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The Intentionality of Logos, the True Transcendence of Dasein: A Dialogue on Heidegger's Ontology in Father D. Stăniloae and J.-L. Marion

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Abstract

This approach focuses on a convergence point between father Stăniloae's theology and Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology, as concerns Heidegger's ontology. The German philosopher launches a challenge as to the role that the Embodiment of Logos actually plays in human existence. According to him, the Incarnation event is for man only a corrective to the ontic, while father Stăniloae and the French philosopher consider that we are facing a true ontological reconfiguration of human existence. This is because the One who has stepped into the ontological field of the human being has the power to take man out of the *being-toward-death* paradigm and give him the opportunity to become *being-toward-resurrection*. Both father Stăniloae and Marion resort to Areopagitic thinking, in which God is above the being, i.e. supra being, so He cannot be considered a being among others, even if He were considered a supreme being. At the same time, God is love because He is the Trinity of People and it is only through this reality that the human being gains more in terms of existence.

Keywords: ontology, being, supra being, *being-toward-death*, Logos, love

OUR PAPER WILL FOCUS ON a convergence point between father Stăniloae's theology and Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology. Their comparison was pursued within the context of Heidegger's philosophy. The two thinkers attempt, each with his own tools, to elucidate what role the Embodiment of Logos actually plays in the world. Is it only as a corrective to the ontic, as the German philosopher claims, or are we, in fact, in the presence of an ontological reconfiguration of human existence?

According to the Christian Revelation, God has created the world *ex nihilo*, so that the being of the world, in which we can include the human being, or the being of the act of being, as Heidegger would call it, cannot be confused with the being of God that precedes and founds it. In his book *The Idol and Distance*, Marion asks an open question, to which however he suggests an answer: “Do the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ affect the ontological destiny or do they remain only an ontic event?”¹ The question is in line with how Heidegger sees “Christianity” by merely bringing an ontic correction to philosophical ontology. This question opened towards Christian Revelation is answered by father Stăniloae, according to whom man is on the “verge of non-being” and, in order to avert this threat,

it is not in the world where we are that we keep our life, as we seem to think, but by leaving it, by losing what we think is life. Life in the present form of creation is a disfigurement of life, it is a life that implacably progresses to death. Only by coming out of this state of illness, by placing ourselves on the edge of being, in front of God, do we regain our life.²

Here the Romanian theologian partially supports Heidegger’s idea of *being-toward-death* in the sense of the limit of existence, but he also definitely contradicts him on the way in which the human being, the *Dasein*, can transcend itself, not only in temporal epectasies, on the horizontal, but it can even transcend the very horizon of the being. Not only can it transcend it, but it needs it urgently, in order to save itself from the “verge of non-being.” Through his Incarnation, the Christ

placed himself between humanity and death, or between the core of all human beings and the death that surrounds them and penetrates them as a darkness of non-being. Through sin [...] the world has leapt again into nothingness³.

Thus, Jesus placed Himself between the being of the act of being and nothingness. God created the world out of nothing, but not to plunge back into nothing or nothingness, but to make it part of divinity, through man. Consequently, the Incarnation event brings about the change and renewal of the ontological destiny⁴ of human being. According to a Greek theo-

¹ Marion, Jean-Luc, *The Idol and Distance*, trans. Tinca Prunea Bretonnet and Daniela Pălășan (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007), 296 [In Romanian].

² Stăniloae, Dumitru, *Christian Love*, postface by Sandu Frunză (Galați: Porto-Franco, 1993), 32 [In Romanian].

³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴ As father Schmemmann puts it, the renewal of man’s ontological destiny is seen in the acceptance by the world of his own self, since, according to his words, “The world con-

gian, “the Incarnation of God the Word laid the foundation of the freeing of the human being from the hold of the devil, of sin, of degradation and of death, while through the Resurrection of Christ the ontological liberation of man was sealed.”⁵

Hypostatic union has precisely the role of bringing man out onto the edge of his finite being, so that from here he can begin to abolish the limits of his existence, by participating in divinity. In opposition to Heidegger’s concepts on the void, “boredom, anxiety and acedia,” Marion suggests three other concepts that abolish it: “the call, the gift and existence.”⁶ *The being of the act of being* abolishes its limits because the One who is above the being and existing before it becomes the true Shepherd of the being, by turning it from *being-toward-death* into *being-toward-resurrection*. This view is also shared by father John Behr:

the whole divine oikonomia was aimed at extending the inter-trinitarian life of glory to the disciples, by their contemplating the Son of God in His body, glorified with the glory that He had with the Father before all eternity, and through this contemplation, by participating in His glory.⁷

Heidegger’s idea about *the only corrective to the ontic* when referring to Incarnation is very much in line with Saint Iustin Popovici’s criticism of the Arianism of western culture of protestant origin. According to him,

Christ is descended to the status of a simple man. God-the man is continually stripped of what He really is; Arius’ work is continuously accomplished. Kant’s *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* is nothing but the new edition of Arianism⁸.

To Heidegger, the distinction between theology and philosophy meant placing himself in the wake of ancient ontology and embracing a form of methodological atheism, since, from an ontological point of view, the “analytics of Dasein has a pre-Christian content and datum, to which

demned itself when on Golgotha it condemned the One who was its true self,” in Pr. Prof. Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, trans. Pr. Prof. Ph.D. Aurel Jivi (Bucharest: Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 2001), 24 [In Romanian].

