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Jason W. Alvis

Marion and Derrida on The Gift and Desire: Debating the Generosity of Things

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Chapter 1
Introduction: Histories of the Gift and Desire

Abstract This chapter provides a brief historical backdrop to both topics of "the gift" and "desire" especially in French philosophy in the twentieth century, and initiates an engagement on thinking how the two topics can be thought simultaneously in order to ultimately shed further light on the distinctions between deconstructive phenomenology, and "classical" phenomenology. Here, the basic claims of the book are proposed. Derrida rejects desire from playing a role in any "happening" or "event" of the gift, most especially because desire is an economically appropriated concept, which is antithetical to the aneconomical gift that he claims to be essential to deconstruction. Instead, the gift must remain "impossible." Whereas for Marion, intentionality is distinct from desire, which is of great interest to him and can play a number of roles in his approach to the gift, the *adonné*, and givenness. Thus, Marion's phenomenology marks a unique union between gift and desire. Such an argument allows for a more detailed understanding of the differences between Derrida's deconstruction and Marion's phenomenology.

> *Love, in the genuine sense, is one of the chief problems of phenomenology*. –Husserl[1]

> *What does it mean: 'given,' 'givenness,' this magical word for phenomenology and the 'stumbling block' for all the others?* –Heidegger[2]

There is a party line along which phenomenologists today tend to be divided. On one side of this line are those favorable to Derrida's cause of deconstruction; those who strip (at times uncarefully and unknowingly) from phenomenology its most vital and basic tools for another, multi-disciplinary agenda. While on the other side

[1] Edmund Husserl, quoted in James Hart, *Who One Is* (Dordrecht Netherlands: Springer Press, 2009), p. 264, note 27. From Edmund Husserl's *Nachlass MS*, E III 2, 36b; transcription, p. 61. Hart translates the continuation of this passage as follows: "And that holds not merely in the abstract particularity and individuality but as a universal problem. It is a problem in its intentional foundational sources as well as in its concealed forms – a problem of a driving intentionality that makes itself felt in the depths and in the heights and in the universal expanses of intentionality."

[2] "Was heißt 'gegeben', 'Gegebenheit'-dieses Zauberwort der Phinomenologie und der 'Stein des Anstoßes' bei den anderen?" Martin Heidegger, *Grundprobleme Phanomenologie* (1919/20), ed. Hans-Helmuth Gander in *Gesamtausgabe 58* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann 1993), p. 5.

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of this line are those unsympathetic to the Derridean cause; those who toil according to the rules of classical (read: Husserlian) phenomenology in all it's "scientific" rigor. Some phenomenologists reject deconstruction in order to get back to the possibilities of knowing "the things in themselves," while others embrace it as the condition of hermeneutic awareness required by all good philosophy.

Of course, this is a hyperbolic caricature. Yet it serves as a reminder that deconstruction is not simply an oddly aberrant, unrestrained thought within the phenomenological tradition, but is also representative of an important, widely followed rupture within – especially French – phenomenology itself. The first step in understanding better this disjunction within the field would involve locating and unfolding specialized encounters on topics relevant to it. One debate that fits such criteria has thus far gone largely overlooked for any import it might have for phenomenology and has been, for better or worse, archived in intellectual history for its inauguratory role in the formation of the burgeoning subfield "continental philosophy of religion."[3] This debate was on "the gift" between Jean-Luc Marion and Jacques Derrida. It's value for phenomenology often has been overshadowed, however, by the so-called "return of religion," a *revenir* that began with Derrida's deconstruction, alongside the – often pejoratively named – "Theological Turn," a *tournant* in French Phenomenology spearheaded by Marion.[4] Such turnings and returnings of religion, to theology, from theology, to religion, indeed have led to effectual, interdisciplinary, and critical application of both phenomenology and deconstruction, especially after Heidegger's critiques of "ontotheology" in metaphysics.[5] Thus, the value Marion and Derrida's debate on the gift might have for phenomenology has

[3] Though it existed long before this time, "Continental Philosophy of Religion" gained a formal beginning with John D. Caputo's 1997 *Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*. For Smith, in regards to this field, "One could identify the rumbling of this thirty years ago in Jean-Luc Marion's landmark work, *L'idole et la distance* (1977) or in the earlier and influential work of Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Lévinas. In fact, elements of such "continental" (or more specifically, phenomenological) engagements with religious phenomena can already be seen in Husserl and Heidegger. In North America, this continental impetus has generated a lively discourse and secondary literature." And Smith continues, "…such discourse had already been sustained in the work of Robert Sokolowski, Merold Westphal, Carl Raschke, Adriaan Peperzaak, Mark Taylor and others." James K. A. Smith, "Continental Philosophy of Religion: Prescriptions for a Healthy Subdiscipline", *Faith and Philosophy*, 26: 4 (2009): 440. Of those attempts in North America, Perhaps the first can be found as early as *Deconstruction and Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), a collection essays from Altizer, Raschke, et al.

[4] Heidegger is often conceived to be among the first to bring Phenomenology's distinctive style to Religious and Theological discourses. Merold Westphal claims that the field's launch pad is Heidegger's essay "Phenomenology and Theology." Marion has concerns with Heidegger's description of the relationship between phenomenology and theology, for it leaves Phenomenology in control over theology. See Jean-Luc Marion, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism*. eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon. (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 69. See also Hent de Vries' chapter on Marion's "heterology of donation" in *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

[5] Though the term "onto-theology" has been hyphenated differently, even within the corpus of one thinker (e.g. onto-theo-logy, onto-theology, ontotheology) it's meaning does not change in either Marion or Derrida's corpus.

remained yet to be disclosed. Further, since both thinkers pose themselves as representatives of their respective methodologies (phenomenology and deconstruction), their debates on the gift may hold at least one key to understanding the limits of deconstruction, whether or not deconstruction truly has supplied warrant for abandoning classical phenomenology, and the particular distinctions between these two often overlapping approaches. This book addresses two particular themes that aid in further understanding and clarifying the differences between Marion's phenomenology and Derrida's deconstruction: the gift and desire.[6] The gift or "Givenness" is according to Heidegger the basis of the self-appearance of things and thus the "magic word for phenomenology," and love, which is similar to desire in a manifold of ways, is claimed by Husserl to be "one of the chief problems of phenomenology."[7] To what degree should these two claims about phenomenology be taken seriously in their own right, and is it possible to address them both simultaneously in a way that allows further insight into this field of thinking?

1.1 Brief History of the Gift in Phenomenology and French Thought

In general, the word "gift" has a rich and manifold history. The Proto-Indo-European roots of the word lead back to *ghabh*, which refers to both giving *and* taking, and was manifested in the Mittelhochdeutsch word for a dowry, *mitgift*. The French *donner* (to give) has it roots in the Hittite words *dô* (give) and *dâ* (take), and similarly the French *cadeau* (gift) originates in the idea of the *catena* (chain), which gestures to "gift" as a means of strengthening the social bond. Naturally, the features of these etymologies that emphasize taking, chaining, and committing eventually led to a number of concerns over how "the gift" may imply a kind of relationship with economy (*oikos*) or exchange while still remaining free from being reduced to economy. To what extent, if any, might "giving" also amount to "taking?" Is there a possibility of a "pure" gift that is free from elements of exchange and trade?

These questions were not yet raised in the early stages of the phenomenological tradition, in which Husserl initiated thinking on the gift in terms of "givenness" (*Gegebenheit*), which simply signals to the *way* in which phenomena come into appearance and become present to consciousness. As the study of appearance (*Phainesthai*, *erscheinen*), phenomenology is trained on the modes of variation that

[6] As Sebbah recently asserted, "the question of the gift, posited as the question of givenness, is phenomenology's grounding question." François-David Sebbah, *Testing the Limit: Derrida, Henry, Levinas, and the Phenomenological Tradition* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 98.

[7] Edmund Husserl, quoted in James Hart, *Who One Is*. (Dordrecht Netherlands: Springer Press, 2009), note 27. P. 264. From Edmund Husserl's *Nachlass MS*, E III 2, 36b; transcription, p. 61. Martin Heidegger, *Grundprobleme Phanomenologie* (1919/20), ed. Hans-Helmuth Gander in *Gesamtausgabe 58* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann 1993), p. 5.

are super imposed upon the experiences of that which is *given* or disclosed in the process of constitution. Husserl's "principle of principles," which claims that what is *given* to intuition is to be accepted on the conditions of itself, opens onto differing ways or "how" (*Wie*) things are given and are determined to be a certain way (e.g. "tables have four legs"). Husserl even discusses certain "modes of givenness" (*Gegebenheitsweise*) or types of disclosure (such as perception, memory, and imagination) that reference the intuitional "grasp" one has on things, or kinds of experiences one has in the disclosure of those things. He also refers to "originary" or "pre-givenness" (*Vorgegebenheit*), which is the intuitive data always already "pre-given" to an experience (namely, in perception), and "absolute givenness," which is an idealistic "hope" that particular evidences or knowledge can be given "absolutely" or completely.[8] "Absoluteness" does not refer to consciousness, but to the thing given to consciousness. The later Husserl realized that knowledge, like "infinity" could not be given absolutely, thus leading him to prefer other terminology over "absolute givenness," which referenced the mental act of an "idealistic" relation with knowledge.[9] Overall, despite the many typologies of givenness and the need to get back to the "givings" of "things themselves" (*Selbstgebungen*), Husserl's thinking on the gift and givenness rarely became much more than simply a metonym for the "how" of a thing or object in its being "given" to one's "inner" experience.

Though Heidegger never explicitly offers a thorough account of the gift or givenness, he at points does raise the question of the phenomenological meaning of *es gibt* (it gives, there is), thereby drawing attention to the fundamental relationship the

[8] Although phenomenology seeks evidence or knowledge that gives absolutely, as "absolute givenness this is an unattainable ideal." Forms of givenness (e.g. numbers, ideal entities) are intuited, as opposed to Absolute givenness, which cannot be obtained. see also Edmund Husserl, *Husserliana* II 31. See Husserl's *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p. 24. For Elizabeth Ströker, "the absolute givenness of the object would then be the ideal limit case of complete, adequate self-givenness." Indeed, "the absolute givenness of an object of knowledge would imply the methodological requirement of producing such givenness within the course of the phenomenological procedures. This would occur by enacting those identifying syntheses of meaning-intention and meaning-fulfillment that provide the evidence of the object. The absolute givenness of the object could then be the ideal limit case of complete, adequate self-givenness. It should be emphasized that according to Husserl this distinguished mode of givenness can never be attained." It is also possible that absolute givenness could refer not simply to a "mode" of givenness, but a "domain," which as Ströker claims "acquires…the dignity of being absolute." Elisabeth Ströker, *Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 57.

[9] Husserl's supposed privileging of intention over intuition has not gone uncriticized. Leask, for example, claims that "before there is any active intentionality, there is passive reception." Leask relies on Husserl's claim that "[The] domain of what is pregiven, of a passive pregivenness ..[is] always already there without any attention of a grasping regard, without any awakening of interest. All cognitive activity, all turning-toward a particular object in order to grasp it, presupposes this domain of passive pregivenness." However, for Leask, this still doesn't mean that Husserl's egology was the prime basis of everything. Everything is a consequence of ones own productive consciousness. Edmund Husserl, quoted by Ian Leask, "Husserl, Givenness, and the Priority of the Self" in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 11:2 (2003): p. 145. See also Dermot Moran's and Joseph Coen's *Husserl Dictionary*. (London: Bloomsbury/Continuum Press, 2012.) p. 24 & p. 140.

gift has with Being. By interpreting *es gibt* as "it gives" or "there is being," he comes to express "Being" according to its being-given. This ultimately leads to further contemplation on the issue of "presence" (*Anwesen*), which is conceived according to its ontological, spatial, and temporal dimensions.[10] In his later *On Time and Being*, Heidegger asserts that since the "beginning of Western thinking" there has been a particular and consequential omission: "Being is thought, but not the 'it gives' as such. The latter withdraws in favor of the gift that 'it gives.' The gift is thought and conceptualized from then on exclusively as Being with regard to beings."[11] Heidegger's concern was that this "being," marked by a presence without reference to the gift, is partly responsible for the reliance upon the Platonic *eidos* or idea in its supposedly stable, transcendent glory. And for Heidegger, the quiet operating of the gift, which he determines as a kind of "manifestation," "opening," fundamental "disclosure," or even "sending," has been covered-over and concealed in the philosophical tradition despite the significant and formative roles the gift should play in the process of thinking and in the disclosure of truth.

Though one could indeed argue that the gift and givenness play central roles in the works of Husserl and Heidegger, it almost is certain that "gift theory" never would have culminated into a debate between Marion and Derrida on the topic (which involved a productive tension between gift and "economy") had it not been for the work of the French anthropologists who studied the gift in more empirical and practical terms. It was not until Marcel Mauss – a thinker less interested in the gift for its phenomenological import – that a more thorough account of the gift is offered, particularly as it may or may not relate with economy. Mauss asserts that the issue of the gift is "one of the rocks on which our societies are built," primarily because it conditions the bases of our means of relation.[12] His wager was that prior

[10] The philosophical employment of *es gibt* first appears in *Being and Time*, and then in his later *Letter on Humanism* Heidegger, says again "es gibt Sein." Martin Heidegger and Jean Beaufret, *Über den Humanismus* (Frankfurt Am Main, Germany: V. Klostermann, 1991), p. 26. In general, he agues that the phrase helps us better understand "Being." One can also find an engagement with the *es gibt* in *Basic Problems in Phenomenology*: "Perhaps there is no other being beyond what has been enumerated, but perhaps, as in the German idiom for 'there is,' *es gibt*, still something else is given. Even more. In the end something is given which must be given if we are to be able to make beings accessible to us as beings and comport ourselves toward them, something which, to be sure, is not but which must be given if we are to experience and understand any beings at all." Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 10. See also Bataille's attempt to initiate thinking on the relation between "Being" and desire: "Laughter intuits the truth that the laceration of the summit lays bare: that our will to arrest being is cursed. Laughter slips on the surface the length of slight depressions: laceration opens the abyss. Abyss and depressions are an equal void: the inanity of the being that we are. Being eludes itself in us, we lack it, since we enclose ourselves in *ipse* and it is desire – necessity – to…" Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014), p. 93.

[11] Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (New York, Harper & Row, 1972), p. 8.

[12] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans W.D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 4. Mauss' far-reaching influence is still being assessed, as recently Moore rightly asked, "might we say that twentieth-century thought in general is haunted by the spectre of *The Gift*, the spectre, or rather spectres of Marcel Mauss's *Essai sur le don*?"

to the age of capitalism there was a certain "gift economy" at work, and that modern industrialization had attempted to extract any sense of the gift (i.e. any incalculable possibilities) from economy in order to construct societies as more efficient machines that might operate only on economies of exchange. Yet as Mauss observed, there still were existing societies that operated on the "gift economy" model, wherein gifts were exchanged as systems "of total services." This led him to conclude that, on the one hand, all societies at least to some degree rely solely on a pure, symbolic act of giving; an act that is indicative of individuals' needs to relate with one another, not so much in terms of needs or goods to be exchanged, but in terms of indeterminate *generosity* and gifts. While economy may make the social world develop, gifts make the social world "tick." Yet on the other hand, he also concluded that giving can ultimately become an obligatory act within those societies ("institutions of total services") entailing that they operate in a circular fashion (i.e. an economy) involving giving, receiving, and reciprocation.[13]

Overall, Mauss' emphasis was on the individual, voluntary, and subjective actions of "giving" in relation to a community, *within* a functional society, and to this point, Lévi-Strauss offers sharp retort. In his "Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss," Lévi-Strauss argues that Mauss' analysis of the gift missed the essential aspects of objective exchange that take place in the acts of gift-giving and receiving in society.[14] This also initiates thinking on how "gift economy" may be an inherent contradiction. In a somewhat typical "structuralist" move, Lévi-Strauss stresses the significance of how such social environments in which gifts are exchanged predetermine and lead people only to interact in such a way because those environments place a demand on the individuals within them to give, a demand that effectively nullifies the gesture of *generosity*, the desire to give.[15] It is this structuralist, Lévi-Straussian account of the gift that Pierre Bourdieu claims to be missing the looming significance of the interconnected issues of "distance" and "time." It is now necessary that "time" be considered alongside any theorization of the gift because, for example, "to abolish the interval between gifts is to abolish strategy."[16] Thus, Bourdieu enters the debate on the gift, leveraging his work between Mauss' anthropological/phenomenological analysis and Lévi-Strauss' more structuralist

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Gerald Moore, *Politics of the Gift: Exchanges in Poststructuralism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 4.

[13] This "institution of total services," suggests Mauss, "doesn't merely carry with it the obligation to reciprocate presents received." But it also obliges one "…to give presents, and…to receive them." Ibid., p. 13. Mauss, who was the nephew of Émile Durkheim, wrote *The Gift* between 1923 and 1924.

[14] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987).

[15] That is to say, for Lévi-Strauss the form creates the content of the act of "giving" for those subjects within these communities. The subjects are not, as Mauss emphasized, voluntarily choosing to give gifts.

[16] Pierre Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique. Précédé de trois études d'ethnologie kabyle* (Genève, Paris: Droz, 1972), p. 223. See also his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

approach by employing sociological examples or case studies of gift exchanges that took place in the communities of the Kabyles people.[17] Bourdieu attempts to resolve the issues of time and distance in relation to the gift by showing two conditions – or what he calls "strategies" – that must necessarily be met in order for a gift actually to be given: There must be a temporal delay of a return-gift (1), and any counter-gift must have some qualitative dissimilarity from the first gift originally given (2).[18] Without these two conditions, any immediate return of another gift would nullify the first one on the grounds that it would be reduced to exchange and economy, and thereby make a parody of the gifts' being given.[19] Although both of Bourdieu's conditions help distinguish the gift from a contract, he nevertheless concludes that even the freest gift is still "contaminated by contract," and this raises the concerns of whether or not it is even possible to have a "gift as such," especially since economy is a central mode of relation between individuals and groups.

1.2 Backgrounds of Desire in Twentieth Century French Philosophy

A central point around which these French anthropologists' analyses of the gift implicitly revolve are the matters of "intent" and desire. When Bourdieu claims that a gift is reduced to contract, he is suggesting that whenever one "gives," one desires or expects to have something in return. When Lévi-Strauss stresses the importance of social expectations to give, he is insinuating that one only "gives" because one wishes or seeks to satisfy the demands of society. And when Mauss asserts that "gifts" form social bonds beyond economy, he is implying that one intends to give and be generous only on the grounds that it is a preferable means of relation over

[17] For a lucid summary of Bourdieu on the gift, see Jeremy F. Lane, *Pierre Bourdieu: A Critical Introduction* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), pp. 102–105.

[18] Pierre Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique. Précédé de trois études d'ethnologie kabyle* (Genève, Paris: Droz, 1972), p. 223. As Bourdieu observes, any immediate return-gift exposes the fact that the gift, as well as its event of exchange, was expected. Though reciprocation may occur between the two individuals, such reciprocation must come at another point in time, and perhaps, also, in some other location. This was the beginning of what Bourdieu named the structure of "misrecognition/recognition." Gift givers need to know that they are giving gifts, instead of "being completely ignorant of the schema which organize their exchanges and whose logic is revealed…yet at the same time they cannot know or recognize that logic." See also Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). For another Anthropologically-leaning work on the gift, see Russell Belk, who also tries to lay out the conditions and characteristics of "the perfect gift" along the lines of intention, and how the gift must be excessive or beyond expectation. Russell W. Belk, "The perfect Gift," in *Gift-Giving: A Research Anthology,* eds. Cele Ontes and Richard F. Beltramini (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996), pp. 59–84.

[19] This does not overrule equivalence in value or similarity between gifts, but simply excludes the fact that the counter-gift can be exactly the same as the first gift. This would make a parody of the gift exchange, leaving the giver either insulted or bewildered.

that of persistently calculating and strictly economizing life and its many ambiguities. A careful study of the gift and givenness, then, entails also an inquiry into desire, which is another theme of significance for treating the distinctions between deconstruction and phenomenology.

Although intending, desiring, loving, and willing are not entirely synonymous with one another, they are germane to the nature of the traditional understandings of philosophy more generally, and to the ways in which things are given or come into appearance.[20] In *The Republic*, Socrates claims desire to be a basic element of the human soul, and names philosophy "the love for wisdom." Then at the dinner party in Plato's *Symposium*, Aristophanes teaches of the birth or origination of *eros* (desire), which maintains not only a sense of "lack" but also "resource."[21] Although, as Socrates inquires of Agathon why it is that "we desire only what is missing," Diatoma shares the tale of Eros, who is conceived by the copulation of gods Poros (resource, plenty) and Penia (lack, poverty).[22] As their child, Eros paradoxically reflects both of his parent's qualities of lack *and* resource.[23] These at times conflicting

[20] As Schrift suggests, "whether Rationalist or Empiricist, whether Ancient or Modern, the history of Philosophy displays a remarkable consensus among the views of those philosophers who discuss desire. While acknowledging the relative infrequency of these discussions, we must note that when desire does become the object of philosophical reflection, almost without exception it is conceived as the consequence of the lack of the object desired." Alan D. Schrift, "Spinoza, Nietzsche, Deleuze: An Other Discourse of Desire," in *Philosophy and Desire*, ed. Hugh A. Silverman (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 174. Descartes considers desire to be a kind of lack also, suggesting that it is a pivotal aspect of understanding that we are, in fact, not the pinnacle of perfection. For example, in his Third Meditation he wonders "how is it possible that I might know and doubt that I *want*, that is to say *that I'm missing something*, if I had in me no idea of such a being more perfect than mine[?]".

[21] Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. by Arnold Hug (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1884), 189c–189d. In Plato *Symposium* is the famous series of speeches at a dinner party on this topic of "love."

[22] As Socrates begins to refute Agathon: "*Agathon…saw the need to distinguish the descriptions of Love and to begin by understanding Love's nature or essence* (199c), but his problem is that he "*failed to see that love, by its very nature, is always a love of something*." That is "*love desires* that which it loves. From this it follows that *love necessarily lacks* (i.e., *is not*) that which it desires." Ibid., 199c–200b. And here Socrates begins to reveal Eros as essentially lacking: "And now, said Socrates, bearing in mind what Love is the love of, tell me this. Does he long for what he is in love with, or not? / Of course he longs for it. / And does he long for whatever it is he longs for, and is he in love with it, when he's got it, or when he hasn't? / When he hasn't got it, probably. / Then isn't it probable, said Socrates, or rather isn't it certain that everything longs for what it lacks, and nothing longs for what it doesn't lack? I can't help thinking, Agathon, that that's about as certain as anything could be. Don't you think so? / Yes, I suppose it is… / Well, then, continued Socrates, desiring to secure something to oneself forever may be described as loving something which is not yet to hand. / Certainly. / And therefore, whoever feels a want is wanting something which is not yet to hand, and the object of his love and of his desire is whatever he isn't, or whatever he hasn't got – that is to say, whatever he is lacking in. / Absolutely." Ibid., 201d–212c.

[23] And thus, Eros paradoxically has the resource of searching for that which he lacks. This particular kind of desire is, on the one hand, full of need and dissatisfaction, while on the other, acting as an energy, force, and resource. Between these two poles, as Vedder suggests, "desire moves, and whatever it catches in its striving, it is bound to lose again the next moment." Ben Vedder, "Heidegger on Desire" in *Continental Philosophy Review* 31 (1998): p. 354. See Plato's *Symposium*,

features of "desire" given it in the Greek philosophical tradition, have continued to follow the word throughout its troubled history. In the early thirteenth century the Latin verb *desiderare* (from which the English "desire" and the French *désir* both originate) came to mean "to wish" or "to long for," namely, that which one lacks. With its prefix *sidus* ("star") *de-siderare* was originally conceived as a navigational term that referred to one's losing focus due to being out "star-gazing" or wishing "upon the stars." This is one reason as to why the word "desire" more negatively came to be identified with one's "lacking" and thereby associated with the following of the "lusts of the flesh"(fourteenth century) or "drive."[24] This may be why "desire" was ultimately discarded by philosophers in favor of the potentials of reason and cognition.

Yet in twentieth century France, along with the advent of the "irrational" Great Wars came a deep suspicion over what become modernism's more "cognitivistic" or consciousness-centered approaches to philosophy. As a result, a more realist, interdisciplinary search began for reconceiving the human condition, and "desire" subsequently became one of the defining features of French philosophers' systems of thought, especially from the 1930s to the 1990s.[25] One important figure in the 1940s

trans. by Arnold Hug (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1884), 203a–204a. See also Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen Mackenna, and John M. Dillon. (London, England: Penguin, 1991), Enneade III, 5.

[24] To "desire" once had this sense of erring and wandering without any navigational "star," as well as a sense of one's being out "wishing on the stars," for what the "gods" or destiny will ultimately bring the desirer. Although in Greek thought "lack" hadn't taken on a moral or sinful register, it began to do so for the early Christians (though not the early Greek Fathers). The Greek term for fault, guilt, and sin in the scriptures, ἁμαρτία (*hamartia*) comes from the verb ἁμαρτάνω (*hamartano*) whose original meaning is incredibly similar to *desiderare*. Thus, wandering ultimately came to mean wandering or "straying from the path," and thus for one to lose one's moral compass or point of focus (e.g. Jesus Christ, God's law). For Augustine, it is to this problem of desire (sexual desire in particular) that he famously dedicates Book 2 of the *Confessions*. There is no question that this notion of "straying" came to occupy his mind, and cloud his heart with guilt. For the adolescent Augustine, it was "out of the muddy concupiscence of the flesh, and the bubblings of youth, mists fumed up which beclouded and overcast my heart, that I could not discern the clear brightness of love, from the fog of lustfulness." Indeed "[b]oth did confusedly boil in me, and hurried my unstayed youth over the precipice of unholy desires, and sunk me in a gulf of flagitiousnesses." Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. E.B Pusey (New York, NY: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1951), p. 23. The results of this for Augustine as well as much of the ensuing Christian tradition, is that when a desire has gone awry towards its lusts, it comes to manifest itself in the flesh. As Augustine puts it, he drifted, and wandered (recall *desiderare* as a following of the star) away from God. This is, following the original sin of Adam and Eve, a desire of the flesh. Augustine's solution is to claim that Christ transforms one's concupiscence into love (*agape*) in such a way that one surrenders one's desires and wanderings, and trades them in for loving one's neighbor as oneself; that is, for the sake of charity for the other. And all of this is possible only because one desires God, for "our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee." (Ibid., Book 1, Chapter 1). As Pascal put it some 1200 years after Augustine, "This desire is left us both to *punish* us for making us feel where we *fell* …" In other words, desire is the mark of sinfulness and fallenness, our bodies a reflection of our yearnings without God.

[25] Deleuze, Foucault, Bataille, Barthes, Marcuse, Lacan and Kristeva, just to name a few, all wrestled with this issue of desire, even though an explicit conception or articulation of it may not have been central to their respective systems of thought. Freud's publication in 1900 of *The Interpretation*

who helped initiate this move was Bataille, for whom desire played the role of getting beyond metaphysics, namely, through one's turning to "Inner Experience" (*L'expérience intérieure*) wherein one finds oneself internally enraptured by what is exterior to oneself. Bataille sought a radical renunciation of knowledge and saw "eroticism" as a means to fulfill that purpose because of its powers to subvert and transgress the mastery of the "I." His wager was that "existence" is a matter of "eros not rationality" or knowledge, and should therefore be imagined according to the passions of desire in the yearning "for our lost continuity."[26] Desire is defined by one's relation with the unknown, which yields "the condition for ecstasy."[27] While desire can never be reified in a "profane" object, the "object of desire" is always in relation to a "fellow being" and the infinite.[28] Unlike his colleague Blanchot, Bataille's realism led him to a conception of a desire that unfortunately often was reduced to "subordinate tasks"[29] for "no one escapes the composition of society."[30]

During the early 1940s there was a period of time in which Bataille met with Blanchot almost daily, and the two thinkers were generally in accord. Yet at one point Blanchot recognized that his work was not moving in a direction that "Bataille would have wished to give or even have ratified" because Blanchot held that "speech entertains what no existent being in the primacy of his own name can attain" for it "harbors the foreign and always furtive affirmation – the impossible and the

of Dreams, a treatise on desire, became a rich resource for these philosophers. Much of the time such engagements were in response to the demands of non-philosophy, as awareness was on the rise, particularly of how interdisciplinarity could no longer be ignored. A consideration of the issue of desire, however, demands this sort of interdisciplinarity, and those on the French philosophical scene, as a result, came to accept this task more readily than their more classically trained philosophical counterparts, who could generally and typically be deemed uninterested in integration with other disciplines.

[26] Georges Bataille, *Erotism* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1986), p. 12. For Bataille: "I affirm, on the other hand, that we must never imagine existence except in terms of these passions…" for "we are discontinuous beings, individuals who perish in isolation in the midst of an incomprehensible adventure, but we yearn for our lost continuity. We find the state of affairs that binds us to our random and ephemeral individuality hard to bear. Along with our tormenting desire that this evanescent thing should last, there stands our obsession with a primal continuity linking us with everything that is… this nostalgia is responsible for… eroticism in man. …In essence, the domain of eroticism is the domain of violence, of violation."

[27] The unknown "gives us anguish, but this is the condition for ecstasy." It is "a stop before the communication that excites the desire but that causes fear." Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014), p. 147. Bataille's *L'expérience intérieure* was first published in 1943. See also Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

[28] Further, whether in erotic lifestyles, loving relationships, or divine love, desire is always "extended toward a fellow being: eroticism is around us so violent, it intoxicates hearts with such force – to finish it, its abyss is so deep in us – that there is no celestial space that does not take its form and fever from it." Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014), p. 121.

[29] One may seek an infinite and sovereign knowledge, but this is "as far as one can go: this desire so quickly born, nullifies itself, by accepting subordinate tasks." Ibid., p. 178.

[30] Ibid., p. 89. For indeed "no one escapes the composition of society."

incommunicable."[31] Blanchot inaugurated a turn to language as a means of showing the "impossibility" of desire, and its status beyond the societal – as well as *economic* and temporally structured – demands that Bataille claimed desire to be encased by.[32] Blanchot insisted that desire extends beyond a rational concept, and begins as an *experience* one has with oneself, an experience of "strangeness." Desire is more "truthful" than thought for "the thought that thinks more than it thinks is desire," which is beyond lack and need (though desire "passes through it"), for ultimately "love wants union." Indeed, it is not through logic or reason that one relates with the "inaccessible and foreign,"[33] but through desire, for the unattainable, unsatisfiable, indifferent, and impossible are precisely what desire is about.[34]

In his 1956 article "Freud" Blanchot investigated the work of a third figure who came to prominence in France in the 1940s and 1950s – Jacques Lacan. Lacan approached *désir* from a theoretical-psychoanalytic perspective, replacing Freud's "talking cure" of *Wunsch* and *Trieb* with a hermeneutics of desire: "*desire, in fact, is interpretation itself*."[35] Psychoanalysis, as the "science of desire,"[36] now attempts to find, name, and articulate (though not "understand") "a liberating truth" that is

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[31] "The response is unexpected. It is not perhaps the one that Georges Bataille would have wished to give, or even have ratified. And yet it is he himself, his books, the surprise of his language, the often unique tone of this silent discourse that permit us to propose it: speech entertains what no existent being in the primacy of his own name can attain; what existence itself, with the seduction of it s fortuitous particularity, with the play of its slipping universality, could never hold within itself… speech…is on the basis of this always foreign and always furtive affirmation – the impossible and the incommunicable – that it speaks, finding there its origin, just as it is in this speech that thought thinks more than it can." Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 210.

[32] Ibid., p. 12. As Blanchot continues, "the question is the desire of thought." Absence "presents itself" in desire, and desire "tends toward this immediate unitary relation." (p. 68). Nevertheless, "The infinite that is the movement of desire passes by way of need. Need is desire and desire becomes confounded with need. It is as though in nourishing myself at the level of subsistence it is not I whom I nourished; it is as though I receive the Other [*l'Autre*], host not to myself but to the unknown and the foreign." (p. 133). Blanchot is interested in a certain "limit experience," which is a desire of "he who is without desire" (p. 205). Blanchot also initiates thinking on "disinterestness" in a way, which Derrida ultimately takes up as an important component to deconstruction.

[33] Ibid., p. 53. In once responding to Levinas, Blanchot suggested that "the thought that thinks more than it thinks is Desire. Such a desire is not the sublimated form of need, any more than the prelude to love. Need is a lack that awaits fulfillment; need is satisfied. Love wants union. The desire that one might call metaphysical is a desire for what we are not in want of, a desire that cannot be satisfied and that does not desire union with what it desires." Further, metaphysics is "the very desire for what must remain inaccessible and foreign – a desire of the other as other, a desire that is austere, disinterested, without satisfaction, without nostalgia, unreturned, without return." Ibid., 76.

[34] Blanchot continues, "a desire for what cannot be attained, a desire that refuses all that might fulfill it, a desire therefore for this infinite lack, this indifference that desire is; a desire for the impossibility of desire, bearing the impossible, hiding it and revealing it, a desire that, in this sense, is the blow of the inaccessible…" Ibid., p. 210.

[35] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Norton, 1998), p. 176.

[36] Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*: *Seminar 7* (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 324.

"in a hiding place in our subject."[37] Like Bataille and Blanchot, desire is more fundamental to experience than knowledge or cognition, and this is contrary to the Cartesian *ego,* the inaccessible place that inspired the Freudian *unconscious*. Lacan replaces such a pure, untouched unconscious with a desire that references a "censored chapter" in our "entire history"[38] against the "lesions" of which one takes revenge in repression.[39] Lacan turns from Bataille and Blanchot in order to "interpret" desire according to the question "*Ché vuoi?*" or "what do you want?" This question initiates the patient's reflection upon the deeper question of "what does he [the therapist] want from me?", which leads the patient to recognize how he desires *to be* what the other desires; to be the other's desire.[40] In this sense, my desire is "the desire of the other" and knowledge is mediated "by the other's desire," and therefore the other's desire becomes *my desire*. Yet in further extending the connection between desire and language initiated by Blanchot, one only owns one's desire once it is *spoken*.[41] For Lacan, when one's "desire "speaks" one commits an act of signification, which gives rise to a "symptom" that reifies in a particular desire, an object of desire (*Object petit a*, or *autra*) that is formulated as an expression of what one "lacks" (*manque*).[42] Though desire itself is not simply *a cognate* of lack, its *relation* is with a lack, *not* the lacking of an actual object.[43] "Lack" is what maintains desire, and when one "lacks lacking," there are symptoms. It is in one's lacking desire that one "desires to desire." Desire, then, is an inherent unsatisfiability that acts as a

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[37] Ibid., p. 24.

[38] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function" in *Ecrits*: *A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink, (New York: Norton, 2004), p. 52.

[39] Ibid., p. 52.

[40] Ibid., p. 98 This "desire of the other" does not have any straightforward meaning. See also Christian Kerslake and Ray Brassier, *Origins and Ends of the Mind: Philosophical Essays on Psychoanalysis* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2007), p. 67.

[41] This more extended explanation of Lacan's theory of desire will become helpful for later chapters, which engage his work in relation to Derrida and Marion more closely. For Lacan, "it is only once it is formulated, named in the presence of the other, that desire appears in the full sense of the term." Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*: *Seminar 7* (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 183. See also Lacan's *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis* Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1991), p. 343. As Lacan would have it, "what is important is to teach the subject to name, to articulate, to bring desire into existence" Indeed, for Lacan, the other is "called upon to answer for the value of this treasure" Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*: *A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink, (New York: Norton, 2004), p. 303.

[42] Our symbolic orders are structured by our "big other," who tells us what we want. Our desire to desire, comes through the superego injunction to "enjoy!" and is never a pure desire which we actually get to choose. One learns how to desire in fantasy. Recognizing this lack within ourselves, as "desire adjusts to fantasy." Ibid., p. 301.

[43] In this "space" of lack, "desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand rips away from need, this margin being the one that demand –whose appeal can be unconditional only with respect to the Other – opens up in the guise of the possible gap need may give rise to here, because it has no universal satisfaction (this is called 'anxiety')." As for the lack, "man's continued nescience of his desire is not so much nescience of what he demands, which may after all be isolate, as nescience of when he desires." Nescience, in this case, is man's "lack of knowledge" or "ignorance" of his own desire. It is not so straightforward that "lack" is desire. Ibid., p. 814.

surplus. And in coming full-circle to the Platonic conception of desire, it is both lack and resource.[44] This is one key to understanding the distinctions between Marion and Derrida on the gift.

1.3 Debating the Gift and Desire: Marion and Derrida

Despite their differences, Lacan, Blanchot, and Bataille all hold to a conception of desire that cannot be reified in an object, that always relates with the foreign and strange beyond the subject and its knowledge, and generally maintains an inherent relation with "the other" in order for it to be sustained. As such, one can see how desire might play a manifold of roles in the formation of things as they are given to thinking. "Philosophical nature" says Socrates "is always in love with the understanding that makes clear to it the being that is eternal and *does not shift about* through generation and decay."[45] The aim of philosophy is for one to desire to go beyond the visible region to the intelligible region, from the presented phenomena to their universal *eidos*. As both resource and lack, desire (*eros*) was conceived as the faculty that allows for a linking up between the "sensible" and the supra-sensible, transcendent, and unchanging sense. Though one desires the truth of the *eidos*, one's senses are easily deceived, and therefore one's task is to somehow "purify" one's desires from their overly-sensible relation and redirect them towards the *eidos*, so that it can be *given*. For Plato, the transcendent and universal *eidos* can *be given* to a certain degree and in accord with one's desiring it.

This somewhat idealistic conception of the relationship between desire and "the given" went largely uncontested until Nietzsche, who condemned the concept of the Platonic *eidos* for its metaphysical reliance upon a non-existent "elsewhere." For Nietzsche, there is no "idea" that can be given from a transcendent place, and this also marks a certain reversal in the understanding of desire. Instead of offering desire the fundamental role of "seeking of truth" out of one's lacking the truth, desire becomes tasked with the very creation of truth. One does not desire or try to find truth, but instead forges it and forms it (*umgestaltet*) according to the affirmative "yea-saying" of the "will to power." For Nietzsche, desire is not a relay for a thing's being given, and thus any attempt to try to refer to "things in themselves" runs the risk of a quasi-reliance upon a transcendental and metaphysical resource. The theory of desire can be understood as a pivot point around which one might

[44] Ibid., p. 814. It is not just that desire "is not satisfiable," but desire *is this very unsatisfiability* in a way. For Lacan, "desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second." It is "the surplus" (and all surpluses supply and give) that comes about through the subject trying to articulate and speak the differences between "needs" and "demands." These demands can be articulated through the plurality of drives, which originate in the singularity and simplicity (i.e. irreducibility) of desire. These drives are incomplete manifestations of desire, expressing it in different, yet only partial or refractory ways.

[45] Plato, *Republic*. 485B. *italics my emphasis*.

understand how things are given, to what degree, and whether or not a desiring subject stands in the way of the gift's being given.

1.3.1 Derrida on the Gift and Desire

One might locate Derrida squarely within this Nietzschean legacy of condemning the Platonic *eidos* found in both the philosophical tradition and Husserlian phenomenology.[46] For Derrida, it is possible to see this metaphysical reliance especially in Husserl's conception of "intentionality," which inhibits the work of *différance* on the grounds that it privileges presence over absence, maintains foundational points of origination accessed through teleological means, and entails an idealistic conception of a subject who is too blinded by its own interests and desires to see things and their multiform signification on their own terms. It is also such an *intentional* attempt to relate with the world of things that is partially responsible for Derrida's a priori rejection of the gift from ever entering phenomenal experience. For a thing to "be given" as a result of one's volitional and intentional effort is to limit that thing's appearance to the activity of the subject. In the wake of Heidegger's "fundamental ontology," Derrida unfolds Heidegger's claim that *es gibt* had become "permanent presence" and Derrida concludes that the "logocentric" heritage (e.g. Husserlian phenomenology) conceives of givenness as simply a *sign* that points to the *eidos*. For Derrida, the *es gibt* discloses that there is always a "gift" that can come into play at any point and at every instance in such a way that "presence" itself is dramatically disrupted. The gift, in other words, is not simply the giver of "presence," but also what takes it away through disruption, and any intentional efforts to force things into appearance and to keep them there, disavow the importance of how the gift is to function in the roles of "becoming" and "arrival." Although the forces of "heterogeneity" and difference operate at the "basis" of thought, Derrida recognizes that it would be banal and disingenuous simply to emphasize "becoming" over "belonging," and this is why deconstruction embodies how "'belonging' (*appartenance*) refers to philosophy, the Greek, totality, and 'the breakthrough' (*percée*) refers to non-philosophy, the non-Greek, the opening."[47] The gift plays a role here, and provides one reason for Derrida to insist that deconstruction is "not the mixture but the tension between memory, fidelity, the preservation of something that has been *given* to us, and, at the same time, heterogeneity, something absolutely new."[48] This dis-

[46] Derrida's work indeed retains some aspects of phenomenology, for "every transgression" as Derrida once argued "must, in some fashion…conserve or confirm that which it exceeds." Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy" in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978.), p. 274.

[47] Jacques Derrida, *L'Ecriture et la Difference*. (Paris: Seuil. 1967), or *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 163, cf. 110–111.

[48] *Emphasis mine*. Jacques Derrida, "A Conversation with Jacques Derrida," in *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, Eds. Jacques Derrida and John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p. 6. And he continues: "The paradox in the instituting moment of an institution is that, at the same

tinction, which Derrida eventually conceptualizes in the *aporia*, marks a tension that should prohibit the persistent and continued reliance upon what has been *given* already in the past.

Further, "permanent presence" is caught in the restraints of economic exchange, calculation, and foundational thinking that has forgotten difference and the deferral of presence.[49] And since Husserlian phenomenology has a "gift" that is restricted to "presencing," Derrida never makes the attempt to save this version of the gift, and instead attempts to put it out of phenomenal play and observation by naming it "the impossible." As "the impossible," the gift cannot be desired because it is unconditionally beyond the possible. This marks Derrida's own way of protecting the gift from falling into "economy," the *aporetic* "other" of the gift. He does not want the gift to become something phenomenologically observed or available in full presence because this limits it to economy and exchange. The gift, or that which is given, cannot be given with any interest in an economical "return," otherwise it is merely an exchange. Even the expression of thankfulness for a gift damns it back into economy.[50] Further still, when a gift is consciously recognized or "known" as a gift, this nullifies that a gift has been given on the grounds that the giver thanks and congratulates himself for a gift well given. Even to think or say "that was a gift" is to bind the gift immediately to the temporalized economy of presence through fixing it into place, and to submitting the gift to being merely a reflection of the subject's desired "meaning," which is repeatable, identifiable, and reliant upon past experiences. Husserl's idealistic subject is left as/in a *solus ipse* that cannot extend beyond its own isolation.

Despite the fact that Derrida's gift cannot enter phenomenality, the topic of the gift is incredibly significant for Derrida and deconstruction, so much so that his reflections on the gift developed in his seminars "in the 1970s ("Donner le temps"); *these questions have expressly oriented all the texts I have published since about 1972*."[51] Indeed, the "impossibility" of a gift does not preclude or forbid its arrival, happening, or "experiencability" as an *event*. The gift must unfold in a horizon

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time that it starts something new, it also continues something, is true to the memory of the past, to a heritage, to something we receive from the past, from our predecessors, from the culture."

[49] Ibid., p. 13. Deconstruction's "ground" is "difference": "we do not have to choose between unity and multiplicity. Of course deconstruction … insisted not on multiplicity for itself but on the heterogeneity, the difference, the disassociation, which is absolutely necessary for the relation to the other." Derrida makes this a key point in his "critique" of Husserl, particularly in his *Introduction to the Origins of Geometry*.

[50] For Derrida, "As soon as a gift – not a *Gegebenheit*, but a gift – as soon as a gift is identified as a gift, with the meaning of a gift, then it is canceled as a gift. It is reintroduced into the circle of an exchange and destroyed as a gift. As soon as the donee knows it is a gift he already thanks the donator and cancels the gift. As soon as the donator is conscious of giving, he himself thanks himself and again cancels the gift by re-inscribing it into a circle, an economic circle." Jacques Derrida, "On the Gift," in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 59.

[51] *My emphasis*. Jacques Derrida, "How to avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume II*, eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg, (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 313, note 24.

beyond generosity or any intent to give.[52] The gift arises, then, in the force of the production of language, but is not phenomenologically identifiable; it "is something you do" says Derrida "without knowing what you do, without knowing who gives the gift, who receives the gift, and so on."[53] Since the gift is "impossible" and can appear only as an event, this necessitates that Derrida evict the traditional conception of "desire" (voluntaristic or not) from playing a formative role in deconstruction, foremost because it generally belongs to the registers of economy, possibility, and exchange – these *aporetic* "opposites" of the gift.[54] "Desire" belongs to the registers of economy because it is expressive of a subject who is looking for something and wanting or desiring to see something in particular, which is a pursuit based upon past experiences. One cannot appropriately live towards the future, possibile event if one is stuck in the past and committed to reliving it, which is where desire originates. In his 1967 *Speech and Phenomena* Derrida asserts that all "present" moments maintain a residue or trace from the past, and phenomenology far too heavily relies upon such a "present." This is one reason as to why he criticizes Lacan's "desire" as being too hermeneutic, for psychoanalysis is first and foremost an interpretive tool that begins with a desiring subject and an analyst who interprets it. Lacan's desire is reducible to a set of "truth claims" in such a way that words and expressions cannot escape the totalizing oversight of some "science" of desire.

Contrary to Lacan, yet in closer solidarity with Nietzsche, Derrida does not "believe desire has an essential relation to lack" or negativity but he would prefer to think it in its positive aspect as affirmation.[55] In his interview "Dialanguages," Derrida associates desire with mourning, which is a confirmation and response to a *feeling* of loss, which is rooted in affirmation: "I believe desire is affirmation, and consequently that mourning itself is affirmation as well."[56] Derrida dissociates

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[52] As Marion put it recently, "…Derrida concluded that for the gift to remain a gift it must be unfolded in the horizon of gratuity and would therefore be neither visible nor conscious." ("… concluait Derrida, pour que le don reste un don, qu'il se déploie dans l'horizon de la gratuité et donc ne soit ni visible ni même conscient."). Jean-Luc Marion, *La Rigueur des Choses*: *Entretiens avec Dan Arbib*. (Paris: Flammarion, 2012), p. 133.

[53] Jacques Derrida, "On the Gift," in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 60.

[54] Derrida's "*différance*" must necessarily keep any "economical" desire at bay, for he demands that "to differ in this sense is to temporalize, to resort, consciously or unconsciously, to the temporal and temporalizing mediation of a detour that suspends the accomplishment or fulfillment of 'desire' or 'will', or carries desire or will out in a way that annuls or tempers their effect." Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena' and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allision, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 136.

[55] Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Weber, *Points …: Interviews, 1974–1994*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 143.

[56] Ibid., p. 143. This is a certain "mourning, in the feeling or the experience of loss. I rarely speak of loss, just as I rarely speak of lack, because these are words that belong to the code of negativity, which is not mine, which I would prefer not to be mine. I don't believe desire has an essential relation to lack. I believe desire is affirmation, and consequently that mourning itself is affirmation as well; I would accept more readily to say that my writing is bereaved…without intending that to mean loss." Mourning is a response to *a feeling* of loss, but it *is not* loss.

desire from lack because of the aforementioned driving force of "affirmation" in his work, and his distancing himself from "negativity."[57] Desire and mourning (taken together in unison) are both forms of "affirmation" and "responding" to that "which is." And what is affirmed in deconstruction is the difference and plurality of things and their multiform signs. It is not criticism, negativity, nihilism, or sophistry that form the heart of deconstruction, but instead a radical affirmation. This radical affirmation of all things lays emphasis on the *things*, not on a desiring subject who experiences them.

Before one desires, there *is* an affirmation. This should not be taken, however, as an affirmation *of desire* in total. For in another interview, Derrida speaks against subjective desire (desire that is "mine") for its prohibitions in preventing the appearance of the other.[58] Indeed, Derrida is not *equating* desire with affirmation, but along with mourning, *reducing it to* acts of affirmation. Since desire is not "lack," it is more of a resource of saying "yes" to that which already is, to where one is, and to how one is. One way of interpreting this use of desire is to see it operating as an "indifference" to lacking and that which is not "here" in favor of remaining infinitely open to that which is.[59] Affirmation occurs on the basis of "the undecidable itself," which is *not voluntary*: "There is no such thing as voluntary indecision, calculated indecision; there is no deciding strategy of indecision. Indecision happens. One grapples with indecision. If it were nothing but a calculation, it would be a sinister tactic."[60] The only desire Derrida would affirm would be one that is a part

[57] In Chap. 6 of the present study, the relation between Derrida and Bataille appears in terms of Derrida's critiques of how negativity cannot bring about the gift. Negativity is associated with total loss. This becomes apparent in his critique of Bataille's "General economy," which treats the matter of self-sacrifice as a gift, yet for Derrida, such pure negativity cannot be a gift, in part because there is no one there to experience the mourning.

[58] That is, a desire that is named "mine" results in a prohibition of things' being given, not an enabling of them. "Our desire prevents the other as such from appearing or, according to Heidegger's expression, to 'show itself in itself' (*Being and Time*, p. 28). Thus, our desire finds in others 'only what we ourselves put into them' (CPR, Kant, B, xviii). And that means that, in my desire of the Other the otherness of the Other is lost, the Other gradually ceases to be any other (different than me). Insofar as the Other reflects my desire, he becomes the narcissistic idol of myself. I am freed from this desire only by the desire *for* the other." Jacques Derrida in *After God: Richard Kearney and the Religious Turn in Continental Philosophy*, Ed. John Panteleimon Manoussakis and Richard Kearney, (New York: Fordham Press, 2006), p. 286.

[59] In an important sense, "to remain undecided means to turn oneself over to the decision of the other." "It is the Other who will decide what 'come' means; that is where the response is." Even when one doesn't decide, one decides, and can only divert that problem by deciding for the undecidable. Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Weber, *Points …: Interviews, 1974–1994*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 147.

[60] "the greatest decisions that must be taken and must be affirmed are taken and affirmed in this relation to the undecidable itself; the very moment in which they are no longer possible, they become possible. These are the only decisions possible: impossible ones. Think here of Kierkegaard. The only decision possible is the impossible decision. It is when it is not possible to *know* what must be done, when knowledge is not and cannot be determining that a decision is possible as such." Ibid., p. 147. Yet before "the question of decision can be posed' and the question of knowing what deciding, affirming – which is to say, also deciding – mean." Ibid., p. 146.

of affirmation itself as a kind of "letting" of the "to come" come, now. Affirmation is already there, and desire is a *response* to it.[61] This is indeed more about *letting* than it is about *desiring*. It is more about for feiting and surrendering to the eternal recurrence. However, there is a very thin line between affirmation of that which is, of "letting things eternally return," and the desire for repetition in "the will to mastery."[62] Desire is the desire to repeat "what one loves;" the *telos* of desire is the will to relive every moment "eternally."[63] Desire *for* repetition is a response to the call to affirmation. Yet, as Derrida astutely observes, this can quickly devolve into a negation.[64] Despite any appreciation Derrida might have for mastery and formalization "in an economical manner" that affirms the eternal recurrence, the desire to keep "is at once [an] extremely protected, protective, protectionist attitude" that paradoxically marks "'forgetting itself,' despite its attempts to do otherwise."[65] In this sense, desire marks the "sinister" nature of calculation and economy, and in many senses abandons "affirmation."

More generally speaking, though Derrida here interprets desire according to affirmation, the overwhelming majority of references to desire in his work associate it with this kind of calculative and economical attempt to "keep" and "repeat," both of which limit the work of deconstruction. Despite writing of desire in scattered places throughout his work, *there is no sustained reflection on the topic that merits any consideration that desire is conceived or thought to play a formative role in deconstruction*. Instead, Derrida's emphasis was on that which stands outside the self, and anything that leads one back into a self-reflective concern over one's desires (i.e., that which one lacks, wants, or wishes to satisfy) is doomed to prohibit

[61] Affirmation comes *before* desire. This is further confirmed in another interview: "what I say, as soon as I open my mouth, as soon as I do something, as soon as I desire something is that there has been affirmation." *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971–2001*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 27.

[62] Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Weber, *Points …: Interviews, 1974–1994*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 140.

[63] Or "to let everything return eternally." Then Derrida continues to discuss desire in terms of memory: "My first desire is not to produce a philosophical work or a work of art: it is to preserve memory." One desires to preserve what comes into experience. This feeling of loss with which one "struggles" is a lamentation of "the impossibility of repeating. I would like to repeat all the time, to repeat everything, which is affirmation. It is even the Nietzschean sense of affirmation: to be able to repeat what one loves, to be able to live in such a way that at every moment one must say 'I would like to relive this eternally.'" Ibid., p. 145.

[64] This is not an act of negation, but one of affirmation whereby everything is such that he would wish "it to start over again eternally." "This is an affirmative desire in the sense in which Nietzsche defined the eternal return in its relation to desire: let everything return eternally." Ibid., 144.

[65] It is not that Derrida is "anti-repetition" in every sense, of course: "What I admire in the philosophers, what interests me most in others, finally, is that they try to construct the most *economical* machines for repeating." Philosophers want mastery, "which permits the formalization in an economical manner of the maximum of things to be said and thought." Repetition is marked by "the desire to keep." Ibid., p. 145.

the work of *différance*, and the arrival of the gift.[66] Subsequently, desire (as such and from a subject) is kept from having a primary place or role in deconstruction on the grounds that it is not an accurate means of relation with the world or the interpretation of one's "fundamental involvement" in it. Instead, it is "difference" that is far more radical than desire.[67] Though Derrida writes about, and takes seriously the topic of desire, his work can be seen as a drastic distinction from many of his French contemporaries, for whom desire was essential.

Instead, "the experience of the event defeats my will."[68] It is absolute "indifference" that becomes the basis of speculative philosophy. While there is an important distinction that is traditionally made between "will" and "desire," Derrida appears to reduce desire to having elements of volition even though desire is typically understood (at least in the twentieth century) to operate unwillingly at the level of the un/sub-conscious. Even so, desire "speaks" that which one has already experienced before, reflects the past, and enacts specific hopes and interests upon the to-come. In this sense, one is always already willing, even if it is un/sub-conscious. In *Margins of Philosophy*, Derrida insists that the reflection upon desire can only lead to one's acting predictively upon things in one's experience. Desire only allows one to give to oneself what one already has.[69] In a more phenomenological register, desire is not far from intentional directedness, which Derrida clearly rejects in *Speech and Phenomena*. Husserlian intentionality, for Derrida, is to "take originary lived experience as philosophy's sole legitimate point of departure."[70] And from the outset, intending is an "expressing oneself about something" (*über etwas sich äussern*).[71] Phenomenological intentionality is submitted to a voluntaristic and cognitivist framework that seeks to control "expression: it is meant, conscious through and

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[66] Desire is "set into motion" by other things: "the promise of unity…is what sets desire in motion." Further "desire" must "be redetermined on the basis of this necessity" which is the dream or desire for unity. The hope for necessity and idiomatic writing (which is the natural flow of all things being accessible and understandable) demands that "desire" be *redetermined* along the lines and on the *basis of* the primacy of the non-necessary, non-idiomatic, the inaccessibility of "unity" of things. Ibid., p. 136.

[67] Desire is similar to "bliss" (*joissance*) and Derrida doesn't imagine that "any bliss is thinkable that does not have the form of this pure difference." It is difference that provides "the form" of bliss, and similarly desire. Shortly after, Derrida engages the question of lack and enjoyment in the context of pure difference. "I don't imagine that any bliss (let's not speak any more here of desire but of bliss [*joissance*]) is thinkable that does not have the form of this pure difference…"

[68] Jacques Derrida, "A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event" in *The Late Derrida* eds. W.J.T. Mitchell and Arnold I. Davidson, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 237.

[69] There is a certain "lure of the I" that "permits me to give myself to hear what I desire to hear, to believe in the spontaneity of the power which needs no one in order to give pleasure to itself." Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 297.

[70] Jacques Derrida, *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. Marian Hobson, (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 10.

[71] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* Trans. David B. Allison, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 73–74.

through, and intentional. There is no expression without the intention of a subject animating the sign, giving it a *Geistigkeit*."[72] Further, when one "means," the meaning (*Bedeutung*) of an expression is reduced to the desire of the one who "*wants* to say, what he *means* to say."[73] There is also the rejection of desire on temporal grounds in relation to the gift (especially in *Given Time*), for "intending to give" presupposes that one "will give" this or that in the future, and this again inhibits the gift's arrival in the present. Given these rejections of desire from having a place in deconstruction more generally, and provided the value he places on the gift for deconstruction, "generosity," which he defines as "the desire to give," cannot bring about the gift, for it demands two contradictory conclusions: The gift comes from *someone* who desires to give, yet since it is the *desire* to give, the gift immediately takes on an economical disposition and intentional intonation.[74]

1.3.2 Marion on the Gift and Desire

At one point Marion admits that his thinking on the gift is often and at times "… close to Derrida."[75] Yet Derrida's positions on desire and gift are to be distinguished in a number of ways from those of Marion, for whom it is precisely desire (as love) that allows for the primacy of the gift over economy, in part on the grounds of the fecund and excessive primacy of givenness, which gives above and beyond the desires of the conscious individual. These differing positions on the gift are developed throughout a number of his works, yet perhaps most succinctly in *Being Given* (*Étant Donne*), which frequently engages Derrida's criticisms found in their 1997 debate, and in Derrida's *Given Time* (which was developed from his lectures in the 1970s).[76] Their famous exchange on "The Gift" hinged on Derrida's attempt to

[72] Ibid., p. 33. As Derrida puts it, Husserl's expression means "the going-forth-beyond-itself of an act, then of a sense, which can remain in itself, however, only in speech, in the 'phenomenological' voice."

[73] Ibid., p. 34.

[74] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money* (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 162.

[75] Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: hors-texte*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. xxi. See also Marion's *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes; Analogie, création des vérités éternelles et fondement* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1981), p. 450. There, in his reading of "white theology" he gestures towards the Derridean "white mythology" in reference to the failures of modern metaphysics.

[76] An example of such a response to Derrida is in the introductory remarks of *Being Given* where he explicitly states that he seeks to show that his phenomenology of givenness does not imply a transcendent giver. This is a direct response to one criticism Derrida leveled towards him in their 1997 debate. Further, in Chap. 2 Marion subsumes an aspect of Derrida's work under the banner of givenness, namely, that of "denegation," which Derrida offered considerable amount of attention to reformatting in his *How to Avoid Speaking: Denials*. Marion suggests that "the negative… can be understood as the operator of dialectical givenness, which puts the concept into motion, to the point of producing it in actuality (Hegel). Finally, the void is given in the deception of antici-

broaden thought on the gift beyond phenomenology's confines, and on Marion's insistence upon thinking the gift "in the name" of phenomenology. It is no wonder then that Marion counters Derrida's arguments and attempts to save the gift for phenomenal presence by offering a *redux* version of Husserl's givenness (*Gegebenheit*, *donation*), which comes to act as a medium between that which is given (the gift itself) and the "receiver" in every conscious experience.[77] However, Marion's return to givenness marks an essential turn from Husserl, for whom there were a number of traits or typologies of givenness (e.g. absolute, adequate, modes, originary), that refer more metonymically to "presentation" or "appearance." Though Husserl conceptualized givenness, his approach was not well equipped to manage Derrida's concerns over how that which is "given" is too much of a product of the work of an intending subject. Further, despite Husserl's emphasis upon the temporal primacy of a "passive pre-givenness" that is always already there "without any awakening of interest" or intentional grasp, Husserl's approach to givenness is still reducible to the productive consciousness of the *ego*, and therefore, Marion rejects and reformat Husserl's transcendental subject, this synthesizer of the active and passive.[78]

For Marion, part of this problem can be found in the distinction between intuition and intention, which is partially responsible for leading phenomenology back into metaphysics. His wager is that the reduction to givenness can allow phenomena to *give* themselves freely without restriction as "noncausal, nonefficient, and nonmetaphysical."[79] Thus, givenness is not the grand *Ursprung* or originating "cause" of the gift, but instead is implicated at every turn of every experience one has with a gift's being given. The reduction to givenness is not a way for a "subject"

pated perception or in the frustrated expectation of affection, indeed desire. Every negation and every denegation, every negative, every nothing, and every logical contradiction suppose a givenness, which authorizes us to recognize them and thus do justice to their particularities – in short, a given that permits us at the very least to discuss them." Jean-Luc Marion. *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness,* trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 55. Then again, on page 59, Marion confirms that there are no exceptions to givenness:"It follows that the denial of givenness can be neither thought nor accomplished – since denegation, whatever it denies, implies its own givenness inasmuch as it claims to deny, contest, oppose, in short perform here and now. Since only a given can deny givenness, it confirms it as it contests it." That is to say "the denegation already gives." Ibid., p. 59.

[77] Kosky translates the French "*donation*" into English as "givenness," but there are some facets of this French word that are necessarily lost in the translation. This "*donation*" is the *act* of giving *or* creating. Givenness is a calling; it is an appeal to a thing to show itself, and that which "shows itself first gives itself." It is always that which is beyond-the-horizon. This fold of givenness "articulates a process with a given; even if the given must, by definition, give a sense of its donative process." Ibid., p. 68.

[78] For Husserl, the "domain of what is pregiven, of a passive pregivenness ..[is] always already there without any attention of a grasping regard, without any awakening of interest. All cognitive activity, all turning-toward a particular object in order to grasp it, presupposes this domain of passive pregivenness." Husserl, quoted in Ian Leask, "Husserl, Givenness, and the Priority of the Self" in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 11:2 (2003): p. 145.

[79] Jean-Luc Marion. *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness* Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 74.

to make or cause a gift to happen or appear as a result of a subject's intent or desire. Instead, the reduction to givenness is a way to protect the integrity of the gift as free, unconditioned, and unhindered by causality. Marion believes that his concept of givenness can act as the fountainhead of phenomenology without the causal constraints of economy and exchange, in part because a gift is not dependent upon an "efficient giver" or a true "recipient." The character of the gift (i.e. givenness) lies only in the gift itself, not its "extrinsic" and visible qualities determinable through causal logic or the principle of sufficient reason. And as it will be shown in the final chapter, this is the critique he directs at Derrida's recourse to the supposed "impossibility" of the gift.

The overall result of *Being Given* is a triadic synthesis between the works of Derrida, Heidegger, and Husserl (though the works of others are heavily invoked throughout) that seeks to charge phenomenology with the new task of addressing how appearance, as but one mode of givenness, itself appears. The appearance of things that are "given" to one's conscious experience are to be reduced to givenness in such a way that their *means* of being given can be analyzed. When one performs the reduction to givenness ("the more reduction, the more givenness"), phenomena are found in their most unconditioned states, and even can "give" themselves without the work of the cognizer or "conditioner." In Derridean terms, things must have the right to be given on their own unpredictable terms as an "event" ("*l'avenir*").[80] Marion arrives at this point of givenness by performing a reduction upon the distinct yet relevant components of the manifold of the gift: "the gift," givenness, and "the given."[81]

That which *arrives* or is shown is "the gift." The gift is the "final trait" through which phenomena are appresented (partially presented or indicated) and "the gift comes about as a given, thus from and within givenness."[82] Since "that which shows

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[80] See also Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: hors-texte.* trans Thomas Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). p. 47. Both love and gift exceed expectation. They go beyond the thinkable and cannot be conditioned. As Marion suggests in *God without Being*, "If, on the contrary, God is not because he does not have to be, but loves, then, by definition, no condition can continue to restrict his initiative, amplitude, and ecstasy. Love loves without condition, simply because it loves; he thus loves without limit or restriction. No refusal rebuffs or limits that which, in order to give itself, does not await the least welcome or require the least consideration. Which means, moreover, that as interlocutor of love, man does not first have to pretend to arrange a 'divine abode' for it – supposing that this very pretension may be sustained – but purely and simply to accept it; to accept it or, more modestly, not to steal away from it."

[81] Jean-Luc Marion, "Sketch of a phenomenological concept of Gift," in *Postmodern Philosophy and Christian Thought*, ed. Merold Westphal, (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999). p. 131. There is indeed an important distinction found in Marion's work between "the gift" as such, which specifically references gifts that are the result of one's generosity, and "a gift," which is more generally intuitive data or *hyle* distinct from "the" gift as such. An essential starting point for this work on the gift is Marion's early essay "Sketch of a Phenomenological Concept of Gift"; an essay he comes to rework and re-published as a section of *Being Given*. Marion's "Sketch…" was first printed in 1994 as "Esquisse d'un concept phénoménologique du don" in *Filosofia della rivelazione*, ed M. Olivetti (Rome Italy: Biblioteca dell' "Archivio di Filosofia," 1994).

[82] For "…Husserl argues for the extension of givenness to certain meanings and essences, right up to considering the constitution of objects as a givenness of meanings (*Sinngebung*)." Thus for

itself first gives itself" according to one's experience of givenness, appearances can be reduced to their "being given." Once the gift is reified, it is named "a given," yet the gift that is given is irreducible to an ontological register for still "the gift gives itself precisely to the strict degree to which it renounces to be, excepted from presence, undone from itself by undoing the subsistence in it."[83] Thus "the gift" must *renounce* being, otherwise the gift falls prey to the metaphysical and economical privileging of presence that Derrida rebuked Husserl's approach for relying upon.[84]

Marion makes provisions for the gift to have its own register irreducible to the patterns of economy by considering it "along the lines of givenness."[85] Givenness is experienced in "the fold" between the thing that shows and that which is shown, thus making for the possibility of a certain "horizon" for the gift. Nothing (even "nothing") can escape the primacy of givenness, and all of Husserl's reductions are to be interlaced with the reduction to givenness. The possibilities that givenness offer come in the form of a "call," and one's answering that call marks the intuitive openness towards that which comes. In a way similar to Derrida in fact, the "intentional activity" of consciousness that one undertakes in the reductions is far too inhibiting, and therefore givenness is not arrived at via one's intentional activity or "synthesis" between the active and passive. One's actual experience of phenomena in the world has very little to do with intention, and much to do with intuition. What occurs in/to consciousness is not a result of one's active grasping, but one's active releasing. This is why Marion's conception of givenness privileges the activities of the outside world as they dynamically break into one's experiences. Further, givenness is always already giving before any reduction *to* it, though one's experiences of givenness can be increased through the performance of the reduction to givenness (among other reductions). Therefore, one performs the reduction to givenness, which is enacted by attuning intuition to the *possibility* of givenness' excessive giving.[86] This *epoché* is marked by a patient waiting and listening. One begins with what is straightforwardly given to intuition, as that which shows itself must first give itself, and that which gives itself has first shown itself.[87] The given is then

Husserl, givenness "defines in a universal way all phenomenality." Ibid., pp. 123 & 130 respectively.

[83] Ibid., p. 127.

[84] Through his reading of Derrida's *Given Time*, Marion claims that "if there is givenness, it must break completely with the principle of sufficient reason, that of identity and of the quadriform causality, which the economy follows in its metaphysical sense." Ibid., p. 124.

[85] Ibid., p. 131.

[86] This way one might follow better Husserl's advice to look and "look again." Yet for Marion, there certainly is no assurance that our second look will result in seeing the same thing in the same way. In fact, it will most likely be different, especially if we are "giving" ourselves over to intuition, and the possibility that phenomena can appear without reason or sense.

[87] Jean-Luc Marion. "Sketch of a phenomenological concept of Gift" *in Postmodern Philosophy and Christian Thought*, ed. Merold Westphal. (Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 123. For Marion, "phenomenology thinks through all phenomenality from the starting point of the 'giving' intuition: in order to appear, a phenomenon must be able to give itself." Then in *Being Given* Marion asserts that "the way in which the gift gives itself coincides exactly with the way the phenomena shows

"unfolded starting from the fold of givenness" in order to let phenomena appear in and of themselves (in accord with Husserl's "principle of principles").[88] Phenomena are then experienced more fully as one reduces them to how they give themselves *uniquely* each and every time.

Important in this reduction is Marion's conception of "the given," which Marion names "L'adonné" (henceforward called the *adonné*). The *adonné* is Marion's replacement for the Cartesian *ego*, the Kantian "self," the Husserlian "transcendental subject," and the Heideggerian *Dasein*. If one performs the reduction to givenness absolutely, then it is necessary for even the "self" to be bracketed in order to allow the phenomena full quarter to appear on their own terms and according to their manifolds of possible variations. The "horizon" of givenness excessively overwhelms the intentions of "the gifted," who answers the call of givenness. This arises *from* a paradox, for one must actively relinquish intentionality to prepare one's intuition and awareness for the coming gift. One's past experiences, present conditions, and cognitive dissonance can all stand in the way of a thing's being given. While Husserl made provisions for a type of "self-assessment" of one's interests in a phenomenal appearance within his *eidetic* reduction, Marion's wager is that the only solution to experiencing the fecundity of things is by bracketing the self, who is given alongside phenomena as they also are given. Thus, in the experience of phenomena one also experiences the "data" of oneself as given in a particular way, in accord with any number of desires, passions, and interests. Yet in order to truly experience oneself as given, one must surrender oneself entirely.[89] This leads to a number of problems that are in need of working out. On the one hand, the subject cannot be the primary *constitutor* of phenomena because then those phenomena would be *subject to* the interests and whims of the subject and therefore not free to give themselves in and of themselves. Yet on the other hand, the subject cannot be stripped of its passions and reduced to mere "receptiveness," reducing it to an empty shell whose ways are predetermined by its surroundings. This problem becomes even more apparent when one considers Marion's interests in love as a fundamental aspect of that which constitutes the *adonné*.

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itself. What is accomplished as reduced gift is also described as constituted phenomenon." Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 115.

[88] Ibid., p. 118.

[89] Marion's notion of revelation operates out of the understanding that phenomenology isn't merely about the study of the appearances of things, but ultimately those things' *impact* upon the gifted. This is revelation. Revelation leaves us with some sense of truth, but not a truth that can be displayed as a concept/idea to choose or reject. One simply must brace for the "unpredictable landing" of the Truth. As Husserl teaches, Truth is not to be put on display through a series of providing evidences. Marion recognizes that all evidences are merely algorithms of death – dead logical idols. And though there is a place for the provision of evidences, phenomenology, as first philosophy, cannot be supported or upheld by such provisions. However, Marion does offer some anecdotal evidences for why the gift can occur. The absence of an undecided or unknown giver acts as evidence for why the gift can be reduced to givenness, for it is impossible for such a gift to be a loan. See also Ibid., p. 141.

In so many ways, Marion discards Husserlian intentionality, and inserts in its place an erotic disposition, which becomes a part of intuition. It is clear that Marion's work on givenness is not for the sake of simply redeeming phenomenology from deconstruction, but for reconceiving the human condition according to "love." Like Bataille, Marion sees desire as a key to getting beyond metaphysics. Marion asserts that his trilogy on givenness (*Reduction and Givenness*, *In Excess*, and *Being Given*), among other works, but "above all the last three, have been just so many steps toward the question of the erotic phenomenon."[90] How is one to interpret this "just so many steps?" To what degree might the reduction to givenness and the erotic reduction be interlaced? Also, given his following of Derrida's displacement of Husserlian intentionality, what is it that allows Marion to believe he has warrant to reject such intentionality while at the same time retain desire and love, which both share so many similarities with intentionality? Can he conceive of love in a way that is compatible with his phenomenology of givenness? In order to sufficiently answer these questions, Marion's love would need to be "non-intentional" without being emptied of all volition, accessible to "the self" without constituting "a subject" who thereby controls the given, and independent from economy and self-interest.

Desire, which is situated somewhere between intentionality and love is one key to unlocking these questions, which are partially addressed by Marion in *The Erotic Phenomenon*. Although love and desire are not directly synonymous, there are many ways in which they interact. Love actively involves desire in the allowance for a certain kind of assurance of oneself in the form of a paradoxical "definitive individualization." One might become a self insofar as one performs and sustains the "erotic reduction:" "I become myself definitely each time and for as long as I, as lover, can love first."[91] In the performance of this reduction, whereby one brackets the natural attitude, one can recognize and experience the paradoxical "rules" of desire, for "the natural attitude… [is] where scarcity is oppose to abundance; but in the radical erotic reduction … desire identifies scarcity and abundance."[92] The scarcity and abundance of desire harkens back to Plato's conception of it, as well as to Lacan's development of one's making a "surplus" out of lacking. Yet in the context of Marion's work, desire, as scarcity and abundance, both gives *and* takes. Its taking and giving paradoxically subverts economical appropriation on the grounds that it seeks what is beyond the *adonné*. This is indeed quite close to Blanchot's interpretation of desire as a fundamental relation with the foreign and strange, which defy knowledge. Yet contrary to how Derrida understands it, desire in this sense can have no predictable function in the way that economy does. So close to economy, yet incredibly so far away, the paradox of scarcity and abundance at the heart of desire is that which frustrates economical reason.

