸

The third theological version of thinking historicity is the *hermeneutical* one. It deserves its name not only because of promoting 'understanding' to the central feature of faith (faith as understanding act of believing) and not by considering itself as a hermeneutical enterprise (theology as hermeneutics), but rather by understanding God Himself as an event of understanding. God is, then, to be thought of as hermeneutical reality (God as the reality of the new understanding of or as faith).⁹

'Groundless Gods. Metaphysics, its Critique, and Post-Metaphysical Theology. An Introductory Essay', in idem (eds.), *Groundless Gods. The Theological Prospects of Post-Metaphysical Thought* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers / Pickwick, 2014), pp. 1–37, 13–17; see also Friedrich Hermanni, *Metaphysik. Versuche über letzte Fragen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), p. 1.

⁵ Cf. Jörg Dierken, *Fortschritte in der Geschichte der Religion? Aneignung einer Denkfigur der Aufklärung* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012), pp. 72–81.

⁶ See Ludwig Feuerbach, who thinks that Hegel considers God's essence as God's acting and were, therefore, 'genötigt, das Gedachtwerden Gottes zum Sich-selbst-Denken Gottes zu machen' (Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums*. Ausgabe in zwei Bänden, ed. by Werner Schuffenhauer (Berlin: Dietz, 1956), p. 348).

⁷ Cf. Alfred N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*. Corrected edition, ed. by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York and London: The Free Press, 1978), p. 348; see also Daniel A. Dombrowski, *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion. A Process Perspective* (Albany NY: SUNY, 2005), ch. 3 and 4.

⁸ See Philip Clayton and Paul Davies, *The Re-Emergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁹ For details see Hartmut von Sass, 'Faith and Being. Hermeneutical Theology as Post-Metaphysical Enterprise', in idem and Eric E. Hall (eds.), *Groundless Gods. The Theological Prospects of Post-Metaphysical Thought* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers / Pickwick, 2014), pp. 214–241.

Evidently, all three versions of thinking historicity in theological terms suffer from, at least, the danger not to do justice to God's sovereignty and independence of the world. In the first version God comes to Himself by and only by the process of thinking and being thought. In the second version the development of the world and God's 'biography' are to be identified. The third and hermeneutical option, finally, has the inclination to turn God into a function of human understanding.

On the one hand there are good reasons for an incarnational religion to invest theologically in clarifying the historicity of faith *and* God not as two, but *one* single question;¹⁰ on the other hand it is equally understandable to implement concepts to prevent God from collapsing with his creation.¹¹ There has to be genuine reservation against that danger of equation traditionally expressed in the idea of a hidden God, the distinction between immanent and economic Trinity, the God that is beyond our grasp and knowledge. All these attempts – the *Deus absconditus*, the Trinitarian immanence, or negative and apophatic theology – try to save the God of history from being a merely historical God. Isn't it true that, to put it in Schleiermacherian terms, the idea of God's being *a se* (aseity) belongs essentially to the religious consciousness of sin and mercy, of fallenness and divine redemption?¹²

All this leads to the fundamental question of how to find (or even to detect) the appropriate balance between God's own historicity and His independence, more specifically: is His 'story' only understandable as derived from His being *a* and *per se* (as, roughly speaking, Calvinism teaches) or is it the other way round, namely, that His independence is an integral element of his being *pro nobis* (as the Lutheran tradition seems to be defending)? Turning now to the concept of 'relational' properties amounts to the attempt to make sense of this second option.

¹⁰ Cf. John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 49 and 61.

¹¹ See Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Der Gott der Geschichte. Der trinitarische Gott und die Wahrheit der Geschichte', in idem, *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie. Gesammelte Aufsätze 2* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), pp. 112–128 (p. 119).

¹² See Notger Slenczka, 'Das Dogma als Ausdruck des religiösen Selbstverhältnisses. Trinitätslehre bei Schleiermacher, Troeltsch und Tillich', in Ulrich Barth, Christian Danz, Wilhelm Gräb, Friedrich Wilhelm Graf (eds.), *Aufgeklärte Religion und ihre Probleme. Schleiermacher, Troeltsch Tillich* (Berlin / Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), pp. 661–684, esp. 682–684.