⁵ Dimitrios Tselenghidis, *Grace and Freedom in The Patristic Tradition of the 14th Century*, trans. Pr. Ph.D. Daniel Pupăză (Iași: Doxologia, 2015), 55 [In Romanian].

⁶ Xavier Tilliette, “Phénoménologies autonomes: Michel Henry & Jean-Luc Marion,” *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, T.60, Fasc.2, Filosofia & Cristianismo: I – Aspectos da Questão no Século XX (Apr. – Jun. 2004): 480.

⁷ Pr. John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, trans. Adela (Iași: Doxologia, 2016), 79-80 [In Romanian].

⁸ Archimandrite Iustin Popovici, *The Man and the God-Man*, trans. Pr. Prof. Ioan Ică and deacon Ioan Ică jr., (Sibiu: Deisis, 1997), 153 [In Romanian].

‘Christianity’ only confers an ontic corrective.”⁹ In Heidegger’s opinion, this ontic corrective does not affect in any way the primacy of *Dasein* and its situation in temporal finitude. *Temporal epectasies* are its only transcendence. According to Marion, by narrowing theology down to a mere ontic variable, Heidegger achieves “God’s first submission to the being. Secondly, this means that God only intervenes as a being among the others that the being of the act of being reconciles according to the ontological difference.” In this sense, God “only intervenes as a supreme being, and this makes Him appear even more clearly as an insignificant being. Under this second condition, ‘God’ submits entirely to an idolatrous prerequisite.”¹⁰

Marion will react to Heidegger’s identification of God with the idea of supreme act of being, by strongly claiming that “God is not an act of being preceded, governed and distributed by the being.”¹¹ He will pursue his demonstration by showing that the event of the Incarnation was so much more than acquiring a human nature, as it is not only the ontic aspect “of a particular being, but the fundamental constitution of *Dasein* that God takes on and renews.” Therefore, the French phenomenologist wonders whether

kenosis may [...] be summed up as an ontic event [...], an event which subsequently modifies certain ontic determinations of *Dasein*, without affecting its entire inner structure. Or whether Christ invests with a new dimension [...] not only a particular being (His own humanity), but the very being of the act of being.¹²

In fact, the Incarnation of Christ implies God’s entering the ontological field of the human being. The One who is, according to Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, above the being, i.e. supra being, enters the ontological field of the human being. Therefore, according to Dionysian theology, God cannot be identified either with the one, or with the being, or with goodness, or with existence because:

existence itself originates in the pre-existing One. And existence is His and He does not belong to existence. And existence is in Him and He is not in existence. And existence has Him and He has not existence. And He is eternal and He is the beginning and He is the measure of existence, existing before the being and before existence and beginning of being a doer and means and end of it all.¹³

⁹ Marion, *The Idol and Distance*, 289.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 291.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 294.

¹² *Ibid.*, 296.

¹³ St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Complete Works*, trans. Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae (Bucharest: Paideia, 1996), 160 [In Romanian].

Therefore, in theological terms, God is above the being. What Heidegger does in his philosophy is to define the conditions of human possibility for divinity. But the conditions of possibility of the *Dasein* are limited to its strict temporality and worldly horizon, so that, in its turn, this heideggerian prerequisite shapes conceptual idols.

The conditions of possibility, the prerequisite of Heidegger's *Dasein*, are abandoned by the Incarnation of Christ. He does not expect man to prepare Him "abode," to allow Him to manifest Himself according to human rules, but He comes to this world announced by old prophecies, in *the fullness of time*, yet – as Marion puts it in biblical terms – "His own did not receive Him" (John 1,11). The manifestation of God in history is paradoxical, because one would expect that this incarnation of Christ would be well received, prepared, cherished. The love of God is manifested irrespective of this prerequisite of man. Let us remember that the prophecies placed the birth of the Messiah in the Bethlehem of Judea, while Jesus is known as the Nazarene, and that He will later be crucified. He is asked to leave the country of the Gergesenes after He restores a demon-possessed man. So, "His own did not receive Him," they did not prepare Him "abode." He came into this world in a manger, which

not only does not limit and prohibit manifestation, but becomes its prerequisite (as the destruction of any idol prior to the unthinkable), its characteristic feature (God alone can reveal Himself, when and where no other divine being can wait) and even its highest stake (God reveals Himself by outpouring His divine glory).¹⁴

Kenosis reveals Christ's unconditional love. There is a clear suspension of reciprocity. God does not condition His gift of man's receiving Him, of his respect or of his love, but He gives without withdrawing, even embracing death on the cross. For Marion, love goes before the idea of being in philosophy, because:

God is not because He must not be, but He loves, therefore, by definition, no condition can continue to restrict His initiative, amplitude and ecstasy. Love loves unconditionally, simply because it loves; He loves without limit or restriction.¹⁵

In phenomenological terms, love takes precedence over the concept of being, because love is the giver. To be love, love involves experiencing a direct relationship. Trinity love fulfills all the conditions of phenomenology to constitute the donation, because the love of the Father is given in with-

¹⁴ Marion, *The Idol and Distance*, 297.

¹⁵ Jean-Luc Marion, *God without being*, trans. Thomas Carlson, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 47.