God and Alterity

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In philosophy the question about God has developed, historically, parallel to and intimately connected with metaphysics. In metaphysics, the onto-theological thought of God arises from its dependence on the ontological difference, the thought of the 'unthought as such.' Within this philosophical construct, God is ultimately thought as the 'ground' of all that is, the Being of beings, the *causa sui*. This paper, mostly inspired by the philosophy of Jean-Luc Marion and Emmanuel Levinas, argues in favour of a post-metaphysical way of thinking about God: a thinking which releases God from the onto-theological category of Being, and addresses the radical and irreducible alterity of God; a thinking which critiques thinking, in order to address the dilemma of our discourse of Transcendence to be shared within a community-in-dialogue.

This work is divided into three major sections. Beginning with Marion's interpretation of Heidegger's account of the analytic of the *Dasein*, the first section will suggest that one starts the question of God from God alone—the *gift* of Love that precedes Being—rather than from Being. The second section will introduce Emmanuel Levinas' account of the ethical pre-condition of discourse and reason. For Levinas, discourse starts with, or is preceded by, the gaze of the face of the Other who refuses to be reduced into a category of the same. Subsequently, the questions of language and reason, their limits, necessity, and ethical reach will also be addressed. Finally, this paper will revisit the question of God and reflect on the philosopher's and theologian's call to dialogue with, and service to, the community.

I

Heidegger observed the problematical character of unity between 'the common being (thus no being in particular) and essence (thus with a supremely particular being)'[1] in metaphysics. In order to find a common unity between these two categories, Heidegger proposed to "take the relationship between the two functions of the same 'metaphysics' to be that of two intersecting and reciprocal

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'groundings'"[2] For Heidegger, the internal unity of metaphysics was found in a common 'Being' (*das Sein*) as that which grounds beings and essences: 'The common Being grounds beings and even essences; in return essence grounds, in the mode of causality, the common Being: "Being grounds beings, and beings, as what *is* most of all, account for Being".'[3] Metaphysics is thus defined by Heidegger as the onto-theological system of the mutual or overlapping grounding between essence and existence.

But for Heidegger the place of Being is no longer found within metaphysics. Rather, its ground is located in phenomenology. Once Being was re-located under the discipline of phenomenology, Heidegger attempted to approach the question of God in relationship to Being.

Rather than concentrating on the metaphysical question on the 'existence of God,' Heidegger posed a more fundamental question, the question of existence itself, Being as such, that all that is *is*: 'The truth about "God" could never come but from where truth itself issues, namely from Being as such, from its constellation and from its opening.'[4] For Heidegger, this anteriority of the *Sein* is secured and justified concretely by the analytic of the *Dasein*. The phenomenological anteriority of the *Dasein* comprehends Being 'over all beings and over every regional ontic investigation.'[5] This privileged anteriority of *Dasein* as Being-in-the-world does not reveal anything against or in favour of God's existence, yet it implies and presupposes Being as the ground of all that is, including God.

Marion is aware of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics' turning Being into an objectifiable conceptual category under the domain of the *ego*-consciousness. Marion is similarly suspicious of the limits of metaphysics. As Marion points out, contrary to this metaphysical construct of God,

> Christianity does not think of God starting from *causa sui*, because it does not think God starting from the cause, or within the theoretical space defined by metaphysics, or even starting from the concept, but indeed starting from God alone, grasped to the extent that he inaugurates by himself the knowledge in which he yields himself—reveals himself'.[6]

Although Marion is suspicious, he no longer plays against metaphysics, but, rather, critiques Heidegger's primacy of *die Seinsfrage* and—as Marion states in the preface of his book—'shoot[s] for God according to his most theological name—charity.'[8]

How could we think of God outside of metaphysics, and even more

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so, outside of *Dasein*? It is not the same to say that God is 'beyond' being as to say that God is 'without' being. While the former expresses a 'hyperessentiality' of God's discourse that still depicts God as 'God,' the latter attempts to take away the quotation marks in order to free God from 'God.'[9] Even when we use language 'transreferentially,' pointing not to an object, but evoking in the reader an 'event of mystical union,'[10] we are still facing the difficulty of releasing God from ontological categories, and in doing so, we still remain in the stage of elucidating the necessity of Being in God—even if Being has a post-metaphysical denotation as in Heidegger's account.[11]

For Marion, the proposition 'God is a being' itself appears as an idol, "because it only returns the aim that, in advance, decides that every possible 'God,' present or absent, in one way or another, has to be."[12] Marion suggests that the quotations marks on 'God' are symptomatic of the onto-theological position that has transformed God into a conceptual idol in which God masks himself.