[90] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 10.

[91] Ibid., p. 76.

[92] Ibid., p. 131.

Such an interpretation of desire is at the core of Marion's approach: "nothing belongs to me more than that which I desire, for *that* is what I lack; that which I lack defines me…"[93] Radically similar to Lacan, one's lacking is a constituting resource, but Marion insists that this demands a co-constitution that is radically intersubjective: "the lover is individualized by *desire*, or rather by the desire that is *his* and no one else's."[94] Although desire cannot be named "mine," it does uniquely define "me." The other, who is radically "unattainable" through desire, helps constitute me as the *adonné* through the process of "eroticization."[95] Yet in a way similar to Derrida, and distinct from Lacan, Marion does not suggest that desire is a means through which one might interpret the world, or the means to receiving the abundance of what can be understood or given in it. This is one reason as to why love, like the gift (namely, as a kind of gift), must have its own forms of rationality and unique categories of reason.[96] Love, which is typically understood as irrational, is now instead extra-rational.

1.4 The Tasks of This Book: A Debate Over Phenomenology

This book investigates how the manifold of the meanings of desire might contribute to further clarifying the central tensions between Marion and Derrida in their debates and engagements on the gift. The interrelated topics of intent, meaning, desire, volition, and love mark central points of tension in how one is to express and understand "the gift," "the subject," and whether or not something like givenness is possible. On the one hand, both Marion and Derrida dismiss the concept of intentionality and any fixed "subject" from having a role in the formation of both conscious and unconscious experience. Instead of blindly remaining committed to the modern conceptions of ipseity in "the figure of mastery of self, of adequation to self,

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[93] Ibid., p. 108. Marion continues to demonstrate that it defines me "more intimately than everything that I possess, for what I possess remains exterior to me and what I lack in habits me." Though desire is not a "need" it is a kind of hunger, and a capacity that asks for fulfillment. See also Jean-Luc Marion, *On the Ego and on God: Further Cartesian Questions*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007). See p. 69 for Marion's engagement with "desire and hunger," p. 91 for a consideration of desire, capacity and dissatisfaction, and then p. 94 for Marion's conception of the relationship between desire and *capacitas*.

[94] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 108.

[95] Ibid., p. 93. This "relation" is conceived according to what Marion calls the "crossing of the flesh." Desire "births" eroticization. I "become amorous simply because I want to, without any constraint, according to my sole, naked desire."

[96] Marion continues, suggesting that there is "perhaps a deep rationality and consciousness of desire which is other than and goes far beyond mere unconsciousness." Jean-Luc Marion, *After God: Richard Kearney and the Religious Turn in Continental Philosophy*, Ed. Richard Kearney, (New York: Fordham Press, 2006), p. 331. See also p. 329, where Kearney (who also happens to be the moderator of Marion and Derrida's debate on the gift, 6 years earlier) claims that there is "within metaphysics a metaphysical desire to understand, to conceptualize, …to make sense of."

center and origin of the world" Derrida insists that one "must seek a new (post-deconstructive) determination…of the 'subject.'"[97] It is no coincidence that Marion also discards the modern subject and aims to re-establish the possibility of a "self" that is capable of loving on the basis of givenness. Although Derrida may not have been a formal "teacher" of Marion (Derrida was a *répétiteur* at the Ecole normale, and likely helped Marion prepare for the *aggrégation*), Marion has been influenced greatly by him, and still engages Derrida's work today. For example, in his 2010 *Certitudes négatives* Marion engages Derrida's assertion of the impossibility of forgiveness (which is a kind of gift). In his 2012 *Figures de phénoménologie: Husserl, Heidegger, Lévinas, Henry, Derrida,* Marion places Derrida on his list of the top phenomenological thinkers, namely, for Derrida's work on the impossibility of the gift.[98] Then in his 2012 *La Rigueur des Choses*, Marion claims that "Derrida [among others in the phenomenological tradition] in a certain way, are people still living in me, and with whom I am still in discussion."[99]

Yet at the same time, there are vast differences between Marion and Derrida, especially when it comes to desire, love, and the gift. Although Marion "was my student long ago…" says Derrida, Marion "fortunately…was not my student, because we do not agree on some essential issues."[100] Indeed Marion briefly sat

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[97] As Derrida insists, any attempt to respond to, or go beyond deconstruction would "…no longer include the figure of mastery of self, of adequation to self, center and origin of the world, etc…" but "…would define the subject rather as the finite experience of non-identity to self…". Derrida calls for others to reconceive subjectivity.

In this interview with Jean-Luc Nancy, Derrida insists that his successors not be "pre-deconstructive:" "By what right, conversely, can we be forbidden from calling this 'subject?' I am thinking of those today who would try to reconstruct a discourse about the subject which would not be pre-deconstructive, about a subject which would no longer include the figure of mastery of self, of adequation to self, center and origin of the world, etc… but who would define the subject rather as the finite experience of non-identity to self, as the underivable interpellation inasmuch as it comes from the other, from the trace of the other, with the paradoxes or the aporia of being-before-the-law, etc." Jacques Derrida. "Eating Well" in *Who Comes After the Subject*, ed. E Cadava, et al. (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 102–103.

[98] Here Marion addresses Derrida's crucial development of the interrelated issues of invisibility and impossibility; openings that became essential for Marion's own resuscitation of Givenness and the *adonné*. Jean-Luc Marion, *Figures de phénoménologie. Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, Henry, Derrida* (Paris: Vrin, 2012).

[99] "…Henry et Lévinas, et d'une certaine maniére Derrida, restent gens vivants avec qui je suis toujours en discussino. Heidegger aussi, évidemment." Jean-Luc Marion, *La Rigueur des Choses*: *Entretiens avec Dan Arbib* (Paris: Flammarion, 2012), pp. 39–40. My translation.

[100] Jacques Derrida, "On the Gift," in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 58. In an earlier statement, Derrida says of Marion that his thinking seems to be at once, "very close" while at the same time "extremely distant." This is consistent with the way in which he describes, in *The Politics of Friendship* how there is always commonality between enemies; even "love" to some degree. For Sebbah, within phenomenology there is an excess that calls for transgression, for "to be interested in the practice of excess is thus, precisely, to be interested in the practice of the *limit*, the limit through whose transgression alone excess can be what it is. In fact, in the case of phenomenology, the legitimate limit – the limit as legitimizing norm – is the limit of the domain of what appears *as* it appears, the limit of the *given*." François-David Sebbah, *Testing the Limit Derrida, Henry,*

under Derrida's tutelage, yet Marion turns from the primacy of deconstruction and *différance* by absorbing them into being but manifestations of givenness, for Derrida "was not deconstructive enough."[101] Yet given Marion's and Derrida's commonality in other matters, what are the specific bases of these differences, and how do they lead to the implications of their differing methods or styles of deconstruction or phenomenology? For Derrida, love is reducible to a version of narcissistic economy on the grounds that his understanding of desire is primarily a will to calculative repetition. Derrida's version of desire is welded to economical appropriation because it is developed and formed by past experiences, previous relations, and subject-centered interests that entail a certain level of hindrance to deconstruction and the infinite play of *différance*. And this plays out in how he conceives of the gift, which cannot enter phenomenality because this would leave the gift in the calculative hands of a desiring subject who exacts control over the appearance of the gift. Yet Marion, while he dismisses intentional, conscious acts from playing any important role in his phenomenology of givenness, readily admits that his interests in the gift are motivated by restoring to love "a concept." Love and desire can play important roles in the constitution of the *adonné*, in the coming about of the gift into phenomenal appearance, and in the preparation of phenomenological intuition and awareness.

In the following chapters, the claim is made that Derrida rejects desire from playing a role in any "happening" or "event" of the gift, most especially because desire is an economically appropriated concept, which is antithetical to the aneconomical gift that he claims to be essential to deconstruction. Instead, the gift must remain "impossible," and therefore one formative aspect of deconstruction is that it is marked by the incommensurability between the gift and desire. Whereas for Marion, intentionality is distinct from desire, which is of great interest to him and can play a number of roles in Marion's phenomenology of the gift, the *adonné*, and givenness. Thus, Marion's phenomenology marks a certain union between gift and desire. The general argument proposed here is that *Derrida's deconstruction is marked by the disjunction between gift and desire, whereas Marion's phenomenology demands a unique union between the two*. Such an argument allows for a more detailed understanding of the differences between Derrida's deconstruction and Marion's phenomenology, which represent a significant tension in phenomenology more generally today. How, though, can Marion indeed reject Husserlian intentionality, yet accept desire and love as essential to phenomenology? Also, what is it that keeps Derrida from disallowing desire from having a role in deconstruction? And finally, how might the ways in which these two topics' – gift and desire – relation/non-relation allow for further insight into phenomenology today?

In order to unfold and support these claims and to exfoliate the details of these questions, the following chapters (which proceed non-chronologically) begin with an investigation into how Marion's theory of the *adonné* can circumvent the

Levinas, and the Phenomenological Tradition (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 4.

[101] Jean-Luc Marion in "On Gift and Desire: An Interview with Jean-Luc Marion," See Appendix.

problematic distinctions between activity and passivity in his version of "the self." Some of the major concerns for Marion's phenomenology is that the *adonné* – this "master and servant" of the given – becomes a passionless receiver of that which is given, especially since Marion discards the modern subject on the grounds that its horizon of possibility precludes the manifold of possibilities that given phenomena have to offer. It is precisely because of the fact that Marion postures the *adonné* in the context of love that it may be possible to have a non-synthetic approach to the active "receiving" of things on their own accord. Marion's turn to love opens onto the affective dimensions of man that centralize desires, passions, and love in a way that they no longer are inhibitors of the given, but rather essential conduits to the *adonné's* taking interest in the given. Marion's rejection of the intentional, transcendental subject who is the "finder" of things in their pure state in consciousness opens onto the need to conceive of a self that does not tamper with the givenness of things. In Chap. 1, the *adonné* is juxtaposed according to Kant's conception of the self, and is unfolded according to the three themes of transcendental apperception, intersubjectivity and interlocution, and "imbued intuition." Although Marion's the *adonné* becomes like any other given (as Marion himself suggests), this claim often is misunderstood to mean that the *adonné*, robbed of intentionality, should therefore be accorded the status merely of being passive. It is often overlooked that he reconstructs the phenomena as well, attributing to them an active, dynamic, "subject-like" means of giving or presenting themselves. This is one reason as to why Marion can speak of the "inversion of intentionality," whereby one experiences *from* the phenomenon a kind of "counter-perspective." Love and desire play important roles in this inversion.

In the third chapter clarification is given to Marion's understandings of "desire," namely in *The Erotic Phenomenon*. Philosophies of "objectivity" have lost sight of love and its uniquely supporting evidences, and desire plays a number of roles in the restoration of love, namely, in restoring to love the "dignity of a concept," in its contribution to forming selfhood and "individualization," and in its forming the paradoxical bases of the erotic reduction and "eroticization." Since he demands in *La Rigueur des Choses* that "*The Erotic Phenomenon* logically completes the phenomenology of the gift and the saturated phenomenon," it is necessary to conceive of how *The Erotic Phenomenon* does so.[102] The erotic reduction demands that one

[102] "*Le Phénoméne érotique* complète logiquement une phénoménologie du donné et du phénoméne sature…." As he continues, *the Erotic Phenomenon* (as text and as theory) is able to do so "because the given other performs the saturated phenomenon par excellence." ("car l'autre addonné accomplit le phénoméne sature par excellence"). Jean-Luc Marion, *La Rigueur des Choses*: *Entretiens avec Dan Arbib*. (Paris: Flammarion, 2012), p. 201. My Translation. Marion explicitly asserts in his *Prolegomena to Charity* that all of his work on "the gift" is leads up to the question of love. His aim in "*Being Given* [was] to lay down more than prolegomena – to sketch the phenomenological situation of an *ego* for whom, at the very outset and on principle, loving and being loved is not forbidden. This *ego*, designated as he who is given over to the phenomenon (*l'adonné au phénoméne*), and himself through from donation as point of departure, can in effect expose himself to an *alter ego*." Jean-Luc Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), xi–xii.

bracket oneself and return to the *Ursprung* of intuition by asking the important question "can I be the first to love?" Chapter 4 applies these findings on the manifold of desire back onto Marion's understanding of "the gift" and his phenomenology of givenness. How might the erotic reduction and the reduction to givenness interrelate? Might love and desire be modes or "capacities" of alteration of one's experience within intuition? Desire, which is conceived in relation to "lack" as a resource, provides a kind of "negative assurance" that allows the *adonné* to access an affirmation of love.

Chapter 4 continues with Marion's *The Erotic Phenomenon* and applies the findings on the "manifold of desire" to an investigation into how it might relate with "the gift." The topic of privation is used as one way to exfoliate the points of interrelation between the gift and desire. Indeed, if nothing (even "nothing") falls outside the bounds of "being given," then givenness must have some way of relating with "lack," which Marion refers to as the emptiness of actuality, and an obscurity that gives a "deficiency in appearing." Along similar lines, Marion not only holds that gifts are generally "invisible" phenomena, but also that they achieve the status of "the gift" all the more when they are not reified in an object or thing: The less the gift attains to being an object, the more the gift "appears." Yet there are a number of other ways in which desire and gift might relate in Marion's work. It may be that desire *is given*, that givenness relies fundamentally upon desire as a passion for performing the reduction, or that the *adonné's* "desire to give" or the "desire for the gift" play particular roles in intuition and the profusion of givenness.

Then Chap. 5, which marks a transition to the work of Derrida, addresses the ways in which Derrida conceives of the insufficiencies of Husserlian phenomenology. Since Derrida calls for an "impossible" relation with the future "to-come" that is out of the reach of "my will or desire," Husserlian "directedness" must be replaced with *différance*, the differing and deferring of which are experienced intuitively through a unique synthesis between a kind of openness and "indifference." *Différance* disrupts phenomenological presence by "procuring it" for "its openness" to something otherwise, and this chapter will argue that Derrida's rejection of the possibility of "desire" in the intentional structure of Husserlian phenomenology marks a central development in the early stages of deconstruction. The rejections of intentional consciousness, which for Derrida amount to a rejection of desire, are sutured to his other concerns for phenomenology, such as its conceptions of the transcendental, temporality, "the sign," history, and teleology. In the end, the will must be defeated, for it is an "adversed mobility" of going out of "oneself and returning into oneself."

Chapter 6 then takes these findings on Derrida's rejection of desire from deconstruction and applies them to an interpretation of how he understands the gift, which is explained in most detail in his ambiguously titled *Given Time* (*Donner Le Temps*). *Given Time* does not unfold simply how time is given, but is dedicated to showing how a gift can be given, *given* the parameters of time. The temporal dimensions of the gift demand that the gift be "impossible," and that any desiring or "intending to give" presupposes a future, which inhibits the arrival of the gift. As "the impossible," the gift cannot be desired because it is unconditionally beyond the possible,

and in relation to the *aporia*, one experiences a tense profusion of desires for the seemingly opposite demands of gift and economy, which frustratingly culminates in *indecision*. The gift can be "at play" in time, but cannot "happen" as a result of the intent to give because the gift cannot be derivative of one's desire, in part because desire is reflective of a past experience. It is indeed not "the gesture that counts" when it comes to giving, for an act of generosity, if anything, inhibits a gift's happening, which must take place beyond the conscious experience of the individual.

If the gift is central to deconstruction, then it is at work even when Derrida doesn't write explicitly about it. Since Derrida is able to "avoid speaking" about the gift in his "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," then this essay provides for the opportunity to contextualize the gift in deconstruction, and to conceive of what kind of roles it might play more broadly in this overall "style." This is the aim of Chap. 7, wherein the gift is considered in relation to negation/affirmation ("denegation"), Being, *khora*, and economy. "Denegation" (*Verneinung*, or denial) is a psychoanalytic principle that insists that whatever a subject most forcefully rejects is in fact that which the subject most innately desires to affirm. The negation of negation (denegation) is affirmation, and Derrida's rejection of the gift from coming into phenomenal appearance might be thought to have an affirmative function. Next, the gift (and its variations of *Gabe*, *Geben*, *es Gibt*) is conceived as the progressive "displacer" of Being and "the transcendental horizon that belonged to it." The gift might play the role of dissociating the Heideggerian distinction between "Being" and "beings." Third, deconstruction is not aligned with negative theology, which doesn't acknowledge its "predicates," but with *Khōra*, a central concept in Derrida's œuvre. When brought into the context of *Khōra* (the "desert in the desert") the gift can be conceived not according to its coming into appearance, but as that which *takes* from phenomenal experience in such a way as to draw attention to what is absent or "out of joint." The work of the gift is thus inverted from "giving" to "taking." The fourth way of placing the gift in the context of deconstruction begins with Derrida's denial of phenomena having the status of being formalized solely into an economy. For Derrida, since "there is also something beyond this economical conciseness," and because there is an "aneconomy or anarchy of the gift" then it is possible to associate the gift with that which deformalizes understanding in consciousness, as well as the distinction between sense and nonsense.[103] Derrida's "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" is also significant for its being an early response to the work of a number of critics; among whom was a younger Marion who was concerned that deconstruction was merely an apophatic negation and deceptive sophism.

Chapter 8 turns to Marion's and Derrida's 1997 roundtable discussion "On the Gift" in order to juxtapose between the two thinkers a series of differences: anti-subjectivity/the *adonné*, possibility/impossibility, the gift/givenness, and narcissism/love. Although Derrida is correct to insist that the modern *ego* inherently relies upon an external, metaphysical, and infinite "resource" for sustaining it, Marion is

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[103] Jacques Derrida, "How to avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume II*, eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 308, note 8.

convinced that Derrida does not leave any good options for its replacement. Yet Derrida claims that phenomenology (Marion's included) privileges the "possible," which is an economical concept, and this in fact inhibits the arrival of the gift despite any intentional effort to bring it about. Thirdly, while Derrida conceives of the gift, as radically as possible, in an *aporetic* relationship with economy and its possibilities, Marion demotes economy to the primacy of givenness. Then, though Marion conceives of love according to its being a gift *par excellence*, Derrida insists that love is inherently "narcissistic," precisely because it involves an appropriation of the other for the sake of one's own desires or interests. Love is caught in the *aporia* between economical appropriation and a necessary relation with the gift. Further, there is the problem that a concept of givenness may ultimately be reducible to a covert attempt at having an ultimate, cosmic giver, and this cannot be rectified simply by claiming that there is an unexpected appearance of things in their supra-subjective state. There are indeed temporal vicissitudes that mark an inherent rupture in the steady constitution of the gift according to "impossibility," which Derrida holds to be a better "register" for the gift than Marion's givenness.

The concluding chapter, Chap. 9, synthesizes findings from previous chapters on Derrida and Marion's differing conclusions on the gift and desire, then contextualizes those differences within the two thinker's respective positions of deconstruction and phenomenology. Derrida once remarked that he and Marion are "very close and extremely distant" at the same time, and this chapter illuminates the latter. The consequences of these distinctions bear a weight on their respective methodologies or styles. For Derrida, desire runs counter to any presuppositionless grasp of things, and deconstruction is found in the intuitive disruptions of *différance*, the "giver" of expression. "The sign" functions independent from "intentional acts" that are tooled according to the will of the one performing the reduction. The force of signification cannot be tamed and reduced to *Bedeutung*, or meaning, for the undistinguishable force of *différance* does not give "meaning" but "sense" (*Sinn*). Yet for Marion the performance of bracketing and the active suspension of constitutive phenomena entail that desire *actively* becomes passive and *receptive*. This is quite distinct from Husserlian intentionality in that both givenness and desire are given their own registers or *ratio*, and therefore need not flow from any cognitive directedness upon things. Cognition is a kind of second-order *ratio*, thinking is but one mode of givenness. Yet this does not entail that knowledge is impossible. One might have certain forms of knowledge in the paradoxical form of "negative certainties," which reach beyond theories of knowledge that appear to be more of an inversion of modern epistemology than any actual refashioning of it. As Marion argues in his more recent *Certitutes négatives*, "negative certainties" provide types of assurance independent from the control of economy, possibility, or the noetic, mental activity of perceiving.

Overall, the present study offers an interpretation of Derrida's and Marion's engagement on the gift in a way that points to its importance for phenomenology today without assuming that their contributions are influenced – or more pejoratively, undermined – by religious or theological underpinnings. There are other investigations into the exchanges between Derrida and Marion on the gift, most

notably Robyn Horner's 2001 *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (Fordham UP). This work, which was the first sustained secondary resource in English to consider Marion's growing influence, was released shortly after the debates between Derrida and Marion, yet its aim was not a juxtaposition of these two thinkers' works on the gift and its value for phenomenology. Indeed, Horner made it quite clear: "the question with which I have been occupied throughout this study is a theological one: how is it possible to speak of God as gift?"[104] This work is an invaluable resource, and while the topic of the gift certainly has theological value and import, the present study makes a concerted and purposeful effort to suspend such theological concerns in favor of considering carefully the merit and contribution their debate might have for better understanding phenomenology. This does not entail that theology and philosophy necessarily are competing disciplines, or that theology is not important for these thinkers. Yet in following Marion's own hopes that phenomenology and theology remain two distinct disciplines that deserve a dignity in their own right, this project will follow those hopes as far as possible.[105] Marion's work still is misinterpreted often through the lens of Dominique Janicaud's sharp rebukes of Marion's work as it amounted to a theological "hijacking" of phenomenology.[106] Since then, Marion and a number of his interpreters (e.g. Cristina Gschwandtner) have sought to dispel such suspicions, and the

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[104] Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2001), p. 241. There are many points at which the present study will diverge from the other secondary resources that have addressed Marion's work, yet this project would not be possible without the resources provided by Horner, Kearney, Gschwandtner, and Caputo. For a recent engagement with how the work of Marion (and others such as Henry and Richir) represents a continuity with classical phenomenology, see H.D. Gondek and Laszlo Tengelyi, *Neue Phänomenologie in Frankreich* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2011).

[105] There are certainly theological inflections in both Derrida's and Marion's work, and it could be argued that concepts like Marion's "saturated phenomena" came directly from the inspiration of the theological works of Rahner and von Balthasar. Marion even names his saturated phenomena *par excellence* "revelation" in an obvious nod to theology. However, Marion has often expressed the desire to keep theology separate from phenomenology. For more on Marion's understanding of the relationship between philosophy/phenomenology and theology see his collection of essays *The Visible and The Revealed*, trans. Christina Gschwandtner, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008). Marion wants to keep the distinction between phenomenology and theology so as to maintain their dignity, without a reduction of one to the other. Quite similar to Rahner (though there are many aspects of Rahner's work Marion seeks to avoid), Marion claims philosophy and theology as distinct sciences, but at the same time, demands that they have some level of an *external* relation or unification. Even in the last five years, Marion gestures to Rahner in his "Le croire pour le voir" (p. 62) and asserts that "incomprehensibility… can also give access to a real" and a "positive experience of the infinite." There are indeed a number of ways in which the concepts of philosophy/phenomenology and theology interrelate, yet the present study attempts to focus solely on Marion's and Derrida's contributions to phenomenology in particular. Not in the least because Marin's work has been accused of having a phenomenology corrupted by ontotheology. See also Dominique Janicaud, *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

[106] It has also been claimed that Derrida's philosophy has been hijacked for theological purposes. See Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

present work takes for granted that although Marion's phenomenology of the gift *may* be inspired by theological *interests*, it is not necessarily reducible to them. Gschwandtner, who is also one of Marion's primary translators, has released two works in recent years that have sought to clarify Marion's approaches to both philosophy and theology more generally (*Reading Jean-Luc Marion: Exceeding Metaphysics* in 2007) and to apply Marion's conception of "saturated phenomena" more broadly to phenomena in such a way that there are "variations" of givenness (*Degrees of Givenness: On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion* in 2014).[107] Also of note is Kevin Hart's recently collected (2013) *Jean-Luc Marion: The Essential Writings*, which acts as a reader of selections to Marion's work, alongside Hart's masterfully written introductions to these selections.

Among these samples of secondary literature, as well as other works dealing with Marion and Derrida, there is yet to be an attempt to contextualize these two important aspects of Marion's work (givenness and love) with one another. Although this book primarily concerns Marion and Derrida's relationship on these topics, it is often necessary to engage in their particular and often idiosyncratic interpretations of Husserl; the one from whom both individuals begin, and to whom both persistently return in their work.[108] Although a broad selection of material from the works of both Marion and Derrida are consulted here, with a constant eye to their shared debate "On the Gift," the chapters on Marion center around treatments of his *Being Given* and *The Erotic Phenomenon*, and those on Derrida focus on *Speech and Phenomena*, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," and *Given Time*.[109]

[107] Christina Gschwandtner, *Degrees of Givenness: On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014) and Christina Gschwandtner, *Reading Jean-Luc Marion: Exceeding Metaphysics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007). To a lesser extent, another text, that addresses Marion's work on the border between philosophy and theology is in Tasmin Jones, *Apparent Darkness: A Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011). There, she seeks to contextualize Marion's work in relation to historical theology.

[108] In part, both Marion's and Derrida's work can be considered as unique responses to Husserl's "principle of principles." As found in his *Ideas 1*, it is the source of authority for knowledge and is the principle "that every primordial dator [presentive] Intuition is a source of authority (*Rechtsquelle*) for knowledge, that whatever presents itself in 'intuition' in primordial form (as it were in its bodily reality[or actuality]), is simply to be accepted as it gives itself out to be, though only within the limits in which it then presents itself." Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I: General Introduction to Phenomenology* (London, New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 43.

[109] There are indeed a number of angles from which this project could have addressed these questions. Marion's recent *Certitudes négatives*, which is referenced throughout the document, holds an engagement with the gift and sacrifice that could be applicable to a number of conclusions made in Chap. 3. Or for an insight into "desire," one could turn to Marion's *Au lieu de soi: l'approche de saint Augustin*. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2008). *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012). However, I interpret both of these works as continued means of clarification of the basis Marion has already established in *Reduction and Givenness*, *Being Given*, and *The Erotic Phenomenon*. I do not interpret any of these new works, as of 2015 to offer any direct contradiction to these early works, which establish the basis of Marion's understanding of givenness and love.

Overall, these distinctions between Derrida and Marion on the gift and desire extend beyond the confines of phenomenology into more important, everyday concerns. Although Marion ultimately concluded in their debate on the gift that "whether *Etant donné* [*Being Given*] is still phenomenology we shall see ten years later" and that "this will be an issue, if any, for our successors," Marion then summons Heidegger's assertion that one should not be too interested in phenomenology *per se*, but in "the things phenomenology is interest in."[110] Although these critical distinctions and disjunctions have a use now, over 10 years after their debate, the more fundamental hopes of the present study are to engage not simply what "phenomenology is interested *in*," but "interest" in and of itself, which can in a number of ways initiate a shifting of thought on the gift, as is the case in the works of Marion and Derrida. If love is the *gift par excellence*, and at the same time threatened by economical appropriation on the grounds of its necessary association with desire, then to what degree is the gift also implicated in this narcissism, even when one is unaware of it? For one to remain interested in and faithful to phenomenology may implicate one's love and desire far more than one would like to admit. This is one reason as to why it is necessary to wonder how far Marion's newly minted dictum "so much reduction, so much givenness" might go in conjunction with his erotic reduction, which demands that the subject bracket itself and return to the *Ursprung* of intuition by asking what, who, and most importantly "why" one is capable or not of being the first to love. And if all things are given in such a way that love is integrated throughout, what of the potentially horrifying, practical implications this might entail? To what degree are acts of terrorism "given" in conjunction with love? In what sense might one reflect on how certain historical events, such as the Holocaust, are "lovingly" given as "saturated?" What does love have to do with the overwhelming phenomenal content of trauma that results from violence enacted upon someone? Does this not all end in a banal swirl with love once again being reduced to an abstract affection? Though Marion draws a distinction between the phenomenal content of things that are simply and straightforwardly "given" to consciousness and "the gift" as such, he directly attempts to situate love at the center of one's "first experience" with the world.

[110] Jean-Luc Marion, "On the Gift," in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 68. *Emphasis mine*. As Heidegger himself puts it, when introducing his approach to what he conceived to be the *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*: "In negative terms this means that our purpose is not to acquire historical knowledge about the circumstances of the modern movement in philosophy called phenomenology. We shall be dealing not with phenomenology but with what phenomenology itself deals with. And, again, we do not wish merely to take note of it so as to be able to report then that phenomenology deals with this or that subject; instead, the course deals with the subject itself, and you yourself are supposed to deal with it, or learn how to do so, as the course proceeds. The point is not to gain some knowledge about philosophy but to be able to philosophize. An introduction to the basic problems could lead to that end." Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 1–2.

1.4.1 The Generosity of Things

While the major aims of this book are to illuminate Marion's and Derrida's respective positions on the gift and desire, and how they can contribute to a better understanding of phenomenology today, there is also a latent interest that is explored throughout the book through a series of questions. It concerns how far a phenomenological conception of the gift and givenness can be thought on the terms of "generosity," which Derrida defines as the "desire to give." A phenomenology of generosity would need to address the modes of appearances of phenomenal things, and the ways in which desire might be taken as fundamental to such modes. If things are *given* full quarter to *give* themselves to intuition on their own initiative with only the prehension of the self, and if the self, whose thing-like quality is given in the same way as any and all phenomena, which have certain *tendencies* to do so with a surprising amount of variation, then it appears as if a consideration of generosity in this context, from the outset, is not prohibited. In English, it is of course a bit clumsy to consider things in terms of their being generous because "things" do not "desire" or have interests, nor can they express charity or love in an intended or self-reflective "involvement" in the world. Yet the German *Großzügigkeit*, or "generosity" is etymologically defined as having a tendency towards the great and broad (*einen zug ins Grosse haben*). It emphasizes the tendency, trait (*Zug*), or characteristic (*Charakterzug*) of giving in *action*. Greatness (*Grosse*), or that which the tendency is towards, can be thought according to an ideal superlative, but more specifically to the great, "big picture" or "broad-view" of that which/he whom is giving. We speak frequently of things being "generous" according to portions, amounts, and applications: a portion of potatoes, the amount of space in one's apartment, or the application of sunscreen are all thought in terms of "generosity." We indeed have a deeper relation with things than we tend to recognize, as things shape us just as much as we shape them. In the phenomenological sense, of course, there is a much broader possibility of the interpretation of one's relation with things as objects, ontic phenomena, abstract concepts, or states of affairs, yet all things, in their being given, give, along with their appearance in general, their data and intelligibility *to us* in their coming into appearance without our request or permission. This marks one of the mysteries of consciousness, namely, that despite their inanimate nature, things interact with us just as much as we interact with them.

That which is given out of generosity is given liberally and excessively, and this sense of generosity can be brought to bear upon Marion's phenomenology of givenness, which holds to the primacy of things' being given in their particular modes of giving, yielding, or "giving away" insofar as they can do so *in and of themselves*, and without holding anything back. For Marion, things "give themselves" broadly with a wide range of unsuspected potential. Although things do not in and of themselves *have* "desires," they also are not to be conceived merely as passively constituted by the *adonné*. Thus, to what degree do things have a certain trait (*Zug*) of liberal breadth independent of the intentional effort of any transcendental "self" who traditionally has been thought to be their prime constitutor? Further, could

generosity be a linchpin upon which Marion's theory of the *adonné* is based? The overall difference between "tendency" and "desire" may remain a deciding factor upon whether or not it is possible to conceive of things as generous. Indeed, if things have a tendency to give, but do not have "desire," then it may not be so much the case that they "give" their data, intelligibility, and resources, but more so rather that they take, fill, or temporarily satisfy the desires of the one to whom they are given. This would certainly not be inconsistent with an understanding of desire according to its most radical and paradoxical feature of being a "resource of lack." If desire is a resource of lack, and things give themselves to us through interacting with these desires, then it may be that things' being given effectively "take" or "fill up" one's desire with their phenomenal content. If this is the case, then the limit of conceiving the subject as the shepherd or transcendental constitutor of things has been reached, and it is therefore necessary to turn to a conception of the self whose first interest is to be a *recipient* ("the *adonné*"), not only of itself, but also simultaneously, of the generosity of things.

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Part I
Marion, the Gift, and Desire

Chapter 2
Marion's The *Adonné* or "The Given:" Between Passion and Passivity

Abstract This chapter investigates how Marion's theory of the *adonné* ("the given," or "the self") can circumvent the problematic distinctions between activity and passivity. Some of the major concerns for Marion's approach is that the *adonné* – or "the given" – becomes a passionless receiver, especially since Marion discards the modern subject on the grounds that its horizon of possibility precludes the manifold of possibilities that given phenomena have to offer. It is precisely because of the fact that Marion postures the *adonné* in the context of love and desire that it may be possible to have a non-synthetic approach to the active "receiving" of things on their own accord. Here, the *adonné* is juxtaposed according to Kant's conception of the self, and is unfolded according to the three topics of transcendental apperception, intersubjectivity and interlocution, and "imbued intuition" or saturated phenomena. Marion refers to the "inversion of intentionality," and it is within this inversion that love and desire play important roles.

> *I am conscious to myself a priori of a necessary synthesis of representations – to be entitled the original synthetic unity of apperception...* – Kant[1]

"So much reduction, so much givenness." The more one's convictions concerning a straightforward existence, and appearing of presence in the natural attitude are neutralized, suspended, or placed on hold, *and* the more one remains attuned to the "what" and "how" that "happen" within intuition, the more, then, givenness can yield and produce any number of manifold experiences or events that alter that moment in consciousness.[2] Yet, such a reduction itself is imbued already with givenness. The moment of pause or reflection as a turning inward, finds an inward that already has been given. "It is" (*es gibt*) there already, as one seeks to capture the

[1] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans F. Max Müller, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), B135.

[2] First mention of this concept came in *Reduction and Givenness*: "Finally, what role is played by givenness, explicitly used but nonetheless never determined as such? These shortcomings led me to propose a fourth and last formulation of a possible first principle of phenomenology: 'So much reduction, so much givenness.'" Jean-Luc Marion, *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), p. 203.

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moment at which one constitutes and transcends subjectivity. Consciousness, also, is given, and a product of givenness, and this is why "so much reduction, so much givenness" entails not simply that the first is a "condition" for the latter, or a step towards the giving action of givenness, but rather that this "so much givenness" in fact redounds or again resurges upon the reduction itself. This entails that even "the subject," this performer of the reduction, is no longer safe from also being conceived as "given."[3] Nothing is safe from the primacy of givenness (even "nothing"), and as a consequence, givenness functions between the conscious-*of-something*, and the *coming-to-someone*, thus demanding, first, the givenness of consciousness itself.

Givenness for Marion furnishes the unconditioned, unmediated, and primary manifold of *how things* are given, *what* things are given, the *way* things are given, and the *who* that is given. "*L'adonné*" (henceforward called "the *adonné*") receives itself and that which is given within the structure of consciousness. The move of integrating givenness as the sole, prime mover of thought is a profound one, for as a variable foundation, its gradients disregard its status as such by its protest to the stativity of Being. How, though, does givenness give, and to what degree does the "donee" or the experiencer of such givenness play a role, especially in light of Derrida's rejection of the possibility of a phenomenology of the gift, which immediately prohibits the possibility of theorizing a "given" or *l'adonné*? Marion's principle "so much reduction, so much givenness" adjoins the already existing three, intertwining dictums of Husserlian phenomenology: (1) so much appearance, so much being, (2) accept what is given to intuition in accord with the being-given of intuition, and (3) go back to and seek the "things themselves" in and of themselves.[4] All three of these principles are imbued with the intertwining of givenness (as the immanent structure of phenomenality) and the reductions as the preparation of intuition for appearances as they come into being within reality.[5] If there is to be access

[3] Henry offers a creative explanation of Marion's reduction: "'So much reduction': this final and radical dismissal, issued to being and all that is, to all that comes from it or goes with it, speaks and calls in its name – in the name of the world. 'So much givenness': that which, in the absence of this being and its call, in the absence of ek-static appearing, gives nonetheless, gives everything – self-givenness, Life, and in it all those who live [tous les vivants], and the cosmos itself." Michel Henry, "The four principles of phenomenology," trans. Joseph Rivera & George E. Faithful, *Continental Philosophy Review* 48: (2015), p. 20.

[4] Marion's basic delineation of these principles: Marion: "where appearing in fact passes into Being (first formulation), where one returns to the matters at stake (second formulation), and where intuition announces the right to appear (third formulation) – but always starting from the operation that prompts it, the reduction. No givenness without reduction, no reduction that does not end up at a givenness." Jean-Luc Marion, "The Other First Philosophy and the Question of Givenness" trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky, *Critical Inquiry* 25:4 (1999), p. 792.

[5] Ibid., p. 793. "The intimate intertwining of reduction and givenness therefore defines the principle of phenomenology. What appears gives itself, that is to say, it appears without anything being held back or left over." Again, Henry's unfolding of this important relation proves helpful: "Phenomenology rests on four principles which it explicitly claims as its foundations. The first – 'so much appearance, so much being' – is borrowed from the Marburg School. Over against this ambiguous proposition, owing to the double signification of the term 'appearance,' we prefer this strict wording: "so much appearing, so much being.' The second is the principle of principles. Formulated by Husserl himself in section 24 of *Ideen* I, it sets forth intuition or, more precisely, 'that every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition' and thus for any

to givenness, it cannot be described on the terms of Being or beings, despite any favoring of the phenomenal gift. The "it" of *es gibt* (it gives) must withdraw in order for the gift to give itself according to its own conditions, those of givenness.

Husserl already had established that things are *given* as correlatives to noetic acts, especially as the subject is attuned to, or conscious-of them. Even in Husserl's principle of principles for phenomenology is the demand to accept the "what" *and* the "way" in which things are given to intuition, which signals to givenness as the mode through which the given comes into experience. Yet for Marion, Husserl's conception of Phenomenality is still too addressed to intentional consciousness and the constituting acts of the subject, who is supposed to be the "finder" of things in their pure states in consciousness.[6] The constitution of phenomena is not simply the result of a synthesis between intuition and intention and further still, transcendental consciousness cannot deliver something's being given (although it does not preclude it). Also, Husserl carefully considered the term "givenness" and even employed it to suggest that each kind or sort of being has its own "mode" of givenness.[7] Yet Husserl's version of givenness dealt more with things' or objects' being given, and certainly not the subject's concurrent disclosure along with the things' being given in/to consciousness. It is this move that is inherent to Marion's project and essential to his offering a non-synthetic approach to givenness – Marion's definitive contribution to phenomenology. Where Husserlian "absolute givenness" (which he distinguishes from "adequate givenness") is "an ultimate" and can be exemplified in the *cogito* according to thought, this kind of givenness is an unachievable ideal for it fails to reduce the subject to being given.

A similar critique is made of Heidegger, whose approach to "Being" inhibits the freedom of phenomena to appear and be given in and of themselves. Heidegger conceived of *Gegebenheit* as a form of *disclosure*, opening up, or even "sending."[8]

particularly rational statement. In the third principle the claim is so vehement that it clothes itself in the allure of an exhortation, even a cry: 'zu den Sachen selbst!' The fourth principle was defined considerably later by Jean-Luc Marion in his work *Reduction and Givenness*, but its importance hits upon the entirety of phenomenological development as a hidden presupposition that is always already at work. It is formulated thus: 'so much reduction, so much givenness.'" Of this third principle, Henry suggests that "it's announcement conjures up a duality of terms. This duality is not a fact of language but refers to what it claims to speak about: 'Zu' on the one hand, and 'die Sachen' on the other. 'Zu' is the access to something, the possibility of reaching it, while 'Sachen' designates something which is reached through this access, the content to which such access gives access." Michel Henry, "The four principles of phenomenology" trans. Joseph Rivera & George E. Faithful, *Continental Philosophy Review* 48: (2015), p. 4.

[6] Husserl borrows such of an "intentional structure" in the subject that remarkably transcends itself from the Psychologism from his teacher Franz Brentano in Vienna.

[7] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, Vol I*, trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson. (New York, NY: MacMillan Company, 1931), p. 78.

[8] No matter the modes of authentic givenness that have been developed since phenomenology's beginning, such as self-affection, moods, Dasein, they all fall, as Marion claims, within givenness "whether they admit it or not." Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 333, Note 43. As Steinbock suggests, for Heidegger, "giving, which does not give itself, but only its gift, this

This giving, as a making-place-for, emphasized how the conscious shifting and oscillation from beings to Being could take place. Yet for Marion it is not *Dasein*'s openness to Being via existential fears or moods that describes one's innermost experiences with things. What Marion claims to have discovered is a horizon whose primacy is more essential than Husserl's transcendental consciousness and Heidegger's Being: "the pure call" of givenness.[9] Despite Heidegger's opposing of modern subjecitivity or "subjecticity," Marion holds that both Heidegger and Husserl overly emphasized the role of a poised, intentional subject, one who generally is responsible for things *not being given* on their own terms, in and of themselves.[10]

This call of givenness, as the manifold of both consciousness and Being entails that the subject be thought according to it (not according to consciousness or being), thus resulting in the destabilization of a metaphysical idol that has been in place since the beginning of phenomenology – the thinking thing or self. The self is problematic in the case of intentionality precisely because of the desires of that self. As it will become clearer in the final chapter, while Derrida's focus is on the primacy of *différance*, which is beyond the self all together, Marion thinks Derrida gives far too much credence to the ultimate primacy of intuition.[11] Marion is aware that an extreme emphasis on either intuition or intention unrealistically paints the picture of a more passive *or* active subject, the dialectic of which "vanishes" when suspended long enough for one to perform the reduction to givenness. What becomes necessary, then, is a kind of triple reduction on various aspects of "the gift" – the donee, donor, and "donner" (gift) – in order to uncouple them individually from transcendental consciousness, to provide some kind of basis for a phenomenal gift in conscious-

giving that holds itself back is called sending (*Schicken*)." This is giving is a making-place-for, and the sending source "withdraws from unconcealment (GA 14: 28/22)." Anthony J. Steinbock, "Heidegger, Machination, and the Jewish Question: The Problem of the Gift," in *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 5 (2015): 50–76.

[9] For Henry, "It is here, by demanding the radicality of a reduction that suspends the phenomenality proper to being, that the fourth principle provides the path toward a more original givenness." Michel Henry, "The four principles of phenomenology" trans. Joseph Rivera & George E. Faithful, *Continental Philosophy Review* 48: (2015), p. 4.

[10] Marion's interpretation of Heidegger's *Dasein* as a kind of subject may be a bit too extreme. Hemming claims that "Heidegger from beginning to end was an implacable and vocal opponent of every form of subjectivity, subjectivism, and subjecticity (all Heidegger's words), and every attempt to privilege the 'subject' as the 'I-think me thinking' from Descartes and Kant onwards, which characterised the whole philosophical tradition of modernity. Centrally, the most absolute thinker of this subjectivity is Hegel, who transformed Kant's 'supersensible' philosophy into a politics that took its most extreme form in Marx, but also in democratic Liberalism, from which we are yet to escape. One of the pitfalls that dogs too much Heidegger scholarship is the repeated insistence by commentators that the word *Dasein* is in some way a masked name for the rehabilitated subject. Lawrence Hemming, "Review of Thomas Sheehan's *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift*" in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*. 2015.06.28. Accessed June 22, 2015. http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/58956-making-sense-of-heidegger-a-paradigm-shift/

[11] As Hart recently put it, Marion thinks Derrida is "fixated on the primacy and fullness of intuition in Husserl." Kevin Hart in *Jean-Luc Marion: The Essential Writings*, eds. Jean-Luc Marion and Kevin Hart, (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013), p. 35.

ness and, as it later will be shown, the possibility of thinking love as a gift and as interwoven in the very structure of givenness itself. This again raises the question of just how far it is possible to suggest that the givenness of things initiates thinking on the affective dimensions of desire, will, passion, and love to give; dimensions that are typically understood as easily bracketed by neutral, presuppositionless, and rational subjects.

The following considerations are aimed at showing what the basic features of Marion's phenomenology of givenness and the *adonné* ("the given") amount to. This account is by no means comprehensive, yet offers an explanation of how Marion's theory of the *adonné* can be understood when contextualized more broadly in relation to his work on love and givenness. One might find it curious, indeed strange that Marion critiques the intentionality of both Husserl and Heidegger's approaches, yet then turns to imbue his theory of the *adonné* with love and desire, both of which imply a sense of volition. In part, Marion is responding to Derrida's disregard for the desire of the subject. The problem is not a subject who loves and desires, but a subject whose horizon of possibility *precludes* the true arrival of the gift. It is in fact love that postures the *adonné* in a non-synthetic approach that does not see desires, passions, and love as stumbling blocks for the given, but rather as essential, affective dimensions to accepting that which is given on its own accord. Marion's approach to reconceiving traditional subjectivity, especially after Derrida's deconstruction of its "intention" heavy emphasis, is not without concerns, however. To what degree does staging the self in a stammering pre-subject-like state remove agency, volition, and therefore responsibility? Further, if there is no such agency prior to the status of being given, can love, as Marion comes to conceive of it as having its own rationality, ever truly be love, or must it remain merely an impulsive reaction, empty of content and volition? Finally, prior to being given (if it is possible to consider this theory of the *adonné* temporally) is the *adonné* more of a "what" as opposed to a "who?"

2.1 Recent Challenges to Marion's *L'adonné*

Questions such as these have led to a number of criticisms of Marion's work. A number of criticisms and concerns towards Marion's understanding of the *adonné* have surfaced in recent years, and although they spring from a number of general concerns with Marion's approach (e.g. hermeneutical givenness, saturated phenomena) most of them can be reduced to some degree to his account of *l'adonné* lacking in clarification, and the non-synthetic approach of disregarding the passivity/activity problem in the interplay between intuition and intention. It would be too much here to mention all of these critiques.[12] Yet one such criticism has come from

[12] Other critiques, of course, have been raised to Marion's phenomenology of givenness, not to mention his theology. Rawnsley suggests that the primacy of givenness, as a singular concept that seeks to comprehensively provide a manifold for manifestation is expressly metaphysical. Further,

Mackinlay, who insinuates that Marion's approach to phenomenological intuition is too passive because Marion mistakenly relies on a hermeneutics "after the fact," temporally considering the endless interpretation that comes after one has experienced a phenomenon or event. Instead, for Mackinlay hermeneutics should not be restricted to past events because "phenomena are always already interpreted in their very appearing" not simply "after" they have appeared. An endless hermeneutic is required, and this is part and parcel of the demands of temporality.[13] This is a part of a more fundamental concern for Mackinlay, who worries that "there is no sense of activity in the reception, not even of 'mediation' – the *adonné* seems to be simply passive."[14]

This is a buoyant critique of Marion's hermeneutics insofar as the *adonné* remains passive to that which appears, and to the extent that one is not always already finding oneself in a kind of Ricœurean endless circle of interpretation. A necessary response to this critique would involve demonstrating that Marion's approach both takes seriously the need to see and conceive of the *adonné* according to its activity (perhaps as a "willful blindness" as Lewis suggests) and to show the inherently temporal structure of what it means to be "a given" in time, not simply as a response, but also in unison with the "call" to that response.[15] Further, it would be necessary to account for the *adonné's* active reception and love or care for that which is given, appears, or comes into being. After all, to *not* find oneself always already given and interpreting is to presume in fact a certain volitional, conscious, and "subjective" neutrality that exacts control over that which appears. This is precisely the problem Marion is attempting to avoid. Yet is it enough for Marion to assert that the *adonné* "remains in the end the sole master and servant of the

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Jean Grondin critiques that Marion may still be too Cartesian in a search for foundations. Jean Greisch claims that Marion needs to address the hermeneutical parameters of givenness. For Rawnsley, "The problem with Marion's definition of 'givenness' is that it seems to operate as a way of singularizing the manifold to a unified principle which underlies or determines it, or which supplies an intelligibility to an otherwise profuse manifold of phenomenality (even if this intelligibility is always dissolved in an 'excess' which saturates what is usually understood conceptually). Whatever he may call them, these moves appear to us as *metaphysical*, and metaphysical in a quite 'traditional' sense." Andrew C. Rawnsley, "Practice and Givenness: The Problem of 'Reduction' in the work of Jean-Luc Marion," in *New Black Friars* 88: 1018 (2007), p. 698.

[13] Shane Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess: Jean-Luc Marion, Saturated Phenomena, and Hermeneutics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), p. 33: "Such a hermeneutic would have to be deployed without end and in an infinite network. No constitute of an object, exhaustive and repeatable, would be able to take place." As far as Mackinley is concerned, "The most serious defects in Marion's theory result from his failure to acknowledge the hermeneutic dimension that I have identified in the structure of saturated phenomena."

[14] Ibid., p. 33.

[15] In response, Stephen Lewis suggests that "Mackinlay seeks to eliminate the possibility of willful blindness to the reception of saturated phenomena…" and this is reducible to "an epistemological problematic of perception." Stephen E. Lewis, "The Phenomenology of Givenness and the 'Myth of the Given" in *The Reason of the Gift* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2011), p. 15. See also Marion's "The Reason of the Gift" in *Givenness and God: Questions of Jean-Luc Marion*, eds Ian Leask and Eoin Cassidy (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005).

given[?]"[16] It is indeed necessary to further unfold how the given interacts with givenness, and whether or not there are reasons for abandoning it on the grounds of these concerns of temporality.

There is another level of concern that more generally might be addressed to Marion's "Saturated Phenomena." These phenomena indeed help to unfold the applied structure of Marion's approach to rethinking givenness, for the richness of saturated phenomena call one to rethink *all* phenomena in general. Provided that there are such saturated phenomena, and that they are classifiable as "phenomena," then this calls for a rearranging of how all phenomena give themselves or appear. It is a similar interpretation that leads Mackinley (as well as Steinbock and Gschwandtner to a more limited degree) to conclude that "saturation should no longer be understood as a rare exception to 'ordinary' phenomenality," but is to "be regarded as the normal way in which *all* phenomena appear."[17] In part, this is because Marion "ascribes an eventual character to all phenomena," and because saturated phenomena are an essential "paradigm" for the giving character of givenness.[18]

As Gschwandtner suggests, this critique does not entirely sink Marion's theory of saturated phenomena, but rather provides reason for further explanation and expansion. For her, the limitation of Marion's saturated phenomena is that they are in need of being explicated according to a variety of layers, namely, in their hermeneutic dimension, and in their lack of explication of their many "degrees of givenness," to which Marion himself refers.[19] Marion's theory of saturation should apply to all phenomena, both the seemingly "banal" and the "doubly saturated" ones. For her, givenness can emerge as a way of accounting for phenomena only when it is to be thought in terms of having differing "degrees." In *Degrees of Givenness*, Gschwandtner relies on Marion's self-stated hope for a phenomenological hermeneutics, not a hermeneutic phenomenology. Yet for her, "hermeneutics is not just an early phenomenological stage that henceforth must be overcome" as one finds in Marion's recent *Certitudes Négatives*, but instead is "an essential aspect of the appearing of all phenomena, including and maybe especially excessive and saturated ones, as hinted at in 'Giveness and Hermeneutics.'"[20] This may indeed be the

[16] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 319.

[17] Shane Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess: Jean-Luc Marion, Saturated Phenomena, and Hermeneutics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), p. 217.

[18] Ibid., pp. 216–17. Mackinley also suggests that Marion's reliance on Husserl's concept of degrees of adequation, and Kant's table of categories, are problematic and "unconvincing."

[19] Gschwandtner's is less of a critique over Marion's overall approach so much as it is an unfolding of concept in his work that demands more explanation. As she puts it, her goal in this text is "to show that the very phenomena marion posits as saturated cannot appear exclusively in the excessive and utterly overwhelming sense he often suggests, but instead require both the possibility of 'degrees' of phenomenality and an important hermeneutic dimension." Christina Gschwandtner, *Degrees of Givenness: On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), p. 24.

[20] Ibid., p. 24.

case, and if so, it is a tonic correction or at least clarification as to how givenness and the "interpreting" *adonné* are to interact. Yet, for Marion givenness and hermeneutics are not to be equated with one another, for although givenness gives in conjunction with the reduction, the preparation of intuition or turning of attention is not the same as a thinking, interpretive endeavor. For Marion, "thinking about… is one mode of giveness; it is another one altogether to find oneself in the presence of – what gives *itself*."[21] The turning of one's attention can and does happen, in fact, even without thinking. If interpretation is to be named a fundamentally "thinking about" endeavor of that which is always already appearing to *the adonné*, then it is only one particular way in which givenness is experienced.

Indeed, Marion does not "abandon" hermeneutics, so much as place it under the primacy of givenness. Does this entail, however, that his approach be named "radically passive?" Tasmin Jones suggests that "the radical passivity with which Marion characterizes receptivity seems to abandon the possibility of hermeneutics."[22] Yet this is only the case in so far as hermeneutics has a more "fundamental" primacy over givenness. This raises the question as to how far givenness, especially in constitution with Derrida's deconstructive semiotics, relies on language, and is thereby beholden to the status as "always already" given via a hermeneutic optics. Does Marion have a way of accounting for the difference between an interpretive reception and an utter and total passivity? This problem also appears to be part and parcel of concerns surrounding Marion's account of the *adonné* as a powerless, passive subject. While Marion's account "certainly succeeds in displacing the subject from a dominant, constituting role, and removes any vestiges of Cartesian or Kantian sovereignty," Mackinley is convinced still that this "dethroning seems to be accomplished by enthroning a new sovereign, rather than by overturning the dominion of sovereignty as such."[23] What might this new sovereign be in Marion's account? Marion indeed describes the appearance of phenomena to be dependent on certain attitudes taken up by the recipient ("e.g. with reverence for icons, or by envisaging a face rather than objectifying it"), yet Marion concludes that these activities are not to stand in the way of phenomena being given in and of themselves "purely" on the grounds of givenness. Attitudes do not constitute the space out of which phenomena

[21] For Marion "Givenness in person can remain a mere consciousness…without the thing (here an essence) presenting itself absolutely of itself, purely and without reserve. Thinking about… is one mode of giveness; it is another one altogether to find oneself in the presence of –what gives *itself*." Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 29.

[22] Tamsin Jones, *A Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion: Apparent Darkness* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), p. 115.

[23] Shane Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess: Jean-Luc Marion, Saturated Phenomena, and Hermeneutics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), p. 217. In further delineating the differences between the passive and the active, Mackinlay claims that "the space needed for these phenomena to appear is only opened by an active and interpretive reception. Such an active reception is not compatible with the passivity of Marion's *adonné*, nor with his claims that phenomena give themselves solely on the basis of themselves."

spring or appear, but merely color it in a certain light.[24] Thus, for Marion givenness itself becomes the sovereign. But since givenness is in tow with the performance of the reduction and the actions performed by the *adonné*, there is still room for further clarification concerning how givenness can be the primary "giver" of the *adonné* without the *adonné's* volitional return, and sustaining efforts in the aforementioned reduction to givenness.

There are further concerns for the *adonné*, who appears to be at the mercy of givenness as a powerless subject and the "screen" onto which the gift "crashes." On the one hand, in order for phenomena to appear on their own accord, the *adonné* must not interfere or limit their appearance, yet on the other hand, the *adonné* rationally and willfully performs the reduction whereby the *adonné* experiences itself. Schrijvers concludes that Marion's the *adonné* must be one "that does not distort with its own intentions the gift of phenomena…" yet in being stripped of subjective volition, "it is reduced to a mere receptiveness and passivity towards givenness."[25] This is indeed the risk that Marion's approach runs, and Schrijvers comes to this conclusion on the grounds that Marion's account of givenness fails because by necessity it falls into one of two extremes: Either givenness becomes autonomous and therefore an objectification, or the *adonné* cannot escape sliding back into being like other modern conceptions of subjectivity, which would make the subject the sovereign of givenness. As Schrijvers puts it "either givenness takes on the posture and the contours of an autonomous instance" which would amount "to a similar 'objectification of the subject'" or Marion's the *adonné* "still resembles the modern subject" and is but "one more heir of transcendental subjectivity."[26] Marion's givenness indeed is "primary," but it is not clear if such primacy entails authority. After all, the very definition of "givenness" is to be understood in the context of "the gift," which is meant to act precisely as giving, as opposed to an economical "taking" or exchange. Is "primacy" reducible to an "authority?" The other extreme that Marion wishes to avoid, as Schrivers astutely recognizes, is the need to prohibit the *adonné* from controlling that which is given, but to do so without the *adonné*'s becoming merely a passive filter for givenness. Without disregarding these aforementioned charges and concerns, there are a number of ways in which some of them might be disarmed, namely, through a closer inspection of the *adonné's* temporal dimensions,

[24] Ibid., 217. Mackinley's solution is to conceive that "the appearing of phenomena is better understood as a middle voiced happening. The choice of a middle voice means that neither phenomena nor the recipient are described in terms that are exclusively active or passive." Ibid., p. 219. Finally, "Marion is right to claim that his theory of saturated phenomena offers a new paradigm for phenomenology, and a revised understanding of phenomenality. However, this paradigm is not one in which phenomena give themselves and show themselves on the basis of some pure and absolute givenness. Rather, it is a paradigm in which phenomena only appear in a hermeneutic space that is opened by the one who receives them." Ibid., p. 220.

[25] Joeri Schrijvers, *Ontotheological Turnings?: The Decentering of the Modern Subject in Recent French Phenomenology* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012), p. 73.

[26] However, Schrijvers argues that Marion's the *adonné* "still resembles the modern subject in that it takes over precisely those characteristics that Marion attributes to Heidegger's *Dasein* as one more heir of transcendental subjectivity." Ibid., p. 80.

the non-synthetic approach of the passive/active, and the imbuing of the *adonné* with love, passion, and desire.

2.2 Marion's the *Adonné*: How You See Is How You Get

A central question that guides Marion's work in *Being Given* is this: Can givenness accomplish "the pure appearing of the phenomenon…from no other point of departure than itself?"[27] His answer is yes, but this demands a number of explanations. Since a central wager in *Being Given* is that givenness is a self-giving phenomenon unconditioned by Being, world, *ego*, or Other, it is necessary to reconceive how the *adonné* can be a passionate "thinker" without that passion "conditioning" or influencing the *adonné* to misconstrue that which is given. Marion is aware that there is no ambivalence that one has to moments of manifestation. The way things are given to us are in accord with one's appropriations of those things, and one's attunements to their being given further colors the ways in which they are appropriated. Thus, the subject – especially the modern one – is taken to be clearly layered with un/subconscious drives and elements of desire that at the very least demand a bracketing of that subject in order to truly experience *das ding* in and of itself, and according to its own presentation.

This is the project Husserl initiated. The well-known first principle of Cartesianism, the *ego cogito ergo sum*, is where Husserl locates his own first principle by carefully tracing the steps of the transcendental *ego cogito*; the *place* where one accesses consciousness, the indubitable *cogitatio*. In further reducing Descartes' doubt, Husserl shows that "without doubt there is *cogitatio*, there is, namely, the mental process during the [subject's] undergoing it and in a simple reflection upon it. The seeing, direct grasping and having of the *cogitatio* is already a cognition."[28] Already within this central impetus for Husserlian phenomenology is the recognition that the subject thinks *itself* prior to (or perhaps contemporaneous with) the thing towards which the subject's thought is directed. Descartes' mistake, along with the early empiricists, was to presuppose and impose rules *on* cognition, which leads to an atomistic description of experience that presumes all *content* in the mind to take form as an "idea." This problem prohibits, however, the ability to offer a careful and scientific description of consciousness itself, as the rules inhibit a pure phenomenological study, one whose outcome is not already pre-determined. Marion agrees with Husserl's claim for the need to reach the fecund core of pre-reflective consciousness; to the base of what can and cannot be known.[29] Yet instead of simply

[27] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 108.

[28] Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. William Alston and Georege Nakhnikian (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p. 2.

[29] And since "the Cartesian *cogitatio* already requires the phenomenological reduction," phenomenology should be enthroned as *philosophia prima*, *Erste Philosophie*, "first philosophy." Ibid, p. 5.

following Husserl's approach to bracketing via a radical doubt that suspends or "puts out of play" one's presuppositions (i.e. one's doubting oneself), Marion seeks a way to offer a more radical bracketing of the subject all together. Husserl's approach does not, contrary to his hopes, allow access to transcendental, pure consciousness. Husserl's optimism concerning the possibility of experiencing phenomena in and of themselves, which rests on the claim that one can access them via a bracketing of *all such mental actions* of the subject (at least as "psychic facts") demands to be rethought.[30]

Marion's starting point to finding a solution to this manifold of problems is not to ignore the presentation of the subject, or one's experience with oneself *as* a subject, but to bracket the subject in efforts to more closely experience that which is given *in accord with* the subject's volition to experience the thing, *and* one's preparatory actions of attuning one's intuition for the thing to give itself. Marion's move, then, must be understood in light of his claims that love and passion are a centerpiece of the *res cogitans*, who is primarily "moved" or stirred to the reduction and to thought or thinking.[31] This move can be tracked in Marion's work in *The Erotic Phenomenon*, which seeks to disrupt and displace the staticity of being, *ego*, and the metaphysical presumptions made of existence and subsistence. As the next two chapters more closely investigate, Marion's erotic reduction and reduction to givenness must be taken into account together. Marion's "reason of the gift," (the logic according to which is unconditioned givenness itself) is interlaced with a *cogito* whose passions, loves, and desires are not inhibitors to experiencing a thing in and of itself, but instead lubricants for finding the thing there in consciousness.

[30] Although Phenomenology is *inspired* by Cartesian doubt, Husserl certainly does not use doubt in the same way. Husserl places a "radical doubt" in his formulation of bracketing, one whereby the subject suspends the thesis she wishes to explore phenomenologically. Because of this radical doubt, one is capable, at least momentarily, of experiencing a consciousness *absent* of presuppositions, or *Voraussetzungslosigkeit*. What makes this distinct from Cartesian doubt is that Husserl's reduction is not so much the calling-into-question of a truth claim of the existence of an object, but rather, is the suspension of the thesis we hold concerning that thing for the sake of exploring and examining it more closely. In other words, we do not say "no" to the question of existence of the thing and its attributes *in order to prove* its existence or non-existence, but instead we say "not right now," to that question in order to properly see the things' respective essences. It is doubt that allows us to strike and to re-strike (or think and re-think) a thing in proportion to the ways in which it is experienced in consciousness, this task of phenomenology just considered. We "set it out of action," and allow it to remain in its own right, but remain without making a "use of it" or employing it for a purpose. The "thing" (*das ding*) here still lies "within the brackets," but now available there, in its pure phenomenality with, as Husserl puts it, a "change of indicator." It is no longer "doubt", but the subtle act of "putting out of play" or "bracketing," – surely the linchpin of the reduction – as it allows for a seeing and re-seeing of the various strata of the thing in question. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, Volume II*, trans by W.R. Boyce Gibson (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972), p. 108.

[31] For Kevin Hart, "the *res cogitans* has its origin in a primal act of feeling, not thinking. This feeling is immanent and invisible; it is an example of what Henry…calls flesh, not biological tissue such as skin…but inner, subjective life." Kevin Hart in *Jean-Luc Marion: The Essential Writings*, eds. Jean-Luc Marion and Kevin Hart, (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013), p. 32.

2.2.1 Features of the **Adonné**

In order to lay to rest the possibility of a *Dasein or ego* as the guarantor of phenomenal things in their being constituted, and to better ensure that "I" am not the determinant or guarantor of that which arrives, Marion continues (to some degree) in the Derridean legacy of disrupting the traditional, modern "subject" or "self." But if, at first, there is not a self, then what comes "in the self's place?" It is the *adonné*:"

> It is necessary that the self receive itself as a gift. But, in this case, the ego discovers itself received like one of its other gifts, contemporaneous with, not anterior to, its other gifts, not preceding them, still less conditioning them…the self comes over me like a given, which I receive at the same time as all the other givens.[32]

Indeed contemporaneous (and this is essential) with a phenomenal given, the *adonné* is given along with it, and given in such a way as to *respond* to the thing being given. One might surmise then, that in order for one to respond to the call of givenness, and experience some of the fullness of givenness in accord with that which is given, one must be prepared to experience that unique given. Every phenomenal given has singular features, and carries with it particular *ways* in which it gives itself *to be experienced*. The *adonné* is given in such a way as to experience the particular phenomenon that is given.

There are four stages in which the *adonné* is given. The first stage is the call to hear, wherein one is addressed as a "me."[33] One is indeed given "from the call that gives me to myself before giving me anything whatsoever."[34] The second stage is the surprise at one's being called wherein one is "at a loss" or shocked at the call and being called.[35] The third stage is being addressed with a *particular* word or concept as "interlocutor" (and here the call takes on particular features). Finally, the *adonné* is given, and delivered from solipsism. In order to finally attain this status as given, one must respond, and not deny the call. Although one might deny or reject *what* is given, the response happens, and is non-optional.[36]

However, prior to achieving the status of the *adonné*, one persistently wrestles with one's selfhood vis-à-vis the other. The paradox of seeking selfhood is that when one tries to be a self, one cannot be, for one must forget oneself in order to find oneself, namely, by loving and responding to the call of that which is given.[37] One is defined by one's love. What ultimately comes to fill this warm seat of what might be called a "placebo self" is something different from a *subjectum*: "In the self's

[32] Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 286.

[33] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 268.

[34] Ibid., p. 269.

[35] Ibid., p. 269.

[36] Ibid., p. 288.

[37] Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 100.

place there is not a shape of consciousness, nor a type of *subjectum*, not that unto which the self is like and refers."[38] Once given, and part and parcel of being given, one's response to the given, and subsequent experience with its appearance is always already intersubjective. Again, Marion's work on what he names "the erotic reduction" cannot be taken as distinct from, or non-influential upon his approaches to the reduction to givenness and the *adonné*. The erotic reduction, which is fueled by the question "can I be the first to love?" is constitutive of the "how" structure of my being given and what I do, see, and experience as given. This is one motivation behind performing the reduction to love. Marion's phenomenology is an approach motivated by being able to positively answer the questions posed in the erotic reduction: "can I be the first to love?" – a question that has implicated already the other. Indeed, even under the new status as the *adonné* one is to "sustain" the erotic reduction to love for as long as possible, for a persistent reflection upon one's status *as given* detracts attention from that which is given.

In seeking to explain and at points expand upon Marion's understanding of the *adonné*, it is helpful to engage his unfolding of Kant's theory of the self in *Being Given*. Instead of a direct engagement with Husserl or Heidegger, it is Kant whose work Marion employs as a foil for unfolding the features of the *adonné*. There are three themes that allow for a better understanding of this concept: Transcendental apperception, the intersubjective dimensions of the *adonné* as "Interloqué," and imbued intuition.

2.2.2 Transcendental Apperception

Must the conditions of experience of a given intuition be developed by a subject? Marion's five "Saturated Phenomena" correspond to Kant's divisions within the table of categories (with the exception of accommodations made for a fifth, "revelation"), although such phenomena are capable of exceeding Kant's categories and as such, are not *simply* constituted objects. For Kant, the appearance of phenomena arrive, as Marion notes, on the grounds of the "conditions of experience for and by the subject."[39] If such a subject is the sole originator of phenomena according to these conditions it places upon them, then how far and to what degree can things be "given" in any new, unexpected way? Kant's notion of the self begins in the well-known distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal, between which the self is a kind of bridge whose task is to make sense of both realms and thus to synthesize

[38] Ibid., p. 312.

[39] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 181. For a helpful contextualization of how Marion's "revelation" relates with his understanding of "phenomenology" more generally as the study of that which is "revealed" or appears, see Thomas Alferi, "Von er Offenbarungsfrage zu Marions Phänomenologie der Gebung" in *Von der Ursprünglichkeit der Gabe*, eds Joas and Gabel, pp. 210–33.

the world of experience with the "inner world" of reason. Kant's "transcendental apperception" begins with the claim "that I am conscious to myself *a priori* of a necessary synthesis of representations – to be entitled the original synthetic unity of apperception."[40] This self synthesizes the various representations of itself and various phenomena that come to it (thus the "transcendental" synthesis). Under the transcendental apperception (a "partially presencing" or indication) the "I" becomes something of a category that is constructed prior to *and independent from* any consideration of things outside itself, like a pen and paper. In constituting such objects, the "I" employs a "transcendental synthesis of imagination" that preconditions all experience.[41]

One step in Marion's alteration of Kant's thesis comes in the subject's status not as the constitutor of the phenomenon, but instead the one who actively and volitionally grants (via the reduction to givenness) to the phenomenon the status and "the initiative of appearing on the basis of itself…"[42] This is not a contradiction of Kant here, but a *broadening* of Kant's notion of the self to allowing such a self to be one among many phenomena. And vice versa: Marion's phenomena are granted the status that the "self" alone is granted in Kant's schema. The aforementioned interpretations of Marion's the *adonné* as merely passive focus on the claim that the *adonné* is given in a modality similar to how things, in general, are given. Unfortunately, the presumption is often made (per the aforementioned criticisms) that the self is *reduced* to the passive status similar to that of things. However, for Marion, things take on a more dynamic *and active* sense as given. Even things are not simply "passive," or more specifically, one's experience of things is not in a mode of passivity. Of note is that neither the *adonné* is reduced to the status of a phenomenon in a typical sense of appearing, nor is the phenomenon elevated to the status of a subject, who is clearly imbued with volition, rationality, etc. Instead, phenomena have self-like qualities and as such can constitute themselves and show themselves. This is why Marion can speak of the "inversion of intentionality" whereby one experiences *from* the phenomenon a kind of "counter-perspective."[43] For Marion, these phenomena, as part and parcel of being phenomena that can

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[40] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans F. Max Müller, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), B135. See also Richard D. Chessick, "The Problematical Self in Kant and Kohut," in *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 49: (1980): 456–473. See also Klaus Düsing, "Constitution and Structure of Self-Identity: Kant's Theory of Apperception and Hegel's Criticism," in *Midwest Studies In Philosophy*, 8:1 (1983): 409–431.

[41] See C. Thomas Powell, *Kant's Theory of Self-Consciousness* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1990). See also Morwenna Griffiths, *Feminism and the Self: the Web of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 4.

[42] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*. trans. Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 181.

[43] For him, "intentionality is inverted: I become the objective of the object" Ibid., p. 146.

Then, in *The Crossing of the Visible*, Marion claims that "it is a matter of an inverted perspective, a counter-perspective, which is no longer organized in terms of the internal gaze of the spectator, but as if the painting climbed back up from the unseen under the direction of its spectator, *object and objective of the perspective*, no longer its author" Jean-Luc Marion, *The Crossing of the Visible*, trans. James K.A. Smith, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 39.

appear to us without our asking or intent, lack an objective identity in themselves and come from givenness, out of their being given: "The origin of givenness remains the 'self' of the phenomenon, with no other principle or origin besides itself. 'Self-givenness, *Selbstgebung, donation de soi*' indicates that the phenomenon is given in person, but also and especially that it is given of itself and on the basis of itself."[44] On the grounds of givenness alone do things appear to consciousness. Indeed consciousness itself is a phenomenon, but not a *result* of a subject's action or intentionality. Phenomena maintain a sense of excess beyond the abilities of the *adonné* and her consciousness.[45]

This replacement for the "subject" is henceforward conceived as the *adonné*, which is given according to the overflowing generosity of givenness. This does not entail that "the self" altogether disappears, for in order to perform the reduction (e.g. the reduction to givenness) one is tasked with preparing and attuning one's intuition or awareness to one's being given. This preparatory effort for receiving is neither purely active and constitutive (as in Kant) nor passive and observant (as in, say, Derrida). Instead, the passive/active dichotomy should be productively understood as laminates of relation. For example, the *adonné* goes beyond "passivity as activity, because in being liberated from its royal transcendental status, it annuls the very distinction between the transcendental *I* and the empirical me."[46] The liberation of my status as a transcendental "I" and empirical "me" entails the enactment of passivity *as* activity. The reduction to givenness becomes, then, a *turn* to preparing one's intuition. This is an active-passive initiative that seeks to bracket one's efforts by insisting on one's sustaining passivity for as long as possible. Similar to Marion's approach, Heidegger had his own way of deconstructing the passive/active distinction. Especially for the early Heidegger, "World" becomes a part of *Dasein* itself. The relationship between *Dasein* and Being is irreducible to the problem of "passivity" or "activity," and should unfold itself altogether differently, namely in one's being constituted-by, yet co-constitutive of the world.[47] Yet for Marion, the *adonné* is given contemporaneously with that which is given, and it is givenness itself, not the world, that does the giving.

