

KARL RAHNER REPEATED IN JEAN-LUC MARION?

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The author traces an interesting development in Jean-Luc Marion's thought, from explicit rejection of Karl Rahner's thought to strong affinities with it. Marion's early theology aligns itself with Hans Urs von Balthasar's, making a later turn to Rahner seem impossible. But in his phenomenological trilogy and newer theological reflections, Marion opens to a Rahnerian perspective, particularly with respect to the mutual collaboration of faith and reason. Marion thus provides one more example of Rahner's enduring significance.

FUTURE RAHNER SCHOLARSHIP, suggests Robert Masson, must contend with the question of the “frame” for an interpretation of Karl Rahner's overall achievement.¹ Masson raises and discusses this question because he keenly perceives that a place for Rahner must be located—argued for, not just assumed—in contemporary discourse. One can search out this place for Rahner by considering his thought on the foundational issues that undergird the whole of Catholic theology. All the while, one should put this thought in dialogue with thinkers of today. My aim here is modest: to set up one such dialogue, namely, between Rahner and Jean-Luc Marion.

These two thinkers might seem an unlikely pair, since Marion is usually regarded as bearing affinities to Hans Urs von Balthasar and harboring antipathies toward Rahner. One might, however, see it differently. Cyril O'Regan detects a “non-identical repetition of Rahner” in Marion's

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¹ Robert Masson, “Interpreting Rahner's Metaphoric Logic,” *Theological Studies* 71 (2010) 380–409. I am grateful to Leo O'Donovan, Richard Lennan, the anonymous referees, and my colleagues, Matthew Eggemeier, Andrew Prevot, Robert Green, and John Manoussakis, whose critiques of earlier versions improved this article immeasurably.

discourse.² Though there is some distance of theological sensibility between Marion and Rahner, it might be much shorter than some, including Marion himself, have thought. O'Regan's insight could be seen as of minor interest, but I argue here that Marion's proximity to Rahner is significant. At a time when many people dismiss Rahner, Marion's non-identical repetition of him indicates that Catholic theology still needs Rahner, particularly when it grapples with foundational questions like the relationship between philosophy and theology.

My argument proceeds in three parts. First, it explains the irony behind the claim that Marion "repeats" Rahner's approach to foundational philosophical and theological questions, and includes a survey of Balthasar's influence on Marion's early theological writings and Marion's consequent suspicion of Rahner. Second, it describes a turn in Marion's phenomenology that has a major theological implication: it creates a field of resonance between him and Rahner. Third, it juxtaposes a few chapters from Marion's *Le croire pour le voir* (2010)³ with some Rahnerian writings on mystery and God's incomprehensibility. It points out how, with his discussion of the expansiveness of Catholic rationality, Marion verges on becoming a Rahnerian.

MARION'S BALTHASARIAN PAST

In his early theological work, *The Idol and Distance* (1977),⁴ Marion declares a preference for Balthasar's theology of revelation, due to its emphasis on God's freedom to reveal God's self. Key here is the element of surprise: God breaks unexpectedly into human life; our categories cannot contain God. In his later phenomenological work, *Being Given* (1999),

² Cyril J. O'Regan, "Jean-Luc Marion: Crossing Hegel" in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2007) 95–150, at 127.

³ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le croire pour le voir: Reflexions diverses sur la rationalité de la revelation et l'irrationalité de quelques croyantes* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2010). Two of the book's essays have been translated into English: "Faith and Reason," in *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Christina Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University, 2008) 145–54; and "The Formal Reason for the Infinite," in *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Graham Ward (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001) 399–412. I have consulted these translations, but the translations that follow are mine.

⁴ Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University, 2001). Here Marion writes: "To H. Urs von Balthasar my approach owes much. . . . The proportions of what is involved here nevertheless forbid me from transforming a dependency into an affiliation" (xxxviii). Marion recognizes a debt to Balthasar's theology but resists being labeled a thoroughgoing Balthasarian, and herein may lie a seed of Marion's later Rahnerian turn.

Marion explicitly discounts Rahner as a theological option,⁵ precisely because he believes that Rahner accents revelation too heavily as an a priori condition of human knowing and willing, and hence as too easily expected, recognized, and plugged into a thought system. Marion seems to have in mind such Rahnerian sayings as this: “God can never be a pure *a posteriori* if the human person is ever to know anything at all about Him.”⁶ Marion’s discomfort with Rahner’s insistence that God’s revelation include an a priori element shows that Marion stands firmly in Balthasar’s line. Balthasar recognizes an openness within human beings for God’s truth, but with the important caveat that “this openness is not the creature’s autonomous possession.”⁷ For Marion and Balthasar, God must be purely a posteriori, otherwise human persons can stake a claim on God’s grace, even to the point of asserting power over against it. To ensure that no such “Promethean” claims arise, theology must describe grace as arriving like a lightning bolt, interrupting everyday living, not as having always been there. Grace and revelation should be regarded as shattering categories and overwhelming intuition, not fitting neatly into categories and playing along with intuition. On Marion’s Balthasarian view, revelation too easily received reveals little, and certainly not God. *God without Being* (1982),⁸ the book that put Marion on the map for US theologians, presupposes such a reading of revelation, thus the normativity of a Balthasarian/Barthian perspective.

God without Being presupposes analyses already completed in *The Idol and Distance*, which is the best site for unveiling the Marion-Balthasar relationship. The latter volume consists in five studies: two introduce and tie up, respectively, the strands of Marion’s theological proposal; three interpret Friedrich Nietzsche, Friedrich Hölderlin, and Denys the Areopagite, who illustrate and enact Marion’s vision. The project is christological, both with respect to articulating the relationship between the Son and the Father, and to discussing the human capacity for apprehending the Father through the Son. The operative idea here is the one for which Marion is most famous: the icon. Marion’s language and concerns throughout this christological project are manifestly Heideggerian. He inserts his own theological ideas directly, if critically, into Heidegger’s narrative of the history of metaphysics

⁵ See Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2002) 367 n. 90.

⁶ Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, trans. William Dych (New York: Continuum, 1969) 182.

⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory*, vol. 1, *The Truth of the World*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000) 53.

