

Contemporary Humanism

International PhD Program & Research Network

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Dissertation

Non-onto-theo-logical: Parallels in Thomas Aquinas' and Martin Heidegger's Thought on God and Being.

ABSTRACT:

The question of whether Thomas Aquinas' concept of God qua be-ing (*esse*) exemplifies Martin Heidegger's concept of ontotheology seems to have initially arisen in the 1950s and has since roused considerable interest in every decade thereafter, not only because of its academic and ecclesial implications, but also because, despite having been so frequently asked, it has yet to be answered decisively. This thesis is an attempt to ask and answer the question decisively, so as to draw scholarship on the question towards consensus. First, the thesis defines Heidegger's concept of ontotheology with an account of its development, its structure, its structuration, and its implication of oblivion of be-ing (*Sein*) and conceptual idolatry. Second, based on this definition, the thesis demonstrates that Heidegger must have categorised Aquinas' concept of God qua *esse* as ontotheological, firstly, because Heidegger judged Christianity itself ontotheological and Aquinas is Christian, and, secondly, because Aquinas' description of metaphysics seems discussed by Heidegger as an ontotheological structure governed by an ontotheological centre, to wit, God qua *esse*. However, it is argued that this categorisation is falsifiable if Aquinas' concept of God qua *esse* does not imply oblivion of *Sein* or conceptual idolatry. And the thesis proceeds to prove, third, how Aquinas' thought of *esse* parallels Heidegger's thought of *Sein* in an overcoming of such oblivion, and fourth, how the former's analogically determined coordination of kataphaticism and apophaticism in his threefold way parallels the latter's thought about how God ought to be thought in an overcoming of such idolatry. Thus, even if Heidegger was right about his concept of ontotheology in general, he was wrong in having thought that Aquinas' concept of God qua *esse* exemplifies it in particular. And, by implication, Christianity is also proven non-ontotheological, at least insofar as this concept of God qua *esse* exemplifies it.

Research interests / Fields of expertise

Thomism
Heideggerianism
Philosophy of Religion
History of Philosophy

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