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[44] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 20.

[45] What Marion names "Poor" or "Common Law" Phenomena, notwithstanding, these specific phenomena are lacking such excess or saturation.

[46] Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 48.

[47] As mentioned earlier, for these reasons, and for others, Marion may go too far in suggesting that Heidegger still actively privileges an intentional subject in Heidegger's situating *Dasein* (most explicitly in *Sein und Zeit*) as the world mediator and shepherd of Being. The Heidegger after the *Kehre* can be construed as an attempt to swing in the other direction by clarifying that Being is the field or clearing in which *Dasein* experiences the world. For Heidegger, "The wherein of self-referential understanding, as that for which one lets entities be encountered in the way of Being of involvement, is the phenomenon of the world." Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (New York: Harper Collins, 1962.) pp. 18, 119.

2.2.3 *Intersubjective Dimensions of the* Adonné *as "Interloqué"*

There are a manifold of subversive *relations* and extra-subjective ways of experiencing that serve to expand the folds between givenness and transcendental consciousness. One of which that becomes essential is the intersubjective dimension of the *adonné*: What happens when the *adonné* is a phenomenon of experience for *someone else*? Since one might receive the other directly, and does not mediate this experience of the other, the other (through givenness of course) *becomes a self*. This becomes further evident in Marion's Saturated Phenomenon of "flesh," for this flesh is not given to me by myself, but myself is only given *to me* as a gift from the other. As Mackinlay interprets Marion here, my flesh is the first phenomenon "in the world, and that by which the rest of the world is in turn rendered phenomenal for me."[48] One must consider the *adonné* in its "interlocutionary" (*interloqué*) constitution, namely, in being loved and named as one who "loves first." The next chapter will address these elements in the context of the erotic reduction, and the role of desire within it.

It indeed should be the case that whatever is shown is in fact the thing itself and not simply a representation of some other thing.[49] In this sense Marion parts ways from Kant by not precluding the possibility that the thing in itself is necessarily inexperiencable as a given. For Kant, a thing's intelligibility determines its existence, and a thing's "thinkability" is hedged and protected by the principle of noncontradiction. If a thing's "thinkability" is that which determines its existence, and the self is primarily qualified by its thinking in general, then it is possible to conclude that Kant's "self" is determined by its thinking. As a result, the noetic process maintains a certain priority over other human faculties such as bodily senses, emotions, and affects. Further, a thing for Kant first must be conceivable in order for a thing "to be," and such a conception is not in experience and therefore is not a result of one's intent.[50] One draws ontological conclusions, but only on the grounds that "being" first must be thinkable. The "being thought" of things entails that things must be *represented* by a subject, the *first person* as the means through which one understands representation as experience.[51] Concerning this first person, Kant concludes that "the abiding and unchanging 'I' (pure apperception) forms the correlate of all our representations insofar as it is to be at all possible that we should become

[48] Shane Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess: Jean-Luc Marion, Saturated Phenomena, and Hermeneutics*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), p. 138.

[49] Ibid., p. 18.

[50] In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant shows how ontology relies upon *a priori* knowledge, which leads to the reliance of "being" upon its first being conceived or conceivable.

[51] Phenomena only hold the status of being *Vorstellungen* or representations. Kant indicates that all phenomena are to be "understood" as only and ever *tentatively available* as such, as only representations. See again Pierre Keller, *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge Press, Cambridge UK, 1998), pp. 30 and 36.

conscious of them."[52] This unflinching "I" is to be taken as the new grounding of phenomenal experience. Marion indeed recognizes that this foundation on the noetic authority relies "entirely on the primacy of the *I*. But can the *I* itself be founded in a sufficiently radical way to ensure its primacy, that of 'first philosophy'?"[53] Here, one can see that "the *I* can only legitimately exercise its noetic primacy in assuming a transcendental status – not that of one object among others, even transcendent, but of a unique, non-object like authority, which fixes the cognitions of possibility of the knowledge of objects."[54] After all, what grounds the *cogito*? This noetic primacy "has a price: the disappearance or the putting in parenthesis of the one who plays the role of first, without being [*l'etre*]."[55] Marion's critique of a stand-alone *cogito* is that this thinking thing must necessarily ground its noetic reliance *upon itself*.

As Kant asserts, the *internal* individualization of the self is what provides the basis for thinking, determining an *external* spatio-temporal designation.[56] Space and time are specifically *a priori* forms of intuition, that is to say, forms that are built into awareness as ways of *appearing* and of making things appear (or at least representing them in such a way that one recognizes their appearance). Is it a problem for Kant to hold, on the one hand, that the self must rely upon its being-thought, and on the other hand, that the possibility of thinking relies upon a structured and determined self? Further, if one must intentionally sketch a determination of time in order to truly experience it, is time reliant upon experience and, consequentially, a particular preunderstanding of the cause/effect relation? Marion would likely answer "no" to the first question and "yes" to the second. Marion claims that for Kant phenomena must "be fitted into the rules of experience, therefore of time, in admitting in advance a relation with precedents."[57] That is, time is linear for Kant, yet certain phenomena are built into the "rules" of time. Thus, in this case, time, as a pure intuition, is somewhat dubious because it in some way relies upon experience. If Kant's self must rely upon experience, which is always changing with time, then it is dubious to conceive the self as anything but indeterminate, ever-changing, and in flux. If it is the case that Kant's notion of time is imbued with a presupposed notion of experience, then there must be a way to account for the self as indeterminate.

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[52] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans F. Max Müller, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), A123.

[53] Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner, and Vincent Berraud, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 11.

[54] Ibid., p. 11.

[55] Ibid., p. 12.

[56] See here Michel Henry, *I am the Truth*, trans. Susan Emanuel, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 123–124.

[57] Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner, and Vincent Berraud, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 115. Cf. p. 95. Anecdotally, Marion sees time not as that which passes, but as "something" that "collects" and appears most explicitly on "my face;" this is what allows for the possibility of my being interpreted by the other. Time needs to accumulate so it can leave a trace, without which, there can be no hermeneutics.

Instead of such a subject, Marion's is "given" as the one who is itself received *from what it receives*. The *adonné* is "the one to whom what gives itself from a first self… gives a second *me*, the one of reception and of response." This discards any such "pretension of any *I* to a transcendental function, or, what comes down to the same thing, the pretension of a possible transcendental *I* to the last foundation of the experience of phenomena."[58] Being, or having the status of an "I" is not the basis of one's experience in the world. Everything does not begin with the I as a foundation, and this entails that there are aspects of oneself that are inaccessible, for there is no fixity of a present I. The *adonné* has no "proper essence," and this places it in a necessary relation with a "lack" that only *the other* can come to fulfill. This lacking is not an empty space, but an inaccessible and clandestine surplus. This points to the paradox of the *adonné*, which Marion claims St. Augustine to have already understood: "man is defined by the very fact that he remains without definition – the animal properly without property."[59] One is to remain "undefined," yet as it will be shown in the following chapter, one receives a "definition" in, through, and on the conditions of love. *Eros*, which is inherently intersubjective, ultimately becomes the foil upon which the problems of the *adonné* are reflected. The *adonné* is actualized according to its relation with the other and on the terms of love. This is because love is that which one most innately desires above all else. It is neither knowledge, nor subsistence that one desires (*conatus in suo esse perseverandi*), and thus the *adonné* is conceived according to its primary concerns of *loving and being loved*. According to what Marion names the "crossing of the flesh," the *adonné* is given and receives desire and love contemporaneous to the moment at which the *adonné* gives this love.

Marion develops this inter-subjectivity (via a kind of supplementary inversion of Lévinas' intersubjective time and the temporary infinite demands the other poses) less according to the subjective responsibility *for* the other, and more so in terms of how the other contributes to the co-constitution of the *adonné*. This does not lead the *adonné* to the recognition that his projected self actually falls short of being a self, but instead, that this new "self" – the one that gains a particular kind of actualization *in* locution with the other through excess – *far exceeds* what it thought to be its originally self-projected self. It is this displacement of one's conception of self that reflects the saturating work of givenness. Marion's proposal does not call for the total eradication of self-identity, but rather necessitates that it is conditioned by an internal *fissure* that only can be seen in the reflection of the face of the other.[60] This other is experienced by the *adonné* in a "saturated" intuition.

[58] Ibid., p. 45.

[59] Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 254.

[60] Yet there is still no "subject." In this way, Marion is quite close to Lévinas, whose understanding of "ipseity" (the most reduced "core" of the subject) maintains a fissure or breach, which is a result of the subject's connection with the other.

2.3 On Saturated Phenomena: Imbued Intuition

2.3.1 Husserlian Intuition

Marion's redux version of intuition in a number of ways is developed through his reading of Husserl's *Ideas I*. Husserl's Intuition, or *Anshauung*, can refer to sense impressions or, more broadly, "awareness." The German root *Shau* indicates a kind of "looking," the ending *ung* indicates that it is a noun or state of being, and the *An* or "to" refers to the "state" or status of looking. Colloquially understood, *Anschauung* simply refers to one's perspective or opinions (e.g. *Weltanschauung*, "world view"), but phenomenologically speaking, it takes on a deeper meaning, especially when Husserl employs it to understand the consciousness of a subject. Husserl's subject supposes an "absolute consciousness" the moment the subject declares or attributes meaningfulness to a thing, and absolute consciousness – which is *not* of the natural world – is the territory or field of phenomenology.[61] The thing's meaningfulness originates in, is derived from, and is accessed through the subject's *intuition*. This meaning exists *absolutely* and independently from any sense given to it by another source (in or through the natural world) and thus, the *subject's experience* of a thing *prescribes its meaning*, and by doing so, assigns the thing to having particular ways of being seen and perceived.[62] Perception changes these meanings as they are given in differing modes of appearance. The thing's dependence upon being perceived and experienced, which are ever-changing activities, entails that the meanings of those things also do not crystallize in their particularity. Yet Husserl wishes to conceive of the thing in itself as *not* changing based upon one's experience of it (i.e. an anti-constructivist model). It is this gap in Husserl's thought on intuition that Marion finds dissatisfying, for if the subject is not bracketed, then indeed, the multifarious meanings – of which the subject cannot be the sole originator – of the thing or object do not give themselves to us irrespective of, and irreducible to such subjective perceptions.

However, for Husserl, whether or not a thing is perceived does not change the fact that it persists in the consciousness of the subject – things certainly need not be in one's scope of perception in order to "exist." Thus, the subject can very well be aware of a thing's existence in the world without it being a *present* thing. Yet, despite their not being at hand, these things still constitute the world as such, namely, the actual "present."[63] In order to conceive of a supra-subjective possibility of givenness, Marion turns to the intricate relations between the subject and intuition in phenomenology. Husserl's notion of "intuition," which marks the site of the overall flourish of the phenomenological reduction as it relates to the intentional structure of consciousness, is generally qualified by its givenness, namely, by the arrival or

[61] Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. William Alston and Georege Nakhnikian, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p. 169.

[62] Ibid., p. 148.

[63] Ibid., p. 103.

presence of "sensuous content" (broadly understood) upon a cognizer, its coming before the individual as an appearance, and its arrival as an appearing. This is irrespective of whether or not the sense perception is of an object, or of a non-sensical "expression." That is, a thing can be intuited without ever becoming a sensory event. Consistent with Husserl's theory of subjectivity, acts within intuition are modifications of perception.

This is one reason why Husserl believes he has warrant to suggest that phenomenology is a new way of seeing things in their essential and non-contingent states. Although perception may change the *way* a thing is experienced, not all valuable thought or knowledge is founded in experience.[64] Experience cannot fully and adequately determine the thing as such, since both experience in general, and the experiences of things in particular, are in a constant ebb and flow of contingency. The thing, as one sees it, is contingent upon one's experience of it, and is "never demanded as necessary by virtue of its givenness."[65] On the one hand, a subject's experience of a thing determines that thing, yet on the other hand, experience (as understood by the empirical sciences) cannot appropriately lend to the grasping of things in their totality. A thing is always more than that which is seen, perceived, or even intuited.

Husserl conceives of rather strict guidelines for intuition, as it is the mode within the conscious subject that is tasked with the determination of knowledge and the legitimization of its locus of presentations.[66] Intuitions are trustworthy enough to found knowledge upon them as they lead to non-contingent essences, and this is the case so long as such intuitions do not directly contradict the corporeal *limits* that also show or give themselves. Perhaps Husserl believes – since he limited *through experience* the possibilities of intuitability – that he can achieve in this principle a source and guarantee of all value.[67] This point becomes of prime interest to Derrida, for such a supposed guarantee makes its own presumed evidence as a self-given

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[64] Ibid., p. 85.

[65] Ibid., p. 144.

[66] Husserl's "principle of principles," as found most explicitly in his *Ideas I*, is considered in this way: "…every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition," and "…everything originarily…offered to us in 'intuition' is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there." Ibid., p. 44.

[67] As Henry interprets Husserl here, "under the very same term 'intuition,' there is a particular mode of appearing that is intended and that is no longer a still undefined, simple concept. For Husserl, intuition signifies the structure of consciousness as 'consciousness of something,' as intentional. To be sure, it is fulfilled intentionality that, *stricto sensu*, the concept of intuition qualifies, but it is to intentionality as such that intuition owes its power of constituting phenomenality, of instituting the condition for the phenomenon. Intentionality gives rise to phenomenality. Intentionality thus proceeds by surpassing itself toward that which is cast in front of it as its intentional correlate, as a transcendent object. It is the transcendence of this object, its setting at a distance that constitutes phenomenality as such." However, for Henry, "In the case of Husserl, the central lacuna of his phenomenology is the fact that it misses in principle, and notably in the principle of principles, the transcendental life that nonetheless constituted its primary preoccupation." Michel Henry, "The four principles of phenomenology" trans. Joseph Rivera & George E. Faithful, *Continental Philosophy Review* 48: (2015), p. 8 and p. 9 respectively.

principle. The possibility of such a guiding principle ensures, as Derrida demands, that "the phenomenological form" is filled with content that is "controlled by metaphysics itself."[68] Such concerns certainly play in the background of Marion's reasons for returning to the supposed founding authority of intuition, the place in consciousness where things simply appear or are given.

2.3.2 Marion's Saturation of Intuition

To Marion's understanding, it is not just things that should be thought to hold manifold possibilities for us, but also our intuitions of them, which are the inner-conscious acts that unfold the particular "hows" of a phenomenology of givenness. Marion develops what he calls "saturated phenomena," which represent and mark the immeasurability and ineluctability of givenness as that which frees these phenomena from being-objects and "being" in general by saturating intuition itself. The "saturated" in "saturated phenomena" does not refer to simply the phenomena, for they are also "saturating;" they are phenomena that saturate. Saturated phenomena cannot be grasped by intention, but come in the excess of intuition, for intuition exceeds the donee's intention, and thus the *adonné* cannot predict what these phenomena will give. They are phenomena that *give* themselves without conditions placed upon them by the subject, and appear as "unconditioned phenomena" in the sense that they do not depend upon the subject's experience or horizons of possibility (although these conditions do not preclude the sending of givenness).[69] As saturated, and as flowing from the fountainhead of givenness, saturated phenomena mark the elusive generosity of things. Yet they are not necessarily extraordinary things happening in extraordinary situations to extraordinary people. Saturation is "banal" in so far as it occurs, or is capable of occurring all the time, working against the grains of experience: not *in* experience but in counter-experience.

By Marion's estimation there are four major "types" of saturated phenomena, although their various strata at points overlap and share similarities: the event, the idol, the icon, and the flesh.[70] Marion's interest in the saturation of awareness leads

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[68] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 5.

[69] Jean-Luc Marion. *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 212. Marion is consistent in his description of these phenomena in his later works as well: "In order to introduce the concept of the saturated phenomenon in phenomenology, I have just described it as *invisible* (unforeseeable) according to quantity, unbearable according to quality, but also *unconditioned* (absolved from any horizon) according to relation, and *irreducible* to the *I* (incapable of being looked at) according to modality. These four characteristics imply the term-for-term reversal of all the rubrics under which Kant classifies the principles and thus the phenomena that these determine." Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Christina Gschwandtner and others (New York NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 45.

[70] Ibid., p. 233.

to his development of these phenomena in relation to Kant's 4 classes of the 12 categories, which for Kant act as synthesizers of intuition and the concept. It was by way of a priori knowledge that Kant allowed for access to things on the grounds that the categories are imposed by the mind onto those things. There are four overarching classes to Kant's 12 correlated categories, or pure concepts of understanding, which a priori are laminated onto experience: Quantity, quality, modality, relation. These concepts and their status as a priori provide the building blocks for knowledge and any possible set of ontological categories of cognition that result from the appearance of the thing (although *not* the Husserlian "thing in itself"). In many respects, Kant takes it that any study of categories is indeed an a priori concern (although he distinguishes between those of meanings and those of objects, and further categorizes their objective, material and existential dimensions). Marion employs Kant's categories and their respective sub-classifications to help illuminate his own understanding of the various ways in which intuition is saturated *in accord with* particular "saturated phenomena." Intuition becomes the location in which those categories are instantiated as "saturated." It is our senses of relation with these qualities that, in the reduction to givenness, are overwhelmed according to quantity, quality, modality and relation.

Marion's "event" is overwhelmed with the *quantity* of (generally historical) data, information, or possibility of interpretation.[71] In the fusion of the plurality of horizons is an overwhelming of any number of possible significations that prohibit a total grasp of their infinite play. "Horizontality" is saturated as a field of vision; that is to say, the horizon itself and its possibilities are "filled" with excess. This saturation of quantity prohibits the end to the interpretive enterprise. Unlike "the idol," the event presupposes an inter-objectivity, and via the plurality of possible relations, inhibits the solipsism of the *adonné*.

"The idol" generally is taken to be a (usually visible) thing whose fineness overwhelms the *adonné* with a manifold of *quality*. Distinct from any "idol" of a religious tradition, the quintessential idol would be a painting or work of art as a creation, the particular definitions of which lend to overwhelming and "saturating" the field of visibility. A painting, for example, must thwart and surprise one's expectations, and lead one back through an exercise of reflexivity to recognize that the thing's quality is always lacking in its totality. Such quality cannot all be received in one moment, and one must therefore return to "see it again." While the work "begs to be seen and reseen" it "can't be seen" because it fills and over-fills the visual field itself in a way similar to event phenomena.[72] And while it appears to be a thoroughly

[71] For a helpful unfolding of how these relate with Marion's saturated phenomena, see here Christina Gschwandtner, *Degrees of Givenness: On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014).

[72] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Crossing of the Visible*, trans. James K.A. Smith, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 63 and 82. For more on the idol, and in a sense "desire", see Marion's chapter entitled "What Gives" in *The Crossing of the Visible*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 33. He suggests that a painting must thwart our expectations; must surprise us; p. 46 he gives us an idea of what desire "does for us", on p. 51 he suggests that every image (i.e. idol) must become the desire of the other.

immanent phenomenon, it paradoxically cannot be seen in the way that other phenomena might be, for the idol saturates the field of vision itself.

With the third, the "icon" (or "face"), one experiences the suffusions of *modality*, which holds a manifold of possibilities of *how things could be*. These phenomena embody the moment where the "gazer takes the place of the gazed upon," and the other weighs on my gaze like a "burden."[73] The gaze has an effect: The face of the other is constantly changing, and this changing indicates or qualifies a change of expression as to what weight that it (the other's face) asks me to carry or bear. The other saturates and alters my sense of responsibility. This type of saturated phenomena expresses the essential characteristics of the other three.

"The flesh" marks the quintessentially intersubjective overwhelming of *relation* between oneself and the other. The "flesh" is always given by another, is a-giving-in-relation, and demands the role of the other in order to phenomenalize. As *the* place of touching, one must be open to being affected. The flesh is always affected "first in and by itself" (Marion here borrows Henry's notion of "auto-affection").[74] As coming upon me from the other, the phenomenon of flesh leaves me surprised that *I* am here. This particular saturated phenomenon will be considered in closer detail in the following chapter.

Ultimately, Marion makes provisions for a fifth type of saturated phenomena that might be seen as representative of the four other types. What he names "revelation" is a "mode of appearance" that is exemplified most vividly in the Christ figure. It would be a phenomenon that helps to unfold the possibility of appearance(s) in these phenomena, yet Marion has offered very little explanation about this fifth type. Indeed, there are a number of aspects of saturated phenomena that could use more clarification. For example, not all phenomena are saturated, and not all offer the "…same degrees of givenness" although "there can and must be indefinite degrees of givenness, but no exception."[75] The need for more clarification in these regards has led Gschwandtner to contend that if all phenomena are "given" via the continuous "giving" work of givenness as the primary manifold, as Marion himself asserts, then even those phenomena Marion claims to be lacking in saturation, such as his "poor" or "common law" phenomena, indeed also have some level of saturation somewhere along a gray scale or gradation of variation.[76] One might here observe that given Marion's other engagements with the Derridean *aporia* between economy and gift, it is likely that Marion would not hold to a kind of "pure" gift or givenness (although givenness maintains a certain "primacy" over economy), for

[73] Jean-Luc Marion. *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 233.

[74] Ibid., p. 231.

[75] Jean-Luc Marion, "The Other First Philosophy and the Question of Givenness" trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky, *Critical Inquiry* 25:4 (1999), p. 794.

[76] Marion says as much in concluding that phenomena give in variation (*Being given* 147). Jean-Luc Marion. *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 234. This is what distinguishes the saturated ones from the "common-law" sorts of phenomena that lack intuition (e.g. a geometrical equation). All Saturated phenomena appear as paradoxes, and are given as such.

this would in fact summon an economical framework found in the extremity of "purity." A "pure" gift would leave the gift conceived on economical terms. This is not to mention the fact that Marion has a phenomenological interest in performing the reductions in order to see supposed dialectics "vanish," as Husserl conceived. It would be inconsistent for Marion to hold too strictly to a dyad between excess and non-excess or saturation and non-saturation.

Further, while the distinction between givenness and saturation is an important one, the separation between these similar concepts is not strongly distinguished in Marion's work. He does make it clear that "there is no appearing that escapes the fold of givenness" and "givenness is never suspended, even if and precisely because it admits an indefinite number of degrees. Once again, there can be indefinite degrees to givenness, but there is no exception. Givenness is therefore set up, by its certainty and its universality, as an unconditional principle."[77] That is, givenness is responsible for the giving of *all things and* for doing so in variation. To what extent does givenness already imply excess and saturation, as Gschwandtner insinuates?[78] Can Marion still maintain the primacy of the gift (via givenness) over economy if it is possible to claim, a priori, that givenness cannot and will not saturate some phenomena?

2.4 Love and "the Given?:" Tables with Three Legs

There are indeed still unresolved tensions in Marion's understanding of givenness, saturated phenomena, and the *adonné*, and since his approach has led to a number of reactions from his readers – ranging from rejection to expansion – Marion continues to clarify further his work with each publication. Despite the many important turns Marion could make in his work (indeed nothing prohibits him from rejecting his entire oeuvre), his developments of the gift, love, and the *adonné* form a prominent union. The *adonné* is given in such a *way* that it can love *as a response*. The self, prior to achieving the status of the *adonné* already operates with a kind of love (which will be treated in the following chapter). And the performance of the reduction to givenness is motivated by a certain attunement of oneself in a moment of "wanting-to-see" that prepares one for the inflow of phenomena.[79] Although Marion

[77] Jean-Luc Marion, "The Other First Philosophy and the Question of Givenness" trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky, *Critical Inquiry* 25:4 (1999), p. 795.

[78] Gschwandtner takes up this concern in her approach to the "degrees of givenness." The infinite variation "of degrees of givenness from poorer to richer phenomenality, the notion of the paradox and Marion's descriptions of the saturated phenomenon instead indicate far more absolute distinctions: a phenomenon is *either* "poor" *or* "saturated," intuition is *either* 'empty' *or* 'full,' consciousness *either* controls and constitutes the phenomenon *or* it is overwhelmed by what is given and utterly unable to constitute it or impose its own parameters on it." Christina Gschwandtner, *Degrees of Givenness: On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), p. 5.

[79] Jean-Luc Marion. *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 41.

indeed calls for a restriction of intention, and a shifting of phenomenology to intuition, this does not entail that he removes love and its forms of volition, desire, and “knowing” from his phenomenological agenda or toolkit. Instead, they play important roles in intuition, as there is no naiive intuition free from passion. Naiveté is laden with passions and interests, and while it would be banal to suggest that one is always desiring, it is necessary to see how Marion’s development of the *adonné* is partly for the sake of finding a way to engage those desires, loves, and passions that lead the self to finding its “why” for bracketing.

Husserl already had recognized something like this in his elucidation of the need to bracket the phenomenological constitution or “finishing act” that one performs upon that which appears in consciousness. Although what one sees is a wooden structure with a flat top and three vertical appendages holding it up, one imagines the fourth appendage, based on past experiences, and names it a “table.” These acts take place all of the time in one’s relation with oneself, the things that one is given, and what one takes for granted in everyday experience. Indeed, if things and physical, sensory objects such as tables generally are taken for granted as such, then how much moreso does one operate with preunderstandings of oneself upon receiving oneself and thereby performing the “finishing act” upon oneself in such a way that one simply is “this” or “that?” And if one cannot bracket the past experiences that lead one to perform these acts of constitution upon oneself, then to what degree can phenomena that are given ever penetrate the conscious experience of the subject in such a way that those phenomena are experienced on their own accord without that subject’s total constitution and control? There is indeed a need for a radical dispossession of the self. We cannot take for granted even ourselves. Despite the hermeneutic concerns over Marion’s approach, his bracketing of the subject and replacing it with the *adonné* is precisely the attempt to gain a deeper hermeneutic awareness that does not even presume that a stable “I” is there. Interpretation first begins with one’s being given, not just in general, but in particular ways (such as attitudes or attunements) that come along with that which is given. In order to get back to the things themselves, one must see that one is given in particular ways each and every time one experiences oneself experiencing something. What is one’s motivation, however, for “reducing oneself?” Why would one even begin to perform the reduction honestly in order to postpone one’s “finishing act?”

“Love” may be one part of the answer. Marion ends his predominantly phenomenological work of *Being Given* with a short meditation on love, a topic that did not receive any further explicit treatment in that text. Why does he do so? Is he foreshadowing coming works, such as *The Erotic Phenomenon*? Or does Marion insinuate that one should go back and read *Being Given* again with this lens of love? In the final sentences of *Being Given*, Marion appropriates Heidegger’s somewhat enigmatic claim upon “love as the basic motivation [*Motivgrund*] of phenomenological understanding.”[80] To bravely enter into phenomenological understanding, a task that

[80] “Liebe als *Motiv*grund des phänomenologischen Verstehens.” Just before that, Heidegger suggests “Mitgehenkönnen – Vertrautsein – ‘*Liebe*.’” This is written in the context of *Phänomenologische Anschauung*, or “intuition.” Martin Heidegger, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, GA 58 (Frankfurt Am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), p. 185. Quoted in Jean-Luc Marion, *Being*

is by no means easy or uninterested, is "motivated," impelled, or brought forward by some particular interests or desires on the part of the *adonné*. This suffuses transcendental phenomenology, even down to the core of its reductions, with not only love, but also with *a being motivated by love*, the will, passions, and indeed, desire. Love is to intuition and awareness what light is to visual appearance, and both are forms of seeing.

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Chapter 3
The Manifolds of Desire and Love in Marion's *The Erotic Phenomenon*

Abstract This chapter seeks clarification into how Marion understands "desire," especially in *The Erotic Phenomenon*. Philosophies of "objectivity" have lost sight of love and its uniquely supporting evidences, and desire plays a number of roles in restoring to love the "dignity of a concept," in its contribution to forming selfhood and "individualization," and in its establishing the paradoxical bases of the erotic reduction and "eroticization." Since he claims in *La Rigueur des Choses* that "*The Erotic Phenomenon* logically completes the phenomenology of the gift and the saturated phenomenon," it is necessary to conceive of how and to what degree. The erotic reduction demands that one bracket oneself and return to the *Ursprung* of intuition by asking the important question "can I be the first to love?" This chapter initiates an application of these findings on the manifold of desire back onto Marion's understanding of "the gift" and his phenomenology of givenness. How might the erotic reduction and the reduction to givenness interrelate? Might love and desire be modes or "capacities" of alteration of one's experience within intuition? Desire, which is conceived in relation to "lack" as a resource, provides a kind of "negative assurance" that allows the *adonné* to access an affirmation of love.

> *Love itself, in the course of its movement, is what brings about the continuous emergence of ever-higher value in the object – just as if it were streaming out from the object of its own accord, without any sort of exertion (even of wishing) on the part of the lover.* – Max Scheler[1]

Is phenomenology permitted to access its "whys?" Given the method's focus on finding the things or "whats" of intuition, and provided it has the tools or "hows" of accessing those "whats," it appears that its "whys" easily can be overlooked. To what degree might Marion, in his insistence upon the gift, givenness, and the manifold of motivations always already in cognition, initiate an effort to explore and understand the relation between these whys, whats, and hows? Indeed, Marion himself has his own motivations for spending over two decades working on the problem of the gift. Such work was not for the sake of simply "the gift" in and of itself, or for

[1] Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, trans. Peter Heath (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), p. 157.

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providing a more primary mode of givenness in transcendental consciousness, but for a purpose that has motivated Marion's work since the beginning. Even his works that focus on phenomenology's structure and methodology bear the marks of this other, driving force. His more phenomenologically oriented readers might find works like the 1986 *Prolegomena to Charity* oddly out of place, although this text allowed him to test the limits of his phenomenology towards this greater aim, and to show that he had not "given up on this project, despite the delay in completing it."[2] This project, driving force, and motivation was and still is "love," which maintains a near metonymic relationship with "desire." One might read all of Marion's oeuvre, even works that appear purely devoted to phenomenology, with this goal of "saving" love in mind.[3] Yet, it isn't until *Le Phénomène Érotique* (first published in 2003) that the issue of love receives a close treatment, despite the fact that Marion claims it "has obsessed me since the publication of *The Idol and The Distance* in 1977. All the books I have published since then bear the mark, explicit or hidden, of this concern."[4] This would include all of his works on the topic of the gift and givenness. One reason for his interest in the matter of love came from the recognition that the topic, which plays a central role in everyday life, had been so underestimated in the philosophical tradition, even to the point of being reduced to an irrational drive.

A close reader of Marion's work would recognize that love is obviously a central topic. Given this centrality, it is necessary to understand how it relates to other centrally important topics throughout his oeuvre, namely the gift.[5] It is a bit puzzling, however, that the points of relation and tension between these two topics are not

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[2] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 10.

[3] Perhaps the first occasions Marion makes an explicit move to consider gift alongside desire is in "Sketch of a Phenomenological concept of Gift," in *Postmodern Philosophy and Christian Thought*, ed. Merold Westphal (Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 138. As Marion demands, "if, in effect, we understand *love* as *give* in a privileged sense, this gift can only remain itself inasmuch as it does not diminish itself in an exchange, wherein reciprocity would annul the gratuity; the gift requires, in order to give itself, that it decide *itself* as a gift beginning with itself alone, and that it give without return, without either responses or reimbursement." And Marion shortly thereafter continues "the 'enemy': the one who does not love in return and therefore permits one to love freely (without reservation, in other words) permits the gift to occur."

[4] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 10.

[5] In an interview, Marion added: "When I started to study philosophy, I was very much impressed that an issue which was so important to me […] the question of love, was *so* underestimated, to put it mildly, by classical metaphysics. That is, from Descartes on, perhaps late scholasticism to Nietzsche, to some extent, the issue of love, the question of love, looks more and more degraded into passion, irrationality and so on, in contrast to the central role played by love in our daily experience indeed […] and in the first attempt to [build a] philosophy, where love was central […which we see…] in Plato, in Christian thought, [and] to some extent in Aristotle as well. So, I started to make the "long walk" around this misleading interpretation. So in fact, as soon as *The Idol and The Distance* the question of love and gift was, in fact, already asked […]. And I first found my way out of this misunderstanding of love with the question of givenness, when to my surprise, I discovered that givenness could be seen as the call of […] phenomenology, not intended as a new *access* to the question of love […] but it *could* be the right door into a new understanding [of love]." Jean-Luc Marion in "On Gift and Desire: An Interview with Jean-Luc Marion." See Appendix.

explicitly stated in his work. Thus, clarifying pressure should be put on the question as to how central love has been, and to what degree it is implemented and implicated in his understanding of the gift's relation with economy, the call of givenness, and the experience of the *adonné* with saturated phenomena. While Marion doesn't explicate *how* or to what extent these topics of gift and love are intertwined, his work indeed opens the door for multiple treatments of their interconnectivity. That is the central aim of the following two chapters. If, as he claims, all of his work since 1977 was for the sake of finally coming to be *able* to write *The Erotic Phenomenon*, then by implication, all of his work on the gift has an intimate relation with his writings about love, which in turn offered him the opportunity to *extend* the phenomenality of givenness (*donation*). One might even conclude that the great trilogy on the topics of gift and givenness (*Reduction and Givenness, In Excess,* and *Being Given*) had, at least implicitly within it, a motif and hope for finally "solving" the problem of love and *eros*, for indeed all of his books "…above all the last three, have been just so many steps toward the question of the erotic phenomenon."[6] This raises a number of questions. How exactly are gift and love interconnected, and why did Marion spend an entire decade on the problem of the gift partly in order to be able to offer a phenomenology of love? Marion gives a few more hints:

> I have attempted, particularly in *Etant donné: Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation*, to lay down more than prolegomena – to sketch the phenomenological situation of an *ego* for whom, at the very outset and on principle, loving and being loved is not forbidden. This *ego*, designated as he who is given over to the phenomenon (*l'adonné au phénoméne*), and himself through donation as point of departure, can in effect expose himself to an *alter ego*, who does not reduce to his object, because this *alter ego* comes to him, without cause, without expectation, and contrary to all intentionality. But the possibility thus opened for a conceptual approach to love has not yet been pursued nor brought to conclusion. While waiting to keep the promises that I have dared to make, I would like at least to render a service: to regain, concerning love (and thus charity), several evidences that have most often been lost in the spectral clarity of the world's objects.[7]

Objectivity has lost sight of love and its uniquely supporting evidences, and Marion wished to establish the possibility of the *adonné*, for whom "loving" is central, and this has propelled him into significant alterations of both themes individually, and together, ultimately taking "the long road" to save love. Similarly, his work on givenness also plays a role in getting him to the point of being able to reconstruct the self, as "given over" to an *alter ego*, an other.[8] Before writing *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Marion concludes *Being Given* – which has come to be known as his phenomenological magnum opus – with a short meditation on love. This text, which marks the completion of his triptych on the problem of the gift ends with the very important, and telling question: "Could the phenomenology of givenness finally

[6] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 10.

[7] Jean-Luc Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity* trans. Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), pp xi–xii.

[8] This reconstruction of the ego as now "the given" allows for the functionality of something like a "self" without all the metaphysical baggage.

restore to it [love] the dignity of a concept?"[9] That is to say, givenness is a key that Marion will use to unlock his own, new interpretation of love. Again, those unfamiliar with Marion's oeuvre might be surprised to find this idea of love in a text committed to the reconfiguration of phenomenology, but as Marion understands it, love is precisely what phenomenology needs, and he begins in this trajectory with giving love its own kind of rationality, separating it from metaphysics, consciousness, or being; themes that are also central to instating givenness at the center of phenomenological thinking.

How is love to be considered distinctly from the rationality of reason, and how is it to take on the role of motivating phenomenological understanding as its *Grundmotiv*?[10] As noted in Chap. 2, despite the issue that love is scarcely present in Heidegger's works, Marion enigmatically suggests that even in Heidegger's approach something like love, as more "fundamental" than "understanding" is already present in consciousness, even before one's experience of oneself as thinking or doubting. As phenomenology's "privileged theme," love is its purpose and driving force; charging phenomenology with a greater and perhaps more existentially adequate interest in performing the reduction than merely the will to knowledge and understanding, which are concepts exterior to one's personhood and identity, and ultimately incapable of ever "defining" a person. What one knows hardly breaches one's interior self.

In *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Marion wants to reconfigure "love," for as the most misunderstood of all words, it has been either over-conceptualized within the sphere of rational thought, or entirely inscribed within the register of metaphysics. And because it has been misdiagnosed to belong to either one or the other extremes, it must be rethought and reconfigured in a way that avoids both. His reconfiguration of Husserl's "givenness" plays a role in *how* love must be reconsidered, especially as the "call" of givenness. Thus, one might suggest that Marion's is a phenomenology that takes this call of givenness to be one that, in the calling, and in the call's being heard, is not devoid of love.

Further, Marion's examinations of givenness were for the sake of showing that there could be such a thing as a gift void of exchange in phenomenal experience. Without this "possibility" of gift, he understands that there is also no possibility of love, which he takes to be void of (or at least, unmotivated by) self-interest, economy, and reciprocity. This problem, which one finds in the work of Derrida and through which Marion spent over a decade working, will be more closely addressed in Chap. 4.[11] The aim of this chapter is to illuminate how Marion understands

[9] Jean-Luc Marion. *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 324.

[10] Ibid., p. 324.

[11] A problem that Marion points out concerning the "egos" of the past, is that they can only love reciprocally; it will only love if it can get love in return. However, this is entirely contrary to love for Marion, as love must be contrary to self-return: "What does the erotic reduction, in spite of the ego, open before it? At best, in the highest estimation of its fearful expectations, the ego hopes not to lose anything there – it hopes that love will give it assurance at a fair price." Jean-Luc Marion,

"desire," most especially as it relates with love. For if in Marion's phenomenology there is an important connection between his work on givenness and that on love, *and* between the desires and passivity of the *adonné* in phenomenological intuition, then a treatment of desire is also necessary. To what extent is love active within intuition, and how far can desire be thought as selfless and aneconomical? What is "desire" for Marion?

In an early commentary on Marion's *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Claude Romano claims that in that text "he [Marion] never speaks of 'desire' or of 'instinct,' or of 'sexual drives' – even if the correspondent phenomena are present in his analyses, and even minutely described."[12] Although Romano offers a number of significant clarifications of this text, Marion does, in fact, speak extensively of desire in this text, yet does so in a way that is distinct from how the topic is generally conceived in twentieth century psychoanalysis, which categorizes desire alongside "drive" or "sexual instinct." This may be why Romano dismisses its importance in *The Erotic Phenomenon*. Yet, Romano recognizes that Marion's "love cannot be broken down into desire, on the one hand, and feelings, on the other." And that "there is not a pre-erotic, stammering stage of love – the stage of desire," which is generally taken to be aimless and blind. The lack of a sharp distinction between desire and love in Marion's work is part and parcel of his appropriation of desire on the terms of love, and this distinguishes it from generally economical, self-oriented terms such as "drive" or "sexual instinct." Marion's redefining and expropriating desire for and within love demands that one tread lightly concerning desire as a stand-alone concept, or simply as absorbed by "love."

The aim of the two following chapters is to show how the deeply intimate relationship between the gift and desire works for Marion, namely in *The Erotic Phenomenon* and *Being Given*. Marion simultaneously attempts to "save" love through his work on the gift and givenness, while also inserting into the gift and givenness a distinctly "loving" intonation. Given the concerns Derrida raises, which will be carefully addressed in the second section of this book, Marion must first make a place in phenomenal experience for the gift in a way that leaves it irreducible to economy and its many predicates. If gift can be reduced to exchange, then love forfeits its status as a selfless, aneconomical act, and any "love of self is only

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The Erotic Phenomenon, trans Stephen E. Lewis, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 68–69.

[12] Romano continues "On the contrary, with sexuality we are already within the dimension of eroticism, which is to say of love, one and indivisible. Far from desire being a simple 'drive' within me, which turns toward objects and aims blindly at them, the phenomenon of erotic attraction is a global phenomenon that is impossible to break down into elements or parts (here Marion is particularly sensitive to the teaching of Heidegger throughout *Sein und Zeit*), a phenomenon in which it is the flesh of the other that eroticizes my flesh: my 'eroticization,' writes Marion, 'comes to me from the other.'" Claude Romano, "Love in Its Concept: Jean-Luc Marion's The Erotic Phenomenon," in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 2–3.

good for hatred, received or given."[13] In efforts to ultimately draw these correlations, this chapter reveals how Marion understands and employs "desire" in *The Erotic Phenomenon* by considering the topic in five contextual relations: knowledge, selfhood and the erotic reduction, individualization, love, and desire's paradox and function in "eroticization."

3.1 Goals of *The Erotic Phenomenon*

The Erotic Phenomenon is as enigmatic as it is ambitious. It demands that the reader have a working knowledge of phenomenology, but also the ability to suspend such a knowledge as Marion is reworking methodological frameworks. While the text is contextually rigorous, he is no longer setting the stage for phenomenology, but performing it. It's lack of footnotes or extensive references to other thinkers relieves the reader of certain responsibilities to contextualize the work in the philosophical tradition, yet it can also have the effect of distancing the reader from the tradition. The text acts as a differential between his two duplex-trilogies. The major phenomenological works (*Reduction and Givenness, In Excess,* and *Being Given*) and those more theological in nature (*God without Being, The Idol and Distance,* and *Prolegomena to Charity*) come together in an entirely phenomenological attempt to think of love, which is illuminated via theological themes and concepts. Although Marion has made explicit the need for differentiation between philosophy and theology, this text tests those disciplinary borders as well as the possibilities of love as a synthesizing concept between them.

Prior to considering the specific details of desire in *The Erotic Phenomenon*, it is helpful to sketch the text's basic interests. These interests can be read through the lens of seven, non-equivalent themes, which are listed here in no particular order.[14] The first is that of inter-disciplinarity. Marion implicitly addresses the insufficiencies of any attempt to represent too heavily one discipline over the other (phenomenology, theology i.e.). This is indicative of a more explicit aim, which is to ensure that he offers a phenomenology of love that avoids the recourse to over-qualify and

[13] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 63.

[14] Though Marion states that there are three aims of the text, I am expanding upon these "themes" to show some of the implicit interests as well. As Romano notes, Marion imagines this text as having as little as three aims or "theses, in appearance extremely simple, the consequences of which The Erotic Phenomenon opens out methodically: (1) love speaks with only one meaning: it is perfectly univocal, whether we are talking about God's love or that of creatures, whether maternal, paternal, or filial love, or the love found in friendship and in carnal love; (2) love sketches "another figure of reason" (15): there is an erotic rationality that exceeds (and, according to the author, precedes) metaphysical rationality; and (3) we must think a "love without being" that excepts itself from the horizon of ontology, and which prescribes for phenomenology a new field of research and even a sui generis realm of phenomenality." Claude Romano, "Love in Its Concept: Jean-Luc Marion's The Erotic Phenomenon," in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 321–322.

over-conceptualize love, as well as its counter impulse, which is to leave love ultimately "unknown" and, in effect, abandoned to metaphysics. This is a real problem for Marion, and he carefully attempts to articulate a language for love that avoids those two impulses, demanding that the erotic phenomenon comes through a *sort* of intentional effort to bring about a gift by way of the decision to be the first to love.

A second theme is the further elucidation of the interrelated issues of ipseity (selfhood, identity) and alterity (otherness), which are intimately related with his conception of the *adonné*, and his saturated phenomenon of "the flesh," as described in the preceding chapter. Only through love can one receive oneself – from the other – in conjunction with one's decision of "the will" to love them. The other is "a calling" in general, and the call to love the other in particular. Thus, the call to love the other is also a call to abandon one's subjectivity, selfhood, and ipseity, for in answering the call to love, there can be no desire for a return or exchange. In answering the call to love, one experiences a "pure loss" without a return. This sense of pure loss is also central to his phenomenology of givenness, but here gets developed in terms of the "erotic reduction," the aims of which are situated according to the attempt to be the first to love the "other," who can at any point arrive without warning.[15]

Thirdly, a thematic focus in the text is a reconstructing of the Cartesian account of the *ego cogito* on the basis of love. Marion replaces the "I think therefore I am," with what appears to be a new maxim: "I love therefore I am." The first published edition of *Le Phénomène Érotique* originally held the subtitle "*Six Méditations*," but it was dropped from both the English – as well as the most recent German – translations for reasons still to be explained. Yet this former subtitle evokes Marion's interest in employing this text to replace the Cartesian *cogito* by inserting within those meditations on selfhood "the tonality of an erotic disposition." The closest one gets to locating such dispositions in Descartes' work are in the *Passions of the Soul*, which indeed play a role in Marion's development of the primacy of the affective dimensions of experience. In Descartes's work is an intricate interplay between passivity and activity, which might be reduced to the self *actively* affecting itself, thus simultaneously indicating the *passivity* of the self.[16] It is important to note that Marion is not only a phenomenologist or theologian, but also an international authority on Descartes. The influence of being such an authority, as Gschwandtner notes, is paramount to any reading of Marion.[17]

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[15] Marion's development of a way to think of love beyond the strictures of intentionality indicate that he is aware of Derrida's concerns of this phenomenological concept.

[16] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 15–16. See also Jean-Luc Marion, *On the Ego and On God: Further Cartesian Questions*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 134. There Marion sketches the cogito on the terms of desire, and offers a reading of Descartes' *Passions of the Soul*.

[17] "What Marion develops in his early writings on Descartes….is absolutely essential for fully understanding and appreciating Marion's later arguments. Many of the later claims…. are deeply grounded and thoroughly prepared in his earlier writings. Marion's writings still make up about half of the corpus of his published writings, and even in the most recent works he often refers back

The fourth, and perhaps most important theme in this text is situated around the overall aim of showing that love must not be bound to reciprocity and exchange. This claim forms a central tenor to the erotic reduction.[18] For Marion, the interrelated issues of exchange and economy threaten love's possibility, and the way in which psychoanalysts – Freud in particular – have traditionally dealt with the issue of love can be reduced to two founding questions, which are ultimately vain or self-interested: "what's the use?" and "does someone love me?" Marion holds that these questions have imbedded within them the expectations of reciprocity and entitlement, and thus are antithetical to love *as such*. Instead, the question that comes truly from the "erotic reduction" is framed better as "can I love first?" ("*puis-je aimer, moi le premier*?").[19] This question is two-fold. First, it forces the individual to question himself – who he loves, how he loves the other, and if he loves the other at all in the first place. It is a question that takes one to his internal responsibility for the other. Secondly, it draws attention to the temporal dimension of loving *first*, which is an act that comes from a heart without intent to receive something (e.g., love) in return.[20]

Marion was well aware of this problem of the reciprocity of love as early as the 1970s, when he began to formulate its concerns in *The Idol and Distance* through a radical reading of Nietzsche's *Gay Science*.[21] However, it wasn't until *The Erotic Phenomenon* that he reduced the problem to a logics of alterity. The acute problem can be formulated as such: is my knowledge or love of the other actually the other, or is it simply my own reflective desire for what this other is *to* or *for* me? If it is the case that the other is simply a mirror of my own consciousness as an idea, then any

to these earlier ones." Christina Gschwandtner, *Reading Jean-Luc Marion: Exceeding Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), xv.

[18] For further concerns about how Marion transitions from his reduction to givenness to his erotic reduction, see Claude Romano, "Love in Its Concept: Jean-Luc Marion's The Erotic Phenomenon," in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, Ed. Kevin Hart (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

[19] Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: six méditations*. (Paris: Librairie générale française, 2004), pp. 116–120. See also Robyn Horner, *Jean-Luc Marion: A Theo-logical Introduction* (Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), p. 145.

[20] This is in respect to a theological concern over how we might love *as* we are loved first by God (I John 4:10). This ultimately poses a problem within Marion's work, for if God loved us first, and we are to respond to that love by loving back (or by loving the other), then a kind of reciprocity inevitably takes place. If God loves us first, are we not indebted to God for that love? Marion employs this not so much as a problematic impasse, but as a kind of theological bridge to the phenomenological problem. We need to be able to love in the first place, *and* in the first place. And without a first love, this is impossible.

[21] In attempting to describe Nietzsche's position on God and love, Marion suggests that for Nietzsche "The love by which God loves is *Eros* that aims at exclusive possession. It first requires strict reciprocity: 'A God who loves men, provided only that they believe in him, and who casts an evil eye and threats upon anyone who does not believe in his love! What? A love encapsulated in if-clauses attributed to an almighty God! A love that has not even mastered the feelings of honor and vindicativeness!'" Marion continues, "Like a sentimental ruse, this reciprocity masks the taking–possession of the other." Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. Thomas A Carlson (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2001), p. 69.

"love" for this other would be instead for my idea or *idol* of him; not the other as other, the other *as such*. The results of which are that *my* love can never actually reach the other, and are actions only for my own good. I am the only benefactor of love. Instead, Marion imagines love as that which occurs *independent* of my self, *in spite of* my subjectivity, and as that which forces me to exceed – but not necessarily "transcend" – my lived experiences of myself.

A fifth theme that is of note in this text is the ultimate eradication of the distinctions between the different "types" of love. Here, the three types of love that have come to be known by their Greek nomination (*philia*, *eros*, *agape*, excluding the lesser known *storge*) all share features of one another. On the one hand, *eros* relies upon *agape* love, which is selfless, as *agape* is a point of origination of *eros*. While on the other hand, one can enter an experience of selflessness through *eros* as an immanent form of *agape*. These distinctions between the types of love are not helpful for any discipline that aims to take love seriously as a concept, which is marked by self-renouncing, sacrificing, and freeing from selfishness. Further, and in pushing the aforementioned theological limit, Marion insinuates that love also has, built within it (but without being reduced to), elements of faith and hope. Love is indeed the greatest of these inter-related Christian actions.

A sixth theme that recurs throughout the text is love's relation with "the flesh," one of the "saturated phenomena" he began exploring years prior to the writing of *The Erotic Phenomenon*. Although often exemplified by Marion in cases of "romantic love," his meditations on the flesh, and on love in general, are not reducible to physicality or carnality. Instead, the "Flesh" (described in closer detail in Chap. 1) is the particular saturated phenomenon that corresponds to the Kantian category of "relation," and enacts the giving of the *adonné* "in relation." In order for the *adonné* to receive its flesh (this place of affection or "touch line" or relation with the other) it is self-affected "first in and by itself." Here one might notice an adaptation of both Descartes' passions and Michel Henry's "auto-affection."[22] As overwhelming my intention and unfolding "according to the fold of givenness," the flesh leaves one surprised that one has been called, and "is here."[23]

[22] Jean-Luc Marion. *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 231. Intentionality does not allow me to properly love the other *as such*, for in intending to love the other, I still objectify her. It is when the other engages in this activity with me that I can reach love *of* the other. This is what it means to love – to live in the experience of our shared "invisible" gazes. In Caputo's view, "The choice of topic is less surprising than it might seem. Not only is there a long-standing analogy between mystical and erotic experience but the idea that God (who is without being) has become "flesh" is the central teaching of Christianity. That implies that flesh can do without being, a proposal that Marion defends in the present study." John Caputo, "Review of Jean-Luc Marion's *The Erotic Phenomenon*," in *Ethics*, 118:1 (2007): pp. 164–168.

[23] Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 99. And Speaking to its paradox: "The only flesh that the lovers make thus escapes them at the outset; it draws aside from them immediately and puts itself on the point of leaving even before showing itself in the light of day." Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Stephen Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 203.

The seventh theme of note in this text concerns the radical *decision* to love. It is *my* decision and desire to love the other that engages the inter-giving (not "exchange") of "flesh." The other is individualized according to my desire and decision to love. Although we experience saturated phenomena (e.g., the flesh) in their excess or saturation of intuition, one's decision to love is offered, phenomenologically decided upon, and ultimately given.[24] Such decisions, however, are not reducible to "reasons" or "intentions" for love's reasons do not have a logical explanation, but instead unfold according to affectivity in the intuition of that which appears in/to love. In the coming chapters the way in which love negotiates the problematic borders between intuition and intention will be further elucidated.

The radical decision to love is developed out of an inversion of Nietzsche's "will to power." For Nietzsche, the will to power maintains a similar decisionism, but it lacks a true connection with the other, only allowing for a will that is ultimately reducible to a "drive" (*Trieb*), which must necessarily be self-seeking. Marion's decisionism keeps the other within view of the will, allowing one to choose to *not* love the other. Such choice allows for a purposeful attachment to the other, who does not make one strong through one's own power or will (Nietzsche), but makes one weak and vulnerable, as it is unclear as to who this other is, and what they will bring into one's world. Thus, strength is not self-sufficiency, but its inverse – self-deficiency that plays into the risky decision to love the other.[25] Marion inverts the Nietzschean "will to power," re-claiming it not as a resource, but as an essential lack. Nietzsche's "will" makes us strong, while Marion's "desire" makes us weak.[26] This further speaks to the primacy of love, on which the will to power ultimately rests. This decision to love individualizes the lover, and according to the lover's lack and desire, defines the lover most intimately. The inference here is that when one love's, one takes up and reveals an essential lacking in a way not unlike the Heideggerian *Abgrund*, the groundlessness of a decision that entails the relinquishing of control (and in a paradoxical sense, decision itself). It does not matter as to where this decision to love originates or what kinds of desires affect it, but only that it is chosen, coming from an act of free volition that is the response to the erotic reduction.[27]

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[24] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 22.

[25] Ibid., pp. 116–120. See also Robyn Horner, *Jean-Luc Marion: A Theo-logical Introduction* (Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), p. 145. Horner suggests that "there is always the chance that this type of decision will keep us firmly within the grip of metaphysics, but then there is the chance that it will open onto excess."

[26] This reversal becomes even clearer, as Marion in a recent interview asserted that he "would like very much to do with love what … Nietzsche has done with will to power; that is to deconstruct the claim to objective truth, arguing that in fact … what is at work is the will to power… but the will to power itself 'rests,' so to speak, on the question of love. This *may be* the next step [of my work]." Jean-Luc Marion in "On Gift and Desire: An Interview with Jean-Luc Marion" See Appendix.

[27] This risk to love is indicative of love's departure from reason itself. In *On the Ego and On God* he claims that desire operates on a different level than reason. See also Jean-Luc Marion, *On the*

3.2 Marion's Conceptions of Desire

In efforts to understand the manifold of Marion's theory of desire (*désir, désire, désirer*) in *The Erotic Phenomenon*, it will be contextualized here according to the five themes of knowledge, selfhood and the erotic reduction, individualization, love, and desire's function in "eroticization." After contextualizing desire according to these themes, a manifold of ways in which to consider his theory of desire will become apparent, then clarified in conclusion: desire as lack, as non-universally defining, as non-governing of love, as cyclical in the erotic reduction, and as inherently related to the flesh of the other. This will involve a careful negotiation between desire *as such*, as not reducible to a tautology with love, the interconnection that Marion insists upon existing between desire and love, and a further contextualization of "desire" in twentieth century thought, namely in the work of Lacan, a figure Marion occasionally yet implicitly relies upon in thinking desire. The wager is that his references to desire, which are a central aspect of love, lend further insight into the very basis of the structure of the *adonné*, the gift, and the phenomenology of givenness.

3.2.1 The Desire to Know

The first reference to desire appears as early as the third paragraph, where Marion reminds his reader of the age-old problem of "philosophy," and its definition as "the love of wisdom." As Aristotle claims, "all men desire to know," and in reading this as radically as possible, Marion demands that philosophy begin with loving *before* knowing, for in order to "comprehend, it is first necessary to desire to comprehend; put another way, one must be astonished at not comprehending… philosophy comprehends only to the extent that it loves…"[28] That is, directly as a result of my lack (in this case, lacking knowledge) I desire knowledge. I desire this thing that I lack, am in a way "astonished" or surprised that I do not have this content that I lack, and in turn, respond with a choice. I choose to love knowing, and then attempt to know. Generally, this all happens without our knowing it. Given the somewhat vague usages of desire and love in this passage, one might be tempted to think the concepts are synonymous for him. Yet, there is no simple tautology between the two, for as evidenced just lines later (as well as in multiple other places in *EP*), he provides another formula that in fact employs their distinction, suggesting that "it may be that in order to attain the truth, it is necessary, in *every* case, first to desire it, and

Ego and On God: Further Cartesian Questions, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 77.

[28] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 2.

therefore to love it."[29] The differences between love and desire might be thought according to the steps of knowledge: we *first* desire truth before we receive it, or "attain" to it, and then (or "therefore") we in turn, love that truth. Our first desiring truth *then* loving it should remind us that this desire is coming from our lacking the truth. We respond to this lack and this desire, still by a choice (recall the earlier description of the decision of the will in Marion's love). We respond to desire by choosing to love or not love the truth.[30]

This desire is not the desire of the Freudian *Trieb*, an unconscious drive that we are given and then strive to fulfill out of obligation to ourselves, but rather, as Marion puts it in an interview around the time of the publication of the French *Le phénomène érotique*, "desire is the 'backstage' of metaphysics, something never enlightened by metaphysics" and there is "perhaps a deep rationality and consciousness of desire which is other than and goes far beyond mere unconsciousness."[31] A desire that occurs unconsciously is one that belongs to metaphysics as another transcendental and inaccessible place, and earlier psychoanalysts fall prey to this metaphysics, often without knowing it. This is not to say that there are unknown desires within me that I essentially do not "know" myself, but that (in the case of Freud, for example) desire was put out of phenomenological play. Freud's *wunsch* is part and parcel of the psychic/biological libido that fuels motivation and basic drives such as self-preservation, sex, etc. For Marion, "This is the limitation of the first psychoanalysis, where to put desire beyond question, Freud had to base it on the [drive,]

[29] Ibid., p. 2.

[30] Instead, philosophy, and those who attempt to do it, have fled from this truth, denying it in exchange for "the science of objects – that pottage of lentils." Ibid., p. 2. And, this exchange is a direct result of philosophy's having "lost even the desire for love, indeed, sometimes one would almost believe that philosophy hates love. Philosophy does not love." Ibid., p. 3.

[31] "Or you may argue – and I think it was part of Levinas' point about Plato – that the desire is prior to the philosophical intention to know and has to be taken seriously as such. So you may try to focus your attention on desire 'as such.' This can explain an aspect of neo-Platonism, for instance, regarding desire 'as such.' But the question is whether desire does not claim far more than mere philosophy understood as a theory of knowledge. Perhaps the question of desire is too serious to be explained within the same horizons as the question of knowledge. Perhaps the question of desire can not only not be answered but not even be asked in the horizon of Being. This is a reason why I think desire is the "backstage" of metaphysics, something never enlightened by metaphysics (which is unable to do so). And so we have now perhaps to open a new horizon where the question of desire may be taken seriously. And it is not taken seriously, for instance, in psychoanalysis, because psychoanalysis can consider and describe desire, but it takes desire as simply a drive, an unconscious drive; it is nothing more than a drive, largely and maybe for ever. But there is perhaps a deep rationality and consciousness of desire which is other than and goes far beyond mere unconsciousness. To open this new horizon we have to get rid of the horizon of Being, which is, at the end of metaphysics, quite unable because not broad enough to do justice to desire." Jean-Luc Marion, "Jean-Luc Marion and Richard Kearney," in *After God: Richard Kearney and the Religious Turn in Continental Philosophy*, Ed. Richard Kearney (New York: Fordham Press, 2006), p. 331. In this same Volume, Kearney also contributes to this question by recognizing that there is "within metaphysics a metaphysical desire to understand, to conceptualize, …to make sense of." p. 329.

that is a very undecided physiological, psychological basis."[32] Paradoxically, although desire is objective for Freud as this "drive" (and the very basis upon which psychoanalysis is built) it still elusively hides in the unconscious. It is a "hidden" yet driving force upon which the system relies, and this makes it a paradigm for metaphysics. Thus, Marion's versions of desire and love have their own kinds of rationality, and are not to be given over to metaphysics. Whether Marion is aware of it or not, this implicates to some extent Descartes, from whom we get the idea of the "pure and untouched" *Ego* from the *Cogito*; a place that is inaccessible to thought. This aspect of Cartesianism is what fueled Freud's notion of *the unconscious*. The Freudian dialectic is one between the *conscious* subject, and the *unconscious* one, and the *product* or *synthesis* between these two is what allows for new discoveries about oneself (thus the talking cure). Whereas for Lacan there is no pure, untouched, or hidden unconscious, but simply desire in which is our "entire history" is a "censored chapter" marked by a "lesion," and to which I take revenge against by way repression.[33]

Another way in which desire can be thought in relation to knowledge in *The Erotic Phenomenon* appears in a treatment of the historical placement or opposition between love and charity. Love has been imagined as "supposedly possessive desire and [charity] supposedly gratuitous benevolence, rational love (of the moral law) and [love as an] irrational passion."[34] Marion opposes this idea of separating these two "types" of love, for as already shown, he claims their unity. Instead, love *is not* this "possessive desire," or the desire to consume, own, or take control-over. Love is not simply a barbaric "passion" that lacks the ability to be conditioned or cultured by us, nor is it completely up to chance as to where our desire takes us. Thus, why do we desire to know? We do so because we *enjoy* knowing; we experience the *pleasure* of knowledge, which is indeed "a means… to such an enjoyment of the self." And this desire to know reveals an even deeper desire, for "desire itself, more essential than the desire to know, springs forth – desire, which, even in knowledge, only desires self-enjoyment."[35] Thus, there is an unhidden primacy that Marion

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[32] As Marion put it in an interview: "But the question of desire itself remains puzzling because I don't take for granted that desire may be the last authority. I mean that, from time to time we face the possibility of … a lack of desire. We should not take for granted that desire is always working, because we cannot control desire; we cannot produce it. So where is this coming from? That is the point. And desire as such is less an answer than a question. This is the limitation of the first psychoanalysis, where to put desire beyond question, Freud had to base it on the [drive,] that is a very undecided physiological, psychological basis." Jean-Luc Marion in "On Gift and Desire: An Interview with Jean-Luc Marion" See Appendix. See also Jean-Luc Marion, *On Descartes' Metaphysical Prism: The Constitution and the Limits of Onto-theo-logy in Cartesian Thought*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 200. There he suggests that desire renounces objects to come.

[33] Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Héloïse Fink and Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006), pp. 52, 96, and 98.

[34] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 5.

[35] Ibid., p. 11.

gives to desire. Desire desires self-enjoyment. Desire desires to enjoy, and knowing is the desire for, and enjoyment of knowing.

3.2.2 Desire, Selfhood, and the Erotic Reduction

The next important aspect of Marion's conception of desire appears in the next chapter of the *Erotic Phenomenon*, and in regard to selfhood:

> I do not become myself when I simply think, doubt, or imagine, because others can think my thoughts, which in any case most often do not concern me but, instead, the object of my intentionalities; nor do I become myself when I will, desire, or hope, I never know if I do so in the first person or only as the mask which hides (and is propped up by) drives, passions, and needs that play within me, yet without me. But I become myself definitely each time and for as long as I, as lover, can love first.[36]

As it later will be clarified, for Marion essential elements of desire necessarily *belong* to the other and not myself, and partly for this reason it does not constitute "me," nor is it unique to me. Only love allows me to become a self, while desire does not for it comes primarily from lacking. It only is in being the first to love that the erotic reduction might be engaged, and in which I can commit the only act that can singularly define me *qua* me. This reveals a distinction between desire and love: my desire is not uniquely mine and does not uniquely define me, while love, *which is invigorated by desire*, is that which is capable of constituting me as a self. This position is reflected in a Lacanian framework whereby desire marks the essence of man, desire is the lack of "being," and thus man is defined by this lacking that the other comes to fulfill. But this way of thinking desire leads to a problem: Love must complete an impossible act, for if desire is implicated within love, and if desire is never properly my own, then how can love ever be an act that comes from my own agency, and is a direct result of my decision? This problem will be returned to later in this chapter.

3.2.2.1 Desire Provoked by the Erotic Reduction

Marion then turns to consider desire and how the *adonné* operates in and with the erotic reduction. After briefly recounting the myth of Don Juan, Marion suggests that Don Juan takes "the initiative to love, without any other reason than to accomplish the erotic reduction itself. What is more, his desire does not so much provoke the erotic reduction as result from it."[37] Though desire is that which begins with our lack and thus comes to embody us, there is also a kind of desire that, in a way, comes on the tail-end of the erotic reduction; as its result. This is evidenced in Marion's reading of Don Juan, who persistently *asks the question* as to whether or not he can

[36] Ibid., p. 76.

[37] Ibid., p. 82.

be the first to love (though he never actually is): this is *the* question that "provokes" the erotic reduction. The particular desire that comes *after* the erotic reduction is the desire to love. Only after one asks "Can I love first?" can one express one's desire to love. Desire in this case is derivative of the erotic reduction, which in a sense, is born in that important, first question, thus *leading* to a decision.

But Don Juan does not succeed in loving, as evidenced by his quickly growing tired of the women whom he has "loved" (and thus objectified), turning away from them. Thus it isn't that he loves "too much," but in fact that he "loves too little, too short of the mark, without impetus; he loses his advance. Don Juan loves too little, not because he desires too much, but because he does not desire enough, or desire long enough, or desire persistently enough…" He does not hold to the erotic reduction, and thus the erotic "reduction is only accomplished so long as the advance is repeated."[38] Marion employs the myth of Don Juan to illustrate that although it may appear as if one is amorous, such love may be revealed only in the course of time. It may be that the supposed lover doesn't sustain the erotic reduction and therefore loses desire, no longer "desiring enough." The erotic reduction plays the essential role of engaging and inciting (perhaps even creating) our desire to love, and after the erotic reduction is engaged, it must be sustained by the desire for desire, or the desire to love, as the erotic reduction does not sustain itself. But this begins in a free decision of the will.

3.2.2.2 The Possibility of Desire and the Erotic Reduction

Marion indeed holds to a radical decisionism that is indicative of his view that we are ultimately "free" to make such decisions. For example, he demands that "I have the sovereign freedom to make myself a lover…I become amorous simply because I want to, without any constraint, according to my sole, naked desire."[39] My desire can be ineffective in the face of my choice to be a lover. I can postpone, constrain, or detain it. Desire is not that which turns us into lovers; it is our *decision to love* that does so, and even though desires are constantly at work, they do not govern necessarily the decision to love. In part, this is because love, once again, has its own "logic" and its own rationality. Although desire may play a central role, at least in the background of the *adonné*, desire "becomes" only *after* the engagement of the erotic reduction. Marion understands the reduction to givenness in a similar way, namely, in its being a sort of active-passive effort and choice. The erotic reduction is a concept that allows one to see how this active-passive element in intuition works for Marion. He claims that when "…the erotic reduction radically questions, 'can I love first?' desire is not yet at issue – it can only come later. At issue is the very condition of desire, which first requires this consent, and the possibility that it opens."[40] Now, in the erotic reduction, desire is not *an* issue or *the* issue, but this

[38] Ibid., p. 85.

[39] Ibid., p. 93.

[40] Ibid., p. 94.

does not rule out that desire is, at the very least, present within the thought and sense of the lover, or the one performing the erotic reduction. Only *later*, after I decide whether or not to love, does this become "an issue," challenge, or even a question. The erotic reduction is what "conditions" desire and "makes it possible." Desire might become "possible" only after the erotic reduction because it is only then that the inter-sociality it permits is formally engaged, namely, through our flesh "crossing with" the flesh of the other. That is, because my flesh becomes enjoined with the flesh of the other, desire becomes possible, which is part and parcel of my decision, for when I love to love "I am willing it and… deciding it."[41]

3.2.3 Desire and Individualization

For Marion, the lover does not become a "self" through desire, but through love: "the lover is individualized by *desire*, or rather by the desire that is *his* and no one else's."[42] Thus, that which makes the lover an individual is *his* desire *as* lover, which is a desire that cannot *originate in* the other. It is a very unique and singular desire that defines each individual lover, yet that which individualizes him is a combination between his uniquely given desire, and his choice to love (the other). By implication, without desire the lover would *not* be capable of being an individual, for desire in its more "raw" form is not capable of individualizing me as it always begins in "the other," not in the individual. On this point Marion is strikingly similar to Lacan. However, once one comes to direct that desire in a loving way, the lover has taken ownership of it and the lover is no longer simply a passive recipient of his desire. As this desire becomes particularized, it is now the lover's very own particular and unique desire-to-love. Yet is it possible to suggest that desire "in general," as still "the other's" desire, is ultimately incapable of *defining* me?

There is a particularly necessary and subtle distinction to be made between "individualization" and "definition." While desire in and of itself cannot "individualize me" or make me a self, desire does "define" me:

> Indeed, unless it merely obeys natural and physiological necessities (in which case we would be speaking of a simple need), desire cannot be universalized so that it applies to me and to anybody else; nothing belongs to me more than that which I desire, for *that* is what I lack; that which I lack defines me more intimately than everything that I possess, for what I possess remains exterior to me and what I lack in habits me; such that I can exchange what I possess, but not the lack that possesses my heart.[43]

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[41] Ibid., p. 94.

[42] Ibid., p. 108.

[43] Ibid., p. 108. Though desire is not a "need" it is a kind of hunger and capacity that seeks fulfillment. See also Jean-Luc Marion, *On the Ego and On God: Further Cartesian Questions*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007). See p. 69 for "desire and hunger," p. 91 for desire, capacity and dissatisfaction, and then p. 94, for desire as *capacitas*.

This passage may very well be the most revelatory of how Marion understands desire, which can be understood here according to four aspects. First, there is a necessary distinction between a drive or "simple need," and desire. Drives are universal (e.g., "I need to eat"), while desires are particular to each individual. Although they both spring from a kind of "lack," needs and drives dissolve or dissipate once "met," while desires, by definition, can never be met or accomplished. Marion again distances himself from the Freudian universal "drive" by giving desire the role of particularizing the individual in allowing her to choose to love or to not love.[44] Instead, Marion's work is aligned more closely with that of Lacan, who "was very well aware that there is no objective desire."[45] Given this general alignment, further correlations can be made between the two thinkers. Secondly, Marion suggests "lack" to be an essential part of desire. For Lacan, one comes to accept the desire of the other as one's own desires, and on this point (and without uttering Lacan's name), Marion makes the similar claim that the acceptance of the other's desire is a

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[44] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 108–109. The earlier French edition provides a helpful background for further understanding the above passage: "L'amant s'individualise d'abord par *le désir*, ou plutôt par *son* désir à lui et à personne d'autre. En effet, à moins qu'il n'obéisse qu'à des nécessités naturelles et physiologiques (et il s'agirait alors d'un simple besoin), le désir ne peut s'universaliser pour s'appliquer à moi et à n'importe qui; rien ne m'appartient plus que ce que je désire, car *cela* me manque; or ce qui me manque définit plus intimement que tout ce que je possède, car ce que je posède me reste extèrieur et ce qui me manque m'habite; en sorte que je peux échanger ce que je posède, mais non le manque qui me possède le cœur. Et, plus que tous, l'amant ne désire que celui qu'il a décideé de désirer, ou plutôt qui l'a décidé, lui, l'amant, à désirer; car le désir, sand doute parce qu'il repose sur le manque du désiré, se déclare d'autant plus puissamment qu'il éclate sans argument, voire sans raison; il naît à l'amant bien en deçà des explications et des justifications, parce qu'il surgit du manque même, par un travail du négatif et selon l'indispensable absence de ce qu'il désire." Jean-Luc Marion, *Le Phénomène Érotique: six méditations* (Paris: Grasset, 2003), p. 172.