⁸ Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: Hors-texte*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991).

as ontotheology.⁹ Marion contends stridently that contemporary Christology needs to place itself outside metaphysics. But just as crucial as his adoption of Heidegger's narrative is his divergence from Heidegger. In *The Idol and Distance* where Marion deviates from Heidegger, Balthasar's influence looms large.

For instance, Heidegger extols Hölderlin as an exception to the "onto-theo-logical" rule of metaphysics insofar as the poet employs non-Christian, Greek elements. Marion agrees with Heidegger that Hölderlin escapes metaphysics, but disagrees as to how. Taking a Balthasarian tack, Marion insists that Hölderlin evades metaphysics not when he avoids Christian language, but precisely when he employs it. While Heidegger reads Hölderlin as a post-Christian, atheistic harbinger of a new beginning after metaphysics, Marion views Hölderlin as a poet whose language amounts to Christian praise of God.¹⁰ This reading is hardly self-evident. Acknowledging this at various points,¹¹ Marion relies on Balthasar's prior study of Hölderlin as a Christian poet in *The Glory of the Lord*, volume 5.¹² (Marion likewise relies on Balthasar as his main authority when he considers Denys the Areopagite¹³). This all suggests that Marion's detailed theological rejoinders to Heidegger¹⁴ gain significant inspiration from similar analyses already completed by Balthasar.

Though Marion's early assumption of much of Balthasar's content is of great interest, more to the point here is his adoption of Balthasar's fundamental theological perspective. *The Idol and Distance* does not consist simply in a complex objection, developed with the help of Balthasar, to Heidegger's alleged fencing-in of Hölderlin or the Christian mystical tradition. Instead, Marion intends the book as an essay in constructive, "non-onto-theological" theology after the proclamation of the death of God.¹⁵ This theology bases itself in Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians regarding the

⁹ See the opening chapter, "The March of Metaphysics," in *Idol and Distance* 1–26; see also Martin Heidegger, "The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics," in *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002) 42–74.

¹⁰ See Marion, *Idol and Distance* 129–36.

¹¹ E.g., *ibid.* 22, 137.

¹² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 5, *The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age*, trans. Oliver Davies et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991) 298–338.

¹³ Marion, *Idol and Distance* 139–95; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. 2, *Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles*, trans. Andrew Louth et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1984) 144–210. See Tasmin Farmer Jones, "Dionysius in Hans Urs von Balthasar and Jean-Luc Marion," *Modern Theology* 24 (2008) 743–54.

¹⁴ Marion, *Idol and Distance* 200–215.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 20.

folly of the cross: the Christian *logos* departs entirely from “Greek wisdom,” which Marion takes to be metaphysics. In a distinction he gets from Heidegger, but with significant chastisement from Balthasar, Marion aligns the classical German pairing of *Offenbarung* and *Offenbarkeit* with Paul’s *logos* of the cross and the *logos* of “the Greeks.”¹⁶ For Marion’s theology, God’s revelation (*Offenbarung*) assumes primacy of place over any manifestation (*Offenbarkeit*) of being, i.e., the object of philosophy. Giving *Offenbarung* a primary and *Offenbarkeit* a secondary role amounts, Marion avers, to returning theology to its own vocabulary, as opposed to borrowing it from philosophy; the words of Scripture outshine the words of the philosophical tradition. Returning to our previous terminology, the a posteriori element of revelation outstrips and provides the context for any a priori claim that a human recipient of revelation might try to make. Marion believes that this *Offenbarung*-centered theology sides with Balthasar over against Rahner, or so his later reference to the two would have us conclude.¹⁷

Today we know—or should know—that Marion draws the contrast between Balthasar and Rahner too starkly, with Balthasar as the strictly theological theologian and Rahner the prodigal philosophical theologian. In doing so, Marion follows Balthasar’s most ungenerous moments of Rahner interpretation that accuse Rahner of relinquishing the surprise of revelation and denying the scandal of the cross.¹⁸ Marion, along with Balthasar, tends to ignore the fact that Rahner’s a priori revelation is of a piece with the transformative power of the Word’s incarnation in Jesus Christ. A comment Rahner makes late in *Hearer of the Word* illustrates this point:

Revelation does not have to be merely a critical judgment pronounced on what is human, merely something standing above the world, which can never become “flesh” but always only a thorn in the flesh. Yet, on the other hand, we can and must accept God’s free revelation as unexpected, undue grace, as “history,” not as opposed to nature but as standing above nature.¹⁹

¹⁶ See Marion, *God without Being* 62–70.

¹⁷ “The fact (if there is one) of Revelation exceeds the scope of all science, including that of phenomenology. Only a theology, and on condition of constructing itself on the basis of this fact alone (Karl Barth or Hans Urs von Balthasar, no doubt more than Rudolf Bultmann or Karl Rahner), could reach it” (Marion, *Being Given* 367 n. 90).

¹⁸ See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness*, trans. Richard Beckley (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994) 108–9.

¹⁹ Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Continuum, 1994) 154. It seems appropriate to focus on *Hearer of the Word* here, because critics of Rahner often point to his early work as catastrophically determining his theology before he even writes it. This view of Rahner is ill-conceived and tends to predicate itself upon a misreading of the transcendental in Rahner, particularly his

Clearly this passage replies to Barth,²⁰ Balthasar's great inspiration. Rahner concedes to Barth that revelation ought to be a surprise and a scandal, but he recasts what surprise will look like. It need not be opposed to human "flesh" and "nature," but instead must be seen as elevating this "flesh" or "nature." A change still occurs, then, through Christ's incarnation, even if it does not scandalize the human person as much as Barth or Balthasar would have it. Marion erroneously downplays this Rahnerian version of surprise, but that is not so much the point as this: given Marion's early Balthasarianism and consequent anti-Rahnerianism, one might deem it unlikely that Marion could make any sort of Rahnerian turn, but I show that he does—even if he himself does not recognize it.

A TURN TOWARD RAHNER?

