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God without being: mystique as a theological possibility

Deus sem ser: a mística como possibilidade teológica

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Abstract

This paper discusses the negative theology, based on the mystical discourse, as an alternative approach to the rational and positivist thought of the classical theology. Through the understanding and attempt to talk of God without the concept of *being*, the possibility of remaining in the theology domain will be analyzed here, but being guided rather by the search and love instead of the intellect's descriptive interest, as it happens in mystical thought. The distinction between the positive theology and the negative theology is presented in this argument as a path for thinking through and understanding God, by means of replacing the concept of being with the ideal Good, which awakens in the theologian a desire for union with the object. Love, in its appetitive meaning, becomes the adequate path for searching and meeting God, with no need for removing Him from His original condition. Therefore, the negative theology possibility reaches the extremely high level of mystique and contemplation.

Keywords: God. Being. Theology. Mystique. Love.

Resumo

Este artigo discute a teologia negativa, sustentada sobre o discurso místico, como uma abordagem alternativa ao pensamento racional e positivista da teologia clássica. A partir da compreensão e da tentativa de falar sobre Deus sem o conceito de *ser*, será analisada, aqui, a possibilidade de continuar no domínio da teologia, mas se orientando mais pela busca e pelo amor e menos pelo interesse descritivo do intelecto, como acontece no pensamento místico. A distinção entre teologia positiva e teologia negativa é apresentada nesse argumento como caminho para reflexão e compreensão de Deus, a partir da substituição do conceito de ser pelo Bem ideal, que desperta no teólogo um desejo de união com o objeto. O amor, em sua acepção apetitiva, torna-se o caminho adequado para a busca e o encontro de Deus, sem a necessidade de retirá-lo de sua condição original. Desse modo, a possibilidade da teologia negativa alcança o elevadíssimo nível da mística e da contemplação.

Palavras-chave: Deus. Ser. Teologia. Mística. Amor.

Translated text. Original article in Portuguese

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Introduction

God without being is an argument developed between the Middle Ages and modernity which may be investigated, above all, through the criticism to the onto-theo-logic rationale of ancient philosophy. The culmination of this dispute, which came from Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite, is Heidegger's philosophy, whose problem is God's position with regard to thought. Thus, there emerges a discourse tangle which weaves God's concept, name, and divinity.

Aristotle's, let's say, *onto-theo-logic* project unified all substances in the world into a superior substance, God: the first being, universal, *causa sui*, as it's well known in the author's *magnum opus*: *Metaphysics* (ARISTÓTELES, 2001).

Kant was the first one to examine the so-called *ontological* proof as designating the particular area of theology in which God's existence is deduced through the ultimate concepts of supreme being and original being. The supreme original structure (KANT, 1994).

Heidegger expanded the discourse and transformed ontology into onto-theo-logy through his subdivision of *metaphysics*. Ontology will address the being's essence and the theology of the being's foundation. Thus, according to Heidegger, metaphysics will be, contemporaneously, ontology and theology and it'll comprise the universality and the original structure of God's primacy. In this case, onto-theo-logy will be a sort of "theology's metaphysics" (HEIDEGGER, 2003).

Thus, there emerges the finding that thought believed that God, the original *being*, has always been something taken for granted and commonplace, a concept to be understood through human reason, the universal signifier which is found throughout the *being's* structure, providing one with unity and true meaning to point out what is utmost in existence.

The onto-theo-logical project is so *present* in the Western thought that it became impossible to refute it once for all, mainly because it was embraced as the dominant discourse in theology.

A parallel approach, seemingly more successful among philosophers than theologians, has also been designed as an important reflection on the possibility of considering the advent of God in us. This pathway can be traced back as early as the confrontation between the thought of Plato and Aristotle and it was progressively deepened in another possibility of theology throughout the centuries (DERRIDA, 2000).

Besides the onto-theo-logic tradition, used to think everything through the concept of *being*, there's a subtle way of taking reality into account, open through reflection, which is proposed to overcome this representation. A sort of patience and finitude mystique.