[45] For Marion "Lacan was very well aware that there is no objective desire, which is a Christian position, and very polemical thesis against Freud. But Freud, as a follower of Schopenhauer, had admitted, I think, that there was an objective desire. But it is not even clear whether, for instance, the final goal of desire is self-conservation. I think that Lacan was better on that [issue of desire] than Freud." Jean-Luc Marion in "On Gift and Desire: An Interview with Jean-Luc Marion" See Appendix. Given this reference to Schopenhauer, it is helpful to at least sketch his understanding of desire. "The World" is a blind, illogical and aimless impulse that, as "will becoming object," is essentially the materialization and making-static of will – which in this case we can also say of desire – and will animates or gives life to the world. Will (*Wille*) is always at the foundation of instinctual drives and human life. Though Representation (*Vorstellung*) comes into relationship with "will" much in the way that electricity might relate with its spark, the will is "unrepresentable" in itself. Yet it is not simply the case that the will is the *cause* of representations, for Will also needs representation. The will plays a significant role in Schopenhauer's aesthetics, also. For example, through music one can experience the will in its most pure, unmediated and "unrepresented" form. Yet our status as desiring and willing beings is simply a sign of a structural and fundamental *lack*, for "suffering is the substance of life" and "desire, of its nature, is suffering." Thus, suffering and lack are that which make our world; a view that is reflective of Schopenhauer's own lack, that of an optimism concerning any ultimate meaning, hope, or harmony in the world. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. A. Burdeau, (Paris, PUF, 1966), p. 39, and p. 396.

defining moment for the "self." My desire is not my own, but in being *for* what I lack, I thus do not possess desire. Lacking is a kind of absolute, which cannot be understood (though again, does not fall into metaphysics for Marion). For Lacan, desire is the replacement concept for the *cogito* and of "understanding" as such. The *cogito*, is simply an *imaginary* function of a constructive symbolic, in the sense that it represents the feeble attempt to establish and presume an "identity" for the "subject," which is predicated upon another presumption that demands of a symbolic discourse a necessary I-world relationship.[46]

A third point that one might glean from this passage is that desire uniquely defines me and paradoxically, defines me through my lack of that which I desire. Since my desire defines me and my desire is quite precisely that which I lack, then my lack – paradoxically, still – also defines me. This desire, empowered by lack, gives me definition *more than anything else; any other thing I call "mine."* For Lacan, desire is dialectically connected with an other. The question, "*Ché vuoi?"* ("what do you want?") is the question that leads best the subject to the path of his own desire, through the other (in Lacan's case, the psychoanalyst). The subject always hears (but without knowing it) the question "what do I want?" to actually mean: "What does the other want from me?" Thus, for Lacan "desire" is always and only "the desire of the other." In fact, the entirety of human knowledge is mediated "by the other's desire." This is by no means an animalistic desire predicated on "lack/need," but one that goes deeper to the roots of the *conditio humana*.[47] The fourth, perhaps most important aspect of this reference is that one might infer that if desire fundamentally defines me because it is that which I lack, then that which I possess does not define me whatsoever. What I possess is "exterior to me" whereas that which I lack "inhabits me," and thus properly, yet still paradoxically, becomes "mine." Since my possessions are external and exterior to me, then they are never properly mine. My possessions are like clothes, which can be taken off or put on. Thus, in the context of love the only thing that we can give is our lack, because we can only properly and paradoxically "own" our lack and desire. Perhaps this is the only gift worth giving, for the gift is best given when it "gives nothing."

3.2.4 Desire Now Proceeding from Love

One must recall that the reversal that desire enacts: The giver is indeed the greatest receiver, and likewise, the giver of love receives the most from this act of love. But before any love for the other ever takes place, there is the decision to do so, and before that decision is a desire that begins with lack, which comes from the other. It

[46] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function," in *Ecrits*, trans. Héloïse Fink and Bruce Fink *Ecrits: the first complete edition in English* (New York: Norton, 2006), p. 52.

[47] Ibid., p. 98. The first other we ever experience is within us and is one whom we come to experience through "The Mirror Stage." See also p. 96.

is now possible to track Marion's consideration of desire less generally, and more specifically as "love's" desire:

> And, more than anything, the lover only desires the one that he has decided to desire, or rather who decided him, the lover, to desire; for desire, doubtless because it rests upon the lack of the desired, declares itself all the more powerfully when it bursts out without argument, indeed without reason; it is born in the lover just this side of explanations and of justifications, because it rises up out of lack itself, through a work of the negative and according to the indispensable absence of what it desires. Born of the pure lack of the other, the lover's desire affects him without his truly knowing why, nor through whom – and that is what individualizes him deep down.[48]

Lack in general can be thought more particularly as the "lack of reason." Instead of love proceeding from desire, it is now desire proceeding from love. Desire comes to the surface most powerfully (though it can still come after being processed through reason) when it comes by decision. However, this is not a decision that is entirely logical and rational, but rather one that proceeds from love's own rationality, from the *erotic reduction*. Such a decision occurs *prior to* our offering of justifications for loving the other (and in turn, desire proceeding from it), and Marion once again suggests – without contradicting his other positions concerning the inner "reason" of love – that there is such a thing as a "reasonless" decision; a decision that acts without justifications, but one that still proceeds by way employing a kind of calculation.[49] What is being calculated by the lover isn't whether or not loving the other is a wise "investment" or an intelligent decision, but rather, whether or not the lover can "be the first to love" the other. *If* the decision to love the other were based on economical justifications and calculations, then it would contradict it's love, leaving that act, in effect, not at all loving, and ultimately under the control of economy, reciprocity, and exchange, which Marion has repeatedly demanded to be antithetical to love and its reason.

Instead of a desire that is subject to reason, it most fundamentally comes through its own rationality, and in this case, lack. That is to say, lack (though not "need") is *a* reason of desire. Desire is based upon the "lack of the desired," and is thus a part of the order of lacking, sharing its genetic features.[50] Lacking is a kind of opening

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[48] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 108.

[49] Ibid., p. 109: "At this instant, in which it is precisely too late, in which it has already happened, in which I am made by the other and by my desire – I am no longer the same, and thus I am, at last, myself, individualized beyond the point of return."

[50] Desire must come from lack, and as such, births nothing. And this is something of which Derrida addresses in Kant's work. Kant's major failure for Derrida was that he didn't have an "antithesis." If you cut off the negating work, then you lose desire's function in thought. Derrida and Marion agree here, perhaps. A slight difference, though, is that, while Derrida abandons both reason and desire for not being capable of production, Marion simply renames reason and desire. For Marion, love indeed has its own rationality: "..A concept of love must be able to give a rationality to all that nonerotic thought disqualifies as irrational and degrades to madness: certainly desire and oaths, abandonment and promises, sexual enjoyment and its suspension, jealousy and lies, children and death, all of these events escape certain definition of rationality – one that fits with the things of the world…. But this clean getaway surely does not imply that these events lie in exile outside all

up, a particular expression of truth, *Unverborgenheit*, or unconcealment of that which is lacked. It is in this sense that desire comes through acts of negation, as it essentially *is* absence, is lack, is nothing. Desire's status as lacking indicates its rationality is not "limited to the world of things." Further, desire is the only thing that I can "have" because of the existence – or at the very least, the fantasy – of an other who is absent within me (for if she were present then I would never be me). Since I lack what I desire, I do not, nor can I ever, actually know either why I love her or exactly what my desires are towards her. This point will be further clarified in sections to follow.

By definition, the "lackingness" of a thing is incapable of being known, for there is, in fact, nothing to be known about it.[51] This element of lacking is a starting point for love, yet not in a way that leaves love ultimately "unknown" and therefore still inscribed in metaphysics. Instead, such lacking entails the necessity to begin with love as if it has its own dignity and rules, which operate according to lack, a realm outside even the jurisdiction transcendental consciousness. The rules of desire are based upon a lack, and this is why there is a constant slippage (*glissement*) of reason whenever one tries to apply reason to understanding love.[52]

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rationality; it suggests rather that they fall under another figure of reason, a 'greater rationality' – that which does not limit itself to the world of things…love falls under an *erotic* rationality." Ibid., p. 5.

[51] In order for desire to be sustained there must be something new for it to desire; in a way like Blanchot, there must be something unknown and unexposed. Marion suggests that there is a difference between a kind of "medical" nudity, in which we come to be physically examined simply as a body (almost as an object) and a nudity of the flesh. The medical sort of nudity is not capable of sustaining desire, or properly engaging the erotic reduction that would sustain it continually, and Marion claims that "…in order to remain the object of desire, the object strives maliciously not to strip itself too much, or too quickly – for the stripping nude destroys what is desirable in it, because the stripping nude transforms it into a simple object…" Similarly, desire disappears when it has been fulfilled and satisfied, and often at the expense of the object's consumption. Marion asserts that "the evident object of desire (for nothing hollows itself out more, in order to expose itself with less reserve) goes back up entirely to the surface of the visible…" and the "….body as an object cannot (at least not for very long) make itself be desired – the object does not hold the distance of desire. Desire can only kill the other, who would have the weakness or the imprudence to allow him or herself to be made an object." Ibid., p. 116.

[52] Ibid. p. 4. Indeed, "for there is a single, simple reason that explains why we can say nothing of lover or of charity: we have no concept whatsoever of love. Without a concept, each time that we pronounce the word 'love' or reel off 'words of love' we literally no longer known what we are saying and, in fact, we say nothing." Also, at times the reason of love seems to be madness: "The concept of love is distinguished exactly by its aptitude to think about that which philosophy takes for madness – an aptitude that does not always disqualify, but often gives reason to amorous events as such, according to a rationality that proceeds from love itself." Ibid., p. 109.

3.2.4.1 The Other to Whom One Directs One's Desire

Next, the lover, as an agent of decision, is allowed to participate with his desire by choosing to love, which in effect, creates more desire. After being loved, the other chooses whether or not to love back by guiding and directing his desire. Marion continues:

> I become myself and recognize myself in my singularity when I discover and finally admit the one that I desire; that one alone shows me my most secret center – that which I lacked and still lack, that of which the clear absence focused for a long time my obscure presence to myself. My desire speaks me to myself by showing me what arouses me….This moment, in which desire fixes me in myself by settling my gaze upon that particular other, is recognized without fault – it is the moment in which, discovering a face, a voice, or a silhouette, I confess *in petto* that 'this time, this one's for me'; in the sense in which I could say such a thing to myself when finally a race seems winnable, or just before playing a dirty trick….[53]

Notice that this – heteronormative passage – does not claim I recognize and see my singularity when I, in general, love, but only once I "finally" confess (perhaps to myself) whom it is that I love, for that beloved occupies the place of my lack. And in order to continue loving her, I must not put my lacking her to an end. Desire is indeed sustained precisely by the unknown of the lover. I must *never not* lack her. Further, desire in itself, must remain unknown as this lacking.

Similarly, the desire I name "mine" speaks to me, not I to it. It reveals to me what I could not find on my own through reason or calculation.[54] One usually speaks of desire as if it is capable of being revealed, exposed, shown, examined, and owned. Such is not the case for Marion, and what appears to be a simple reversal of this age-old assumption, has a deeper concern buried within it. That is, my lack is not simply that which defines me by representing me in a way, nor that which starts the process of establishing a stable being or given *ego*. Instead, my lack is what defines *me*, but fixes me into place only after the other – whom I am to love – has been decided upon as the one to whom I will give love. Such a decision, again, is not one that is arrived at through reason and logic, although it indeed has its own form of volition.[55] All of this might be read back into what we already know of the *adonné*

[53] Ibid., p. 108.

[54] For more on the issue of speaking and confession, see also Jean-Luc Marion *Au lieu de soi. L'approche de Saint Augustin*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2008). *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012). For a helpful contextualization of Marion's reliance upon Augustine's understanding of love, and the resonances of Augustine in Marion's work on love, see Eoin Cassidy's "Le phenomene erotique: Augustinian resonances in Marion's phenomenology of love" in *Givenness and God: Questions of Jean-Luc Marion*, eds. Ian Leask and Eoin Cassidy (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 201–219.

[55] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 109: "It is the instant in which I tell myself that I am *not yet* in love, that I am still the master of my desire, that I am going because I want to, and other such lies that I do not truly believe."

(as unfolded in the last chapter) as given through the power of givenness in concurrence with whatever phenomenon is given in and to consciousness.

3.2.5 Desire's Function in the Erotic Reduction

In Husserlian terms, the "natural attitude" is our normal, everyday way of life wherein the subject holds the belief that the world it experiences is factually existent in actuality. It is a certain naïve way of being in the world. For Marion, any reasoning that comes through this attitude is straightforward, and leaves the *adonné* incapable of imagining a world suffused with paradoxes. Standing beyond the natural attitude is the one who performs the erotic reduction, which is an embodied action that has its own rationality or is, at least, "extra-rational." The erotic reduction is thus the place where the paradox reigns supreme, and this is why desire, as Marion concludes, can be both scarcity and abundance:

> …this advance and this withdrawal only contradict one another if we come back to the natural attitude (here, metaphysical), where scarcity is oppose to abundance; but in the radical erotic reduction, where desire identifies scarcity and abundance, not only is the advance and the withdrawal of each flesh receiving itself from the other not a contradiction, but they reinforce each other, clamor for one another, and arouse one another.[56]

Within the erotic reduction, the paradox is the norm, and in this case, desire must be both scarcity and abundance because it both nourishes and is nourished. Consistent with the already arrived at treatments of Marion's text, desire can become present only as a result of the erotic reduction, and from one's choice to perform it. On the one hand, once set into motion by the decision to be the first to love, desire acts as an abundance and excess that comes to support and feed the continuation of the reduction. While on the other hand, desire is scarcity, which has already been shown to relate with lack, and in order for it to be sustained, it *must remain* without fulfillment. As long as it *remains*, that is to say, *persists* as unaccomplished and unfulfilled, it meets its own goal and is, in a sense, accomplished, thus sustaining the erotic reduction. But the erotic reduction is sustained in so far as it remains "not yet."

What Marion refers to as a moment "eroticization" occurs in so far as it's lack of accomplishment is sustained. Eroticization is what takes place between two flesh whose gazes are crossed, for the accomplishment of "the eroticization of crossed flesh… lasts only as long as it remains unaccomplished; desire lasts for as long as it does not cease to increase and, thus, for as long as it is not achieved in the present; it lasts in and thinks to the fear of finishing, of giving way to its plentitude."[57] Desire both desires and fears its ultimate accomplishment – and following with this paradox, its non-accomplishment – and since flesh is the given-place or location wherein

[56] Ibid., p. 131.

[57] Ibid., p. 132.

this desire can be enacted and put into play, then "the flesh" also plays by these paradoxical rules. For "the flesh that is crossed" Marion continues, "only loves by the contradiction of being only for as long as it is not yet."[58] The flesh is that which is given in the act of love and, in fact, *only* is given insofar as it avoids congealing into "being." In effect, love, the flesh, and desire all play by the same paradoxical rules; rules that act as the only conditions for their phenomenal appearances.

The moment at which eroticization (not to be equated with the erotic reduction) comes to an end is solely when a lover decides to deny its occurrence. In this case, it is "over and done with – not suspended for lack of desire (or more exactly, for lack of the strength not to resist in one's flesh the other flesh), but for lack of the desire for desire. Eroticization is born of desire, which grows from scarcity, as if from its own mode of abundance."[59] Eroticization comes directly from this paradoxical desire. Although the erotic reduction is that which engages desire, and particularizes it, it is desire that births "eroticization," the movement within the erotic reduction that engages the two lovers to "inter-gift" their flesh, which is one of the five saturated phenomena that corresponds to Kant's category of "relation." Relation is dependent upon a kind of vulnerability, which in this case correlates with desire as the vulnerability in my flesh to the flesh of the other. This plays a particular role within the erotic reduction. Instead vulnerability as a physical or even physiological condition, Marion imagines it phenomenologically, and in the case of the flesh's being vulnerable to the other, such a phenomenon of the flesh is capable of being experienced. In further following the understanding that love has its own rationality, vulnerability is yet another "passive-active" phenomenon whereby its passive act of yielding – which here might be thought as a modality of giving – entails the active, risky endeavor to be "the first to love." Yielding, though passive, is indeed one of the most active forms of loving.

The flesh is the only thing capable of sustaining desire to love, for desire, as lack, must be sustained by something non-objective and ultimately unattainable. Since any attempt to maintain desire must fail if desire is for an object (on the account of desire's very definition), then desire, if it is going to be desire *as such*, must be *for* some non-thing. The only way for desire to not consume or objectify the other is if the desired other is nonobjective and never attainable. Only then can desire "eroticize" the flesh, *which is the result of the radical decision to love, provoked by the erotic reduction, and sustained by the "flesh" as its aim and motivation*.

[58] Marion continues: "It only lasts if it happens or comes to pass, and thus passes beyond itself, surpasses itself, without ceasing not to cease. It must always be going and coming, withdrawing and advancing faster in order that its unaccomplishment still be accomplished." Ibid., p. 132.

[59] Ibid., p. 134.

3.2.6 Desire and the Other

In further reflecting his alignment with Lacan, Marion's desire depends upon the fantasy of the other. Yet where Lacan hoped for a more psychoanalytic discourse of desire, particularly in the context of analyzing fragmented "subjects," Marion employs phenomenology to show that desire only properly can be "understood" through its own reduction within phenomenology. Instead of a discourse on desire more generally, Marion places desire within the flesh as it saturates conscious intuition. This allows one to have *discourse* about it outside material (or in Lacanian terms, "spoken") and metaphysical registers, and in turn, this permits desire a more prominent place in the human condition. Not only is one's discourse of desire properly "the other's" (Lacan), but it only can occur with an other, and more specifically, take place at the point where my flesh crosses with the other's flesh. This should lead to the inevitable question, however: What about when there is no literal, actual other? Marion would then answer, that a literal other is not necessary, for there only needs to be a *fantasy* of the other, for "my desire remains ever intentional of the other; even if no real other attends it, [but nevertheless] my desire always depends upon at least a fantasy of the other," whether known or not.[60] In part, this is because of the lack of agency we have in regard to "our" own desire, and our status as the *adonné*, or "given" after the reduction to givenness and the erotic reduction. Although one has an ultimate freedom to choose one's love, one cannot even eroticize or arouse one's own flesh, for it eroticizes *itself* without one's knowledge and awareness, particularly because the other is implicated within one's desire and at work outside one's own agency and control.

Desire *is* precisely the force or ability of one's flesh to eroticize itself, for "what we call desire, namely the strength of my flesh eroticizing itself, consists in being able to engage oneself – to engage the flesh [like a pinion] in the rack of eroticization."[61] The flesh eroticizes itself, and to follow Marion's analogy, works like the simple machine of a rack and pinion. Desire is the effort and rotational motion put into, or invested in the flesh (the pinion like the steering wheel of a car), that is then converted into eroticization (the rack, or linear movement of the car's wheels), which acts with linear motion. Desire is the force of engagement.[62] Once such a desire goes through the erotic reduction (i.e., the result of the decision to be the first to love), it comes to be shaped and sustained by the flesh of the other, thus coming out of its machinery as love for the other or, in staying with the car analogy, arriving at its final destination. Yet, and "in turn," desire proceeds back from the intersection of my flesh and the flesh of the other – that is, flesh's desires – as love, for "what we call 'loving' is summed up most often by yielding to the automatic desire of my flesh, or the flesh of the other."[63] Of course, given the significance of

[60] Ibid., p. 139.

[61] Ibid., p. 140.

[62] Ibid., p. 131.

[63] Ibid., p. 140.

trust within loving, and the instantiation of "yielding" that occurs within such trust, we choose to *give ourselves over* to the desires of the flesh.[64] Thus, it is possible to see a way in which desire and love relate: love is yielding (giving way) to the desire of either my flesh, or the flesh of the other.

3.3 Desire's Paradoxes

There are five ways of understanding the manifold of Marion's theory of desire: desire as lack *and* resource, as non-universally defining, as non-governing of love, as cyclical in the erotic reduction, and as inherently related to the flesh of the other. Most consistent in Marion's writing on desire is that it proceeds, fundamentally, from a paradoxical "lack," and formless "form." This ensures that desire is brought about through "scarcity," and thus coming from a particular kind of "nothingness." For example, in the case of human knowledge we desire before we know; and more specifically, we desire the pleasure of knowing, as desire desires to enjoy its desire. But desiring before knowing demands a very precise relationship not with a *kenosis* or emptying, but with an original and more primary lack and *capacitas*. This is, in part, indicative of the necessary suturing between the subject and the other. While love is mine because I have chosen it, desire originates in the other, and cannot be named as such, as "mine." However, although it cannot be named, desire does uniquely define me, for it speaks to my lacks; lacks that only I can have, and inherently speak to my intersubjective co-constitution. As lack, desire cannot be met and satisfied, and in order for desire to "remain" desire, it must be for something ultimately unattainable.[65] One's lack is one's greatest resource.

Thus, desire is not universal, nor can it be for an object. Marion's understanding here is antithetical to what he considers to be the Freudian misunderstanding of desire as drive. Instead, since desire's starting point is lack, it cannot be objectified, nor can it be "possessed." Desire cannot, in Marion's language, "individualize" me, although it does "define" me. Desire defines me in the more general sense, in that I now have some outline as to who I am, and who I am not as the *adonné*. Indeed, desire does not individualize me, giving me a stable self that is reliable as a self. Only love can get me to the point of observing anything like a self. The peculiarities of this important distinction leave room for further thought and exploration. To what

[64] There is certainly a temptation here to draw the allusion to St. Paul's use of "desires of the flesh." Though Marion is also aware of this potential connection, his uses of this term have no determinable relation with those of St. Paul, but rather with Michel Henry's understanding of flesh and auto-affection.

[65] See also the *Visible and the Revealed*, where Marion suggests that desire and love increase precisely when one does not see one's object of desire. Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and The Revealed*, trans. Christina Gschwandtner (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 107. Then, in Marion's *In Excess*, visibility exposes one's desire for what it most truly is. Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 61.

degree does one's status as the *adonné*, as given, come in accord with one's being the first to love and becoming a self? Further, to what extent does this apply to all cases of love, even beyond romantic love? Marion has already clarified that what is said of romantic love (the cases of which are often exemplified in *The Erotic Phenomenon*) can also be said of love in general, but can there indeed be something like the "crossing of flesh" in the case of friendship, or even in love for one's neighbor or enemy?

Thirdly, although desire maintains a unique relationship with love, the two are not equivalent. Desire simply leads one to the choice to love or not to love, but it does not take one any further. Thus, and in very a limited sense, desiring comes prior to loving. Yet, while it begins with desire, love is ultimately free from desire's governance. That is, desire does not control love, nor is it responsible for turning one into a lover. One becomes a lover *only* once one makes the radical decision to love, and only after becoming a lover, can one's original desire be sustained, for it is there that one can finally become an individual. Yet this relationship is still very tentative: the lover's own unique and particular desire-to-love is what makes him an individual, yet it can do so only after it has gone through the process of loving and being directed towards a beloved.

A fourth, related aspect of the manifold of desire observable in this text concerns the cyclical relationship between desire and the erotic reduction. Although desire comes before the erotic reduction, it is the erotic reduction that sustains and in turn fashions desire, maintaining its particularity as the "desire to love." This speaks to the paradoxical rules of *eros*: Desire is qualified as both scarcity (coming from lack) and abundance (acting as a resource for the erotic reduction). Before it goes through the erotic reduction, desire is formless and still "lacking," while after that reduction, it plays the role of offering love an "abundance."

Finally, desire is what births "eroticization," a movement within the erotic reduction. The moment of eroticization occurs at the intersection – or point of the crossing between – my flesh and the other's flesh, and desire in this case is what could be called the "force of engagement" for the flesh. Since my desire is only the desire of the other, it can become "possible" only within the other in general, and within the other's flesh in particular. More specifically, desire can become "possible" only after it has come through the erotic reduction, which occurs within the flesh of the other. Yet because such acts of loving demand the other, this desire still cannot be imagined as attainable and fully understandable. Once flesh is the aim of desire, it absconds from view and leaves us lacking any ability to conceive of it. Marion indeed imagines this form of "relation" according to what he calls the "crossing of the flesh:" the gifted's (the *adonné*) vulnerability as it meets the vulnerability of another.[66]

While givenness and love form the center of thematic focus throughout his oeuvre, it is strange that Marion makes no explicit mention of "givenness" in the *Erotic Phenomenon*. Yet, now that a theory of desire has been distilled from his work it can

[66] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 134.

be applied to understanding better the "generosity of things" and the manifold of ways in which desire might relate with the gift. Are love and desire just as primary as givenness in transcendental consciousness, and therefore modes of *alteration* of intuition? Is love also to be thought as part and parcel of intuition itself, like a light that alters both the seeing and the seen? The goal continues to be to understand the role or purpose of desire in the reduction to givenness, and to find out how far it might be suggested that Marion's newly minted dictum "so much reduction, so much givenness" goes in conjunction with his erotic reduction, which demands that the subject bracket himself and return to the *Ursprung* of intuition by asking what, who, and most importantly "why" one is capable or not of being the first to love. Indeed "love" is Marion's "why" for phenomenology – for its own reasons, and for others.

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Chapter 4
Marion on Love and Givenness: Desiring to Give What One Lacks

Abstract This chapter extends the treatment of Marion's *The Erotic Phenomenon* and applies the findings on the "manifold of desire" from chapter three to an investigation into how that manifold might specifically relate with "the gift." The topic of privation is used as one way to exfoliate the points of interrelation between the gift and desire. Indeed, if nothing falls outside the bounds of "being given," then givenness must have some way of relating with "lack," which Marion refers to as the emptiness of actuality, and an obscurity that gives a "deficiency in appearing." Along similar lines, Marion not only holds that gifts are generally "invisible" phenomena, but also that they achieve the status of "the gift" all the more when they are not reified in an object or thing: The less the gift attains to being an object, the more the gift "appears." Yet there are a number of other ways in which desire and gift might relate in Marion's work. It may be that desire *is given*, that givenness relies fundamentally upon desire as a passion for performing the reduction, or that the *adonné's* "desire to give" or the "desire for the gift" play particular roles in intuition and the profusion of givenness.

"Un bienfait n'est jamais perdu." A good deed is never lost. A theory of givenness aims to ensure that phenomena, even good deeds or acts of generosity, are not lost on the account of the giver or receiver. In phenomenological terms, a thing's appearing to consciousness leads the "subject" into the most radical of reductions, in which phenomenality or appearing itself becomes its most privileged theme. Givenness, as the "how" of conscious experience, guides the appearing of appearance in order to ensure that every given phenomenon and every act within consciousness has the privilege of appearing on its own terms without one's obsessive focus on the thing in itself. All phenomenology is able to do, or is prepared to accomplish, is the interrogation of the modes of givenness; not the objects or things of appearance themselves, but instead "objects in their how."[1] Phenomenology, as the study of appearance (*Phainestai*, what is brought to light or the open) must radically question its many variations or *modes* of appearance. The question then becomes how the subject, who is also to be bracketed on the account of also being

[1] Michel Henry uses this phrase in reference to givenness. Michel Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, trans. Scott Davidson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 101.

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an appearance (in this case, to oneself) is to complete the task of the reduction, and to what degree the subject's desire, directedness, love, and disinterestedness are motivations to perform the reduction, *or* its inhibitors. Further, givenness must have its many variations, otherwise it becomes, as Derrida critiqued, simply another attempt on the part of a desiring subject to find the *Ursprung* or point of origination of phenomenal things. After Derrida, a phenomenology of givenness cannot be conceived as the hunt for origination but instead, under Marion's approach, the passive-active observance of the manifold of givenness. This is one reason why the conflicts between Marion and Derrida might be examined more closely according to the problematic interplay of the gift and desire, namely, as to how far one's desire can lead to the coming of a gift, a generous act created in the form of a good deed, and to what degree desire prohibits it. On the one hand, it is insufficient to suggest merely that desire irrationally drives human conduct, and on the other hand, it is hermeneutically dishonest to disregard the role desire plays at the core of the human condition. How far is desire implicated in one's performance of the reductions, and to what degree can love and desire be modes or "capacities" of one's experience with one's very own intuition? The theme of "lack" once again proves instructive in these regards. Yet if desire is to be conceived in relation to "lack" then negativity must in a sense be affirmed as it provides the *adonné* with a "negative" assurance and certitude of love. Perhaps it would be good, then, that all good deeds, in a radically different sense, are "lost."

This raises the question as to what extent Marion's twin reductions concerning givenness ("so much reduction, so much givenness") and love ("can I be the first to love?") are to be taken in unison as primary "conditions" for the appearance of things.[2] There are indeed many ways in which desire and gift might relate in Marion's work. It could be that desire necessarily is *dependent* upon its being given, or alternatively that givenness fundamentally relies upon desire as a passion for performing the reduction. These potential connections have specific import into Marion's turn away from Derrida's deconstruction, and toward his own approach to a redux version of a phenomenology of givenness. One way in which he approaches these concerns is to suggest of the gift that it, like desire, has a fundamental relation with "lack." Marion holds not only that gifts can occur outside the "ontic" world, but that in fact, when they do occur in this fashion they do so in their most "pure" form. Phenomenology is the study of *the appearing, giving, and sending* of phenomena. The gift need not be reified in an object, reality or thing. This works as a "fundamental rule:" the more a gift "appears," the less it attains to being an object. The inverse is also true: the more a gift is objectified, the "poorer" it is and the less "givenness" it is capable of enacting, for "in the realm of the reduction, the gift is accomplished all the better when it is not reified in an object."[3] Even Further: "…the

[2] Marion's reduction to givenness ("So much reduction, so much givenness") is formulated in *Being Given.* Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 14.

[3] Ibid., p. 106: "..it must be suggested as a fundamental rule that the more considerable a gift appears, the less it is realized as an object and by means of a transfer of property. Only simplistic

gifts that give the most and most decisively give *nothing* – no thing, no object; not because they deceive expectation, but because what they give belongs neither to reality nor to objectness and can thus surpass all expectation, indeed fulfill a desire."[4] Contrary to the lower quality gifts that are reified in objects, the greater the abstraction and "emptiness" a gift commands, the more expressive it is of pure givenness and its fecundity. It isn't that a gift remains in a stammering pre-stage of objectivity prior to its initiation into being-as-object, but rather that there are gifts that are "nothing." They *give* nothing. "Nothing" remains an empty square or "the absence of beings."[5] Such a gift – indeed the most fertile – does not seek to *deceive* but to enact a transgressive *excess*.

These gifts address, meet, and fulfill a desire (of which one is unaware) by "surpassing expectation" precisely *because* such gifts do not belong to objective reality. Desire is also a non-objectifiable "thing;" one that is not easily "met" in a straightforward way. It is only because of givenness – the how and excessive saturation of appearing-to-intuition – that these desires can be met. Not only can desires be met, but they are fulfilled in a way that they "get" more than they ask for due to the excessive nature of givenness. As given to the *adonné*, it is possible for desire to be saturated with possibilities of quantity, quality, relation, and modality. Contrary to Derrida's gift, which can only appear in the absence of desire and conscious awareness, Marion's givenness can interact with the *adonné's* desire subversively by exceeding desire's desires, but not formally "meeting" them. The "nothing" here is not simply that which is unknown by an *ego*, but the call of givenness heard by the *adonné* to go-beyond the known. This nothing, in its precise sense, is what one does not desire. Desire is not to be understood as the unconscious, subjective, and differential force that directs and controls the ego as a passive agent, but the active-passive motivation for the unknown, namely, the unknown of nothing, which can never be fully achieved. This is what fuels the desires of desire. The desire of the *adonné* is not to have desires met, but to receive, through the gift *par excellence* (the gift of nothingness, i.e.,) more than the *adonné* wants to want. The gift of nothing allows for the possibility of desire's fulfillment, which results not in the reception of a thing that one desires, but actually a "nothing," which births more desire. Thus, the fulfillment of a desire doesn't result in satisfaction, but precisely the opposite – its frustration.[6] Marion does not specifically say that *all* desire gets fulfilled by the

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gifts, and the poorest ones, coincide perfectly with the transfer of an object; it is not even self-evident that all commercial transactions (excluded from strict givenness) can be exhausted in this simple transfer. Or: the more the gift is radicalized, the more the object is reduced to the abstract role of support, occasion, symbol."

[4] Ibid., p. 106.

[5] Ibid., p. 54.

[6] One might suggest that Givenness gives a nothing that fulfills what could be called "desire + 1," while other common gifts do not have the capacity to do so; those in the economy of exchange can never be fulfilled. And if not an object, then it occurs in a decision. The gift does not become real in the objects transmission from one person to another: "[M]ost of the time, this act already results from a decision that is immaterial but the only one to attest it…" No reason circumstance or pas-

givenness of this nothing, but only that the gift of nothing can in a strange and subversive way, fulfill *a* desire.

4.1 Gift, Desire, and Lack

Fulfillment, frustration, excess, and subversion are ways in which the *adonné* fundamentally relates with the gift and desire, namely, in terms of "lack." In taking what has already been demonstrated of givenness, the given, the gift, desire, and love in previous sections, this chapter will chronologically investigate key passages in *The Erotic Phenomenon* wherein Marion gestures toward an interrelation between gift and desire, and will illuminate further (via six "meditations" that loosely correspond to Marion's in this text) their particular ways of relation especially in terms of "lack." If everything, "even nothing" is given, and no phenomena fall outside its jurisdiction, then givenness must have a way of relating with "lack," which is the emptiness of actuality, and an obscurity that gives a "deficiency in appearing."[7] Lack must be thought under the mode of "givenness by negation," a mode of givenness upon which Marion reflects through what he calls "the void," which could be argued to occur within desire itself. While nothingness is defined as "the absence of beings," the "void" is a "powerlessness to affect." The void first must be given, and given "in the mode of lack or of deception."[8] Voids come *either* through acts of deception, which trick one into thinking that they are something more than a void, or in the mood or feeling of something lacking. Voids can be phenomenologically reduced *to* their givenness, which allows one to recognize them as voids, and some particular features and functions of such voids. After the reduction to givenness, "finally, the void is given in the deception of anticipated perception or in the frustrated expectation of affection, indeed desire."[9] The void is given in order to frustrate the expectations of desire, for desire's long awaited given does not fulfill its expectations and ends-up frustrated and deceived by the void that is given. Since

sion can "provoke the gift necessarily – except by making it necessary, therefore annulling it as gift." Ibid. p. 106. For more on nothingness and desire: p. 171.

[7] For Marion "nothing arises that is not given. And even nothing [is given]." Ibid., p. 54.

[8] Ibid., p. 54. Marion places givenness within, and prior to the dialectical process suggesting that "the negative, it can be understood as the operator of dialectical givenness, which puts the concept into motion, to the point of producing it in actuality (Hegel)." Ibid. p. 55.

[9] It is of note that Marion reduces everything, even nothing, to givenness: "Every negation and every denegation, every negative, every nothing, and every logical contradiction suppose a givenness, which authorizes us to recognize them and thus do justice to their particularities – in short, a given that permits us at the very least to discuss them." Ibid. p. 55. This reference to denegation is an explicit response to Derrida, despite Marion's not mentioning his name here. As it will be shown in section two of this book, "denegation" is a concept Derrida develops in response to Marion (and other's) early criticisms of deconstruction, which Derrida takes to be a style of addressing différance by way of affirmation or what he calls "denegation," which is his own redux version of the Hegelian "sublation" or *Aufhebung*. Marion is here saying that givenness is more primary than negation and "denegation."

desire begins in lack (as shown in the preceding chapter) this void likely appears within one's desire itself. The experience of lack comes through the means of anxiety, which also appears in desire's lack of fulfillment.[10]

The relationship between givenness and desire-as-intentionality (which will be addressed more closely in later chapters) can be demonstrated further through this understanding of lack. Givenness is a viable way of overcoming the intentionality of the *adonné* by excessively transgressing it via the saturation of intuition, which Marion contends to be more primary. Givenness is the excess of intuition *over* intention, so in the performance of the reduction to givenness, the *adonné* releases its intentionality toward a particular phenomenon *and the how structure of* that phenomenon's appearance, thus opening a horizon for the diversity of variation of saturated phenomena. Givenness shocks or jolts intentionality first through giving unexpected modes of appearance. Of course, some desires get fulfilled in the natural attitude or the everyday. Intents or ways of being "directed" become particularized, employed, and fulfilled all the time. However, when the reduction to givenness is employed, the deepest of wills, desires, and volitions must effectively be tricked by givenness in order to sustain the passive-active relation with the reduction, and this is what creates void and lack – the cosmic soup in which desire might be created. Again, it is not simply the case that desire prohibits the phenomenal possibility of the gift's being given, or the opportunity to actively work toward, via the reduction, an experience of givenness (recall Marion's newly minted dictum). Gifts that give nothing (gifts *par excellence*) can fulfill *a* desire. Such a fulfillment of *a particular* desire, however, only shocks the desired into desiring more, thus opening up more possibility and consequently, more lacking. "Nothing" is that which the *adonné* most truly desires, and it leads the *adonné* to performing the reduction to givenness in order to receive the excess that givenness gives. This lack might be thought also in terms of the frustration of desire. Yet this frustration of desire is in fact its strength. When one "knows" what one desires, expectations are present and effective. When those desires are not fulfilled, frustration is manifested, thus leading to further desire, namely by way of the productive work of "the void." One experiences one's lack of ability or powerlessness to bring about one's desires, and this creates a productive tension within intuition (namely, between givenness, the phenomenal gift, and the *adonné*), which plays a role in leading one to the performance of the reductions.

[10] Ibid. p 54.

4.2 Six Meditations on Desire and Gift

4.2.1 1st Meditation: Judge Not

In transitioning to *The Erotic Phenomenon*, the relationship between gift and desire will be addressed according to "six meditations," which loosely correspond to Marion's own "erotic" meditations in that text. Yet since the following passages often are not about desire explicitly *as such*, it occasionally will be necessary to recall the conclusions of the manifold of desire from the last chapter, and apply them toward seeing how gift and desire relate. The first "meditation" centers on the question of assurance. Marion wishes to establish the grounds of possibility for something like an *ego* or subject to love; not in terms of how *there is* an *ego* or a stable self that can love, but rather that the *ego is given* in accord with love.[11] Marion claims of this ego that "it is not enough that I recognize myself as a certified object, nor as a certifying *ego*, nor even as a properly being being; I must discover myself as a given (and gifted) phenomenon, assured as a given that is free from vanity."[12] Vanity is an inhibitor of both reductions (the erotic reduction and the reduction to givenness). Vanity inhibits, more generally, the intuition of phenomena in and of themselves, and it prohibits the performance of the erotic reduction. The Cartesian *ego* is devoid of being able to love as "it" is detached from its intersubjective connections with the other, and therefore incapable of achieving the status of being a foundational self or a truly "thinking thing." Secondly, Marion reveals that *if* this *ego* is not a "proper" self-sustaining *ego*, then the only alternative is to imagine it as both given *and* gifted. This is an important point: the ego's being *given* ensures that the ego does not walk in self-stability, autonomy, and *vanity*, but rather as also given *and giving* in the world. The concern of "vanity" for Marion stems from the questions: "who cares?," "what's the point?," or "why bother?." Instead of the vain *ego*, the *adonné*'s being *gifted* ensures a way in which it can bracket those sulking questions in order to perform instead the erotic reduction concerning those with whom one is always already in relation. The paradox, which then becomes part and parcel of phenomenology, is that the reduction demands my turning away from myself, despite seeking that which appears within "my very own" transcendental consciousness.

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[11] In his most recent interview, and in responding to a question concerning how he came to begin his consideration of the role of love, Marion had this to say: "what I needed was to deconstruct the two main objections to […] of love, which were, first […]understanding of the ego as pure understanding. And this meant, for me, to deconstruct the […] the Cartesian *ego*, the standard interpretation of it, and the other [second] thing: the question of the primacy […]of being against love. So it was a long way to go." Jean-Luc Marion in "On Gift and Desire: An Interview with Jean-Luc Marion," See Appendix.

[12] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 22.

This paradoxically leads to a kind of assurance for the *adonné*: "The assurance appropriate to the given (and gifted) *ego* puts into motion an *erotic reduction*."[13] What kind of assurance, and of what exactly is it that the *adonné* is to be assured? Such an assurance is that of givenness, and that the gift is possible – the *adonné* can be assured by givenness that it can give. The assurance that comes from givenness to *l'adonné* (Marion's "self") is what initiates the movement of the erotic reduction, which in turn births another, new assurance.[14] The erotic reduction is the point at which I turn to myself and ask, not simply "can I love?" but more precisely "can I be the *first* to love?" In this very question, one abandons deliberation over a host of other questions and concerns. Existence, subsistence, fairness, meaning, and reality are all bracketed under the privilege of what is of true interest to the *adonné*. Attempting to be the first to love leads the *adonné* from its dreary self-enclosure to a vivid "elsewhere," which is in conjunction (and further prolongs the relation) with an other.[15]

As noted in chapter three, the erotic reduction is what "conditions" desire and "makes it possible" particularly as the desire to love. That is, the question "can I be the first to love?" comes to shape desire according to the asking of that very question. Such a question starts the exploration or reduction into how the subject is not given *there* as *a* being among beings, but particularly *as a giving thing*; a thing that gives in the way that it was first, and continues to be given according to its unique forms of its being-given, its givenness. Thus, the *adonné* imitates the way in which it was, itself, created by givenness; that is, in the saturated overflow of excess *onto* intuition, the given also can give in a way that imitates givenness itself. The movement of the erotic reduction is started by givenness, which gives the *adonné* an assurance. And then, this movement that frees the individual from vanity, hubris, and narcissism (the "erotic reduction") makes desire possible as the particular desire

[13] Ibid. p. 22. Yet as Marion says elsewhere, "Assurance and certainty must not be confused. Certainty results from epistemic reduction (or even ontological reduction) and comes into play between the *ego*, master, and the object, mastered." Jean-Luc Marion, "On Love and the Phenomenological Reduction" in *The New Arcadia Review*, 2 (2004). This essay was a rough draft of the first chapter of *Le phénomène érotique* (Paris: Grasset, 2003), first given as a lecture at Harvard in November 2002, with a translation by Anne Davenport.

[14] Marion continues: "Assurance, in contrast, results from an erotic reduction. It comes into play between, on one side, the *ego*, its existence, certainty and objects, and on the other side some yet unknown authority, sovereign in so far as it will answer the question "am I loved?" and hold its ground against the challenge "who cares?"" Jean-Luc Marion, "On Love and the Phenomenological Reduction" in *The New Arcadia Review*, 2 (2004).

[15] "It is enough, for the erotic reduction to take place, to understand what I ask (of myself): not a certainty in and by itself, but a security advancing to myself from elsewhere. This elsewhere begins as soon as the self's dreamy self-enclosure gives way, allowing some authority to pierce through that is not me, and from which I receive myself, according to varying and still undefined modalities. It is unimportant for this elsewhere to be identified as some neutral other (life, nature, the world) or as the other in general (a given group, society), or even as a particular other (man or woman, the divine, perhaps God); all that matters is that it reach me from elsewhere, so vividly that it cannot not matter to me since it matters in me." Jean-Luc Marion, "On Love and the Phenomenological Reduction" in *The New Arcadia Review*, 2 (2004). It is noteworthy that Derrida critiqued this question of meaning as an "economical" notion in *Speech and Phenomena*.

to love, conditioning desire toward action, propelling the lover to decide to love. One's asking "can I be the first to love?"[16] challenges and provokes one's desire to love, and one can have the assurance as to whether or not one has achieved the erotic reduction, which is in relation with the other. "Achieving" this reduction is not only for the sake of love, but also for the possibility of the phenomenological and transcendental reductions. The suspension of judgment, or *epoché*, can be taken in its most existential sense, namely, by suspending the manifold of judgments and assessments in relation to others, things, and oneself. The erotic reduction, which begins in a desire-as-lack, ultimately provokes the *adonné* to go beyond its judging hubris, vanity, and self-interest.

4.2.2 2nd Meditation: Giving and Loving Without Return, and at a Loss

Love is motivated by desire, which begins in lack, and the erotic phenomenon comes as a result of the performance of the erotic reduction. As a phenomenon, it implicates the other, to whom the lover "gives," in a limited sense, "nothing." Love is the provision of a space for the other to not be expected to return in love, and nothingness is implicated as a space that goes "beyond being" and its economical predicates. Acceptance, rejection, and return are not conditions for love or the gift, and Marion confirmed this again recently in *Certitudes Négatives*.[17] Love, exactly like the gift, need not be even accepted by the other in order for it to still be deemed "love," for "the lover has the unmatched privilege of losing nothing, even if he happens to find himself unloved, because a love scorned remains a love perfectly accomplished, just as a gift refused remains a perfectly given gift."[18] *Just like the gift*, love can stand the test of rejection. The gift can occur even without any recognition from a giver or receiver whatsoever, and similarity, love need not be "positively" accepted or received. Marion further implies that love, when rejected, is an even more saturated gift that, by merit of its rejection from the intended recipient, is more truly nonreciprocal and aneconomic.[19] When a lover truly loves, she risks

[16] For a helpful background of understanding Marion's interest in overcoming vanity and hubris, see Timothy Mooney's helpful "Hubris and humility: Husserl's reduction and givenness" in *Givenness and God: Questions of Jean-Luc Marion*, eds Ian Leask and Eoin Cassidy (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005).

[17] In *Certitudes Négatives*, Marion reflects on the example of birth, suggesting once again that the "donor" who gives the (gift of the) child need not yet be an essential part of the experience of birth from the perspective of the child. Jean-Luc Marion, *Certitudes négatives* (Paris: Grasset, 2010). p. 298.

[18] Continuing, "what is more, the lover never has anything to lose; he could not even lose himself if he wanted to." Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), p. 71.

[19] For example, the presence of jealousy in the lover acts as the perfect sign of a love tainted by reciprocity and exchange. Such a desire to not simply to love, but also to receive love in return and

everything because she knows that it is only through loving that she herself can continue to be given as loving. The only "return" gift that the lover receives is more opportunity to love. Love inverts economy by rejecting the resource of calculation. Loving is losing:

> Accomplishing the act of loving not only allows for not fearing loss, but it consists only in this freedom to lose. The more I lose utterly, the more I know that I love, without contest. There is only one single proof of love – to give without return or chance of recovery, and thus to be able to lose and, eventually, to be lost in love. But love itself is never lost, because it is accomplished in loss.[20]

In this paradoxical sense, the appearing of love is a disappearance. After the performance of the erotic reduction, one who has the status of the *adonné* is not bound to "being," and is capable of loving excessively. This occurs on the grounds that love is "accomplished" according to the loss of the *adonné*. Loss is a kind of proof for the accomplishment of the gift, which occurs after the vain, self-sufficient ego is bracketed. When one gives "without return," as it is possible to see in love, one has a kind of proof of the gift – loss.

The *adonné* enacts what might be called a "love without being." Since love is beyond being, then it is associable with a kind of "nothing," as it does not play according to the ontological rules of "presence." Next, since the gift must occur without return, it gives in general, and gives love in particular, through the mode of loss. It might be suggested then, that desire is born of this nothing – particularly through the vacancy of the other – that is given. Both love and desire, as intimately connected, embody the paradox that "the more it [love] loses, the more it gains."[21] As no longer inscribed in the *phusis* of being, desire *comes* from nothing (givenness, i.e.,), receives nothing, and in turn, love fulfills the action of giving the gift of nothing. Nothingness plays a vital role in love's rationality.

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exchange. This was never not love in the first place. This kind of reciprocity does not belong to the order of the erotic reduction. Of course, Marion is not suggesting that one should not have a response to the other not returning one's love, but simply that jealousy is not a response indicative of a love that has taken place. Jealousy is not actually a result of love, but simply a formless desire that is yet to go through the "process" of the erotic reduction. Much in the way that Marion earlier came to speak of Don Juan, Marion continues to question any claim to love that does not have a direct recourse to the other. In speaking of the vacuity of jealousy, he wonders about this phenomenon, and how one claims that it is simply the result of love: "I love another perfectly (so I claim, or brag), and she, for her part, does not love me in return; I see an injustice in this; I conceive a lively resentment, which we call jealousy. But what does love signify here? Nothing but a shapeless desire, which has not yet acceded to the erotic reduction, has no knowledge of the lover's advance, and becomes exasperated by blindly laying claim to reciprocity without ever supposing that, perhaps, it is not so simple." Ibid., p. 171.

[20] And Marion continues "Loving loses nothing from the fact of not being, because it gains nothing from the fact of being." Even nothing offers "it [love] yet another privileged terrain." Ibid., p. 71.

[21] Ibid., p. 71.

4.2.2.1 In Being the First to Love (and Give)

If the gift is not within the order of being then one cannot reach certainty that a gift event has occurred through the conditions of being (which demand the adherence to principles of sufficient conditionality). Nevertheless, if one is to say that a gift has occurred, then one must be able to do so with some kind of assurance. Such an assurance of loving only can come through the conditions of love's own rationality. In loving one does not receive an assurance that comes through the certainty of being, "…but *the assurance of loving*. By responding to the question 'can I love first' with the loss of the gift to the point of the loss of self, the lover really does win an assurance – understood as the pure and simple assurance of the precise fact that she loves."[22] The lover has a sense as to when she has lost or given something, and the paradox of the gift is that it is best accomplished when it is most "lost" or given-up. The assurance of love comes in one's recognition of loss. Love, or to be more precise "loving first," is the moment at which one "loses" or gives the gift, and does so in a way that one finally is liberated of the false idol of "the self." This moment of "loving first" is also the point at which one takes the risk of stepping in the direction of the other and the other's flesh, which continues to provide an assurance:

> [Assurance] comes from an elsewhere that is more inward to me than myself: the elsewhere that comes upon me in the very gesture in which I give up what I have (my gift) and what I am, in order to assure myself only of what I truly make in this instant – love. I receive the assurance that I am making love and I receive it only from lovemaking itself and in view of itself alone.[23]

One cannot prepare for the moment of love by estimating how much it will cost in order to have the assurance ahead of time that one will be loved in return. It is only by giving one's gift of love that one can be assured of its being given; that one can be assured of having loved, through love's own sort of assurance. In this giving-up, love is "giving way," yielding, and releasing. The assurance does not come from me, as a stable self, but it is *given*, presumably coming from elsewhere. It is not quite clear as to where this assurance comes from, for Marion does not make it explicit, yet it certainly need not be from God or any metaphysical other (though this is not prohibited).

4.2.2.2 The Suspension of Reciprocity

The lover is given and appears in a moment of suspension, namely, the suspension of reciprocity, which is the means of economical relation with others:

> When, then, does the lover appear? Precisely when, during the encounter, I suspend reciprocity, and no longer economize, engaging myself without any guarantee of assurance. The lover appears when one of the actors in the exchange no longer poses prior conditions,

[22] Ibid., p. 73.

[23] Ibid., p. 75.

> and loves without being required to be loved, and thus, in the figure of the gift, abolishes economy.[24]

The lover "appears." This is, of course, a key phenomenological term, and it is likely employed for the purposes of further demanding that love is capable of phenomenological appearance in, by, and to intuition. One is "aware" or intuits love only according to the assurance that it itself gives. Even further, although love enters phenomenal experience, it not only avoids economy, but it *abolishes it*. This is indeed strong language, to be sure, for economy is also related to calculation, which is an important tool that forms the bases of logic and reason. Marion ultimately claims the primacy of givenness over economy, and this comes from his engagements with Derrida on the gift. Derrida situates gift and economy in an *aporia* (which will be addressed in section two), and even the naming of a gift in phenomenal experience automatically inscribes it under the jurisdiction of economy. For Marion, love must be beyond economy, otherwise it falls into narcissism as it is grounded in logical conditions. The individual must abandon "conditionality" itself, which is, in and of itself, a kind of "condition" for giving. Next, and as its result, the lover appears, and in appearing, enters into a realm of pure gratuity – or what Marion names the "figure" of the gift – through which the lover might "abolish" economy, exchange, and reciprocity. Although givenness remains primary, love is inherent to the reduction, which is all the more accomplished when the *adonné* desires to love, which remains the motivation, or in a limited sense, the "cause" of the gift.[25] Thus, the figure of the gift as pure gratuity or generosity can only provide the *adonné* assurance through her active sustaining effort. Generosity, or the desire to give, is aneconomical and thrives in so far as it gives without calculating what it wishes to take. In order for desire to remain desire it must, like love, *give* and desire to give. Desire must be generous in order for it to be sustained. Instead of having the status of a drive, desire is more related to love in its association with generosity and its active suspension (or to a limited degree, abolishment) of economy. As outside the bounds of reciprocity, it is also beyond causality, which must adhere to the rules of sufficient reason.[26]

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[24] Continuing, "In trade and exchange, only reciprocity reigns – and legitimately so – because it allows us to distinguish good agreements from bad agreements." Ibid., p. 78.

[25] Ibid., p. 78. In a similar vein, Marion suggests that "It might even be that the euphoria of my encounters grows the less I engage myself; it maybe that that I exchange ever more tokens of friendship, of interest and, and of seduction the more I never truly give them, distributing them instead according to a strict reciprocity, neither more nor less, as if we were dealing with an immaterial merchandise, invaluable and yet really and truly negotiated…"

[26] For, "…in loving without reciprocity, the lover loves without reason, nor is he able to give reason – counter to the principle of sufficient reason." Ibid., p. 79.

4.2.3 3rd Meditation: Desire and Decision, Lacking Intention

How can it be that a refused gift still remains a gift? The decision to love plays an important role:

> For, even if I possess no assurance whatsoever that I love first, I at least have the assurance of having decided to do so. Just as love given remains perfectly given even if the gift is refused, since the scorn that the gift suffers in no way interferes with the abandon that the gift accomplishes, so too does the lover who decides to love first acquire the certainty of having decided.[27]

This could be the most essential assurance proper to the erotic reduction – the lover has decided to love and the lover knows once she has done so. That is, the lover is well aware of when she decides to love, and it is the decision to do so that marks the giving of a gift.[28] This gift is one of abandon and releasement. It is a gift of no return. There is no return gift that can be expected on the part of the lover, and in another sense, there is no returning or turning back after the gift of love has been made. The decision to love is not a calculation of loss, but a response to the desire to be the first to love. In this sense both gift and love embody acts of abandonment, and in fact, *accomplish* abandonment by not minding the irresolvable lack of reciprocity.[29] Gift and abandonment form a formidable connection in Marion's epistemology in his recent *Negative Certainties*.[30]

As already noted, Marion's givenness works in the excess of intuition over intention. Yet in another sense, when one wishes to give a gift (e.g., the gift of love) and decides to do so, then and only then can one receive the assurance of having done so. Although the receiving of a gift can occur in spite of one's intentions, when in the mode of giving to another it is one's decision to give that puts the gift into phenomenal motion. Yet still, even though the giver decides to give, Marion never promises that the giver *receives* an assurance proper to what he understands himself to be giving. Givenness indeed gives in spite of the *adonné's* desires. But in the particular instance of the gift of love, it comes through the decision to give, into which the *adonné* is led by desire. Desire is also the impulse within the *adonné* toward some other, but it does not control love, nor is it responsible for making one

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[27] Ibid., p. 90.

[28] Marion shortly comes to reiterate this point on the next page, suggesting that "just as love given remains perfectly given even if the gift is refused….so too does the lover who decides to love first acquire the certainty of having decided [to love]." Ibid., p. 91.

[29] And then some 15 years earlier Marion says something quite similar to this in *God without Being*: "Thus love gives itself only in abandoning itself, ceaselessly transgressing the limits of its own gift, so as to be transplanted outside of itself…love holds nothing back." Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: hors-texte*, trans. Thomas A Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). p 48.

[30] Marion repeated this theme of abandonment recently in *Certitudes négatives*, suggesting that "sacrifice" accomplishes this negative "certainty" by way of the "abandonment of the gift," which is part of the gift itself. Marion contextualizes this in the case of Abraham and Isaac. See Jean-Luc Marion, *Certitudes négatives* (Paris: Grasset, 2010), p. 204 and p. 209. English translation forthcoming.

love. Thus, though lacking in understanding and rationality, as completely unfulfillable and unintelligible, love is a decided-upon desire that embodies love's own form of rationality. Love is the decision to embrace a particular and favorable desire, and from that decision ultimately comes the gift of love. But only once the lover decides to love can that desire be sustained, which again shows that desire is not the overseer of love, nor is it separate from it.

4.2.4 4th Meditation: The Gift One Lacks

The assurance of an individual lover's love can come independently of the other's acceptance. Yet there is also a sense of love, namely that of interrelation, that insists on a *kind* of mutuality in order for its accomplishment: the inter-gifting of "the flesh." As mutually given and contemporaneous to the gift of the other, it is irreducible to economization. Also, this inter-gifting is sensitive, for one lover's gift of the flesh must be given to the other without thwarting her will and desire; she must also desire and, in turn, give such a gift in order for this inter-gifting to take place.[31] The one who is given, is also gifted in such a way that one can in turn give to another. This gift is in fact a gift that one doesn't actually have to give: "The flesh that henceforward has been thoroughly eroticized…accomplishes the lover in one who is gifted – one who receives himself from what he receives, and who gives what he does not have."[32] The gifted can give his love to the other, and although it is not necessary that the other return that love in order for the original act of love to be accomplished, he receives himself – his own flesh – from the other when the other also loves mutually. This gift that is given by the lover – the gift that the lover does not have – is the gift of flesh. Flesh is not the physical body, nor is it a metaphysical sense or meaning of selfhood, but rather a kind of quintessential moment of reflective auto-affection in which one is given a surprising and unmerited glimpse of oneself, namely as loving.

There is an important phrase here that appears at least four times in *The Erotic Phenomenon*, and that is, when the *adonné* loves, he "gives what he does not have."[33]

[31] Without the desire of the other, and the free choice to decide to also love, then the results would be what Marion has called a "perverse gift," which leads us to further reflection upon how all things, even acts of violence, are "given." The issue of "the gift" is beyond good and evil: "Of course, I do not suffer this arousal all the time; sometimes, I exert it, when I attempt to give to the other her eroticized flesh in spite of her, against her will – a perverse gift, worse than rape, because I tear from her even the consent to my taking control over her. Thus the eroticization of the flesh does not always, or necessarily, reach the other in person, nor myself…" This idea of a "perverse gift" does not appear to be something Derrida every gestured towards. Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 153.

[32] Ibid., p. 120.

[33] He also alludes to having and giving what I don't have on p. 141. But interestingly he earlier said on p. 47 that "As everyone knows, I can only give that which I already possess, or that which I have possessed and maintained." Perhaps this is a problem of which Marion is unaware. And "…it is

Of what does this "not having" consist exactly and how is it signified according to lack? Does it mark an essential territory of "nothing"? It cannot be presumed that – even within the last century of phenomenology – the definitions and qualifications of "nothing" are univocal. Heidegger, for example, held that it is not simply the case that "nothing" (*das Nichts*) *is*, but rather that being comes into presence out of nowhere, and does so by eluding expectation and causality – any stable and fixed economy. While for Heidegger, *being* discloses itself, and thus gives itself according to, and in the figure of nothing, Marion wants to say that givenness gives not only "nothing" but also "being." In "Anaximander's Fragment" Heidegger asks "what does 'give' mean here? How should whatever lingers awhile, whatever comes to presence in disjunction, be able to give jointure?" Can a "present" gift, Heidegger asks, "give what it doesn't have?"[34] He continues by suggesting that "to give" once strictly meant "to yield" or "give way" to the gift as it passed from oneself to another. Heidegger thereby questions whether or not the gift ever fully can be in the present anyway; ever "be" actually at a point in time, or if it always simply is, in a sense, passing through. Gift, *es gibt* (literally "it gives") cannot elude time, but it also comes into presence, seemingly out of nowhere, out of "nothing."[35] Since the issue of time is heavily implicated in any (potential) gift, then there can be no "present tense" possession of a gift. Perhaps, then, a Heideggerian discourse on desire would begin and end with this kind of nothingness.

For Lacan, who is influenced by Sartre in these regards, "nothing" takes on a rather different sense. For Lacan, "nothing" is derivative in part of desire. His "nothingness" is in the capacity or terms of lack (not being). Desire is for the nothing or that which is lacked, and this is why love also is figured in the mode of the nothing:

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necessary that another give me my own flesh that, nevertheless, she does not have, and which I, who become that flesh, nevertheless cannot give to myself." Ibid., p. 123. See also p. 125 and p. 129.

[34] This is a point to which Derrida draws attention in *Given Time*, suggesting in a footnote that "the expression 'to give what one does not have' is found in Heidegger (in particular in 'The Anaximander Fragment'… but also elsewhere…" Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), chapter 1, footnote 2. Martin Heidegger, "Anaximander Fragment," in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1950), p. 334. Or in English, "Anaximander's Fragment," in *Early Greek Thinking: The Dawn of Western Philosophy*, trans. David Krell and Frank Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 52. Earlier in "Anaximander's Fragment" Heidegger begins this trajectory of the gift as "what one doesn't have" in a rather straightforward, matter-of-fact way: "What does 'give' mean here? How should whatever lingers awhile, whatever comes to presence in disjunction, be able to give jointure? Can it give what it doesn't have? If it gives anything at all, doesn't it give jointure away? Where and how does that which is present for the time being give jointure?…How should what is present as such give the jointure of its presencing? The giving designated here can only consist in its manner of presencing. Giving is not only giving-away; originally, giving has the sense of acceding or giving-to. Such giving lets something belong to another which properly belongs to him…The *didonai* designates this 'letting belong to'." Ibid., pp. 43–44 (original German p. 329).

[35] Heidegger makes this topic of "nothingness" the focus of his 1935 lecture "What is Metaphysics?" wherein he begins with the following question: "Why are there essents rather than nothing?" Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York, NY: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 1.

"Love is to give what one does not have…" precisely because the lover is implicated in a relationship with the other. Further, "this privilege of the Other thus sketches out the radical form of the gift of something which it does not have, namely, what is called love."[36] Love is a gift one does not have (to give) because love is precisely the *expression* of one's lack. Therefore, to love is *to give one's lack* to the other, as one's lack uniquely defines the lover. Yet, in one's giving love to the other, one asks the other to fulfill one's lack, and this is why one necessarily must be sutured to the other. This further attests to Lacan's understanding of what it means to remain always a fragmented subject. It might be suggested, then, that for Lacan love is the giving way, up, or in to the fact that one has *nothing* to give, which is the point at which one gives one's lack – in effect, nothing at all.

It is possible to see a surprisingly close link here between Lacan and Marion, yet Marion's approach entails a unique twist. The best gifts give nothing, which further sustains the primacy of givenness and love. For example, not even death, which is generally typified as the ultimate void or nothingness, can escape from being inscribed "forever within the horizon of givenness."[37] Thus, Marion seeks to ensure the primacy not only of desire, but of givenness, the saturating work of which goes

[36] Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1966), p. 618 and p. 691 respectively. As Jean-Luc Nancy interprets: "Lacan's definition is that *love consists in giving what one does not have*. Of course this is a definition by impossibility, because how can you give what you don't have? We don't need to be Christian or to have a Christian face to agree that Lacan's definition is a Christian one. To give what I don't have is precisely *not* to give something I would have, so it must mean not to give anything of the order of anything that could be given. No, to give something that doesn't belong to the realm of give–able things, neither that nor to give myself, because one could be seduced by the idea 'yes this means to give *myself*.' If myself is once again something I could give, then this myself is only the myself which I have. Then this definition means that love consists in giving something which is nothing. Nothing has to do with what is not a thing, not at all a thing – then what is not a thing, what is not an object? If you want, this is a subject. But this doesn't really mean to give the subject, as the subject would be once again some *thing* that I would be. Love consists in my giving from me what is not mine in any sense of a possible possession of mine, not even my person. So *to love* means to give what is behind or beyond any subject, any self. It is precisely a giving of nothing, a giving of the fact that I cannot possess myself. This is *to abandon*, because in that case I would say that *to give* is the same as *to abandon*. In French I would say *donner* is the same as *abandonner*. Because *to give* in French is *donner*…" Jean-Luc Nancy, "Love and Community: A Roundtable discussion with Jean-Luc Nancy, Avital Ronell and Wolfgang Schirmacher" at The European Graduate School, August 2001. Accessed October 02, 2013. http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-luc-nancy/articles/love-and-community/

Jacques-Alain Miller (one of Lacan's primary translators) interprets this statement: "Lacan used to say, 'To love is to give what you haven't got.' Which means: to love is to recognize your lack and give it to the other, place it in the other. It's not giving what you possess, goods and presents, it's giving something else that you don't possess, which goes beyond you." Jacques-Alain Miller, "We Love the One Who Responds to Our Question: "Who Am I?" in *The Symptom*, trans. Adrian Price. Accessed December 12, 2013. http://www.lacan.com/thesymptom.htm

[37] Marion suggests that "death does not steal from givenness that which (or he who) could receive it; it inscribes it (or him or her) forever within the horizon of givenness." Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 59. And just a few pages earlier, he claims that "nothing is given by means of the fundamental mood of anxiety." Ibid., p. 54.

beyond anything a Lacanian interpretation of a fragmented subject's desires ever could offer. For Marion it is not speech that provokes or promises desire, for indeed "the less I say of anything, the more I give the other her flesh."[38] By implicating nothingness in the horizons of love, the French *donner* (giving) and *abandonner* (abandoning) appear to be situated already within one another's discourses. Abandoning is a giving up of the gift of love as a renouncing of the self.

The primacy of givenness is reflected in Marion's erotic reduction, which in some cases is instantiated by two lovers caught in a gaze. What he names the "crossing of the flesh" is the moment at which it is not only one lover who gives what he does not have, but two "lovers give each other what they do not have, each flesh receiving itself from the other, they experience the same erotic accomplishment…"[39] Thus each lover contemporaneously gives this nothing to the other, and does so for as long as they *each* possibly can. As long as they can sustain the erotic "accomplishment," they give each other a flesh, which they each do not have. Thus, the gifts of the flesh are also gifts of nothing. Although Marion does not explicate any further as to how or why love is this gift that one does not have, he does hold to the view that love – which in this case appears to be specifically romantic – is a promise to do so for eternity.[40] Since once can never keep the promise to love for all eternity, even after death, then it is a promise one cannot keep. In this case also, love is a gift one does not have.

Indeed, love is marked by the "desire for eternity." And by reading Marion back through Lacan on this point, one might suggest that although desire *originates* in the other, it is *transformed* into love when one *chooses to give* it back to the other. Despite this point of origination being in other, Marion holds that desire still does uniquely "define" me, and therefore one might be led to conclude from this that the other is inherently active in this "definition." That is, one receives definition in relation to the other, who is also the recipient of one's love, which is a gift. But before the particular gift of the flesh is given, desire births what Marion names "eroticization," and then desire is sustained by the decision to love. This appears to offer a cycle to eroticization, wherein desire is implicated at every turn. First desire is put into play by givenness; secondly desire provokes the decision to love; thirdly this

[38] Further, "the less you speak to me of objects, the more you give me my flesh; you and I give our flesh by only speaking in order to arouse it. Erotic speech thus proves a transgressive…" Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 148. And similarly, a few pages earlier, he demands that "my climactic enjoyment gives me a flesh, because it comes from a flesh; now, as neither one nor the other arises from… I thus have nothing to tell her, having in fact nothing to share with her, since we give to one another reciprocally only the…" Ibid., p. 145.

[39] Ibid., p. 128.

[40] Implied within the promise to love is the promise to do so for all eternity. And since I cannot keep such a promise, then whenever I love, I give a gift that I do not have to give. The meaning of "love" is a "desire for eternity," for from the beginning of the erotic reduction is struck, in the face of any coming anticipated death, a desire to love and "be loved forever". One cannot promise eternity, but he nevertheless does so in every act of love. See also Ibid., p. 195.

births eroticization within the erotic reduction; and finally the erotic reduction sustains and creates more desire.

4.2.5 5th Meditation: Love, Lack, and the Other

As for these specific, inter-gifting and inter-crossing gifts of flesh that neither lover has, they specifically take place in the erotic reduction when the two lovers, each and individually, decide to be the first to love. In the crossing of the flesh, not only must the lover decide to give, but "the other" must have her own unique initiative and desire to love, and this is what prevents the crossing of the flesh from becoming economical or reciprocal.[41]

Highly implicated in Marion's employment of the gift in this text are matters of alterity and intersubjectivity, topics of prime interest to Lévinas, the work of whom Marion seeks to extend by suggesting that ethics and responsibility for the other cannot access the other as properly other, as an individual. Instead, in the framework of ethics the other must be imagined simply as an object, predicated within the subject-object paradigm. For Marion, the other cannot simply be an object of my desire, for this would inscribe one back into an economical narcissism. Instead, the other must also be thought as given or the *adonné*. Indeed, for Lévinas there must be one who takes all of the risk, as subject, toward another, with no hope for reciprocity. Yet this marks Lévinas' misstep: the uni-directionality of love disqualifies it as truly loving, reinscribing it back into a narcissism, for this act does not provide a "neutral" territory wherein two lovers might approach their respective other. A closed circuit whereby one loves without at least being open to *mutually* receiving love (as distinct from being loved "in return") automatically discounts the act of being the first to love. Love is necessarily, then, *a love for the other to love*. Marion resolves that the two lovers, *both as* "given over" (*l'adonné*) must appear to one another through an "intergivenness" in a place. Such a place must be *foreign to the both* of them, wherein they can each make the decision to take the risk to love, which enacts the mutual giving of the flesh. Only this kind of love is capable of giving one access to the other, as both given and gifted.[42]

What are the phenomenal conditions of this kind of love? For Marion, "we phenomenalize one another, because we each give to the other the flesh that we do not have – she mine, I hers. We cross our flesh."[43] That is, in the mutual giving of this

[41] Ibid. p. 119. Marion continues, "the other gives me to myself for the first time, because she takes the initiative to give me my own flesh for the first time."

[42] See also Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 323. Also, the risk comes in the surprise of the excess of givenness. The experience of the gift of one's flesh is one wherein one cannot *clearly* determine its point of origination.

[43] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 176. He then asserts that it is possible to imagine between two lovers "… the crossing of our flesh, which gives mutually what each does not have." Ibid., p. 180.

gift of flesh the two lovers "phenomenalize" each other's flesh, which can occur only because of their respective other's loves. Yet, such a phenomenalization is not permanent but temporally contingent. One is "individualized" through this gift given by the other only for "as long as the process of eroticization lasts."[44] This phenomenalization is still not the gift of a stable self, one that I come to possess, "… for I do not possess my flesh, but receive it from the other, who gives me to myself."[45] Instead of being possessed, it simply remains "received," and when one receives a gift, it never stays in a static place or becomes "possessed," but remains in motion. This *dynamic movement* of the gift demands that it, in turn, be gifted to an other. The phenomenal figure of the gift here is "the flesh," which one cannot give to oneself, and for this reason the other is clearly not a commodity, but a necessity. That is, the other cannot be commodified according to any cost/benefit analysis employed by the supposed lover. The necessity of the other, however, still does not imply that the other can then become "needed" in the sense that one might use the other as an object, or as a part of an economically appropriated calculation. One reason for this is because the gift of "a flesh" is a gift that my other does not actually have – it is also a nothing.

To a limited degree Marion develops his own version of something like Lacan's fragmented subject. Marion's version of fragmentation can be thought according to the *adonné's* status as never possessing a self, being unstable, and only temporarily individualized. These features are the necessary, yet paradoxical conditions for the possibilities of love and the gift. The lover's salvation is in his fragmentation, which is both a lacking of the other, and a space for the other. This sets up the erotic reduction. In being the first to love, one makes a decision upon one's desire, which is a kind of impulse toward the other, who is, in the first place, its source of origination. One's desire only becomes "possible" within the other, namely, in the flesh of the other. This flesh, which makes one's desire possible, is given by the other, only for as long as the shared act of eroticization lasts in the erotic reduction. Thus, when one decides to love the other, one gives a paradoxical gift, which is embodied in the desire-for the lover. "Desire for" once again insinuates lacking. The gift of love is the lover's lack. This is the case in so far as one relates with the other not as an object, or as a subject, but as a lover. In one's giving one's lack to another, one is providing the other with an opportunity to engage in the most fundamental of human activities – loving. Although loving in return is not required, love, by definition in accord with Marion's interests, is an allowing the other to love in return, and in response to one's lack.

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[44] Ibid., p. 152. Continuing, "as long as the process of eroticization lasts, the other individualizes me by giving me my flesh and vice versa."

[45] In reiterating this important point: "[F]or I do not possess my flesh, but receive it from the other, who gives me to myself in the same time in which she gives it to me; as lover (that is to say, one who is gifted to another gifted one), I receive myself from the flesh of the other." Ibid., p. 129.

4.2.6 6th Meditation: The Paradoxical Gift of Love

Here, the paradoxes of gift and love become more clearly pronounced. At the aforementioned intersection of the crossing of the flesh is a "shared present," which is a moment when each lover contemporaneously gives to the other:

> The exchange of faithfulness thus defines the only shared present of the erotic phenomenon – the lover saying to the other lover not, 'I love you!' but instead giving him or her an infinitely rarer and more powerful gift, 'You love me truly, I know, I assure you.' The lovers give one another this present for as long as their present lasts.[46]

Marion here turns the declaration "I love you" on its head. The lover's love is now the gift of assuring the other that *she* is the lover, that *she* loves. This "more powerful" gift of love comes in such an assurance. But how exactly does one give an "assurance" that is certain enough? Assurance comes as a gift, not in the speech act of saying "I love you," but in a "shared present." The gift gives a present, which arrives on the grounds of love. For Marion, "presence" is implicated in the question of the *es gibt*, and when presence enters into the status of being, it only does so as a result of its being given *first*, and loved *foremost*.[47] The present is given, but constantly "overflowed" through an indefinite, unexpected event. The present is a kind of trace of the gift, but only appears as an "arrival of an elsewhere." In both lover's loving the other, they give a present, which they each share; a present that can last only as long as the love lasts. The present in this case is precisely *the* erotic phenomenon. The erotic phenomenon is given as a gift, which *only* appears as a result of the two lovers having made the decision to love. This is what Marion calls the "crossed phenomenon."[48] The lovers, together, bring about the present through decisions to love, which came from decided upon gifts, in the first place. Although it is not possible to rely on the causal claim that the lover's love "was given" as a *result* of that

[46] Ibid., p. 190. It is interesting here to note that though earlier Marion asserted that the gift of love is best accomplished without speech, he is suggesting here that in the paradoxical instance of two lovers giving each other their flesh, the most powerful love comes in the gift of an assurance. Is this assurance that is given just a sense that the other receives, and must it come through a speech act?