My first section shows how a mix of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics and Balthasar's theology of revelation in Marion's early theological works leads him to reject Rahner. The present section tells how the development of Marion's later philosophy starts him on a path that will eventually modify his initial theological impulse, thus creating a space in which he softens his antipathy to Rahner. Marion's new opening toward Rahner, which I treat in my third section, comes to light as Marion discusses a "new beginning" in philosophy.²¹

In *The Idol and Distance* and *God without Being*, Marion's sharpest divergences from Heidegger bring to light what he has learned from Balthasar. In his great philosophical trilogy—*Reduction and Givenness* (1989), *Being Given* (1997), and *In Excess* (2001)—Marion's departures from Heidegger are again revelatory. The phenomenological proposal that he elaborates, like the christological one he constructs in the early theological works, draws inspiration from Heidegger most notably in its

later theology; they claim that the so-called transcendental perspective of *Hearer of the Word* and *Spirit in the World* removes the scandal of Christ from Rahner's later theology before he even writes it. This view of Rahner is ill-conceived and tends to predicate itself upon a misreading of the transcendental in Rahner, particularly his alleged Kantianism. Unfortunately, the case against Rahner's critics cannot be prosecuted here; for a sustained critique, see Peter Joseph Fritz, "Sublime Apprehension: A Catholic, Rahnerian Construction" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2010).

²⁰ Incidentally, the paragraph that precedes it is a critical response to Schleiermacher. The frequent comparison of Rahner to Schleiermacher, I would argue, has no basis in reality.

²¹ See Jean-Luc Marion, *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1998) 1–3.

aspiration to a “new beginning” in philosophy. Heidegger, with his own claims to be the custodian of a “new beginning,” stood in a line of other prominent German philosophers who did the same: Kant, Nietzsche, and Husserl. But if Marion is indebted to Heidegger for the idea of a “new beginning,” he also finds in it grounds for diverging from Heidegger. Marion’s guide in the places where he departs from Heidegger is Husserl. Where the latter departs from Kant and Nietzsche, Marion finds ways to depart from Heidegger.

Herein lies a momentous, if quiet, shift in Marion’s thinking as it relates to theology. In his earlier theological works, Marion diverges from Heidegger based on a theological objection: Heidegger unjustifiably stipulates that Christianity cannot evade metaphysics. There Marion showed that faith claims about Christ can and do break the stranglehold of metaphysics on Western thought. Faith, rather than reason, was the key to defeating the metaphysical tradition and its critic, Heidegger. Changing course in his later philosophy, Marion finds in philosophical reason, particularly in Husserl’s phenomenological reason, a candidate just as strong as Christology for exiting metaphysics. By implication, reason and faith might cooperate in a way that Marion’s earlier work, with its strong distinction between *Offenbarung* and *Offenbarkeit*, disallowed. So begins Marion’s repetition of Rahner.

From the start of *Reduction and Givenness*, Marion reads Husserl’s phenomenology as a new beginning that follows the end of metaphysics in Nietzsche. Marion both assumes the veracity of Heidegger’s diagnosis of Nietzsche as the last metaphysician and contests Heidegger’s view that Husserl remains mired in Cartesian metaphysics.²² Likewise, Marion follows Heidegger in lauding Husserl’s discovery of categorial intuition. Yet Marion uses Husserl’s categorial intuition differently than Heidegger would. Heidegger uses Husserl’s categorial intuition in consonance with Kant’s prescription that intuition is utterly finite. Marion uses categorial intuition against this Kantian idea. For Heidegger, Kant’s great accomplishment consists in his turning of thought back to its proper finitude.²³ For Marion, Husserl’s great achievement is broadening intuition beyond the bounds of Kantian finitude.²⁴ This is all to say that Marion effects a complex conversation between Husserl on the one side and Nietzsche and Kant on the other, so as to arrive at a new account of phenomenology, beyond Heidegger’s.

²² For this latter point see *ibid.* 81.

²³ See Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington IN: Indiana University, 1990) 150–53.

²⁴ Marion, *Reduction and Givenness* 12.

Marion's comparison of Husserl and Nietzsche early in *Reduction and Givenness* is intriguing, once one recognizes that Husserl stands proxy for Marion, and Nietzsche for Heidegger.²⁵ Both Husserl and Nietzsche locate themselves at the end of modernity, and they try to set the terms for modernity's aftermath by affirming existence (*Dasein*) in a new way. Nietzsche's yea-saying to the world as it is Heidegger takes up in his later writings—*Gelassenheit* (1959), for example. Husserl proves to be Nietzsche's "unavoidable twin" with his broadened view of intuition that says yes to each phenomenon that gives itself *as* it gives itself.²⁶ Should one stop here, it might seem that Nietzsche and Husserl are doing the same thing, and that, by proxy, Heidegger and Marion are as well.

Marion has more to say, though. He states much later in the book that Husserl confronts his readers with an "amazing paradox": "he discovered a mode of thought that absolutely revolutionizes metaphysics without, however, understanding its final scope."²⁷ The fact that Husserl appears as Nietzsche's twin relates ineluctably to the fact that Husserl never finished the task he had set for himself. Husserl discovered a new, broadened intuition that attained first not to phenomena, but to "givenness," i.e., that by which phenomena are given to intuition. Husserl, however, failed to fully explore this broadened intuition. Had he done so, his affirmation of givenness would have surpassed by leaps and bounds Nietzsche's Dionysian yea-saying. Marion takes it upon himself to carry forward the Husserlian torch and to leap past Heidegger.

Marion's attempt "to think givenness as such" entails elaborating "new and rigorous paradoxes."²⁸ When he introduces this elaboration of paradoxes in *Being Given*, he indicates both how he conceives himself advancing beyond Heidegger, and how he begins to repeat Rahner. Tellingly, he writes that in describing his paradoxes, "I do not hesitate to go so far as the phenomenon of Revelation, namely Christ."²⁹ Against Heidegger, who proscribes the examination of anything Christian in philosophy, let alone Christ, Marion permits himself to examine anything, including Christ.

This may sound exactly like Marion's objection in *The Idol and Distance* to Heidegger's bracketing of Christ, but it is not. In the preface to the American translation of *Being Given*, Marion notes that in his earlier theological work he lacked a phenomenological philosophy that could make the constructive claims he wished to make against Heidegger. Instead, he resorted to theology. He broke *God without Being* into two parts, a philosophical text and a theological "outside-the-text."³⁰ He calls

²⁵ Ibid. 17–18.

