

Is Being a “Screen” of God?

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Abstract Marion contends that whereas the traditional metaphysics (“onto-theology”) poses the first ‘idolatry’ in the sense that it reduces God, who is both transcendent and infinite, to a being, albeit the highest being, Heidegger’s ontology represents a second, yet subtler ‘idolatry’ in that Being is thought as a condition of God, and as such it constitutes a ‘screen’ over Him. I argue, however, that Marion’s criticism of Heidegger with regard to his position on the relationship between Being and God is not well founded, as it is based on a misinterpretation of Heidegger’s conception of Being. I attempt to show that Heidegger’s ontology accommodates the notion of God free from any ontological constraints.

In his *God without Being*, Jean-Luc Marion argues for a thesis, which is both unapologetically theistic and uncompromisingly postmodern: To liberate God from all ontological constraints¹. Written at the border between philosophy and theology, *God without Being* raises once more the question of God in the postmodern context. In developing the thought of love (*agapē*) as pure giving before Being, Marion attempts to show that the postmodern strategy of the de-centering of Being and the deconstruction of metaphysical discourse can help regain the authentic understanding of the question of God. In this respect the outcome might bear an affinity to pre-modern theology’s insistence on the primacy of the Good over Being. Following Heidegger, Marion attacks traditional metaphysics and its religious counterpart, natural theology for their ‘onto-theological’ nature, that is, thinking of God as *a* being, albeit the highest being. The heart of the book, however, is a move from the Heideggerian critique of onto-theology to the rejection of Heidegger’s post-metaphysical and anti-onto-theological notion of God, which, as David Tracy observes, constitutes the ‘most original and daring’ part of the work.² According to Marion, whereas the onto-theology poses the first ‘idolatry’ in the sense that it reduces God, who is both transcendent and infinite, to a being, the Heideggerian ontology represents a second, yet subtler ‘idolatry’ in that, while releasing God from the constraints of onto-theology, it still signifies that Being, though without the metaphysical

connotation, is still imposed on Him. Marion uses the metaphor 'screen' to convey the sense of what he thinks is the mediating nature and the conditionality of the Heideggerian Being. The only way to escape idolatry altogether, Marion proposes, is to break the 'screen', to think God without any condition, not even the condition of Being.

This paper is a critical response to Marion's criticism of Heidegger with regard to his position on the relationship between Being and God. I argue that the criticism is not well founded, as it is based on a misinterpretation of Heidegger's conception of Being. In the first section of this paper, I provide a succinct account of Heidegger's criticism of onto-theology and how Marion advances his criticism of Heidegger. In the second section, I offer my own interpretation of the Heideggerian Being and the so-called ontological difference. I argue that the Heideggerian Being is not a 'screen' understood either in the positive sense as a transcendental condition through which things appear, or in the negative sense as an obstacle or barrier in our encounter with things, playing the role of reducing God to a being. In the third section, I address Heidegger's unique understanding of the task of theology, and argue against Marion's charge that Heidegger's conception of theology is constructed in such a way that God is thought to be subjugated to Being. Ultimately, I want to show that Heidegger's ontology does not exclude the notion of God free from any ontological constraints.

I. 'Onto-theology and the God of Metaphysics'

The title of Marion's book, *God without Being*, with the deliberately misleading overtones of atheism, designates the central task of this philosophic-theological work: to free God from Being. The task is twofold, corresponding to the double meaning of Being, that is, Being understood in the tradition of metaphysics, and Being in the Heideggerian non-metaphysical sense. The first step of the task is to free God from metaphysical Being, which is precisely the theological significance he finds in Heidegger's criticism of onto-theology.