[47] Ibid., p. 34. Though not uttering here Heidegger's name, one cannot help but assume Heidegger to be the inspiration for Marion's thinking here: "the present that is given accomplishes the present instant, precisely because it overflows presence. What is more: the arrival from elsewhere is not only accomplished in the present, it gives me my first present. With its passage, at last something – once again – happens. This gift of the precise present results from the arrival of an elsewhere within the indefinite future of my expectation." Continuing, the gift is able to be "in the present." Ibid., p. 36. Further, he suggests that the present itself is a gift: "in every case, time essentially unfolds itself according to the mode of an event, like the unpredictable arrival of an elsewhere, of which no one knows the day nor the hour, and of which the present can only be given as an unexpected and unmerited gift." Ibid., p. 37. Finally, Much later Marion asks "…how could a passage which, in passing, necessarily disappears, nevertheless happen, and accomplish itself enough to leave behind it a gift, that is, give a present? How could that which passes not sink into the past, not only give itself in the present, but give this present as a present." Ibid., p. 132.

[48] For "The erotic phenomenon appears not just in common to her and to me, and without a unique egoic pole, but it also appears only in this crossing. A *crossed phenomenon*." Ibid., p. 103.

love, it is possible to suggest that love's "option" was given by way of the lover's experience with lack. In this sense, desire *gives rise* to the decision to love.

Perhaps the most loving act is in one's allowing the other to love. In turn, the receiver of what might be called the "love of love" can decide upon love. After the lover loves back, then the two lovers can assure one another that they have indeed done so. This assurance is a gift that is interlaced with the original, first act of love in the reduction. One's allowance of this other to love is a gift in general, and a gift of one's lack and desire in particular. One's desire begins in lack, but this lack is an act of love that is not a usurping of the other, but a giving place to the other as a lover, and thus a "place in this world." How is it, then, that lack can be thought to have a "giving" element? As giving, desire-as-lack can be considered a resource within the erotic reduction. As implicated within the aforementioned paradox of *eros*, desire fulfills the role of being the *adonné's scarcity* (*Poros*), as well as his *abundance* (*Penia*). The simultaneous enactment of both scarcity and abundance is not contradictory for desire. After desire goes through the lover's erotic reduction, it dramatically births "eroticization," which is the movement within the erotic reduction wherein two lover's flesh are simultaneously given. Finally, since in loving the other one gives what one does not have (one's lack and desire) and because the greatest or "more powerful" gift comes in loving the other first and assuring her that she loves me – in effect, giving me her own desire and lack – it becomes possible to suggest that the greatest gift is the paradoxically *giving and abundant* gift of lack. This is entirely consistent with Marion's already standing thesis that the reduction to givenness is an active-passive coloring of intuition that seeks to dissolve the tense dialectic between activity and passivity. In part, this active/passive dichotomy is reliant upon an understanding of what Derrida conceived as the *aporia* between gift and economy. Although Derrida's establishment of the *aporia* was in part an effort to save the gift as a "pure" aneconomical concept, his retaining of the sharp, delineated borders between the two concepts was in itself an economical one, namely, in the obsessive pursuit of distinguishing those terms. The movement of safeguarding "purity" is first and foremost economical. This may be yet another reason as to why Marion wishes to establish the primacy of *both* givenness *and* love and their manifold of passive/active modalities.

4.3 Lack, Desire, and That About Which One Might Be Certain

Marion's *The Erotic Phenomenon* initiates his careful consideration of love, lack, assurance, and certainty in relation to phenomenology, and foreshadows his recent work in *Negative Certainties*.[49] Here, Marion draws on past illuminations of things

[49] Concerning that which intuition cannot "grasp" see here *Being Given*. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 199.

that the intuition cannot grasp, and turns to the epistemological implications a phenomenology of givenness might have on rethinking the dimensions of causality and the possibilities of knowledge. This is to turn from understanding things in their objectivity, to a grasping of things first in their phenomenality. In *Being Given* he already showed how one arrives at givenness by the effects, not the causes. Further, givenness is not reducible to a strict, metaphysical, cause-effect structure. Yet how is it that one can receive certitude concerning one's relationship not only with objective things in sense experience, but also with things that elude intuition? Marion extends the idea that things are given in the most stunning quality when they give "nothing" to invert the notion of first and second order substances. Modern Empiricism has taught to privilege that which is seen on the grounds of its being seen or in terms of sensibility, yet such ontic things are merely contingent or incidental properties determined in certain states (think Marion's "poor" or "common-law" phenomena which are poor in saturation or excess). Instead, things give best when they "lack" visibility and are *not* reified in objects of sensibility.

Further, *Negative Certainties* shows how a distinction must be made between those phenomena that give themselves along with the givenness of certainty, and those that give *without also* giving certainty. That is, there are things that give *without giving* certainty, and this *without* signals again to "lacking" or negativity, but this time in the phenomenon itself. It is this lacking of things that leads Marion to the claim that we can "know" of certain things that they will remain unknowable. This epistemological claim is built on *apophasis*, or reasoning from the negative or unknown (this will be considered closely in the next chapter). One can achieve assurance and certainty *via negativa*, or by way of negation. There are a number of "things" that tend to go beyond, and therefore in their own way *overwhelm*, our intuition. These things thereby subvert our knowledge of the world in profound ways. They are profound *to* us and interesting *for* us by merit of their not being able to be constituted *by* us. We have experiences with these phenomena, which are qualified by their lack of appearing to intuition, yet in their lacking, still provide excessive or saturated intuition. This calls for a questioning of knowledge. By way of what Marion names "Negative Certainties" (*certitudes négatives*), there are things of which we can be certain by way of determining their limit of reducibility, or "irreducibility." These are exemplified in God, who eludes intuition and is "irreducible,[50] and man himself, who is a stranger unto himself in a radical way.[51] Both are "exceptions" to the order of objective knowledge. Thus *Negative Certainties* is an appeal to a kind of apophasis, which Marion indeed already employed at length

[50] As Marion suggests "Et puisque l'on peut aller jusqu'à appliquer la finitude à l'être lui-même, comment ne pas conclure que Dieu doit faire exception aux normes de la finitude, et que, surtout, cette exception elle-même constitue encore une manière d'expérience – une expérience impraticable selon les normes de la finitude, ce qui, dans ce cas seulement, pourrait mériter le titre de Dieu et, une fois retraduit en termes épistémologiques, s'énoncerait ainsi : si l'incompréhensibilité atteste l'impossibilité de phénoménaliser l'infini, elle postule encore, certes, sur un mode négatif, une expérience positive de l'infini." Jean-Luc Marion, *Certitudes négatives* (Paris: Grasset, 2010), p. 94.

[51] Ibid., p. 41. "Il faut comprendre que toute autre chose peut et doit se connaître, sauf l'homme."

in *God without Being*, *In Excess*, and *The Erotic Phenomenon*. The Erotic Phenomenon, for example, is arrived at by way of a kind of call and response; desire appears as lack, and one responds through a decision, which has an effect on one's very way of experiencing the unique intelligibility of that which the phenomenon gives. Marion's work in *Negative Certainties* does not contradict, but reiterates and extends his basic approach to the phenomenology of givenness. Indeed, giving and showing go hand in hand, for the way things appear coincides *precisely* with the ways in which they are given, which is accomplished through the *adonné's* performance of the reduction to givenness.[52]

Phenomena that "lack" or withhold phenomenal data *say something* of themselves, namely, that their parameters are not determined by a subject who is "constituting" them in transcendental consciousness. Despite the *adonné's* inability to constitute them, there are a number of ways in which the manifold of desire might function in relation to givenness and the gift. These roles of desire, which are distinct from intentionality, help Marion establish the primacy of givenness and the possibility of the phenomenality of the gift, but they also play an essential role in the *adonné's* experiences of love, which for Marion deserves its own sort of primacy. But perhaps most importantly, these interconnections between gift and desire suture them to one another. This is reflected in *The Erotic Phenomenon*, which shows, with stunning consistency, how the erotic reduction is not exclusive from the reduction to givenness, or merely a second-rate reduction that submits to the primacy of givenness, but one that should be understood *alongside it*. That is, love, as a potential way of seeing and means to phenomenality, lends to a better understanding of Marion's givenness. For example, the reduction to givenness itself involves a suspension of a manifold of judgments, which is initiated by the *adonné*, whose lacking and desiring leads the *adonné* to go beyond hubris, vanity, or self-interest. Such suspensions help initiate not only the erotic reduction, but phenomenology's reductions in general, as ways of suspending the subject *in toto*.

Further, lacking and nothingness play essential roles in the rationality of love, which to a limited degree might be considered according to an apophatic sort of "negative certainty." This promulgates the many paradoxes of love and the gift, namely in Marion's own syntheses between activity and passivity. Concerning love, since "the more it loses, the more it gains," the gift of love that is given is precisely the lack of the lover, and the gift of love is the giving of what one does not have. As demonstrated here, there are indeed a number of ways in which desire and gift come to connect in Marion's work: In some cases, desire is derivative of givenness, and in others, desire comes before the particular gift of love – the most exemplary of gifts – is given. Further, there is a delicate relationship between the language of desire and that of love, which is certainly not metonymic, but is also not easily separable into two independent concepts. As far as Derrida is concerned, love and desire are under the jurisdiction of economy, and since the gift cannot be given to phenomenal

[52] Ibid., p. 164. "la manière dont le don se donne coïncide exactement avec la manière dont le phénomène se montre; ce qui s'accomplit comme don réduit se décrit aussi comme phénomène constitué."

experience, love and the gift cannot have any sort of relationship. Yet for Marion, while gift and economy indeed have a troubled relationship, when one performs the reduction upon their seemingly *aporetic* correspondence, one sees their dialectic "vanish" in a way that ends in a hierarchy, with givenness retaining primacy over economy. Not only *can* love and desire play a role in the appearing of the gift, but to some degree *must*, especially since the activities of the gift and love are indeed intertwined.

4.4 An "Erotic Reduction to Givenness?"

Given this background, what makes Marion's givenness so unique is precisely that it is a non-intentional, intuition oriented, yet erotically "dispositioned" approach to phenomena. And as this chapter has sought to demonstrate, it is the erotic dimension of "lack" or privation, which is at the heart of love and desire for Marion, that comes to be sutured to the gift, and to some degree, to givenness. This is not to conceive givenness solely in terms of "negativity" or "passivity," yet there is a sense in which desire, as a "resource of lack" is precisely what initiates the *adonné* towards performing the reductions. Yet since desire is a "resource of lack," it need not inhibit that which appears or comes to be given. One flaw in Husserl's approach to intention was that it saw the data of things as passive, and the transcendental subject as active/passive. Marion seeks to invert that strategy by conceiving the *adonné* as more passive, and things as more active (though he often disregards the passive/active distinction all together).

There are a number of concerns that arise, however, for any attempt to conceive the necessary interrelation between givenness and love. It is the case that all gifts are given only out of love, otherwise there are socio-economic interests at work that motivate the will to give, thus nullifying the gift. Further, since gifts are given only out of love, the gift as such appears in *accord with* love, which is a kind of first experience of the gift. This is indeed a fine way to discuss the "proper" gift *as such*, as well as love and its own "reasons," yet when one attempts to employ this conception to consider real phenomenological experience of the "givenenss" of all things, there is reason for serious pause. Can this gift/love relationship be applied to the givenness of *all phenomena*? Is love inherently a part of the very structure of givenness? Marion has not clarified as much, yet the possibility of permanently suturing givenness to love gives reason for reflection. First, the gift/love relationship may not be capable of being extended to all phenomena without reference to a cosmic, transcendent "giver." This is, of course, one of the problems Marion has persistently tried to avoid in his theory of givenness, especially in response to Derrida's concerns. While there *may* be a way to speak of anonymous "givenness," there can be no anonymous "love" without a "name tag" attached to it. If an anonymous love were possible, it would nullify Marion's attempts to situate love concretely in a context that is not metaphysical, and it would leave "love" in an abstract, subject-oriented, and self-constituted dimension. A second concern for any attempt to

permanently yoke givenness to love revolves around the following question: If all things that are given are given in accord with love, what of the forms of "negative sociality" and the vices that are imbued within our world such as murder, envy, or hate? These phenomena indeed reflect a deep and lasting givenness, especially upon those affected by the experiences in which they manifest themselves. Surely love cannot be an integral aspect of the "givenness" of these things, for if so, Marion's definition of love would again be reduced to an abstraction without the supposed seeking of the "good" of the other. A third reason (which could be posed more as a question in need of further clarification) as to why love cannot be integrated within all forms of "givenness," is that not all things "given" are given to a recipient. It would be an utter and total abstraction to suggest that the tree in the courtyard disappears when there is no one there to perceive it. Yet if it is in fact there, then it is persistently giving its data, despite there not being a receiver of that content. In this case, love cannot be integrated with givenness, for in every case of love there needs to be recognized *either* a giver *or* a receiver. And in the case of the tree in the courtyard, it is prohibited from "giving" with love on the grounds that it lacks certain volitional elements, and therefore, it cannot be such a "giver." These three concerns should prohibit the possibility that *all* things and their phenomenal data are "given" in accord with "love."

Although love and givenness cannot be conceived as intertwined in the case of the givenness of *all* things, this does not prohibit one's passionate or even erotic engagement with those things. Indeed, Marion's erotic reduction can be seen as a tonic correction to subject-oriented conceptions of consciousness that privilege particular sorts of rationality over the manifold of our affective engagements in the world. The erotic reduction provides further means for the bracketing of oneself, for the sake of the experience with/of the other, and for the sake of things' being given to conscious awareness. In such a case, love might provide a necessary means of suspending the manifold of judgments in which one is "always already" engaged in order to get beyond the *hybris* of the self and its many interests, drives, and forms of "hunger," those classical definitions of "desire." When engaged in the erotic reduction, things are no longer simply appearing *to me* and therefore *for me*. Indeed, desire, which is one's "resource of lack," can be a proper mode of engagement with things, namely in one's active preparation of intuition, not in order for one to get the particular *things* one desires, but for one's *will to be transgressed* by the givenness, or generosity of those things. This is of course one motivation for performing the reductions that Husserl's list of reasons for doing so did not include.

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Part II
Derrida, Desire, and the Gift

Chapter 5
Indifference: Derrida Beyond Husserl, Intentionality, and Desire

Abstract This chapter exclusively focuses on the ways in which Derrida conceives of the insufficiencies of Husserlian phenomenology, especially "intentionality" as it might relate with desire. Since Derrida calls for an "impossible" relation with the future "to-come" that is out of the reach of "my will or desire," Husserlian "directedness" must be replaced with *différance,* the differing and deferring of which are experienced intuitively through an openness and "indifference." *Différance* disrupts phenomenological presence by "procuring it" for "its openness" to something otherwise, and this chapter will pose that Derrida's rejection of the possibility of "desire" in the intentional structure of Husserlian phenomenology is a central and formative development in the early stages of deconstruction. The rejections of intentional consciousness, which for Derrida amount to a rejection of desire, are sutured to his other concerns for phenomenology, such as its conceptions of the transcendental, temporality, "the sign," history, and teleology. In the end, the will (and with it, desire) must be defeated, for it is an "adversed mobility" of going out of "oneself and returning into oneself."

> *One should not search for something behind the phenomena – they, in and of themselves, are the lessons. – Goethe*[1]

"Indifference" is not an attitude.[2] Distinct from any "disposition" or status of being indifferent (especially to the appearance of particular things) Derrida's "indifference" radically conditions one's experience more broadly according to the open field in which the play of signification occurs. "This indifference to content" and phenomenal appearances marks openings to the event of possibility, as the *conditioner* of desire itself. This indifference is to be distinguished from particular instances of indifference-to or indifference-about, which have particular – conscious

[1] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Goethe on Science: An Anthology of Goethe's Scientific Writings*, ed. Jeremy Naydler (Edinburgh, Scotland: Floris books, 1996), p. 91.

[2] "This indifference to content here is not an indifference, it is not an *attitude* of indifference, on the contrary. Marking any opening to the event and to the future as such, it therefore conditions the interest in and not the indifference to anything whatsoever, to all content in general. Without it [marking the opening to the future], there would be neither intention, nor need, nor desire, and so on." Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 73.

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J.W. Alvis, *Marion and Derrida on The Gift and Desire: Debating the Generosity of Things*, Contributions To Phenomenology 85,
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or unconscious – predicates of that which indifference is directed towards. Such supposed indifference is merely a desire-to-be-indifferent. Instead, there must be an indifference that is derived from *différance* itself, not from the predicates of presence, conscious experience, or an intended object. Kantian "disinterestedness" fails on the account that it begins with desire, for one attempts to be, or "is interested" in being disinterested.[3] And Husserl's naiveté falls short because it begins with an intentional subject whose voluntarism and decisionism "conditions" the phenomena that are supposed to be given in and of themselves. Instead, Derrida calls for an "impossible" relation with the future "to-come" that is out of the reach of "my will or desire, beyond my very intention. An intention to renounce intention."[4] There is "something before" these desires, and indifference begins there, in the altering work of *différance*, which is to be "affirmed." Thus, for Derrida, the manifold of – especially cognitivist – desire is the central inhibitor of the to-come and "becoming," and is therefore denied a role in deconstruction, which is his response to a problematic phenomenology that has fallen into a metaphysics of presence through the reliance on a transcendental subject who tirelessly pursues the objective of making "difference derivative" of presence, not the other way around.[5]

Although Derrida is indebted to Husserl's phenomenology, his recognition of its precise shortcomings and limitations should be taken seriously, at the very least because Husserl's appears to have been indeed the last chance for developing a "first philosophy."[6] The discipline of phenomenology (which Derrida has certainly not

[3] Though a Kantian understanding of desire is not detectable in his epistemology, one can get a sense of how he understands it in his Aesthetics, specifically as it comes in relation to pleasure, delight and, paradoxically, "disinterestedness." One experiences delight through beauty, but in order to do so, one must have some degree of disinterestedness in being satisfied through beauty's representation. But still this disinterested satisfaction "always has a reference to the faculty of desire." This desire is distinct from "interest" or purposiveness, and comes through an individual's aesthetic tastes. Kant suggests that "The satisfaction which we combine with the representation of the existence of an object is called interest. Such satisfaction always has reference to the faculty of desire, either as its determining ground or as necessarily connected with its determining ground." Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*. Trans by James Creed Meredith. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007) Part 1, section 2, 205A, p. 37.

[4] The messianic calls one to reject oneself: "…the messianic sentence carries within it an irresistible disavowal." This messiah calls me to leave the other to come… free in his movement, out of reach of my will or desire, beyond my very intention. An intention to renounce intention, a desire to renounce desire, etc. 'I renounce you, I have decided to': the most beautiful and the most inevitable in the most impossible declaration of love." For Derrida the Messiah is "beyond" one's intention and this is, in fact, the very nature of messianism. Thus, the only kind of "access" point to the messianic, if there be one, is through an intentional act of the renunciation of intention itself. Here, "intention" is used synonymously with "desire," and a kind of decisionism. But this decisionism is an abolishment of the will, not way to find its fulfillment. This is indeed a messianism without religion; one without a connection to a religious tradition. See Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* (New York: Verso, 1997), p. 174:

[5] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 101.

[6] Concerning these limits, Marrati puts it nicely: "with the limits of phenomenology one touches, according to Derrida, on the limits of the philosophical project itself." Paola Marrati, *Genesis and*

abandoned entirely for along with semiotics it forms the heart of deconstruction) claims to be its own ground, and is therefore caught in a double-bind between its attempt to use itself as a self-foundation, and its internal claims that demand it to contest its own self-legitimacy.[7] Phenomenology seeks the avoidance of being reduced to ontology, yet it's projection of an intending subject as the center of its analyses blindly reflects the opposite. This subject fails to see phenomena as they truly are because it can only reflect its own self-interests, desires, knowledge, and experiences upon everything that appears. Despite the typical critiques of deconstruction as relativisitic or nihilistic, Derrida wishes his approach to go beyond a phenomenological perspectivism rooted in a subject, the desires and voluntarism of whom blind the subject from receiving that which is given. Deconstruction seeks its own version of "saving" phenomenality through a pre-existent constitution (*vorseienden Konstitution*) that comes in the form of a semi-transcendental structure found in language. That which goes beyond what is inside or "outside the text" is an *archi-écriture*, this pre-existent that points beyond the phenomenal and towards the differing and deferring of language. Phenomena and their latent yet potential "signification" themselves must be grammatically liberated, and deconstruction is forged by Derrida in order to fulfill this task.

Instead of a radical reduction to a stable and originating concept "beneath" phenomenal appearance, Derrida seeks to show how the very grounding of philosophy must involve the destabilization of itself, something for which phenomenology could never account. He names this new, operative, and shifting ground *"différance*." *Différance*, as that which both "differs" and "defers" has elements of expression indiscernible to the ear, and is always already operative within every phenomenal appearance. Stable, self-reliant presence, which an intentional subject seeks, is a myth, and in *Speech and Phenomena* Derrida replaces this Husserlian "directedness" with *différance.*[8] To experience this great differing and deferring work one must "be" indifferent or indiscriminately "open." The job of *Différance within* phenomenological presence is "procuring it" for "its openness," its openness to something otherwise, and the manifold of the infinite play of signification.[9] Given the value of this project of grammatical and phenomenological liberation, it is also necessary to abandon the hopes for establishing a "methodology" in any traditional sense. This is why "deconstruction is not a method or some tool that you apply to something from the outside. Deconstruction is something which happens and which

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Trace: Derrida Reading Husserl and Heidegger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 2.

[7] Or as Marrati phases it, phenomenology wishes to found "itself upon itself." Ibid., p 2.

[8] Given my argument that Derrida forcefully rejects intentionality in favor of a intuition and the *différance* that occurs in it, Lawlor's thesis appears to suppose the opposite: "Derrida's concept of *différance* derives from the Husserlian concept of intentionality; like intentionality, différance consists in an intending *to*; it is defined by the dative relation." Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University press, 2002), p. 230.

[9] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 68.

happens inside."[10] Methods are limited to giving the subject what the subject wants, and Husserl's reductions (the eidetic reduction, for example) are reductions to meanings that suture the appearance of things to the subject's supposed transcendental consciousness.

This chapter will argue that Derrida's rejection of the possibility of "desire" in the intentional structure of Husserlian phenomenology plays a central role in the early development of deconstruction, and continues throughout Derrida's oeuvre. This is argued by highlighting Derrida's turn from Husserlian thought according to four problems, all of which are germane to the matter of intentional consciousness. These problems concern: (1) Intentionality and desire, (2) Transcendentals, (3) Origin, teleology, and history, and (4) The relation of temporality to sign, signification, and presence.[11] These are all considered in the context of Derrida's deconstruction of Husserlian phenomenology, which Derrida interprets through a variety of lenses.[12]

5.1 Desire, Intentionality, and Meaning

Husserl's "intentionality," is the "directedness of consciousness" upon a thing.[13] This "directedness" or attention-giving is essential, for at any point one might be deceived by one's anticipations and presuppositions about a thing. In everyday

[10] Though Derrida speaks of an "inside" and "outside" here, we can't take this to mean that he seriously employs these terms for any serious philosophical reflection, as it will later be shown how Derrida deconstructs the distinction between "inside" or "outside." Jacques Derrida, "A Conversation with Jacques Derrida" in *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, ed. John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p. 9. As Wesphal puts it – though at the risk of allowing the reader to become a "passive" recipient of its work – deconstruction is "not so much something we do as observe." Merold Wesphal, "Continental Philosophy of Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William J. Wainwright (New York: Oxford Publishing, 2005), pp. 472–93.

[11] Similarly, in her recent work *Genesis and Trace,* Marrati outlines the most crucial ways in which Derrida differs from Husserl, suggesting that "it is around the theme of genesis that some of Derrida's most insistent preoccupations will come to be gathered: the question of the contamination of the empirical and the transcendental, the question of the temporality of sense, the question of origin and history." Paola Marrati, *Genesis and Trace: Derrida Reading Husserl and Heidegger* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p 2.

[12] Lawlor asserts that Derrida's reading of Husserl was highly influenced by Eugen Fink's *Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl in the Contemporary Critique* (a work that is known to have influenced a number of first and second generation Heidegger scholars in France as well), Jean Cavaillés' *On Logic and the Theory of Science*, Jean Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*, and then Tran-Duc Thao's *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism.* See also Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University press, 2002).

[13] "Intentionality" was Husserl's proposed solution to the problem of how the subject and the phenomenon relate. Husserl dedicated his 1884 *Philosophy of Arithmetic* to his professor and mentor, Brentano, the one who inspired Husserl to see the importance of "intentionality." Intentionality is

experience, one has collected histories of experiences, which is to say that one rarely comes upon an experience that does not ring, at least in part, of a past experience. Thus, it is necessary to take care so as not to project those anticipations onto how that thing is, and works in every case.[14] A lever is necessary, then, in order to reconcile the subjective constitution of a thing, and that thing's self presentation or disclosure. Despite Husserl's distaste for how classical psychology conceived of desire, it's concept bears similarities to his development of intentionality, as he derives it from his teacher Brentano.[15] Of course, desire and intentionality are not cognates, but at the very least, Husserl's desire *is* intentional, and it shapes the way of intending, but like intentionality itself, desire is never fully aware of what it does, or what it, itself, desires. This word "intend" refers – in the case of "intentionality" – to the active setting of one's course for a particular object through "perception, thought, or volition." As *intendieren*, it is the active intending of an object in order "to mind" it or to find it "meaning" (*meinen*) something in particular. Intentionality is a *way* of being directed or aimed at a particular object in a very specific way unique to its presentation, and is thus a way of experiencing one's desire in and of itself, most especially in relation to the object or that which is desired in that moment.[16]

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one of the most consistent concepts in his vast corpus of writings. As Marrati recommends, his initial interest in turning to the concept of intentionality was in order to "reconcile the act of the constituting subject and the objectivity of the intended signification." Paola Marrati, *Genesis and Trace: Derrida Reading Husserl and Heidegger*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 6.

[14] Indeed, Husserl's meditations on intentionality or "directedness" are derived directly from his teacher, Brentano, who claimed that "every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not do so in the same way. In presentation, something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. This intentional inexistence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We can, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves." Franz Brentano quoted in Dagfinn Follesdal, "Husserl's Reductions and the Role They Play in His Phenomenology," in *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism,* edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus, Mark A. Wrathall (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 107. See Franz Brentano, *Psychology From an Empirical Standpoint* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1924).

[15] On more Phenomenological grounds, Ricoeur notes that "to say that I desire is to say that the object attracts me." Husserl had a certain distaste for classical psychology, which "constructed man like a house: below were the elementary functions; above was an extra level, the will. Need, desire, and habit were transposed from animal psychology as required." Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 53 and p. 217 respectively.

[16] Desire has certain "aims" for Husserl. For Smith, Husserl's "intentionality covers not only the way an intention or volition is aimed at doing something, but also the way a perception or thought or desire is aimed at some object, the object of perception, thought, or desire." David Woodruff Smith. *Husserl*. (Taylor & Francis, 2007), p. 192.

This is not to confuse desire with "deliberation," however. Although Husserl expressed reservation concerning any reduction of intentionality to "deliberation," this has become one of the most common misunderstandings of Husserl's phenomenology. "Deliberation" is more thorough, requiring careful planning, thought and insight, while "intentionality" is a more general "directedness" or "being-directed." Being-directed does not necessitate my cognizant awareness of that direction. The subject may not be acquainted with the "directing" of its consciousness. Being-directed could be the subject's being directed *by* the object, not just at/to it. This signals to important differences between desire and intentionality. Notably, a Husserlian desire, it seems, operates at the level of the "unconscious" – a term Husserl never actually used, but to which he alluded, and for which he allowed the possibility – while intentionality finds itself situated in the reductions, which occur precisely in conscious experience, even though directedness may not be "deliberate."[17]

Further, "the will," which is more deliberative, is not perfectly metonymic with "desire." Their differences can be seen in Aristotle's distinction between *proairesis* and *orexis*. *Proairesis* is a kind of "faculty of the will," which is ultimately free and deliberate, while *orexis*, a kind of "desire," is connected with the object that one lacks.[18] These distinctions are indeed difficult to maintain, and are therefore up for debate, but the traditional way of understanding them lies in their supposed sources: the free choice in consciousness (will) or the lacking subconscious (desire). Yet, since both are inherent within the human condition more generally, there are nevertheless similarities between the two words, as they both refer to "wanting." Derrida is well aware that there are differences between the terms "desire," "will," "intentionality," and "decision." However, he is concerned that for Husserl, although "intentionality never simply meant will, it certainly does seem that [at the very

[17] Though Husserl has a heavy-handed critique of the psychological approaches of his times, his phenomenology begins with a classification of those different types of "acts" of conscious experiences, which Brentano developed; for example, those of desire, imagination, and perception which are a part of Brentano's "descriptive psychology." However, Husserl promotes these types as having more influential roles in his philosophy. Brentano made a sharp distinction between what he called "descriptive psychology," which simply "describes" the experiences of consciousness, and "genetic psychology," which looks for the "genesis" or beginning of how that mental state came into being. As Smith demonstrates, in phenomenology they are "now, a vital part of the essence of an act of a certain type…the intentionality of the act," which is "a complex relation among subject, act, content and object: *ego – act – content -> object*." David Woodruff Smith, *Husserl* (Taylor & Francis, 2007), p. 54 & p. 233.

[18] See here Hannah Arendt, "Willing," in *The Life of the Mind* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1978).

Nietzsche initiates his own reflection on the will as freedom, whereby one has the "will" to shape power (creatively). This will is not an Apollonian sort of "control," but an active creation. Philosophy should be about the triumph of "*Wille*" (our intentional, self-disciplined will) over *Willkur* (arbitrary desire). This, for Philosophy, is a much-needed distinction between "instinctual drives" and "intentional desire." Through this intentional desire, one is opened up to the world through saying "yes!" to the Dionysian "excess", which leads to truth. Thus, the *Wille zur Macht* is not control, but a particular sort of self-mastery that infinitely multiplies into the possibilities of truth, insofar as it is performed.

least] in the order of expressive experiences…Husserl regards intentional consciousness and voluntary consciousness as synonymous."[19] That is, at least in relation to the problem of "expression," Husserl's "intentionality," Derrida critiques, is an entirely voluntaristic movement that takes place in consciousness, despite Husserl's interest in having an intentionality that is a more general "being directed."[20] This concern over intentionality might be taken as a centerpiece to Derrida's other critiques of Husserl's phenomenology and is here illuminated along three different lines.

5.1.1 Intentionality and Expression

The first way of understanding the problem of intentionality is through the matter of expression. As Derrida interprets Husserl, "an expression is not primitively an 'expressing oneself' but is, from the outset, an 'expressing oneself about something' (*über etwas sich äussern*)."[21] There is a distinction between the expression itself, and what that expression is ultimately *about*, its content and indication, and Husserl privileges the latter given the intentional structure of consciousness. There is no primitive "expressing oneself" without an object. In part, this is why Husserl's phenomenology (here in distinction from Heidegger's) still has within it an operative disjunction between truth and appearance/revelation, for that which is revealed is an expression about particular aspects of a thing-as-revealed, not the thing in its entirety. We indeed have various relations with the revelations of things, but the things themselves are contingent upon our receiving them as given.

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[19] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 34.

[20] Derrida's critical interpretation of Husserl's intentionality has not gone without critique, however. The question becomes to what extent Husserl's intentionality presupposes a certain transcendental horizon of "touching." Willard, for example, argues that Husserl's phenomenology does not fall to the critiques that Derrida levels against it. Instead, Willard insists that "there is a longstanding tradition in Western thought according to which whatever objects present themselves to consciousness are the products of some more fundamental type of "touching" between the mind and something else" and Willard's "first thesis here is that Derrida falls squarely within this "Midas" tradition in the interpretation of intentionality: a tradition which very few philosophers in the modern period – possibly only Husserl, though the most common reading does not even exempt him – have managed to escape. It seems clear that intentionality for Derrida really is a kind of making: a making that is always a re-making, thus moving all 'objects' – the individual as well as the universal – into the realm of the ideal as he understands it, and simultaneously doing 'violence' to that from which this 'ideal' object of consciousness is produced, as well as to the produced object itself." Dallas Willard, "Predication as Originary Violence: A Phenomenological Critique of Derrida's View of Intentionality," in *Working Through Derrida*, ed. G. B. Madison (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), p. 120.

[21] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 73–74. And as Derrida later continues, this distinction "determines an epoch characterized by the philosophical idea of truth and the opposition between truth and appearance…" Ibid., p. 77.

Derrida concludes that Husserl's conception of expression as merely an "expressing oneself about" harbors a more serious problem; that is, it leads to a voluntaristic choice about, and therefore a control over the expression. According to Derrida, in Husserl's *Investigations* "expression is a voluntary exteriorization; it is meant, conscious through and through, and intentional. There is no expression without the intention of a subject animating the sign, giving it a *Geistigkeit*."[22] There is no expression that goes unanimated by the subject. The subject's animating and giving life to expression degrades any and all expressions (including emotional affects such as hate, joy, etc.) to a cognitivist account. Indeed, if expression cannot come about by any other means than through the choice and agency of the willing subject, then the expression is necessarily bound to the activity and choice of that subject, and therefore, ultimately can project only "what" and "how" that subject *wants*. Thus, for Derrida, *the subject sees only what it wants or desires to see*. It is not simply the case that the desires of the subject color or influence the seeing, but more extremely, that those desires prohibit seeing the thing in itself, which must be free to express itself entirely.[23]

5.1.2 Intentionality, and Meaning

A second way of considering these interrelated problems of desire and intentionality is through the topic of "meaning." For Derrida, in Husserl's thought there is "no expression without voluntary intention," for "if expression is always inhabited and animated by a meaning (*bedeuten*, *wanting* to say), this is because, for Husserl, the *Deutung* (the interpretation or the understanding of the *Bedeutung*) can never take place outside oral discourses (*Rede*)."[24] In other words, Husserl's expression cannot be "meaningless" or devoid of the desire-to-say or "mean" because it can only take place in oral discourse. This is reflected in Derrida's *Of Grammatology* where he also critiques Saussure for privileging the oral tradition. The problem with phenomenology is that its meaning or speech of the "expression" can never actually come from the expression itself; it must necessarily originate in or be "made" by the intending subject: "What 'means,' i.e., *that which* the meaning means to say – the meaning, *Bedeutung* – is left up to whoever is speaking, insofar as he says what he

[22] Ibid., p. 33. For Derrida, Husserl's expression means "the going-forth-beyond-itself of an act, then of a sense, which can remain in itself, however, only in speech, in the 'phenomenological' voice."

[23] In a way not entirely distinct from Lacan, Derrida ultimately wanted to see speaking and discourse "unleash" or free expression in very practical, even political ways. If expression is "unleashed" then there is an effect: one can bring down oppressive ideologies, regimented systems of morality, political repression and so forth. The point of transition from an "early" to a "late" Derrida (if it is possible to speak of Derrida in these terms) can be seen in his movement from *describing* deconstruction and "discourse" to *prescribing* it in its socio-cultural dimensions.

[24] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 33–34.

wants to say, what he *means* to say – expressly, explicitly, and consciously."[25] Meaning comes from the desire of the subject in general, and his desire to speak that proposed meaning in particular (thus the title *Speech and Phenomena*). Ultimately, *if* there is a subject who directs or "makes" the meaning for the expression, then the expression *in itself* is empty and devoid of meaning, and if an expression is empty until animated by the intending subject, then, like a balloon waiting to be expanded by air, expression cannot have its own sense. For Derrida, expression must be free from the intent and express meaning of the one who intends it, and must be therefore "involuntary."[26]

Contrary to Husserl's position in these regards, Derrida proposes that "dissemination" limits the category of "meaning," and the desire of the one who "means."[27] Derrida's replacement for Husserl's *eidetic* reduction to meaning is radicalized in what one might call a "semiological reduction" that estranges the expression from the intending subject. The most radical reduction for deconstruction is a reduction *to* the semiotic structure of language and its differing process. Meaning can only tell us something about ourselves, and a turn to the semiotic structure of language initiates a releasement of meaning in the most radical of senses. Derrida sketches a solution to the problem of meaning by turning to "sign" and "signification" as concepts that help to exfoliate Frege's well-known distinction and differentiation between *Bedeutung* (meaning) and *Sinn* (sense).[28] This differentiation, which Husserl does not recognize, demands that "meaning" is always derivative or contingent, while sense can be meaningless, lacking in rationality, although intelligible and significant. There are indeed words, actions, and ideas that are meaningless *inside* language.[29] This is what leads Derrida in *Of Grammatology* to his famous and

[25] Ibid., p. 34.

[26] Ibid., p. 34.

[27] Or as Caputo puts it, Derrida's "*dissemination* 'moves beyond'" the *eidetic* reduction in particular "which is a reduction *to* meaning, toward a more radical reduction *of* meaning [itself], a grammatological liberation of the signifier, releasing it into its free play." John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1987), p. 148.

[28] One recognizes signs prior to the audible experiences of language, and since signs are simply regulative (i.e., they play by the rules of the game), there is something at-work beneath their surface; some unintelligible, yet dynamic force. This is the seed that Derrida appears to find most intriguing in Semiotics.

[29] Derrida interprets Husserl to provide no distinction "between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*," however, "logical meaning is an expression." This is where Derrida sides more with Semiotics, for it is about making *sense* and becoming rational (though never in actuality), intelligible, or *significant*. Intelligibility is not the same as rationality, though, as it can be nonsense (See also Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense*). "Sense" is made through a differential in language. Language itself, is a way of differentiating between the *thing* that *is*, and our claim *about* what we think it is, and how we describe it. As Saussure would have it, language does not have, built within it, a series or chain of referents that allow definite meanings, and since this is the case, meaning becomes necessarily arbitrary, *never* absolutely present to us. Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 20.

often misunderstood conclusion that "there is nothing outside the text."[30] This should be read in a radical way: There is no outside to which one can refer without a reversion to metaphysics, and the "meaning" of a subject is an inhibitor to one's experiencing the differentiating force of "the event" in language.

5.1.3 Intentionality and Metaphysics

The third way in which the problems of intentionality might be imagined in Derrida's thought turns on the metaphysical nature of voluntarism. As synonymous with voluntary consciousness, intentional consciousness *may* be metaphysical, namely, for its reliance upon a subject who actively *screens* the gap between the invisible ideal and sensible. For Derrida "…the concept of intentionality remains caught up in the tradition of a voluntaristic metaphysics – that is, perhaps, in metaphysics *as such*."[31] Though Husserl expressly wished to avoid metaphysics in his establishment of phenomenology, his version of intentional consciousness, as voluntaristic, becomes trapped in one's nostalgia of bringing a desire to "permanent presence." As Derrida puts it in the final chapter of *Speech and Phenomena*, "the *history of metaphysics therefore can be expressed as the unfolding of the structure or schema of an absolute will-to-hear-oneself-speak.*"[32] That is, an agent/subject wishes to mean or intend something stable and accessible, and in assuming such stability, the agent's desire to hear himself "speak;" that is, to repeat what one already has known or experienced, is merely an expression of a metaphysics of presence. The problem of the metaphysics of presence is a major concern for Derrida, and soon will be considered more closely. Elsewhere, in *Margins of Philosophy*, Derrida reiterates that desire acts predictively upon one's experience of some thing, inhibiting the thing from showing itself. Through an intentional structure one only gets, through a *rep-*

[30] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 158. One should read this in a radical way. There is no "outside." Deconstruction doesn't simply respond to *questions* posed within (*a l'interieur*) metaphysics "in order to go outside" (as we saw in his early work), but now is a kind of invitation, or as Lawlor puts it, "the keeping of a promise to a specter who needs to come inside, and thereby form a community." Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University press, 2002), p. 221.

[31] Ibid., p. 34. Yet as Caputo puts it "From Plato to Husserl, the subject/agent signifies a certain 'intending,' a '*vouloire-dire*,' a wanting-to-say, a meaning-to-say, wanting, meaning, and willing well-being. Otherwise the subject/agent would never do a thing, nothing would happen or eventuate." John D. Caputo, "A Commentary: Deconstruction in a Nutshell" in *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, ed. John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p. 144.

[32] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 102. This voluntarism is also related with motivation (*Motivierung*). Derrida is convinced that in Husserl's phenomenology there is a "unity" within the indicative function, which is held together "by a certain 'motivation' (*Motivierung*): it is what moves something such as a 'thinking being' *to pass* by thought from something to something else." Ibid., p. 28.

etition, what one already has. There is, what Derrida calls the "lure of the I", which can give rise to a hallucination that "permits me to give myself to hear what I desire to hear, to believe in the spontaneity of the power which needs no one in order to give pleasure to itself."[33] This desire of consumption is metaphysical in the sense that it privileges the present over the absent.

Ultimately, metaphysics puts an end to the free, infinite play of difference. Perhaps this is why "will" and "intentionality" get circumscribed as metaphysical concepts, for "all the concepts of metaphysics – in particular those of activity and passivity, will and non-will…. *cover up* the strange 'movement' of this difference."[34] To its demise, voluntarism and intending within phenomenology over-determine its interests. Simply put, phenomenology has *too much interest*. In the final words of *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida concludes with such a claim: "contrary to what phenomenology…has tried to make us believe, contrary to what our desire cannot fail to be tempted into believing, the thing itself always escapes."[35] Though the subject thinks it has apprehended the object of experience, the subject has actually substituted its own nostalgic will upon that object of experience, and thus missed its temporal arrival.

5.2 Phenomenology and the Problem of Transcendentals

While it is the case that Husserl questions the legitimacy of psychologism, neither Derrida nor Husserl want to create a distinction between the psychological and the phenomenological because this would imply a dualism between the "real" and "the transcendental real." Both Descartes and Kant's projects are generally characterized according to their relation with transcendental "dualism." The Kantian distinction, for example, between the *noumenal* and the *phenomenal* was one that raised Husserl's concerns. Despite Kant's claim that any real verifiable assertion must be based on "empirical experience," his formulation of *Das Ding an Sich* allows for the "thing" never formally to appear, but hide behind the curtain of experience. Husserl agrees (in his later *Cartesian Meditations*) with Hegel's concern that in Kant's approach there is a certain invisible and non-verifiable "thing," which lands Kant back into the metaphysics he has, time and again, attempted and claimed to avoid. The especially later Husserl thus doesn't want phenomenology to be "a Kantian idealism which believes it can keep open, at least as a limiting concept, the possibility of a world of things in themselves."[36] Such concerns originally led Husserl

[33] Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1982), p. 297.

[34] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 85.

[35] Ibid., p. 104.

[36] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. D. Cairns (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), p. 118.

"back" to formulating ways of *access* to the things in themselves, namely, by rethinking transcendental consciousness, the means by which the subject goes beyond itself in order to know things that are covered over in thought and independent of the subject.[37] One is to begin with a description of these things, which one takes to having been given to one's consciousness. What becomes necessary for Husserl is a description of what happens at the intersection of the immanent and transcendental reality in consciousness.[38]

Husserl wishes not to limit the transcendental to immanent appearing, for there are indeed things that appear to consciousness that have "essence" but not necessarily are accessible to corporeal experience (e.g., shape, color, movement, the soul, feeling, human nature). Transcendent essences secure the possibility of immanent experience, for immanent reality is "not in itself something absolute… it is nothing at all… it has no 'absolute essence' whatsoever, it has the essentiality of something which in principle is *only* intentional, *only* known, consciously presented as an appearance."[39] Immanent reality has no absolute essence, while the transcendental world in its purity can only be "seen" through intuition, through a series of phenomenological reductions that suspend the immanent world in order to catch a glimpse of the transcendental one.[40] On the one hand, this transcendental, pure consciousness – that which the phenomenological reductions aim to attain – is, in a limited sense, more primordial than physical substance. Physical being "rests on" this pure absolute consciousness, so much so that every experience is first an *experience of experience* itself.[41]

[37] Recalling the Scholastic notion of the word, "transcendentals" are categories, which "applied to any being whatsoever," transcend "all determinations of type and genus," are thus universal and as such are non-contingent. In reference to structures of cognition, they make knowledge possible. Husserl carries forward a Kantian understanding of this term, suggesting that though "phenomenological transcendental philosophy is distinguished from all historical philosophies" there is nonetheless "an obvious essential relationship" between it "and the transcendental philosophy of Kant." Edmund Husserl, "Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy," trans. Ted E. Klein JR and William E. Pohl, *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 5.3 (1974): p. 9 & 13. See also Matheson Russell, *Husserl: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: Continuum Press, 2006), p. 39 & 42–43. Husserl indeed uses this word "transcendental" similarly to Kant. In *CPR* Kant suggests that he entitles "transcendental all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects in so far as this mode of knowledge is to be possible *a priori*. A system of such concepts might be entitled transcendental philosophy." Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (trans F. Max Müller. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), A 11 f., B 25.

[38] The category of "the transcendental," here, should not be confused with the theological notion of "transcendence." "Trancendental" carries a "sense of world-transcendence." Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, Vol I,* trans W.R. Boyce Gibson (New York, NY: MacMillan Company, 1931), p. 161.

[39] Ibid., p. 154.

[40] This consciousness is accessed through the performance of a reduction: a mental glimpse or vision that occurs in and by a momentary suspension of, and disconnection from nature and the "immanent" world. Like panning for gold, the residuum of such an endeavor is the absolute kernel of transcendental consciousness – the place where one might experience the world *qua* world in its "purity."

[41] Ibid., p. 161.

Yet on the other hand, the "immanent" is the "real" place in the world through which these things are experienced and reduced. This is why the golden rule of phenomenology is to not claim anything that we "*cannot make essentially transparent to ourselves by reference to consciousness* and on purely immanental lines."[42] Phenomenology indeed seeks to exclude the *kind* of transcendence that is smuggled into one's experience without reference to these "immanental lines." Such an exclusion, however, "means not the exclusion of the genuinely transcendent" but of the transcendental "as something to be accepted as existent, i.e., everything that is not evident givenness in its true sense, that is not absolutely given to pure 'seeing.'"[43] Although this transcendental consciousness goes unconditioned (a hermeneutically suspicious position Marion seeks to rectify) by the immanent one, these two places should not be seen as antithetical, or as necessarily distinct. These various interrelations developed by Husserl between the immanent and the transcendental spheres institute an unfolding (or in his language a "vanishing") of the lines inherent to the supposed dualisms or dialectics between the two.

Despite this attempt to remove the distinction, its removal does not result in the immanent and transcendental having equal footing or similar precedence, and what appears to be a privileging of the universal over the contingent ends up driving phenomenology. As a *pure* "descriptive discipline," Husserl's phenomenology is accomplished intuitively, as an enterprise that examines states of purity or unconditioned states of experience.[44] The natural standpoint, or attitude, is that which takes place in the everyday experience of the empirical or real (*Erfahrung*) "world," while lived or "ideal" experience (*Erlebnis*) references life *as lived* in relation to our concrete existence.[45] That is, states of unscathed universality are privileged in their universality, despite their need to correspond to "immanental lines," and it is the subject's intentionality that provides a means of accessing such lived experience.

For Derrida, Husserl's is not a viable solution to the problem of dualism for a number of reasons.[46] One cannot access "totality" or the universality of essences

[42] Ibid., p. 176.

[43] Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. William Alston and Georege Nakhnikian (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p. 7.

[44] The word *pure* here refers to the nature of an experience as "unconditioned." Ibid., p. 176, cf. 120.

[45] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, Volume II*, trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson (London England: Allen and Unwin, 1972), p. 52. Lévinas, who seems to be on good Husserlian ground here, claims that phenomenological intentionality allows one to get beyond merely experiencing a "representation" of an object, to seeing that it "connects the notion of consciousness to that of life, i.e., it leads us to consider consciousness under the rich and multiform aspects characteristic of our concrete existence." See Emmanuel Lévinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology,* trans. by André Orianne (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), p. 53.

[46] Similarly, as Marrati interprets Derrida here, such an act is "only through an *a priori* synthesis that supposes a transcendental act that is itself synthetic." Yet we are still left with the problem that synthesis implies "a duration and a genesis, the time of an actualization." Paola Marrati, *Genesis and Trace: Derrida Reading Husserl and Heidegger* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 6.

empirically or objectively because there is no subject capable of constituting objectivity, as even the subject is in continuous flux and movement (*Speech and Phenomena*).[47] It is most especially the subject-as-reasonable that becomes a central matter of concern, even in Derrida's later work as he persistently wrestles with Husserl's conception. In *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, Derrida seeks to demonstrate how Husserl's "reason" actually *becomes* a transcendental, and is essentially "autoimmune" to failure. As Derrida suggests with concern, there is a supposed "limitlessness" to Husserl's reason, which is employed by Husserl to create a system whose task is to merge the Kantian noumenal with the phenomenal. Reason is that which plays the great role of merging these two worlds because it attempts to act as a "superpowerful" origin that, for Derrida "gives reason or proves right, that wins over everything, that knows everything and lets everything be known, that produces becoming or genesis but does not itself *become*."[48] This reason has no rival, does not submit to the principle of becoming (*appartenance*), but in the Greek order of being or "belonging," holds a permanently and therefore reliable transcendental status.

As such, this reason has the "right to reign" over, and maintain a privileged access to both the invisible, and all that "becomes." Such a powerful reason is "unreasonable" for Derrida, because it assumes access to the future and its fecund, indeterminate possibilities. Husserl believes his reason to be able to transcend the rules and structures of temporality, and under this thesis, it paradoxically leads back to a privileging of the empirically observable by merit of its reliance upon establishing universal essences as predictable and predetermined. Instead, in *Rogues* Derrida wagers that the only way for any new creation to come about through thought is by opening reason *itself* up to "the event;" allowing it to *become*, and *become-shaped* by the invisible and unpredictable forces of difference and dissemination, which are not transcendentals. This is "the event (unique, unforeseeable, without horizon, unmasterable by any ipseity or any conventional and thus consensual performativity), which is marked in a 'to-come' that [extends] beyond the future…"[49] Derrida's conceptualization of the event is not simply the future, or that which is to come, but marks a horizon beyond the to-come. Husserl's privilege of reason results in its achieving the status of a transcendental, thus giving it the right to rule over temporality itself and therefore eliminate any possible relation with the event and its unforeseeable futures.

[47] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 65–66.

[48] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason,* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 138.

[49] Ibid., p. 87.

5.3 Origin, Teleology, and History

In his 1959 essay "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology," Derrida argues that Husserl's method is based on the foundation of a presumed "genesis" or beginning. At the time of writing, Derrida was becoming increasingly aware of structuralists' worries concerning phenomenology; worries that generally amounted to suspicions of phenomenology's claim to "experience," on the grounds that it ignored the "inexperiencable" structure that underlie and undergird every experience. Derrida employs these structuralist critiques to address a problem that plagued both the structuralism and phenomenology of his time: origins must already entail "structure" in order to be proper points of departure or beginning. That is, every genesis has another genesis, which Derrida deems to be formed by interconnected forces that are at work within them. This concern over the interrelation between genesis and structure is a guiding one for Derrida, and it holds together his sustained concerns for phenomenology, spanning over three decades of writing.

Any genesis, for Derrida, is complex; there are no stable or pure beginnings to which one might refer, or at the very least, refer with confidence in their unconcealing truth. This not only goes for phenomenologists, but also for philosophers who seek the ultimate explanation of things, for one can never access the structure or the genesis upon which a structure is built. There is no nature. There is no paradise. Yet, thee is a certain dark tendency, especially in philosophers, to seek the genesis or origin of phenomena because the presumption is made that such an origin will be the most seemingly "natural" place to holding the keys to untainted "being" in its purity. For Derrida, Husserl is not only guilty of doing this, but also of placing this search for origins at the center of his method, which inadvertently creates out of this origin an "untouchable" (*Das Heilige*) in phenomenology. As such, phenomenology would be little more than a revival of Platonic Rationalism.[50] In *Rogues*, Derrida observes that rampant within Plato's *Republic* was a "genealogical discourse about patrimonial and capital filiation," which qualified "the sun" or "the good" as parents, or points of origin; and that similarly, in the *Crisis*, Husserl "cites or summons to appear a certain sun of Descartes, although he [Husserl] could have just as well replaced it by the sun of Plato."[51] Husserl falls into the same problems that Plato did by relying upon an untouchable and unobservable *eidos* that acts as irreducible to any precedence whatsoever. Any reliance upon a genesis or origin demands the stability of sense, a stability of which Derrida insists to ignore the nature of "becoming," which in Derrida's view is the true way in which "sense" comes to express itself.[52] That is, the point of genesis, under Husserl's thesis, is an originary, inacces-

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[50] Lauer suggests that this can be seen especially in Husserl's "Philosophy as Rigorous Science."
Quentin Lauer, "Introduction," in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers. 1965), p. 76.

[51] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason,* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 139.

[52] As Marrati notes, the question of origins "is the very question of the relation of time and truth" as "Genesis always refers to the absolute emergence of an originary sense, insofar as it is irreduc-

sible, yet stable sense. It is thus no wonder that Derrida ultimately comes to quarantine the gift to "impossibility," which is not a transcendental category or point of origin, but something that can never enter into the status of phenomenality.

5.3.1 Teleology

The *seeking* of origins within Husserl's phenomenology is inherently teleological. As Husserl suggests, "being human is teleological being and an ought-to-be," which is to say that there is always a directedness of thought or a *telos*, goal, or purpose behind all thinking.[53] Of course, Derrida takes issue with this directly, but also claims that Husserl's *telos* can be traced back to an even deeper problem, one of unifying speculative reason with practical reason: "long before Husserl, Kant had also claimed the inseparable unity of theoretical reason and practical reason."[54] For Kant, wedding these two types of reason requires that one form have primacy over the other for according to Kant, "without this subordination, a conflict of reason with itself would arise."[55] Of course, for Kant, it is practical reason that wins out and gains this primacy, therefore charging the theoretical with the particular "interests," demands, and *telos* of practical reason. Husserl commits the same mistake as Kant, thus charging phenomenology with a *telos* in efforts to legitimize its *raison d'être.* Thus, phenomenology must justify its theoretical interests, which are "conditioned" (*nur bedingt*) or limited by and upon its practical or "unconditional" (*unbedingt*) interests.[56] The theoretical becomes conditional and limited. The problem with this is that such a teleology presupposes its outcomes according to these practical designs and in turn leave little room for the experience of knowledge to-come:

> Whenever a telos or teleology comes to orient, order and make possible a historicity, it annuls that historicity by the same token and neutralizes the unforeseeable and incalculable irruption, the singular and exceptional alterity of what comes, or indeed of who comes, that without which, or the one without whom, nothing happens or arrives.[57]

Any philosophy that claims a *telos* or interest, in effect, demands for a certain type of future, one whose questions already have their answers and are closed to "the

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ible to anything that precedes it." Paola Marrati, *Genesis and Trace: Derrida Reading Husserl and Heidegger* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 3

[53] Edmund Husserl, quoted in *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason,* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 130, note 7.

[54] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason,* Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 132.

[55] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (Digireads.com Publishing, 2006), p. 84.

[56] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin, 1965), p. 126–28.

[57] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason,* Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 128.

incalculable" and its fecund possibilities.[58] The infinite *task* and *telos* of practical reason, as it comes to guide and condition speculative reason, thus precludes the arrival of "the event."[59] And phenomenology's stifling of the event with a transcendental idealism, and of any future knowledge with a Kantian rationalism are the reasons why Derrida insists on "the failure of this *telos*."[60]

For Derrida the solution to this problem is somewhat straightforward: Release speculative and theoretical reason from its conditions. Unconditionality must be "the ultimate recourse" or the absolute principle of speculative reason, otherwise it abandons its status as truly speculative. The only interest one might grant a pursuit of pure reason to having, if it is, in fact, "pure," is the interest in allowing it to be unconditional. Pure, speculative, theoretical reason must be de-conditioned from practical reason for the former "requires an unconditional truth." For Derrida, such "unconditionality is the truth of truth."[61] To seek *and* to find creates a "structure of expectation and anticipation,"[62] indeed an automated desire for fulfillment. Instead, one must become "disinterested" in the most radical of senses by disentangling oneself from the expectations that bind signification and its infinite play. This is only possible through the promise of the "impossible," which proceeds by a kind of "*chercher le midi a quartorze heure*," a "looking for noon at two o'clock."[63]

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[58] To use a phrase from Lacoste here, such questions "carry their own answers ready and waiting in their bosoms." Though Lacoste situates himself primarily in the phenomenological tradition, he too, like Marion, has been greatly influenced by Derrida, for in speaking of the hermeneutic circle, Lacoste suggests that "we can learn only to the extent that we can let the unanticipated put our expectations and our prejudices in question. Authentic discovery punches a hole in the circle, *since only pseudo-questions carry their own answers ready and waiting in their bosoms.* Pre-understanding without honest admission of non-understanding will hardly invite more than the most meagre discoveries. Yet it is necessary for questions to be asked, and that means there must be a field of dialogue where the speech that answers my questions can become my very own speech. Who am I, that the speech of theology addressed to me, however rudely, is capable of securing my adherence? Equally, how must theological speech be framed if what it offers has to serve as an answer to a question?" Jean Yves Lacoste, "More Haste, Less Speed in Theology," *The International Journal of Systematic Theology,* 9:3, (2007): p. 273, (*my emphasis*).

[59] Such a teleology has vast effects on how one conceives of time for, as Marrati contents, "to think time as the unfolding of a teleology amounts to effacing its temporal character, to endowing it with a sense independent of it." Paola Marrati, *Genesis and Trace: Derrida Reading Husserl and Heidegger* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 6.

[60] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 36.

[61] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason,* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 132.

[62] Ibid., p. 128.

[63] Such a reference to the "great noon" conjures Nietzsche's "God is dead." The reference to the "impossible" is connected to "the promise," which, as Lawlor asserts, "is based on sovereignty. And sovereignty – without a master over, Godless – is a sign, for Nietzsche, of the overman." See also Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University press, 2002), p. 214.

5.3.2 History

Another theme through which Derrida critiques Husserl and phenomenology is "history," particularly in *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Phenomenology*. He describes Husserl's history as within "the empirical sciences dealing with causality and world events."[64] As empirical science, history is a tool that allows for the surveying of data that others have collected, or is a means of recalling our own archive of experiences. This understanding of history is "inscribed in the genetic problems" of Husserl's work, and haunt it subsequently. There are three different layers to Derrida's concerns in these regards.

The first layer of concern Derrida has of Husserl's concept of history is that it "presuppose[s] the possibility of a going backward, the possibility of finding again the originary sense of the former presents as such."[65] Within what might be called here the "historical attitude," one is capable of having a kind of omnipresence in regards to time, which presumes "a history that is intelligible" and transparently accessible to consciousness. Such a history's "sedimentations can be unmade and remade without alteration."[66] Under Derrida's analysis, Husserl employs a subject capable of "reactivating" (*Reaktivierbarkeit*) an originary sense of historical acts *within* its own consciousness. This disregards the temporal dimensions of presentation and appresentation, as well as the endless, hermeneutic circle in which one finds onself always already implicated. The second layer of concern is that Husserl's understanding of history maintains a contradiction. On the one hand, Husserl's approach maintains "a history constituted in its very meaning, by something other than itself" while on the other hand, Husserl's history is "an originarily temporal lived experience."[67] Thus, Derrida wonders how genesis (i.e., that absolute beginning point of sense) might be "constituted" if it is to be, in fact, the origin of sense. This also runs contrary to the fact that, in Husserl's construction, it is only temporality that is supposed to be doing the "constituting."[68]

The third layer of concern is in how History relates with "intentionality." Under Derrida's analysis, Husserl attempts to save transcendental idealism by reconstructing Brentano's intentionality in the refusal of Kantian formalism, and this refusal is responsible for creating a rift between "history" and "the transcendental," namely, in the way in which one accesses or relates with historical data. Husserl attributes the subject with the role of being "intentional," which demands that phenomenology "take originary lived experience as philosophy's sole legitimate point of departure."[69]

[64] Jacques Derrida, *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Phenomenology*. trans. Marian Hobson (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press. 2003), p. 153. Though originally written in 1953–54, it has undergone multiple changes and editions.

[65] Ibid., p. 161.

[66] Ibid., p. 161.

[67] Ibid., p. 161.

[68] Ibid., p. 161.

[69] Ibid., p. 10.

Thus, "lived experience," which is accessed through intentionality or directness beyond the "natural attitude" is the point through which one has access to this historical data. Although he rejects formalism, Husserl still maintains Kant's understanding of the "transcendental," but adds (perhaps inadvertently) to it an even more privileged status as the "origin of experience." The transcendental is indeed the origin of lived experience, which is brought about through the subject's intentional directedness. Otherwise the "transcendental" would be reduced to a state of contingency as formal and logical, and would thus "no longer [be] a constituting source but the constituted product of experience."[70] The central problem here is that the transcendental becomes dependent upon the intentional actions of the subject, *the desires of whom are experience driven*. For Derrida, this is a problem in relation to historical data because one cannot access it except through experience. History, for Derrida, is not reconstructed through a subject's experience. The product of Husserl's understanding of "history will thus be only the intentional chain of meanings, the series of moments where passive synthesis, 'animated' by active syntheses, is 'recognized' as passive synthesis."[71] As reliant upon the sustained effort of an intentional subject, this history does not deserve such a title. Thus, although Husserl claims history to be a kind of empirical science, it fails due to its necessarily grounding itself on subjective intentionality and the passive-active syntheses that claim to produce "meaning."

5.4 Phenomenology as the Metaphysics of Presence

Again, Husserl wants "knowledge producing" empirical experience, but not at the expense of relying upon invisible "things." In performing the reduction, all the subject can do is describe that which appears *in the present.* Being present allows the subject access to any trustworthy science. One experiences a thing as it is "set before" one's conscious visibility, for in the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl writes, "the notion of being can arise only when some being, actual or imaginary, is set before our eyes."[72] Not only is the thing set before us, but also we before it, and Husserl is interested in showing the primacy of phenomenology over ontology, which presumes the stability of beings. Ontological identity presumes a thing's availability in full presence. The question then becomes how being is accessed through various modes of relation, which color how a thing presents itself. But this

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[70] Ibid., p. 10.

[71] Derrida continues to explicate this problem, suggesting that "these intentional referrals are in principle infinite and, to that degree, never take on the absolute of their sense…" and "an eidetic analysis must suppose the absolute of sense to be *already* known, and institute the absolute intentional sense and the transcendental activity on the threshold of passivity itself by a decree or a certainty of an exception and nonphenomenological type." Ibid., p. 144.

[72] Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 5th edition, (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1968), p. 141, then on p. 201.

does not disqualify the possibility of being and presence, for phenomenology only ensures that the "correlation to perceivability, intuitability, meanability and knowability is inseparable from the sense of being in general…"[73] The thing being *presently* perceived is, and only *is* in that moment perceived as such, and shifts according to various modalities of "seeing." The Husserlian "given" is the present, intentional object in the horizon of consciousness and, in the subject's "horizon," it becomes available there in that moment.[74]

Derrida is concerned that Husserl relies upon a concept of presence (*Gegenwart*) that is not suitable as the "first" sense of "being," which for Derrida, dynamically rests on the infinite play of the modalities of "absence," *differánce*, and alteration. One should not have the idealistic hopes of experiencing a pure present, hopes not only held by Husserl, but also any *logo*-centric philosopher. There are two different lenses through which one might understand Derrida's concerns for Husserl's concept of presence. The first lens is the more particular concern of re-presentation. In the long history of "ideas," the lofty assumption is made that a "subject" can have *pure* representations of those ideas, and Husserl's phenomenology attempts to rely on these representations. For Derrida, there is no pure present for all *present-ations* are only temporally constituted in a synchronic synthesis of experiences both in the past, and towards the projected future.[75] Derrida's *Speech and Phenomena* seeks to demonstrate how phenomenology is bound by the "principle of principles," which values a primordial presence given its allegiance "to intuition as a source of sense and evidence…" which signifies "…the certainty, itself ideal and absolute, that the universal form of all experience…has always been and will always be the *present*. The present alone is and ever will be."[76] Husserlian awareness or intuition holds to a present that is presumed to be unchanging, which is ensured and underwritten by universal transcendentals. Yet intuition signifies, which Derrida takes to be always a flexural bending of time itself. The present moment is not capable of sustaining the altering work of signification. The present does not come from a "bending-back of a return" or repetition, because there is something upon which presence is based: difference. And this provides an important key to understanding Derrida and his deconstruction: "trace or difference is always older than presence and procures for it its openness."[77] As older than presence, and standing in the place of it, "trace is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces,

[73] Ibid., p. 141, cf. 201.

[74] Or as Horner puts it, "the given" is the object in the "horizon of the phenomenologically reduced consciousness." Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York, NY: Fordham Press, 2001), p. 24.

[75] Every presentation, as Horner interprets, "involves the temporally divisive movements of re-presentation and appresentation." Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2001), p. 25. See also Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 7.

[76] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 53.

[77] Ibid., p. 68.

and refers beyond itself."[78] Derrida's concept of "trace" is but a remainder after time has passed. Husserl misses the fact that there is always something out of sync or joint *within* presence itself, as every movement, in effect, is a modification of the very "present" it attempts to indicate. Thus, phenomenology relies on a re-presentation (a repetition of the present) by once again concretizing and making static the Platonic ideals according to *logos* and its unchanging, transcendental reason. Husserl's work is haunted by this problem of the "metaphysics of presence," which disregards the absence, spacing, and differentiation of things.[79] For Derrida, absence is not derivative of presence, but instead presence is derivative of absence. Of course, Husserl does not disregard "absence" or that which does not show itself to consciousness, for his conception of givenness allows for this. The difference, however, between he and Derrida is that for Husserl the "absent" or "unseen" appears on the basis of what is seen, according to that which appears in the present, and is therefore conditioned by it.[80] This marks a fundamental distinction between he and Derrida.

A second lens through which the general features of Derrida's concerns of presence can be observed is through Husserl's conception of knowledge. For Derrida, *any* philosophy founded upon an idea and theory of knowledge is, as a result, metaphysical, for as he rhetorically asks in *Speech and Phenomena*, "is not the idea of knowledge and the theory of knowledge in itself metaphysical?"[81] Phenomenology is obsessed with the "obstinate desire to save presence and to reduce or derive the sign, and with it all powers of repetition…"[82] Instead of the sign being derivative of presence, as Husserl holds, the opposite is the case for Derrida. Husserl privileges present-knowledge, and thereby ignores the multiformity of acts of signification; a signification *irreducible* to both knowledge and presence. The standing gap between knowledge and language is disregarded, and therefore knowledge is incapable of turning to language as a source of expression. There is no immediate transferability between truth and language, and prior to any unity between the two is "repetition," which is not synonymous with presence. Husserl mistakes presence for what is actually repetition, which for Derrida is a manifestation of *différance*. Instead "the

[78] Ibid., p. 156.

[79] Derrida learns of these concerns from Heidegger, to whom Derrida ultimately redirects this criticism. Derrida contends that one must begin with the understanding that "absence" – not simply presence – is equally necessary for our understandings of "being." As Heidegger puts it, "the ancient interpretation of the being of beings" is influenced by "the determination of the sense of being as… presence." The entirety of the philosophical history of metaphysics is plagued by the view that beings are "grasped in" a "being present," and thus determined by this mode of temporality. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1967), p. 25.

[80] Or as Lawlor conceives of it, "the unseen examples are appresented on the basis of the seen even though we realize that we will never see them all." Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University press, 2002), p. 164.

[81] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 5.

[82] Ibid., p. 51.

presence-of-the-present is derived from repetition."[83] The repetitive "is irreducible in presence or in self-presence" and is "older than presence and procures for it its openness," which prevents us from speaking through the "glance of an eye," a "simple self-identity."[84] The reliance upon such a concept of "presencing" brings an end to the infinite chain of signification that takes place by and within a thing or phenomenon, and thus bars the subject from turning to the phenomenon "as it if were the first time." Derrida goes to great lengths to emphasis the fecundity of "the event," the orientation of which is the to-come, and the way in which it cannot be desired or be an object of volition. There is no access to the phenomenal thing in full-presence.

This is partly why Derrida thinks Husserl to be still too much of an idealist. The correspondence between knowledge and meaning appears to be taken for granted by Husserl in his endorsement of an agreement between the ideal and the "real," which seeks to rely upon a persistent, enduring present. The failure of any idealistic drive for a "pure theory" of meaning is not due to its overlooking the contingency of meanings, but rather because it fails to grasp that there exist phenomena that are "meaningless," yet still somehow appear to us and affect us. For Derrida, a theory of meaning must take into account that being is just as shaped by its absence as it is by its presence; one that *arrives* momentarily, only "in the very blink of an eye, *im selben Augenblick*." The physical act of blinking reminds one that "'the look' cannot 'abide.'"[85]

Given this background, Derrida arrives at the conclusion that "the whole phenomenological discourse is…caught up within the schema of a metaphysics of presence which relentlessly exhausts itself in trying to make difference derivative."[86] This accusation concerning difference will be considered more closely, but for now it is necessary to see that the central problem of the "metaphysics of presence" is that its discourse presupposes a precise sense of being-as-presence.[87] This "metaphysics of presence" is "metaphysical" in the sense that it summons, presumes, and relies upon an absolutely and infinitely irreducible, yet inaccessible "other" source. On this point, Derrida defers to Lévinas, who calls metaphysics the "discourse of alterity," one that is a "discourse with God" as "metaphysics is the essence of this language with god."[88] Metaphysics as ontotheology (following Heidegger's formulation) seeks a ground or *causa sui* that can sustain its "beings," and this is a violation (or "violence" in the Lévinasian sense) because it reduces this "absolute other" to being *here* and present, and as such transgresses the very idea of the absolute,

[83] Ibid., p. 101, p. 51. See also p. 67, where Derrida similarly insists that "the ideality of the form of presence itself implies that it be infinitely re-peatable, that its re-turn, as a return of the same, is necessary *ad infinitum* and is inscribed in presence itself."

[84] Ibid., p. 68.

[85] Ibid., p. 68 & p. 104.

[86] Ibid., p. 101.

[87] The metaphysics of presence presumes "sense" *as* presence.

[88] Jacques Derrida, *L'Écriture et la Différence* (Paris: Seuil. 1967), or *Writing and Difference,*. trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 159/108 cf. 154/104.

who/which transcends all categorical distinctions, even being. Derrida employs this Lévinasian critique back onto phenomenology, for even if it successfully avoids being "not governed by the question of being," it still relies upon a preunderstanding of presence.[89] Thus, phenomenology is "the metaphysics of presence in the form of ideality," and its "ideality is the preservation or mastery of presence…".[90] As Derrida critiques, phenomenology, like Hegel's dialectic, privileges sight as an active, not simply passive faculty of desire. It seeks to master and preserve that which appears, and this is an idealization or valorization *of the sense of perception*, which must always be necessarily rooted in the present.[91] Husserl's phenomenology is a metaphysics that holds presence as *the most primary meaning* of being itself.[92]

5.5 Language and Sign

The critique of the supposed mediation between truth and language inherent within phenomenology is part and parcel of what leads Derrida to the question "how does the signifier signify?" in *Writing and Difference.*[93] It was Peirce who originally suggested that "we think only in signs" but it was Derrida who gave semiotics a distinctly phenomenological verve, namely in how "the sign" functions in language beyond the spoken word. "Phenomenology," says Derrida, is the "reduction of naïve ontology, the return to an active constitution of sense and value, to the activity of a

[89] Ibid., p. 197/134.

[90] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 9.