²⁷ Ibid. 142.

²⁹ Marion, *Being Given* 4.

²⁶ Ibid. 19.

²⁸ Ibid. 205.

³⁰ Ibid. x.

this recourse to theology “blunt,” and promises that his new phenomenology aims to negotiate better the relationship between phenomenology and theology. Thus he defends the possibility of Christ’s appearance in thought on phenomenological grounds: “Every phenomenon must be describable, and every exclusion must on principle be reversed.”³¹ The implication is that no phenomenologist—Heidegger or anyone else—should decide what phenomenon may or may not be described. This, for Marion, is the upshot of Husserl’s discovery of a broadened intuition oriented toward givenness. If Heidegger’s phenomenology admits all phenomena but Christian ones (following Nietzsche’s supposed yea-saying), then Heidegger’s phenomenology is incomplete. His exclusions must be reversed, and this Marion intends to do. His resemblance to Rahner in this respect is striking.

Rahner wrestles with the relationship between philosophy and theology throughout his career. When he does, Heidegger is never far from his mind, whether explicitly mentioned or not. Like Marion, Rahner learns much from Heidegger, but he too has deep disagreements with his philosophy professor.

It is well known that while he studied under Heidegger, Rahner thought quite a bit about the relationship between theology and philosophy. Some of his lecture notes from the 1930s, now published in his *Sämtliche Werke*, show that Rahner has a fundamental objection to Heidegger’s thinking. He rejects what he calls an “apriorism of finitude” (*Apriorismus der Endlichkeit*) in Heidegger.³² In other words, Heidegger assumes a priori that thinking must direct itself to finitude only. For this reason, philosophy, which attains to finitude alone, understands the task of thinking better than theology does when it pretends to reach out to the infinite. In reality, theology can do nothing more than rehash human faith claims. Rahner’s notes object to Heidegger’s circumscription of philosophy and the consequent view of the relationship between philosophy and theology. Readers of *Spirit in the World* (1939) and *Hearer of the Word* (1941) know that in these works Rahner tenaciously defends the place of infinity in philosophical thinking as an assurance of true human transcendence. He pits transcendence toward the infinite against Heidegger’s transcendence “toward nothingness.”³³ Even in philosophy, unlike Heidegger, Rahner leaves the door open for theology, for the appearance of Christ, and for the outpouring of grace.

³¹ Ibid. 4.

³² Karl Rahner, “Vortragsskizzen,” in *Geist in Welt: Philosophische Schriften*, ed. Albert Raffelt (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1996) 444.

³³ Rahner, *Hearer of the Word* 50.

Hearer of the Word is a work of *Wissenschaftstheorie*,³⁴ i.e., a classical German foray into how to define the relationship of the sciences to one another. Rahner sharpens his focus to just two sciences, in large part because he deems them the most fundamental: philosophy of religion and theology. In discussing these two sciences, Rahner takes a cue from Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, which spoke of two "stems" that spring from one "root"; Rahner sees sensibility and intellect springing from the imagination as their common source.³⁵ He envisions philosophy of religion and theology as two "stems," analogous to sensibility and intellect, which share a common root in the human person.³⁶ He thus refers back to his analyses in *Spirit in the World* of the metaphysics of human knowing in Aquinas. There Rahner shows that, for Aquinas, human sensibility and intellect find a common ground in the imagination.³⁷ Undoubtedly Rahner's reading of Aquinas finds a remarkable parallel between him and Heidegger. However, just as a convergence between the Rahnerian Aquinas and Heidegger appears, they diverge.

Heidegger develops his view on sensibility and the intellect as two stems sprouting from the root of the imagination via an exegesis of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. His reading of this foundational work cuts against the interpretations of German Idealists such as Fichte and Schelling, who saw in Kant's teachings on the imagination an opening toward the infinite.³⁸ By contrast, Heidegger sees in the Kantian imagination a strong statement of philosophy as a "mark of finitude."³⁹

Working somewhat at the behest of Joseph Maréchal and Pierre Rousselot, but even more so of Aquinas and other medieval Schoolmen, Rahner permits himself to flirt with German Idealism insofar as it insists on the place of infinitude in the imagination. More specifically, he adapts the Scholastic teaching of the "emanating influence,"⁴⁰ the spontaneous activity of an agent, to accord with the German Idealists' view of the productive imagination as the expression of human freedom and source of human action. Rahner locates this "emanating influence" at the center of human knowledge and action, thus arguing that the source of all human sensibility

³⁴ Below I argue that it is not only this, but also a work that presupposes a theology of grace.

³⁵ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* 97.

³⁶ Rahner, *Hearer of the Word* 4: "The problem of the relation between theology and the philosophy of religion is the metaphysical problem of the common ground from which both spring, hence it is also an inquiry into human nature."

³⁷ See especially Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 305–9.

³⁸ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* 98 n. 196.

³⁹ See *ibid.* 17: "Thinking as such is . . . already the mark of finitude." See also *ibid.* 171.

⁴⁰ Rahner, *Spirit in the World* 339–40.

and intellect is the power of spirit. And for Rahner, "spirit" means that which is directed toward the "absolutely infinite."⁴¹ This aspect of the human person reaching out toward the infinite, the *Vorgriff*, he defines as "the *a priori* power, given with the very nature of the spirit, to represent to oneself the single quiddities brought up by the receptive sense knowledge in a dynamic *a priori* reaching out of the spirit for the absolute range of its possible objects."⁴² The notion of *Vorgriff*, a word Rahner borrows from Heidegger's *Being and Time*, is ironically the point at which Rahner diverges most sharply from Heidegger. They part ways, somewhat like Marion and Heidegger, over the issue of a broadened intuition.