II. RELATIONAL PROPERTIES

There are several ways of thinking through changing objects. Either the object in question changes due to an internal development, or the person conceiving this object changes, or the link between both is processing in a new direction. Under Kantian (or post-Kantian) conditions, the first way is a mere abstraction since change is itself a category that is introduced by an observer for whom change is conceivable or, as stronger version, without whom there is no change at all. Hence, the object leads back to its observer and his or her relation to that very object amounting to the second and third way. Thus, change is only change for someone in a particular context. Nevertheless, we would like to speak of change that is a feature of the object, in other words, an objective change.

There are again two options to clarify this objective change – and this alternative brings us to the distinction I am interested in here, the difference between intrinsic and relational (or extrinsic) properties. It has been developed within the discussion of defending the hermeneutical thesis by Hans-Georg Gadamer on the essential underdeterminedness of every interpretation, but could also be used outside that important and influential debate.¹³

Intrinsic properties are taken to be those features that an object has in the way that this thing is 'in itself', such as shape, size, colour (if one wants to count secondary properties to that object 'itself').¹⁴ Relational properties, however, are those features that an object has and that depend (wholly or partly?) on something other than that very thing, such as being an uncle of someone or being married to or divorced from Queen Mary.¹⁵ So, the two ways mentioned above consist in either the change of the object in question (intrinsic) or the relation between this object to other objects (relational).

¹³ Cf. esp. David Weberman, 'A New Defense of Gadamer's Hermeneutics', in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60:1 (2000), 45–65; Weberman, however, relies here on David Lewis' 'Extrinsic Properties', in *Philosophical Studies* 44:2 (1983), 197–200; see also Jeff Malpas, 'The Origin of Understanding: Event, Place, Truth', in *Consequences of Hermeneutics. Fifty Years After Gadamer's Truth and Method*, edited by Jeff Malpas and Santiago Zabala (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), pp. 261–280.

¹⁴ Cf. Andy Egan, 'Second-order predication and the Metaphysics of Properties', in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 82:1 (2004), 48–66.

¹⁵ See also Peter F. Strawson, *Individuals. An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen, 1959), ch. 5.

Consider, for instance, the French Revolution. Our understanding of that historical event today is (or might be) crucially different compared to the past instances of understanding and contextualizing it. The importance of temporal distance consists mainly in the way in which more recent events have brought out new aspects of or ‘redetermined’ the earlier phenomena. In the case of the French Revolution, there is the occurrence of Napoleon Bonaparte, the ramified creation of the French Republic, the tensions up to the war with Germany, and, of course, numerous more subtle and less prominent occasions.

However, the temporal element is only one ingredient that constitutes the relational shifting. There are also relational properties that derive from the distance between the object of understanding and the vantage point of the interpreter distanced not by its temporal, but by its cultural specificity. Therefore, we have the *diachronic* as well as the *synchronic* version of relational properties and, of course, a mixture of both. What this precisely means is that the object of understanding is underdetermined, because its relational properties are shifting according or even due to the temporal or cultural point of the observing person. If it is correct that *Hamlet* (I was sitting in Southern Denmark while writing this) is a different object for us here and now than for a 17th-century reader in England because of its delayed relational properties, it might be no less true that the same play is a different object for different readers today because of the different relational features Shakespeare’s masterpiece has as a consequence of its relation to divergent cultural points of view. *In summa*: The object in question is not complete (or, with Kant, ‘in itself’) but rather in a state of constantly being formed, shifted, adjusted – changed, because of its relational properties, both temporal and cultural.

So far my description of what has been introduced as ‘relational properties’ by a few authors like David Weberman. It is, to begin with, clear that relational properties do not follow the logic of dispositions that unfold themselves as time marches on, but that they represent something truly new due to sometimes unexpected links to other entities. There are no defined and definable limits for these connections, rather a potentially *holistic network* of clusters, connections, and alliances that is synthetic (and not analytic) in character. Moreover, the concept of relational properties belongs to the hermeneutic tradition of reception theories turning initially aesthetic claims into ontological ones. Rudolf Bultmann’s famous claim according to which the reception belonged to

the received text is only the theological specimen of that very doctrine starting off with Gadamer's main work *Truth and Method* from 1960 and being an 'import hit' for literary theories thereafter.¹⁶

However, different objections may arise at this point and discussing them will lead us to make some conceptual modifications. First, does not this conception allow for a helpless relativism? No, I think, it doesn't, since we have to distinguish between being relativistic and relational. Whereas the former might express something like the absence and lack of any criteria, the latter underlines only a kind a dependence on specific contexts that do have criteria and set limits.¹⁷ Second, it is not entirely clear in Weberman's paper on which ontological classes these properties are applicable. Sometimes it looks as if we are only talking about properties of things; at other times, however (as with the example of the French revolution), we are dealing with historical events; more to the point, one could argue that relational properties are also relevant for other properties of any kind. If we do not subscribe to the (debatable) claim, that the universe is ontologically furnished only by things, events, and properties, then we might include our minds as changing in relation to their new relational properties too. So, everything is subjected to that change and everything could be changed in the way described.

