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Heidegger, Marion, and the Theological Turn: "The Vanity of Authenticity" and the Answer to Nihilism

Matthew C. Kruger[1]

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Abstract
This article explores the responses to nihilism offered by Jean-Luc Marion and Martin Heidegger. In particular, this paper offers a response to Steven DeLay's 'The vanity of authenticity'; DeLay's text argues for the superiority of Marion's response to nihilism through his notion of vanity and, further, argues that this supposed defeat of Heidegger by Marion lays the foundation for the theological turn in philosophy. This paper will instead suggest that Marion has not in fact surpassed Heidegger, that his concept of vanity does not represent a meaningful innovation, and that his answer to nihilism/vanity through love is more similar to Heidegger's response than either DeLay or Marion acknowledges. DeLay's reading focuses on Heidegger's *Being and Time*, but uses this reading to dismiss Heidegger's work in its entirety. This paper will, instead, focus on Heidegger's later work, which is ignored by both Marion and DeLay, offering particular attention to the shift in Heidegger's response to nihilism as he increases his engagement with the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche and introduces the concept *Gelassenheit*, which generally replaces the terminology of authenticity after the 1940s.

Keywords Jean-Luc Marion · Martin Heidegger · Friedrich Nietzsche · Nihilism · Vanity · Theological turn

This article is offered in response to Steven DeLay's lengthy essay on the concept of 'vanity' in Jean-Luc Marion. I thank DeLay for his contribution: Marion's understanding of vanity is insufficiently recognized, and it is a sharp and essential critique of earlier philosophy, as well as an important diagnostic tool for approaching today's world.

This being said, I find many significant issues with many of the arguments presented in the article. The primary concern of this paper will be DeLay's treatment of the work of Martin Heidegger, though this requires careful qualification. DeLay

✉ Matthew C. Kruger
krugerma@bc.edu

[1] Theology Department, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, USA

offers a thorough criticism of Heidegger's concept of authenticity, centered upon a close reading of *Being and Time*. He uses this close reading to (1) argue for the superiority of Marion's thought, and (2) to dismiss any further use of Heidegger—or Husserl, for that matter—at least in terms of their phenomenological method.[1] There are two obvious concerns which emerge from this argument. First, *Being and Time* appears in 1927; Heidegger writes for almost fifty additional years, and continues to revise, refine, and perhaps even fundamentally change his thought. To offer a reading of a single early text and then dismiss that figure's work in its entirety is plainly inappropriate and inadequate. This is especially true on the matter of authenticity, as Heidegger ceases using the term in his writing by the 1940s. To suggest, therefore, that Heidegger's faulty concept of authenticity causes his work to be defeated by Marion, when Heidegger himself revises and dismisses the term in his own work, is a particularly weak argument. To be fair to DeLay, his target appears to be philosophers who argue for the continued significance of authenticity. To this end, I would share his concern, as Heidegger's reworking is accomplished for good reason, namely his increasing engagement with Nietzsche and his understanding of the response to nihilism in his later work. The goal here, therefore, is to agree with DeLay on the importance of Marion's treatment of vanity, but to suggest there is much more in Heidegger's later writings which Marion's philosophy needs to engage with before a conclusion is reached regarding the preeminence of vanity or the necessity of the theological turn.

Second, DeLay treats Marion's concept of vanity as a novel usage of an older concept, overlooking Marion's own statement regarding its presence in Nietzsche, as well as the direct manner in which it is addressed in Heidegger's thought. Vanity's question, 'What's the use?' is, as will be discussed, the question of purpose; it is answered by Nietzsche through the revaluation of all values, an answer dismissed first by Heidegger and subsequently Marion who follows the same argument. It is at this point where Marion's critique of Heidegger emerges, namely the argument that at the point of perfect boredom (vanity), the call of Being would be insufficient to provide an answer to vanity's question. Instead, Marion answers the question with an understanding of kenotic love, which, because love is matter of interest, restores interest and thus purpose in existence: as DeLay summarizes, 'As Marion shows, we see that love—ultimately biblical love of God and neighbor—marks us as the ones we are' (DeLay, 2021, 21). The problem, however, is that Marion does not understand Heidegger's Being; neither does DeLay. It is interpreted as a question of existence or ontology alone, constrained by the question of ontological difference, and this approach does not address the expansive sense of Being granted in Heidegger's work, especially his later writings. Most significantly, Marion does not account for the concepts of love, care, hospitality, and poetic inspiration, themes which are

[1] 'Summoning us to face up to the depths of who we are, the erotic reduction reminds us that phenomenology must make the theological turn. Vanity disqualifies anything less.' (DeLay, 2021, 64). That is, Heidegger's phenomenological method (and methodological atheism) is shown to be inadequate because of Marion's critique of vanity, thus suggesting that the only choice for philosophy is to turn towards theology as Marion does.

found throughout Heidegger's work and provide an answer to 'what's the use?' in a way which holds many similarities with Marion's response.

The key difference is, of course, the specific nature of Marion's answer, expressed here by DeLay as 'biblical.' The answer to nihilism for Marion is Christian love; Heidegger's answer is far less specific, and far more difficult to trace, though its resonances with Christian love have been noted by a variety of thinkers.[2] Marion proudly and directly includes Christian theology into philosophy, making space with his phenomenological method, an approach which contrasts sharply with Heidegger's methodological atheism. It is for this reason that DeLay declares the necessity of the 'theological turn' in philosophy—since a Christian concept of love is the only thing which can answer nihilism, in this telling, it is necessary that philosophy embrace this concept. As I have indicated, however, Heidegger's answer is not as different as it seems, and there may be good reasons for hewing closer to Heidegger's non-theological approach than turning to Marion's overtly theological one.

