The Metamorphosis of Finitude: An Essay on Birth and Resurrection. Emmanuel Falque. George Hughes (tran.). New York: Fordham University Press, 2012. ISBN: 9780823239207. Pp. xiv + 193.
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Falque's *The Metamorphosis of Finitude* is the second of three books belonging to a "triptych" that examines the theological truths of the Easter *Triduum* (Passion, Resurrection, and Eucharist) in light of the philosophical experiences of agony, birth, and the body (ix). Although the two wings of the triptych remain to be translated, with this volume Hughes provides the inner centerpiece that holds the other two pieces together. In keeping with this imagery Falque begins the book with reference to Van der Weyden's altarpiece at the Beaune hospice in Burgandy, which depicts Christ's *parousia* at the last judgment. Across the bottom of the painting, naked individuals emerge from disturbed broken earth, resurrected. Falque interprets, "There is a cracking and opening up of immanence and temporality (the crust of our finitude), even though finitude may be impassable simply at the level of our existence. Neither another world nor an event in the world, the resurrection shows itself here in its own true daylight as a transformation of the world, and of human beings in the world…an ontic event" (xiv). The book expounds this richly intricate assertion in three parts, beginning with an account of finitude in the first part, returning to the metamorphosis of finitude in the second, and concludes with a phenomenology of resurrection in the third. this review assesses two inter-related aspects; namely, the relation between immanence and transcendence, on the one hand, and philosophy and theology, on the other. Broadly speaking, the former indicates Falque's methodology and the latter the content of his argument.

Falque's method can be measured according to the difference between Henri de Lubac's *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* and Maurice Blondel's *Letter on Apologetics*. Each of these works responds differently to atheistic humanism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This atheism's basic assumption is that humanity only flourishes if the divine is denied, since the existence of God would necessarily relativize the autonomous integrity of finite things. An early, schematic formulation of this assumption can be found in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*: "it nonetheless seems that as soon as one assumes that God as universal original being is the cause also of the existence of substance…one must then also concede that a human being's actions have their determining basis in what is entirely beyond his control…A human being would be a puppet, or a Vaucansonian automaton built and wound up by the supreme master of all

artificial devices" § 100-101). Even as "God" is a necessary postulate for practical reason's categorical imperatives, human freedom requires extrication from "God" as *causa sui* to be fully realized. Nietzsche capitalizes on this, developing his philosophy and corresponding conception of Christianity precisely on this very point. So radically and thoroughly has Nietzsche applied this assumption that not even rejection of the divine—Anselm's fool, one could say—offers any kind of dialectical affirmative proof of God. Humanity's "no" must not even be a negation but rather a *sui generis* absolute positing beyond good and evil. Gradually, the presupposition that humanity and divinity are in competition became normative. Henceforward, philosophy must be decidedly immanent to be legitimate. One may think here of Heidegger's bracketing of philosophy in *Being and Time*'s opening prohibition: "tell no stories" § 6).

Henri de Lubac opposes this assumption by arguing its opposite: "where there is no God, there is no humanity either." Despite the subtlety of his interpretations, de Lubac's apologetic polemics are not immune to impatient rebuttals and harsh indictments designed to rouse the faithful and denounce the faithless as deviant. Such an approach continues even today among some of de Lubac's orthodox Anglophone descendants. Alternatively, Blondel assumes a "method of immanence" which maintains that all experience of God is human experience. So seriously does Falque apply Blondel's "method of immanence" that he curtails any attempt to "hypostasize man as a 'transcendent Being'" or to find an experience of the Infinite in some structure of humanity å la Rahner or, by association, Maréchal (7). In addition to radicalizing Blondel's method, Falque shifts its conceptual framework from the Thomist nature/supernatural to Heidegger's existential analytic of *Dasien*. Falque conceives this as a shift from a didactic, theological approach to a heuristic, philosophical one. For Heidegger, theology resolves in advance and "from above" the question of Being, but such a question can only legitimately be raised "from below," and can only be answered by reflection on the questioner, *Dasein*. Falque does not concede Heidegger's problematizing of the relation between philosophy and theology, but he acknowledges Heidegger's "constructive atheism" as methodologically compelling precisely because it is conceived heuristically. In seeking an answer to the question of Being—"Why is there something rather than nothing?"—*Dasein* does not decide in advance for or against nothingness but rather reflects upon its station as a questioner enthralled in existential crises of care (*cura*) and trouble (*molesta*), or, in Augustinian terms, *oneri mihi sum* ("I am a burden to myself."). Only here can the force of the question of Being, origin, and time be felt through a complete exposure to the possibility of disbelief. By accepting Heidegger's closure to "transcendence," Falque adopts his atheism as heuristically normative. This method is consistent with J. Greisch, "Atheism is not just a theoretical problem, it is first of all an *a priori of existence*" (40). In contrast to de Lubac, then, Falque does not treat atheistic humanism as if immanence were a problem in need of a transcendent resolution.