The term ‘onto-theology’ is used by Heidegger to designate the fundamental character of metaphysics, which, according to Heidegger, constitutes the heart of Western philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche³. In its most basic sense, onto-theology is the interweaving of ontology and theology. This interweaving, Heidegger points out, arose from the fundamental ambiguity in Aristotle’s definition of metaphysics, the ‘first philosophy’, as the study of ‘being *qua* being’, i.e., the Being of beings – for the study of the Being of beings can be understood as either an inquiry into Being as such or an inquiry into beings as a whole. In the former sense, the inquiry is about the essence of Being in general, and is thus known as ‘ontology’. In the latter sense, the inquiry is about the ground of beings as a whole. As this ultimate ground is known in Greek as *theion*, the study of Being of beings is then called ‘theology’. The inseparability of ontology and theology is a direct result of this ambiguity. According to Heidegger, metaphysics understands the difference between Being and beings in terms of ground and grounded. But for a system of metaphysics to be both complete and consistent, it must postulate something as the *causa sui* (self-grounding). This *causa sui* is the God of metaphysics. ‘The onto-theological constitution of metaphysics stems from the prevalence of that difference which keeps Being as the ground, and beings as what is grounded and what gives account, apart from and related to each other’⁴. The introduction of a metaphysical God into metaphysics is necessitated by the distinction between ‘ground’ and ‘grounded’ or between ‘Being’ and ‘beings’⁵.

While the term ‘onto-theology’ is used to signify the fundamental character of metaphysics, it is also meant to bring out the very nature of Christian theology in general.⁶ Heidegger says, ‘we must remember that the word and concept “theology” did not grow in the framework and service of an ecclesiastical system of faith, but within philosophy’⁷. Theology in its various forms takes as the fundamental doctrine that God as the creator is a being, the supreme being which grounds all beings and is at the same time the self-grounding, i.e., the *causa sui*. This is a result of the way the ecclesiastic theology of Christianity developed itself: It took up and transformed Greek metaphysics, and in doing so

transformed its own character. In taking possession of metaphysics, Heidegger tells us, theology has forgotten what is written in the First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians (*Corinthians* 1:20): ‘Has not God let the wisdom of this world become foolishness?’⁸

Heidegger’s overcoming metaphysics is then of both philosophical and theological significance. From the philosophical point of view, it is purported to uncover the real meaning of Being, and the still ‘unthought’ in the difference between Being and beings, or, to strip away the traditional theological appearance from the question of Being. From the theological point of view, it releases theology from philosophy, and at the same time, releases God from metaphysical constraints. Echoing Pascal’s famous distinction of the God of Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac from the God of the philosopher, Heidegger speaks of the divine God as opposed to the God of philosophy.

The Being of beings is represented fundamentally, in the sense of the ground, only as *causa sui*.⁹

This [*causa sui*] is the right name for the god of philosophy. Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god.¹⁰

The god-less thinking which must abandon the god of philosophy, god as *causa sui*, is thus perhaps closer to the divine God.¹¹

The so-called ‘god-less thinking’, then, should be understood as the non-metaphysical and post-onto-theological thinking, it re-establishes metaphysics without a metaphysical God. Such a ‘god-less thinking’ finds its expression in Nietzsche’s proclamation ‘God is dead’. According to Heidegger, the death of God in Nietzsche is the death of the God of metaphysics or the death of the God of onto-theology, not the death of the divine God, who is never comprehended by metaphysics, but can only be encountered through faith. Thus Heidegger claims that the expression ‘God is dead’ is ‘an expression not of atheism but of onto-theology, ...’¹² As the divine God has long been eclipsed by

the God of onto-theology, the death of the latter signifies the end of this eclipse and heralds the return of the former. This is precisely the reason why ‘the god-less thinking’ helps us move closer to the divine God.

Up to this point, Marion has been following Heidegger. He recognizes that Heidegger’s strategy, i.e., overcoming metaphysics, does bring about a fruitful destruction of the first ‘idolatry’, the metaphysical concept of God, and thus allows the emergence of a God who is free from onto-theology.¹³ However, Marion contends, it is doubtful whether the divine God can really emerge after the overcoming of metaphysics. The problem lies in the very act of ‘allowing’: the overcoming of metaphysics *allows* the emergence of God. According to Marion, Heidegger poses the question of Being as a/the precondition for the meaningfulness of the question of God. Thus ‘to release God from the constraints of onto-theology can still signify that Being, thought as such, without its metaphysical figure, in the way that Heidegger attempted, is still imposed on him.’¹⁴ He finds in the following passage how God, as understood by Heidegger, needs Being’s ‘permission’, Being’s letting-be, in order to make His appearance.

Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy is the essence of divinity to be thought. Only in the light of the essence of divinity can it be thought or said what the word ‘God’ is to signify.¹⁵

Marion invites us to see here how the question of God is ultimately determined by a preliminary, that is, the question of Being. ‘In the beginning and in principle, there adverts neither God, nor a god, nor the logos, but the advent itself—Being, with an anteriority all the less shared in that it decides all the rest, since according to and starting from it there literally remain only beings, and nothing.’¹⁶ Instead of stepping back from the God of metaphysics to the divine God, Marion argues, Heidegger takes the step back to the thought of Being, and thus sets up a screen, ‘the screen of Being’ (*l’écran de l’être*) before God. Once again, God falls victim to the constraints, this time not of onto-theology, but of the condition of Being, and thus remains ‘the divine prisoner’.¹⁷

Marion claims that Heidegger's primacy of the question of Being (*Seinsfrage*) establishes, beyond the idolatry proper to metaphysics, another idolatry, the second idolatry, proper to the thought of Being as such. By idolatry Marion means any regionalization of the divine. According to him, an idol is not false or illusory in any ordinary sense. On the contrary, its luminescence is an actual reflection of the divine. But the divine embodied in the idol keeps our look too captive so that we cannot see beyond it into the distance. The idol freezes the divine light within the scope of the merely human gaze, interest and aim, and thus is always a mirror in which we see ourselves. In the idol, we can never reach out to the invisible infinity of the true God. The God who is thought in terms of Being is an idol, as He becomes nothing more than a reflection of our projection of Being. The Heideggerian idolatry takes Being to measure the divine and as a result eradicates the infinite and incomprehensible depths of God in the way any idolatry does.

The solution to this second idolatry, therefore, is to dissolve or break the 'screen', to abandon the anteriority of Being, to de-center Being, or as Marion puts it, 'to think God without any condition, not even that of Being' and 'to think God without pretending to inscribe or describe him as a being.'¹⁸ This move, Marion thinks, is in line with what is disclosed in the revelation of I John 4:8: 'God is love (*agapē*)'. Love, Marion tells us, does not try to encompass or reduce someone to its own terms, but rather is a self-giving that advances without imposing conditions. The idea of *kenosis* in Christology signifies how we can possibly achieve an encounter with God: God crosses out himself (on the cross) from Being and reveals pure giving.

We are speaking of the ~~God~~ who is crossed by a cross because he reveals himself by his placement on a cross, the ~~God~~ revealed by, in, and as the Christ.¹⁹

Thus the Being-God relation must be reversed. Being is not prior to God, but rather, God is prior to Being.

~~God~~ gives Being to beings only because he precedes not only these beings, but also the gift that he delivers to them—to be. In this way, the precedence of Being over beings itself refers to the precedence of the gift over Being, hence finally of the one who delivers the gift over Being.²⁰

Marion claims that his thought of pure giving before Being has its precedents in the Neo-platonic tradition, who proclaimed the primacy of the good over Being. He contrasts the preeminent figure in that tradition, Pseudo-Dionysius, to the scholastic philosopher Thomas Aquinas, and argues that Aquinas' inversion of the good and Being resulted in a long tradition of the forgetfulness of the infinity of the unthinkable God, which Heidegger's radical strategy of overcoming metaphysics does not escape.

II. 'Screen' and Heidegger's Being

'Screen' is the metaphor Marion employs to designate Heidegger's Being. In its most basic sense, 'screen' refers to the conditionality of Being. This is indicated by the grammatical structure of the sentences used by Heidegger, 'Only ... can ...?' A condition may be understood in either a positive or a negative sense. The transcendental conditions in Kant's philosophy are basically positive in that they make our experience *possible*. Insofar as such conditions concern the realm of experience, they do not constitute obstacles and barriers between us and the world. The *noumena* are beyond our experience and are never the objects of our knowledge. On the other hand, a condition in its negative sense is understood as drawing the limits for the appearance of things; it allows some things, or some aspects of things, and not other things or other aspects of things, to appear. A condition in this negative sense may be what Heidegger calls 'enframing' (*das Gestell*). Enframing does not let things appear in their own way; it manipulates everything in a most violent manner. Obviously 'screen' is used by Marion as a condition in its negative sense. It makes God visible to human eyes, but at the same time closes our access to His invisibility and reduces His infinity.