This paper will proceed as follows: first, I will provide a quick overview of the concept of vanity in Marion's work. DeLay's reading is taken only from *The Erotic Phenomenon*, and it is essential to understanding the concept in full to make reference to an earlier work which also offers a substantive treatment, namely *God without Being*. The discussion of vanity in these two works provides the critique of Nietzsche and Heidegger from the perspective of vanity, and particularly Marion's suggestion that both projects fail to answer the question, 'What's the use?' This leads to an account of Heidegger's answer to nihilism, with particular interest paid to the role of love in his work, as well as poetic inspiration and the concept of *Gelassenheit*. What is suggested here, briefly, is that Heidegger's answer shares much with Marion's which is unacknowledged or unknown by Marion; in particular, the shared influence of Augustine is crucial to acknowledge before attempting a substantive distinction between the two thinkers on this topic. This leads, finally, to the question of the theological turn, and to whether Heidegger's approach may have a certain appeal in comparison with Marion's overtly theological position.

Marion's Vanity

What is vanity? This is a complicated and expansive question covering several decades over the course of Marion's career. The two primary sources of his thought on vanity, treated explicitly, are two of his major works, *God without Being* and *The Erotic Phenomenon*. This being said, Marion uses the concept of vanity as a means of discussing nihilism; the terms are sometimes used interchangeably by Marion himself (Marion, 2012b, 114), and the discussion of nihilism can thus include a far wider range of texts.

In *God without Being* and *The Erotic Phenomenon*, vanity is perfect boredom. It is a state where a person is not interested in anything, not moved by anything; it does not require active judgment or determination that things are boring or meaningless,

[2] See Kearney (1992) and Vattimo (2010), as examples among others.

but is simply an inability to be taken in by anything. For both texts, vanity is of a piece with the process of seeing the shortcomings of previous forms of philosophy. A person in vanity is unmoved by all previous forms of philosophy which might attempt to give them a reason to engage with the world, and this because they are perfectly bored.

In *God without Being*, vanity is discussed as a matter of five components: suspension, boredom, vanity of vanities, as if, and melancholy. First, a suspension of judgment begins the process, where one withdraws from active determination—instead of saying, 'this is right, this is wrong, this is good, this bad…' everything is 'meh,' without significance, without interest or the possibility of judgment/attachment. Second, this suspension leads to boredom; Marion is careful to distinguish this form from previous thinkers, especially Nietzsche and Heidegger, stating that this boredom is not Nietzsche's nihilism, because outside Nietzsche's 'will to power' (Marion, 2012a, 114) nor is it anxiety, because Marion's bored person is too bored to respond to the call of Being (Marion, 2012a, 117).

This brings us to the third step, namely vanity of vanities, which Marion takes from *Ecclesiastes*. Writing of 'the black sun of vanity,' Marion describes a point where the complete lack of interest renders everything perfectly indifferent, and the person 'no longer feels interested in interest' (Marion, 2012a, 123). The question of interest is the most important part of Marion's description of vanity and thus of nihilism. In order to answer nihilism, one must be furnished with an interest—that is, one must have a desire to engage with some given thing, to find purpose through interest.

The fourth and fifth steps, likewise, set up the solution. The fourth, 'as if,' suggests that the ontological status of things is meaningless: if something is not loved, it is 'as if' it does not exist; likewise, if something is loved, even if it does not exist, it is 'as if' it does exist, setting up Marion's critique of Descartes and Heidegger (Marion, 2012a, 127). This latter part is crucial to understanding Marion's critique Heidegger's work: Heidegger's *seinsfrage* cannot answer vanity because, Marion argues, it does not matter if something exists, and this is all that the question of Being offers us. A person in this position, even if they were to hear a call of being, would not be interested in it, suggests Marion; on the other hand, as I will suggest below, Heidegger's *dasein* presumes love, and in his later thought in particular, the 'choice' of response is not something willed, indicating that Marion's treatment of Heidegger on these counts is insufficient. The call of being does not follow the same procedure as prior philosophy, despite Marion's suggestion, where it is an idea presented to the person and their will chooses to follow it; instead, the person receives their being in the call and is moved responsively into a new form of existence, one outside of nihilism.

The fifth and final aspect is melancholy; more importantly, the opposite of melancholy is *agape*, which answers melancholy by providing interest and avoids the ontological by defeating concerns over ontological status. Love, therefore, is the answer. And yet, *God without Being* does not contain a full discussion of love; Marion treats the idea in depth first in *Prolegomena to Charity*, followed later with *The Erotic Phenomenon*, the latter of which fully develops love in its relation to vanity. A quick definition of the idea in Marion's thought is not possible, as Marion's definition of

love is at once Christian—accounts of love provided by earlier Christian theologians, especially Gregory of Nyssa (Jones, 2011) and Augustine (Marion, 2012b) are particularly influential—and Heideggerian, Platonic, and Lacanian, and tracing the varied influences is a challenge. Ashok Collins does, however, offer a succinct starting point: 'In short, love is a form of knowing that does not demand comprehension, but rather reception of the unthinkability of distance.'[3] That love is a form of knowing is understood to correlate to Pascal, among others, specifically his understanding of three orders of knowing, namely of the world, the mind, and the heart—which is the order of charity. As Christina Gschwandtner writes in reference to Pascal's three orders, and Marion's use thereof, 'Love, then, is a kind of knowledge of the will that gives access to a realm of phenomena that cannot be known otherwise' (Gschwandtner, 2016, 20). This expansion of access to phenomena is, of course, the centerpiece of Marion's thought, and it serves as both the key to his phenomenology and the key to his answer to nihilism. It is also a mainstay of Christian theology to have love and knowledge coincide in some way in the love of God, where the true knowledge of the God beyond knowing is love. The reason for this collapsing of the distinction between knowledge and love is found in the fact of our divinization, our becoming like unto God. As we love God, and become unified with God in that love, we are made like God. To be made like God is to become that which God is (love), and being made like God is to know in the same way God does, not in concept, but as one exists, and thus to know God.