It is important to mention that Marion opens his book with an explanation of the distinction between the idol and the icon. While the idol freezes the gaze of the divine upon itself, marking the invisible by the gaze of man, the icon provokes our vision of the Invisible God who first looks at us in the ultimate icon—Christ, as the visible of the Invisible. Opposite to the conceptual idol of 'God,' which fixes the divine in a concept, the icon releases the concept from confining God conceptually by pointing beyond the limits of reason, transcendental consciousness, and ontological difference.[13] In order to abolish such an idolatry, Marion proposes to cross GXd so that we could return to the 'icon' of GXd where 'GXd manifests (and not masks) himself, in short, where he gives himself to be envisaged by us.'[14] Rather than using quotation marks, Marion crosses the word GXd to indicate precisely the pre-ontological reality of God-love as revealed in the Cross, 'the GXd revealed by, in, and as the Christ... [this] GXd does not express himself first according to and starting from Being.'[15]

Because God is love, God is Other than Being: 'Only love does not have to be. And, GXd loves without being.'[16] As John 4:8 insinuates, 'God is love' (*ho theos agape estin*). This reality as otherwise-than-being in God consists, 'more radically than in being, in loving.'[17] God precedes Being. God's pro-ontological 'requisite'[18] also precedes the 'gift' of Being that he delivers to all beings. In this sense, as Marion argues, the 'gift' has precedence over Being:

> GXd 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

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> the precedence of Being over beings itself refers to the precedence of the gift over Being. That one, the Requisite, 'Being returns to him but he does not return to Being; Being is found in him, but he is not found in Being; he maintains Being, but Being does not maintain him'[Denys]. Being, *auto to einai*, is only uncovered in being dispensed by a gift; the gift, which Being itself thus requires, is accomplished only in allowing the disclosure in it of the gesture of a giving as much imprescriptible as indescribable, which receives the name, in praise, of goodness.[19]

Must not love *be* in order to love? Must not God[20] *be* to love? For Marion, God could no longer be envisaged as the ground of being, but as a love-donation that delivers God as a 'being-as-given.' This donation 'obeys a demand infinitely more complex and powerful than the resources of efficient causality.'[21] Through his donation, God defines himself as the being-as-given *par excellence* rather than as the 'donor-being':

> This supremacy denotes neither sufficiency nor efficient causality nor primacy, but the fact that he (God) gives himself and allows a giving that is being, more than any other being-as-given. In short, with God, we are dealing with the being-as-given *par excellence*, the being who is completely given (*l'étant-abandonné*).[22]

This giving completely implies that God gives without restrictions, reservations, or restraint:

> God gives himself absolutely, with every aspect offered, with no outline withheld, in the way that a Cubist painter explodes the dimensions of objects, so that all their appearances are juxtaposed, despite the constraints of perspective. God reveals himself given unreservedly, with nothing withheld. His obviousness unfolds in the atonal tonality of dazzlement.[23]

In virtue of his donation, God becomes invisible. God disseminates all limits (the absence of horizons), and thus presents himself not as an object, but as an absence/trace, as unknowability. as a radical non-availability. The paradox of God's donation is that he is a phenomenon *par excellence* who runs the risk of revealing without appearance, refusing to be possessed or manipulated:

> And we verify this each time we see the donation misunderstood, on the pretext that, since it is given without repossession or retreat, it abandons itself to the point of disappearing as an object that is possessable, manipulable, discernible. The donation *par excellence* in

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fact risks seeming to disappear (by default) precisely because it gives itself unreservedly (by excess). And every day we see for ourselves this strange but inevitable paradox.[24]

God-Love is *otherwise than being* not because it is non-being, but the 'excess' or the incommensurableness of a giving that is (an exception) prior to its manifestation. God-Love is not the opposite of Being, but is other than the other of Being or non-being, is *otherwise.* Being is exceeded by the excess of a donation which is prior to its appearance as a phenomenon, and thus subversively refuses to be possessed. This radical love of God is subversive in its giving. It upsets all the wisdom of the world (1 Cor 1:27) by crossing out thought, by forcing thought to criticize itself. This does not mean that God's love is irrational. It means that God transverses and unmasks, thus abolishes, the freezing of God into a conceptual idol of human reason. Jesus' death on the cross is the manifestation of this subversive love that challenges logical thinking. Out of this gift that gives itself to creation and all thinking, *theo*logy discourses.