[91] Any kind of valorization of that which is presented through "perception" is privileged over that which is non-present. As briefly mentioned, this is similar to the critique he levels towards Hegel. Derrida demands that Hegel privileges the issue of "sight" as the ideal sense, which is indicative of Hegel's position on desire. Derrida claims that for Hegel, sight "gives its sense to theory. It suspends desire, lets things be, reserves or forbids their consummation." Further, Hegel's theory of desire is "the theory of the contradiction between theory and desire. Theory is the death of desire, death in desire, if not the desire *of* death. The entire introduction to the *Aesthetics* demonstrates this contradiction between desire (*Begierde*), which pushes toward consummation, and 'theoretical interest,' which lets things be in their freedom." This raises a number of questions concerning desire, once again. To what degree is Hegel's "desire" to be taken as this effort to bring things into "consummation," or, put otherwise, into presence? Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1982), p. 92 & p. 92 n. 20.

[92] See Jacques Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl's Phenomenology,* trans. Leonard Lawlor (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010).

[93] This is especially true of the "early" Derrida, who was interested in showing how signification can be at work without its being represented and how signs become intelligible to us. See also Sloterdijk's *Derrida, an Egyptian,* where the argument is made that Derrida's writing leaves a kind of "pyramid" of archives. Every act of writing is an attempt to memorialize an active, lively signification, and when one "signifies" one "divinely" creates. Peter Sloterdijk, *Derrida, an Egyptian: On the Problem of the Jewish Pyramid*, (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009).

life which produces truth and value in general through its signs."[94] Phenomenology employs a kind of "logical" language that presupposes the difference between "signs" and that which they signify. Derrida arrives as this problem through an understanding of Ferdinand de Saussure's conception of the two-part aspect of the sign (signifier and signified). The problem with Husserl's approach is that it results in a logical language that leaves the signified (*signifié*, the "concept" that form represents) effectively determined by the signifier (*signifiant*, the "form" that the sign takes). The form drives and determines the content. Yet for Derrida (as well as Saussure) the sign is determined by the necessary *association* between the signified and the signifier. The signifier is generally the word that refers to the signified or that to which the word refers, and a "sign" is only recognizable on the grounds that both signified and signifier are complementary. Although Derrida critiques Saussure's privileging of oral speech over writing in *Of Grammatology*, the signifier/signified relationship is one essential aspect of semiotics that Derrida employs to consider the inconsistencies of Husserl's approach.

Indeed, Husserl had his own way of discussing signs. Husserl draws a distinction between two kinds of signs, which for Derrida is the root problem as to why the reductions fail to lead one to phenomena in and of themselves on their own terms, for indeed "…the whole future problem of the reduction and all the conceptual differences in which it is articulated…are opened up in a *divergence* between two kinds of signs…"[95] These two signs for Husserl are "expression" and "indication."[96] Husserl's "expression" refers to how signs relate *internally* with one another, demanding no sense of time or context (cue Derrida's earlier critique of the problem of "presence") and Husserl's "indication" is the way in which signs relate *externally* to the world through a kind of intentional pointing that takes place in a temporally contingent moment. Within this distinction, Husserl privileges indication over expression, for, as Derrida claims, "only indication is a true sign" for Husserl.[97] Indeed, "Husserl is already resolutely engaged in one of the modifications of the general structure of the *Zeigen: Hinzeigen* and not *Anzeigen*."[98] This modification is a focus on the subject-oriented indication (*Hinzeigen*) over expression (*Anzeigen*). The natural conclusion for Husserl, says Derrida, is that "every sign is a sign for something" or is "about something (*für etwas*)." Yet this reduces any sign's possibilities to having merely one particular, calculable meaning that is bound to that which it indicates. That is, if all signs are signs-of, then it is that which the sign is "about" that shapes or *conditions* the sign. The signifier (form) controls the signified

[94] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 25.

[95] Ibid., p. 30.

[96] Husserl's "expression and indication" are interestingly similar to Frege's "sense and reference."

[97] And Derrida ultimately concludes "it is more and more clear that despite the initial distinction between an indicative sign and an expressive sign, only an indication is truly a sign for Husserl." Ibid., p. 42.

[98] Ibid., p. 24. Yet in asking about the "sign in general" one must take care so as not to elevate "the question of the sign to an ontological plane."

(concept) on the grounds of the subject's indication. This ultimately does not allow for the possibility of the free expression of signs.[99]

Further, the supposed separation between these two kinds of signs (which "defines" phenomenology) and the subsequent privileging of intentional "indication" overlooks the fact that in order to make that separation, one is always already operating out of, and relying upon the signifying work of language. Derrida even is "tempted to say that this separation, which defines the very space of phenomenology, does not exist prior to the question of language…it is discovered only in and through the possibility of language."[100] Phenomenology cannot be properly phenomenological because it falsely presumes the separation between expression and language; a separation that cannot be made phenomenologically, but *only through a "semiotic" investigation into language*. Indeed it is a problem that "Husserl believes in the existence of a pre-expressive and pre-linguistic stratum of sense…" even though there is no access to it. If it were accessible, spoken discourse and a study of its semiotic structures would show that "expression and indication" are not distinguishable as two types of signs, but are one and the same.[101]

Husserl's conception of every sign being a sign-of or sign-for is entirely consistent with his understanding that consciousness is always a being conscious-of or conscious-about. There is no "thinking in general" without some content or object to think-on, or about. This "aboutness," however, is a subject oriented approach that begins with the orientation of one's desires. As Socrates argues in the *Symposium*, love must always have an object; desire is always "of something."[102] Could it be simply a coincidence that Husserl's consciousness and Plato's "desire" must always, in similar fashion, have an object? For Derrida, desire, meaning, and directedness are insufficient to allow for the free expression of signs in and of themselves as those concepts predetermine that which may or may not come into appearance or "be given."

5.6 Deconstruction of the Will

It is not the case that Derrida does not write about desire, or that it has not occupied a place in his thinking. However, deconstruction is built around a radical "indifference" that comes prior to willing and desiring. This may be why he never gives a

[99] Ibid., p. 23.

[100] Ibid., p. 21.

[101] Ibid., p. 31.

[102] Plato, *The Symposium*, ed Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 1989), C-E, 199. As Cobb suggests, Socrates argues that "Love is the sort of thing that requires an object. Just as one cannot simply be a father or a sister, but must be the father or the sister *of someone*, so one cannot just love, period. One must love something. Hence, love is always 'of something' (199 c-e). Moreover, the something is necessarily something that one does not have. (200a)." William S. Cobb, *Plato's Erotic Dialogues* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993), p. 70.

clear definition or explanation of desire, but only circles around the concept apophatically. In "A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event" Derrida is compelled by Bachelard's somewhat ambiguous statement "wanting is wanting what one cannot." The phrase "wanting is wanting what one cannot" could, with a "have" or a "want" at the end, be a complete sentence. Yet in either case, it is more generally the "what one cannot" that determines the nature of desire and wanting for Bachelard, according to a radical privation. For Derrida, the traditional "concept of willing" as privation and lack should be dispensed with, for it indicates that there is something (that "one cannot") that is hiding in a metaphysical "beyond." Yet, there is indeed something that exceeds the subject and its abilities to will; there is something the subject "cannot." This is more along the lines of what Derrida is "interested" in. This "cannot" is not a desire in relation to "lack," but the radically *finite*, indeterminable, unknowable, and "inexperiencable" future with which one should live in relation.[103] Derrida suggests that "what I cannot, and hence the impossible that exceeds my ability and my power, is precisely what I cannot *want*. I am keeping here to the moment when the experience of the event defeats my will."[104] Agency, which is defined according to an identity over which one has some elements of active control, presupposes willing. Yet "if I want what I cannot, this willing must be stripped of what traditionally clothes the will and determines it as will, namely agency, control, the 'I want what I want.'"[105] That is, if willing is based upon the particular theory of desire that Bachelard referenced, then willing can no longer be determined as the "I want what I want," but instead as the precise overturning of the will itself as "wanting what one cannot." For Derrida, it can no longer be desire or the will that direct speculative philosophy, but only an absolute "indifference" grounded in affirmation that goes beyond disinterestedness and naiveté. This is why Derrida, in *Points/Interviews* concludes that "the only attitude … I would *absolutely* condemn is one which, directly or indirectly, cuts off the possibility of an essentially interminable questioning."[106] It is as if philosophy can once again hinge on "the question," which begins in wonder, and culminates in the experience of phenomenal things "as if it were the first time." Deconstruction seeks to underwrite this interminability through a fundamental disinterestedness that takes precedence over the will and any negative aspect of desire-as-lack. It is possible to conclude, then, that since

[103] The theme of the "to-come" is also used in reference to the "promise." To promise is to *speak* on behalf of the "to come," or to send in advance. Texts and languages exemplify this, always making promises that cannot be fulfilled. This, of course, entails a certain relationship with temporality. The promise is contextualized in *Spectres of Marx* through a radicalization of the idea of "the messianic" relation whereby one is always in waiting for that which never comes. This waiting for the to-come is a "messianism without religion." Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York & London: Routledge, 1994), p. 59.

[104] Jacques Derrida, "A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event" in *The Late Derrida*, eds. W. J. T. Mitchell and Arnold I. Davidson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 237.

[105] Ibid., p. 237.

[106] Jacques Derrida, *Points …: Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed Elisabeth Weber (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 239.

"the disruptive force of deconstruction" is "always already at work within the work," then it is also at work within the self, thus suspending its stability and disrupting its will to meaning.[107] The will, that "adversed mobility" (*gegenwendige Bewegtheit*) of going out of "oneself and returning into oneself" must be defeated and replaced with a radical indifference.[108]

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[107] "The very condition of a deconstruction may be at work, in the work, *within* the system to be deconstructed; It may *already* be located there, already at work, not at the center, but in an eccentric center, in a corner whose eccentricity assures the solid concentration of the system, participating in the construction of what it, at the same time, threatens to deconstruct. One might then be inclined to reach this conclusion: deconstruction is not an operation that supervenes *afterwards*, from the outside, one fine day; it is always already at work in the work;" And Derrida continues "Since the disruptive force of deconstruction is always already contained within the very architecture of the work, all one would finally have to do to be able to deconstruct, given this *always already*, is to do memory work. Since I want neither to accept nor to reject a conclusion formulated in these terms, let us leave this question hanging for a while." Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul Deman* (New York NY: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 73.

[108] Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 80. Derrida reminds that Schelling shows how the term *sucht* (though it directly translates to "search") can be translated to mean something like "nostalgia," which has its roots in obsession, illness, epidemic, and even evil. For Derrida, "this evil [desire for nostalgia] is inscribed in desire, and, like desire itself, it carries in it a motivity, an 'adversed mobility' (*Gegenwendige Bewegtheit*): go out of oneself and return into oneself." Derrida continues in his reading of this kind of "evil" as it relates to what Heidegger suggests of "spirit," which seeks to go out and return to itself in a similar nostalgic fashion.

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Chapter 6
Desire in Derrida's *Given Time*: There is (*Es gibt*) No Gift Outside the Text

Abstract This chapter takes the findings from chapter seven on Derrida's rejection of intentionality and desire from having a role in deconstruction and applies them to an interpretation of how he understands the gift in his ambiguously titled *Given Time* (*Donner Le Temps*). *Given Time* does not simply unfold how time is given, but is dedicated to showing how a gift can be given, *given* the parameters of time. The temporal dimensions of the gift demand that the gift be "impossible," and that any desiring or "intending to give" presupposes a future, which inhibits the arrival of the gift. As "the impossible," the gift cannot be desired because it is unconditionally beyond the possible, and in relation to the *aporia*, one experiences a tense profusion of desires for the seemingly opposite demands of gift and economy, which ends in *indecision*. The gift can be "at play" in time, but cannot happen as a result of the intent to give because the gift cannot be derivative of one's desire, which is reflective of past experiences. It is indeed not "the gesture that counts" when it comes to giving, for if anything, an act of *generosity* inhibits a gift's happening, which must take place beyond any conscious intending of any "subject."

> *'Es gibt die Zeit, es gibt das Sein' says 'Zeit und Sein' in 1962. There is no question of reversing a priority or logical order and saying that the gift precedes Being. But the thinking of the gift opens the space in which Being and time give themselves and give themselves to thought. I cannot enter into these questions here; I devoted a seminar to them at the Ecole normale superieure and at Yale University in the 1970's ('Donner le temps'); these questions have expressly oriented all the texts I have published since about 1972.* – Jacques Derrida[1]

"Giving time," "donating one's time," "leaving time," "the gift of time," "giving the time," and "given time" are all possible translations of Derrida's ambiguously titled book *Donner Le Temps*. As a play on Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, or *Being and Time*, which unfolds the ways in which Being *is* time (among many other things), Derrida's book, which is given the title *Given Time,* is not simply an inquiry into how time is

[1] Jacques Derrida, "How to avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II*, eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 313 footnote 24.

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given, but how a gift can be given, *given* the issue, realities, and parameters of time.[2] Time helps set the tensions between the *aporetic* concepts of gift and economy. This tension, which comes to mark an essential role for deconstruction in the final decades of Derrida's work, complicates and frustrates any possibility of stabilizing the dialectic or polarity between these concepts. "Wherever there is time" Derrida argues, "the gift is impossible," and it is time that "sets in motion the process of a destruction of the gift."[3] In order for the gift to occur phenomenally, both it, as well as its donor (as Derrida suggests early in *Given Time*) would need to be outside the bounds of time, which is an "impossibility." A few years later, in his debate with Marion, Derrida conditions this statement by clarifying that he never concluded that a gift cannot *happen*, but only that it cannot enter phenomenal, immanent appearance as a gift. Indeed he "never said that there is no gift" but he "said exactly the opposite." That is, "it is impossible for the gift to appear as such. But I never concluded that there is no gift."[4] One cannot know a gift *as such*, in part because it cannot enter into "presence," as Husserl used that term. Although Derrida leaves it an open question as to whether or not a gift can "happen," he has decided that it cannot do so under the watchful jurisdiction of phenomenology. Ultimately, the inscription of time upon the possibilities of the gift prohibits the gift and any "intending" giver from being named as such in phenomenal presence. The demands of time necessitate that desire, which originates in the past experiences of a "desiring subject," is incapable of bringing the gift about. If one might conceive of a gift that could "happen," then "the subject" must be, in phenomenological terms "bracketed," and in semiological terms, "barred." The Derridean "subject" is a-being-subjected-to the acts of signification and deconstruction.

A second theme that is essential to *Given Time* is that of "the impossible." It is indispensible to understand that for Derrida "…the gift is the impossible. Not impossible but *the* impossible; the very figure of the impossible. It announces itself, gives itself to be thought as the impossible."[5] It is not as if the gift is figured according to having the status as impossible, but that it is *equated* with "the impossible." Thus, the impossible *is* the gift *as such*.[6] The fragment "as such" is not employed

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[2] As Sebbah recently put it, in *Given Time* "the gift 'is' time itself." François-David Sebbah. *Testing the Limit: Derrida, Henry, Levinas, and the Phenomenological Tradition*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 101.

[3] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 9 and p. 14 respectively. On page 14 he continues to assert that this destruction remains in process "through keeping, restitution, reproduction, the anticipatory expectation or apprehension that grasps or comprehends in advance."

[4] Jacques Derrida, in *God, The Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 59.

[5] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 7.

[6] Raschke suggests that, as impossible, "the gift is an 'overrunning' of the circuit of exchanges and calculable signifiers," then later reads Derrida to be saying that "any 'possibility' of the gift depends necessarily on a ruse that engenders the illusion of money as tokens of exchange, when in fact there is no real exchange, only the productivity of pure *signs* of *exchange*. In other words, a

liberally by Derrida, and in this context it indicates that future references to "the impossible" relate back to his explication of the gift, here in *Given Time*. Derrida names the gift "the impossible" in order to protect it from economy, which operates according to possibility, or that which one might conceive to be capable of being experienced. That which one determines to be possible is generally based on one's conception of what is reliable from past experiences. However, this does not entail that the gift (as the impossible) is not experienced or "experiencable," but only that it must be experienced as an unqualifiable, unquantifiable, and non-phenomenal event. The impossible cannot be bracketed or reduced. Indeed, giving "should be an event. It has to come as a surprise, from the other or to the other; it has to extend beyond the confines of the economic circle of exchange. For giving to be possible, for a giving event to be possible, it has to look impossible."[7] The event, which can happen without one's cognizant awareness, *must defeat one's will,* and the impossible must exceed one's desire, otherwise the "im" of the "impossible" is negated.[8] Thus, any supposed experience of the impossible immediately must be renamed "possible" if it enters phenomenal experience. Nevertheless, although one cannot recognize or signify the impossible gift, it is what makes the possible, possible. This is important for understanding how, for Derrida, the practical, theoretical, and phenomenological limitations and possibilities of "gift" are all intertwined. This will be clarified in the final chapter.

A third theme essential to *Given Time* is that of the *aporia*, which maddeningly frustrates any supposed opposition between gift and economy. As he puts it in *Psyche*, "deconstruction is explicitly defined as a certain aporetic experience of the

'gift economy' is impossible *de re*. Nonetheless, it is indeed possible *de dicto*, if simply because what seems to be the actual intension of the expression arises from a deceit – specifically, a deceit that could in its 'criminal' guise destroy, at least theoretically, the credibility of the exchange system that it simulates." Carl Raschke, *Force of God* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 48 and p. 53, respectively.

[7] Jacques Derrida, "A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event" in *The Late Derrida*, eds. W. J. T. Mitchell and Arnold I. Davidson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 230.

[8] The notion that the event "defeats my will" was briefly engaged in chapter four of this book. In gesturing, it seems, to the duplex-cogito who does not understand his desires, Derrida claims that "what I cannot, and hence the impossible that exceeds my ability and my power, is precisely what I cannot *want*. I am keeping here to the moment when the experience of the event defeats my will." In continuing along these lines, to say "I decide" is to say that I am capable of deciding, and am the "master of my decision." As such, Derrida continues, it "is an expression of my power, of my possibility." But this is problematic, for Derrida wants to say "my decision is, in fact, the other's decision… my decision can never be mine." It must "disrupt my power, my ability, my possibility…as it is always for the other that I decide; it is the other who decides in me, without in any way exonerating me from 'my' responsibility." This kind of decisionism disrupts my agency, for "if I want what I cannot, this willing must be stripped of what traditionally clothes the will and determines it as will, namely agency, control, the 'I want what I want." Ibid., p. 237. For more on this relationship between responsibility, freedom, will, and desire, see Derrida's *The Gift of Death*. There, he suggests that responsibility is "often thought, on the basis of an analysis of the very concepts of responsibly, freedom, or decision, that to be responsible, free, or capable of deciding cannot be something that is acquired, something conditioned or conditional." Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 7.

impossible."[9] The *aporia* is the point at which Derrida hopes to reach in every work of deconstruction, and it indicates the demand for tensions and puzzling moments of indecision that are irresolvable by any act of reason. The concept of the gift leads one to an *aporia* between the gift and economy, and this *aporia* entails that there is even "the madness of economic reason."[10] Economic reason extends beyond the formal study of economics, and implicates all human interactions, social functions, and technological appropriations. There is a kind of "credit" (which in some senses implicate "faith," "debt," and "lack") that one attributes to others. This is an expansion and extension of *Oikos*, or the "managing of the household" to the negotiation of identities.[11] Derrida demonstrates that there is nothing beyond economic exchange to which we can refer in phenomenal experience, even suggesting that Mauss and his theory of the gift, among others, were "counterfeiters"; their writing itself a form of "counterfeit money."[12] This conclusion is reached because of the constant attempt to formalize, and therefore neuter the competing forces of being and becoming, of phenomenal reality and the forces that disrupt it. "Counterfeit Money," the subtitle of *Given Time*, is the title of a tale by Baudelaire that indicates this maddening *aporia* whereby one is "at the heart of a literary experience or experiment with all the semantic and ultra-semantic resources."[13] The Derridean *aporia* is the point of decision/indecision one reaches in the experience of conflicting semantic and ultra-semantic forces. It is in this sense that the gift must exceed metaphysical reflection (which for Aristotle was propelled by the search for a ground or proper reason for a particular system of thinking) as the gift is "at once reason and unreason."[14] The gift in this sense leads to "madness," for "how is one to speak reasonably, in a sensible fashion, that is, accessible to common sense, of a gift that could not be what it was

[9] Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Vol I*. Trans Peggy Kamuf. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 27. Also see p. 15.

[10] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 34.

[11] As Moore would have it, "Derrida's concept of economy should be read as a literal interpretation of the Greek *oikonomia*: the management, or rather the law (*nomos*) of the *oikos*, meaning household or hearth, a place of identity." Gerald Moore, *Politics of the Gift*: *Exchanges in Postmodernism* (Edinburgh Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 11. See Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 6 and 18.

[12] Derrida, much later, offers an eloquent exposition of "economy," which is "the management of the *oikos*, of the home, the family, or the hearth, [and] is limited to the goods necessary to life." Ibid., p. 158. It is helpful to consider here Jean-Joseph Goux's argument in his 1984 *Les Monnayeurs du Langage* (*The Coiners of Language* [Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994]), where he suggests that literature, as it "progressed" through modernity, came to reflect the current and contemporary economic situation, specifically the decline of the gold-standard.

[13] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 159.

[14] Instead, the gift is, as Derrida suggests "at once reason and unreason, because it also manifests that madness of the rational *logos* itself, that madness of the economic circle the calculation of which is constantly reconstructed." Ibid., p. 36. Perhaps it is the case that the repetitive and circular nature of economy is indeed an *inversion* of the Nietzschean "eternal recurrence of the same."

except on the condition of not being what it was?"[15] Neither dialectic nor paradox, the *aporia* demands a productive, yet maddening tension that one's desires are incapable of placating or dissolving.

This chapter illuminates Derrida's understanding of the gift according to desire, and argues for the ways in which desire is rejected from bringing about the gift. This is achieved through examining the gift in relation to the aforementioned notions of time, the impossible, and *aporia*, namely, in *Given Time*. It is demonstrated here how desire is a central inhibitor to the phenomenal possibilities of the gift. In relation to time, the desiring or "intending to give" presupposes a future, which inhibits the gifts arrival. As "the impossible," the gift cannot be desired because it is unconditionally beyond the possible. And in relation to the *aporia* between gift and economy, one is led to a radical *indecision* that removes their volition. Indecision is either the profusion of conflicting desires, or the privation of them. The failures of desire in relation to the gift illuminate once again Derrida's "disinterest" in giving desire an important place in deconstruction (as argued in the previous chapter). Of course, this distinguishes him from many of his French structuralist and post-structuralist contemporaries, for whom the topic of desire was central, especially in the wake of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis.[16] If desire begins in the subject as an attempt to create, control, and "intend," then it is reducible to an economic function. And if desire is an economical function, then it *precludes the possibility* of the gift, which is aneconomical. This *aporia* between gift and economy reaches a point of climax in "generosity," which he defines as "the desire to give," and asserts that it demands two contradictory conclusions. A precondition for the gift is that it is given, namely out of generosity; yet generosity, as the desire to give, precludes the gift on the account of the economical nature of desire and intention. These positions on desire and gift are indeed distinct from those of Marion, for whom it is precisely desire (as love) that allows for the primacy of the gift over economy, in part on the grounds of the fecund and excessive nature of the gift, which gives above and beyond the desires of any subject.

[15] Ibid., p. 35.

[16] In reference to Lacan, he believes his work to have had a great influence on Derrida: "Properly speaking, the *noeud bo* [Borromean knot] in question completely changes the meaning of writing. It gives to the aforementioned writing an autonomy, which is all the more remarkable in that there is another writing [*une autre écriture*], which results from that which one could call a precipitation of the signifier. *Derrida has laid emphasis on this, but it is quite clear that I showed him the way.*" *My emphasis*. Jacques Lacan quoted in Michael Lewis, *Derrida and Lacan: Another Writing* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh Press, 2008), p. 1.

6.1 Timing the Gift

6.1.1 Time Given to the King in "Le Temps Du Roi"

In Chapter one, "The Time of the King" (*Le Temps Du Roi*), Derrida reflects on the tale of Madame de Maintenon, who has a particular romantic relationship with her King, and to whom she "gives all of her time." Maintenon claims that the king "takes all" of her time; it is given-over to him, while she prefers to give her time to someone else. Derrida highlights the purposive contradiction that Maintenon makes in stating that she wants to give the "rest" of her time to someone else, even though she already gives it all, *ahead of time*, to the King. For Derrida, time is all we have (to give), and thus "in giving all one's time, one gives all or the all."[17] The greatest gift (*if* such gift-events can occur at all in the first place) is the gift of one's time in general, and the gift of its "rest" (the remainder of time after all of it has been given) in particular. "Rest" raises a correlation to both temporal "pauses," holidays, or time away, as well as spatial remainders, "cinders," or "left overs" (as the German *Rest* refers). As a gift, both forms of "rest" are irreplaceable, irrevocable, and singularly representative of the donor. Maintenon knows that she has no time to give, yet she desires to give the remainder of it to her friend – this remainder that she *does not have to give*.[18] Although Maintenon desires to give this gift, it cannot be brought into phenomenal appearance, as it would contradict the limits of time. This sets into motion the ensuing *aporia* Derrida establishes between gift and economy.

Derrida concludes from this story of Maintenon that the occurrence of this impossible event of giving time – this gift one does not have to give in the first place – results in a paradox (one similar to the aforementioned unkeepable promise). Maintenon gives her time, which she does not have to give. Derrida somewhat enigmatically alludes to Heidegger and Lacan, who each share their own particular

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[17] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 1.

[18] From version (draft) one of *Donner Le Temps*, taken from the Derrida Archives at University of California, Irvine: "Son Désir serait la oú elle voudrait (conditionnel) Donner ce qu'elle ne peut pas donner, le tout, ce reste de reste dont elle ne peut pas faire présent ce reste de reste de temps dont elle ne peut pas faire présent, voila ce que Mme de Maintenant (comme j'ai envie de l'appeler) désirerait, desir donner."

Jacques Derrida, version 1 of *Donner Le Temps*. Chapter 1, p. 3. *UC Irvine Libraries, Special Collections – Jacques Derrida Papers.* Accessed July 9, 2012. I translate this as: "Her desire would be where she would like [or desire], there in the conditional, thus allowing her to give the all, which she cannot give or do, this the rest of the rest of the time, she cannot do [or give] this here, though Madame de Maintenant (as I want to call her) wishes, desires to give." This is slightly different from Kamuf's translation, which reads: "Her desire would be there where she *would like*, in the conditional, to give what she cannot give, the all, that rest of the rest of which she cannot make a present, that is what Madame de Maintenant (as one might call her) desires, that is in truth what she would desire, not for herself but so as to be able to give it…" Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 4.

understandings of what it means for one to give a gift that one does not have to give.[19] This allusion is likely for the sake of revealing how the gift and economy lead to an *aporia*, and of showing how – especially diachronic – time is an economical inscription. Thus, when Maintenon says that she gives her time, she is uttering a contradiction, for such a desire to give, namely, *in* time, automates a negation of any possibility of giving. This is partly what leads Derrida wonder to "how can a time belong?"[20] If we are *in* time, already inscribed in it, then wouldn't this entail that the gift be subject to the *conditions* of time, thereby conditioned, and caught in the *demands* of an ensuing cyclical form reducible to economy and exchange? Yes, but Derrida adds an interesting twist here: Since time attempts to order gift according to its logic, the gift is temporally impossible, which ultimately leads him to associate the gift *with the* impossible.

Maintenon still gives her friend something that is impossible to give, "the *rest* of the time," which for Derrida "…the rest, by all good logic and economics, is nothing."[21] The "rest" is impossible to give, is nothing, and as such, is not subject to the jurisdiction of identity, economy, exchange, and "good reason." She essentially wants time she does not have, so all she has to give, quite strictly, is her own *desire* to give, which Derrida calls "nothing." It is only the desire to give that acts as a gift in this case. Thus, her true desire is to break the laws and rules of economy, and give time in such a way that eludes time itself. Ultimately, Maintenon's friend (Saint-Cyr) has "the rest," the "nothing"; something that Maintenon can give, in a limited sense, because it goes uncalculated by economy. This rest or remainder is nothing. *Es gibt*, or "*there is* nevertheless…*and it never gives itself, the rest*."[22] Although all of her time is given to the king, Maintenon gives this nothing to her friend, which is something that the King cannot take. She does not have this gift of time, yet she gives it nonetheless. The one thing that the king cannot take is Maintenon's nothing, this "rest." Derrida here relies on Heidegger's concept of "nothing," which when though according to the gift ("of what one does not have") is the key to the arrival, "sending," or disclosure of Being on its own terms and seemingly out of nowhere.[23]

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[19] Here Derrida summons Lacan, who suggests that to love is to give a gift of what one does not have. And then later, on a similar note, he raises the question of Heidegger and the "gift that one doesn't have." This is only an allusion between Heidegger and Lacan, though, and one that we should not take too seriously as a demand on Derrida's own interests here. For Lacan, this specific gift of love is qualified by lack, which is a kind of "first action" of "desire." And this is a point to which Derrida later draws attention in *Given Time* in his reading of Heidegger's "Anaximander's Fragment." See Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking: The Dawn of Western Philosophy*, trans. David Krell and Frank Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 52. For Heidegger, "giving is not only giving-away; originally, giving has the sense of acceding or giving-to. Such giving lets something belong to another which properly belongs to him…the *didonai* designates this 'letting belong to.'" Ibid., pp. 43–44.

[20] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 3.

[21] Ibid., p. 2.

[22] Ibid., p 4.

[23] Ibid., See footnote 28, chapter 4. This reference of Heidegger's was considered in closer detail in Chap. 4.

As coming from nowhere and nothing, the gift is impossible, yet still capable of "happening."[24]

It is a sense of "nothingness" that "leaves her [Maintenon] something to be desired," and because the King takes and occupies all of her time, one can sense in her "the infinite sigh of unsatisfied desire."[25] According to a radical conception of desire as "unsatisfiable," any fulfillment of desire would result in its being relinquished. Maintenon is frustrated because she does not want to give all of her time to the King, but rather to her friend, and if it were possible, her "desire would be there where she *would like*, in the conditional, to give what she cannot give…"[26] Maintenon is frustrated by the fact that her desire does not condition or *make* the gift occur, and she wants to inscribe a gift into time by stretching and bending time to accommodate to her desires. In Maintenon's wanting to give something that "she does not have" she is attempting to break the rules of time itself. She wants to do the impossible, and indeed "the whole of her desire" (*pour le pouvoir donner*) says Derrida, is to break free from the rules of economy. Yet she cannot "make a present" of this "rest" of time. Her desire cannot produce the arrival of the gift, for the gift must remain outside the bounds of time and conscious experience, and therefore must be undesirable. One cannot desire the gift *as such*, for this would require that one first be able to describe it. And in order to describe it, one would first need to have had an experience of it phenomenally at another prior point in time. The gift is not phenomenologically experienceable, is thus not desirable, and this results in the dissatisfaction, disappointment, and frustration of Maintenon's desires. What one "wants" is not "the gift," for one cannot even desire the gift. That which one thinks is a gift, and that which one therefore desires, is an economically appropriated, temporally inscribed gift-like event. If it *were* the case that desire could bring about the gift, then "desire and the desire to give would be the same thing, a sort of tautology."[27] That is to say, all desire would be reduced to *generosity*. Yet this desire would be only "abundance" without "lacking."

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[24] See also Jacques Derrida, "A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event" in *The Late Derrida*, eds. W. J. T. Mitchell and Arnold I. Davidson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 237. Also, recall here the distinction between will and desire. The will has been historically considered the place of freedom, while desire is an irresistible and natural drive.

[25] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 4.

[26] She chooses where she wishes to direct this rest, or nothing, for as Derrida continues, "nobody takes it all from her…" as no one can take her nothing from her. Ibid., p. 4.

[27] Ibid., p. 5. There is a slight distinction here between this published version, and the first draft: "… voila le tout de son desire, et le desir et le desir de donner, c'est la meme chose, c'es cette tautologie…" This could be translated as "… here is all of her desire. And the desire and the desire to give is the same thing, this is a tautology." Jacques Derrida, "version one" of *Donner Le Temps*, Chapter 1, p 3. *UC Irvine Libraries, Special Collections – Jacques Derrida Papers*. Accessed July 9, 2012.

6.1.2 The Temporal Dimension of Intending to Give

There is another sense in which, on temporal grounds, desire is incapable of bringing about the gift, namely, as "intention." The gift is impossible in any case where time conditions experience, and thus in order for any gift to be possible, one would first need a "caesura" in this circle of time. This would require deliberation and intention. "Intention" is simply a version of the "desire to give."[28] For "let us suppose, that someone wants or desires to give to someone. In our logic and our language we say it thus: someone *intends-to-give* something to someone. Already the complexity of the formula appears formidable."[29] "Intending to give" begins with a subject's seeking to constitute itself by going outside of itself, then coming back into itself through a "reappropriation" of that which is supposed to have been given.[30] Derrida shows that the preposition "someone desires to give" is already temporally constituted. To intend-to-do anything is future tense (e.g., I intend to pick up coffee tomorrow). Intention projects particular outcomes upon a future event, and in the case of the gift, entails that one seeks to make the gift a derivative product of one's desire or intent. Yet this would entail that the gift is only a subsidiary byproduct of one's own desire to bring it about. One's "intentions" are generally regarded, even in a court of law, to be just as significant as the actual actions of an individual. If this were the case also with the gift, that is, if intention oversees the possibility of the gift, then the gift is degraded to being a *product* of volition. For Derrida, a gift desired is a gift intended, and a gift intended is temporally conditional, subject to one's desires, and therefore not a gift as such.

Intention also implies knowledge of that which is intended. Since a gift cannot be named in phenomenal experience (a point Derrida has made quite clear), knowledge or even phenomenal "awareness" of the gift cannot be initiated. Yet, intention implies that one knows what one is doing, what one is desiring and what, precisely, one wants as an outcome of a given situation. Such preconditions for the gift leave it in the control of one's knowledge, as a mere outcome of its being desired. This implies purpose and design. Although one tries to give a gift *on purpose* and *intentionally*, the gift cannot be named, recognized, or possessed. The gift cannot be brought about as a result of ones's knowledge, for this would entail that the gift is subjected to the parameters of reason.

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[28] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 11. Derrida uses want, desire and intention synonymously here and shortly after (similarly, but not equivocally) on pg 11: "I suppose that I know and that you know what 'to give,' 'gift,' donor,' 'donee' mean in our common language. As well as 'to want,' 'to desire,' 'to intend.'"

[29] Ibid., p. 10.

[30] "It supposes a subject and a verb, a constituted subject, which can also be collective – for example, a group, a community, a nation, a clan, a tribe – in any case, a subject identical to itself and conscious of its identity, indeed seeking through the gesture of the gift to constitute its own unity and, precisely, to its own identity recognized so that that identity comes back to it., so that it can reappropriate its identity: as its property." Ibid., p. 11.

A third problem inherent within a "desire to give" is that it always implies a recipient or donee:

> Let us suppose, then, an intention-to-give: Some 'one' wants or desires to give. Our common language or logic will cause us to hear the interlace of this already complex formula as incomplete. We would tend to complete it by saying 'some 'one' (A) intends-to-give B to C, some 'one' intends to give or gives 'something' to 'someone other.'[31]

Interestingly, Derrida repeats – with only a subtle change – these four sentences in the paragraph to follow. Such a repetition is a common literary device he frequently employs in other works to indicate the importance of that which is repeated. In this case, the repetition seeks to show how the "desire to give" implies desire, a donor, a donee, and the gift itself. Indeed "this compound structure is indispensable…" *if* there is to be a gift. Such a "structure" is necessary in order to name a gift a gift; that is, for the name "gift" to *mean* anything.[32] And the understanding that one has as to what a gift means is that it implies a donor and a donee. There are no gifts "in general" without at least two persons' direct or indirect involvement (although a donor and a donee need not be aware for Derrida). By demanding the involvement of "the other" in what Derrida calls the "gift event," Derrida is implying in effect the demands of difference and disruption. The other *disturbs* one's intentions and *thwarts* one's desires. The presence or involvement of the other does everything *but* give me what I want, for since the other is always already a part of me, having influenced me and shaped my desires and interests, even "my decision is the other's" and therefore "the freest decision in myself is for the other in myself."[33] Lacking a traditional conception of subjectivity, and understanding the role played by the other in the cultivation of desire, Derrida continues to assert that

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[31] And Derrida continues, "This 'something' may not be a thing in the common sense of the word but rather a symbolic object; and like the donor, the donee may be a collective subject; but in any case A gives B to C." Ibid., p. 11.

[32] As Derrida asserts "for the gift to be possible, for there to be gift event, according to our common language and logic, it seems that this compound structure is indispensable. Notice that in order to say this, I must already suppose a certain precomprehension of what *gift* means. I suppose that I know and that you know what 'to give,' 'gift,' donor,' 'donee' mean in our common language. As well as 'to want,' 'to desire,' 'to intend.'" Thus, one must consider "the following axiom: In order for there to be gift, gift event, some 'one' has to give some 'thing' to someone other, without which 'giving' would be meaningless." Ibid., p. 11. It is worth briefly recalling here that for Derrida, words, concepts, and ideas can be meaningless, as they are only signs that are de-signed to point in particular ways and places.

[33] Perhaps this is why, in his more candid discussions in "On the Gift" with Caputo and Kearney, Derrida demands that "my decision is the other's" and we "have not to account for, but to experience, the fact that the freest decision in myself is a decision for the other in myself." The ultimately "free" decision is *for* the other, not *of* the other. Derrida continues, insisting that "the other is in me; the other is my freedom, so to speak. You can transfer what I'm saying about decision to desire. The desire of my desire is not mine. That's where desire stops. If my desire for the other, for the *tout autre*, were simply *my* desire, I would be enclosed in my desire." Thus we can conclude that a stable desire demands, also, a stable subject capable of desiring. But for Derrida there is no such subject with such a *capacitas*. We will consider the lack of "subject" in Derrida in our final chapter, but for now we need only mention how it is necessary that we be subjectless, for this is what allows the gift to properly be gift, as non-phenomenal. That is to say, there is no subject that stands in its

the only possible way of understanding the gift is to name it "the impossible." Yet this does not imply that the gift "fails" to operate, but that we fail in attempting to conjure the gift on our own terms, or detect its operations.

6.1.3 The Gift "at play" in Time

Also of importance in Derrida's description of the relation between gift and time is "projection" or *Entwurf*. Through his own interpretation of Heidegger's later text *On Time and Being* (not *Being and Time*), Derrida wonders if there is a way to "arrive" at the gift in a non-phenomenal way, and to "get out of the circle" of economy, in order to give the gift a "place" of its own. This involves an attempt to extract desire from a concept of the gift:

> …the desire to accede to the proper is already, we could say, surreptitiously ordered by Heidegger according to the dimension of 'giving.' And reciprocally, what would it mean to think the gift, Being, and time *properly* in that which is most proper to them or in that which is properly their own, that is what they can give and give over to the movements of propriation, expropriation, de-propriation or appropriation? Can one ask these questions without anticipating a thought, even a desire of the proper? A desire to accede to the property of the proper? Is this a circle? Is there any other definition of desire? In that case, how to enter into such a circle or how to get out of it? Are the entrance and the exit the only two modalities of our inscription in the circle?.... these are so many threads to be pursued.[34]

way. Jacques Derrida, *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism,* eds. John D Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 134–135.

[34] Derrida suggests that giving orders "le désir d'accéder au propre." Kamuf very straightforwardly translates this into English to mean that giving orders "the desire to accede to the proper." This more direct translation leaves Derrida's concept of desire sounding a bit too passive. For what should draw one's attention in this phrase is that we want ownership, and though we intend and grasp-for it (not necessarily passively consenting, acceding or yielding), these efforts fail. Purposiveness, ownership, intent, and desire all fail in reference to the gift. Instead of passively giving oneself over to the proper (as the Kamuf translation suggests), one miserably grasps for possession, on-purpose, trying to *take* ownership. One tries to name the gift on one's own, but its name is ineffable, even though it is in the horizon of finitude. Jacques Derrida, *Donner le Temps*: *1. La Fausse Monnaie* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1991), p 36. For Derrida, "Dans la position même de cette question, dans la formu-lation du projet ou du dessein de pensée, à savoir le « afin de » (nous pensons « afin de » *(um… zu)* penser l'être et le temps en leur « propre » *(in sein Eigenes, in ihr Eigenes),* le désir d'accéder au propre est déjà, pourrions-nous dire, subrepticement ordonné par Heidegger à la dimension du « donner ». Et réciproquement. Que signifierait penser *proprement* le don, l'être et le temps dans ce qui leur est ou dans ce qu'ils ont de plus *propre,* à savoir ce qu'ils peuvent donner et livrer aux mouvements de propriation, d'expropriation, de dépropriation ou d'appropriation? Peut-on poser ces questions sans anticiper une pensée, voire un désir du propre? un désir d'accéder à la propriété du propre? Est-ce là un cercle? Y a-t-il une autre définition du désir? Dans ce cas, comment entrer dans un tel cercle ou comment en sortir? L'entrée ou la sortie sont-elles les deux seules modalités de notre inscription dans le cercle? Ce cercle est-il lui-même inscrit dans l'entrelacs d'un *Geflecht* dont il ne forme qu'une figure? Autant de fils à suivre." See also Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 21–22. See also Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 5.

One's "ownness" and desire for the proper (i.e., what is given) relates to Heidegger's understanding of the design of thinking, which is with/for a purpose or "projection" that does not originate in a subject. To understand Derrida's somewhat idiosyncratic employment of these terms, we might briefly turn to Heidegger's engagement of them. The word Heidegger uses to unravel the traditional concept of "purpose" (*Zweck* in Kant's usage) is *Entwurf*, or "projection," which is a kind of "thrown-out-thereness." This "thrown-out-thereness" is a provisional "design" (*Entwurf*) upon that which appears or is "projected." Contrary to the Husserlian position that thinking is always a thinking-of (or conscious-of) in the intent, projection, or purpose of the subject, Heidegger's *Eigen*, or "appropriate" content of thought is given by Being. Heidegger's *Entwurf* or "projection" appears to have nothing to do with desire (*Begierde*), since it is the free projection of one's ownmost possibilities (within the horizon of the ultimate possibility of death, that is, of having "no more possibilities"). For Heidegger "Being" may "give itself," but only in relation to one's thematized existential possibilities that are always *sich vorwegs* or "beforehand," namely, in one's state of *Geworfenheit* or "thrownness."[35] This thrownness is not to be associated with any teleological goal or object, not even a functionally illusory object (such as the Lacanian *objet petit a*). Thrownness opens the horizon of the temporal of that which one is "toward."

Derrida agrees with Heidegger that that which is *Verhältnis*, or "held together" (deriving from *es halt* or "it holds") in relation comes from the instantaneous moment at which, or reciprocal engagement wherein, thinking is "projected" and the giving of Being simply "happens."[36] Perhaps this is why Heidegger chooses not to refer to "desire" (*Begierde*), for it implies and intends an object (of desire). *Dasein* can only be directed at that which is *Eigen* (a non-object), the ownmost of Being, through thinking. One does not arrive at or choose thoughts through volition or desire, for desire is another reason for the Heideggerian "destruction" (*Destruktion*) of metaphysics, on which Derrida himself claims to base his "deconstruction." Another reason as to why Heidegger rarely uses the word "desire" (*Begierde*) is likely because it implies a constituting subject who intends objects and represents them. For Heidegger "subjectivity" is the metaphysical *idée fixe* or obsession that is responsible for the "forgetfulness" of being. Being "gives," but if one desires what is given (a way of speaking Heidegger would not use) one is not desiring a "givenness" or a "gift" but an *Eigen*, the appropriate "occurrence" (*ereignet*) of the content of thought "given by being."[37] Heidegger's *Eigen* is not an object or a

[35] For an explication of "thrownness" see book six of Heidegger's *Being and Time*.

[36] See Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* (New York NY: Harper & Row, 1972).

[37] What appears to be contrary to my reading of Heidegger's position on desire and the gift, Caputo questions Heidegger's grounding of *es gibt das Sein* as grounded in "generosity." In the context of reading Derrida vis-à-vis Heidegger, Caputo suggests that "that gift without gift, without the swelling and contracting of gift-ing, could take place only if everything happened below the level of conscious intentionality, where no one intends to give anything to anyone and no one is intentionally conscious of receiving anything. Such austere, Grinch-like conditions are hardly met at all anywhere. Not even Heidegger's notion of the *es gibt das Sein* can meet this requirement, for Heidegger at once seizes upon the generosity embedded in the German idiom *es gibt (geben, die*

representation, but rather that which is most intimate or "ownmost" to Being itself, and only "given" according to the conditions of thought.[38] For Heidegger "we do not come to thoughts, they come to us," and for Derrida this is the case, "and reciprocally" – thoughts come to us insofar as we do not come to them.[39] Derrida is interested in showing how thoughts relate to one who does not come to them, and this is implicated in his thinking on the gift.

Derrida's understanding of thinking is not that it accords to an order or gives itself over to an intending subject. In rhetorically asking "is there any other definition of desire?" Derrida is once again, but in this case sarcastically, disjoining gift from desire and removing gift further from any order of desirability. Desire is implicated within the circle of economy and exchange, and Derrida deconstructs this circle in order to show that it cannot contain the gift; that it can make no teleological object out of the gift, no intent that allows the gift to appear as a result of its being desired, for "what is constitutive of the gift…" is "…no longer a category of the psyche."[40] Independent from the will of a desiring subject and one's psychical or cognitive experience, the gift can *play* freely, and the *Eigene*, this "thing of time implies…" says Derrida "the play of the gift."[41] Through an association between *es spielt* and *es gibt* (it plays and it gives) the status of the gift as "at play" in the very inner workings of time instantiates the only way in which the "gift event" can occur. The desire for the "proper" (i.e., what is given to presence), as the "propriety" of the gift, is trapped in the circle of exchange. By according the gift the role of "play" within time, Derrida is no longer considering the "given" of "given time," but the "pure," impossible "gift." The gift *as such* deconstructs desire to the point that it no longer has anything *per se* to desire, namely, through being "at play." The gift is "at play" as a kind of never attainable and impossible "object of desire" within time.

6.2 The Gift as the Impossible

Derrida names things "impossible" so as to indicate that they are so abundant that they cannot be phenomenally represented. Yet this is not a negative maneuver. As Kearney put it, Derrida thinks of the impossible "in a way that is not simply negative or disabling. The impossible needs to be affirmed because… it is precisely

Gabe), which is supposed to mean simply 'there is.' On this account, the French idiom *il y a* is better and more 'value-free,' more neutral and indeterminate." John Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York NY: Fordham University Press, 1997), p. 143.

[38] Heidegger here appears to be relying upon a theological conception of revelation as a purely gratuitous "event," which one cannot project or make as an object of desire.

[39] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 23.

[40] Ibid., p. 23.

[41] Ibid., p. 22.

impossibility which opens up possibility and makes it possible."[42] Derrida frequently uses the term "impossible" in reference to particular terms and concepts for the sake of rescuing them from their "commonplace" usage; for protecting those concepts from being ill-imagined within, or reduced to phenomenal experience. Further, the "impossible" is not a metaphysical "beyond," but the place wherein one arrives at an *aporia* or point of decision between the possible and the impossible.[43] Thus, "impossible" is a register that allows for a kind of transcendental mystery while not giving-in to the control of metaphysical language and thinking. As the gift, the impossible thwarts the supposed reliability of a "reasonable" subject, namely, by disrupting order and economy through arrival as an indescribable, undecidable, and non-theorizable event (*l'avenir*). As undecidable (that is, outside the bounds of one's conscious desire and intent) anything can happen, but a "happening" is not the same thing as a "possibility" in a Derridean schema. "Possibles" lead to certitude, for as he suggests in *the Politics of Friendship*, "…a possible surely and certainly possible, accessible in advance, would be a poor possible, a futureless possible, a possible already *set aside*, so to speak, life-assured."[44] Despite the openness of the term "possible," once some thing, idea, or event is supposed or claimed to be within the realm of possibility, it is then determined as "certainly possible." Instead, the impossible, which should be "affirmed" and is associated with *différance*, is that which opens onto any possibilities. The possible does not determine the impossible.

In the later half of chapter one of *Given Time*, Derrida shifts to thinking the gift on the terms of the impossible: "For finally, if the gift is another name of the impossible, we still think it, we name it, we desire it. We intend it."[45] That is, *although* one *attempts to* think, desire, name, and so on, the gift, one in fact cannot. Instead, the gift cannot be presenced, but rather frustrates the temporal dimensions of thinking, desiring, and intending by disrupting that which one thinks to be impossible. When one desires or thinks the gift, one is not desiring the gift *in itself*. In fact, that which is desired is something quite the opposite of the gift – something economical. Likewise, although one *thinks* one desires the impossible, what one is actually desiring is the possible. One cannot desire the impossible, and likewise, nor can one desire the gift. However, this does not preclude the possibility that "perhaps there is nomination, language, thought, desire, or intention only there where there is this movement still for thinking, desiring, naming that which gives itself neither to be

[42] Richard Kearney, "Desire of God: An Exchange" in *After God: Richard Kearney and the Religious Turn in Continental Philosophy*, ed. Richard Kearney and John Panteleimon Manoussakis (New York, NY: Fordham Press, 2006), p. 96.

[43] See also Robyn Horner, *Jean-Luc Marion: A Theo-logical Introduction* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005), p. 45.

[44] Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* (New York: Verso, 1997), p, 29.

[45] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 29. Then in *Donner le Temps*: "Car enfin, si le don est un autre nom de l'impossible, nous le pensons pourtant, nous le nommons, nous le désirons. Nous en avons l'intention." Jacques Derrida, *Donner le Temps*: *1. La Fausse Monnaie*, (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1991), p. 45.

known, experienced, nor lived."[46] Again, the gift as the impossible is not metaphysical but, as non-phenomenal, operates out of sight. Thinking and desiring are made possible by the gift, and therefore the gift cannot be subjected to thinking or desiring. Further, one can neither block the path of the gift, nor can one pave its way: "In this sense one can think, desire, and say only the impossible, according to the measureless measure [*mesure sans mesure*] of the impossible."[47] There is no human activity that will ever act as a *cause* for the gift to appear. It is only the impossible that dictates and determines its own thinkability and desirability. However, this does not entail that the impossible takes any radical *primacy* over economy (and its predicates of measurability and possibility), for economy and the gift are in an *aporetic* relationship.[48]

6.3 Aporia and the Gift

Derrida frames deconstruction according to the affective *mood* of undecidability. Whereas the Hegelian dialectic proceeds by way of negating negation, by a thesis and its antithesis, ultimately to reach further clarification of that which is negated, Derrida's *aporia* is built on the insistence that dialectics (in a way similar to Husserl) can indeed be dissolved, but their dissolution doesn't create clarity. Dissolution leads to disruption and "madness." The interconnection between what appear to be static polarities is brought about by the expression and force of deconstruction. This folding and unfolding of such polarities and the lack of mediation and resolution between them leads to indecision. This is not simply indecision between the two concepts or terms originally polarized, but *ultimate* undecidability. In the case of the relationship between gift and economy, the *aporia* is the place or "crossroads" wherein a plurality of acts of signification occur through centering on the non-existent, non-present, and inaccessible *gap* between gift and economy. The *aporia* is the point of ultimate *irreducibility*. Yet one typically understands that there is a "gap" between dialectically opposed concepts. Derrida describes this problem in relation to gift and economy: "This gap between, on the one hand, thought, language, and desire and, on the other hand, knowledge, philosophy, science, and the

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[46] And Derrida continues to express that this occurs "in the sense in which presence, existence, determination regulate the economy of knowing, experience, and living." Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 29.

[47] Ibid., p. 29.

[48] "If one wants to recapture the proper element of thinking, naming, desiring, it is perhaps according to the measureless measure of this limit that it is possible, possible as relation *without* relation to the impossible. One *can* desire, name, think in the proper sense of these words, if there is one, *only* to the *immeasuring* extent [*que dans la mesure* démesurante] that one desires, names, thinks still or already, that one still lets announce itself what nevertheless cannot *present itself* as experience, to knowing: in short, here *a gift that cannot make itself (a) present* [un don qui ne peut se faire présent]." Ibid., p. 29.

order of presence is also a gap between gift and economy."[49] It is generally understood that on one side of the gap is "the gift," and on the other side is "economy." One might take it that the gift marks the realm of the actions of thinking, speaking, and desiring – actions that involve a going-out beyond, and into the excess – while economy commands the stable system and structure of society and home (*oikos*), which seek reliability, presentation, and fairness. *Yet* overall, for Derrida this faulty polarization represents a clean, structured, and stable dialectic in which the two supposed extremes never meet. Instead, gift and economy are co-implicated in each other's discourses even though gift is impossible, and even though economy wishes to seize control of the gift.

6.3.1 The Gift Beyond Dialectic

What Derrida calls the "quasi-transcendental illusion of the gift" should not be thought according to a metaphysical register that starts with opposition. Derrida wishes to no longer be implicated in the Kantian machinery of opposition, namely, that between the noumenal and the phenomenal, "between thinking and knowing," one that he says "communicates…with the problem of time on one side, that of the moral law and of practical reason on the other side."[50] This Kantian dialectic between thinking and knowing should be abandoned for "this quasi 'transcendental illusion [of the gift]' should not be either," and "must exceed the limits of … even philosophy."[51] The gift cannot be appropriated by philosophical thinking, reason, and calculation (which are economical). One cannot choose the gift over economy, and reciprocally:

> On the contrary, it is a matter – desire beyond desire – of responding faithfully but also as rigorously as possible both to the injunction or the order of the *gift* ("give" ["donne"]) as well as to the injunction or the order of meaning (presence, science, knowledge): *Know* still what giving *wants to say, know how to give*, know what you want and want to say when you give, know what you intend to give, know how the gift annuls itself, commit yourself [*engage-toi*] even if commitment is the destruction of the gift by the gift, give economy its chance.[52]

[49] Ibid., p. 29.

[50] Ibid., p. 30. This is a somewhat unfair reading of Kant, especially since the more conventional interpretations of him on this point suggest that this results in a kind of hierarchy between thinking and knowledge. Thinking is the possible, and knowing is that which has already been thought and then confirmed.

[51] In Derrida's words "…the effort to think the groundless ground of this quasi 'transcendental illusion' [of the gift] should not be either – if it is going to be matter of *thinking* – a sort of adoring and faithful abdication, a simple movement of faith in the face of that which exceeds the limits of experience, knowledge, science, economy – and even philosophy." Ibid., p. 30. Kant, however, only uses the term "transcendent ground," not "transcendental ground," as Derrida does here.

[52] Ibid., p. 30.

Any privileging of the gift over economy, or economy over the gift is rooted in the theoretical distinction between those terms, and therefore such a distinction (or ability to distinguish) would hold primacy over these concepts and their activities. One must realize that there *appears to be* a dichotomy between these terms, and *aporetic* thinking begins with the recognition of those surface distinctions. In something of a redux version of the Husserlian *eidetic* reduction, Derrida holds that one should reflect upon that which appeared to be a dichotomy in light of their (e.g., between gift and economy) actual *aporia*. In the *aporia*, one must "respond faithfully" to the injunctions of both extremes. In his 2005 *Rogues*, Derrida reiterated that the gift "is that which opens the possibility of circularity – a circularity identified with calculability – while including in that circularity the possibility of its failure. The gift is a figure of unconditionality whose event the economy seeks to annihilate."[53] While the gift initiates a certain economical function of circularity, economy seeks to disrupt any and all "unconditionality," of which the gift is a "figure." Neither gift nor economy hold primacy over the other:

> One cannot treat the gift […] without treating this relation to economy […]. But is not the gift, if there is any, also that which interrupts economy? That which, in suspending economic calculation, no longer gives rise to exchange? That which opens the circle so as to defy reciprocity or symmetry, the common measure, and so as to turn aside the return in view of the no-return?[54]

It is not the case that economy is that which must be avoided in order for the gift to occur, for that would indicate simply another economical principle, namely, a desire to set economy aside in order to bring the "pure" gift into phenomenal presence. There is no way in which one can create the right conditions for the gift to happen. What one can do, however, is respond to this *aporia* by another act of deconstruction, wherein one goes to the limits of both economy and gift. One is to "give economy a chance" for it is not some "evil other" of the gift. Further, economy needs the gift, and although gift is responsible for starting the circle of economy, one must experience the *aporia* between the gift and economy in order to understand the gift, namely, that it is impossible. What makes the relationship between the gift and economy *aporetic* is their entirely separate demands. Economy insists upon a sensible rendering of the gift, while the gift demands that one abandon economy and its sense.[55] This is why the gift/economy distinction is the *aporia* par excellence.

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[53] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason,* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 149.

[54] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 7.

[55] In economy, "one must also render an account of the desire to render an account." Ibid., p. 31.

6.3.2 The Helplessness of Intentionality

Within *Given Time* allusions often are made to Baudelaire's short story "Counterfeit Money." Two friends were walking a busy street, and one friend – knowing quite well the nature of his environment as well as the sorts of people they might encounter on their walk – peculiarly, and to the surprise of the narrator, arranges his coinage in different pockets. Right away they came across a beggar, to whom this friend secretly and pridefully slips a counterfeit coin. After the narrator comes to hear that this "gift" was in fact a counterfeit coin, he began "looking for noon at two o'clock," seeking an "impossible" explanation for why his friend did this. The narrator's initial conclusion was that the giving of the coin was for the sake of creating an event in the life of the beggar.[56] Irrespective of whether or not the ultimate outcome was financially favorable for the beggar, the giving of this coin, if it was given with the aforementioned motive, was justifiable according to the narrator.

However, upon further deliberation of his own words – "there is no sweeter pleasure than to surprise a man by giving him more than he hopes for" – in conjunction with a deeper look into his friend's eyes, which the narrator says "shone" with "unquestionable candor" (which we can take to mean that he finally recognized his friend's motives and true desires), the narrator was led to his final conclusion as to what in fact happened. His friend, the narrator concludes, had two intentions, not just one: he did not *only* want to create an event in the life of the beggar as originally imagined, but to do so without costing him the price of a coin; wishing to keep his money. The friend wanted to do a good deed that cost him nothing at all, and the narrator concludes that this was not simply mean or unkind – for that would actually be excusable – but was rather an act of intentional ignorance. The narrator deems such an act "unforgivable" because his friend commits "evil out of stupidity."

Derrida unfolds this tale according to the relation between the gift and economy. The narrator's original allowance for his friend to be acquitted of his "crime" was on the grounds of "the desire to 'create an event' by the offering of counterfeit money [which] can only *excuse*, can only render a criminal enjoyment excusable if there were *desire* to create an event."[57] For the narrator "in itself, this desire would be good, it would be the desire to give that on which to live, very simply, *to give more (with which)* to *live* [*donner plus a vivre*], indeed to give life…"[58] Here Derrida exposes the narrator's failure. As evidenced by the narrator's original justification of his friend, the narrator holds the belief that one's *intent* or *desire* matters for the sake of determining whether or not an act is justifiable or not. The specific intent of, or desire for creating an event – something unexpected, intriguing, and experiential –

[56] Derrida says of this "looking for noon at two o' clock" (*chercher le midi à quatorze heure*), that "it is as if we were looking for complications," as if "we wanted to show that we were given to, and even gifted at, tracking the impossible." This is a common French saying, which colloquially denotes one's aim to do the impossible, or make the impossible happen.

[57] Ibid., p. 157.

[58] Ibid., p. 157.

in another's life is a justifiable, and perhaps even worthy cause.[59] The narrator initially legitimizes his friend's actions under the assumption that his friend indeed had a certain desire to be generous – even if such generosity did not materialize in the form of money. It is not only the case that desire or intent are poor sources of legitimization for measuring or justifying one's actions, but also that the supposed "goodness" of the intent to create an event through the gift of the coin is rendered solely in a vacuum of conjecture. The giver doesn't decide if the gift was a good gift, or if a gift ever occurred in the first place. A gift, if it is going to happen, must be incalculable. Indeed, "only an hypothesis of counterfeit money would make the gift possible," as "no one ever gives true money" anyway.[60] That is, only conjecture, an economically inflected principle, led the narrator to conclude that a gift event had occurred. Instead, for Derrida, *différance* and credit (which he considers a kind of "blind" faith act) disrupt *oikos* and economy, and provide for the possibility of a "chance for the event." This possibility for the event *aporetically* creates a "limit between the limit and the unlimited," namely, between economy and the gift.[61] Through a reading of Baudelaire's tale, Derrida arrives at the semiotic claim that the "semantic resources" within language and the "ultra-semantic" ones beyond it, such as "the truthless truth, the lawless law, the dutyless duty" are *all concentrated and lost* "in the enigma of *Khre*, of *Khrema*" and by implication, in "their whole family: *one must, to need, to lack, to desire*….".[62] This enigmatic family is "chrematistics," "necessity," or what Heidegger names "that which inescapably must be," or that which "one holds in one's hand." Desire belongs to these economic registers, and one is always at a loss for referencing anything that is ultra-semantic. This claim to the semantic dependence of phenomenality is consistent with his claim that "there is nothing outside the text."

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[59] And here Derrida reminds of the narrator's statement in the story that "such conduct on my friend's part was excusable only by the desire to create an event *in* this poor devil's *life*." Ibid., p. 157.

[60] Ibid., p. 157. This is also a subtle critique of any "restricted economy" that believes in equal trades, on the grounds of a unified currency. Perhaps it is no coincidence that this text finally appeared in publication around the same time at which the European Union was being formed, namely, in the attempt to develop a single, unified currency.

[61] Ibid., p. 158. See also Ibid., p. 167. It should be noted here that in *Given Time* Derrida speaks of "credit" both within the context of "gift" as well as in that of "economy."

[62] Ibid., p. 159. Derrida puts it this way: "With 'Counterfeit Money,' we are at the heart of a literary experience or experiment with all the semantic and ultra-semantic resources, the truthless truth, the lawless law, the dutyless duty that are concentrated and lost in the enigma of *khre, of khrema, of khraomai, of to khreon*, and their whole family : *one must, to need, to lack, to desire, to be indigent or poor*, and then *owe, ought, duty, necessity, obligation need, utility, interest, thing, event, fatality, destiny, demand, desire, prayer* and so forth."

6.4 Generosity: Or the Desire to Give

The paradox of generosity is that it begins with intent to give, but ultimately only culminates in debt. If a gift is to be given, it must by definition come from one who has a desire to be generous. However, "if it is not to follow a program, even a program inscribed in the *phusis*, a gift must not be generous. Generosity must not be its motive or its essential character."[63] Desire once again fails to bring about a gift, for on one side of the *aporia* is the readiness to be generous, yet on the other side stands the essential lack of generosity: "One may give *with* generosity but not *out of* generosity, not so as to obey this originary or natural drive called generosity, the need or desire to give, regardless of the translations or symptoms one may decipher it."[64] The gift operates independent of cause and effect, and such a "desire to give" cannot be the ultimate "cause" with the gift as its intended "effect." However, "generosity" can appear alongside the gift event, so long as that generosity does not resolve or intend to be the cause of the gift. This marks the crucial mistake made by the narrator in trying to interpret and observe his friend's desires. What the narrator thought to be generosity was based upon what appeared to be an intent to give. Yet once this intent or desire to give was determined no longer to be a part of his friend's desire, the friend's desire became insidious. The narrator's mistake, according to Derrida, was to operate with a conception of "the gift" that subjects it to being a mere product of a generous subject.

Thus, the only "gift" that comes from an act of generosity or intention is a gift of debt as it is reinscribed into economy and exchange. This is not a gift as such, but a quasi-gift of coming and returning in the circle of exchange, which accrues "interest."[65] Derrida explores the topic of "interest" in his later works specifically in his fundamental concern of what it might mean to have a "disinterested gift-giving." In *Rogues*, Derrida claims that Kant has an interest, despite Kant's desire to be ride of interest. Kant wishes to attain a rationality that is unaffected by and devoid of the emotive and affective dimension. Kant's desire is devoted to the "thesis" (over the "antithesis"), which he believes will allow him to progress toward building a stable architectonic. Kant privileges "the moment of the thesis over against an antithesis that threatens the systemic edifice and thus disturbs the architectonic desire or interest…"[66] Yet Kant's avoidance of the antithesis results in a paradox, for "if reason

[63] Ibid., p.162.

[64] Ibid., p.162. Derrida continues, "the gift, if there is any, must go against nature or occur without nature; it must break off at the same blow, at the same instant with all originarity, with all originary authenticity."

[65] This is not a point that Derrida makes explicit in *Given Time*, but if time is inescapable in both economy and gift, then whenever there is a debt owed, that debt must change and take shape through time, which necessarily leads to an accrual of interest, even when such a debt is between friends. In which case, the interest just accumulates in a more "friendly" way.

[66] In continuing to speak of this threatening antithesis, Derrida suggests that it is for the sake of, or "…most often so as to take into account, antithetically, themes that should be important to us today, namely, divisibility, eventfulness, and conditionality." Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays*

passes for being disinterested, in what is it still interested?"[67] Kant's "reason" has an interest in being disinterested (*le sans- intéret*). This is symptomatic of a perhaps deeper problem Derrida is unfolding in *Given Time* according to the deconstruction of the *aporia* between gift and economy. One must have a disinterestedness in the gift *if* the gift is to appear, yet is this ultimate "disinterestedness" possible, especially in relation to particular concepts, ideas, things, and objects? This is what leads Derrida, as shown in Chap. 4, to conclude that "disinterestedness" must be an ultimate one, in the sense that one cannot have particular ways of being disinterested, or particular human elements (e.g., emotions, reasons, effects) it wishes to avoid. These sorts of disinterest (as in the case of Kant) hide the work of deconstruction, and the potential productivity of the indecision reached in the *aporia*.

Derrida turns to the seemingly somber recognition that there is no generosity free from wanting something in return, but this holds more than a simple claim to narcissism. Derrida arrives at this realization through unfolding the narrator's final conclusion about his friend (the counterfeit coin-holder) in Baudelaire's little tale. The narrator concludes that his friend's desires were not only impure, but also "unforgivable:" "the narrator sees, *believes* he sees the truth of what the other had wanted to do, his 'aim.'"[68] As evidenced in the narrator's drastically changing perception of his friend, the interpretation of desire comes to color what and how the narrator ultimately comes to see. The narrator is shocked that his friend is not *purely* generous, not entirely committed to regulating his desire to give. For Derrida, such a commitment is economical. Derrida asserts that the narrator's claim indeed marks "the very blindness" (or further, the "unquestionable candor") *of the narrator himself*. The narrator relied upon a pure distinction and polarity between gift and economy, and therefore arrived at the unflinching conclusion that his friend's desire "had been to do a good deed while at the same time making a good deal[;]" that is, as Derrida puts it, "he aimed to play and win on both scores."[69] One might interpret Derrida here to be suggesting that the narrator's reliance upon a conception of "purity" between the gift and economy was paradoxically reflective of the narrator's own preference for economy. It was ultimately the narrator who's conclusions were arrived at in bad faith on the grounds that he did not consider allow the *aporia* between those concepts to trouble him. He straightforwardly accepted their supposed

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on Reason, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 120.

[67] Ibid., p. 120. There is a similar critique of Kant in Derrida's reading of the Kantian aesthetics in *Economists*. There he claims that, for Kant "mediation on a disinterested pleasure therefore provokes a moral interest in the beautiful. It is a strange motivation, this interest taken in disinterestedness, the interest of the interestlessness [*le sans- intéret*], a moral revenue drawn from a natural production that is without interest for us, from which one takes wealth without interest, the singular moral surplus value of the without of pure detachment…" See also Jacques Derrida, "Economesis" in *Continental Aesthetics: Romanticism to Postmodernism: an Anthology*, eds. Richard Kearney and David M. Rasmussen (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p. 441.

[68] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 163.

[69] Ibid., p. 164.

dialectical relationship, and succumbed to the fateful conclusion that what one "desires" or "intends" is all that matters. Further, the gift and economy are implicated within each other, and the narrator is naïve to believe that there is ever a way to do a good deed without wanting something in return. Any desire to give will always maintain an economy within it.

6.5 It Is (*Es Gibt*) the Gesture that Counts

Derrida concludes *Given Time* the same way he begins it, with a meditation on the gift; in particular, one in which we can infer a challenge to any possibility of desire. He rhetorically summons Michel Deguy's *Donnant Donnant*, and closely attends to the final stanza: "what do you desire to give?/It's the gesture that counts."[70] The gesture of giving, for Derrida, is precisely what does *not* count when it comes to the gift. The intent within generosity in fact inhibits a gift's happening (which takes place beyond the conscious experience of the individual) most especially when one relies upon the supposed (and therefore thoughtless) dialectic between the gift and economy. Indeed any gift that comes from generosity actually only can give a "gift of debt," which is the abandoning of the gift *as such*. Thus, when one thinks one desires the gift, what one actually is desiring is simply something that resembles the gift *in economy* – a counterfeit gift – not the gift *as such*. There is no pure generosity on the part of a subject; no good deeds committed by someone who does not (at least implicitly) wish for some economic return, for even the joy of giving is a kind of return.

Although Derrida claims that a gift cannot happen in diachronic, linear time, his naming the gift "the impossible" distances it from playing by time's rules. A shift takes place in *Given Time* where Derrida begins to claim that the gift can be "at play" within time, and can therefore "happen," so long as it does not happen as a result of intentionality. Intentionality fails on three accounts. First, intentionality is an attempt to constitute oneself as a subject, particularly through the intent to give. Second, intentionality has a future tense, and thus the hope for a preunderstood outcome. If one were to succeed in bringing about this intended outcome, the gift necessarily would be a derivative of one's desire. Third, intentionality, by definition, must carry some kind of presupposed knowledge of what one is intending, and in this case, that which one is intending to give. Yet this would entail that the gift is subject to knowledge, once again negating the "generosity" of the act of giving.

[70] Michel Deguy, *Donnant Donnant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), p. 57. As translated by Derrida: "Giving/Giving is the formula/The exchange without market where use value would only be that of the exchange of the gift in which the common is not even sought, abundance of incomparables without measure taking in common, a barter where the garlic flower changes into what is not refused/what do you desire to give/It's the gesture that counts." Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 164.

Intentionality, which is inscribed in economy, is the teleological pursuit of making the gift tangible.

Further, the gift/economy *aporia* is indeed essential to understanding Derrida's conception of the gift, as the *aporia* leads to a radical, yet productive indecision. Economy wishes to seize control of the gift, and the gift constantly seeks to disrupt the stability economy presupposes and promises. The gift does not come through any discipline (e.g., phenomenology) one thinks will allow one (e.g., Marion) access to it, and economy does not have an easily identifiable and exposable gift laden within it. Instead, as Derrida asserts, this particular *aporia* must "exceed the limits of … even philosophy."[71] One does not "access" the gift by disowning economy, for one should give "economy a chance." This leads one into a true experience of the maddening *aporia*, which holds two seemingly contradictory demands that result in indecision.[72] This particular treatment of *Given Time* has highlighted Derrida's deconstruction of the themes of the gift and desire, according to which Marion sets his own phenomenological agenda. Contrary to Marion, Derrida's understanding of desire leaves it without any relevant role in his philosophy or deconstruction. *Given Time* shows how "the thinking of the gift" opens the space in which "Being and time give themselves and give themselves to thought," yet, this is not an order of primacy, but only an entrée into the *aporia*, which leads one into *indecision*, which in this case is the point at which one's volition, choice, and agency are temporarily detained or "bracketed." Such indecision ushers one into a radical experience whereby desire is rendered helpless, and this is the point at which, finally, the gift can be decoupled from, or unconditioned (*unbedingt*) by any conscious, intentional "grasping."

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[71] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 30.

[72] As Mansfield aptly puts it, "the gift is that which opens the economy and sets it in motion, but it is also that which enlarges it, and by enlarging announces the possibility of the economy's very limit and breakdown. Indeed it defines the logic of breakdown as an inevitable part of the economy's most sober operations." Nick Mansfield, "Sovereignty as its Own Question: Derrida's Rogues," in *Contemporary Political Theory* 7 (2008): p. 371.

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Chapter 7
The Gift in Derrida's Deconstruction: Affirming the Gift Through Denegation

Abstract If the gift in fact is central to deconstruction, then it is at work even when Derrida doesn't write explicitly about it. This chapter turns to Derrida's essay "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," and demonstrates how within it the gift can be contextualized in his deconstruction more generally. The gift is considered in relation to negation/affirmation ("denegation"), Being, *khora*, and economy. "Denegation" (*Verneinung*, or denial) is a psychoanalytic principle that insists that whatever a subject most forcefully rejects is in fact that which the subject most innately desires to affirm. Affirmation is here called "de-negation" and any rejection of the gift from coming into phenomenal appearance can have an affirmative function. Next, the gift is conceived as the progressive "displacer" of Being and "the transcendental horizon that belonged to it." Third, since deconstruction is aligned with *Khōra*, a central concept in Derrida's œuvre, the gift can be conceived in relation to it as that which *takes* from phenomenal experience in such a way as to draw attention to what is absent. Fourthly, one might associate the gift with that which deformalizes understanding in consciousness. Overall, this essay of Derrida's is significant for it's being an early response to the work of younger Marion who was outspoken about concerns that deconstruction was an apophatic negation and deceptive sophism.