Marion's understanding of love also addresses concerns about gift giving, a perspective developed in dialogue with Heidegger and Derrida. In particular, love must be outside of any sort of economy of exchange. Gschwandtner explains:

> The only way to escape this experience, in Marion's view, is to give up on our own desire for love and affection, which is also rooted in the expectation of reciprocity about love: 'I will play the game of love, certainly, but I will only risk the least amount possible, and on condition that the other go first.' This is not love, but commercial exchange. We must convert the question 'Does anyone love me?' into a different one, 'Can I love the other?' and decide to love first without expectation of response. (Gschwandtner, 2016, 90; Marion, 2007, 69)

Conscious of the question of whether a gift can be given, Marion outlines love as gift by carefully articulating how it is also outside of exchange—the lover loves without expectation of return. The lover loves, in fact, without even the knowledge of the other existing. This possibility of loving—loving in self-giving—is made possible by God, who gives this gift.

With the reduction to love as outlined in *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Marion provides his solution to the problem of vanity as outlined in *God without Being*—DeLay's presentation of the text is largely appropriate, and I will not repeat it here.

[3] Collins, Ashok. "Being exposed to love: the death of God in Jean-Luc Marion and Jean-Luc Nancy." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2016–12, Vol.80 (3), p.297–319. 302 – with reference to Marion – "If love reveals itself hermetically as distance […] in order to give itself, only love will be able to welcome it.".

Marion once more understands Heidegger as advocating an approach to reality which is based, fundamentally, on a question of existence or being; we find purpose as we become open to hearing a call from Being, telling us to exist, and then choosing to respond to that call. This leads to DeLay's conclusion:

> The analysis of vanity recommends that authenticity no longer be treated, without any further ado, as it still almost without exception is by the Heidegger literature, as the most fundamental response we can take to reality. To the contrary, existence is not decided by posing the question of the meaning of who we are in terms of Being (and hence the ontological difference); we work out that existence most basically, to the extent that we do so successfully, by and in love. (DeLay, 2021, 22)

So, for DeLay, Being and the ontological difference should not be treated as the foundational questions, nor should they be treated as philosophically valid in relation to purpose. The reason for this is that they cannot, in Marion's estimation, function in a way which will take a person out of perfect boredom—they fall prey, therefore, to the question: 'what's the use?' (DeLay, 2021, 22): a person does not care whether or not they exist if they do not have any interest in the question. As discussed above, it is possible for things to be *as if* they do not exist if they are not loved, and thus the question of existence is secondary to the primary question of love.

Nietzsche and Heidegger

DeLay thus presents Marion's triumph over Heidegger as the result of an innovative form of questioning. As indicated in the introduction, however, the question 'what's the use?' is Nietzsche's, not Marion's. As Nietzsche writes:

> The nihilistic question "for what?" is rooted in the old habit of supposing that the goal must be put up, given, demanded from outside—by some superhuman authority. Having unlearned faith in that, one still follows the old habit and seeks another authority that can speak unconditionally and command goals and tasks. The authority of conscience now steps up front (the more emancipated one is from theology, the more imperativistic morality becomes). (Nietzsche WTP 1.1.20, Kaufman 17)

Thus, to suggest that Marion is innovating in any sense by asking this question is, of course, deeply problematic. The question 'why?' or 'what's the use?' is not even innovative in Nietzsche; it is simply the question of purpose, goal, or aim. It is the question of teleology, asked anew now that previously unquestioned teleologies have been discredited. It is of significance for Nietzsche as he has diagnosed an already existing aimlessness within European culture, a product of an overwrought skepticism and relativism, identifying this lack of direction as an indication of nihilism stemming from a loss of connection with the world. Nietzsche thus did not create this question as a way of critiquing extant philosophy, but rather to highlight the fact that commonplace notions of *telos* and purpose were already dead and that nihilism

was spreading. Nietzsche is not the one who killed God, only the one who acknowledged that God was already dead.

Despite DeLay's suggestions that Marion's concept of vanity, grounded in the question 'what's the use?', is a novel application of the idea, Marion himself recognizes his debt to previous thinkers. In his interview with Dan Arbib, he explains:

> According to Heidegger's later analyses after *Being and Time* (for they reinstate boredom into anxiety), I attempted to show that what is particular to boredom is that it suspends not only being [l'ètant] in totality (as anxiety does) but the question of Being itself. Boredom, in fact, renders the question of Being indifferent by confronting it with the question "So what?"—the *umsonst* of nihilism, according to Nietzsche. In the test of boredom, of spiritual weariness, and of the sadness of the soul, Being becomes in some way indifferent. I obviously used Heidegger, but, above all, going back also to Pascal, the thematic of the three orders…. (Marion & Arbib, 2017, 114)

In Marion's telling, he uses the problem of vanity to expand upon Heidegger's concept of boredom, which does not extend far enough in this version. Nietzsche's question, therefore, counters Heidegger, who has made philosophy all about the question of Being—Nietzsche defeats Heidegger by asking 'what's the use of the question of Being?'; interestingly enough, Marion will also have Heidegger defeat Nietzsche in turn—'no one dies for mere values' (Heidegger, 1977, 142; GA 5 102)—by destroying the idea of value and thus destroying the revaluation of all values. Marion thus stands, in his mind at least, on top of the defeated philosophies of Heidegger and Nietzsche, who have killed each other.