Some may criticize Marion for doing precisely what he is trying to avoid—presenting reasonable arguments for talking about God outside of reason and of Being. But for Marion, a discourse on God is only plausible under this pre-condition of God's gift; otherwise it becomes a mere theo*logy* that submits God to the logical game-rules of Being, which ultimately freezes God before the gaze of human *Dasein.* The experience of God-Love that gives himself for the sake of the Other calls for higher levels of conceptualizations (and deconstructions), in which typifications are not focal—but still must be used. Rather, the experience of God's *gift* precedes and provides the clue for all later conceptualizations. God gives Himself to be known 'insofar as He gives Himself—according to the horizon of the gift itself.'[25] In the gift's act of giving itself, the gift gives absolutely. A discourse on God arises from this act of giving: 'To give pure giving to be thought;'[26] and so it is always a kind of *said,* catching up to, and never quite catching up to *say*ing.

II

We theologize, philosophize, and discourse about God. God's donation is his saying that *gives a sign,* it is his expression, and thus self-exposure, which enters into a dialogue with us. My saying of God is the giving of myself giving words to another; it displays my vulnerability to the other. As Levinas points out in his account of the saying,[27] although protected and somewhat dissimulated in the said, it (the saying) 'exposes' itself:

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> This exposure is the frankness, sincerity, veracity of saying. Not saying dissimulating itself and protecting itself in the said, just giving out words in the face of the other, but saying uncovering itself, that is, denuding itself of its skin, sensibility on the surface of the skin, at the edge of the nerves, offering itself even in suffering—and thus wholly sign, signifying itself. Substitution, at the limit of being, ends up in saying, in the *giving signs, giving a sign of this giving of signs*, expressing oneself.[28]

The saying is the gifting with a sign from which discourse takes place. Through discourse and language we thematize the non-thematizable only because discourse and language are not only inevitable, but indispensable.

As Marion points out, the 'Copernican revolution' advanced by Levinas consists in his consideration of the primacy of ethics over ontology, since (even fundamental) ontology is unable to attain the ground, a ground that is not governed by theoretical philosophy, but by ethics:

> Thus not only did ethics become the *philosophia prima*, but it shifted the centre of the *ego* toward the always already open, offered, and destitute face of the other people, and therefore toward the being-as-given of others. The *ego* no longer provides a foundation through (self) - representation; it always reveals itself already preceded by the being-as-given of others, whose contra-intentionality it submits to, unobjectively [...] According to the rules of donation, the *ego* thus attains a secondarity which is nevertheless more phenomenal than any representative primacy. To the *ego* others appear to be the nearest being-as-given.[29]

This being-as-given of others is the other's face, his/her manifestation or 'epiphany' that speaks by the act of disclosure/donation. For Levinas, the face speaks and instructs, and does so only in the ethical mode: 'this face forbids murder and commands justice'.[30] Even before I am 'provoked' by the other's demand, the feature of ethics is in the demand of the other's face. The other calls me not to centre my attention on my own *ego*, but to step away from myself and to be responsible before the other in his/her alterity:

> To be responsible before another is to answer to the appeal by which he approaches. It is to put oneself in his place, not to observe oneself from without, but to bear the burden of his existence and supply for its wants. I am responsible for the very faults of another, for his deeds and misdeeds. The condition of being hostage is an authentic figure of responsibility.[31]

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I am a 'substitute' for the other person, responsible in his/her place, a hostage for the other. Whether I respond to the other or not, the call of the other to responsibility is always there, it is always initiated from the 'already there' of the face in front of me. Even before someone else is responsible for me, I am responsible for the other person, and thus the fact of the asymmetry of the relationship:

> Such responsibility, to the point of suffering or dying for the other person, is asymmetric. I am a substitute for the other person, but no one is reciprocally a substitute for me. Indeed, characteristic of this ethics is the moral revulsion from any claim that others are responsible for me in the same way that I am responsible for them. Independent of the complex relations to many other people, prior to any considerations of justice, I am responsible for this neighbour, this near one, regardless of the other's behaviour, attitudes, even responsibilities toward me. Such a being-for-the-other instigates my entry into society, where there are other others and justice is at issue.[32] But we join society, says Levinas, because before joining, we are already responsible excessively for one other person, the neighbour.[33]

'To speak is to make the world common, to create common places.'[34] Not only am I responsible for the other, but I speak in order to signify my responsibility. The linguistic system is an indispensable tool that serves to utter and communicate/share (despite insufficiency) that which is outside of language, being, or theme. The pre-original saying moves 'into a language, in which saying and said are correlative of one another, and the saying is subordinated to its theme.'[35] And although it appears that in and though language the *otherwise than being* is an event of being, the pre-original character of the saying refuses to be reduced by the synchronicity of the said.[36] The saying remains always a 'trace' without origin, a diachrony of a proximity that cannot be fully re-presented (and yet it is betrayed when it enters into essence).[37] The saying in the said, however, is not a failure or a 'fall' of the saying, but rather, language, theme, thought, the said... all are—despite the betrayal— 'motivated by the pre-original vocation of the saying, by responsibility itself'.[38] For Levinas, language is not a mere doubling of reality, or a re-presentation of the Other, but is the way to make myself available for the other, for whom I am already responsible.

This ethical dimension that is initiated by the call from the other is the pre-condition of discourse, reason, and knowledge. While the modern European philosophical tradition describes cognition under the primacy of consciousness, synthesis, presence, and synchrony, Levinas proposes a different account of knowledge. For Levinas, reason and cognition are preceded by how the other is given. It is a precedence by

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what could not be synchronized, or could not be present, a diachrony, a past before memory.

The primacy given to knowledge is one of the principal characteristics of the modern European philosophical tradition. Within this tradition, knowledge is understood to be given in the temporal mode of presence. All objects must show themselves in the horizon of presence, in order to be accessible to analysis and/or description. In knowledge, nothing is absolutely hidden or secret, but immanent and accessible, or present, to consciousness. This immanence is a temporal mode deployed 'in favour and on the basis of the present, itself understood as the [Hegelian] here and now by which consciousness assures itself'.[39] That which is other, whether an object, thing, or being, is reducible or accessible to thought, and consequently subject to the unity of a system of thematization.

As Levinas points out, knowledge and reason are 'sought in the relationship between terms, between the one and the other showing themselves in a theme.'[40] Levinas calls a *system* this coexistence between different terms in the unity of a theme: 'the one with the other are present in it as one signifying the other, the one as sign of the other, the one as renouncing its figure to trespass over to the other.'[41] As Levinas points out, throughout this reduction the other is 'divested of its strangeness, in which thinking relates itself to the other but the other is no longer other as such; the other is already appropriated, already *mine*.'[42] Cognition appropriates the other as its own within the confines and under the scrutiny of the *ego*, self, self-consciousness, and/or mind. Under this view, discourse is capable of synthesis via the signifying *cogito*, which reduces thinking to a relation of adequation between thought and the object.

But how can the philosopher talk about the *Other qua Other* that ultimately resists the *ego*'s power of conceptualization and *thematization* (that which 'begins' as an act of consciousness)? As Levinas observes,

> But the problem is that one can ask if a beginning is at the beginning, if the beginning as an act of consciousness is not already preceded by what could not be synchronized, that is, by what could not be present, the unrepresentable, if an anarchy is not more ancient than the beginning and freedom?[43]

For Levinas, the 'proximity' of the other, the 'neighbour,' is the givenness of the other *qua* other before me, gazing first at me and making me his/her hostage. This proximity is for Levinas a reason before the thematization of signification by the thinking subject, before