In *Hearer of the Word*, Rahner designates *Vorgriff* as the linchpin of the relationship between philosophy and theology. The apex toward which philosophy ascends Rahner calls "a possible revelation of God."⁴³ A philosophy that truly opens its eyes and ears to such a revelation also opens itself to theology. Rahner argues that a possible revelation of God has two key ingredients. The first ingredient is vintage Rahner: "A divine revelation is possible only if we ourselves, the subjects to whom it is addressed, offer it an *a priori* horizon within which something like the revelation might occur."⁴⁴ Due to statements like this, Balthasarians, including the early Marion, feel justified in contending that Rahner shackles God's revelation to human limitations, thus setting the bar just as low as did his 18th-century forefather, Immanuel Kant. *Vorgriff*, in this case, would do the shackling.

But Rahner, who at this point directs his argument *against* Kant,⁴⁵ has not finished. He proceeds with the second ingredient: "And only if this horizon is absolutely unlimited will no law or restriction be imposed from the start on a possible revelation concerning what might and should possibly be revealed."⁴⁶ In other words, the requirement of an *a priori* human horizon for a revelation does not detract from divine revelation's power to reveal. Put more pointedly, only a receiver with an intuition broad enough to receive the infinite will actually receive what is given. The *Vorgriff* is such a broad intuition. At its best, Rahner argues, philosophy has this broad scope and is "the ready openness and open readiness for theology."⁴⁷

Before I relate all this back to Marion, I must briefly examine how Rahner develops similar ideas about philosophy and theology in his *Theological*

⁴¹ Ibid. 186.

⁴² Rahner, *Hearer of the Word* 121–22.

⁴³ Ibid. 9.

⁴⁵ See *ibid.* 122, 140, and 54.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 53.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 53.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 150.

Investigations. “Philosophy and Theology” (1961), for example, deals with the modern perception that philosophy and theology are “two sciences alien to each other”; they have merely an external relation.⁴⁸ Rahner does not deny that philosophy and theology are distinct sciences—this is simply a fact—but he does reject their separation.

The main question Rahner approaches in this essay is whether there can ever be a pure philosophy. If there were, philosophy and theology could remain separate, as one text outside another. Rahner acknowledges that one could hold this opinion in one sense: “that it does not take any of its material contents and norms from the official, socially constituted and hence ecclesiastical, special, and thematized revelation.”⁴⁹ But in another, more important sense, one cannot hold this opinion, because “in every philosophy men already engage inevitably and unthematically in theology, since no one has any choice in the matter—even when he does not know it consciously—whether he wants to be pursued by God’s revealing grace or not.”⁵⁰ Philosophy cannot ultimately be seen as purely discrete from theology because both are sustained from within by God’s grace. I examined above how Rahner holds philosophically that the human person opens from the imagination outward, toward the infinite. Here, in this theological treatment of the relationship between philosophy and theology, Rahner makes his own philosophy thematic: “The depth of the human abyss, which in a thousand ways is *the* theme of philosophy, is already the abyss which has been opened by God’s grace and which stretches into the depths of God himself.”⁵¹ These words illuminate Rahner’s earlier philosophical projects in *Spirit in the World* and *Hearer of the Word*. *Vorgriff*, it turns out, is the “abyss” opened by God’s grace. Or, to dig deeper, *Vorgriff* is the movement of God’s grace through the human person.⁵² Thus, *pace* Karen Kilby, *Vorgriff* is an earlier formulation of Rahner’s later term, supernatural existential.⁵³

⁴⁸ Karl Rahner, “Philosophy and Theology,” in *Concerning Vatican Council II*, Theological Investigations (hereafter TI) 6, trans. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969) 71–81, at 71.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 78.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 79.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 78.

⁵² On this, see Fritz, “Sublime Apprehension,” chap. 2.

⁵³ See Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 59–69. Kilby gets Rahner right when she notices the “points of continuity” between *Hearer of the Word* and the supernatural existential (59–60). She gets Rahner wrong when she posits an “incompatibility” between *Hearer of the Word* and the supernatural existential (60–69). Her misreading of the situation hinges on a misinterpretation of *Hearer of the Word* as an “either-or” work, somewhat in the vein of Barth’s theology (62).

Ten years later, Rahner delivered a lecture entitled “On the Current Relationship between Philosophy and Theology.”⁵⁴ The lecture contains a fascinating interpretation of chapter four of *Dei Filius*, Vatican I’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith. Rahner contends: “The heart and center of [*Dei Filius*] is this: man cannot escape from having to do with God, and even at a stage prior to any Christian revelation conceived of in explicit or institutional terms.”⁵⁵ In *Dei Filius*’s explicit pronouncements about the human ability to know God through natural reason, Rahner sees an implied claim that God operates and even effects salvation not only through faith and revelation but also through reason, philosophy, and science. God is always there, whether one notices God or not. In other words, reason itself has fundamental importance. Rahner observes that “what is utterly astonishing is that the faith of the official Church, of its own volition, ascribes so fundamental a significance to a factor which lies outside the Church’s own conscious faith in revelation.”⁵⁶ Rather than requiring that science and philosophy make a theological turn, Vatican I upholds autonomous reason as vitally important of itself. This reading of *Dei Filius* is somewhat counterintuitive. This council seems to have opened the doors to the wisdom of the world in the way that many see only in Vatican II.

Though Rahner may overstate his case, he does so because he believes that he recognizes in Vatican I, after the dawn of secular reason, the seeds of a new partnership of philosophy and theology. He sees in *Dei Filius* the Catholic affirmation that “everything human belongs to God, and only so is truly appropriated to man.”⁵⁷ Because of this, the theologian, philosopher, and scientist must cultivate a partnership. Each field can use its own distinctive methods, but all must find a way to work together—not excluding one another, as Heidegger would have it.

Let me now return to Marion. His phenomenological trilogy develops at length a method of philosophy that, although strictly distinct from theology, also never separates itself from theology. To adapt a turn of phrase from John Manoussakis, in his later phenomenology concerning “the revelation of phenomena,” Marion finds a philosophical method that can incorporate the chief datum of theology, “the phenomenon of revelation.”⁵⁸ Like Rahner, Marion develops a view of reason/philosophy

⁵⁴ Rahner, “On the Current Relationship between Philosophy and Theology,” in *Theology, Anthropology, Christology*, TI 13, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1975) 61–79.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 67.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 79.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 68.