But once again a clear problem arises, namely that Marion is plainly misreading Heidegger's 'later analyses.' The 'what's the use?' of nihilism is, of course, a challenge to any thinking focused on establishing a certainty from being, or on deriving a telos from the mere fact of our existence—that is, it counters Descartes' *cogito, ergo sum* as a sure foundation for a purposeful existence. But it is fundamentally a question of purpose: why should I do anything? And it is, further, a question which Heidegger knows very well. He is deeply influenced by and writes extensively on Nietzsche's *Will to Power*, interested in precisely the question of nihilism and thus the problem of providing some form of purpose or direction to existence while avoiding the previous errors of philosophy and theology. To suggest that Heidegger is somehow blindsided by the question of purpose or interest is to perform a superficial reading of his work.

To explore this further, I will turn to Heidegger's analysis of Nietzsche's answer to nihilism, an approach which Marion follows to a certain extent. As established above, the question of vanity is actually the question of nihilism, an equivalence Marion offers explicitly, even as he acknowledges different forms. Nietzsche thinks of nihilism as a question of the loss of values: 'What does nihilism mean? That the highest values devaluate themselves. The aim is lacking; "why?" finds no answer' (Nietzsche WTP 2,

Kaufman 1).[4] In order to overcome or go through nihilism, as Nietzsche seems to want to do, then, it appears to be a matter of finding new values which can restore purpose. In a passage which Heidegger cites in his treatment of Nietzsche, the superiority of value over certainty is established: 'The question of value is more fundamental than the question of certainty: the latter becomes serious only under the assumption that the question of value has already been settled' (Nietzsche WTP 588, Heidegger, 2002, 178). Sounding much like Marion before Marion, therefore, Nietzsche suggests that any form of certainty which might be provided philosophically is meaningless until purpose is provided. Heidegger affirms this; the question of Being, especially for the later Heidegger, does not affirm one's existence, nor is it in any way reducible to the existence of objects or some ultimate thing; it is about a comprehensive sense of world itself. Being is not, therefore, a question merely of existence or ontological difference. As Andrew Mitchell has discussed at length, in Heidegger's later work he moves away from the ontological difference and with this to a distinctive blurring of that distinction and most every other (Mitchell, 2015).[5] Being and beings, as well as Being and nothing or non-existence, are not set in opposition to each other; instead, they always exist in a blurred relation.

Nietzsche thus sets up this pairing between assurance or certainty and the question of value. Following Heidegger's critique of valuation, Marion considers this a false pairing: the paths for philosophy are not either certainty or value. At this point it bears repeating that Marion's attempt to use Nietzsche's question 'What's the use?' against Heidegger is suspect, as if Heidegger was not aware of this question. For example, in the same article on Nietzsche's nihilism, Heidegger writes:

> If God—as the supersensory ground and as the goal of everything that is real—is dead, if the supersensory world of ideas is bereft of its binding and above all its inspiring and constructive power, then there is nothing left which man can rely on and by which he can orient himself. That is why in the passage we quoted, the question is asked, "Aren't we astray in an endless nothing?' The statement "God is dead" contains the realization that this nothing is spreading. Nothing means here: absence of a supersensory binding world. Nihilism, "the eeriest of all guests," is standing at the door. (Heidegger, 2002, 163)

Heidegger lays out the problem plainly, 'Aren't we astray' playing the role of 'What's the use?'; a lack of anything 'inspiring' or anything which can 'orient' us—that is, anything which can answer 'what's the use?' The question, therefore, is whether or not Heidegger thought answering the question of purpose was a possibility, or whether he is a nihilist himself. Given the difficulties of reading Heidegger, especially his later work, scholarship is unsurprisingly split on this issue. Following Dreyfus (2006), Raffoul (2010), Mitchell (2015), and others, however, I argue that

[4] Despite the questionable nature of the *Will to Power* as a text, it is necessary to discuss here as it is the source of Heidegger's and thus Marion's treatment of nihilism in Nietzsche.

[5] See especially pp. 9, 187, 312–320.

Heidegger provides a clear, if challenging, response to nihilism and to the question of purpose, and it is one which is overlooked in almost its entirety by both Marion and DeLay.

Heidegger's Answer to Nihilism

What does this response look like? It begins with the problem of value. As Heidegger writes:

> The essential means are the conditions of the will to power itself that are posited by the will to power itself. Nietzsche calls these conditions values. He writes (Werke, vol. XIII, "Nachgelassene Werke," #395, from 1885): "In all will is an esteeming estimation." To esteem means: to constitute and ascertain value. (Heidegger, 2002)

Value, as Heidegger describes Nietzsche, emerges out of the will to power. This means that all of our values are products of the will to power, and do not have any existence themselves, but only exist as they are posited. Values are creations of the will or some thing called will, therefore, and they thus only exist as they are willed. This leads to Heidegger's conclusion that, as Dreyfus writes, 'As long as we think in terms of value positing rather than being gripped by shared concerns, we will not find anything that elicits our commitment' (Dreyfus, 2006, 349). The answer to nihilism in Heidegger is not a revaluation, but a denial of any thought of values and the emergence of shared concerns in some other way—there is still a firm commitment to commitment, to interest, and thus to love.