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the assembling of terms in a present, a pre-original reason that does not proceed from any initiative of the subject, an anarchic reason.'[44] Reason is not, thus, what begins in the cognitive act of the ego-consciousness synchronically assembling terms under a system of re-presentation (the unity of a theme). It has an ethical genesis 'before the beginning, before any present, for my responsibility for the other commands me before any decision, any deliberation.'[45] This *an-archy* of the other's face that puts at risk the certainty of my knowing is 'transcendence itself, before certainty and uncertainty, which arise only in knowledge.'[46]

Is not Levinas (and myself) using language and discourse, thus thematizing or synchronizing terms when he talks about ('describes') transcendence? How could one speak of that which transcends the subject (the 'I') without reducing the alterity into a converted measurable category of the same?

For Levinas, the idea of Infinity is 'transcendence itself, the overflowing of an adequate idea.'[47] Following Descartes' reflections on infinity, Levinas regards the idea of Infinity not only as an idea that is beyond consciousness, but an 'invasion' of consciousness (the 'totality' to which Infinity 'does not permit itself to be integrated [into]'[48]). The Infinity of the Other exceeds my capacities and turns my world inside out by coming into my world. This asymmetrical relationship of the face to face position between the Other and the same, in which the Other is given from a 'height,' challenges and breaks my tendency to totalization (and reduction):

> The conjuncture of the same and the other, in which even their verbal proximity is maintained, is the *direct* and *full face* welcome of the other by me. This conjuncture is irreducible to totality; the 'face to face' position is not a modification of the 'alongside of..' Even when I shall have linked the Other to myself with the conjunction 'and' the Other continues to face me, to reveal himself in his face.[49]

The Infinite 'affects,' 'overwhelms,' and 'devastates' thought, by calling thought into question and getting me involved in 'a critical attitude which is itself produced in face of the other and under his authority.'[50]

For Levinas, philosophy is called to fulfil the task of remaining in this critical attitude implicit in the saying engendered in face of the other. In this sense, philosophy is not separable from scepticism that recalls the faults seen in the totality of representation. Scepticism is a form of breaking up the 'coherent discourse', which in its infatuation with the said 'dissimulates a transcendence, a movement from the one to the other, a latent diachrony, uncertainty and a fine risk.'[51]

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Philosophy, as well as theology, is called to take this risk of facing the uncertainties of discourse by remaining in a critical attitude. Because language and discourse betray the saying in the said, because the said masks the transcendence under an artificial and synthetic representation, the task of both philosophy and theology consists in venturing to reduce that betrayal. This venturing is an adventure, a 'drama' that calls (a vocation of responsibility) for self-reflection, and even more so, outside/beyond the self, to a shared or communal reflection:

> Philosophy thus arouses a drama between philosophers and an intersubjective movement which does not resemble the dialogue of teamworkers in science, nor even the Platonic dialogue which is the reminiscence of a drama rather than the drama itself. It is sketched out in a different structure; empirically it is realized as the history of philosophy in which new interlocutors always enter who have to restate, but in which the former ones take up the floor to answer in the interpretations they arouse, and in which, nonetheless, despite this lack of 'certainty in one's movements' or because of it, no one is allowed a relaxation of attention or lack of strictness.[52]

In this venturing, the philosopher/theologian dialogues and reflects with other humans. He/she listens to what the other person has to say about certain questions or pondering, and addresses an interlocutor bringing new horizons within a communal attempt to find answers.

This level of dialogue and discourse is similar to Habermas' theory of 'communicative community' (*Kommunikationsgemeinschaft*), in which the "participants in a practical discourse test the validity claims of norms and, to the extent that they accept them with reasons, arrive at the conviction that in the given circumstances the proposed norms are 'right'."[53] The communicative community is an intersubjective community that is 'discursively' grounded in 'consensus of the participants through argumentation.'[54] Habermas suggests a need for critical theory in order to judge which assumptions and prejudices are implicit in language and communication, and to detect how power and domination operate in interpretation as well. What impedes understanding is not just the result of an inward phenomenon of 'misunderstanding,' but *ideology* is also a phenomenon that distorts and exercises coercion upon the act of communication. As Paul Ricoeur points out in his comments on Habermas' account of ideology, the distortions of language, 'do not come from the usage of language as such but from its relation to labour and power, these distortions are unrecognizable by the members of the community. This misrecognition

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is peculiar to the phenomenon of ideology.'[55] A reference system[56] should work as a critical instrument to show how language is also ideological. Critical philosophy is therefore required, in Habermas' opinion, in order to unmask the pluralism of spheres of interest that underlie the enterprise of knowledge and the content of discourse.