The question now is whether Heidegger's Being is really a 'screen' as Marion claims it is, that is, a condition not only of beings, but also of God. In

what follows, I try to answer this question. It can be justifiably said that the whole enterprise of Heidegger's philosophy is to raise anew the question of Being, and to explain how his own thought on Being is fundamentally different from the way Being is conceived in the traditional metaphysics. To see this, it is important to look into how Heidegger critiques Leibniz' formulation of the first question, 'why is there something, rather than nothing', because Leibniz's formulation, as Heidegger sees it, is the most explicit articulation of the metaphysical understanding of Being, and his critique of it is not merely a critique of Leibniz, but also a critique of metaphysics as a whole.

In both 'What Is Metaphysics?', and *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger provides some extensive treatment of Leibniz's formulation of the first question of metaphysics. He explains that the 'why' in the question asks about the ground of beings. Thus the 'first question' is asked according to the 'first principle': 'Nothing is without ground (reason)'. Now in order to understand the 'first question' one has also to understand the 'first principle'. The first principle concerns the ontological difference in the sense that the ground of that which is must be understood as the Being of beings. However the relation between the ground of what is grounded in Leibniz, and in traditional metaphysics in general, is essentially a causal relation. That is, Being as ground is understood as a cause, the first cause of beings. Inasmuch as Being is the first cause, it is still treated as a being although the highest being, because the relation between a cause and what is caused is thought as a relation between one being and another. The first principle seems to pre-determine the answer to the 'why' in the first question, and thus marks forgetfulness of Being. Heidegger says:

This question inquires into the first cause and highest existent ground of beings. It is the question of the *theion*, a question that had already arisen at the beginning of metaphysics in Plato and Aristotle; that is to say, arisen from the essence of metaphysics. Because metaphysics, thinking the being as such, is approached by Being but thinks it on the basis of and with reference to beings, metaphysics must therefore say (*legen*) the *theion* in the sense of the highest existent ground.²¹

But how can we avoid this seemingly unavoidable way of thinking Being as a being? How can we really differentiate Being from beings? Heidegger suggests that we can find the possibility of avoiding the metaphysical treatment of Being by starting with the first question, 'Why are there beings, rather than nothing?' First of all, the question is about all beings, which are all we can think of, and what we can think of is limited only by nothing. The introduction of nothing by the first question into metaphysics is then simply to present beings as a whole, namely, that which is not nothing. As Heidegger puts it,

What follows in the interrogative sentence, 'rather than nothing', is only an appendage, which may be said to turn up of its own accord if for purpose of introduction we permit ourselves to speak loosely, a turn of phrase that says nothing further about the question or the object of questioning, an ornamental flourish. Actually the question is far more unambiguous and definite without such an appendage, which springs only from the prolixity of loose discourse. 'Why are there beings?' The addition 'rather than nothing' is dropped not only because it says nothing. For why should we go on to ask about nothing? Nothing is simply nothing. Here there is nothing more to inquiry about. And above all, in talking about nothing or nothingness, we are not making the slightest advance toward the knowledge of the being.²²

But it appears that metaphysics does have something to say about nothing. The clue, Heidegger suggests, lies in what is said in Leibniz's first principle, which can only be heard if we are attentive enough. Instead of '*Nothing is without ground*', Heidegger tells us, we should hear '*Nothing is without ground*', the 'ringing' together of the 'is' and 'ground'. In hearing '*Nothing is without ground*', we emphasize on 'thing' (being) and 'without', but not on 'ground'. The emphasis seeks to determine what being is or how being needs to be grounded. In hearing '*Nothing is without ground*', by contrast, we emphasize on 'is' and 'ground', but not 'being'. The switch of emphasis from the 'being' to 'is' is in fact a transition from being to Being. In hearing '*Nothing is without ground*', we get the sense of the belonging together of Being and ground. This does not mean that Being has a ground. It rather means that Being is a ground. Being itself is ground-less, that is, not grounded by anything else. Inasmuch as Being is the ground without ground,

it is the 'abyss' (*Abgrund*). Of great importance here is that we must not understand the ground which is Being in the metaphysical sense, that is, in terms of causal relation. Being is not another being along with beings which it grounds, but beings' own ground. It is precisely in this sense that Heidegger identifies Being, which is the ground (the 'abyss'), with nothing.