Marion follows Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, suggesting again that the values Nietzsche arrives at, even if revalued, are weak, because they are merely values. Values are, in this understanding, self-assertions, products of one's own willing. He writes:

> Nihilism is defined by an event; the highest values are devalued. And the gut reaction, which would consist in defending these highest values more vigorously the weaker they become, reinforces nihilism all the more because it thereby proves that these very values are only values, without any other value than the power of affirmation that upholds them from the outside and thus unveils them as intrinsically dependent on the will to power and transferred over to its empire. In the end, it matters little what values are affirmed or even whether they are affirmed or denied; the only thing that counts is the degree of the will to power that appears through them. (Marion, 2017, 14-15)

Nietzsche is thus dismissed by both Heidegger and Marion as providing a solipsistic self-assertion as the answer to the problem of nihilism.[6] And, further, any answer to nihilism that uses the ideas of value or will is necessarily faulty, as David

[6] Arguments can and have been made that this is a reductive understanding of what Nietzsche means by "Will to Power," but this is a matter for a different paper.

Storey writes, 'For Heidegger, the categories of will and value are part of the problem of nihilism and cannot be part of the solution' (Storey, 2015, 166). We cannot will our way out of nihilism. And if values only emerge through willing, then neither of these categories will be useful for providing an answer to nihilism.

This is one reason why Heidegger's thought on the matter of nihilism changes in presentation from its early to late forms. Authenticity as a concept emerges from a Kierkegaardian framework (Dreyfus & Rubin, 1987); Heidegger moves away from this framework to an Eckhartian one: Gelassenheit. Gelassenheit is, in the simplest explanation, a form of non-willing. Its inclusion in Heidegger's philosophy is for the precise purpose of avoiding Nietzsche's seemingly willful answer to nihilism. Unfortunately, Gelassenheit is often stereotyped as an entirely passive response to existence, or overlooked entirely. The latter is mainly true of Marion's understanding of Heidegger. As George Pattison writes in a footnote:

> Marion does not, however, discuss the further development of Heidegger's thought in the years that follow the inaugural lecture when the 'call of Being' comes to be mediated through the poet and the poetic word that calls to mortals in the power of the holy. If we were to take this into account then an *existentiell* narrative of the progression from *Being and Time* through the inaugural lecture and the lectures on boredom and onto the meditations on this poetic word might run something like this: *a young philosopher grapples with the meaning of life in face of the all-encompassing prospect of an ineluctable death. However, time goes on and there seems to be no resolution to the anxiety with which these questions fill him. Eventually, even the most impassioned of young philosophers gets rather bored with it all. Nothing really interests him anymore. Finally, however, he opens a book of poetry by Hölderlin and, all of a sudden, the poetic word seems to grip him and open the real possibility of a new way of Being*…(Pattison, 2011, 328 n. 69)

That is, Heidegger's thought on the matter of the call of being changes dramatically, receiving an invigorated expression in his turn to the poetic, but also to Gelassenheit, along with the movement away from the term 'Being' to a series of alternatives. None of this shift is meaningfully acknowledged by either Marion or DeLay. The coincident appearing of the poetic and the notion of *Gelassenheit* in Heidegger's later work should be enough to give us pause as far as accusing Heidegger of passivity (Birmingham, 2006).[7] *Gelassenheit* is the openness of the poet to being gripped by Being, guided by the disclosure of things, invigorated by this shared and intertwined world; and poets in their passionate expression and calls to altered ways of seeing and living in the world can hardly be accused of passivity, nor are they stuck in boredom or concerned only with 'existence' as Marion would seem to suggest. Most significantly, there is a theory of love—Heidegger rarely uses the term so directly, but we see it in care, in the theory of self as self-giving and given,

[7] Peg Birmingham details the non-passivity of *Gelassenheit* because of its similarity with Augustine's *amo: volo ut sis*; she also argues for the close connection of authenticity with *Gelassenheit*, which I will, once again, not be addressing in this paper.

and in hospitality. We see love as a necessary fundamental attunement which makes possible knowledge and friendship, together. And this answer of poetic inspiration, love, and related terms is the answer to nihilism: instead of an assertion of values, a self-willed answer, one is gripped by something outside of themselves in a middle-voiced occurrence, becoming a charismatic figure who then communicates to the others within that community, allowing them to be likewise gripped, resulting in meaningful and shared concerns for that community.

As Dreyfus discusses, this response to nihilism sets up what he calls 'Heidegger's mistake;' i.e., this is why Heidegger becomes a Nazi: he believed he would be the poet mediator revealing a new form of existence as part of a shared social movement. Defending the fact that Heidegger has an answer for nihilism should not be mistaken as a defense of Heidegger's way of answering it or of the way he lived (Dreyfus, 2006, 371). More significantly, the connection with Marion's answer should not go unstated; Marion's charismatic communicator of shared concerns is not a novel political movement, but the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church (Marion, 2012a, 152–158). I am not suggesting an equivalence between Nazis and Catholics, to be clear, just arguing that there is a similar structure appearing here in broad outline.