Without undermining or excluding the punctuality of Habermas' emphasis on critical theory, in the Levinas model, however, this rationalistic approach of communicative community must be preceded by an ethical cornerstone that recognizes the primacy of the Other. The precondition to dialogue, although it does not exclude reason, is ultimately founded on a pre-cognitive level: 'The need to theorize becomes not a mode of cognition but a requirement of responsibility in relation to others.'[57] Before I respond to another, the discourse already starts in the openness of a face to whom I open or expose myself. Rooted in ethics, philosophy and theology have then a vulnerable task of self-exposing by saying a theme and then unsaying what it has said; both the said and the saying play a crucial role in the philosopher's and theologian's vocation.

III

And what about *God*? Throughout our discussion of Levinas' account of the Other, the question about God has not been peripheral. God is the Other *par excellence*; he is the Other-Transcendence-Unreducible *gift* who gives even to the point of becoming vulnerable to thematization (Marion's, Levinas,' ours, or saying itself) which philosophy and theology cannot ultimately avoid, and yet are called upon to reduce.

Marion follows a similar argument to Levinas's account of the Other. Like Levinas, he argues for an account of transcendence outside the framework of metaphysics and onto-theology. God is the radical Other who cannot be reduced to representation. Yet, unlike Levinas, for Marion the radical alterity of God is not analogous to the 'face' of the neighbour. Instead, our 'vision' of God is similar to the economy of the *icon*. God is not the product of the human gaze that results from a vision of the invisible (*idol*), but he is the one who provokes a vision (*icon*), gives himself to be seen, and—as Graham Ward comments on Marion's *God Without Being*— 'opens an infinite depth to which one's gaze surrenders, in veneration.'[58] Thus, for Marion, God's kenotic love gives beyond any analogy, even of Being. This act of kenosis is God's *donation par excellence*.

Speaking about God's kenosis, absence, or trace, does not mean that we try to eliminate God's existence. God indeed *is*.[59] But we agree

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with Marion who—despite his inevitable hermeneutical horizon—questions any kind of absolutizing of God as a mere metaphysical and onto-theological concept. And, at the same time, we do not want to resolve the inevitable tension between the 'dialectizable and the non-dialectizable'[60]—which is still dialectical—by giving predominance to one pole over the other. Infinity is not just a logical negation of the finite, but a 'co-implication' of the finite. In our discourse on God we are provoked by his initiative to enter into dialogue with us. Our language serves as a medium and locus for facilitating and evoking this encounter. In some ways, theological discourse is about an encounter between the inner and the outer experience of the Infinite God. But because we are always prompt to absolutizing through language, we are called to self-critique and constant renewal in order to let God be God. In discoursing on God we need both the *said*—a presence for others in words—and the *unsaying*—a reopening of self for others. Robert Gibbs is right in pointing out that this philosophical dilemma reflects a tension between the said and the unsaying, whereas both are necessary for discoursing on God:

> Without the said, philosophy would consign transcendence to an outside, leaving the inside of the system intact; without the unsaying, philosophy would again reduce the God who comes to mind to merely what the mind can think. Philosophy itself becomes philosophy and God. God and Philosophy.[61]

The mystery still remains, God who is ultimately Other is also immersed in the life-world from which we—God-and-us—dialogue. God, who is 'outside the subject', enters the world making an inscription of his trace, and we encounter this trace within the realm of our worldliness (our being-in-the-world). Language and discourse are this liminal point between the finite and the Infinite, presence and absence. As Graham Ward explains it, the core of discourse on God displays this mystery of the Word in human words:

> Discourse weaves a way of faith between the Spirit that questions, disrupts and promises, and human attempts at representing this action. Discourse is the presentation of otherness *and* human representations of it; the Saying *and* the said, the Word *and* the words.[62]