1 Between being and good

The relationship between *being* and *good* and the attempt to name the divine is the key point in the debate between the onto-theo-logy and the *apophatic* tradition, usual name to designate the negative theology.

There're two possibilities inherent to the very discourse on God: regard him as *being* (Aristotle) or as *good* (Plato)? (RICOEUR, 1953-1954).

Before being passed over in favor of Aristotle, Plato conceived a *Good* beyond being, placed above the logical categories of substance (*ousia*) and thought, reached only through self-giving (RICOEUR, 1953-1954). The negative theology, in its own way, discovered that the *Good* constitutes an alternative to the thought of God understood as the onto-theo-logy *being*. However, it also understood that this

is an extremely difficult project for our usual way of thinking, historically sustained on the categories and representations of the Aristotle's *being* (HEIDEGGER, 1989).

Poetically, Lévinas (2002, p. 162, author's emphasis) thinks through the clash of two traditions saying that the:

> Closeness to God in which sociality, with regard to its irreducibility to knowledge, is designed as being *better* than the fusion and culmination of being in its self-consciousness, closeness where, in this "better than", *good* starts having a meaning. Closeness which provides pure duration and patience of living with a meaning, sense of life purely lived with no reason to be, rationality older than the revelation of being.

Heidegger started from a similar idea by considering the positive and negative aspects of *good* as an abandonment time, a pure *gift* one. An unconditional self-giving on the part of the divine, as a static cause of finite existence. An absolute's giving which occurs at the beginning of human existence movement and returns again on the pure source of the *gift*.

This starting point puts in crisis the intellectual construct of reality which one seeks to represent through the mental creation itself, as explained by Ricoeur (1953-1954, p. 74, author's emphasis, our translation): "The decisive crisis is put into motion with the *Metánoia*, the 'conversion', through the purification of Mysteries. This purification is expressly named in the most 'mystical' texts by Plato"[1].

Outside of this mystique, there remains the pure need for thinking of God as *being*, something which involves the acceptance of certain attributes, such as unity, eternity, simplicity, present times, etc., as metaphysical concepts.

This, by the way, is the logical description, which is more interested in the evidence of God's existence than in God himself, and it's perfectly included in the great theological tradition of Catholic thought, synthesized in the early modernity

[1] Original excerpt, in French: "La crise décisive de la mise em route c'est la *Metánoia*, la 'conversion', reprise de la purification des Mystères. Cette purification, expressément nomée dans les textes les plus 'Mystiques' de Platon".

by René Descartes.

Descartes' thought, however, is a faithful echo, according to Yannaràs (1995), to the scholastic rationale of Campanella, Anselm of Canterbury, Hugh of Saint Victor, and, finally, to Saint Augustine.

The appropriation of the concept of *being* by theology is very well outlined in the Catholic theological tradition. It was magisterially resumed by Leibniz, who argued for, from the beginning to end, the strength of reason over all concepts, including the concept of God. In *Essais de Théodicée*, Leibniz (1969) reaches the perfect order of the so called evidence of God's existence, and it lists the four main tendencies:

I. the ontological demonstration, described by Anselm, states that God is the greatest thing which the mind is able to conceive (*aliquid quo nihil majus cogitari possit*);

II. the cosmological demonstration is also Leibniz's favorite, who eventually synthesized it in the principle of sufficient reason (*nihil est sine ratione*), but whose origin is the Aristotelian thought, and it was widely reported by Saint Thomas Aquinas;

III. the convergence of truths points to the eternal truth, God. It, therefore, is the conclusive point of human, moral, mathematical, and metaphysical knowledge. It's the very *raison d'être* of rationality;

IV. the last evidence is sustained on the so called teleological principle, or purpose. This idea ensures the world's rationality whereas it finds in God its purpose and aim. It's one of the oldest kinds of evidence of God's existence and one of the most significant arguments, considering that it not only applies to a particular being, but it's the reason of the world in general.

All this together constitutes a natural theology which transforms the search for God into a *scientia* totally structured on reason, which will complete its cycle in modern rationalism (YANNARÀS, 1995).