But there are in Heidegger two different, albeit related, meanings of nothing: existential and ontological, both of which are mentioned in 'What Is Metaphysics?' When he says that anxiety reveals the nothing, he is referring to the existential nothing which is already discussed quite extensively in *Being and Time*. While in an average, everyday mode of existence, one is preoccupied exclusively with beings, nothing reveals itself to Dasein in his anxiety of being toward death, in which 'Dasein finds itself face to face with the "nothing" of the possible impossibility of its existence'.²³ In 'What Is Metaphysics?' the existential analysis of the nothing by way of the phenomenological description of anxiety gives way to the analysis of the ontological meaning of the nothing, which, though still obscure in *Being and Time* as Heidegger admits,²⁴ receives a poetic elucidation in a late work 'The Thing',

The emptiness, the void, is what does the vessel's holding. The empty space, this nothing of the jug, is what the jug is as the holding vessel.²⁵

Understood in the traditional way the being of a jug is its form or essence, which determines the jug as a jug. 'The Thing' shows, however, what is more fundamental is the 'emptiness' or the 'nothing', because it is the 'emptiness' or the 'nothing' by virtue of which the jug obtains its form from which arises the usefulness of the jug. Being as nothing or emptiness is also 'openness' and 'clearing', in which beings appear. This sense of Being (or nothing) is explored in 'The Origin of the Work of Art',

The forest clearing (opening) is experienced in contrast to dense forest, called 'density' in older language. The substantive 'opening' goes back to the verb 'to open'. The adjective *Licht* 'open' is the same word as 'light'. To open something means: To make something

light, free and open, e.g., to make the forest free of trees at one place. The openness thus originating is the clearing. What is light in the sense of being free and open has nothing in common with the adjective 'light', meaning 'bright'—neither linguistically nor factually. This is to be obscured for the difference between openness and light. Still, it is possible that a factual relation between the two exists. Light can stream into the clearing, into its openness, and let brightness play with darkness in it. But light never first creates openness. Rather, light presupposes openness.²⁶

Being does not determine *what* beings are, and does not endow beings with forms or essences; it rather *allows* or *lets* beings be. By 'allowing' or 'letting' Being removes obstacles or barriers from our access to beings, which are kept in the darkness of the dense forest of metaphysical concepts. It is the sense of 'clearing' or 'openness' of Being which allows and lets beings be that is totally ignored by Marion when he speaks of the Heideggerian Being as a screen which turns God into 'the divine prisoner'.

III. Theology as the Science of Faith

If, as I have argued, Heidegger's Being is not a condition for the presence of God, how are we to explain his famous assertion made in the 'Letter on Humanism'? Now I want to draw attention to what Heidegger really says in this important text. In fact Heidegger here talks about the word (Wort) 'God', not what the word refers to.

Erst aus der Wahrheit des Sein läßt sich das Wesen des Heiligen denken. Erst aus dem Wesen des heiligen ist das Wesen von Gottheit zu denken. Erst im Lichte des Wesens von Gottheit kann gedacht und gesagt werden, was das Wort »Gott« nennen soll.²⁷ (Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy is the essence of divinity to be thought. Only in the light of the essence of divinity can it be thought or said what the word 'God' is to signify.²⁸)

The word 'God', which is always part of human discourse, is surely not God himself. And it is the word 'God', not God, that needs the disclosure of the truth of Being. As long as the word 'God' is metaphysically construed, we can not experience the infinity and otherness of the divine God through the word 'God'.