Through discourse, language says and unsays this mystery, and in doing so, it reveals, captures, and mirrors the Infinite, 'like sparks from hearth fires everywhere.'[63] The fact of mystery displays our condition and the unresolved dilemma of God:

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> That everything can be sacred or profane, full of meaning or perfectly senseless, seems here to be the simple consequence of what will look like the most mundane evidence and the most problematic of mysteries: the passage from the sensible to the intelligible by way of the inscription of the trace.[64]

Ultimately, nevertheless, Love is not spoken, but—as Marion rightly points out—love is done; 'in the end, it is made. Only then can discourse be reborn.'[65] If it is really genuine, a discourse about God must first start from this agapic encounter with God-who-gives radically. From this birth we then reach out beyond the confines of the self and return the gift, not to God—since God gives unconditionally and without a fee—but to the community in dialogue.[66]

1 Jean-Luc Marion, 'Metaphysics and Phenomenology: A Summary for Theologians.' *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader.* Ed., Graham Ward (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 281.
2 Ibid., 281.
3 Ibid., 282.
4 Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being.* Trans.., Thomas A. Carlson. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 41.
5 Ibid., 42.
6 Ibid., 36.
7 Although our argument throughout this work is not focused on or ultimately founded upon a particular religion (i.e., Christianity), we find some of Marion's reflections on the God of Christianity as a paradigm of God's radical gift of love displayed in and through Christ. It is important, however, to inform the reader of Marion's (and our own) religious context which inevitably influences and shapes his (our) position. Besides a few examples from Christ and Christianity, most of our arguments remain outside the Christian arena—but not without diminishing or underestimating its relevance for our discussion.
8 Marion, xxi.
9 In Marion's critique of metaphysics, the 'God' with quotation marks depicts the 'God' of philosophy and metaphysics as founded/grounded on the thought of Being, instead of an experience of God which is anterior to Being.
10 Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 10.
11 For a critique of Marion's interpretation or *mis*interpretation of Heidegger's comments on the relationship between God and Being, see Laurence Hemming's essay, 'Reading Heidegger: Is God Without Being? Jean-Luc Marion's Reading of Martin Heidegger in *God Without Being.*' in *New Blackfriars* (July/August 1995), 343-350. See also John Caputo's essay entitled 'How to Avoid Speaking of God: The Violence of Natural Theology.' from *Prospects for Natural Theology.* Ed., Eugene Thomas

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Hang (CUA Press, 1992), 128–150.

12 *God Without Being*, 44.

13 For more details on the distinction between idol and icon, see chapter one in *God without Being*, 7-24.

14 Ibid., 76.

15 Ibid., 72-73. The fact that *God* has primacy over Being, does not rule out a metaphysical approach to God later.

16 Ibid., 138.

17 Ibid., 74.

18 Marion uses Denys' term the 'Requisite' (*Aitia*) to denote that "which defies categorical expression since everything is at once predicated of it and yet it is nothing of all these things'." Ibid., 216 (footnote 55).

19 Ibid., 75.

20 The word God will not be crossed in the rest of this paper; it is nevertheless implied.

21 'Metaphysics and Phenomenology: A Summary for Theologians', 291.

22 Ibid., 291.

23 Ibid., 292.

24 Ibid., 293.

25 *God without Being*, xxiv.

26 Ibid., xxv.

27 Levinas seldom makes it explicit that the Other is God, he rather and mostly talks about the other as another human person. For the purposes of our paper, we are using Levinas' analysis of the other as a paradigm of the irreducible alterity of God.

28 Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Trans.., Alphonso Lingis. (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981), 15. Italics are mine.

29 'Metaphysics and Phenomenology', 290.

30 Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*. Trans., Kathleen Blamey. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 189.

31 *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, xiv.

32 In the face of the other the 'ought' is already there (whether or not I recognize it). For Levinas equality and reciprocity, as well as norms, come from the level of the 'third.' This level of the third is a third party, a viewer that views the I from the vantage of the other. The third is the eyes of humanity (the we) calling to form a community based on equality and justice. This social dimension, however, presupposes (or results from) the asymmetrical relationship given by the face of the other. (For a more detailed description of the third, see *Totality and Infinity*, 212–214).

33 Robert Gibbs, 'Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995): Introduction.' *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader*, 50.