DeLay, for his part, acknowledges the 'care-structure' (DeLay, 2021, 31) of *Being and Time*, but does not think it substantive because of a corresponding split in the structure of self; this question of the self will be discussed below, but it is first important to acknowledge the importance of all these key terms which express varieties of interest and concern. Behind these terms, as mentioned above, is the concept of love; and the concept of love in Heidegger is an increasingly studied aspect of his work, offering a direct response to critiques of Heidegger's thought on the basis of a supposed absence of love. Andrew Zawacki, himself a poet, has quite explicitly made the connection between Being and love, where love is an aspect of Being. He writes:

> Heidegger introduces love here to reassert that destitution is the regrettable outcome of humanity's having renounced, via self-assertion, its utmost human character, which is comprised of pain, death, and love, each an aspect of being. But if love does in deed belong to the realm of Being, a realm that has been concealed by the double aversion, then the recovery of Being would necessarily usher the unconcealment of love, as well. In striving to render mortals aware of their mortality, then, in a manner that allows them to enter and possess their own nature, the poet performs a service not merely ontological: he also participates in love. (Zawacki, 2004)

To give a full treatment of Heidegger's concept of love is too great a task in this paper; but Zawacki's summation does affirm what is written in the extant scholarship on love in Heidegger. Love is an aspect of being (DeSantis, 2021; Östman, 2014; Perrin, 2009); it is a fundamental attunement (DeSantis, 2021; Swanton, 2010); it is necessary for knowledge of Being (Östman, 2014; Rojcewicz, 1997); it emerges from a discussion of Augustine's thought (Birmingham, 2006; Östman, 2014; Perrin, 2009); and it holds a direct ethical significance, insofar as we can speak of 'ethics' in Heidegger (Kosky, 2010). To say that because

Heidegger identifies ontology as first philosophy at various points indicates that he has no space in his thought for love is, of course, nonsense. The primacy of place afforded to Being must be understood with a suitable definition of Being; and the question of Being is not merely the question 'does it exist?' even as Marion and DeLay treat it this way. Being, nothing, love, death, and other qualities, too, are part of Being. Questions of ontology, therefore, are not merely questions of whether something *is*; instead, to ask the question of Being in the way Heidegger does is to ask of being, nothingness, boredom, love, dwelling, purpose, care, and so on. That these are continuous themes in his thought is no mistake, nor is their consistent appearance inconsistent with his understanding of ontology as first philosophy.

Heidegger's later treatment of love does, in fact, give us reason to consider anew *Being and Time*—better yet, to reconsider Heidegger's method and not be as hasty as DeLay. Again my concern here is more to suggest the similarity between Marion and the later Heidegger rather than defend Heidegger and his early work, but Lars Östman's article on the topic of love provides a ground for understanding the full extent of the overlap between Marion and Heidegger's sources from an early point. He writes:

> More than Heidegger defines love in *Sein und Zeit*, he indirectly, via the Pascal and Augustine citations, lets love be part of Dasein's factual existence as the precondition for knowledge and truth to take place, i.e. love is the condition of possibility. Love designates Dasein as the form of life inhabiting the possibility of hearing the voice of the philos. (Östman, 2014, 549)

Marion, who shares the thorough influence of both Augustine and Pascal, above describes the state of boredom as one in which the person who is bored finds themselves without interest; in contrast, Östman describes Heidegger's *Dasein* as already existing in love as love is a necessary precondition for knowledge—it is the precondition for the hearing of the call and being moved by it, something which one could perhaps fruitfully compare with Pascal's third order of charity described above. The answer which Marion suggests, therefore, that love is essential to the provision of interest and thus provides the answer (or the essential component to the answer) to nihilism is given in a related—though different—form, one which emerges in Heidegger, similarly, out of an engagement with Christian sources, especially Augustine and Pascal. Without interest (love) there is no possibility of understanding, and no possibility of communication, meaning, or purpose. Östman continues:

> Dasein hears language before it can determine it. Before language becomes language it is voice; before language is propositional it is poetical. When Dasein hears the voice of the friend, Dasein is already engaged in a fundamental Verstehen. Dasein is the being towards which something like truth and knowledge may be revealed, because openness 'is' only insofar as Dasein exists in a world; the open is what constitutes the premise for the revelation of knowledge and truth. Only because Dasein exists factically as being-in-the-world can it hear the voice of the philos in drifting between *coelum* and *terra*

> constituting the human world as possibility, i.e. as impotentiality. (Östman, 2014, 549)

'Love is the condition of possibility,' as quoted above, and here we constitute 'the human world as possibility.' Love is intrinsic to world; where does this love lead?

To provide an all too brief summary, it leads to Heidegger's answer to nihilism, which cannot be fully developed here for reasons of space and complexity. First, we start with the problem: purpose cannot be provided through reason or will; values are merely posited and insufficient for answering nihilism; an answer outside of reasoning and willing is thus necessary. This leads us to *Gelassenheit*; a person who thinks/wills in the alternative format of *Gelassenheit* can engage with the world in a different way than the person who behaves otherwise. More importantly, this person is open to the inspiration described above, and receives not merely direction for their self, but rather a self which is directed. This process is a matter of 'grace,' suitably redefined (Mitchell, 2010; Östman, 2014). But, significantly, Heidegger's thought is not individualistic, and the solution to nihilism cannot be entirely individual, as there is a necessarily societal component to being human. Human selves are porous, always formed by what is around them, and thus remains the challenge of other humans, as well as the problem of the potential negative influence by technology (*Gestell*), for which *Gelassenheit* provides only a partial solution (Dreyfus, 2006). Nonetheless, the person in *Gelassenheit* is directed towards acting responsively in relation with the things of the world, beyond the active/passive distinction, a relationship marked by care for others, and, as Birmingham suggests, a love that lets be: *amo volo ut sis*, following Augustine (Birmingham, 2006, 152).