Although Lévinas has noticed that certain issues precede the preeminence of *being*, let's seriously take into account the strengthened archetype on which the issue concerned is sustained, that provides onto-theo-logy with a support. Even Derrida (1996), who, in his deconstruction pathway attempts to completely destroy this kind of discourse, is aware of the impossibility of dismissing it or even overcoming it in a permanent way.

The criticism by Derrida (1996), Marion (1982), and, in a certain sense, by Nietzsche, too, adds to the reflections by Heidegger (1989): the onto-theo-logy wasn't able to think the *gift's*[2] time, nor the divine self-giving, which just leaves at the time he *gives* himself. From this, one deduces that, when someone thinks of him, God shows his own meaning, but, when he's reduced to what was thought, something very important is left behind without being thought through.

2 Good as advent of mystical reflection

Speaking of the prospect of a new theological restart and summarizing this other side of the attempt to let God come into human existence, Derrida (1996, p. 3-4, author's emphasis) states that:

> However, we'll never be able to ensure, and, due to certain reasons, as we'll see, we'll never be able to assign, to anyone, a negative theology project *itself*. Before Dionysius, it'll be sought in a given Platonic and Neo-Platonic tradition.

[2] The concept of *gift*, usually claimed in the discourse on God by some philosophies, clearly refers to grace theology within the Catholic reflection domain and it addresses the major themes of Christianity.

The starting point for the Platonic tradition recognized by theology is the idea of Good, its diffusive nature, and the mystical conception it bears. Good, regarded as an alternative to the onto-theo-logical constitution, thus, seems to be part of this recognized tradition which, since it's previous to Aristotle, rearranges itself to oppose, albeit marginally, to the ontologizing thought which tries to define God.

Paul Ricoeur (1953-1954, p. 74) explains that Plato's thought seems to situate Good before the very idea of the Divine. As Good is the foundation of Divine himself, then, love is what leads something to move towards him, instead of thought. This reasoning directly has to do with the mystical foundation of understanding, which surrounds the negative theology as an appetite able to search for something that is ultimately behind transcendence itself.

Attempting to lead one to think through the divine from the *erotic* activity is, undoubtedly, the dominant aspect in the Platonic context, but, on the ecclesiastical theology horizon, Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite, greatly strives to resume this tradition. He says that:

> It did seem, even to some of our sacred writers, that "loving desire" is a term more worthy of God than "charitable love" (*agapè*), because the divine Ignatius wrote that "it was the object of my loving desire that they put on the cross". And in the books preparatory to the Scriptures, you'll find this word applied to the wisdom of God: I wished its beauty (Sb 8.2). There's no need, thus, that this erotic word alarm us or that arguers turn it into a scarecrow (PSEUDO-DIONÍSIO, 2004a, p. 52, author's emphasis).

One notices, here, the difficulty for including again this second reflection pathway within the speculative project that theology had established for itself. *Eros*[3], as a movement principle which articulates the relationship between the lover and the beloved, is no longer an actual possibility for theology, and this even becomes a scandal for it.

[3] Eros is represented by appetite and desire for union with the beloved thing. It's mostly exposed in Plato's *Symposium*. Agape is another way of defining love, but without desire. It's, so to speak, unselfish love.

Pseudo-Dionysius aims to resume this mystical line which is identified with the apophatic scheme as opposed to the onto-theo-logical method that addresses God as a being, given and exposed in his own nature.

The negative theology, thus, isn't considered this way because it makes unfeasible any kind of knowledge. It doesn't lead to *a-theism*, as one may see at first glance. What happens is a change in focus and in the access pathway to God, which is no longer characterized by the pure act of thinking. The doors open to his conquest through the desire to possess him as the beloved one, a permission to unity through the very attraction caused by *unawareness*.

In this case, the negative theology is the apophatic theology, and it has the same meaning. While supported by the principle of denial, especially the denial of God's *being*; it opposes the *cataphatic* theology, which, since Aristotle's time, means to state something. The highest point of *cataphasis* happens when one defines something through its substance (*ousia*), something which the *apophatic* theology denies to be true with regard to God.