⁵⁸ John Panteleimon Manoussakis, “The Revelation of the Phenomena and the Phenomenon of Revelation: An Apology for Dionysius’s Phenomenological Appropriation,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82 (2008) 705–19, at 712.

that is expansive enough to reach out toward theology. He insists that each field retain its own method and scope—thus he answers critics who accuse him of a “theological turn in phenomenology.”⁵⁹ But he also argues for a phenomenology so radically broad as seemingly to verge onto theology’s territory. This blurring of boundaries is a repetition of Rahner.

So too, though, does Marion remain nonidentical with Rahner. Vestiges of his Balthasarian past keep him from approving of Rahner’s thesis that philosophy is a “condition of the possibility of theology.”⁶⁰ Marion still maintains that his phenomenology of *l’adonné*, the one gifted with phenomena she cannot anticipate, contrasts with Rahner who maintains that the recipient of God’s revelation always brings “something positive of his own to bear upon this revelation.”⁶¹ Like Balthasar, Marion insists on the element of surprise.⁶² To repeat, Marion does not recognize Rahner’s rendering of the element of surprise.

Even so, Marion has come to the edge of the Rahnerian view of philosophy and theology’s interrelation—and has partially crossed it. This would have seemed impossible for the Marion of his Balthasarian past. He has come upon a new beginning.

MARION MEETS RAHNER: INFINITY AND INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

Rahner and Marion agree on a crucial point. Against Heidegger, they insist that reason is open to infinity; reason’s capacity to think cannot be limited to the finite alone. In this last section I show how Marion and Rahner’s agreement on infinitude’s place in human thinking manifests itself in Marion’s latest book, *Le croire pour le voir*, a set of theological essays that appeared in French *Communio*—ironically enough, the journal founded by Balthasar.

I begin with a statement from *Le croire pour le voir*: “To use one’s reason, for us, demands from the start to be exercised by the infinite . . . so as to make our rational capabilities advance by applying them not only to some delimited object, but also to that which by definition always resists definition.”⁶³ Today, notes Marion, thinking the infinite has become an exigency for all the sciences. Mathematics uses infinity as a limit concept; physics explores the “infinitely small” particles of the universe, and biology the “infinitely small” structures of life; astrophysics explores the “infinitely large” expanses of space, while technology, with its “imperialist interpretation” of

⁵⁹ See Marion, *Being Given* 71–74.

⁶⁰ Rahner, “Philosophy and Theology” 71.

⁶¹ Rahner, “Current Relationship between Philosophy and Theology” 76.

⁶² Marion, *Being Given* 268.

⁶³ Marion, *Le croire pour le voir* 55.

the world, asserts an “infinite reach” over the globe.⁶⁴ The sciences have arrived, then, at a point where the infinite and the incomprehensible continually confront reason. The problem is that the sciences do not acknowledge this incomprehensibility. They continue to claim objectivity. Marion believes that a phenomenology that thinks about the infinite (is “exercised by the infinite”) can help make sense of this new situation in the sciences. I have noted that Marion’s phenomenological trilogy works to expand intuition so that it is faced with the in-finite arrival of givenness. It bears mentioning that in other recent phenomenological works, Marion aims thoroughly to inject the infinite into his thinking, both to describe human love and to gesture toward a phenomenology of the love of God.⁶⁵ These phenomenological overtures to the infinite invite theological application, and Marion does precisely this in *Le croire pour le voir*. He draws nearer to Rahner.

Rahner concurs *avant la lettre* with his French counterpart. The use of reason demands being exercised by the infinite. For Rahner, the movement of thinking toward the infinite consists in an encounter with mystery, the incomprehensibility of God.⁶⁶ In fact, Rahner believes that ultimately all thinking, at its deepest level, relates to incomprehensibility and mystery:

All understanding of any reality whatsoever is in the last resort always a ‘*reductio in mysterium*,’ and any comprehension which is or seems to be devoid of the character of mystery is only arrived at through the unspoken convention that this ‘*reductio in mysterium Dei*’ should be excluded from the start.”⁶⁷

Unless one holds to an apriorism of finitude, à la Heidegger, one should recognize that all human inquiry goes back to God’s mystery. The human person is continually confronted with “the silent and uncontrollable infinity of reality [that] is always present as mystery.”⁶⁸ Furthermore, the human person, as the one confronted with this infinity, mystery, and incomprehensibility, participates in it. She is incomprehensible.⁶⁹ In other words, the

⁶⁴ Ibid. 56.

⁶⁵ Chief among these is Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006).

⁶⁶ The *loci classici* are Karl Rahner, “The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology,” in *More Recent Writings*, TI 4, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966) 36–73; and Rahner, “An Investigation of the Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas,” in *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology*, TI 16, trans. David Morland (New York: Crossroad, 1983) 244–54.

⁶⁷ Rahner, “Concept of Mystery” 62.

⁶⁸ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1978) 35.

⁶⁹ This is the upshot of Karl Rahner, “The Theological Dimension of the Question about Man,” in *Jesus, Man, and the Church*, TI 17, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 53–70.

incomprehensibility of the human person is the horizon within which God becomes most apparent in the world. Hence the pinnacle of God's revelation occurs in Jesus Christ, in whom "God utters [the] mystery [of humanity] as his own."⁷⁰

Marion's latest theological work turns to this topic of incomprehensibility. "La raison formelle de l'infini" ("Formal Reason of the Infinite") is the flagship chapter of *Le croire pour le voir*.⁷¹ Marion opens the chapter with a twofold thesis: (1) it is a privilege of human persons to be concerned with the infinite;⁷² and (2) thinking the infinite is particularly necessary for modern human persons, because during the modern period the infinite took on a significance it lacked in premodernity. While Aristotle excludes the infinite from thinking, Descartes and Kant admit it. But just as soon as they do, they attempt to renege on this admission.⁷³ Marion contends that, while Descartes's and Kant's allowing the infinite into thinking merits serious examination, their attempt to control it and its incomprehensibility demands rejection. Marion provides the following rationale for a critical reexamination of Descartes, Kant, and the infinite: "Should one lose incomprehensibility, reason would risk losing all its legitimacy, and therefore its whole proper realm [*tout son royaume*]."⁷⁴ Incomprehensibility and infinitude need to be a part of our thinking, lest we relinquish reason.