Es gibt die Zeit, es gibt das Sein. It gives time, it gives Being. – Heidegger[1]

"To leave something later to be found" – could such an effort be coextensive with that of "holding back" in the phenomenological *epoché*? Could the leaving of a remainder of something be part of the result of the bracketing of a thing; a withholding in such a way that the thing might be thought at another, future point in time, as given to consciousness? It could be that the act of "withholding for later" is a preparation of one's intuition for such a later moment. This would relate immediately with "faith," which is committed to the present-tense of actively "leaving," or allowing, for a future time, the enjoyment of a thing's disclosure. There is, indeed, no gift where there is no possibility of something later to be found. To suggest of a thing that it holds a manifold of variation is to presume that it might, in the future, give

[1] Martin Heidegger, "Zeit und Sein," in *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer, 1969), p. 25.

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itself differently and that it has not yet been *exhausted* in the present. Something was left, somehow "later to be found."

This is one subtle insinuation made in Derrida's "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" ("Comment ne pas parler: *Dénégations*," 1986), which is a text that preserves his early engagement with concerns raised about deconstruction by Marion in his early works such as *God without Being* and *The Idol and the Distance*.[2] Despite their different approaches, both Marion and Derrida are not simply interested in preserving the gift, but in redeeming it from the idolatries of metaphysics and its "onto-theological constitution," and in giving it a privileged status whereby it can act in such a way as to disturb economy so that difference and variation are not limited to that which appears or has already appeared.[3] The direct, straightforward, and exhaustive way of seeing and talking about *things*, of thinking and talking about them thoroughly, fully, and finally, is for both thinkers, the termination of both thought and language. To think is to uncover something new hiding within the thing being thought, which, all on its own, holds illustrious variation. How, if it is at all possible, does one access such variation, and through what registers might one discuss, think about, and find it without its being exhausted?

This chapter unfolds four ways in which the role of the gift can be more broadly contextualized in Derrida's deconstruction, namely, in relation to denegation, Being, *khora*, and economy. If the gift, despite being "impossible" is centrally operative within deconstruction, then it should be at work even where Derrida doesn't write much about it. This is one reason why Derrida's essay "How to Avoid Speaking," wherein he "avoids speaking" at length about the gift provides for such an opportunity. "How to Avoid Speaking" was written in response to a series of accusations, which are typified in the claim that those who practice deconstruction are simply "experts in the art of evasion, they know better how to negate or deny than how to say anything."[4] Derrida knows that he has been named a skeptic or sophist who never takes the risk, adhering too strictly to what amounts to a "postmodern nihilism" in his continued adherence to the apophatic approach.[5] This sort of nihilism, as the argument goes, is not open to a leap of faith whereby one might take a risk and "say something." Derrida defends himself in the face of such claims by showing how deconstruction is more than apophatic thinking or negation by employing

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[2] "Comment ne pas parler? How to avoid speaking? Plus précisément: comment ne pas parler *de l'être*." Jacques Derrida, *Comment ne pas parler. Dénégations, en Psyché. Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1987), p. 587.

[3] "It is thus necessary to separate oneself twice: both from those who know – one could say here, from the philosophers or the experts in ontology – and from the vulgar profane who manipulate predicative language as naive idolaters. One is not far from insinuating *[sous-entendre]* that ontology itself is a subtle or perverse idolatry; one will hear this *[en-tendra],* in an analogous and different way, through the voice of Levinas or Jean-Luc Marion." Jacques Derrida, "How to avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II*. eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 158.

[4] Ibid., p. 157.

[5] Jacques Derrida, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold G Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 77.

negative theology as a foil for unfolding his argument that deconstruction is, in fact, better suited as a lever for one to relate, unconditionally, with faith; not simply faith-in, but faith *as such*. "How to Avoid Speaking?" is a question that presumes, contrary to the caricatures made of deconstruction, the impossibility of not taking a risk, of not saying something, or trying to say something, even if that something is "nothing." That is, something, even of nothing, must be "said" even when words are not uttered.

While the topic and method of theology are unavoidable here, they do not command or oversee Derrida's interests, but instead provide occasion for deconstruction, what he calls his "style" – not method – of thinking. When considered in terms of its methodological and textual practices, use of language, and what it all "says" about language more generally, negative theology "says something" that is of theoretical import for deconstruction. Throughout its history, and tracing back to the Greek Fathers, negative theology abides by the apophatic principle that predicative language is inadequate in reference to God. The more one comes "closer" to the divine, the less one can speak; the more one approaches God, the less one can articulate a "name" for God. This approach is traditionally opposed to kataphatic or "positive" approaches that begin with divine revelation and how that revelation is received.[6] For Derrida, apophatic theology fails in part because in praising such a God one first makes an a priori determination of absolute alterity, and therefore negative theology falls back into the ontotheological trap it seeks to avoid. Negative Theology cannot "defer infinitely" and insists on "unnaming" God, yet eventually the "unname" becomes the default name of God. This speaks to the inadequacy of predicative language, and such a criticism might be extended beyond theological language concerning God and applied to all linguistic statements, especially epistemological and metaphysical ones.[7] That is to say, predicative language, in itself, is inadequate for "saying" anything. However, this is its benefit, and is what allows it to actually, and finally "say something." This is one lesson one might learn from negative theology, which harbors a kind of secret reserve, something that is "beyond all positive predication" *and* negation, a sort of "superessentiality, a being beyond being."[8] This is where Derrida begins to take up Marion's interests and interpretations of Dionysius in "God without Being," and turns to psychoanalysis and phenomenology for help in answering the question: how to deny and yet also *not* deny? Indeed, in rejecting or denying something, one is diverting attention away from that which one actually does accept.

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[6] Ibid., p. 75

[7] For Derrida, "one is never certain of being able to attribute to anyone a project of negative theology *as such*." Jacques Derrida, "How to avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II*. eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 143.

[8] Ibid., p. 147.

7.1 The Gift and Negation

It is not enough, however, to banally suggest that nothing is a "something," that there is a negation within every affirmation or an affirmation in every negation. Yet, any attempt to think *beyond* the distinction between being and nothing runs the risk of seeking a point of metaphysical origination. It thus becomes necessary to develop a concept that reaches beyond these dichotomies, and into a space that does not think foundationally, but from the dynamic *Ursprung* of *différance*. This way of thinking gets developed in terms of "denegation" (*Verneinung*, denial), which is another way of saying, by way of a double negative, "affirmation."[9] The negation of negation is affirmation. How is one to avoid speaking? Denegation is part of the answer. Derrida's development of denegation came from Freud's interpretation of how his patients' most fervent denials (*Verneinung* or "denegations") of particular desires signaled to the paradoxical reality that what was being denied was in fact that which was most fervently affirmed or desired by that patient. This sort of rejection or denial comes in the form of an insistent resistance to the analyst, and such a resistance is the key to getting at the truth of what the patient desires the most, yet is prohibited by the patient in reaching their satisfaction. The fervent rejection of that particular desire is then turned by the analyst into a topic of conversation. It is this negation that truly is an affirmation, which needs to be discussed with the patient in order to bring about the "talking cure."

Derrida ingrains a similar version of denegation in deconstruction.[10] This principle is unfolded according to "the secret," which "speaks without speaking." The Biblical narrative of Abraham and Isaac (which Derrida closely addresses in *The Gift of Death*), reveals how Abraham's secret holds to a negation that "denies" or de-negates itself, and this is part and parcel of what a secret is. Abraham cannot

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[9] Marion eventually attempts to absorb denegation into his phenomenology of givenness. "The negative…can be understood as the operator of dialectical givenness, which puts the concept into motion, to the point of producing it in actuality (Hegel). Finally, the void is given in the deception of anticipated perception or in the frustrated expectation of affection, indeed desire. Every negation and every denegation, every negative, every nothing, and every logical contradiction suppose a givenness, which authorizes us to recognize them and thus do justice to their particularities – in short, a given that permits us at the very least to discuss them." Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness,* trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 55.

[10] "These slight disturbances underlie the same sentence. At the same time stable and unstable, this sentence allows itself to be carried by the movements of what I am calling "denial" (*denegation*), a word that I would like to hear prior even to its elaboration in a Freudian context (this is perhaps not easy and assumes at least two preconditions: that the chosen examples extend beyond both the predicative structure and the ontotheological or metaphysical presuppositions that still underlie psychoanalytic theorems)." Derrida continues to suggest that there "is a secret of denial and a denial of the secret. The secret as such, *as secret*, separates and already institutes a negativity; it is a negation that denies itself. It de-negates itself. This de-negation does not happen to it by accident; it is essential and originary." Jacques Derrida, "How to avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II*. eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 158.

speak of the secret (as inherent to the definition of secret), yet he is obliged to constantly remind himself that he has a secret, that what he has *is* a secret. When one has a secret, one talks with oneself, via a form of soliloquy, about this secret in the form of a re-presentation, and has an inner "speaking" or dialogue concerning its status as a secret and its manifold details. One promises not to speak about the secret, yet in making that promise, one must constantly and continually continue a form of speaking, namely, to oneself. Denegation, then, as exemplified in the case of the secret, reveals the paradox of affirmation and negation, of the integration of something and nothing.[11] At the very least, one here reaches an *aporia* between affirmation and negation.

A similar play can be described in Derrida's concept of the gift, which can "happen" as an event, by way of giving itself as "the impossible," but never happen as a phenomenon in consciousness, thus never lending itself truly to be thought as such. That is, there is a form of denegation inherent within the gift, also, for the gift does not and cannot be presented to consciousness because if it were, then it would immediately need to negate itself and its status as gift. Yet, in rejecting or denying the gift from entering phenomenal appearance, its non-presentation allows the gift to truly be "affirmed," and to appear on its own accord and conditions. These conditions are unlike those set by Marion via his placement of the gift in the "register" of givenness, for Derrida's conditions of the gift are precisely that of being *unconditional* and "unregisterable." For Derrida, even the conditions of the gift must remain unknown and impossible, and the precise critique Marion levels towards Derrida's association of the gift with "the impossible" (which will be considered in detail in the final chapter) is that Derrida's "impossible" has unresolved conditions. Yet thinking the gift without conditions and according to the impossible situates it according to denegation. Derrida insists upon denying the possibility of the gift, namely, as a phenomenologically identifiable concept or entity, yet one must considered that the adamant refusal of the gift has an affirmative function. "There is no secret as such; I deny it" says Derrida. This is also the case he eventually makes for the gift, by raising its status to being seemingly holy and untouchable, and by dissociating it with phenomenal experience. Ultimately, the gift's negation unravels according to the strictures of its being double-negated, and therefore affirmed. Derrida, in fact, cherishes the gift and affirms it with a "wink."

There can be no gift, but this is precisely the *how* structure of the gift's occurrence, not only as an "event," but also as a denegation of *Ereignis*. The way a gift occurs is in its non-occurrence, and the rejection of a gift (of saying "no" to it) does

[11] "This denial [*dénégation*] does not happen [to the secret] by accident; it is essential and originary. … The enigma … is the sharing of the secret, and not only shared to my partner in the society but the secret shared within itself, its 'own' partition, which divides the essence of a secret that cannot even appear to one alone except in starting to be lost, to divulge itself, hence to dissimulate itself, as secret, in showing itself: dissimulating its dissimulation. There is no secret as such; I deny it. And this is what I confide in secret to whomever allies himself to me. This is the secret of the alliance." Jacques Derrida, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold G. Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 95

not entail that a gift occurs or does not occur, but affirms it all the more as only being unfolded according to its very own impossibility. But even in the affirmation of "the impossible," this is still not a gift that can be taken up by the "grip" of consciousness. Deconstruction harbors here a kind of "deconstructive reduction" (if one might take the risk to speak of it in these terms) whereby one, *via* denegation, surrenders the hope of accessing the gift, yet lives in relationship with it as impossible. At first glance these appear to be contradictory impulses: to surrender the possibility of thinking or even desiring the gift, and of affirming it. It is in this sense that deconstruction extends or expands the Hegelian dialectic, not by reproducing it, but instead by contradicting it (the dialectic, in and of itself) to the absolute point of absurdity or strangeness. What at first appear to be polarities, when pushed to their limit, reveal levels of mediation in terms of what and how they signify, and it is this plurality of acts of signification that leaves one faced with the *aporia* (see Chap. 6), the point between two seemingly opposite decisions that robs one of their will to choose.

Thus, the not appearing of the gift leads one into such an *aporia*, and in this sense, denegation can be thought as at least one of its modes of appearance. A stone that is being carved into a figure begins to take shape through removal, and the mode of appearance employed by deconstruction may be thought more as a *taking*-away than an *adding* or giving-to. This is consistent with the name of de-construction, which embodies the paradox of *alethia* as a simultaneous un/concealment, for it aims to do two, seemingly opposite things: In it, "…at the same time, you have to follow the rule and to invent a new rule, a new norm, a new criterion, a new law."[12] Much like Husserl's *Abbau* (unbuilding encrusted "deposits" in relation to static and genetic phenomenology) and Heidegger's *Destruktion* (which follows the trajectory of un-hiding/hiding, *a-lethe*) Derrida's deconstruction is "not the mixture but the tension between memory, fidelity, the preservation of something that has been given to us, and, at the same time, heterogeneity, something absolutely new."[13] Un-building is, at the same time, the building-up of something else. Uncovering is a simultaneous covering. Similarly, deconstruction is not that which banally tears down old concepts, but rather, is marked by the effort to honor those concepts by extending them through new means of their being thought in a differing context.

[12] Jacques Derrida, "A Conversation with Jacques Derrida" in *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, ed. John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p. 6. See also Derrida's "The Force of Law," wherein the distinction is made between "law" and "justice." Derrida insists that "we might say it is legal, that it conforms to law, and perhaps, by metaphor, that it is just, but we would be wrong to say that the decision was just." He goes on to claim that "…there is never a moment that we can say *in the present* that a decision *is* just…" Jacques Derrida, "The Force of Law: 'The Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice,* trans. Mary Quaintance, ed. Drucilla Cornell et al. (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 23.

[13] And he continues: "The paradox in the instituting moment of an institution is that, at the same time that it starts something new, it also continues something, is true to the memory of the past, to a heritage, to something we receive from the past, from our predecessors, from the culture." Jacques Derrida, "A Conversation with Jacques Derrida" in *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, ed. John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p. 6.

The “de” in “de-construction” is the negation or unfolding of an already completed piece of work or writing. It can be likened unto de-negation, the “de” of which works as a double negative: not as a negation of a construction, but *a negation of something already having been negated*, and therefore affirmed. Following Nietzsche, Derrida has a rich understanding of affirmation in these regards, which was addressed in Chap. 5 regarding “indecision,” and the active passion of “letting something be” in the tragic affirmation of *amor fati*; an affirmation of that which might be “to come.”

The concept of negativity is at the root of how Derrida comes to consider negative theology or apophaticism, which is co-extensive with the positive (and affirmative) predication of theological statements. The negative is the beginning of negative theology, not simply its goal, as God is even the “origin of this work of the negative.”[14] That is to say, the impetus of negativity, of negation, which entails its own negation as denegation, is neither a method nor an approach that seeks God, so much as it begins *in* God, as the negation of God’s self as God. The “cause” (although this word must be taken with upmost caution) of that which appears does not come in a straightforward appearance as such, as a “being” in the empty “field” of experience, or as one imposed onto the background of empty space. Affirmation can only appear as the negation of negation, only after, via negation, one has gone through the troubles and efforts of negating. It is by way of this denegation or affirmation that the gift can give, as impossible.

7.2 The Gift and the “Before” of Being

Yet how, precisely, does one relate with the impossible, if at all? The impossible is related with as an unspeakable, as that about which one should avoid speaking, as the title of the essay suggests. Yet in desiring and attempting not to speak, one always comes up short. That which is unspeakable cannot be expressed (*arrhiton*), yet its inexpressibility is dynamically “interwoven” (*sympeplektaz*) with the expressible.[15] Again, it is not so much the extremity or polarity of being and nothing that is of interest to Derrida, nor is it their attempted mediation (as in phenomenology, which attempts to bring things to immediacy, presence, or appearance). It is not so much Marion’s “God” without, beyond, or *sans* being/nothing that is of interest here, but rather, that which is *the*-beyonding-of-being. What is this “beyond being,” and how does one speak of it without falling back into metaphysics? Is there some-

[14] For Derrida “God is not merely the end, but the origin of this work of the negative.” Jacques Derrida, “How to avoid Speaking: Denials,” in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II*. eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 146. Further, “God is not simply his place, not even in his most holy of places. He is not and he has no place, he does not take place *[n’a pas lieu],* or rather he is and has/takes place *[a lieu]* but without being and without place, without being his place.” Ibid., p. 163.

[15] Ibid., p. 162.

thing that comes *before* the presumably basic distinction between being and nothing?

There is no "before" to which one might refer without reverting to a hidden *eidos* or essence, or without falling back into metaphysics. Thus, *différance* and *trace* are coined as non-metaphysical terms that can be the vehicles for going beyond phenomenological "intention" or "meaning to say" (and desire to some degree) in presence or in the context of being.[16] These concepts are before "the before;" before anything thought in terms of being *and* non-being so that they do not conceive of the "hyperessentiality" of being, or of God beyond being. The name "God" cannot be registered according to what one thinks to be unknowable. As unknowable, even the referent "God" cannot make sense. Further, God is without-being-*in* place, and unidentifiable with *a* place. One traditionally understands Being in its ontological category as identifiable with placeness, of taking up space. This is one reason as to why Heidegger critiques the Cartesian understanding of space as "extension" (*extensio, Ausdehnung*), expansion or stretching, (the root "*dehn*" of which marks the "lengthening" or stretching of space), which leaves "Being" like any other beings. Being is not *a* being, however. This is exemplified by the fact that, as Derrida recognizes, even when Being is not *written* it is still present. There is no way of getting away from it, and even if negated, Being would be "appearing without appearing."[17] This Being is a nothing that *is*.

Derrida comes to conceive of a space that is identifiable with the beyond of both being and nothing, both affirmation and negation, and this lack of space marks the without/sans/beyond being. Such a concept of Being, which derives its notion from presence, or from "capable of being presented in space," is an allusion to Derrida's own *Given Time* wherein he accepts, then deconstructs Heidegger's claim in *Being and Time* that identifies the fundamental, ontological relation between being and time to the point of their near dissolution into one another. *Given time* accepts that Being *as time* is first of all *given* in an inexpressible way beyond, to a certain and limited degree, what is, and what is not. Yet the original content of "beyond being," or transcendence of *Dasein,* cannot be elaborated or expressed, although its non-expressability is part and parcel of expression. Thus, one is led back into the

[16] "What "différance," "trace," and so on, "mean-to-say"—which consequently *does not mean to say any-thing—would* be "something" "before" the concept, the name, the word, that would be nothing, that would no longer pertain to being, to presence or to the presence of the present, or even to absence, and even less to some hyperessentiality. Yet the ontotheological reappropriation always remains possible—and doubtless *inevitable* insofar as one is speaking, precisely, in the element of ontotheological logic and grammar. One can always say: hyperessentiality is exactly that, a supreme being that remains incommensurable with the being of all that is, that *is* nothing, neither present nor absent, and so on. If in fact the movement of this reappropriation appears irrepressible, its ultimate failure is no less necessary. But I concede that this question remains at the heart of a thinking of différance or of a writing of writing." Ibid., p. 148.

[17] In interpreting Heidegger, Derrida asserts that "it [Being] should always have been written *under erasure.*" Being comes before negation, and there is "nothing negative about it!" Ibid., p. 148.

question: How to avoid speaking [of Being]?[18] It is possible to *speak-about*, speak around, or implicitly mention a word, thought, or concept without *using* that word or expressing it, yet there are indeed consequences for avoiding direct expression.[19] There are consequences of both the “avoidance” of Being, and the speaking of Being.

However, the concepts of Being and time, according to Derrida, get *displaced* or removed from their usual status with a very slight change of indicator, and this provides occasion for thought: “*Es gibt die Zeit, es gibt das Sein.*” (“It gives time, it gives Being.”).[20] It is such a displacement or deformalization of these concept that draws attention to them in a new way. The authority they held as proper concepts for ontology is vacated, and as displaced, they have left their proper place. Obviously, the gift has something to do with the “how” structure of these concepts, and it is the deconstruction of Being that initiates the gift’s being thought. The gift gives best – though it is, as mentioned, impossible – when it gives a sort of displacement; first a displacement of itself, and second, of that which it gives, not *in* a particular moment in time, but *in spite of* time. This recalls what was found in Derrida’s conception of the gift in Chap. 6, namely, that the gift “happens” outside of time, and is therefore a potential disruptor of time itself.

The great displacer of Being, the way in which it gets dis-placed is indeed “the gift.” “The gift” and its variations (*Gabe*, *Geben*, *es Gibt*), says Derrida, “progressively and profoundly displace the question of Being and the transcendental horizon that belonged to it in *Sein and Zeit*, that of time, or even what is sometimes translated, so problematically, by event, *Ereignis*.”[21] In one sense the gift plays the role of being the displacer, of relocating or resituating these concepts in a way that turns and draws attention to them in a new way (recall: “leaving something to later be thought”). They are left somewhere else. Yet in another sense, the gift is what comes *in lieu* of Being, as a re-placement for it and its active role and status. In the movement of displacing Being, time, and event, “the gift” claims the status of a new “first”, “before,” or “beyond,” not as a static replacement, but as a dynamic and active *displacement* that deformalizes that which has been economized. The gift makes the concepts strange to us, draws attention to them, but without the gift’s being known, recognized, or cognized by us.

Derrida appears to have initiated (or at least, anticipated) this role of the gift in one of his earliest texts, the *Origin of Geometry*, wherein he begins the deconstruction of phenomenology’s particular sorts of reliance upon Being. In the final pages of this book, Derrida suggests that “Being itself must always already be given to

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[18] “Being is a perennial topic in this essay: “I will limit myself to the question that my title imposes: How to avoid speaking? Or more precisely: How to avoid speaking *of Being*?” Ibid., p. 188.

[19] Ibid., 188.

[20] Martin Heidegger, “Zeit und Sein,” in *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer, 1969), p. 25.

[21] Jacques Derrida, “How to avoid Speaking: Denials,” in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II*. eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 188.

thinking, in the presumption – which is also a resumption – of Method."[22] The taking up or active selection of a method (i.e., phenomenology) also entails that "Being" is found or "already given" to thought (*donné a penser*). Or, as he mentions in *Glas*, the gift must even comes or *gives* "before everything." Thus, he claims, "the philosopher" must distinguish between "the irruptive event of the gift" and "what is currently designated under this word."[23] This "eventual," more "pure gift" must be conceptualized "before every determinable being" and further, even "before everything."[24] To conjure Husserl here, there is a sense of an originary "pre-givenness" of content to intuition, yet Derrida privileges any pure, eventual, irruptive event of the gift in a different sense by assigning it the role of disrupting *even* the raw "data" that is pre-given to intuition. Even the conceptualization of the gift, which by the nature of one's necessarily "needing to speak," is disrupted by the gift. The concept of the gift cannot contain the gift as such. The "place," of its displacement, the place gift gets placed-in is what Derrida names according to his reinterpretation of the Greek concept of *khora*.

7.3 Gift and *Khora*: Taking Is Giving

All that might be said about any kind of "before" *after* metaphysics, is that it marks an empty lacuna. There is nothing that otherwise can be said of it. Derrida reaches this result after having first arrived at the conclusion that negative theology fails in its potential to "defer infinitely," in part for its insistence on "unnaming," which indeed distinguishes that which is or is not appropriate in regard to speech (about God). Instead of infinite deferral, this static unnaming effectively becomes, (absent of deliberate choice and by way of implication) the new "name" of God.[25] There is no "absolutely negative discourse," for *logos* (as word) entails the speaking of something or of the attributes of someone.[26] Thus, deconstruction is not to be aligned with negative theology, which doesn't acknowledge its "predicates," but with *Khora*,

[22] Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's "Origin of Geometry": An Introduction,* John P. Leavey and David B. Allison (Stony Brook, NY: Hays, 1978), p. 152. For Kevin Hart, this reference in *Origin of Geometry* "anticipates a thinking of the gift and in particular the impossibility of giving in the present…" See also Kevin Hart, "Review of *The Gift of Death*", in *Modern Theology* 12: 4 (1996): 495–96.

[23] Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans John P. Leavey and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska press, 1990), p. 242.

[24] Ibid., p. 242–243.

[25] For a concise summary of Derrida's "How to Avoid Speaking" see Christina Gschwandtner, *Postmodern Apologetics?: Arguments for God in Contemporary Culture* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2012), p. 62. For her, the "unnaming" ultimately "names" the divine by "marking distinctions between appropriate and inappropriate speech."

[26] Jacques Derrida, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold G Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 103.

a concept of placeless emptiness that better serves to "protect" the unnamable name (*Sauf le nom*) of God. *Khora*, Derrida ultimately concludes, is more true to undecidability, for even praise is predicative in its conception of that which it is praising. This is taken to be a direct challenge to Marion's *God without Being*, wherein he suggests that praise is, in fact *non-predicative* for the name of God is that which *calls us* and therefore surpasses signification (and is thus *hors-texte* as the subtitle of *God without Being* subtly suggests).[27] Yet for Derrida, there is no praise empty of signification that can be directed at nothing. Praise makes decisions in terms of its object or person of praise, and thus "God without Being" is a God still intended, expressed, defined, and *desired*. This is, in part, because "Being" still marks a kind of territory. "Being" has a transcendental horizon or hidden, temporal dimension – time, which ultimately corresponds to Being via "presence." Being's revealing itself (*Offenbarkeit*, as distinguished by Heidegger from theological revelation, *Offenbarung*) can be thought at the point at which it slips or transitions into "beings" according to the placeless place or *Khora*. One might interpret Derrida to be employing *Khora* as a heuristic device for deconstruction to act as a praise of the endless stream of predicates.[28]

Derrida's refashioning of the *Khora* (from *kharismos*) originates in his treatment of Heidegger's interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus* both in "How to Avoid Speaking" and in "*Khora*" in *On the Name*.[29] In the former, *Khora* is used to mark the slippage, placelessness, and space between "beings and Being." *Khora* cannot be located, yet it is named "the" place.[30] In the latter essay, *Khora* is more generally presented as

[27] "As Jean-Luc Marion rightly remarks, praise is 'neither true nor false, nor even contradictory,' although it says something *about* thearchy, about the Good and about analogy; and if its attributions or namings do not belong to the ordinary value of truth, but rather to a supertruth ruled by superessentiality, praise nonetheless does not merge with the movement of prayer itself, which does not speak *about* but *to.* Even if this address is immediately determined by the discourse of praise and if the prayer addresses itself to God by speaking (to him) about him, the apostrophe of prayer and the determination of praise are not the same but two different structures: 'Trinity!! Higher than any being, any divinity. . . . Guide of Christians in the wisdom of heaven!'" Jacques Derrida, "How to avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II*. eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 177.

[28] Ibid., p. 179. Indeed, this is because "a predicate can always conceal another predicate, or even the nakedness of an absence of predicate, the way the veil of a garment – sometimes indispensable – may both dissimulate and make visible the very thing that it dissimulates – and render it attractive at the same time. Hence the voice of an utterance can conceal another, which it then appears to quote without quoting it, presenting itself as another form, namely, as a quotation of the other."

[29] Jacques Derrida, "*Khôra*" in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 126. See also p. 95.

[30] There is not space to fully elaborate upon this here, but Derrida draws his conception of *Khora* from Heidegger and Plato: "Heidegger immediately specifies that Plato could not elaborate the original content of *epekeina tes ousias* as the transcendence of *Dasein* ('der ursprtingliche Gehalt des *epekeina* als Transzendenz des Daseins'). He makes an analogous gesture with regard to the *khdra:* in the *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, a brief parenthesis suggests that Plato fell short of thinking the place *(Ort),* a thinking that nonetheless suggested itself to him. Plato would, in truth, have only prepared *(vorbereitet)* the way for the Cartesian interpretation of space as *extensio*

the opening, closing, and displacing of any and all categories. In this sense, it is a concept that was already employed by Socrates, who "operates from a sort of non-place."[31] But as a non-place it is not to be conceived as "negative." Since there cannot be an absolutely negative discourse, *Khora* does not directly refer to an empty space within signification as it is "nothing positive or negative."[32] Yet it does have a sense of emptiness as "impassive" which is not to be confused with "passivity."

An overarching interpretation of both of these passages is that even transcendence or absolute otherness cannot capture the essence of *Khora*, for these terms are still metaphysical and seemingly otherworldly. *Khora* is beyond the rational and empirical and "belongs neither to the sensible nor to the intelligible, neither to becoming nor to nonbeing."[33] It is temporally and spatially beyond and prior to any dialectical distinctions, namely, between that which is and that which is not. One could call it inconspicuous or inapparent (*Unscheinbar*) in its not appearing in any straightforward way. As such, in the background of Derrida's concerns for phenomenology is that it's practitioners still presuppose one thing: a kind of dialectic between that which appears, and that which does not appear.[34] This is, of course, germane to the Greek word *phenomenon*, or "to make apparent," for that which

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(Ausdehnung).' Elsewhere I have tried to show what is problematic and reductive about this perspective. Seventeen years later, the last page of *Was heisst Denken?* again mentions *khdra* and *khdrismos,* without any explicit reference to the *Timaeus*. Plato, who is supposed to have given the most decisive *Deutung* for Western thought, situates the *kharismos*, the interval or separation, the spacing, between beings and Being. And yet '[*he khdra*] heisst der Ort,' '*[he khora]* is the *locus,* the site, place.' For Plato, beings and Being are thus 'differently located [*verschieden georted.*' Thus when Plato gives thought to the different location [*die verschiedene Ort*] of beings and Being, he is asking for the wholly other place *[nach dem ganz anderen Ort]* of Being, as against the place of beings." Jacques Derrida, "How to avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II*. eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 177.

[31] Jacques Derrida. "*Khôra*" in *On the Name*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 107.

[32] "The passage by way of negativity of the discourse on the *khora* is neither a last word nor a mediation in the service of a dialectic, an elevation toward a positive or true meaning, a Good or a God. It is not a matter here of negative theology; there is reference to neither an event nor a gift, nor an order, nor a promise, even if, as I have just underlined, the absence of promise or order, the barren, radically anhuman and atheological nature of this "place" obliges us to speak and to refer to it in a certain unique way, as to the wholly other that would not even be transcendent, absolutely remote, nor immanent or close." Jacques Derrida, "How to avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II*. eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 174.

[33] Ibid., p. 174.

[34] For indeed "under the name of *khora*, the place belongs neither to the sensible nor to the intelligible, neither to becoming nor to nonbeing (the *khora* is never described as a void), nor to being: according to Plato, the quantity or the quality of being are measured against its intelligibility. All the *aporias*, which Plato does not dissimulate, would signify that there *is there* [*il'y a la*] something that is neither a being nor a nothingness; something that no dialectic, participationist schema, or analogy would allow one to rearticulate with any philosopheme whatsoever: neither 'in' Plato's works nor in the history that Platonism inaugurates and dominates. The *neither-nor* can no longer be reconverted into *both-and.*" Ibid., p. 172.

appears or "shines" carries warrant (*Scheinen*) or a ticket for its own appearance. Similarly, *Phainesthai* is not simply that which appears, but that which *shows* (*Phainein*), or – in following the root *phaino* – brings itself into the light of day.[35] In Derrida's efforts to get beyond the *aporia* between the shown and the unshown, he employs *Khora*, the desert in the desert, as that which even *gives* to "impossibility" its ability to autodeconstruct itself.

Khora is the inaccessible place or non-place, the desert of thought between Being and beings. Yet one should take care so as not to reduce *Khora* to being metonymic with "givenness;" it is not "given," and stands beyond the standard modes of presentation all together. In "The passage by way of negativity of the discourse on the *khora*…there is reference to neither an event nor a gift."[36] *Khora* is not given, yet its concept is to be thought along the lines of "the trace," a trail of linguistic signs or remains that are given or "left there" to only mark what once was, not what will be. The trace promises nothing, and might be said to signal or "leave" only in order to increase, in the same moment, the frequency of anticipation for what might come.[37]

Since *Khora* is "not given," how might one begin to think the potential connection between the gift and *Khora*, two centrally important concepts in Derrida's work? This understanding of *Khora* helps illuminate further the gift as this great displacer of Being. The gift would not be that which gives or brings a phenomenon to fruition, as typically understood, but as precisely the opposite: that which *takes* from phenomenal experience, and places dimensions of that thing and its being thought in the inaccessible placeless place of *Khora*. In gift's giving, in other words, it is taking from the vast manifold of phenomenal experience and "giving," in a flourish of negation, by taking from what is "already there" – or as colloquially understood, already "given" – insofar as it "leaves something later to be found," which transcendentally "hides" in *Khora*. The work of the gift is inverted from "giving" to "taking" in order to truly give or be the gift. The operation of the gift is to be this arbiter of hiding, doing the work of withholding, performing the task of "leaving something later to be found" by displacing. This might indeed give a new meaning to the bracketing, suspending, and withholding in the phenomenological reduction – the gift, in and of itself, can give by withholding.

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[35] See here Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1967), p. 29. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Robinson and Macquarrie. (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), p. 51.

[36] Jacques Derrida, "How to avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II*. eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 174.

[37] Ibid., p. 174. Derrida continues: "To obey this injunction without order or promise, an injunction that has always already taken place, one must think that which – standing beyond all given philosophemes – will have nevertheless left a trace in language, for example, the word *khora* in the Greek language, insofar as it is caught up in the network of its usual meanings. Plato had no other. Along with the word, there are also grammatical, rhetorical, logical, and hence also philosophical possibilities. However insufficient they may be, they are given, already marked by this unheard-of trace, promised to the trace that has promised nothing."

7.4 The Gift, Negativity, and Economy

This implicates once again the question of the impossible as that which goes "beyond" the sensible. The sensible is "the economical," which is understood as the realm of thinking that belongs to the aims of phenomenology as it operates according to, and along the lines of the intentional acts of the subject. As Chap. 5 addressed, that which occurs in the domain of the known, desired, and calculable are economical in so far as they attempt to be predictable, manageable, and reciprocal. For Derrida "there is also something beyond this economical conciseness."[38] As one might observe in negative theology, for example, it claims to be attained "by passing beyond the intelligible itself, the *apophatikai theologai* aim toward absolute rarefaction, toward silent union with the ineffable."[39] The *aporia* between speaking and not speaking, the effable and the ineffable lends insight into a central "critique" of Phenomenology, which he claims is marked by the attempts to access what occurs *in* the place of consciousness – a territory or space it conceives to be temporally and ontologically prior to that point at which something is "spoken." In phenomenology, Derrida asserts, it is in consciousness that one obtains the "singular power not to *say* what one knows."[40] Phenomenology hinges on things appearing and disappearing, ideas coming in and out of one's consciousness constantly in a steady stream, but many, if not most of these things are not verbalized. This standard "cognitive model" of understanding consciousness, however, overlooks that the lack of uttering a word, of keeping silent about it, in no way precludes that word from being thought or even desired. Thoughts come in the form of words, and are therefore classifiable as forms of speaking. When one "negates" or defers, one always affirms something.

There are two different senses in which this might be understood. In one sense this avoidance of speaking is precisely an economical measure that puts an end to the infinite play of signifiers that Derrida so often celebrates. And in contradistinction from economy, the gift is associable with this infinite play of signification. In another, rather different sense, the avoidance of speaking, when taken as a form of denegation, favors not-speaking over the positive, economical claims that are known and calculated. Economy is the realm of the possible and the formal, of all things formalizable into understanding and understandable words, whereas the gift belongs to "the impossible," a register that acts *before* any distinction between sense and

[38] Ibid., p. 150. Indeed "with the ascent beyond the sensible, one gains in conciseness, for 'the more we take flight upward, the more our words are confined to the ideas we are capable of forming.'" Yet "there is also something beyond this economical conciseness. By passing beyond the intelligible itself, the *apophatikai theologai* aim toward absolute rarefaction, toward silent union with the ineffable:"

[39] Ibid., p. 150.

[40] Ibid., p. 156. Derrida then raises the question, which has definite phenomenological undertones: "And yet is any problem more novel today than that of consciousness? Here one is tempted to designate, if not to define, consciousness as that place in which is retained the singular power not to *say* what one knows, to keep a secret in the form of representation. A conscious being is a be-ing capable of lying, of not presenting in a discourse what it nonetheless has an articulated representation of: a being that can avoid speaking."

nonsense. Deconstruction can be thought as effort of allowing nothing to become economically formalized; yet it is simultaneously the inspiration behind one's choosing to "give economy a chance." A similar concern for the aneconomical nature of the gift, and its relation with negativity was prefigured in the early, rich essay "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve" in *Writing and Difference*. There, Derrida carefully deconstructs Bataille's concepts of economy in order to begin fashioning his own concept. In Bataille's reading of the case of the Servant and the Lord (i.e., the master/slave dialectic), he concludes that the dialectic must proceed by way of an ultimately negating act wherein one takes the ultimate risk through a radical leap into the abyss.[41] This is the only way in which economy can be subverted.

Bataille observed that the Potlatch festivals of Native American communities in the Pacific Northwest embodied what he called "general economy." Distinct from Mauss' "gift economy," Bataille's "general economy" is not simply a concept that applies to *communities* wherein gifts are given, but one wherein gifts are given in such a way that the individual giver "gives it all away," in the sense that gifts are excessive and perhaps even "wasteful" to the point of one's taking extreme risks to give. This is likely one reason as to why Bataille took a studied interest in the Aztec people who gave-up their bodies at the pyramids of sacrifice through what he deemed to be the best, most pure act of general economy, wherein "everything is put at stake." The inverse of the general economy is Bataille's "restricted economy," which is exemplified in the monetary interests of the modern West, the member states of which have sought to secure systems that ensure that any trade of one thing of value entails the return of another thing of equal value. In other words, for all that one spends, there needs to be an equal pay in return. As the dialectical opposite of general economies, restricted economies do not allow any waste, lines of flight, or points of excess.

Derrida's language and conception of "economy" originates here in his unfolding of what he takes to be the weaker aspects of Bataille's understanding of general economy, which are that one cannot fully experience any kind of "resolution" the Hegelian dialectic has to offer. Any economy of ultimate, Dionysian risk is one wherein the negativity also gets negated, thus never moving along in the dialectic, the ultimate aims of which are a return to self-consciousness, and ultimately, absolute knowledge. Bataille's general economy, while it is intended to act as a corrective to restricted economy, can only end in negation. Although this may be more revelatory of Derrida's reading of Hegel than that of Bataille, Derrida's concern for the theory of general economy is that if one gives an excessive gift, for example, if one makes a sacrifice of oneself by jumping into the volcano for religious reasons, nothing is actually given. Bataille's exposition of economy fails because it ends in *absolute* negativity. Put otherwise, if the excessive gift of Bataille's general economy only remains in negativity, then it ends in Hegel's absolute negativity of death,

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[41] For Hegel, the master/slave dialectic ultimately results in giving the slave freedom through self-awareness as a subject. And since the end point or aim of the overall dialectic is "absolute knowledge" and absolute self-consciousness, there is a sense in which it is better to be a slave, for Hegel.

and in "*abstract negativity*:" for "To rush headlong into death…one risks losing the effect and profit of meaning which were the very stakes one hoped to win."[42] Thus, Bataille's excessive gift cannot complete the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, which demands not just a letting go, but also a "taking up;" a simultaneous giving *and* taking that is irreducible to "economy" for Derrida. Bataille's excessive gift "…can only utilize the *empty* form of the *Aufhebung*…" and thus "…Bataille is even less Hegelian than he thinks."[43] This is why even the most excessive of gifts, namely, those of sacrifice, are doomed to fail.

The gift must resist economy and absolute negation so that the supposed "giver" experiences and "takes up" the loss of that which was given. In this early essay Derrida begins to formulate the idea that *writing is* capable of breaking economical conciseness, and by reading this back into "How to Avoid Speaking", deconstructive writing eventually becomes a way of letting the text "speak" (re: the title of the essay) by way of the expression of writing. Further, the disappointment with the insufficiencies of Bataille's conception of the two types of economy leads to a retooling of Heidegger's thinking on the *es gibt* as a way of exposing the incommensurabilities of any and all economies, most especially any hopeful expression of a reliable, general economy. Even an excessive gift that goes "all the way" to the point of sacrificing and thereby negating oneself, cannot be a gift as such. The gift, which is enacted in the infinite play of signifiers, and is ontologically prior to the distinction between sense and nonsense, must be radically aneconomical.

7.5 The Anarchy of the Gift: Gift and Deconstruction

Despite managing to avoid speaking directly about the gift in "How to avoid speaking," an inconspicuous footnote of Derrida's bears testimony that "aneconomy or anarchy of the gift… has occupied me elsewhere for a long time."[44] This occupation allows one to exfoliate additional ways of understanding Derrida's concept of the gift. When taken in the context of denegation, for example, the refusal of the gift's coming into phenomenal appearance has an affirmative function. This refusal must be taken as a creative, linguistic rejection that, like denegation, does not signal simply to its importance, but most importantly becomes the mode of appearance of the gift: the gift appears and acts inconspicuously as it is affirmed via the negation of negation. Yet an act of negation, in and of itself, despite its commonly appearing or

[42] Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy" in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978.), p. 255. See also Omid Nodoushani, "A Postmodern Theory of General Economy: The contribution of Georges Bataille", in *Culture and Organization* 5:2 (1999): 331–345.

[43] Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy" in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978.), p. 275.

[44] Jacques Derrida, "How to avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II*. eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 308, note 8.

"being given," is not enough for a gift *as such* to occur. Even an act of physical self sacrifice, is not necessarily a gift. This is a result of the radically aneconomical nature of the gift (which cannot be understated), and its association with the infinite play of signification. As such, the gift acts as a dissociator of meaning and sense, and even the dis-placer of being and time. Displacing can be thought as a form of taking and withholding (recall here the practice of "bracketing" in the reduction), and in the context of *Khora*, gift operates somewhere in the "placeless place" or "desert in the desert."

One must wonder, however, as to why Derrida ever involves himself in thinking about "the gift." First, it was for the sake of deconstruction, the motifs of which he began fashioning prior to any direct attention to the topic of the gift. Eventually, the gift ultimately becomes aligned with the work of deconstruction as a force within it for disrupting the economic circle of things, namely by removing the deposits that have so encrusted "Being," and by revealing the unplumbed weaknesses of restricted economies. The gift is not simply a topic of concern, or concept to which deconstruction is *applied*, but is a valuable "tool" within deconstruction itself. The gift appears to become the driving force of deconstruction in its propagation of *différance*, in both its giving in/to, and limitation of phenomenal experience. The gift's rejection of its status as a phenomenon, the gift's possibility as impossibility, and the gift's limitation as unlimited all demarcate the many paradoxes that not only *give rise to thought and speech*, but also limit and take thought and speech away.

Another reason for his theoretical engagements with the gift is that he knows it to be a linchpin concept for phenomenology, which is the study of the means of appearance, sending, or givenness within conscious experience. Thus, any theoretical examination into the gift, namely, the dismissal of "the gift" as a phenomenal possibility, carries with it consequences for phenomenology and its own possibilities as a method. As it will become clearer in the following chapters, Derrida's interest in showing that the gift cannot appear phenomenally indicates a sustained attention to what he conceived to be the yet explored insufficiencies and limitations of phenomenology to attend to the gift, and allow for its appearance. The gift is a phenomenon that denies its status as a phenomenon, and this is why phenomenology, which relies so heavily on its study of that which is given, appearing, or showing, is in fact quite limited, most especially in its ability to be concerned about phenomena that deny their status as phenomena, such as the gift: "What I was interested in with this problem of the gift, among other things, was precisely to check the limits and possibility of phenomenology."[45] Phenomenology, in its giving itself the status of "first philosophy," attempted to place itself beyond reproach and outside the realm of being assessed from the outside. Thus, deconstruction is employed to check, test, and address the blind spots of phenomenology, not in order to criticize it, *per se*, but "to find within phenomenology the injunction to go beyond phenomenology."[46] The wager Derrida makes is that phenomenology has something

[45] Jacques Derrida, *God, The Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Indianapolis IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 71

[46] Ibid., p. 75

waiting within it that is profound: As a study of the appearance of "phenomena" it is capable (with the help of deconstruction, of course) of reaching the state of naïvete in consciousness it purports to champion. Derrida employs the deconstruction of the gift in part in order to reevaluate phenomenology's values.

Thirdly, Derrida's interest in the gift is also for the sake of reimaging time, an issue that takes on various forms and manifestations of thought throughout his œuvre. The issue of time became a topic of special interest in his turn to the "Messianic" in his 1980 *Specters of Marx*, where he demanded that we have implicit relations with a figure not unlike the Lacanian "Big Other:" a "Messiah," one who will never come (in time), and must always and only be to-come. Here the unfolding of the relationship between time and signification leads to his reappropriation of Hamlet's claim that time is "out of joint," a claim that is directed at how time is to be thought *in toto*. Time is "always" (that is to say, infinitely and without end) out of joint, and lends to unknown possibilities, and there is a certain *contretempts* or "counter" linear time, which horrifically breaks into any present, always already *given* moment. Deconstruction receives its movement and motivation from the pressing suspicion that things are not as they seem; that something, in that particular moment, is strange or out of place. This is consistent with his understand of time in *Given Time*, wherein he imagines the gift specifically as something that cannot appear in the present, and as a result of its being hoped-for. The gift stands outside of time, and is even the "giver of time," yet much like the Messianic promise, the gift will always remain to-come. Time is *given* out of joint and its strangeness is given to standing out. This standing-out is unpredictable and disjunctive.

It is also likely that Derrida has interest in the gift for it carries vast import into themes germane to the deconstruction of the practical/theoretical distinction. How one understands justice, for example, implements a preunderstanding of what it means to give and receive: The "'idea of justice' seems [works/has appearance] in its demand of gift without exchange, without circulation, without recognition of gratitude, without economic circularity, without calculation and without rules, without reason and without rationality."[47] The concepts of gift and justice are both named "undeconstructible" and "impossible," and are interlaced within one another, as the gift demands an aneconomic justice, the fairness of which are impossible. The gift and justice also naturally interlace with the theme of "hospitality," which is a form of giving-welcome to the other without any expectation of a return.[48] In taking Lévinasian ethics to its limit, Derrida demands that one *cannot be infinitely indebted* to the other, for this would nullify the hospitable act, which as a gift, must be antithetical to conditions of "debt." Instead, one must be hospitable in a way that eludes

[47] Jacques Derrida, "The Force of Law: 'The Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Drucilla Cornell et al., (New York, Routledge, 1992), p. 25 & pp. 68–91.

[48] And similarly, in the *Gift of Death*, Derrida recalls Kierkegaard's interpretation of the Story of Abraham and Isaac, and contends that "[Responsibility] requires one to respond as oneself and as an irreplaceable singularity, to answer for what one does, says, gives; but it also requires that, being good and through goodness, one forget or efface the origin of what one gives." Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 51.

these preconditions. However, this is impossible for the moment an act is named "hospitable," it loses its status as such.[49] These interests in hospitality, justice, and the gift all culminate in Derrida's turn to ethics, the result of which is not a banal deconstruction of the possibility of ethics, but an examination of how ethics are given and temporally developed. *The Gift of Death* – a collection of papers that began with the title the "gift of ethics" – examines the essential signifiers between these terms "gift" and "death," and concludes that a true gift must be non-obligatory and can only be properly "received" when it is in the form of sacrifice as a "gift of death," which is a radical finitude.[50] To give a gift, one must eventually sacrifice *oneself* (one's subjectivity and selfhood) yet in a way that does not end in ultimate negativity. One must actively "forget" and displace one's subjective desires, and this begins in an experience of an effortful "deciding" upon the impossible as such, the great *mysterium tremendum*. Such a sacrifice is the attempt to responsibly make a gift *of* death, but one that "must not only forget itself but whose source remains inaccessible to the donee."[51] That is, the recipient of the gift cannot properly know the source of the gift, otherwise it prompts a conscious response from the recipient.

Thus, the gift holds not only theoretical potential for deconstruction in its appropriations of phenomenology, but also the possibility for dismantling the distinction between the theoretical and the practical. What begins as a deconstruction of the gift ends with the determination that there is no gift *as such* that is capable of being deconstructed, for its status as *aporetic* makes it no longer deconstructible. All of this, however, is not to discount the fact that the gift is still always already "at work within the work," perhaps not as passively "hidden" (*Verbergung*) but as that which actively "hides" (*Verborgenheit*) or displaces, simultaneously, that which it gives. In this sense, the gift may also work within deconstruction as it seeks to radicalize the phenomenological *epoché* as a form of "withholding," a taking that gives, namely, by "leaving something later to be found."

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[49] The influence Lévinas has had on Derrida is immense, most especially in Derrida's early writings that concern "the Other," and the impossibility of presence, yet also in his later writings, where he turns to the Lévinas of Judaism and "the promise" in order to initiate the so-called "return" to religion.

[50] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). *The Gift of Death* was originally entitled "the Ethics of the Gift," and was presented at a conference in Royaumont France in December 1990, prior to its publication in French as *L'éthique du don: Jacques Derrida et la pensée du don: colloque de Royaumont* (Paris: Metailié, 1992).

[51] Ibid., p. 41. Here Derrida reads Heidegger and Lévinas in order to arrive at the conclusion that the gift of self-sacrifice can lead to self-recognition or "individuality," yet one must keep in mind Derrida's concerns for Bataille's theory of absolute "negativity."

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Part III
Before Marion's Phenomenology, After Derrida's Deconstruction

Chapter 8
Four Tensions Between Marion and Derrida: Very Close and Extremely Distant

Abstract This chapter takes many of the findings from previous chapters concerning Marion and Derrida's respective positions on the gift and desire, and demonstrates the stark differences between the two thinkers according to four aspects: anti-subjectivity/the *adonné*, possibility/impossibility, the gift/givenness, and narcissism/love. It also turns to Marion's and Derrida's 1997 roundtable discussion on "On the Gift" in order to provide further insight into this juxtaposition. Although Derrida is correct to reject the modern *ego*, Marion is convinced that something must stand "in its place." Yet Derrida claims that Marion's phenomenology privileges the "possible," which is an economical concept that inhibits the arrival of the gift despite any intentional effort to bring it about. Thirdly, while Derrida conceives of the gift in an *aporetic* relationship with economy and its possibilities, Marion demotes economy to the primacy of givenness. Then, although Marion conceives of love according to its being a gift *par excellence*, Derrida insists that love is inherently "narcissistic" because it involves an appropriation of the other for the sake of one's own desires or inherently economical interests. Does Marion's theory of givenness rely upon a "cosmic giver," despite his insistence upon the unexpected appearance of things in their supra-subjective state? Are there temporal vicissitudes that mark an inherent rupture in the steady constitution of the gift, and if so, should the gift be thought according to the register of "impossibility" or of "givenness"?

> *If I try to study love… purely from inner observation, I will find very little to describe: a few pangs, a few heart throbs – in short, trite agitations which do not reveal the essence of love. We must reject the prejudice which makes "inner realities" out of love…leaving [it] accessible to one single witness: the person who feels. Anger…and love are not psychic facts hidden at the bottom of another's consciousness: they are types of behavior or styles of conduct which are visible from the outside. They exist on this face or in those gestures, not hidden behind them. -Maurice Merleau-Ponty*[1]

"Essence is not the end, but a means[;] our effective involvement in the world is precisely what has to be understood."[2] The effective involvement to which Merleau-

[1] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 52.

[2] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings,* ed. Thomas Baldwin (New York: Routledge Press, 2004), p 71.

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Ponty refers is the intended result, or product of one's desire that one has in the world, and indeed must interpret. It is possible to track this involvement by interpreting one's relation with what one supposes to be an "essence." Essence is not a transcendental, universal category, but a kind of idol or *eidolon*; a reflective screen upon which one might see (*idein*) one's *idea* projected. One therefore takes "essence" as a "means" of self-disclosure and as a tool for appropriately describing one's complex, complete, and indicative "involvement" in the world, which returns one to how and in what way one's involvement is indeed "effective." Effectiveness refers to the desires behind specific ways of relating with and in the world, to particular interests one has in one's own activity, and the full spectrum of what such involvement might entail. How far might desired outcomes or "effectiveness" lead one to receive what is or might be given in accord with one's interpretation of the world? And to what degree do these desires to interpret given "essences" of involvement ultimately "give" or show something *beyond* such involvement, something new? If the relation is with merely the *linguistic* meaning of "essence," as only a mirror of the subject, then one indeed has no direct access to that which one wishes to interpret or understand.

Strangely similar to those of the Vienna Circle, who staked their philosophical claim upon the necessity of seeing how we relate with only linguistic "meanings," Derrida inspires a turn to the grammatical structure upon which phenomenal experience is claimed to be based. However, Marion still follows the Husserlian "idealism" that one can enjoy a direct relation with the world through the appearance or givenness of things to one's unmediated consciousness, and that one can grasp what is "designated" therein primarily upon sense experience, not linguistic or grammatical differentiation. In order to discover and interact in new ways with that which is given, and to receive the previously "unseen," Phenomenology must be more than a hermeneutically *interpretive* endeavor. As Marion conceives of it in *Certitudes négatives*, phenomenology once again receives its force by virtue of the "excess" of the "evidence" of (saturated) phenomena that allows for the experiences of new discoveries.[3] But for Marion, and in a way distinct from Husserl, it is not *only* the case that one experiences oneself first and foremost *before* phenomena, for in fact the subject (and its desire) inhibits the generosity of things in and of themselves that constitute oneself. It is not enough to do as Husserl did, and to suture every reduction to a turn to a self-reflected interpretation of that which appears and the way one originally expected or even desired it to appear. While Husserl may be willing to submit everything that appears in conscious experience to a comparison between it and the stakes one has in a thing's appearance, Marion is less optimistic about the possibility of a thing giving itself in and of itself even if one is in persistent communion with this mirror of reflection. One thing seems to be clear for Marion:

[3] See here Christina Gschwandtner's *Degrees of Givenness: On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014, p. 23) for a helpful translation: "This enlargement here does not simply consist in a hermeneutics of already visible and received phenomena (moving them from objectivity to eventness), but in *discovering* saturated phenomena so far misunderstood by virtue of the very excess of their evidence." See Jean-Luc Marion, *Certitudes négatives* (Paris: Grasset, 2010), p. 313.

Interest determines one's relation with the limits of the appearances of that which is or is not given. If that given thing is to appear in a full spectrum of variation, then desire and the particular appearance in which one has an invested *involvement* must be overwhelmed absolutely by that which is given. The question then becomes, for Marion and Derrida alike, how that which is given to consciousness gives without one's desire being consumed by a total knowledge, volition, or involvement that prohibits the generosity of things.

For Derrida the answer is *differánce*, and for Marion, givenness. It is no coincidence that Marion's response to Derrida's claim that there can be no such thing as "the gift" in phenomenal appearance, involves that claim's precise reversal: Everything is *given*, and "the gift" even has its own register, which Marion names "givenness." The gift and givenness are distinct concepts for Marion as "the gift comes about as a given, thus from and within givenness."[4] Thus, in *Being Given* Marion takes up the singular challenge to explore precisely *how* "what shows itself first gives itself – this is my one and only theme."[5] Yet in another sense, Marion takes up where Derrida left off, namely, with the intended eradication of the Husserlian "transcendental I" upon whom the (still too Cartesian) reductions are foundationally based. The first step Marion makes in rejecting this "I" comes in the distinction between "intuition" and the function of "givenness." Husserlian intuition fails to allow phenomena to appear in and of themselves, of being generous, and thus only can lead to the appearance of things a posteriori.[6] The Husserlian maintenance of the gap between essence and existence places too much responsibility upon a "subject"; that it play the role of revealing the function of an object and that it have the potential to do so. Yet it is not tenable to accept prima facie that a subject is capable of doing so without reliance upon a metaphysical, infinite resource that stands outside of the subject. For Derrida and Marion, the traditional "subject," whose desires can stand in the way of that which is given, must be deconstructed precisely for the sake of one's remaining unknown even to oneself. Man is incomprehensible.[7]

Instead of conceding to the view of a subject who is directed at the *eidos* of objects and resultantly has those things *given* to it, Derrida follows in the Nietzschean legacy of rejecting the *eidos* and the possibility of "truth" appearing as a result of its being desired. Desire, as a kind of product of *affirmation*, is the creative development of truth via the "will to power." Derrida turns this Nietzschean concern to Husserlian phenomenology, and rejects the notion of temporally persisting, presentable truths (following, the false equation between truth and "knowledge"), as well as any possibility of an invisible yet driving *eidos* or essence to be "given" that can open onto ways of accessing or stabilizing a "present." Indeed, for Derrida the gift is "the impossible," particularly, as impossible-to-enter time in the present. Further, "generosity" as the "desire to give" is prohibited on the grounds of its being

[4] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness,* trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 130.

[5] Ibid., p. 5.

[6] Ibid., p. 73.

[7] See here Jean-Luc Marion, *Certitudes négatives* (Paris: Grasset, 2010), p. 82.

sutured to the economically structured means of relation that are based upon the past: desire, knowledge, and projection. Love, like desire, is likewise an economically limited concept, and therefore not capable of bringing the gift to appearance. Marion recognizes, however, that if desire is disregarded as a philosophically salient means of accessing things, appearances, and "the gift," then love cannot be associated with the gift.[8] Even in Marion's earlier works (e.g. *God without Being*) love is intimately associated with the gift, namely, as an archetype or gift *par excellence*: "What is it to give itself, if not to love?"[9] Indeed, Marion's reconstruction of Husserlian "givenness" is not about defending only the namesake of phenomenology, but also that of love, which he names the very "call" of givenness. Phenomenology is rethought according to the reduction to givenness, and as described in *The Erotic Phenomenon*, all philosophy, in general, is in every case "motivated" by this call of love.

This chapter synthesizes a number of findings from previous chapters alongside a treatment of Marion's and Derrida's 1997 roundtable discussion "On the Gift," and juxtaposes the two thinkers according to the four themes of subjectivity, possibility/impossibility, the gift/givenness, and love/desire. These themes are not simply for the sake of debating whether or not a "gift" is possible, but also to what degree phenomenology, as the supposed study of the appearance of "givens," can be a viable approach to things in their most pure states. Ultimately, Marion recognizes the weight of the critiques of love and the gift, and fashions a response to Derrida by addressing the given (the *adonné*), the gift (reduced to givenness), love (in/as desire), and the impossible. From his decades of work on the topics of the gift and love, to his development of the folded concept of "Saturated Phenomena," Marion undertakes a carefully constructed response to Derrida's concerns about phenomenology and the gift. Since their debate and subsequent interactions on the topic of the gift, Marion believes he has effectively overcome those critiques with sufficient accuracy and holds that phenomenology can, in fact, go beyond deconstruction, leading him even to conclude that Derrida "…was not deconstructionist enough."[10] If deconstruction can be absorbed into Marion's redux version of phenomenology, and if phenomenology can stave off Derrida's concerns of origin, presence, desire, and the gift, then phenomenology can be more than an interpretive endeavor, and can even allow for particular kinds of knowledge, via "negative certainties," that go beyond the more pessismistic, anti-realist, nominalist, coherentist theories of knowledge founded upon the subject.

[8] If Derrida were to align "love" with the gift," then the result would still be the impossibility of love, on the grounds that love is associated with the gift, which is "the impossible." In the case of love as narcististic, or love as associated with the Derridean concept of the gift, love appears to be lost.

[9] Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: hors-texte*, trans. Thomas Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 49.

[10] Jean-Luc Marion in "On Gift and Desire: An Interview with Jean-Luc Marion," See Appendix.

8.1 Desiring the Subjective

The questioning of subjectivity, which was at the center of the last century's post-war critiques of modern philosophy, takes on a subtly different intonation in the works of Marion and Derrida, who both address specific problems inherent within the Husserlian phenomenological project, which they think to be at fault for seeking an unmediated and subject-centered relation with "the things themselves." As Marion puts it in *Being Given,* he wishes to get beyond the modern project that achieved its status as a "transcendental enterprise by which something is taken for granted *a priori*, which is the I, *ego*, subjectivity, in order, starting from it, to establish the limits of the possible, of any kind of possibility."[11] Any thinking that takes this *ego* for *granted* and presumes it as a kind of "ground," claims Marion, inherently relies upon an "outside;" a transcendental, metaphysical, and onto-theological structure of thought that seeks to set and control boundaries for things' possibly being given. One inspiration for Marion in these regards comes from the work of Derrida on the topic.

8.1.1 Derrida's "Subject-to"

Derrida, especially in earlier works, often takes a more hyperbolic approach to the question of subjectivity via a "desubjectification" or an "anti-subjectivism." It is so hyperbolic that he claims that even Foucault – the *débutante* of anti-subjectivism – didn't go far enough in the demolition of the subject.[12] This absolute jettisoning of any possibility of a subject is one starting point for deconstruction, and as he insists in an interview in the early 90s, "there has never been the subject for anyone … the subject is a fable."[13] As post-modern in the most radical of senses, Derrida seeks to go beyond a Cartesian *ego*, a Kantian "bridge" between the *noumenal* and *phenomenal*, and a Husserlian presumption of the existence and "presence" of a transcendental "I."[14] Naming a subject "subject" presumes its "self-presence," a presenting of itself to itself in and of itself in a smooth, stable, and pure accessibility.

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[11] This is also the critique he turns back on Derrida. For example, any reference to the distinction between possibility and impossibility demands, first, a clear distinction, and second, a relationship wherein one is more derivative of the other. In this case, the impossible circumscribes the "limits of any possible revelation." Jean-Luc Marion, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 74.

[12] Jacques Derrida, "Eating Well" in *Points …: Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 256. For Derrida's critique of Foucault, see p. 268–269.

[13] Jacques Derrida, "Eating Well" in *Who Comes After the Subject*, ed. E Cadava, et al. (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 102.

[14] For example, in his description of "transcendental apperception" Kant insists that "I am conscious to myself *a priori* of a necessary synthesis of representations to be entitled the original

Yet these more hyperbolic rejections of the "subject" should be tempered in light of comments Derrida made in an interview almost a decade earlier: "I have never said that the subject should be dispensed with. Only that it should be deconstructed."[15] One already knows that deconstruction, when it is at work within a work, keeps or retains the concept it is at work within. Thus, "to deconstruct the subject does not mean to deny its existence. There are subjects, 'operations' or 'effects' of subjectivity. This is an incontrovertible fact."[16] Yet in the subject's deconstruction, something entirely new is created, for "to acknowledge" the fact that there is something that must remain, says Derrida, "does not mean, however, that the subject is what it says it is." Derrida finally stakes his claim that the subject is a grammatically inherent, and linguistically bound concept: "the subject is not some extra-linguistic substance or identity, some pure *cogito* of self-presence; it is always inscribed in language."[17] The subject should be expropriated or resituated *in* language and the consequences of this includes the abolishment of a "first understanding" of a subject as given without mediation to phenomenal experience.

Derrida's conclusion that the subject is "inscribed in language" does not come from his readings of Husserl, but of Lacan and Saussure, especially during a particular phase of his work in the 60s and 70s that reflected a general curiosity about contemporary psychoanalysis. Derrida comes to apply aspects of Lacan's interpretation of Saussure on "the subject" to his own work in Deconstruction. Lacan leveraged Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* to revise the Freudian subject (for whom the death drive "instinct" was paramount). Lacan begins his "Demontage de la pulsion" (or "Deconstruction of the Drive," the title of the essay) by attempting to reinstate the distinction between *Trieb* (the psychical instinct or drive) and the biological instinct: "Drive (*pulsion*) is not thrust (*poussee*). *Trieb* is not *Drang*."[18] Ultimately, Lacan concludes that the aim of Psychoanalysis is not to relieve "the

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synthetic unity of apperception." That is, Kant holds that before any thinking occurs, "I" must be conscious first of this self of mine, and the way in which this self synthesizes (thus the transcendental synthesis) the various representations that come to me. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans F. Max Miller (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), B135.

[15] In seeking to clarify his position on subjectivity, Derrida claims "I have never said that the subject should be dispensed with. Only that it should be deconstructed. To deconstruct the subject does not mean to deny its existence. There are subjects, 'operations' or 'effects' of subjectivity. This is an incontrovertible fact. To acknowledge this does not mean, however, that the subject is what it says it is. The subject is not some extra-linguistic substance or identity, some pure cogito of self-presence; it is always inscribed in language. My work does not, therefore, destroy the subject; it simply tries to resituate it." Jacques Derrida, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage,* ed. Richard Kearney (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 125.

[16] Ibid., p. 125.

[17] Ibid., p. 125.

[18] "Drive (*pulsion*) is not thrust (*poussee*). *Trieb* is not *Drang,* if only for the following reason. In an article written in 1915 – that is, a year after the *Einfurung zum Narzissmus*, you will see the importance of this reminder soon – entitled *Trieb und Triebschicksale* – one should avoid translating it by avatar, *Triebwandlungen* would be avatar, *Schicksal* is adventure, vicissitude – in this article, then, Freud says that it is important to distinguish four terms in the drive: *Drang*, thrust; *Quelle*, the source; *Objekt*, the object; *Ziel*, the aim." Jacques Lacan, "The Deconstruction of the

subject" of guilt or shame, but instead, as the "science of desire,"[19] (Lacan's *désir* is his version of Freud's *Wunsch)* to speak, articulate, birth and interpret desire in the subject. Indeed *"desire, in fact, is interpretation itself.*"[20] Lacanian psychoanalysis seeks "a liberating truth" that is "in a hiding place in our subject."[21] The result of Lacan's deconstruction is a "barred" or "fragmented" subject. As "barred," such a subject is phenomenologically "unrepresentable" and can never reach the satisfaction of desire. The impossibility of satisfying desire for Lacan is not *constitutive* but rather *pathological*, and this is what "makes" a subject *through* speech acts. Although there is a disjunction between the sign and the object, desire performs a revelatory function, and "speaking," in and of itself, enacts the Lacanian "cure."

Yet for Derrida, there is only the diseased fracture and no such cure. Desire cannot function for a subject in a way that "creates," because it is not possible to conceive of an "object" outside oneself that is capable of being desired. This failure of desire and any establishment of the subject lends more conclusively to the fracture within linguistics in total. Derrida's Deconstruction employs the fracture, particularly as the profusion of the ultimate frustration and incommensurability between desire and the symbolic. As Miller notes, Derrida certainly formed strong perspectives about Lacan despite somewhat hastily and sparsely reading through Lacan's *oeuvre*.[22] Derrida once even suggested that Lacan's work "contained 'motifs' that were pre-deconstructive [and that] psychoanalysis was … an ally of deconstruction," namely for its recognition of the strained relationship one holds with language. Yet, Derrida questions Lacan's persistent inclination to interpreting through "unconscious desire."[23] Derrida stressed that Lacan, especially in his celebrated reading of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter," reduces the fecundity of expression to the hermeneutic analysis of "truth claims," as Lacan's form of psychoanalytic interpretation does not allow for any words, letters, or ideas to *escape* in speech. Not unlike Deleuze's theory of "lines of flight," if there is no possibility of release or escape, then there is a limitation to one's experiences of "becoming" via the differential forces of deconstruction.

And thus, the Derridean subject is bracketed in favor of the radical grammatical liberation of the force and expression of "*différance,*" a concept that can be understood to disrupt subjectivity according to two distinct, but interconnected components: The first is semiological (to differ), and the second is phenomenological-temporal

Drive" in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 162.

[19] Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*: *Seminar 7*, trans. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 324.

[20] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978), 176.

[21] Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*: *Seminar 7*, trans. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 24.

[22] Miller notes that "there is a certain haste and at the same time an incompleteness about Derrida's relations with Lacan. It is as if he engaged with *this* contemporary earlier than anyone else and persistently throught his oeuvre, but without ever getting to grips with his work." Michael Lewis, *Derrida and Lacan: Another Writing* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 1.

[23] See Christopher Norris, *Derrida* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 113.

(to defer). The first, which involves the act of signification beyond meaningfulness, is not the result of the choice *or desire* of a stable speaking subject, but rather, the consequences of the irruptive, expressive, and forceful relationship between a sign and a signifier. For Derrida "subjectivity like objectivity is an effect of *différance*," so if we have a subject or self, it too is "subject to" the differing of *différance*.[24] On these grounds, any subject is first constructed/deconstructed through a multiform of signs and signifiers; is the result of unpredictable, intermingling, and haphazard forces. To be constantly signified and re-signified provides no "stable condition" from which one might also constitute phenomena as they might be given. It is not the subject that makes *différance,* but *différance* that makes the subject.

The second component of *différance* (especially, in relation to subjectivity) is phenomenological-temporal, in that it never allows for a subject to constitute itself in a "present" moment. Naturally, Derrida is influenced here by Heidegger's "Being towards Death," which indicates one's future projection as a kind of site of beginning to conceive or "think" Being (e.g. *Sein und Zeit, intro II*). Derrida takes this in another direction in order to suggest that there is no temporal structure that allows for any given moment to be experienced *as such*, as "present." Experience cannot be experienced in a present moment, and at any "given moment" something new can irrupt within time. One might recall here Derrida's early readings of Husserl (*Speech and Phenomena*, *Origin of Geometry*), where Derrida claims that there is a constant destabilization of the present always at work, which results in the interruption or caesura of "immediacy" of both knowledge and self-knowledge. One must thus forget oneself.

Instead, the Derridean subject is *subject to* a myriad of influences, signifiers, and senses all within a given *moment*, and one must actively discard one's seemingly "pre-given" subjectivity and come to form right relations with one's being devoid of an indubitable *ego*.[25] This move also reconfigures the notion of "identity," for "in the case of culture, person, nation, language, identity is a self-differentiating identity, an identity different from itself, having an opening or gap within itself."[26] That is, one's identity has at its very core a disturbing, self-differentiating concept at work. Yet this differentiating is not the result of a pessimistic understanding of the subject, for Derrida sees it as precisely the opposite. The lack of being "whole" is a necessary condition for holding relationship with "the other:" "It is because I am not one with

[24] In his reading of Saussure, Derrida suggests that language is "not a function of the speaking subject" but "language, and in general every semiotic code – which Saussure defines as 'classifications' – are therefore effects, but their cause is not a subject, a substance, or a being somewhere present and outside the movement of *différance*…there is no subject who is agent subject and master of difference … subjectivity like objectivity is an effect of *différance*, an effect inscribed in a system of *différance*." Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1981), p. 29 and p. 28 respectively.

[25] This construction of signs is always in movement and temporal limbo. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). p. 49. See also *Margins of Philosophy* where he indicates that the supposed stability of any system is always deferred and differs precisely because it is "vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element." Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy,* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 13–17.

[26] Jacques Derrida in "A Conversation with Jacques Derrida" in *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, eds. Jacques Derrida and John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p. 14.

myself that I can speak with the other and address the other."[27] The implications of this de-subjectification ultimately led him to pursue more fully the question and influence of "the other," in its most radical alterity, on "a me."[28] The subject, whose desires begin in the other, is permanently sutured to this other. Through a radical responsibility to the other, the subject is always and is only ever-changing as "a principle of calculability."[29] Thus, it is in fact not despite of, but *thanks to* this desubjectification and lack of identity that one might experience the other to-come, a notion that becomes essential to Derrida's work and a topic into which he invests a great deal of effort.[30] Where the modern logics of alterity absolutized the differential ruptures the other inscribes into the subject, Derrida is interested in showing how the other remains a representative of absolute difference and is therefore a "source" of subjective alteration.

8.1.2 Marion's "the **Adonné"**

Derrida's deconstruction of the subject, namely, of the subject on whom phenomenological thinking is based, plays a significant role for Marion, although Marion's approach is less about discarding the subject than it is about radically renaming it

[27] Ibid., p. 14. And Derrida continues, "separation, dissociation is not an obstacle to society, to community, but the condition [of community]." See also Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, trans Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 9–11.