34 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*. Trans., Alphonso Lingis. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1994), 76.

35 *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, 6.

36 As Adriaan Peperzak comments on Levinas' account of the conceptual pair *diachrony-synchrony*, these concepts are borrowed from Saussurean

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linguistics, 'where they are used to contrast the diachronic evolution of linguistic elements and the synchronic aspect of their state at a certain moment or period of time.' Cf. *Emmanuel Levinas. Basic Philosophical Writings*. Ed Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. (Indiana: Indiana University Press: 1996), 186 (footnote 21). It is important to note the time factor implicit in this conceptual pair. The saying relationship subtends the said. I bring the saying into the present of said (synchrony), a new saying is still there (diachrony), but I have just made it a theme, and so forth.

37 This 'pre-original' or *an-archic* character of the saying means not having an (ontological) ground or origin or beginning (*arche*). We will show further the relationship between cognition, consciousness, and present, in contrast with a type of knowledge that is initiated by the pre-original 'face' of the other.

38 Ibid., 6.

39 *God Without Being*, 170.

40 *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, 165.

41 Ibid., 165.

42 Emmanuel Levinas, 'Transcendence and Intelligibility', *Emmanuel Levinas. Basic Philosophical Writings*, 151.

43 *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, 165.

44 Ibid., 166.

45 Ibid., 166.

46 Ibid., 167.

47 *Totality and Infinity*, 80.

48 Ibid., 80.

49 Ibid., 80–81.

50 Ibid., 81.

51 *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, 170.

52 Ibid., 20.

53 Jürgen Habermas, 'Selections from Legitimation Crisis', *Critical Theory. The Essential Readings*. Eds. David Ingram and Julia Simon-Ingram (New York: Paragon House, 1992), 205.

54 Ibid., 205.

55 Paul Ricoeur, 'Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology', *The Hermeneutic Tradition. From Ast to Ricoeur*. Eds., Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift. (NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 318.

56 Also called 'meta-hermeneutics', a system for helping to 'formulate the theory of communicative competence..., [and] which comprises the art of understanding, the techniques for overcoming misunderstanding and the explanatory science of distortions.' Ricoeur, 319.

58 Graham Ward, 'Introducing Jean-Luc Marion,' in *New Blackfriars* (July/August 1995), 319.

59 See Fergus Kerr's 'Aquinas After Marion.' in *New Blackfriars* (July/August 1995, 354-364) drawing parallels and differences between Marion and Aquinas regarding God's existence.

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60 We follow the same conclusive remarks on this dialectical tension as explained by Maurizio Ferraris, 'The Meaning of Being as a Determinate Ontic Trace', *Religion*. Eds. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Oxford. Polity Press, 1998), 170–211.

61 From Robert Gibb's introduction to Levinas' 'God and Philosophy.' In *The Postmodern God. A Theological Reader*. Ed., Graham Ward (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 51.

62 Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 245.

63 John Caputo's critique of Marion's *God Without Being* is sharp and relevant. He outlines some of the 'dangers' that Marion's account encompasses, particularly in regard to the areas of Ecclesial centralized power (see Caputo's section 'Ecclesiology Without Violence,' 143–147). Caputo is also right in his Derridarian approach to language and conditionality, reflecting upon the implicit and inevitable 'violence' of mediation within every discourse—including Marion's!

64 Ferraris, Ibid., 196.

65 *God Without Being*, 107.

66 I thank Fr. Michael Barber, SJ, and Fr. Fergus Kerr, OP for criticism and advice throughout the process of writing this essay. I am also grateful to Sally Gunter and Andrew Forshaw, OP for proof-reading my work.

The Younger Mrs Ward
A Catholic Novel of 1899

Bernard Bergonzi

One hundred years ago two Mrs Wards, not related to each other, were writing novels in England. Mrs Humphry Ward had achieved instant fame in 1888 with *Robert Elsmere*. This story of an earnest clergyman who loses faith in organized religion keyed into Victorian anxieties and controversies about faith and doubt. Its author, born Mary Augusta Arnold, was a granddaughter of Dr Arnold of Rugby and a niece of Matthew Arnold; she was a woman of high intellectual and scholarly attainments, a devout agnostic but keenly interested in religion. Ten years later she turned her

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