To make his case, Marion targets two possible rejections of incomprehensibility: (1) "its noetic impracticability," i.e., our inability to think it, and (2) "its marginality amid the real use of reason," i.e., incomprehensibility is nothing but a limit case.⁷⁵ He counters both of these rejections with a christological point, one reinforced by his phenomenology: since the infinite, divine *Logos* became human flesh, all human reason, which always retains its own finite integrity and individual concreteness, is imprinted quasitranscendentally by God's infinity and incomprehensibility.⁷⁶ For this reason, we are drawn to think incomprehensibility not marginally, but centrally. The key, Marion believes, consists in recognizing that "incomprehensibility, as an experience of being unable to grasp, does

⁷⁰ Karl Rahner, "Theology of the Incarnation," in *More Recent Writings*, TI 4, 105–20, at 120.

⁷¹ Marion, *Le croire pour le voir* 55–74.

⁷² Ibid. 55.

⁷³ Ibid. 56–58.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 60.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 67: "Ce qui importe pourtant ici, ce ne sont pas les vicissitudes de *l'imitatio Christi*, mais l'impreinte quasi-transcendentale dont l'infini marque le fini." "Quasi-transcendental" is a word Marion takes from Jacques Derrida, but, given Rahner's many reflections on God's "quasi-formal causality" acting on human persons, Marion might just as well have taken this term from Rahner.

not have only a negative function. . . . It can also give access to a real and positive experience of the infinite."⁷⁷ With this phrase, "positive experience of the infinite," Marion repeats Rahner.

Rahner's writings on the question of God's incomprehensibility center on a fundamental objection to the neo-Scholastic view of mystery. The neo-Scholastic philosophy and theology in which Rahner was originally trained holds to the rather modern presupposition that, from the human side, mystery has only a negative connotation and content. Mystery means a deficiency of truth.⁷⁸ Neo-Scholasticism thus echoes a Kantian view of mystery/incomprehensibility as referring to noetic impracticability. Incomprehensibility is viewed as an "attribute of God" that the human person, "as a result of a purely negative experience of finite limitation, can only accept of necessity with more or less resignation."⁷⁹ Incomprehensibility consists in a provisional failure of human reason that will not find its remedy until after death, in the beatific vision.⁸⁰ Rahner notes that this view "obscures the basic truth that divine incomprehensibility is of vital importance for human self-understanding: it affects all human knowing and does not only emerge when one is specifically concerned with God."⁸¹ Or as Marion would put it, incomprehensibility is not merely a marginal use or limit case of reason.

Why does Rahner think this? First, he resists a modern view of reason that assumes that perspicuity is reason's highest expression.⁸² Second, Aquinas persuades him of this suspicion of modern reason. Aquinas conceives of something moderns would find strange, if not outright contradictory: the incomprehensibility of God in the beatific vision. The heavenly vision of God equals a vision of God's incomprehensibility. God remains incomprehensible at the summit of God's relationship to each human person. Incomprehensibility "signifies a positive finite state and not a block which fixes the creature in his finite condition in the face of infinity."⁸³ The relationship between the finite and the infinite does not end in the finite forcibly grasping the infinite. Instead, it concludes with the finite enjoying absolute proximity to the infinite. Rahner infers that this view of the relationship between the finite and the infinite has wide applicability: "All human knowing, despite the possibility of the 'what' which is predicated, is enfolded in an incomprehensibility which

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 62.

⁷⁸ Rahner, "Concept of Mystery" 41.

⁷⁹ Rahner, "Incomprehensibility of God in Thomas Aquinas" 253.

⁸⁰ Rahner, "Concept of Mystery" 40.

⁸¹ Rahner, "Incomprehensibility of God in Thomas Aquinas" 253.

⁸² Rahner, "Concept of Mystery" 55.

⁸³ Rahner, "Incomprehensibility of God in Thomas Aquinas" 251.

forms an image of the divine incomprehensibility where God reveals himself as the one without a name.”⁸⁴ Rahner acknowledges that perspicuous knowledge has its place. But incomprehensibility is the end of all human persons. Thus incomprehensibility must serve as the norm for all knowledge.

Marion concurs with Rahner on the above counts. Incomprehensibility represents for him a task for human thought: “The time has without a doubt come to admit the incomprehensibility within us.”⁸⁵ The need for such an admission presses so forcefully on us during this age because of a tendency of human persons, at the behest of modern science, to objectify themselves.⁸⁶ Different theories from the human sciences reduce the human person to one aspect, such as libido or economic productivity. By contrast, Christian theology, and a phenomenology compatible with it, reveals that the only way the human person can know herself is by recognizing that, to paraphrase Pascal, “*l’homme passe l’homme*,” the human person surpasses the human person. Each human person is worth more than we can conceive. This means that no person can be subjected to strict conditions of knowability.⁸⁷ A positive view of mystery, incomprehensibility, infinity, and how all these mark the human person leads to this important realization. God renders to the human person of today the service of recalling this insight: self-objectification is not good science. To the contrary, it is irrational, ideological, and must be rejected.⁸⁸

Rahner’s own reflection on contemporary anthropologies harmonizes easily with Marion’s: “Theological anthropology does not just add something new . . . to the statements of the secular anthropologies. It actually bursts these secular anthropologies radically apart, thereby making access possible, for the first time and finally, to the one mystery which we call God.”⁸⁹ Secular anthropologies have their place, surely, but Rahner and Marion converge in their call for a thinking of humanity starting from humanity’s constitutive incomprehensibility, which is received from the divine mystery as revealed in Jesus Christ, the Word of God in human flesh.

Le croire pour le voir poses one more notable aspect of Marion’s repetition of Rahner. Despite the popular perception of Rahner as a liberal trailblazer, he took great pains to construct a theology that remained always close to the Catholic Church’s dogmatic pronouncements. In this way, even given his reservations about neo-Scholasticism, Rahner retained much of its methodology. He hazarded this proximity to traditional

⁸⁴ Ibid. 253.

⁸⁵ Marion, *Le croire pour le voir* 74.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 71.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 121.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 123.