The fundamental conception of Pseudo-Dionysius says that *being* isn't a proper predicate for God. Therefore, theology can't use this as a concept of its own. As the author explains: "God doesn't have a being according to the very way of some particular being" (PSEUDO-DIONÍSIO, 2004a, p. 10). The theology principle, thus, must be another one, the idea of Good. One understands, here, the essential conception of something which is above any kind of *being*, with no effective relationship with the world (HEIDEGGER, 1989).

Pseudo-Dionysius situates God outside the knowledge domain, since: "Every knowledge leads to a being. Well, every being is limited. The radius, therefore, which is beyond every essence, should also go beyond every knowledge" (PSEUDO-DIONÍSIO, 2004a, p. 15). The divine's idea is related to finitude only through a "Thearchy's goodness", as a Good's natural disposition to offer itself.

Pseudo-Dionysius is, indeed, one of the pioneers in this kind of theology. In his key works (*Divine Names* and *Mystical Theology*), the author explains in detail how *deity* goes absolutely beyond the possibility of knowledge, and he extensively addresses a domain where the Aristotelian substance seems no longer able to follow it, leaving as an alternative that God is exactly how he is.

This author establishes a fundamental criticism to the positive theology, or cataphatic. Since, in the opening process produced by knowledge, it allows exactly what should be more important to it to escape, the truth. Derrida constantly refers to this tendency in his formulation of the negative theology. Continuously mentioning Pseudo-Dionysius and Eckhart, the author explains to be facing a dilemma: *abnegation*[4]. That is, how may one keep talking of God even knowing that it isn't possible? (DERRIDA, 1996).

Instead of the God permanently manifested, there's the "unknown God", or, as indicated by Nicholas of Cusa, the *non-autre*[5]:

> Because, among all things he expresses in different ways, the no other clearly appears. Indeed, when it reaches the end of his *mystical Theology*, he states that the Creator is neither something one may designate, nor something else. However, he said, in the same place, that he doesn't seem to reveal anything exceptional, so that, for someone attentive, he expressed the no other's secret everywhere in his [work], one way or another (CUES, 2002, p. 32, author's emphasis, our translation).

The thesis evoked and developed in this theological tendency seeks another union type, besides the usual process of representation and the definitions presented under the shape of evidence demonstrated in the cataphatic theology. That's why neither Pseudo-Dionysius nor Nicholas of Cusa lose sight with regard to the divine being. And, hence, the possibility of finding a suitable way to talk of him.

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[4] In English, the original language of Derrida's text, one may use *negation*, more recurrent, or *denial* to express negativity. However, he opts for the second formulation, which, in Portuguese, sounds more like denial, and it seems to indicate not only pure negation, but also a negation of negating. Or to negate a negation.

[5] Original excerpt, in French: "Car, parmi toutes les choses que ele exprime de manières diverses, le non-autre apparaît clairement. En effet, quand il parvient à la fin de sa Thhéologie mystique il affirme que le Créateur n'est ni quelquer chose de nommable, ni autre chose. Toutefois, il dit dans le même endroit qu'il ne lui semble divulguer rien d'exceptionnel, bien que, pour quelqu'un d'attentif, il ait exprimé le secret du non-autre par tout dans son [oeuvre] d'une manière ou d'une autre".

As a guiding element, Pseudo-Dionysius advises one to go beyond the sensible world to get into the realm of the *mystique* and the *non-cognizable*. Leave aside any pretense of positive knowledge, taking into account that theology is the search for what "is beyond everything" and that the one who searches for it "no longer belongs to himself nor belongs to anything strange", but is "united by the best of his own to the one which escapes all knowledge, after renouncing to all positive knowledge and, thanks to this very non-knowledge, he knows something beyond all intelligence" (PSEUDO-DIONÍSIO, 2004b, p. 15).

Evaluating these claims, more focused on the renunciation to the issue of *being*, Nicholas of Cusa establishes the lost bond with God, because of the identification of absolute no otherness (*De li non aliud*) between the divine and the finite creature. What produces this meeting, however, since Plato's time, is love, and not thought. Since, as the author says, only love "has the maximum power and all happiness, it prepares us by putting us in a position which allows getting together and friendship not only between us, but also with those who are more powerful than us, that is, the gods" (PLATÃO, 1997, p. 123).