The Question of the Subject

Perhaps DeLay would accept that Heidegger has a theory of love behind the scenes, one which addresses at least some of the critique offered by Marion. But there is a further concern Delay introduces, which is the structure of the self in Heidegger and its relation to purpose.

This is a key point where DeLay goes astray in his analysis of Heidegger, drawing conclusions which ignore the answers which are actually to be found in Heidegger's work—admittedly most prominently in his later writing. DeLay offers the terms of the matter as follows:

> An important consequence follows from the Heideggerian conception of subjectivity. By maintaining that we are noncoincident with ourselves, it follows, we have seen, that there is no resolution in the offing regarding what it means to be who I am, because I am in the final sense really nothing determinate at all anyway. The only absolute truth is that there absolutely is no absolute truth concerning who I am, or what I am to do in the face of existence. (DeLay, 2021, 34)

DeLay thus draws attention to the ambiguous and split self which is a hallmark of Heidegger's thought. He, further, critiques the lack of certainty implied in this split

self—where can the human rest if there is no certainty of self within, and nothing to content us without? As he says, even in Heidegger's later thought, his thinking outside of being, 'there is no home for us, only restlessness' (DeLay, 2021, 31).

What becomes clear here is that DeLay is still pining after a *telos*, writing of Heidegger's purportedly mistaken and apparently nihilistic conclusion that, 'From the fact that the ontological structure of selfhood does not supply a *telos* to existence, it does not follow that something else may not' (DeLay, 2021, 33). This searching reveals yet another shortcoming of DeLay's argument: even if we have transcended Heidegger here using Marion's reduction to love, by pining for a *telos*, and by deciding that *this* world is inadequate for its provision, and, further, turning as DeLay does to the possibility of another world in the theological turn, we have simply landed ourselves back in Nietzsche. As Nietzsche writes in the passage quoted above: 'The nihilistic question 'for what?' is rooted in the old habit of supposing that the goal must be put up, given, demanded from outside—by some superhuman authority' (Nietzsche WTP 1.1.20, Kaufman 17). This is the old habit to which we are not supposed to return; we are not supposed to go back to a quest for certainty, fulfillment, or complete satisfaction; and we are certainly not to go searching for a telos outside of this world.

Marion, I would argue, does a better job of taking seriously the Nietzschean critique of teleology than DeLay's presentation would suggest. Marion's work is quite critical of certainty, at least suggesting a Pascalian version in his *Negative Certainties*. More significantly, the answer provided by Marion is not, philosophically speaking, a *telos*. It is the nature of love to be self-giving; a person who becomes a lover gives because it is what they are; and this framework is precisely what is suggested by Heidegger—neither Marion nor Heidegger seeks to restore the framework which approaches life as a question of 'why?' to be answered rationally. Heidegger offers the answer taken from two Christian authors, Meister Eckhart and Angelus Silesius, both of whom have a theory of love which provides, in its own way, a purpose to life. This answer is to live life '*ohne warum*,' without why—'the rose blooms because it blooms, it is without why' (Heidegger, 1991, 39). Here, the human being's being is given to it and the self becomes the being who gives itself in love/care with others. Nihilism is not fully transcended in Heidegger or Marion, because to answer nihilism by providing an answer to 'what's the use?' in a rational way would require participation in a system of thought which is inherently nihilistic—as Marion suggests, nihilism is a side-effect of reason, and this cannot be avoided: 'Once again, nihilism is a fact and a fact of reason itself; we are neither responsible for it nor are we its adversaries' (Marion, 2017, 17).

Thus, when DeLay writes, 'The transcendence of Dasein entails nihilism, consequently, for it prohibits us from ever bringing ourselves into an equilibrium with ourselves—there is always a duplicity, a shadow, or what Dostoevsky called a "double"' (DeLay, 2021, 31), he misses that this doubling is something Christian. The restlessness which DeLay finds so objectionable in Heidegger is still present in Marion. Marion's *Negative Certainties*, for example, affirms a qualified certainty regarding the self, that we can say *that* it is, but not *what* it is—what we are is always a mystery, because we are like God and we cannot say what God is. That DeLay thinks it is a shortcoming of Heidegger's that 'there absolutely is no absolute truth

concerning who I am or what am I to do in the face of existence' (DeLay, 2021, 34) is something he must extend to Marion. Marion takes this argument, after all, from Christian thought, and it is, in fact, a mainstay of the Christian tradition to have a self, inasmuch as it is deiform, which remains hidden from ourselves, inexhaustible and thus outside of truth or certainty. Yes, there is comfort in the idea that we have an end in God, but 'Our hearts are restless until we rest in you, O God' (Augustine, *Confessions* 1.1.1), and we do not rest in God until we are dead. So how can DeLay complain about restlessness in Heidegger? Heidegger is being Augustinian when he suggests a restless self in this life, in this world. It is, further, a key portion of the work of Kierkegaard, whom DeLay also cites approvingly but without the recognition that Kierkegaard's story of human existence is one of despair, a doubling of the self, resulting from the imbalance of the relationship of the self to oneself—and if one were to follow genealogically, it seems that at least the early Heidegger's understanding of the self emerges out of this Kierkegaardian framework (Dreyfus and Rubin, 1987). The doubled self of Heidegger's *Dasein* is his version of the doubled, because sinful, self of Kierkegaard's *Sickness unto Death*. Although DeLay will speak of the possibility of 'equilibrium' (DeLay, 2021, 31), this is something which is placed after death in most traditional theology. The only one, for Kierkegaard, who can achieve this perfect equilibrium is Jesus, as he is the only one without sin and thus the only who is truly free of despair—truly free of the doubling of ourselves. The rest of us, as '*simul iustus et peccator*,' as 'restless,' are not blessed with a peaceful existence. And thus Marion maintains a continued place for nihilism/vanity in his thought; it offers some beneficial aspects for our thinking of the world; and it is never something that we fully defeat or are rid of. Human life in this world, the world which Heidegger so significantly calls our attention to, is always partial and fragmented: 'For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known' (1 Cor 13:12, NRSV).

