Increasingly many contemporary philosophers accept metaphysics as essential to philosophy, and address metaphysical issues. This is a significant and welcome development, but it raises the pressing question of what, exactly, *metaphysics* is taken to be. Is there a definition or at least a general characterization of metaphysics that does justice to the long, important, but also chaotic history of inquiry that has had this designation? It appears that, at least in analytic philosophy, there is not. Instead, most analytic philosophers proceed on the usually tacit assumption that the only way to distinguish metaphysics from other areas of philosophical inquiry is to do the following two things: first, to introduce a purely extensional definition of the term metaphysics, so that metaphysics becomes the set of all philosophical approaches, past and present, to which this term has been applied; and second, to embrace one of those approaches, rejecting or ignoring all the others. This is deeply inadequate, chiefly because it situates all members of the set of approaches on the same level, the level at which the focus is on beings or entities. As will be argued below, however, philosophy, and indeed metaphysics, requires theories not only of beings but also, on a deeper (indeed, on the deepest) level, theories of Being.

That metaphysics must address Being is explicitly recognized by Thomas Aquinas, but post-Aquinian metaphysicians make no such specific inclusions. Indeed, not until Heidegger is Being again thematized—but Heidegger, as is well known, denies that his thinking is metaphysical. To be sure, Heidegger falls prey to selfmisunderstanding, in that he explicitly undertakes “a transformational recovering (*Verwindung*) of the essence of metaphysics,” adding: “... in this transformational recovering, the enduring truth of the metaphysics that has seemingly been rejected returns explicitly as the now

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appropriated essence of metaphysics.” Be that as it may, the radical rethinking of metaphysics advocated here centrally involves including Being within the subject matter of metaphysical inquiry, albeit, as will be shown below, within a theoretical framework that totally dissociates itself from Heidegger's understanding and practising of thinking.

What follows is divided into six sections. Section I characterizes the complex status of metaphysics at present, arguing that metaphysics requires rethinking because it is currently misconceived (by most analytic philosophers) or misinterpreted (by many continental philosophers). Section II shows what becomes of metaphysics if the current misconceptions and misinterpretations are avoided; most centrally, metaphysics then becomes, once again, an inquiry whose scope includes Being. The failure of traditional ontology to thematize Being will be shown in Section III, and the comparable failure of analytic metaphysics, in Section IV. Section V shows how Heidegger restates the question of Being, and Section VI closes the essay with some concluding remarks.

A striking phenomenon in contemporary philosophy is that the most radical critics—not to say enemies—of traditional metaphysics are no longer the traditionally best-known critics, especially Kant (to some extent), empiricists, logical positivists, and pragmatists. Instead, contemporary critics may be divided into those who do not say what they mean by metaphysics, instead relying tacitly on misconceptions, that is, they call their inquiries metaphysical (but their metaphysical domain is far narrower than is the domain of traditional metaphysics) and those who do say what they mean, but in doing so misinterpret metaphysics and consequently reject what they call metaphysics, but

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