Although the mystique has invaded theology since Plato's time (4th century B.C.), this intermediate phase was concluded with Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (15th century). It never went unnoticed, even among exhibitors of the positive way of cataphatic theology.

In the 13th century, this thought was already well recognized in the Western Catholic tradition. Boaventura (1983, p. 192, author's emphasis) describes in his *Intinerarium mentis in Deum* (1259):

> The first method focuses our eyes first and foremost on the Being itself, stating that the first name of God is *He who is*. In the second method, our spirit takes into account Good itself, saying that Good is also the first name of God. The first of these names – Being – particularly refers to the Old Testament, which proclaims, above all, the unity of the divine essence. Therefore, he said to Moses: *I am who I am*. The second name – Good – refers to the New Testament, which reveals the plurality of divine persons.

Although discreetly, Boaventura (1983, p. 192, author's emphasis) seems to prefer the second option, especially because it was chosen by Jesus in the Gospel, as shown in the following excerpt: "Therefore, Jesus Christ, our Master, wanting to raise to evangelical perfection that young man who claimed to have observed the law, assigns primary and exclusively to God the name good – *no one is good* – then, he said –, *but God alone*". The author goes on explaining where these traditions come from in Christian thought: "So, John Damascene, following Moses, says: '*He who is* is the first name of God'. Pseudo-Dionysius, on the contrary, following Christ, says that the first name of God is good" (BOAVENTURA, 1983, p. 192, author's emphasis).

Boaventura (1983), therefore, clearly outlined the two theology types and attributed to Pseudo-Dionysius, who, as one knows, aligns with the Platonic and Neo-Platonic tradition, the responsibility of opposing to John Damascene's trend, which has a more Aristotelian nature, whose intention was unifying the world's substances in an only divine substance. Thus, Boaventura (1983), under the superior echo of theology, as usual in the Middle Ages, understood that it was in the Platonic tradition, with possible echoes in the Gospel, that the idea of good, its diffusive nature, inherent to the mystical conception, became a point of entry to theology.

3 Criticism to the onto-theo-logy

On the modern horizon, the negative theology and the speculative force of mystique have widened to various points of philosophy. They reached multiple issues related to the problem of access to God, but also access to the truth, the substance, the religion, etc.

Restructured under the shape of denunciation, the post-Nietzschean tradition, *apophatic*, helps this resume from the time in which God's death is

identified as the death of his existence's appearance, and, this way, it establishes a crisis in *metaphysics* (YANNARÀS, 1995).

This new pathway, thus, assumes as an initial reference the finitude of human existence, in which the problem starts resembling the first step of the negative theology: identify human existence, finite, with the static thought of God. Therefore, Heidegger (1989, p. 154, author's emphasis) thinks that one should start talking of *being* with a discourse on finitude, taking into account that:

> Who experienced theology, both from the Christian faith and from philosophy, in its historical origins, nowadays, prefers to silence in the thought sphere which addresses God. Since the onto-theo-logical nature of metaphysics became questionable with regard to thought, not because of some atheism, but due to the experience of a thought to which it proved, in onto-theo-logy, the unit still *unintended* of the metaphysics essence.

The attempt to think or name God has always assumed much from metaphysics. Now, then, God's death is a metaphysical crisis – a positive crisis against the possibility of thinking everything. However, one can't mistake the output of metaphysics or positive theology with skepticism or atheism. One speaks, thus, more appropriately, of the reconstruction of points of entry that the individual needs to undertake until he's fully convinced of his faith.

The death phenomenon or reflection, first God's death and, then, subsequently, the individual's death, manifested at the end of metaphysics, reveals the hidden essence of a pretense: thinking through and naming God.

Rethinking this metaphysics constitutes, despite the apparent weakness, a new opportunity for expressing the ineffable presence of God through a new way of provenance to us:

> That provenance, as such, is so central to our religious experience, let's say, it's a constitutive trait of the religion resume, and it's whether a success of the philosophy which is no longer metaphysics or a "content" of the religious tradition itself, which is thus rediscovered: the Trinitarian God isn't someone who calls us to return to the foundation in the metaphysical sense of the word, but, according to the evangelical expression, he calls us to read the signs of the times first (VATTIMO, 2000, p. 103-104).