And last and most importantly, is not the whole scenario sketched so far based on a confusion of hermeneutical changes with ontological ones, of shifting *significance* on the one hand with stable *meaning* on the other, of features of *our* understanding an object with features of that object *itself*? Not necessarily! Consider, for example, that a person might describe the French revolution differently because she has undergone a political conversion; then, this descriptive shift is a result of an upheaval in the personal epistemic or attitudinal makeup – and not in the event 'itself'. But as soon as a person describes the revolution in a new way because the revolution has adopted new relations to other

¹⁶ See Rudolf Bultmann, 'Das Problem der Hermeneutik', in idem, *Glauben und Verstehen. Gesammelte Aufsätze II*, 4th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1965), pp. 211–235 (p. 229); for the comparatistic background see Norman N. Holland, *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

¹⁷ Cf. Hilary Putnam, *Renewing Philosophy* (Cambridge MA / London: Cambridge University Press, 1992), ch. 4; Dewi Z. Phillips, *Faith After Foundationalism. Plantinga-Rorty-Lindbeck-Berger – Critiques and Alternatives*, 2nd ed. (Boulder CO / San Francisco / Oxford: Westpoint Press (1988) 1995), esp. ch. 4 and 17; in fact, this relative, but non-relativistic position is a Wittgensteinian one.

and new events, then it is not the person that went through a change, but the event did so, Weberman holds. Relational properties may be tantamount to new descriptions, but they are not merely changes in the epistemic or hermeneutical setting or the attitude and orientation of a person. It follows from this consideration that relational properties possess *ontological weight*.¹⁸

However, it might be the case that Weberman exaggerates his case and, moreover, that he claims more than what is required to make successfully his point. The confrontation between in- and extrinsic properties is, for sure, a crucial one; but it seems not to be necessary to hold that relational properties are *entirely* extrinsic to dispel the critical impression above, namely, that we are just playing here with the confusion between hermeneutical and ontological categories, with significance and meaning. Instead, one could argue in favour of the 'softer' supposition that relational properties are neither wholly intrinsic nor wholly extrinsic, but that they *combine* elements of both in constituting, therefore, a third category, a 'mixed bag'.

Coming back to the example of the French revolution, it was true that this historical event itself changed by new relational properties, but that this was not completely independent of what we as observer take that very event to be for us nowadays. It is analogous to what Kant described as 'perspective' on an object: I see the table as I am seeing it under certain parameters; there is, so far, nothing subjective (emotions, etc.) involved, just the unavoidable and hardly regrettable standpoint of a particular observer; however, there is, obviously, no perspective without the observing person, and this perspective could be shared by others if they see that table under similar conditions.¹⁹ Hence, here we have the mixture between in- and extrinsic aspects as well; and nevertheless, we could defend the claim that is the core element of Weberman's considerations, namely that relational properties have indeed ontological bearings.

III. GOD'S BEING IS IN (BE)COMING

This final section has only one task, to combine the initial exposition of the problem of God *a se* and God *pro nobis* with the concept of relational

¹⁸ Cf. Weberman, 'A New Defense of Gadamer's Hermeneutics', p. 55.

¹⁹ Cf. Markus Gabriel, *Warum es die Welt nicht gibt*, 8th ed. (Berlin: Uhlstein, 2013), p. 114 (engl. trans. in preparation with Polity Press, Cambridge).

(or extrinsic) properties. In other words: how could that very concept help us to understand a bit better God as a changing reality without trapping Him in the cage of human minds?

We should remember that this topic leads back to the medieval debates on God's existence in relation to God's essence. According to the classical doctrine to be found in the Thomist and, later, the nominalist tradition, there is 'no metaphysical distinction' between the divine existence and essence.²⁰ Thus, for God it is impossible to bring about His own nature without having already all essential properties. What is, following the existentialists, characteristic for human beings, namely to exist and, then, to develop by creating one's own essence is not the way in which God relates to His creation.

