

Book Review

Jean-Bertrand Madragule Badi OP, *Dieu au-delà de l'être. Le sens éthique de Dieu dans la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas*, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Wien, 2013, Peter Lang Edition, 467p., £59.80 (hbk.).

This book addresses a question which concerns the possibility of bridging Levinas' religious and philosophical writings. Madragule Badi OP focuses on the possibility of retrieving the meaning of God as an overcoming of the ontological question in Levinas' work and links such an overcoming to the meaning of Levinas' ethics.

The author does justice to Levinas' attempt to locate the idea of the infinite in the encounter of the Other. He argues that it is through the relationship which determines the responsibility of the I towards the Other that God finds its place: *au-delà de l'être*, that is beyond ontological determination but in a "beyond" located in the most immediate relationship to the Other.

To prove his point, the author chooses to link Levinas' religious sources and commentaries to his philosophical work. He notes that if such a connection is necessary to properly grasp the meaning of Levinas' ethical work, it must be done in the spirit of an irresolution which Madragule Badi OP calls *inquiétude* (Madragule Badi OP: 2013, 27). If the connection he performs does not attempt to produce an equation between religion and philosophy, it is because Madragule Badi OP's reading of Levinas' religious account mirrors the reading of his ontological critique: the idea of a theology grounded upon ontology cannot be satisfying because the meaning of God's word – the trace - is the exact counterpart of the Other's face.

According to Madragule Badi OP, Levinas develops a critique of his religious and philosophical sources around the same axis: in the same way that the Other cannot be reduced to metaphysical determination, God should not be understood as a founding mythical figure whose word would be interpretable. Accordingly, God's word does not proceed from any sort of "revelation" but takes place within the concrete relationship to the Other: an ethical relationship which neither reveals the Other through an analogy with the I nor transcends the I through an excess of being. It is, on the contrary, the status of fragility and powerlessness of the Other which

guaranties its transcendent character: it escapes identification through a retreat that Madragule Badi OP calls “epiphany” (Madragule Badi OP: 2013, 167, 170).

One cannot but receive Madragule Badi OP’s book as a very detailed and interesting intellectual effort as soon as one is ready to accept the general orientation of his account of Levinas’ philosophical trajectory. This trajectory runs from Plato to Jean-Luc Marion and focuses on the retrieval of a notion of transcendence which escapes meaning in favour of an *eros* which refuses both *arche* and *telos*: the love of the Other appears as the always renewed appeal to an excess of ethical responsibility; an excess through which God finds itself both present to us and transcendent.

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