God's death is nothing but the failure and disappearance of an idol made by metaphysics (MARION, 1982). It results from the scheme and the rational categories of metaphysics. The history of metaphysics blocked the contemplation of the divine, through the creation of a genuine language of the ineffable. It named the unsaid and thought of the unthinkable.

The criticism to onto-theo-logy coincides with a new place, where the reflection became abandonment (*ausenhait*), as in the mystical thought, the one which lets it be what *is*.

The way to let it be is what Heidegger is trying to undertake after the death of metaphysics. A mystical passivity, which leaves the deity show itself; inferring that the essential way is only able to live in a world which allows it to be as it is. With no temptation to decide or structure it according to the thought's need (MOTA, 2008).

Only the decision to find God without deciding about his existence is able to welcome him as He is. Without disputing the problem as in the mystique, which is pleased by a way to receive things and let them be as they are. Without posing a decision which comes from the *cogito*. God's death itself is like the absence or obscurity of God as a movement of what may be thought, but not as a possibility that he keeps being the one who Is (MARION, 1982).

Now, one has to transport the philosophical problem to the core of Christian discourse, since, only here, the development of this issue, as well as its possible overcoming, can be truly recognized as related to another possibility of theology as *mystika*.

> That radical eventuality of being that the post-metaphysical thought finds in its effort to break free from the constraint of what is simply present isn't compatible only under the light of the creatureliness which remains on the horizon of a "natural" religiosity, structural, prepared in existentialist terms. For philosophy, a conception of itself as a reading of the signs of the times, without being reduced to a pure passive recording of the time course, only seems possible under the light of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation of God's son (VATTIMO, 2000, p. 104-105).

When one involves the problem of Revelation and Incarnation in the discourse of access to God, he certainly falls into the Christian domain of the way how conceiving the facts. However, as insinuated by Vattimo (2000, p. 107) himself: "Would it be possible to conceive a thought outside of this Incarnation horizon?". The answer is no! Since whether the onto-theo-logy developed itself along with the Christian construction, then, one can only leave it seriously taking into account its foundations. Even that of regarding the mystery of the Incarnation of God's son as a scandal for thought.

I think that, from here on, it's possible to co-involve Heidegger in the discourse sustained by the Christian mystique. Because it's possible to discover something deeply religious in the act almost in despair with which it struggles against the idea that the being is deliberately prevented from being as it is. Let it be, as a philosophical proposal, has a deep similarity with the revelation idea. Well, as Yannaràs (1995, p. 72, author's emphasis, our translation) states:

> Heidegger's nihilism, while respecting the unlimited frontiers of the thinking thought – while rejecting to subject God and Being to the rational schemes –, seems, above all, to coincide with what, when compared to the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, we define, here, as apophatic *renunciation*[6].

According to Heidegger, what one has to think of is the difference as difference. However, the key point is that one shouldn't think the being who is *how it is*, and, here, we touch the *apophatic* theology, where thinking of God isn't think of nothing, because this God is beyond the Aristotle's categories. Eckhart (2006, p. 167-168, author's emphasis) says:

> Knowledge, however, and reason, they peel and receive everything what doesn't know both here and now; *in this* ability, reason touches the angel's nature. And yet, it receives from the senses; what the senses introduce from the outside, that's the source of reason receives. The will isn't like this, at this point the will is more noble than reason. The will doesn't take from anywhere, except the pure knowledge, where there's neither here nor now.

[6] Original excerpt, in Italian: "Il nichilismo di Heidegger, in quanto rispetto dei confini illimitati del pensiero pensante – in quanto rifiuto di sottopore Dio e l'Essere a delle schematizzazioni razionali –, sembra innanzi tutto coincidere con ciò che, in base al *Corpus Dionysiacum*, qui abbiamo definito *rinuncia* apofatica".