The issue here may pertain to Marion's distinction between idol and icon. For Marion, while an idol abolishes distance, an icon always directs us to the infinity of God. Marion would not deny that even an icon is a human creation in the way the word 'God' is. Now the theological significance of Heidegger's overcoming of metaphysics may be seen as essentially an effort to save the word 'God' from being an idol and establish it as an icon. The role of Being is then not to determine what the word 'God' refers to, but to *allow* it to point to the distance. Being only provides the condition for a proper understanding of the word 'God', not a condition for God. This point can be better appreciated when we come to understand what the central task of theology is for Heidegger. In a seminar held at University of Zurich in 1952, Heidegger says,

Being and God are not identical and I would never attempt to think the essence of God by means of Being. Some among you perhaps know that I come from theology, that I still guard an old love for it and that I am not without a certain understanding of it. If I were yet to write a theology -- to which I sometimes feel inclined—then the word Being would not occur in it. Faith does not need the thought of Being. When faith has recourse to this thought, it is no longer faith. This is what Luther understood. Even within his own church this seems to be forgotten. One could not be more reserved than I before every attempt to employ Being to think theologically in what way God is God. Of Being, there is nothing to expect. I believe that Being can never be thought as the ground and essence of God, but that nevertheless the experience of God and his manifestedness, to the extent that the latter can indeed meet man, flashes in the dimension of Being, which in no way signifies that Being might be regarded as a possible predicate for God. On this point one would have to establish completely new distinctions and delimitations.²⁹

Clearly, for Heidegger, Being is not God, nor is it a condition of God. The question of Being is relevant to theology because theology is not the science of God, i.e., *theo-logy* in the traditional sense, but the science of faith. Theology does not have to do with God. It has to do with the fact of faith in the Crucified. In this sense, theology remains a positive science, and is then closer to chemistry and mathematics than to philosophy.³⁰ Such a positive science deals with the fact given prior to any theoretical consideration,³¹ and the fact (*positum*) is what

Heidegger calls the 'Christianness' (*Christlichkeit*), which is 'disclosed only in faith'³² and 'decides the form theology will take as the positive science which thematizes it'.³³ As a positive science, theology is subject to the ontological correction.

One reason Marion charges Heidegger with submitting theology to philosophy, which entails the ultimate submitting God to Being, is that, according to Marion, Heidegger maintains that the ontological analytic of Dasein is more essential than theological account of man as believer. 'Man can eventually become a believer only inasmuch as he exists as Dasein'.³⁴ The separation of philosophy and theology (as part of the deconstruction of onto-theology) and the prohibition of the talk of Being in theology as urged by Heidegger allows only the ontic independence of theology. There is still 'an irreducible ontological dependence' of theology on philosophy.³⁵ Marion concludes,

Hence the theology of faith falls within the domain of *Dasein* and, directly through it, of Being, as the 'God' of metaphysics falls within the domain of onto-theology and hence indirectly through it of Being. It seems that the question of 'God' never suffers as radical a reduction to the first question of Being as in the phenomenological enterprise of Heidegger.³⁶

But it is doubtful whether Marion does justice to Heidegger's interpretation of the relation between theology and philosophy, and to the so-called 'ontological correction'. Although Heidegger admits that the essence of faith can be described as a mode of human existence, and thus the analytic of Dasein can provide ontological correction to the theological account of human beings as believers, he nevertheless insists that Christianness as the fact given to theology does not arise from Dasein or through Dasein, but rather from that which is revealed in and with this mode of existence, from what is believed.³⁷ Thus, theology as a positive science is still different from other positive sciences, such as chemistry and mathematics, which need from philosophy 'their original foundation, the demonstration of all their inner possibilities, and hence the full range of their

truth'.³⁸ So there is a need to differentiate Dasein as such (the pre-Christian Dasein) from Dasein as a believer. Heidegger states,

... being placed before God means that existence is reoriented in and through the mercy of God grasped in faith. Thus faith understands itself only in believing. In any case, the believer does not come to know anything about his existence in faith by way of a theoretical confirmation of his inner experience. Rather, he can only 'believe' his existential possibility as one which human existence itself is not master over, in which it becomes a slave, is brought before God, and is reborn.³⁹

One's pre-Christian existence is indeed existentially, ontically, overcome in faith.⁴⁰