The constructive (but semi-heretical) conclusion from identifying God's existence and God's essence consists, however, in equating God with His acting on us, since His essence is nothing but His pure act or God Himself as *actus purus*. Insofar, Ludwig Feuerbach is completely correct in saying that God is not *per se* if He is not at the same time there *pro me*; or to put it in even stronger terms: God does not exist if no one believes in Him; He is only insofar as He is the object of faith.²¹ And this relation is expressed in the institution of prayer and confession where God and men come together in men being surrounded by the 'ultimately concerning' reality called God.²²

But again, how to make sense of God essentially acting on us without being essentially depending on us? Or, to borrow Eberhard Jüngel's phrase: who is the God whose Being is in (be)coming? It is interesting to see, that Jüngel (paraphrasing Barth in a critical discussion with his German colleague Helmut Gollwitzer in the 1960s) deals with a similar problem as we are doing here. Whereas Gollwitzer emphasizes the God *per se*, the divine aseity,²³ Jüngel underlines the theological necessity to think even God – *pace* the ahistorical metaphysical tradition excluding (radical) historicity in favour of temporally invariant structures – in historical

²⁰ See Brian Leftow, 'Is God an Abstract Object?', in *Noûs* 24:4 (1990), 581–598, esp. 594.

²¹ Cf. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 312.

²² See Eleonore Stump, 'Petitionary Prayer', in *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*, ed. by Eleonore Stump and Michael J. Murray (Oxford / Malden MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), pp. 353–366, esp. 363–364.

²³ See Helmut Gollwitzer, *Die Existenz Gottes im Bekenntnis des Glaubens*, 2nd ed. (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1963), p. 175.

terms of change, affection, and relational conceptions.²⁴ God's acting is His essence, and God's being is a moved and moving Being, a Being in action.²⁵ Accordingly, God's being is in becoming.²⁶

To conceptualize the divine coming and becoming it is, Jüngel holds in line with many other voices, unavoidable to think of God in Trinitarian terms, since the main intention behind that doctrine is to elaborate on God's radical historicity, i.e. even His self-confinement is to be thought historically and in a relational mode.²⁷ This could also be expressed, coming back to the concept of relational properties, as meaning that God is not 'in Himself', but that there are new relations to other and new events that change not only what we take to be God, but touch God's own Being.

Traditionally, the doctrine of Trinity serves as a hermeneutical model to think God's reality between the two poles outlined at the beginning, His sovereign aseity and His essential relation to the world. However, what exactly does this imply, how could we make sense of this doctrinal topic? My assumption is now, that we could paraphrase Trinitarian thinking by referring to the institution of relational properties, in other words and more precisely: we might use the concept of relational properties as ontologically transforming features for elaborating on the Trinitarian dynamics between the three 'persons' of Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit as well as their relation to human beings.

This implies that the Trinitarian modes of Being (Barth's 'Seinsweisen') represent three ways of gaining new relational properties and that God is the very dynamics of this divine enrichment. Either the doctrine of Trinity is, then, the theological expression of the general claim of change based on gaining (and losing or substituting) relational properties; or

²⁴ See Eberhard Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt. Zur Begründung der Theologie des Gekreuzigten im Streit zwischen Theismus und Atheismus*, 3th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1978), pp. 6–7, hereafter GGW.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 46 and 103; see Karl Barth, KD I/1, 391; II/1, 288.

²⁶ See Eberhard Jüngel, *Gottes Sein ist im Werden. Verantwortliche Rede vom Sein Gottes bei Karl Barth. Eine Paraphrase*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967), p. 77; also GGW, pp. 213, 415.

²⁷ Cf. GGW, p. 472; see also Ingolf U. Dalferth, 'The Eschatological Roots of the Doctrine of the Trinity', in *Trinitarian Theology Today. Essays on Divine Being and Act*, ed. by Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 1995), pp. 147–170, esp. p. 147; Hartmut von Sass, 'Nachmetaphysische Dreifaltigkeit. Barth, Jüngel und die Transformation der Trinitätslehre', in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 111:3 (2014), 307–331.

it is the other way round, that relational properties constitute an essential element within that doctrine that could not be explicated without referring to the category of relation. In the one case we would be dealing with a new paraphrase of an old doctrine; in the other case we would just be confronted with unfolding of what is already entailed in the Trinitarian dogma.²⁸

Now, there are different regards for integrating relational properties into the Trinitarian dynamics. The first one is expressed in the question of whether we are dealing with God's internal relation(s) between Father, Son and Spirit or whether His relation to His creature is concerned (or whether we want to defend that distinction in the first place).