But how can one think of the unknown? A thought like this, which thinks of nothing opens an ontological space, to allow the one who is to unveil – by thinking of the difference as difference. Staying in abandonment corresponds to the acceptance of an ontological space where there's nothing. God's death gets into this reasoning as a space with no categories, reaching through the will or poetry. However, one doesn't know much about it, yet.

In general lines, the modern representatives of the mystical theology identified in the God's death movement an authentic possibility for practicing the true Christian mystique. More than God's death, it would be the death of an autonomous subject who tries to set up himself, like the *cogito* of Descartes and Kant, who needs God only for its self-foundation. Death, therefore, is the failure of this theory.

Although the theory of God's death has become popular in the denunciation, often misunderstood, by Nietzsche, its origin comes from a much earlier time, much more connected to that other theology than to denunciations properly speaking:

> Since M. Luther there's a theology of the Cross (*theologie crucis*), which constitutes the unexpected prelude to the theology of "God's death". The expression: God is dead (*Got is tot*), before being used by Hegel and before Nietzsche announced it as a complete fact, the Western man knew it and sang it in the liturgical hymn of Good Friday: *O grosse Noth*! *Gott selbst liegtg todt* (Oh, great misfortune! God himself was killed!) (YANNARÀS, 1995, p. 26, author's emphasis, our translation).[7]

Here, it's worth connecting the criticism to the *onto-theo-logy* with the apophatic tradition in Heidegger, but only as speculation, since Heidegger isn't a mystical man, on the contrary, he's against the mystique. The concept of *being* isn't God derives from that. Well, what Heidegger tries to demonstrate is that God isn't included in the constitution of *being*. The *being* is the one who does have a primacy

[7] Original excerpt, in Italian: "Già a partire di M. Lutero troviamo formulata una teologia della Croce (*theologie crucis*), Che costituische il preludio inaspettato della teologia della "morte di Dio". L'espressione: Dio è morto (*Got is tot*), prima che venisse adoperata da Hegel e prima che Nietzsche la annunciasse come un fatto compiuto, l'uomo accidentale la conosceva e la cantava nell'inno litúrgico protestante del Venerdì santo: *O grosse Noth*! *Gott selbst liegtg todt* (o grande sventura! Dio stesso è morto!)".

over the issue of God. A testimony which is opposite to the trend of identifying Heidegger with Eckhart (MARION, 1982).

However, is it possible to think of a contact between the schemes of criticism to the onto-theo-logy and the apophatic theology through a revision of the continuity or not of this tradition with regard to classical metaphysics?

Nevertheless, how can we identify a *being to death* as a being to God? – All this is very obscure. Heidegger leaves no assumptions for one to make this set up. According to Eckhart, however, this *absence* movement causes a *mourning* which potentiates and increases the desire for searching for and produces the openness to the transcendent. Therefore, death and detachment are what constitutes the true pathway towards God:

> Whosoever, thus, sowing permissive love in the flesh, will harvest eternal death, and whosoever sowing true love in the spirit, from the Spirit will harvest eternal life. Therefore, the sooner man flees from the creature, the sooner the Creator will assist him (ECKHART, 2006, p. 157).

Therefore, man will be able to achieve the "Beautiful-and-Good, which transcends every being and has neither beginning nor end" (PSEUDO-DIONÍSIO, 2004a, p. 48). There's in this theology type an increasingly emersed urgency on the act of searching for God, the impossibility of achieving it through thought, and openness to a *pathós* which generates a unity between the believer and his God.

The decisive step of mystical theology is taken, thus, through another decision type, a detachment (*abgeschiedenheit*). It's no longer merely the act of thinking of God and creating a pathway to access Him. This is a very expensive alternative to the mystique, because it doesn't produce "only a theoretical science, but a lived experience" (PSEUDO-DIONÍSIO, 2004a, p. 30).

4 Mystique and finitude

The apophatic theology, which renounces to think of God as *being*, also renounces to any definitive solution to ask about Him. The detachment caused, in a certain sense, by the loneliness of the one who is alone is the beginning of an endless search, but totally loaded with meaning. This is the balance point between metaphysically thinking and thinking according to finitude.