Thus, to call Falque's approach "apologetic," as Christina Gschwandtner does in her latest *Postmodern Apologetics?*, is somewhat misleading even with considerable qualification and redefinition of the term.

For Kant, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, autonomy requires disbelief. Falque accepts this assumption without adopting their corresponding presupposition that there is a fundamental competition between the divine and human. Instead, Falque argues that finitude seeks metamorphosis and undergoes rebirth without compromising its integrity. This can only be done convincingly if Falque's phenomenological interpretation of the resurrection succeeds in dispelling erroneous implications for the body and cosmology that the doctrine has come to be associated with after Nietzsche's critique of Christianity's "Platonizing"; that is to say, Christianity's condemnation of the body or the earthly in its escapist flight to the spiritual or the heavenly. Many level this criticism against St. Paul in particular. However, according to Falque, the apostle conceives corporality as the mode through which God is experienced. Far from supporting radical dualism, Paul's distinction between spirit and flesh pertains principally to "lived modalities of the body." Whereas Nietzsche interprets the resurrection "biologically"; Paul conceives resurrection as "a relationship lived in our own corporality with the resurrected God" (57). This existential reinterpretation of Christian concepts applies cosmologically as well. "Put in phenomenological terms, heaven and earth are not places separated by some sort of divine geography but existentials or categories of the lived, through which we relate to God" (96). Thus, for Falque, the resurrection is not a rewriting of temporal conditions on an extra-temporal plane of untroubled existence. Rather, resurrection, along with the concepts of rebirth and metamorphosis it entails, primarily concerns a way of living in the world. While this should be understood ethically, the notion of "world" is primarily intended in a phenomenological sense. The metamorphosis of finitude does not mean the alteration of human essence for "existence precedes essence. Rather, through the resurrection "the structure of the world as such is not only changed but changed to the extent that a sudden *irruptive event* of this kind transforms my manner of being in the world from top to bottom, and thus 'makes [the] world" (107). This is not a factual change, but an event or existential metamorphosis in which "resurrection" names human becoming ("to be what you become") or, as Nicodemus was taught, to be reborn into the divine Trinitarian life here and now in temporal, corporeal existence.

As a work borne from the "theological turn," theologians will undoubtedly read this book with other concerns in mind, and there is much here for their consideration, including Falque's association of phenomenological incarnation (*Leiblichung*) with theological incarnation (*Menschwerdung*), his integration of creation and resurrection for reconceiving the relation of time and eternity, his Trinitarian interpretation of

the resurrection, and his claim that the "metamorphosis of finitude is a intra-divine event." Falque frequently employs to theological doctrines phenomenological concepts borrowed from Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, and Marios. Theologians can decide to what degree the phenomenological does justice to the theological or whose theology (Balthasar's?) this account most resembles. This review's limited purpose has been to evaluate Falque's method and its corresponding philosophy with respect to finitude and the possibility of its metamorphosis.

The blending of theology and philosophy in French phenomenology has been much debated, and Falque's own contributions to this debate are many and varied. His radicalizing of Blondel's "method of immanence" brings philosophy and theology into conversation in a significantly different way, for it seeks to open a route to theology precisely where philosophy is resolutely closed-off. However, it is difficult to assess whether this opening is achieved by means of Falque's phenomenology or by his appropriation of theological concepts. To return to an earlier point, it will be recalled that Falque brackets attempts to "demonstrate" that humans have a desire for the Infinite from finite structures like *Dasein* (Rahner) or knowing (Maréchal). For Falque, these "experiential proofs" already assume *a priori* the Infinite. But it is not impossible to think that something similar is being done in this book, for it seems that a Trinitarian theology and an incarnational Christology have taken the place of the Infinite, which Rahner and Maréchal consider first and foremost a philosophical term. Therefore, Falque may achieve his aim of "going through to go beyond Heidegger,, but at what price to his philosophy? This is a question that can only be answered through fuller engagement—the complete picture, as it were—of Falque's work, which many Anglophone readers rightly and eagerly await.