The second regard touches on the problem in how far relational properties are relevant for all three Trinitarian 'persons' or whether only the second 'Seinsweise' of God's reality possesses relational properties whereas the both other 'persons' embody other properties of God, namely intrinsic (Father) and extrinsic features (Spirit). The former alternative means that God the Father denotes the divine reality to which one can relate (intrinsically independent); God the Son is the mode in which God relates to Himself in love and ultimate loneliness, in complete identification and desperate alienation on the cross (relational); and God the Holy Spirit is the medium in which we as humans relate to God as the relation between father and son (extrinsically dependent). The latter alternative would include that all three Trinitarian 'persons' possess *all three* properties (intrinsic, relational, extrinsic) emphasizing therefore, *pace* Arianism, the classical *homoousios* determined at the council of Nicea in 325.

The third regard creating divergent readings of relational properties within a Trinitarian framework concerns the two versions of what it 'is' that is gaining the new properties by collecting new relations. It could mean that God 'before everything else has come into existence' would adopt these new relations; contrary to that conservative reading, the proposal could also mean that this concept of God as the ultimate beginning is itself excluded by relational properties, since He Himself is and was changed by these very features, meaning His transforming reality is gaining these new properties. In the former case God would

²⁸ Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Subjektivität Gottes und die Trinitätslehre. Ein Beitrag zur Beziehung zwischen Karl Barth und der Philosophie Hegels', in idem, *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie. Gesammelte Aufsätze 2* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1980), pp. 96–111, esp. 100 and 107.

serve as metaphysical back-up existing at the very beginning initially without having relational properties; in the latter case that idea would present already a confusion because God himself is the process of having new relational properties that essentially change what God's reality actually *is*.

(NB: this third regard, has obviously, important implications for Christology: the former version still allows for sticking to the idea of a theological relevance of the historical Jesus in contrast to his later reception starting with His own disciples; the latter version, however, undermines that classic distinction between the Jesus of history from the very beginning and the 'kerygmatic' Christ of confession, sermon, and actual faith, since the reception of Jesus would – according to the basic idea of relational properties – change what Jesus Christ *is*.²⁹)

Since all these relations may imply new connections to other facts, things, persons, and events even God does not remain untouched from these new relational properties that do not create God himself or turn him to be essentially dependent on something other than Himself, but essentially change Him by creatures who relate to Him in prayer and are changed by God in that very address. The doctrine of Trinity is a theological model to elaborate on that very idea of radical historicity; the institution of relational properties might help us to clarify the God who is thought of in Trinitarian terms and is, therefore, a God whose Being is in becoming.

IV. NEAR THE END: A THEOLOGICAL IDEALISM?

God's Being is in becoming – this title does not only mean that God incarnates into the unstable and risky realm of change and becoming. It means, moreover, that God Himself is in that process without holding back an unchangeable backup that would only duplicate or separate God into two entities. A theological idealism is *theological* because it is God and not only a 'transforming religion' that is the object of interest. And it is a theological *idealism* because it is the transformative and in this transformation also transformed God who is the ground of the Christian

²⁹ See Martin Kähler's famous paper on the distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of proclamation and preaching: *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus* [1892]. Neu herausgegeben von Ernst Wolf, 2nd ed. (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1956).

hope – including the expectation that this idealism might be the real or even ‘higher realism’³⁰ in philosophical theology.³¹

³⁰ Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher speaks of a ‘höheren Realismus’ in *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* [1799], ed. by Hans-Joachim Rothert (Hamburg: Meiner, 1958), p. 31; for the relevant background see, for instance, Dietrich Korsch, ‘Höherer Realismus: Schleiermachers Erkenntnistheorie der Religion in der Zweiten Rede’, in *200 Jahre Reden über Religion. Akten des 1. Internationalen Kongresses der Schleiermacher-Gesellschaft*. Halle 14.–17. März 1999, ed. by Ulrich Barth and Claus-Dieter Osthövener (Berlin / New York: De Gruyter, 2000), pp. 609–628, esp. 625–626.

³¹ This article is the revised version of a paper given at the 20th conference of the European Society for Philosophy of Religion: ‘Transforming Religion’ in Münster, Germany, in August 2014.