The analytic of Dasein, then, cannot determine the theological account of man as a believer. Heidegger's example is rather illuminating, which Marion simply chooses to ignore: the relation between sin and guilt. Recall Heidegger's extensive analysis of guilt in *Being and Time*. Guilt in that analysis is neither an ethical concept nor a religious one, but a purely ontological determination of Dasein. Now, Heidegger tells us, the theological concept of sin cannot be properly understood in light of the ontological concept of guilt. '[T]he concept of sin is no simply built up from the ontological concept of guilt. Nevertheless, the latter is determining in one respect, in that it formally points out the ontological character of the region of Being to which the concept of sin as a concept of existence must necessarily adhere.'⁴¹ Being a concept of existence, the theological concept of sin acquires the ontological correction. 'But the primary direction (derivation), the source of its Christian meaning, is given only by faith.'⁴² Thus the ontological correction does not found anything for theology.

IV. Concluding Remarks

It is worth noting that Marion in his preface to the English edition written ten years after the French book first appeared seems to hold a more conciliatory view on the relationship between Thomas Aquinas and Pseudo-Dionysius, which he describes in *God without Being* as basically reconcilable one. He suggests now that Thomism need not be interpreted in an 'onto-logical' manner and may be

understood as consistent with the Dionysian position. This change of attitude is largely a result of his reinterpretation of Aquinas' *ipsum esse* (Being itself) by doing away with the importance of analogy and his emphasis on the incommensurability between *ipsum esse* and *ens commune* (Being in general). Of course, this is very much Barthian in spirit. Barth speaks of the Being of God, but rejects the *analogia entis* (analogy of Being). Man's relation to God, he insists, is not based on some intrinsic attributes (Being for example) that man has in common with God.⁴³

Can't Marion reinterpret Heidegger in the way he reinterprets Aquinas? I see no good reason that he cannot. Hans Jonas, a student of Heidegger himself, insists that the Being Heidegger ponders is the 'quintessence' of this world, it is *saeculum*.⁴⁴ What he tries to say is quite obvious. The question of Being, if relevant to the question of God, concerns only the preparation on the part of man. Being as the condition of such a preparation is a 'clearing' necessary for recovering from the metaphysical discourse which has concealed the meaningfulness of faith.

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Notes

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- ¹ Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, translated by Thomas Carlson (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), translated from *Dieu sans l'être* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982). Marion developed the argument also in *L'idole et la distance* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1967) and 'La double idolâtrie' in *Heidegger et la Question de Dieu*, (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1980).
- ² David Tracy, 'Foreword' to the English translation of *God Without Being*, p. xiii.
- ³ Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 59.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.
- ⁶ Heidegger recognizes some exceptions in the medieval mysticism, particularly Meister Eckhardt.
- ⁷ Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on Human Freedom*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 50.
- ⁸ Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 287-288.
- ⁹ Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 60.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 72.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.72.

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- ¹² Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol.4, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 210.
- ¹³ Marion, *God Without Being*, p. xxi.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xxi.
- ¹⁵ Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 267.
- ¹⁶ Marion, *God without Being*, p. 41 (*Dieu sans l'être*, p. 65).
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70 (pp.105-6).
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.72 (p.108).
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71 (p.107).
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.75 (p.113).
- ²¹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol.4, p. 209.
- ²² Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 22-23.
- ²³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 331.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 310.
- ²⁵ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 169.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- ²⁷ Heidegger, *Wegmarken* (Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1967), pp. 181-182.
- ²⁸ Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 267.
- ²⁹ Heidegger, *Seminare*, in *Gesamtausgabe* 15, Klostermann Vittorio GmbH, 2005, pp. 436-37.
- ³⁰ Heidegger, *The Piety of Thinking*, trans. James G. Hard and John C. Maraldo, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 6.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- ³⁴ Marion, *God Without Being*, p. 68 (*Dieu sans l'être*, p. 103).
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69 (p.104).
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 69 (p.104).
- ³⁷ Heidegger, *The Piety of Thinking*, p. 9.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴³ According to Arnold B. Come, Barth was persuaded by von Balthazar in 1950 that both his *analogia relationis* and Aquinas' *analogia entis* do not conflict. See *The Later Heidegger and Theology*, ed., James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb (New York and London: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 122.

⁴⁴ Hans Jonas: 'Heidegger and Theology', *Review of Metaphysics*, 18 (1964), pp. 207-233.