Heidegger observes that, in the first generation of Christians, in which one discovered the true meaning of human life, God wasn't conceived beyond temporality. His giving came as cure, anguish, being to death. It comprised another meaning field and provided the desire to ask with another interpretation (DUBOIS, 2004).

Asking the question without presupposing what the being is constitutes directing towards a religious thought. Therefore, Heidegger wanted to ask the question from the standpoint of finitude. This being – *Dasein* – represents, from the very beginning, an issue – a problem for existence, as God himself is problematic – in the context of finitude.

This observation occurred after the rupture of Heidegger with the Catholic thought and his first influences from Kierkegaard and Bultmann. Bultmann's point was making a new interpretation of faith through the existential condition and not through the dogmatic one. A radical option for Jesus without metaphysics.

This was a new vision for Heidegger. Needing no proof of God's existence to believe in Jesus. The first generation, before the inclusion of paganism in the church, had no metaphysical foundation, but it lived as in Kierkegaard's jump[8]. Hence, there's the idea of jumping, or being thrown, like a Luther's echo and his criticism to Aristotle's metaphysics, as a condition to restructure faith

[8] See Dubois (2000) for an introduction to Heidegger's complicated relationship with the Catholic and Protestant faith.

(YANNARÀS, 1995). This is the starting point in Heidegger's attempt to free existence from the metaphysics, but without engaging in theological issues. The Catholic tradition, on the other hand, relied on revelation (*Offenbarung*) to clarify the authentic way of faith, and, by thinking of the possibility of something which is previous to it, while manifestness (*Offenbarkeit*) reintroduced into its scheme the negative theology.

Returning to the alternative issue of replacing Being with Good, with which this paper started, manifestness now appears as the essence which has the appeal of an "originary light, the very invisibility of visibility? That's what, perhaps, the believer or the theologian would say, particularly, the Christian from the originary Christianity, from Urchristentum in the Lutheran tradition to which Heidegger recognizes to owe a lot" (DERRIDA, 2000, p. 27, author's emphasis). Thus, the negative theology has, as an element of its ineffable search, the sublime, something which was recognized in the Areopagus by Saint Paul as the unknown God who constituted a pretext for starting the dialogue with the Greeks.

In the face of the Greeks there's the old problem: who is God? A significant answer was given by the Aristotle's classical metaphysics, but the unknown God (Acts 17,23) is still living at its side, and, in the impossibility of a definitive answer, there's a suspension, an agreement: let it be the one who Is.

Paul refuses to show or reveal the nature of the unknown. However, by starting to talk of death and resurrection, he opens a second pathway to access God, beginning in a lesser extent due to its static nature, which sounds as a being in himself, in order to prioritize the finitude shown on the Cross. God's hiding behind the Cross is the scandal object which provides the Greeks' willingness to keep the dialogue with an end.[9] However, Paul remains steadfast in this belief, even living without life, having no doubt that the hidden God lives in him (Galatians 2,20).

[9] Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite, is named this way because he describes himself as belonging to the cycle in which the meeting between Paul and the Greeks took place, although he wrote in the 4th century.

Conclusion

By criticizing the onto-theo-logic conception of metaphysics which, by the way, is the usual way of practicing theology, the road opens up for us in order to answer to a question from metaphysics itself: how does God come to us? The negative pathway points to a primitive space of man's relationship with God, whose antiquity precedes even the possibility of *being*. Practicing theology through this conception means directly diving into the unusual and the difference domain.

God, then, no longer presents himself to anyone, producing a gap in free thinking and in the reach through the appetite which drives those who love; a pathway thought through difference situates the lover one step beyond metaphysics, in an eternally moving thought.

The *a-theist* thought should renounce to the causa sui philosophical god – in order to get even closer to the divine God. The God who gets into through the difference, aligns with the primitive tradition, whose interest was an atrium of thought before turning to God himself, the Different.

What the negative theology suggests is that, by practicing this exercise, we are about to understand the difference, but without thinking of the difference itself. A free way of thinking with no dispute concerning its existence. Well, thinking through the denial isn't even a dispute, but the way of solving a dispute.

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