The Theological Turn in Marion

All of this brings us to the primary point of DeLay's article, which is the question of the theological turn. I have suggested here that Marion's work does not defeat Heidegger, at least on the matter of the reduction, at least on the question of love and nihilism. But it still must be admitted that even if Heidegger has a theory of love which plays a significant role in his thought, it is not afforded the primary place. And, further, it is not given in solely Christian terms, nor is it radically inclusive of Christian theology, and this is precisely what DeLay argues that Marion's work necessitates: 'In shifting our attention to the order of love, his erotic reduction challenges the usual facile partitions between phenomenology and theology' (DeLay, 2021, 63). And then, as his essay concludes: 'Summoning us to face up to the depths of who we are, the erotic reduction reminds us that phenomenology must make the theological turn. Vanity disqualifies anything less' (DeLay, 2021, 64). That is, the implications of Marion's reduction to love are that there is no longer a dividing line between philosophy and theology.

But we should be reminded here of the reason why Heidegger does not make the theological turn himself; Benjamin Crowe compellingly argues that the reason for Heidegger's hesitation is not only from a philosophical conviction but also from a religious perspective, namely his reading of Martin Luther. As he writes:

> Rather than committing philosophers to some form of positive atheism, Heidegger is instead drawing the logical conclusions from his reading of Luther. Philosophy must, according to Heidegger, renounce any and all attempts "to have and to determine God" (G61 197/148). The difficult bit, the "art" of it, is both to "do philosophy" and to "be genuinely religious" (G61 197/148). In Heidegger's view, being "genuinely religious" has little to do with prattle about God and has nothing at all to do with successfully undertaking the project of ontotheology. Thus, philosophy is best characterized as being "away from" or "far from" (weg) God. This distance is more of the respectful variety, which, of course, can often be mistaken for standoffishness. Lest confusion befall his listeners, Heidegger makes it clear that in "carrying out" this distance, philosophy always has its own "difficult 'near to' or 'next to' [bei]" God (G61 197/148). (Crowe, 2007, 193-4)

The approach of Heidegger, therefore, requires a methodological atheism, a topic which DeLay argues against in far more detail elsewhere (DeLay, 2019, 2020). This would, again, require another paper to fully encounter, so allow me to briefly point out the concern of Heidegger's which I do not think DeLay has fully appreciated. For example, DeLay writes, also by way of conclusion:

> For although the erotic reduction does not determine how one will necessarily respond to it—it is always just as possible to ignore or suppress as to surrender to it—is not the inwardness it reveals nothing less than the love of God? In establishing that the only claim that truly claims me is love's claim, the erotic reduction invites each of us to confront the possibility that the claim of love is itself equivalent to the call of the Father. (DeLay, 2021, 27)

We can see the tenuousness within DeLay's wording: first, 'is not the inwardness it reveals nothing less than the love of God?' Perhaps DeLay is certain of the answer to this question, and Marion appears to be, as well. The love Marion's reduction reveals at the foundation of our being is God's love—Marion says so explicitly (Marion, 2007, 221–2). And yet, with the next sentence, we are not so sure: DeLay says that this realization challenges us to 'confront the possibility that the claim of love is itself equivalent to the call of the Father.' We are no longer certain, now, whether this is actually God's love; it is only a 'possibility.' I, as a Christian and a priest, would affirm this as well, along with Marion and DeLay. But to affirm this possibility is called faith. It is an act of faith to say that the pattern of existence we encounter phenomenologically is 'equivalent' to God the Father. We can, in fact, stop before this point, as Heidegger does, and perhaps for good reason should do so when we say we are practicing philosophy. For if we proceed philosophically from this point then we are going against a key *theological* premise of Luther's, namely that we are saying, with the air of certainty, *this is what God does; this is what God is like; this is the very nature of God.*

This goes, once more, to Marion's misreading of Heidegger; yes, Heidegger's concern is with ontotheology, and Marion carefully avoids what he understands this to be about, namely Being. And thus he writes, *God without Being*. But once more, the matter is not just about Being in a reductive sense, as both Marion and DeLay miss; the critique of ontotheology is also about systematic approaches to God which trap, restrain, or control God by claiming knowledge; and Marion's reduction to love is precisely a narrowing, an attempt to say not what or that God is, but what God does, and how God is present in the world. It is, further, a reduction which divorces God from creation, as its obsession with avoiding Being ends up avoiding beings and denying the world. Is it not also true that 'The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork' (Psalm 19:1)? Marion's reduction reduces God to the Christian church and its conceptions of love; Heidegger's philosophy calls for a renewed engagement with self and world, and in the openness of Gelassenheit, allows for the possibility of God's disclosure in a way not so restricted by the constraints of human thought or the dictates of dogmatic thinking. I should be careful and clear here—I do not endorse in a simple way Heidegger's thought; there is much to be concerned about, lest we end up making the same social, political, and relational mistakes that he did. But there is still much to be learned and much to be taken more seriously than the sometimes superficial dismissals of his work would suggest. Once the difficult work of actually understanding Heidegger is done, then we can get to a place of meaningfully asking the question of what can be dismissed.

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