⁸⁹ Rahner, “Theological Dimension of the Question about Man” 57.

formulations because of his tenacious insistence on the continuity of church tradition, and because of the closeness in which neo-Scholasticism held theology and philosophy, faith and reason. And Marion, even though he positions himself within a postmodern milieu, reflects this conviction that Christian theology must remain rooted in church teachings while being carefully unfolded by reason.

Marion's chapter "Apologie de l'argument" advocates for a Catholic presence in rational public debate.⁹⁰ Marion approaches with open eyes the difficulties of contemporary public debate in Europe, which is rife with "cultural conflicts," many being patently antireligious. He realizes that the Catholic Church, along with other religious groups, must carefully navigate its minority status in the public sphere, avoiding both an integralism (*intégrisme*) that abandons all difference and a religious irrationalism that responds merely defensively to "the culture." The Church can become a "prophetic minority" through a "serious, patient, and continual effort to construct rational arguments corresponding to each of the propositions of the ordinary magisterium of the Church."⁹¹ Marion's point is clear: the Catholic position in public debates will derive from fidelity to magisterial teaching, based on a balance of faith claims and reasoned argument.⁹² His proposal for the Church's involvement in the public square is remarkably similar to Rahner's in the years leading up to Vatican II. Just as Marion speaks of the Church as a "prophetic minority" that must carefully navigate the rational arguments of the modern world, Rahner writes of a "diaspora" Church that can no longer depend on its majority status and thus on the self-evidence of its claims.⁹³ To have a voice in a pluralistic world, the Church must present its teachings in a reasonable, understandable fashion.

Marion continues this thought in the chapter "Le service de la rationalité dans l'église" ("Reason's Service to the Church").⁹⁴ He proposes that reason should be applied to magisterial pronouncements in order to show, first, the pertinence of the gospel to contemporary situations and, second, how the rigor of the gospel's logic as expressed in Church teachings could clarify contemporary debates on morals, war and peace, death, and much more. Marion concludes, "It is a question of a new effort of Christian rationality to intervene in common rationality."⁹⁵ Many of his thoughts could have been penned by Rahner himself. Granted, Rahner

⁹⁰ Marion, *Le croire pour le voir* 31–53.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 49–50, 48.

⁹² *Ibid.* 51–52.

⁹³ On Rahner's view of the Church as "diaspora," see Richard Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner* (New York: Oxford University, 1995) 121–35.

⁹⁴ Marion, *Le croire pour le voir* 101–13.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 112–13.

will admit that “not every dialogue by which a truth is sought begins like a Catholic Council with a presupposed and explicitly formulated profession of faith which becomes lost on the wings of a hymn into the incomprehensible nature of God and which serves as the starting point from which each and every person . . . tries to find the collective truth.”⁹⁶ So too must each member in a dialogue start from a particular community with its own agreed-upon formulae for truth. From these particular formulae, dialogue can lead to more comprehensive formulae.⁹⁷ For every Rahnerian passage that seems to be merely a gloss on a dogmatic pronouncement, one can be found just after it in which specifically Christian rationality comes to bear on “common rationality” and matters of wide-ranging public significance. Rahner believes that this interplay of rationalities in public dialogue is ultimately sustained by the incomprehensibility of God as it expresses itself to and through human persons. Thus Rahner calls for a dialogue or debate in which different rationalities and distinct propositions meet “a sacrament of initiation into the nameless mystery which all formulae must serve.”⁹⁸ Marion agrees, as I have shown.

The foregoing discussion of Christian rationality as developing out of dogmatic pronouncements, i.e., claims of faith, brings me to Marion’s late commitment in *Le croire pour le voir* to reason’s harmony with faith. The phenomenological trilogy laid the groundwork for this development, but here the harvest is bountifully reaped. His perspective in this book comprises his closest repetition of Rahner to date. Even in this book, however, Marion retains an antipathy to metaphysics that is entirely foreign to Rahner. But to avoid relegating all reason to the dustbin of metaphysics’ history, Marion qualifies his opposition to metaphysics. It does not have a monopoly on reason: “Of course, the ultimate destiny of philosophy, the science of being that later became ‘metaphysics,’ makes its identification with the science of God impossible. . . . But one thing will not disappear: the duty of Christian theology to rationality.”⁹⁹ Theology, then, has a duty to rationality that complements phenomenological reason’s duty to retain a radical openness to theology.

The harmony Marion envisions in *Le croire pour le voir* contrasts sharply with the two-part structure of *God without Being*. Now there are two texts that can work together. *God without Being* is an artifact of a Marion very different from today’s Marion. As he approaches Rahner ever more closely in his thoughts on theology and philosophy, reason and faith, his Balthasarian past appears ever more distant.

⁹⁶ Karl Rahner, “A Small Fragment on the Collective Finding of Truth,” in *Concerning Vatican Council II*, TI 6, 82–88, at 83.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 84, 86.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 86.

⁹⁹ Marion, *Visible and the Revealed* 147.

CONCLUSION: DO WE STILL NEED KARL RAHNER?

In a 1989 essay, Johann Baptist Metz asked, “Do We Miss Karl Rahner?”¹⁰⁰ and answered in the affirmative. Today we might ask whether we still *need* Karl Rahner. Many might say we do not. But the case of Jean-Luc Marion may convince them otherwise.

I have traced the development of Marion’s thought (1) from his Balthasarian past, in which he saw philosophy and theology as antithetical; (2) through a shift in his phenomenology, in which he discovered some grounds for renegotiating the relationship between philosophy and theology; (3) to today when Marion treats philosophy and theology as mutually enhancing. I have argued that Marion’s shift in perspective can be seen as a turn toward Rahner, who from the 1930s on saw philosophy as no less than openness to theology. My argument does not claim a causal relationship between Marion and Rahner; that would be overreaching. Still, the correlation between the two is remarkable. It suggests that Catholic theology and philosophy still need Rahner’s sense of harmony between faith and reason, as well as this sense’s grounding in human openness to the infinite God. The correlation also teaches us that even when Rahner seems to disappear, he returns where we might least expect him.

¹⁰⁰ Johann Baptist Metz, “Do We Miss Karl Rahner?” in *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Paulist, 1998) 92–106.