[28] The subject needs a relation with an "outside" for "if my desire is so powerful in myself, it is because it is not mine. That does not mean that I'm simply passively registering or welcoming another's desire. It simply means that I experience my own desire as the other's desire." And in transitioning to consider the desire of God, Derrida suggests that "of course, God, what may be called God's desire is a part of this scenario. When I say in French *tout autre est tout autre*, which is difficult to translate, this does not mean, as you say, inclusiveness. It means simply that every other, without and before any determination, any specification, man or woman, man or God, man or animal, any other whatever is finitely other, is absolutely other. That is the only condition of a true experience of otherness. This sentence is virtually an object to Levinas, of course, for whom *le tout autre* is first of all God. Every other is infinitely other. That is not a logic of inclusion but, on the contrary, a logic of alterity." Jacques Derrida, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 134–135.

[29] Jacques Derrida, "Eating Well: or the calculation of the subject" in *Points …: Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 272. This essay may offer the most accessible and accurate representation of Derrida's understanding on the subject. As Derrida discusses this principle of responsibility in his *Specters of Marx*, to be responsible for something is to be responsible for sustaining its life. See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 160. For another interpretation of Derrida's subjectivity, see also David Roden, *Understanding Derrida*: *An Invitation to Philosophy,* eds. Jack Reynolds and John Roffe (New York: Continuum Press, 2004), pp. 93–102.

[30] In "Psyche" Derrida refers to deconstruction as this affirmation of the other to-come. Jacques Derrida, "Psyche: Inventions of the Other" in *Reading De Man Reading,* eds. Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 60.

through an inversion of subjectivity. Along with Derrida and other contemporary Post-structuralists, the subject is not a reliable, functional source for establishing indubitable cognition. Yet if there is no "subject," then what ultimately comes to fill its vacant seat? Where Derrida's deconstruction has no new name for "the subject," Marion's work demonstrates, even recently in his work on Augustine, a vested interest in finding what "stands in the place" (or *en lieu* as the book's title suggests) of the *ego*, subject, or self. One reason for pursuing this question is based on the need to have *someone* who is capable of loving, which implies a necessarily solitary, isolated, and volitional understanding of "love" *for* the other, as established in *The Erotic Phenomenon*. Yet since his work on givenness seeks to do away with phenomenological intentionality, love must have its own sort of volition. Indeed, to what degree can love have its own reason, and maintain, according to its definition as *not only* a reactive emotion, a level of volition and deontological duty if there is no desiring "person?" Further, how can things be given if there is no subject or receiver to whom that which is given, "is given?"

In attempting to synthesize the concerns of Derrida, who deconstructs the metaphysical underpinnings of subjectivity and therefore demands the impossibility of a subject, with the ideals of Husserl, whose *Erste Philosophie* is grounded in the unmediated appearance of things and therefore a basis upon which knowledge can be founded, Marion reconceives subjectivity according to what he names "the given" (henceforward called "the *adonné*"). As treated in chapter two, the *adonné* is capable of accepting that which appears in order to achieve knowledge, yet it is non-metaphysical and capable of being differentiated by "the other." Instead of a Kantian understanding of phenomena, which appear on the basis or "conditions of experience for and by the subject," Marion insists that the *adonné* completes no such act of constitution but instead must "leave it [the phenomenon] – finally – the initiative of appearing on the basis of itself."[31] Next, in a subtle, yet vastly implicative move, Marion shifts Kant's understanding of the self to being merely one among many (at times even ontic) phenomena. Thus, the *adonné* belongs on the same plane as any simple given phenomena that are given to the understanding. Nothing escapes the giving and constituting status of "being given, not even the human "subject."[32] Thus, in parting ways with Kant, a phenomenon's appearance cannot be simply the *result* of a subject's intentionality, directedness, or desire, but instead all phenomena – the subject included – are given through the excess of givenness that is always beyond the abilities of any conscious, "perceiving," and imaginative "person."[33]

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[31] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness,* trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 181.

[32] These phenomena appear without their being "requested," and "the origin of givenness remains the 'self' of the phenomenon, with no other principle or origin besides itself. 'Self-givenness, *Selbstgebung, donation de soi'* indicates that the phenomenon is given in person, but also and especially that it is given of itself and on the basis of itself." Ibid., p. 20.

[33] That is, with the exception of the aforementioned "poor phenomena," which are not "saturated." For an even handed criticism of this concept, see Anthony J. Steinbock, "The Poor Phenomenon: Marion and the Problem of Givenness" in *Words of Life: New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology*, eds. Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2010).

Through refashioning the *adonné* ("given over" or "given") according to this new name, Marion, like Derrida lays a heavy emphasis upon intuition *over* intention. Yet Marion's version of intuition is distinct from both Derrida's and Husserl's, for the *adonné* paradoxically is able to go beyond "passivity as activity, because in being liberated from its royal transcendental status, it annuls the very distinction between the transcendental *I* and the empirical me."[34] Once the Kantian subject is dethroned from this "royal" and controlling status of shepherding phenomena, Marion's *adonné* is capable of "transcending" the traditional polarity between the transcendental and the material/immanent, and the dualism between essence and existence that is said to entrap subjectivity. The *adonné* stands *in lieu* of the subject, appears as given, and is given in such a way that it's ipseity or isolation might be differentiated by "the other." The *adonné* is "the one to whom what gives itself from a first self… gives a second *me*, the one of reception and of response."[35] The *adonné* is always already exposed to an I-other relationship, for while there is no foundational "I," there is one who is-given, and who in turn can give.

In relying upon a critique that appears to be highly Derridean in character, Marion insists that the Cartesian *cogito* is based upon an act of noetic reliance and trust upon itself and its own self-knowledge. To some degree, both Marion and Derrida's concerns follow the Husserlian critique of Cartesian self-knowledge that showed how the *ego cogito* is in fact a second-order experience after the *ego* has *appeared* to oneself. That is, one does not first "know" oneself innately, but rather experiences oneself as "knowing." For Husserl, although knowledge (and self-knowledge) may be a transcendental, it is first accessed in pure consciousness via the "transcendental reduction." Yet Husserl later realized that such a focus on consciousness as the *absolute ground* for philosophy revealed the threat of solipsism in phenomenology, and therefore in the fifth of his 1931 *Cartesian Meditations* he suggests the need for a *transcendental subjectivity* that opens onto "intersubjectivity." The general theme of *The Cartesian Meditations* is that of "shared experience,"

[34] Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 48. If Marion succeeds in establishing phenomenality in givenness itself, as opposed to phenomenality being directly mediated by the subject, then he may still need to provide further explanation for how that "subject" (as "*l'adonné*) is reliable (at least to some degree), for under the aforementioned conditions, the subject would always be caught "punch drunk," so to speak, by the shock of pure excess. A problem that may arise here, is that when one *is* a phenomenon of experience for someone else. Since in Marion's thought we can receive the other directly, and do not mediate this experience of the other, this other is, via givenness, becoming a self to the subject. This is evident in Marion's Saturated Phenomenon of "flesh." My flesh is the first phenomenon, as Mackinlay suggests, "in the world, and that by which the rest of the world is in turn rendered phenomenal for me." Shane Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess: Jean-Luc Marion, Saturated Phenomena, and Hermeneutics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), p. 138.

[35] Marion wants to carefully challenge any "pretension of any I to a transcendental function, or, what comes down to the same thing, the pretension of a possible transcendental I to the last foundation of the experience of phenomena." Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 45.

which opens the inquiry as to how that which comes to me, as an essence (and by proxy, a universal), also comes to others. It is the common, shared background of *Lebenswelt*, or "lived/life world" that grounds the ways in which one accounts for the possibilities of other *kinds* of consciousness, whose experiences would yield differing essences. Husserl's later turn to intersubjectivity and alterity became of great interest to Derrida as early as Derrida's Master's Thesis, especially in the section on "The Ambiguous Sense of the 'World'" (in *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy*), which sought to show how the basis of Husserl's principle of principles, originary intuition, is disrupted because the "other" radically introduces an "other" world that should threaten the basis of a solipsistic intuition.[36] It should come as no surprise, then, that Marion continues in the critique of Cartesian self-knowledge, and in order to circumvent the aforementioned problem of solipsism, Marion demand's that the *adonné* allows for givenness to be both subject-independent *and* unconditioned. This allows for the possibility of "the gift" and ultimately love to be experienced *independent of a first experience with* one's own watchful and knowing *ego*, as givenness goes beyond the *adonné*. Similarly, "love is deeper than the self" and is co-extensive to some degree with the way in which love is given. Yet since love is "deeper" than the self, it is neither a heuristic tool for self-knowledge, nor is it capable of producing "certainity" in the typically rationalist sense.[37]

As chapter one more extensively addressed this new name of the *adonné*, it is necessary to note here only the striking distinctions between Derrida's specific concerns over the traditional notions of subjectivity and Marion's conception of the *adonné*, which specifically addresses such concerns. Where Derrida claims the problem of "absolutizing" alterity, Marion insists that the *adonné* is given in the same way that the other is, and therefore is open to differentiation *in* intuition. Where Derrida claims the traditional subject relies upon a metaphysical, infinite, and stable resource, Marion's the *adonné* cannot be accused of such metaphysical reliance, for the *adonné* appears in the same way that other phenomena do. And where Derrida criticizes the *idée fixe* of hermeneutic interpretation according to the

[36] Jacques Derrida, "The Ambiguous Sense of the 'World'" in *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy*, trans. Marian Hobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2003), p. 109. See Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University press, 2002), p. 164. See also Michael Naas, *Derrida from Now On*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 231. Naas suggests that "Husserlian intersubjectivity, where, as Derrida read it, Husserl came to acknowledge in the famous fifth *Cartesian Meditation* the necessity of an interruption of phenomenology and of its principle of principles, originary intuition, in order to recognize the radical inaccessibility of the *alter ego*, of another world, we might say, except by way of appresentational analogy…".

[37] Jean-Luc Marion, "On The Gift and Desire: An Interview with Jean-Luc Marion." See Appendix. See also Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012). As Moore puts it, Marion's gift gives "itself in an experience that does not require, and would moreover be incompatible with, an active, preconditioning subjectivity." Gerald Moore, *Politics of the Gift* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 9.

unconscious desire of a subject, Marion renames desire according to love, which is deeper than the self and therefore not merely the responsive *wunsch* of a stand-along *ego cogito*. Marion's most recent projects indicate that he is still working out the details of these complex problems of the *adonné*, as well as those of "the impossible."[38]

8.2 Possible or Impossible?: Avoiding the Metaphysics of Presence

Any reference to the possible/impossible dyad implies a direct import to the temporal and spatial distinctions within the concept of "presence." For Derrida, the gift is the *impossibility* of presence, while for Marion, givenness is the profusion or saturation of the excessive *possibility of* presence. The Derridean gift is an impossible possibility, and the Marionian one is a possible impossibility. For Derrida, the impossible is what *makes* the possible possible, claiming that in reference to the gift "its possibility is possible as impossible."[39] While for Marion "givenness" makes *both* the possible *and* the impossible possible.

These somewhat convoluted inversions and turns of speech demand some explanation. In their debate "On the Gift" it becomes clear that both thinkers are not trying to determine simply whether or not the gift is "possible" or "impossible" for the sake of claiming the gift's status under the auspices of one of those terms, but rather that both thinkers are trying to think the gift in an aneconomical way. They each aim to protect the gift from being conceived and "experienced" according to economical conceptions. Yet Marion and Derrida each conceive of "economy" in slightly different terms.[40] Marion is trying to protect the gift from both economy and theoretical abstraction by *allowing the gift to be possible*, while Derrida is attempting to save the gift from "presence," commonality, and the "circle" of economy by naming it impossible.

[38] For example, Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*. Trans Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[39] And he continues "but I doubt that there is a possibility of a phenomenology of the gift. That is exactly my thesis." Jacques Derrida, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 60. As Sebbah notes, Derrida's "impossible" remains "in a paradox refusing to let itself retreat into a simple contradiction." François-David Sebbah, *Testing the Limit: Derrida, Henry, Levinas, and the Phenomenological Tradition* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 117.

[40] Also, working underneath the surface of their disagreement is a subtle difference in how the two think of "economy." For Marion, economy can be reduced to any form of "causal" thinking, and for Derrida, economy is more specifically the circle of credit and debt.

8.2.1 Derrida on the Impossible

For Derrida, naming the gift "impossible" removes it from an economical register, and this gives him warrant to claim that "it is impossible for the gift to appear as such" although it can still "happen" as an event.[41] The gift *as such* cannot come into presence, but it can happen as an absolutely indeterminable and unpredictable "event." "Possibility" of the gift is conceived according to an economical appropriation and calculation that is reliant upon one's past experiences, which are reflected in one's "desire to give." So long as the gift is possible, it belongs to this "circle" (a system of control) of economy. The only alternative is to deconstruct the gift to its impossibility and name the gift "the impossible."[42] More generally, there are two ways of understanding the role of the impossible in the context of Derrida's deconstruction of the gift. The first way is to understand the importance of denouncing anything that claims a metaphysical "beyond." Since "impossible" is a word used to refer or indicate the non-referable as kind of placeholder, it is often falsely accused of being reducible to a certain "beyond." Yet for Derrida, one might refer to the impossible without the recourse to this beyond-speak on the grounds that it belongs to the differentiating work of *différance*. Thus, when concepts can no longer be "reduced" or deconstructed, and when one reaches the *aporia*, one already has a projected relation with the impossible, namely, the impossibility of deciding between the demands of two seemingly opposite options that leave one's desires conflicted. Further, deconstruction happens in an "impossible" way: "The deconstruction I try to practice is impossible, is *the* impossible – is precisely this experience of the impossible."[43] Thus, although the gift cannot be referred to in phenomenal experience, there is a certain unknown reliance upon the unexpected and differentiating work that operates in the background of experience. As the impossible, the gift is beyond phenomenality.

A second way of understanding the impossible in relation to the gift is through his conception of "*khora*," the placeless place of "taking place." Derrida wishes to account for "the gift as the meaning of the event on the groundless ground of what

[41] Jacques Derrida, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 59. "I tried to precisely displace the problematic of the gift, to take it out of the circle of economy, of exchange, but *not* to conclude, from the impossibility for the gift to appear as such and to be determined as such, to its absolute impossibility." And the gift isn't phenomenologically identifiable, but comes as an event. It "is something you do without knowing what you do, without knowing who gives the gift, who receives the gift, and so on." And as a result, "we have a relation to the gift beyond the circle… beyond the theoretical and phenomenological determination." Ibid., p. 60.

[42] As Marion puts it "…Jacques Derrida insisted on the idea that the gift must itself always be deconstructed in order to demonstrate its impossibility." ("…Jacques Derrida insistait sur l'idée que le donné devait lui-même toujours être déconstruit jusqu'à démontrer son impossibilité."). Jean-Luc Marion, *La Rigueur des Choses*: *Entretiens avec Dan Arbib* (Paris: Flammarion, 2012), p. 132. My translation.

[43] Jacques Derrida "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 72.

I call *khora*, the groundless ground of a 'there is,' 'it takes place,' the place of the taking place…"[44] The gift is groundless insofar as it is impossible, but it is a ground to the extent that marks giving *as* a "taking place." *Khora* marks the space of the active displacement of the impossible, as well as the gift as the impossible. As it was more closely considered in chapter seven, *khora* extends Derrida's interest in *aporetic* undecidability as a non-metaphysical dimension that marks the slippage between "Being and beings." *Khora* enacts the out-of-jointedness of time and the "spacelessness" of space and "spacing." Yet it does not refer to simply an empty space within signification as it is "nothing positive or negative." As the "desert in the desert," *Khora* is that which makes the possible possible, and the impossible impossible.[45] *Khora* allows impossibility to deconstruct itself, harboring its own auto-deconstruction.[46]

8.2.2 Marion on the Impossible

These interests in keeping the gift "impossible" motivate Derrida's response to Marion's attempts to prove the opposite, that it is possible for the gift to enter phenomenality. For Derrida, Marion's approach cannot go *beyond* the interrelated problems of presence and time, and Marion's hopes are still economically misconstrued because if a gift is going to be named a gift as such, and if it is named *through* phenomenology, then it must occur, at least to some degree, in an act of consciousness. And any act of consciousness must involve an identification (recalling the aforementioned problems of the *ego*); a namability and a knowability of the identified. Once it is named, identified, and known, the gift slides back into economy's circle.[47] This is what leads Derrida to conclude that phenomenology, as the science

[44] As Derrida claims, "I try in *Given Time* and in other texts to account for, to interpret, the anthropo-theological reappropriation of the meaning of the gift as the meaning of the event on the groundless ground of what I call *khora*, the groundless ground of a "there is," "it takes place," the place of the taking place…" Ibid., p. 67.

[45] Ibid. p. 76.

[46] Jacques Derrida, "*Khôra*" in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 126. See also p. 95. Socrates employs a kind of *khôra*, for he "operates from a sort of non-place." Ibid., p. 107. Caputo interprets Derrida's *Khôra* to be "a condition that also makes impossible, that allows what is built up to harbor its own unbuilding, its own deconstructibility." But shortly after, Caputo asserts that Derrida's *khôra* also keeps "desire" alive: "this very desertification is the condition of keeping faith and hope and desire alive." It is not exactly clear in what sense Caputo is employing "desire" here, yet it is likely the case that Derrida's *khora* does the opposite to "desire," through emptying it and exposing "fragility of our structures" of subjectivity. John D. Caputo, "Apostles of the Impossible" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 217.

[47] See also Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 89–91. For Caputo, "Marion is willing to settle for a *higher* economy, just so long as this economy that is not implicated in causality, in causal agents and effects." And debt "…does not present a problem to Marion because debt enters into the very *definition of the gift* for him –

of presence, is economically determined and therefore incapable of thinking the gift.[48]

Marion recognizes that after Derrida's critiques the gift must be saved not only from economy, but also from Derrida's version of "the impossible." Parting ways with Derrida but in response to his salient concerns, Marion concludes that "possibility" is the means through which one can have awareness of, and therefore a certain knowledge as to whether or not a gift event has happened. Impossibility is not a register that allows one to admire the gift from afar, but one in which the gift is entrapped, for Derrida's *naming* the gift "the impossible," amounts to a "demonstration." Derrida *claims* that the gift is "the impossible," which is a category of thought that Derrida actively *creates* and names "unnamable." Instead, the gift deserves its own status, apart from the impossible, and in giving it its own register, Marion believes that the gift can become possible – possible, that is, *only under the gift's own reasons or conditions.*

Marion has recently extended his thinking on the impossible in relation to a certain "negative" certainty; an epistemic modality that one might achieve concerning "the gift" of particularly fecund and saturated phenomena. There are "variations" of certainty, and the most fecund of phenomena do not provide "positive" assurance, but a "negative" one that breaks the supposed relationship between certainty and objectification. One can indeed have certainty about "objectless" phenomena, and such certainty relies upon a paradoxical thinking, namely, in relation to the impossible.[49] The *impossibility* of gaining particular forms of knowledge about some phenomena says infinitely more of those phenomena than one tends to admit.[50] "Impossible" is not an absolute "uncertainty," but referential to a certain "effectiveness" established upon "lack" or "privation" (as confirmed in chapters two and three in relation to desire, the void, and the nothing). Conceived according to Marion's negative certainty, "impossibility" is reappropriated as a negative phenomenon of privation, and this plays a role in Marion's developed interest in "widening rationality" to include paradoxically invisible, yet *effective* phenomena with which one might have relation.[51] Contrary to Derrida's version, Marion's conception of "impos-

'donability,' he says, means the duty (*devoir*) to give – while for Derrida debt is poison to the gift." Thus Caputo holds that their debate should be considered within this greater "question of debt" for "that in my view is central to the difference between Marion and Derrida." John D. Caputo, "Apostles of the Impossible" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 212.

[48] And for Derrida, phenomenology is necessarily a science of presence. The economic circle, "in order to be put in motion, must correspond to a movement… a thought of the gift, which would not be exhausted by a phenomenological determination…. by an economy." Jacques Derrida, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 60.

[49] "Rien ne devient certain qui ne devienne aussi un objet." Jean-Luc Marion, *Certitudes négatives* (Paris: Grasset, 2010), p. 13. Then Marion continues "n'accomplit pas toute certitude." Ibid., p. 15.

[50] There is indeed for Marion "une certitude négative de l'impossibilité de certaines connaissances." Ibid., p. 17.

[51] This is an "élargissement de la rationalité." Ibid., 309.

sibility" *can be known*, albeit apophatically. Yet in following Derrida's conception, the impossible comes in relation to "the event," which leaves it beyond being subject to review according to the "positive" conditions of knowledge placed on objects. Indeed there are phenomena that "are not [to be] reduced to objects" for indeed some "happen as events," which again signals to the importance of saturated phenomena and their many variations.[52] The relationship between "eventhood" (not to be equated entirely with Marion's saturated phenomenon of "the event") and saturation possibly could be conceived according to the dictum: the more saturation, the more "eventhood."[53] Phenomena that can be conceived according to negative certainty are saturated, while those accorded positive certainty are impoverished insofar as they are limited in their expressions of the *variations* of intuition.[54] "Every impossibility" indeed "attests" to negative certainty on the paradoxical grounds of the abilities of the impossible to elude "thought" itself.[55] These recent extensions of work on the impossible in *Certitudes negativés* show a surprising amount of continuity between Marion's earlier meditations on the impossible, the gift, and saturation and this most recent, epistemological work.[56] One's knowledge of the gift does not prohibit or limit its abundance. If the gift is truly and entirely excessive, then even desire or knowledge cannot inhibit it.

This leads back to the 1997 debate, where Marion suggests that Derrida's version of the impossible is still inscribed within metaphysics because his "possible/impossible" dyad still plays by the rules of causality. Causality is indeed a metaphysical conception, which relies on a preunderstanding of "Being." This accusation of falling back into metaphysics refers to a persistent engagement that both Marion and Derrida have with Heidegger's claim concerning the ontotheological constitution of metaphysics. As the science of being *qua* being, metaphysics is the inter-twining of both ontology and theology, as it both seeks to understand the commonality all beings share at their most fundamental level (ontology) and insists upon showing

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[52] Ibid., 276.

[53] "Un phénomène se montre d'autant plus saturé, qu'il se donne avec une plus grande événementialité." Ibid., p. 301 note 1.

[54] "L'objet constitue la figure appauvrie de la phénoménalité, appauvrie parce que diminuée en intuition,

au contraire de l'événement, phénomène saturé d'intuition." Ibid., 302.

[55] See here also Serban's helpful and concise review of Marion's *Certitudes négatives*. Serban interprets Marion according to "Au paradoxe phénoménologique de la saturation, thématisé dès ED [*Being Given*], CN [*Certitudes négatives*] joint, pour l'expliciter, le paradoxe épistémologique de la certitude négative, et renvoie ainsi le projet de la phénoménologie de la donation et de la saturation à l'effort d'une pensée vouée au paradoxe de mesurer ses forces à l'aune de ce qui leur échappe par principe : l'impossible même." Claudia-Cristina Serban, "Revue Jean-Luc Marion, *Certitudes négatives,*" in *Symposium: Revue canadienne de philosophie continentale,* 15:2 (2011): p. 197.

[56] "Toute impossibilité en principe de répondre à une question bien conçue atteste, pour une raison finie, une certitude negative." Jean-Luc Marion, *Certitudes négatives* (Paris: Grasset, 2010), p. 316.

and knowing the "the first cause" or ultimate "source" of Being (theology).[57] Thus, the critique of metaphysics is not taken lightly by either thinker, and Marion is convinced that Derrida's imagining the gift according to the conditions of being *either* possible or impossible does not allow the gift to be free in and of itself, for Derrida's conception of the impossible is predicated upon an apophatic version of possibility.[58] Thus, for Marion, categorizing the gift under either term is just another way of *limiting* the gift. Derrida *chooses* to presume the difference between the possible and the impossible.[59] Although Marion rejects the possible/impossible dyad, he does not abandon or banish the impossible from still playing some kind of role in relation to the gift. Like the gift, the impossible can be addressed phenomenologically for, in fact the aim of *Being Given* was precisely to think "*the* impossible as such."[60] He agrees with Derrida that there is a certain productivity of the impossible, one that is capable of breaking the rules and limits of possibility (and with it those of metaphysics), but Derrida's version of the gift *as* impossible falls back into the pit of causality because the impossible is a kind of infinite resource upon which all things (e.g. even possibility) eventually rely.[61]

Another critique he levels at Derrida's possible/impossible distinction is that the impossible merely is relegated to being a kind of "higher possibility." Impossibility, or that which "makes possibility possible" ultimately becomes the *conditioner* of possibility, and this results in two problems. The first problem is that the impossible, as this "higher possibility," ultimately fails in decentering "presence," and instead, actually becomes a place of *the proliferation of even more reliance upon a supposed presence*, a kind of "pure" presence. The presence that is "not present" indeed shines all the more by its absence. Here, Marion takes up an interest that was also

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[57] For Heidegger, ontology and theology had been problematically conflated from the very origins of metaphysics.

[58] "His [Derrida's] final statement about the gift, the condition of possibility of the gift [and]…in the same way, the condition of the impossibility of the gift [is] brilliant, no question, and actually right to some extent." Jean-Luc Marion, "On The Gift and Desire: An Interview with Jean-Luc Marion." See Appendix.

[59] Marion suggests that he would "ask back –'why do you take for granted that possibility/impossibility can be used that way, about the gift?'" The terms of causality are necessarily "…the main characteristics of being, according to metaphysics." According to Marion, for Derrida there is "no discussion about how far the possible and the impossible could be used in the case of love." "What you [Derrida] said is just that love is not an object for metaphysics. And I agree about that point […] but it is not the end of the story, it's the beginning of the story. […] For me it is very obvious that there was [for Derrida] no discussion about how far the possible and the impossible could be used in the case of love. It cannot be used even in the case of death, mine, or the death of the other, because both Heidegger and Lévinas were very well aware that in that case, the possible/impossible are not convenient […]. So why would they fit the description of the gift? Ibid.

[60] Jean-Luc Marion, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 74.

[61] Marion and Derrida are both interested in the impossible because, as Caputo demands, it "shatters the limits of possible experience… in what exceeds the expectations of metaphysics and confounds what metaphysics calls possible." John D. Caputo, "Apostles of the Impossible" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon. (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 215.

integral to Derrida's deconstruction – the unfolding of the metaphysical presumptions made in modern epistemology concerning its search for the *conditions* of possibility.[62]

The second problem is that the Derridean impossible (if it indeed cannot be conceived as an infinite and thus metaphysical resource) will ultimately deplete itself in the process of making, exposing, or liberating more and more possibility. Thus, Derrida's impossibility is, in effect, not impossible enough, for if "impossibility" acts as a *resource* for the possible then it is a well that eventually must run dry. Marion seeks to overcome these concerns in order to conceive of the gift as possible without it's falling into the entrapping circle of economy. First, he begins with the question as to "how it is that we say that something may seem impossible (that is, contradict the *a priori* conditions of experience) and nevertheless could happen as an event, which takes place without our experience?"[63] He does not disagree with Derrida that the impossible has some kind of functional role in relation to the gift, but Marion claims that such experiences are simply encounters with paradoxes. The supposed happenings of the gift are not "experiences of the impossible," but rather of paradoxes that inherently make it difficult to "…make sense of them in an objective way."[64] What appear to be experiences of impossibility prima facie are merely the first impressions one has when one encounters a paradox. Yet from there, one must begin the reduction to givenness in order to arrive at what Marion names the "'counter-experience' of bedazzlement, of astonishment or *Bewunderung*."[65]

Another way Marion seeks to overcome the concerns about impossibility appears in *Reduction and Givenness*, the central aims of which was to unfold, according to his reduction *to* givenness, the distinction between "the present" and "presence" *as such*, in its purity. He follows Derrida's demand that one never *remains* a stable entity within "presence" as such, but Marion ultimately concludes that the gift must have its own jurisdiction, one beyond this presence as such *and* the impossible. The only way to save the gift and to *know* things that appear as they are given to consciousness is to conceive of a space beyond presence as such that is still capable of being experienced in "the present." This is one reason as to why Marion develops his redux version of Husserl's givenness, which he claims can overwhelm presence *as such* and not be limited to the final determination of presence.

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[62] Sebbah creatively imagines Marion's response to Derrida as a kind of reversal, and this "reversal – meant in the sense of 'reversing' a glove – is clearly the engine of Marion's research, or at least what activates it, and is perhaps even its very heart." François-David Sebbah. *Testing the Limit: Derrida, Henry, Levinas, and the Phenomenological Tradition*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 104.

[63] Jean-Luc Marion, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 74.

[64] Ibid. p. 75. See also Jean-Luc Marion, *Certitudes négatives* (Paris: Grasset, 2010), p. 302.

[65] Ibid. p. 75. See here also Kevin Hart's helpful introduction to *Counter-Experiences*: *Reading Jean-Luc Marion,* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

8.3 The Gift or Givenness?

8.3.1 Derrida on Gift/Givenness

The differences between the German "*Gabe*" and "*Gegebenheit*" have buried within them another key to understanding the tensions between Derrida and Marion. For Derrida, one must always be blind to the gift, and there is no possibility for a category like "givenness," whereas for Marion there is an important distinction between the gift and givenness that allows for the gift to appear, but its paradoxical appearance – the counter-experience – comes as an excess or "bedazzlement" according to givenness.[66] There are four ways Derrida critiques Marion's givenness. The first way is posed by Derrida as more of "… a hypothesis and a question to you [Marion]." [67] If Marion reduces the gift to givenness, then it is probable that what is implied in the "it" of "it gives" is a great, cosmic "giver" (i.e. God). In this case, givenness would be just a cryptic way of saying that gifts are given from God, which would land Marion back in the ontotheological metaphysics he has sought to escape. Although Marion claims that his version of givenness is a part of an immanent structure of conscious experience, Derrida is worried that "…everything that is given to us in perception, in memory, in a phenomenological perception, is finally a gift to a finite creature, and it is finally a gift of God. That is the condition for you to redefine *Gegebenheit* as a gift."[68] Derrida worries that Marion has a tendency to place concepts (e.g. givenness) beyond immanent conditions in a kind of "black box" of transcendence, and Derrida thus seeks an explanation as to how and why givenness is irreducible to the necessitation of an ultimate giver. After all, do not the qualifications that Marion himself makes of the gift demand a "giver?" Further, if the gift can enter phenomenal experience, what might this imply about God's phenomenality and the ontotheological problems Marion claims to avoid?

The second critique Derrida levels against Marion's hypothesis is that under Marion's watch the gift still gets presenced, but simply through a new register – givenness. Marion's solution is not a viable one because "as soon as a gift – not a *Gegebenheit*, but a gift – as soon as a gift is identified as a gift, with the meaning of a gift, then it is canceled as a gift." Derrida insists that "it is reintroduced into the circle of an exchange and destroyed as a gift. As soon as the donee knows it is a gift he already thanks the donator and cancels the gift."[69] Thus, the supposed gift is only a *counterfeit gift* and never becomes a gift as such because in its becoming an image

[66] Caputo places Marion and Derrida's differences in distinct terms: "For Marion, the gift is a matter of hyper-givenness, while for Derrida it is a matter of never-givenness; for Marion, a matter of bedazzlement, for Derrida of blindness." John D. Caputo, "Apostles of the Impossible" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 206.

[67] Jean-Luc Marion, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon. (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 66.

[68] Ibid., p. 66.

[69] And Derrida continues "As soon as the donator is conscious of giving, he himself thanks himself and again cancels the gift by re-inscribing it into a circle, an economic circle." Ibid. p. 59.

of conscious awareness, the "giver" or "receiver" must necessarily respond to the gift in some way. When one knows *about* the gift that one gives or receives, then this being-conscious of the gift is inscribed back into the circle of economy on the account of one's necessarily crafting a *response* to the supposed gift event. In order to not be within the circle of exchange, the gift must be an impossible event that happens without one's conscious awareness and desiring interest.

The third critique Derrida poses is that Marion's conception of givenness can be reduced to the matter of "receptivity," and this necessarily leads to the banal conclusion that "everything is a gift."[70] Although Marion insists that his version of givenness marks the "excess of intuition," Derrida holds that "it is difficult for me to understand how an excess of intuition can be described phenomenologically."[71] This is because in "phenomenology, the principle of all principles […] implies finally intuition, that is, the fullness of the intuition, the presence of something."[72] That is, intuition implies that some *thing* is being intuited. Awareness entails awareness-of. Wherever there is phenomenology, there is an employment of intuition, and wherever there is intuition, there is a supposed presence of whatever is intuited, which is then aimed at or targeted for closer investigation. Marion's phenomenology of givenness fails in a way similar to Husserl's method in that it is still seeking the *eidos* or universal and transcendent essence. Thus, Marion's givenness does not provide a solution to the aforementioned problem of presence, which entails the willful and volitional attempt to "bring something into presence." The gift cannot be "present" nor can it achieve the status of "being as being present." Instead, the following dictum might stand for Derrida's approach: Deconstruction is at work for as long as the presence of a thing is deferred. Not unlike Derrida's conception of the messianic, the only true gift is the gift that never comes or arrives, and with which one can never negotiate or conjure into presence.[73] If the messiah were to arrive, then this would, by necessity, contradict the supposed messiah's messianicity, thus dispelling any possibility of a future to-come and anything like the excessive saturation upon which someone like Marion bases his approach.[74]

[70] Ibid. p. 67.

[71] Ibid. p. 71.

[72] Ibid. p. 71.

[73] Arrival equals fulfillment, and in a Derridean schema we can never have such a thing. While Derrida's desire will always remain out of reach because there is no semiotic equation that allows for the symbolic registering of any desire to come to be fulfilled, Marion's desire is rewarded, and done so with an excess that overwhelms that desire. In other words, Marion's givenness is the *as such* of representation – the representation of representation.

[74] Perhaps Caputo makes a slight misstep here in his reading of Derrida and the Messianic, particularly in his conception of desire: "*The Impossible*, which we love and desire, is for Derrida a justice, indeed a democracy, to come." Caputo's reading is that we simply desire the messiah, and this is what produces the possible. But in fact, desire never actually makes its way into Derrida's philosphy. It is not that we simply "desire" the messiah, for there is no such thing as a desiring subject in the first place. See also John D. Caputo "Apostles of the Impossible" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism.* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon. (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 200.

Derrida's fourth critique, which is similar to that of Paul Ricœur, is that there is a covert tautology between Marion's gift and givenness.[75] This leads the gift back into the control of economy because givenness becomes the *condition* upon which the gift is given, and therefore the gift indeed has conditions. The phenomenological attempt to construe the gift as a phenomenon sutures it to givenness in such a way that givenness becomes its grounding. This again results in the banality of the gift, for it would then have the status of being but a second order *product* of givenness. Indeed, in the very banal and phenomenological sense, there is no gift that is to be admired or respected if simply "everything" and every appearance is "given" as a gift. Derrida thus allows for the possibility of things appearing "straightforwardly," but considers it bad faith to name these appearances "gifts," for gifts are "impossible." For Derrida, Marion's approach amounts to a cheapening of the gift, and in order to protect it, Derrida insists that whatever it is that "is given" is certainly not the gift *as such*, but is only an imposter gift that comes from economy, one that is not at all capable of producing irregularities, deferrals, and difference. These four concerns for Marion's hypothesis of givenness allow Derrida what he believes to be warrant for leaving the gift in the register of *the* impossible as a never-giving or givable phenomenon. Derrida's version of the impossible does precisely the opposite of what Marion's so-called givenness does: The double imperative of the gift is that *it gives in its deferral, and it defers in its being giving*. It always and ever will defer the gift's arrival, and this conclusion is entirely consistent with the role he has accorded the gift in deconstruction, within which is a reliance upon the impossible.

8.3.2 *Marion on the Gift/Givenness*

Marion remains consistent in the elucidation of his theory of givenness, for in a most recent work, *Certitudes negativés,* he still claims that the gift is a self-revealing phenomenon according to givenness, and is therefore "the paradigm of the entirety of phenomenality."[76] This is entirely consistent with his earlier aims in both *Reduction and Givenness* and in "A Phenomenological Concept of the Gift" (in *The Visible and the Revealed*), which were centered on allowing for the "gift conforming to givenness (outside economy)," or put otherwise, "to extract the gift outside of economy and to manifest it according to pure givenness."[77] His attempts to solve the

[75] Although in *Being Given* Marion refers to Derrida's concerns to carry a "three-fold rejection," I have simply added what I think to be a fourth. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness,* trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 84.

[76] Jean-Luc Marion, *Certitudes négatives* (Paris: Grasset, 2010), p. 181.

[77] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness,* trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 115. Then, respectively, Jean-Luc Marion, "A Phenomenological Concept of the gift" in *The Visible and the Revealed,* trans. Christina Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 89. An early concern for *Réduction*

problem of the gift take him back to phenomenology, the supposed "science of the given." Marion is well aware that this debate over the gift holds keys to the future trajectories of his phenomenology and to the possibility/impossibility of describing the human condition, for which he holds love and desire to be central. This is why he turns to replace the Derridean gift-as-impossible with a theory of givenness that can both "give" *and* avoid the problem of falling into the "being" of presence. In redefining "the gift" *in and on the terms of* givenness, he is seeking to remove the gift from having a metaphysical, otherworldly, and ontotheological origin. Givenness, which is defined according to the immanent experience of the gift, is the gift's own register and allows the gift to set its own terms. In his "reduction to givenness," the gift (namely, its phenomenality) gets bracketed, set aside, and put out of play so that the "horizon" of givenness draws attention as the ultimate point of "irreducibility." After performing this reduction, one comes to experience the sheer excess of givenness, as it might overwhelm one's desires, intentions, and expectations.

Marion offers a two-fold defense of givenness in the face of Derrida's criticisms. The first appears in regard to Derrida's worry that givenness can be reduced simply to mean that "God gives gifts"; to which Marion suggests that this particular "misunderstanding worries me more than I dare say."[78] It worries him because his "goal" in both *Reduction and Givenness* and *Being Given* was to prove precisely the opposite: to "establish that givenness remains an immanent structure of any kind of phenomenality, whether immanent or transcendent."[79] That is, one need not refer to some cosmic other as the cause of a gift's givenness, and indeed "in most of the cases, there is absolutely no giver at all. I am not interested in assigning a giver to a given phenomenon."[80] There is indeed a Husserlian influence upon Marion here, namely, in the attempt to reduce the real/nonreal polarity to the point that whatever one experiences can be returned to a *possible* description and "thought along immanental lines" without reliance upon the transcendent. Marion still hopes (although in his own way) for phenomenology to be an entirely "immanent" discipline without necessarily being bound *to* possibility, but also not precluding the arrival of a gift *in* possibility.

The second part of Marion's defense to Derrida's concerns is in his claim that all things phenomenologically given are not "gifts" as such, in the strict sense. Instead, whenever we say that a gift as such *has been* given, its being given can be reduced

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et donation, particularly made by Jean Greisch, is that Marion ignores Heidegger's formulation of the *es gibt*, focusing, perhaps too much, on Husserl. See Jean Greisch, "L'Herméneutique dans la 'phénoménologie comme telle': Trois questions à propos de *Réduction et donation,"* in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 96:1 (1991): pp. 56–57. Hent de Vries notes similarly that in this text of Marion's, Heidegger's "*Es gibt das Sein," or "Es gibt die Zeit"* are "conspicuously absent." Hent de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 80.

[78] Jean-Luc Marion, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism,* eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon. (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 70.

[79] Ibid., p. 70.

[80] Ibid., p. 70.

down to one more level through the reduction to givenness. This marks the attempt to follow and track the manifold of particularities and nuances of *how* the gift is given if and when it is given.[81] Although *not all things given are gifts, all gifts are, in the first place, given*. This is a defense upon which the entire project of givenness appears to hinge. A phenomenology of givenness allows for the bracketing of the gift, the giver, and the recipient, which is more than deconstruction ever claimed to be capable of doing.

In turning now to his counterargument of Derrida's own project, Marion insists that "Derrida's interpretation [of Husserl] remains, paradoxically, *not* radical enough … because it still contributes to an overly narrow understanding of presence, which misses the properly Husserlian deepening of presence as givenness."[82] Here he argues that Derrida fundamentally misunderstands Husserl's "presence" to mean simply that which is "able to be grasped by intuition." Derrida neglects to see the differences between "presence" and "givenness," and falsely equates the two terms. Marion's counter-thesis is that Husserlian presence can and should be defined and described simply as "given."[83] Givenness is not referential to that which is given *to* presence, but the *way* in which some thing is given. Marion seeks to clarify that Husserl's phenomenology marked a *radical* departure from the Kantian distinction between, and the integration of intuition and intention. In this case, phenomena do not appear or come into presence as a *result* of the synthesis between intuition and intention, for even intuition and intention (i.e. signification), their possible syntheses and manifold of relations, must first of all *be given* in particular ways. Each experience in consciousness gives some thing in a particular way, and the "what" of that which is given to intuition should be accepted according to "the way" it is given. Everything – even truth itself in its covering/uncovering activities – must also be given, for at the heart of Husserl's principle of principles is a careful synthesis between "the what" and way of givenness.[84] Although Marion's somewhat liberal (or generous) interpretations of Husserl's understanding of givenness are certainly up for debate, his style of reading Husserl appears, as Sebbah notes, to carry a distinctly Derridean intonation.[85]

[81] Caputo illustrates this point: "the kitchen table is given, but the gift is *hyper-given* [while] for Derrida: the kitchen table is given, but the gift is *never given*." John D. Caputo, "Apostles of the Impossible: On God and The Gift in Derrida and Marion" in *God, The Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 208.

[82] Jean-Luc Marion, *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, trans. Thomas Carlson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), pp. 34–35.

[83] Ibid., pp. 34–35.

[84] It does not appear as if Marion attends much to Husserl's distinction between adequate givenness and absolute givenness, which are two distinct forms of givenness. Absolute givenness, for example, can be exemplified in the *cogito*, but it is an unachievable ideal, especially for the later Husserl.

[85] As Sebbah claims, "…against the Derridean philosophy of the gap, Marion here restores presence, not against Husserl but – in a very Derridean way – by carefully scrutinizing Husserl's unthought. Marion detects a thematic of presence irreducible to intuition." François-David Sebbah,

Such a Derridean intonation is precisely what Marion integrates into his attempt to revive phenomenology after Derrida's deconstruction.[86] Marion employs Derrida's objections to givenness in order to radicalize deconstruction by concluding that deconstruction is a "type" of givenness, which he calls "deferred givenness." Deconstruction helps to "free intuition" ("La déconstruction, qui ne s`affranchit que de l'intuition sensible …") but it "does not broach givenness" (… ne s'affranchit pas pour autant de la donation…). Thus, "deconstruction therefore remains a mode of givenness – to be quite exact that of givenness deferred." (La déconstruction reste donc un mode de la donation – très exactement celui de la donation différée.").[87] As givenness deferred, deconstruction is employed to mark the temporal disposition in which phenomena are given in one's performance of the "reduction to givenness." Marion gleans from deconstruction the demand that "no concept is able to give us the presence of what is at stake…"[88] Yet this does not predetermine that something *like* presence is not capable of being given. Deconstruction plays the valuable role of clearing the debris that impedes phenomenology's progress due to its temporal ignorance regarding presence (i.e. the critique of the metaphysics of presence).[89] Yet givenness, as the excess of intuition "over the concept or the signification … allows us to" be overwhelmed in such a way that "no concept could grasp anything of that experience."[90] Marion's saturated or imbued intuition encompasses Derridean signification, and therefore to rely only upon Derridean deconstruction and its attunements to linguistic and grammatical plays of signification is to overlook the inconspicuous nature of a host of non-grammatical and non-linguistic forms or *ways* in which things are given. Thus, despite its hopes of freeing phenomena, deconstruction effectively limits and inhibits one's experi-

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Testing the Limit: Derrida, Henry, Levinas, and the Phenomenological Tradition (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 106.

[86] "…the reduction of the gift to givenness and of givenness to itself would be accomplished not *despite* the threefold objection made by Derrida, but indeed *thanks to it*." Jean-Luc Marion. *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness,* trans. Thomas Carlson (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 84.

[87] "Deconstruction, which only considers sensible intuition (for categorical intuition perhaps still resists it), does not broach givenness, which would secure for it any and all pertinence in phenomenology. Deconstruction therefore remains a mode of givenness – to be quite exact that of givenness deferred." Jean-Luc Marion, *Etant donné* (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 2005), p. 82. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness,* trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 55.

[88] Jean-Luc Marion, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 69.

[89] Or as Caputo asserts, "deconstruction…is a way to break down those walls, to break open those subjective or conceptual limits, a way to force these transcendental conditions to give way, like the walls of Jericho, to overfull transcendence, a way to let givenness give itself from itself in uncontainable overflow." John D. Caputo, "Apostles of the Impossible: On God and The Gift in Derrida and Marion" in *God, The Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 209–210.

[90] Jean-Luc Marion, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 69.

ence of non-linguistic things and matters irreducible to a semiotic structure. In Marion's commandeering of deconstruction, *différance* is "given" just like any other mode of experience, and it can be experienced through the reduction to givenness.

8.4 Love or Narcissism

As referenced throughout this project, the issue of love has a unique place in Marion's phenomenology, often working in the background as a motivation for the reduction to givenness. However, Derrida relegates desire and love to an economy of narcissism, which he insists should be – like economy – "given a chance." The problematic at hand is the necessity of seeing how/that love and the gift are deeply intertwined (namely, love as the gift *par excellence*), and that therefore if there is to be a phenomenology of "the gift," then love and desire must also be released, at least to some degree, from the economical registers in which Derrida claims them to be bound.

8.4.1 Derrida and Love

Derrida's understanding of narcissism demands some explanation, for "there is not narcissism and non-narcissism; there are narcissisms that are more or less comprehensive, generous, open, extended."[91] Narcissism, which is often understood according to the psychoanalytic principle of egoism, is generally understood as a self-centered hubris whereby one never detaches one's own *interests* when relating with others, who often present themselves as non-external objects of economical appropriation. Derrida takes interest in narcissism for its economically understood means of relation according to one's desire. Economy is unavoidable, and therefore narcissism is always at work in every interaction with any other. Yet this narcissism is not to be taken as entirely pessimistic, nihilistic, or negative. Derrida's is a softened version of a pathological narcissism: "What is called non-narcissism is in general but the economy of a much more welcoming and hospitable narcissism. One that is much more open to the experience of the Other as Other."[92] In every interaction with the other, one always has some appropriation, understanding, expectation, and interest in that other. Derrida's other is not simply the Lévinasian "infinitely other" to whom one is endlessly responsible, but an other with whom one must

[91] Jacques Derrida, *Points …: Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 199. See also Jacques Derrida "Il n'y a pas le narcissisme." (autobiophotographies) in *Points de Suspension, Entretiens*, (Paris: Editions Galilee, 1993), pp. 221–223.

[92] Ibid., pp. 221–223.

come to "identify" in a reflective way if one in fact is going to "love" them. Indeed, narcissism is necessary for this relation, and therefore love is narcissistic:

> I believe that without a movement of narcissistic reappropriation, the relation to the Other would be absolutely destroyed, it would be destroyed in advance. The relation to the Other, even if it remains asymmetrical, open, without possible reappropriation, must trace a movement of reappropriation in the image of one's self for love to be possible. Love is narcissistic.[93]

In order for relationships in general and love in particular to be "possible," a kind of narcissism is the necessary condition. It is not that narcissism is simply "self-love," but that love, in and of itself, originates in the other. In order for one to remain "open" to the love of the other, one must be narcissistic. In a limited sense, the necessity of narcissism is grounded in one's self-identification through the other, in whom one's desires originate. One is essentially not "one" without the other and one's desire for him. The other has something that one wants and desires, and this is essential to one's very nature. Yet, for Derrida, this does not end simply with a theory of desire that *begins* in privation. Privation is but an effect of economically appropriated desire. One must have first some kind of *known* relation with that of which one is *deprived*, for as he describes it in *The Politics of Friendship*, the "feeling of privation" is preceded by that which is "appropriate and familiar (*oikeios*)."[94] That is, desire is first experienced through a certain order of *economical familiarity* or knowledge with that which one wants, and it is only experienced then as a feeling of "lacking" after that knowledge is introduced.

Further, since there are no pure acts of phenomenal gifts without a "return," this view of narcissism is consistent with Derrida's understanding of the gift. In *Given Time*, Derrida consigned the figures of "desire" to economy and "possibility." If it is the case that desire is only accorded "in" the possible, and it can never reach "the gift," (the impossible, i.e.), then love must also, likewise, only remain in the realm of possibility. Love is economic, and never without at least a hint of self-interest.[95] There is no pure love void of some interest in a "return on investment." Derrida

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[93] Ibid. pp. 221–223.

[94] Also see here Derrida's *The Politics of Friendship* (New York: Verso, 1997), p. 154. In reading the case of *Lysis*, Derrida proposes the following thesis: "The friend is the friend of what he desires, but if he can desire only that which he lacks, and if what is lacking can be only that of which he has been deprived… then one must indeed imagine that before this feeling of privation… friendships… must indeed be found to be linked to what is proper, suitable, appropriate and familiar (*oikeios*) to it."

[95] In reference to Derrida, Hubbard asserts that "because love demands that I give of myself without any hint of reciprocity, love is impossible. We cannot truly love another person because there is no way to perform a loving action without that action being acknowledged." Hubbard continues "while Derrida is correct that to truly love someone is an extremely difficult thing, has he accurately described love? I believe that Derrida is mistaken in his claim that love is without reciprocity; to love another person requires that I desire a relationship with the other. As we will see, Marion rightly acknowledges that to love another requires the hope that the other will love me in return." Hubbard appears to misconstrue Derrida and Marion's respective positions on love. Marion makes it clear that the act of love is an act of risking it all in the face of not being loved back. The hope for reciprocity is not a part of what makes love love, though love need not prohibit

reiterates this theme in the *Gift of Death*, when he describes responsibility according to the efforts of Abraham, who remains unable to escape economy and exchange. Right when it seems as if Abraham commits the ultimately selfless, loving act of sacrifice whereby he continuously brackets his desires, Abraham clearly falls into the undecidability that the *aporia* between gift and economy necessarily creates. Abraham is therefore, at the time, on the "inside and the outside" of the law.[96] Unlike those of Marion, Derrida's interests in protecting the gift from economical appropriation does not entail any hope of also saving love. Even though the gift is implicated to some degree with and in economy, a line in the sand must be drawn between the gift "as such" and any "narcissistic" appropriation of it, which is a part of economy. This is the case only insofar as the gift remains impossible, and love/desire remains in the realm of possibility.[97] Yet one must wonder: if Derrida holds that the gift must be separate from economy, then why does he abandon love (which can be understood as a gift *par excellence*) to narcissism and consequently, economy?

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it. It could be that Hubbard was emphasizing the latter. Kyle Hubbard, "The Unity of Eros and Agape: On Jean-Luc Marion's Erotic Phenomenon," in *Essays in Philosophy*: 12:1 (2011): p. 134.

[96] See also chapter four of Marion's *Certitudes négatives*, "Sacrifice According to the Terms of Exchange" where he addresses sacrifice, pardon, and "forgiveness" as means of experiencing the saturation of givenness. Isaac was a gift to Abraham on the account of Isaac being miraculously given to Abraham at such an old age. Sacrifice cannot be described in terms of "negative certainty," though it is a gift of giving up or one of "surrender without return." *Certitudes négatives*, (Paris: Grasset, 2010), p. 195. Sacrifice is a kind of return gift to a debt that one feels in oneself, yet the sacrifice "does not abandon the gift" and "maintains the gift" by "reproducing it" in the mode of "abandonment." Ibid., 203. This is why Isaac, as a sacrifice, is a reminder of the original gift of Isaac as a miraculous gift given. Abraham receives, again and again, the gift of Isaac. This is enacted from the perspective of the sacrificer whose abandoning something makes that which is sacrificed shine all the more clearly and intimately. In *Certitudes négatives* Marion ultimate addresses further "requirements" for the reason of the gift, namely, that one recognize that one accepts a gift, and recognize to some degree that which one is accepting it (p. 178), yet this happens according to the "self-sufficiency" of the gift, on the terms of the gift. The gift thus shows itself in so far as it gives itself.

[97] It appears again as if Caputo misunderstands Derrida on the matter of desire. In reading this issue of Narcissism, Caputo asserts that "as Derrida says, and Marion seems to agree, where there are subjects there are only degrees of narcissism so the true gift must come after the subject. But while both want to break up narcissism, they go about this in different ways. For Marion, narcissism is shattered by the recognition of a duty to give and a debt of gratitude, while for Derrida the breakup of narcissism is a matter of responsibility without duty or debt." Caputo is right insofar as he demands that "Derrida and Marion share the view that the gift shatters the narcissism of the giver – and, as Marion points out, of the recipient too. For even as the gift requires the donor to give up his greed, it also requires the recipient to give up his pride…" However this is the case *only* insofar as the gift is impossible. If the gift comes to be imagined, say, on the terms of the specific gift of love, narcissism takes over, and must do so necessarily, because of love's direct connection with the issue of desire. Instead of seeing Derrida as safeguarding the impossible from the clutches of the possible (i.e. the category in which desire belongs), Caputo appears to read Derrida according to a more neo-platonic, Augustinian understanding of desire. As Augustine says in the Confessions "Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee," yet for Derrida, we cannot place our hope or desire in the impossible, precisely because it is impossible, not some transcendent beyond. The impossible cannot be "possibilized" by desire. If it is desired, it is no longer impossible as such. John D. Caputo, "Apostles of the Impossible: On God and The Gift in Derrida and Marion" in *God, The Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 212.

8.4.2 Marion

Marion's treatise on love in *Le Phénomène Érotique* was published barely a year before the death of Derrida. Whether Derrida knew of this text or not, however, the reconstruction of love has always been a central aim of Marion's long-term interests. Although Derrida appears to have abandoned love to economy, and set apart the gift as "the impossible," Marion recognized that the gift and love are intimately intertwined. If love is abandoned to economy, then must not the gift also entail a similarly economical motive of exchange, thus nullifying the gift?[98] There are two reasons as to why Marion does not wish love to be appropriated by economy. First, love indeed has its own rationality, and therefore occurs without any need for some act of self-seeking, or even "self love." Secondly, if love is necessarily narcissistic, then it is no longer love as such. Marion defines love as the abandoning of self-love and self-interest. Just as Derrida himself suggests about the gift (e.g. if the gift is appropriated by economy, it is no longer the gift), Marion ultimately concludes that love must have its own jurisdiction apart from economy and from "the possible." Indeed, love, at least according to the erotic reduction, is the very attempt to bracket one's *vanity* or self-reflected "love" for oneself for as long as possible. When one performs the erotic reduction and asks "can I be the first to love?" one shuns such narcissistic impulses, at least temporarily.

Yet this runs the risk of being reduced to a negative, apophatic definition of love. To *ask* "can I love?" is to presume that I am not always already loving. The quasi-deontological nature of love, which is achieved according to the *effort* of the erotic reduction must begin with a positive referent, namely, that the other is "loveable" irrespective of whether or not the other is "worthy" of love. Yet, at least for Marion, achieving the status of *being* the first to love is not the telic end of the erotic reduction. The sole goal of the reduction is to *ask* "can I be the first to love?" which then sets loving into motion. In this sense, love can be described positively without reference to economical vanity, narcissism, and "self-love" on the grounds that one, through a "negative assurance" or certitude, realizes that one experiences the loss inherent within an act of loving. Despite it's at first appearing to be apophatic in nature, the assurance begins with the positive experience of one's realization that something has changed within oneself. It is not clear, however, as to whether or not this assurance that is achieved through the erotic reduction might be more "originary" than the reduction to givenness, if it is integral to it, or if it is simply an experience one has "given" to oneself. Yet it is clear that, in a way distinct from Derrida, Marion is comfortable with such assurances in the first place. *Forms* and degrees of assurance, certainty, and knowledge are necessary conditions upon which one takes the risk of engaging and interpreting one's "involvement in the world." To extend Merleau-Ponty's rejection that love is only a first-person phenomenon floating

[98] As Marion suggests, "it could sound a bit strange coming from me, but to *some* extent, Derrida did not push deconstruction far enough. I mean, for instance…his interpretation of love as selfish, as something narcissistic – why? Because for him [Derrida] it remained obvious that love was a question of the self. And my point is that love is deeper than the self." Jean-Luc Marion, "On The Gift and Desire: An Interview with Jean-Luc Marion." See Appendix.

within "inner realities," it is possible to suggest also that love, which demands a risk of involvement in the world, can and should be interpreted phenomenologically, and "is precisely what has to be understood."[99]

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[99] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings,* ed. Thomas Baldwin (New York: Routledge Press, 2004), p. 71.

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Chapter 9
Conclusion: The Generosity of Things: Between Phenomenology and Deconstruction

Abstract This chapter synthesizes findings from previous sections on Derrida and Marion's differing conclusions on the gift and desire, then contextualizes those differences within the two thinker's respective positions of deconstruction and phenomenology. The consequences of these distinctions bear weight on these respective methodologies or styles. For Derrida, desire runs counter to any presuppositionless grasp of things, and deconstruction is found in the intuitive disruptions of *différance*, the "giver" of expression. "The sign" functions independent from "intentional acts" that are tooled according to the will of the one performing the reduction. Yet for Marion the performance of bracketing and the active suspension of constitutive phenomena entail that desire *actively* becomes passive and *receptive*. This is quite distinct from Husserlian intentionality in that both givenness and desire are given their own registers or *ratio*, and therefore need not flow from any cognitive directedness upon things. For Marion there are "negative certainties" that provide types of assurance independent from the control of economy, possibility, or the noetic, mental activities of perceiving. The gift and desire (which are constituted by a unique "lacking") can be thought as types of such certainties.

> *I think that true generosity, which brings it about that a person's self-esteem is as great as it legitimately can be, consists only in his knowing that nothing truly belongs to him except this free control of his volitions, and that his good or bad use of this freedom is the only valid reason for him to be praised or blamed…* –Descartes[1]

How indispensible is intentionality to phenomenology's reductions? Although Marion may succeed in inverting Husserl's schematic intention-intuition structure, is it possible for Marion to still continue employing Husserl's reductions, which relied on such intentional animation? An intentional (directed) *epoché* or "bracketing" is essential to Husserl's basic toolkit, and is required precisely in order to return-to, be "led back" (*reductus*), or access intuition in consciousness so as to isolate its universal rules, essences, actions, and structures that are "common" in

[1] René Descartes, *Passions of the Soul* (London: Hackett Publishing, 1989), p. 153. (*Les passions de l'âme, 1649*).

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and to all experiences relevant to that which is bracketed.[2] In the straightforward experiencing of an object, one turns to the correlating experience according to which that object is given. If Marion is to reconceive the reductions more according to intuition, his approach would need to be centered less on the intentional directing and directedness of consciousness, and more on its "being led back," not only back to the experience in which things are given, but also to the way in which oneself is given in accord with that experience. Husserl's *eidedic reduction*, which reduces to the form, idea, and essence of a given thing without constraints and irrespective of whether or not it is "real," needs, at the very least, one's active description of that which presents itself.[3] It also demands a particular and certain employment of "eidetic variation" in order to sift-through and sort-out both what is or is not "essential" to that which appears. Can this reduction be thought to occur in terms of Marion's version of a saturated intuition? It may be the case that such a reduction can occur without an intentional subject, yet this would entail that instead of a "shifting in attitude" brought about in the *eidedic reduction*, there would be a shifting in how an attitude is *given* to the *adonné* from the data of "the thing" or that which is bracketed. It would also be necessary that the "change in indicator" (in which the phenomenon gives itself in distinction) also contemporaneously change the way in which "the given" is him/herself *indicated* uniquely.

Marion's hope to keep Husserl's reductions would also necessitate an alternate way of conceiving the *"transcendental-phenomenological reduction,"* which is the reduction in which one takes-on a temporary, reflective attitude enacted by the imagination. One compares what is given uniquely in the experience to what one imagines how oneself would have expected that experience to be given otherwise, had one not performed the reduction. This imaginative comparison between that which was given, and that which one would have expected to have been given, would need to be applied to the *adonné* also. One would need to observe how oneself is "given," and to reflect upon how one would have otherwise been given had one not been given in such a way through givenness, in accord with the thing given. The focus can no longer rest solely on consciousness apprehending the object, the reflective attitude of imagination concerning the thing, or the way in which one *acts on* the object and its essence.[4] The structuring experiences in the act (*noesis*), the correlated structure given in the act (*noema*), and the filling and constraining experiences in the act (*hyle*) would each need to be reconceived according to the *acts* of the things themselves upon the given, not simply from the directive effort of the

[2] Husserl does not explicitly consider "reductions" in his earlier *Logical Investigations,* but begins doing so in his later *Ideas I.* Also, Husserl's often repeated reference to multiple, individual reductions can at points seem misleading, as these reductions demand their interconnection. There are simply the "transcendental-phenomenological reduction" and the "eidetic reduction." No reduction stands alone.

[3] One particular essence can be shared by many objects. See Dagfinn Follesdal, "Husserl's Reductions and the Role They Play in His Phenomenology" in *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism,* eds. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), p. 106.

[4] Ibid., p. 111.

constituting "subject."[5] Instead of the reductions being initiated by an active and directed concern for the way in which certain things' "essences" are given *to me*, the reductions' starting point would need to concern how that which is desired *by me* is overcome by that which happens *to me* as things are generously, yet only temporarily given. It also is not entirely clear, then, as to what degree Marion can reject Husserl's intentionality without also rejecting love and desire from having active, or at least participatory roles in a gift's being given. For Husserl at least, love was a part of the structure of intentionality.[6] And it may be that Derrida saw this impasse and subsequently sought to discard desire in tow with intentionality. If so, this would be at least one reason as to why Derrida once remarked that he and Marion are simultaneously "very close and extremely distant."

This book has attended to the latter aspects of that "distance" and has sought a meridian point in their work that could make such distance better come to light. The aforementioned concerns over subjectivity, the impossible, givenness, and love are all means of exfoliating those differences according to the problematic of "generosity" and the potential ways in which desire and gift do or do not relate. Givenness and the gift are centrally related to generosity as the "desire to give" and reference the unexpected appearance of things in their supra-subjective state. The temporal vicissitudes of "impossibility" or "the impossible" mark a rupture in the steady constitution of any desire for the gift, and hence its expectation. The concerns of subjectivity are centralized around who, what, and how one is "given" in relation to one's being a desiring subject. And love is caught in the dyad or *aporia* between having necessary relations with economy and the gift.

9.1 Between Gift and Desire, Between Marion and Derrida

There are a number of ways in which it is possible to understand concretely Marion and Derrida's differences. For Derrida, there is no possible, fundamental relation between one's desire and the coming about of the gift because desire runs counter to any possibility of a presuppositionless grasp of things. Yet for Marion, desire, namely in the figure of love, is central to his phenomenology and thus forms an

[5]Yet, one should still remain aware, as Husserl demands, of that "fruitful distinction…between *immanent* and *transcendent essence*," as it must be "perceived and consistently observed." This distinction is observable in how consciousness (the "I think") relates with perception. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, Volume II*, trans W.R. Boyce Gibson (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972), pp. 180–1.

[6]It seems clear that for Husserl, love was a part of intentionality: "Love, in the genuine sense, is one of the chief problems of phenomenology. And that holds not merely in the abstract particularity and individuality but as a universal problem. It is a problem in its intentional foundational sources as well as in its concealed forms – a problem of a driving intentionality that makes itself felt in the depths and in the heights and in the universal expanses of intentionality." Quoted/translated in James Hart, *Who One Is* (Dordrecht: Springer Press, 2009), p. 264, note 27. From Husserl's Nachlass MS, E III 2, 36b; transcription, p. 61.

inseparable union with "the gift." There are 15 different facets of this disjunction, which are unfolded here by building up from the simplest to the more complex: (1:) For Derrida, there are no similarities between gift and desire, while for Marion the opposite is the case if only for the fact that desire (particularly as love) is a *kind* of gift. (2:) Indeed, for Marion, one cannot come to experience the true gift *unless* desire *is* involved in the giving to some degree, as desire (and at least a form of volition) mark the effort of engagement in the reduction to giveness. Thus, Marion's givenness is further clarified through understanding the function and role of desire in relation to it. Whereas for Derrida, the opposite is true, a "gift event" can only happen when desire is *not* involved; when one does not desire the gift. That is, if desire is aimed towards the gift then it precludes the arrival of any true gift, for the true Derridean gift is necessarily undesirable by merit of its status as "the impossible." (3:) And this is, in part, why Derrida holds that there is no way to refer to such a thing as givenness that might maintain the conditions for the gift. The gift neither comes through a register called "givenness" nor does it appear as a result of its being desired. The gift is only impossible and there can be no active "givenness" that *gives* anything, for the gift's conditions would then be *understood*, known, and thereby accorded a calculative and economic role. Yet on the contrary, for Marion givenness is essential to the intertwining enterprises of the gift, and of desire. Desire/love is accorded such an important role that it is unclear in Marion's work as to which might be accorded primacy in conscious experience: desire or givenness. For this reason, one can neither claim simply that desire is "given" through givenness, nor the inverse; that desire gives or "births" givenness. Instead, one might only suggest that for Marion those concepts maintain a close, complicated, and still slightly ambiguous relationship.[7] Yet it appears certain that, at the very least, as a gift, desire/love is the most powerful gift, and that gift marks the *way* in which love is experienced. That is, love is experienced as a gift.

(4:) Further, Marion's interest in givenness was not simply for the sake of engagement in the phenomenological problematic concerning the gift and economical appropriation, but also for establishing the possibility of the *adonné* for whom loving is not "prohibited." If the gift is ultimately only impossible, then there is also no way to speak of love (and desire) as being a viable experience, for it must necessarily slip into a strange, perhaps even metaphysical abstraction. Under Derrida's assessment love is given over to economy and is therefore a form of narcissism. Yet this does not lead to the conclusion that Derrida abandons the gift to economy, for he too is fighting to save it. His attempt to protect the gift is to name it the impossible, as an event that happens, but one that can only happen when it goes undesired, unseen, and unknown in phenomenal experience. To desire the gift is to be aware of it, and this awareness necessarily runs contrary to the very nature of the aneconomical gift, which cannot be controlled. (5:) This all is sutured to the matter of "possibility." Derrida holds that the gift is impossible, yet desire belongs to the family of

[7] It is still not entirely clear exactly how far Marion equates desire with love, and to what extent.

the possible, the thinkable, and economical.[8] Whereas for Marion, desire/love provides the basis of philosophy, has its own logic and rationality, and marks the fundamental arrangement of one's truly *being* (over merely "subsisting") *in the world*. As a result of desire having its own "rationality," it can allow for its own kind of *possibility*, but one distinct from the ways in which it is described by Derrida. Thus, when one *takes* or accepts *ownership* of one's desire, when one chooses to love, one's being-given-desire-for-the-gift *plays a role* in the gift coming about into its own sort of "possibility." Love is one reason as to why Marion reconceives of the modern subject as the *adonné*, who can desire without controlling that which is given in phenomenal experience. The gift arrives or appears before one has "knowledge" of it, and love is of the order of this first experience with phenomena.

(6:) Thus, love maintains a primacy over *acts* of cognition (i.e. knowledge is derivative of love) and Marion holds that one can "desire the gift," because the gift is generally not first "known," but experienced in spite of one's supposed knowledge of the gift. Yet in Derrida's thinking, one can never "desire the gift," for in one's desiring it, one intends it and *conceives* of it according to knowledge of past experiences. One's seeking or desiring to find the gift leads one to find only what one already *has* in his possession, for the gift is beyond knowledge, expectation, and intention. (7:) Indeed, any intent toward, or desire for the gift is conceived as self-seeking. The result is a selfish – perhaps even "narcissistic" – impulse that would seek to command that which is given as "an object for me." The gift (in its appearance, arrival, and function) would become but a step in the grander plan of ultimately satisfying one's desires. This is another reason as to why, for Derrida, desire can never bring about the gift. Yet as Marion would have it, it is possible to desire the gift, and in fact, someone must, as the arrival of the gift demands *either* a donor or a donee. There are no gifts without at least one person's fundamental involvement. (8:) In part, this is because the gift can come into the "present" without becoming a static "presence as such." "Givenness" allows for the gift to enter the phenomenal present, but not as an object of total apprehension, as the gift is "saturated" and excessive. One's desire (again, one as given, the *adonné*) is overwhelmed by this abundance of the gift. Yet Derrida still is not convinced by these arguments,

[8] In their debate on the gift, Derrida raises the issue of "desire" or "want" and how it falls within the realm of possibility, and thus of economy. In his reading of Heidegger, Derrida shows that "*Möglichkeit* does not simply mean possible or as opposed to impossible. But in German, in *A Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger uses *mögen* as desire." Yet then Derrida enigmatically claims "what I am interested in is the experience of the desire for the impossible. That is, the impossible as the condition of desire. Desire is not perhaps the best word. I mean this quest in which we want to give, even when we realize, when we agree, if we agree, that the gift, that giving, is impossible, that it is a process of reappropriation and self-destruction. Nevertheless, we do not give up the dream of the pure gift." If one reads this straightforwardly, one might take Derrida to mean that "we desire the impossible." However, what Derrida is directing attention towards is that he is "interested in" how the impossible *conditions* desire. And in saying that "desire is not perhaps the best word" he turns to say instead that the "pure gift" (impossible, i.e.) is but a dream and something out of reach. There is no desire *qua* desire for the impossible, because the impossible cannot be desired. Jacques Derrida, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 72.

and in continuing to insist that the gift can never have a phenomenal presence, holds to a version of the gift that stands outside diachronic time, and therefore incapable of being referenced at a given moment in time.

This raises the matter of the first person relationship one has with being a *giver* of a gift and in attempting to be generous. Such a concern relates intimately with the intricate fortunes of phenomenological intentionality. (10:) For Derrida, intentionality must fail to bring about the gift on the grounds that it, by definition, must carry some kind of presupposed knowledge of what it is one is trying or intending to give. If intentionality were to succeed in bringing about *a* gift then this would subject *the* gift to a human capability, thus negating the actuality of that which appears to be given as "a gift." Marion, in some sense, agrees that intentionality must be refuted as *a way to achieve* the gift, on the grounds that it can imply a sense of economically "earning" the gift. Further, Marion generally rejects the Husserlian version of a volitional-heavy intentionality that seeks control of phenomena as they are given or appear in conscious experience. However, Marion does not go so far as to suggest that one's desiring the gift is necessarily a phenomenological intending of it. One can desire what one does not know. Yes, intentionality *precludes* the gift from being known, at least to some degree. Yet one's desire is *exceeded* by the gift as the gift is accorded its role in givenness, for the gift, when given, always exceeds the desire, expectation, or "intention" of those involved in the gift event (giver, donee, and the *adonné*).[9] (11:) Thus, for Marion the gift exceeds one's desires, yet in doing so, the gift fulfills desire in a rather subversive way: Desire's *fulfillment* is its *frustration*. Whereas for Derrida, desire must be antithetical to the appearance of the gift, stopping its appearance, leaving desire in a state of nonfulfillment; desire's fulfillment precludes any unknown happening of the gift event. Nothing and no one can ever pave the way to the gift. (12:) Not only must desire not be fulfilled, but desire must necessarily be completely blind to the elusive operations of the gift in the background of experience. This is because the gift is accorded the role of disrupting economy and that which is knowable and calculable. The gift plays an important role in running "reason aground." Yet Marion insists that the gift need not be threatened by economy because the gift is given according to its own phenomenological "mode," that is, by givenness. In fact, there is a certain primacy that givenness holds over economy, and unlike Derrida, Marion is not concerned about this hierarchy. Thus, although desire may have some economic features or "figures," desire is not *grounded* by the structure of economy and possibility. Desire and love have their own logic separate from economical appropriation.

(13:) Marion's gift is distinct from economy, as his *erotic phenomenon* of love, as a sort of gift, must avoid exchange and economy at all costs. Yet for Derrida, gift

[9] Caputo's formulation can help here: "Is the impossible lodged in a givenness that can never be intended or in an intention that can never be given? Depending on the answer, the transgression of the old Enlightenment, the movement beyond the constraints imposed by modernity's conditions of possibility, the apology for the impossible, will take either of two very different forms which bear the proper names Marion and Derrida." John D. Caputo, "Introduction" to *God, The Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon. (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 7–8.

and economy place contradictory demands upon us, and in order to keep the gift from falling into total economic appropriation, the gift is accorded the name "the impossible." The two seemingly polarized, dialectical, and contradictory concepts of gift and economy do, in fact, have a means of relation.[10] Yet the relation between gift and economy culminates in an unreconcilable *aporia* that is enacted by the frustrating "indecision" between them. Such indecision is the result of either the privation of desire for either, or the profusion of desire for both, and is the point at which one must fashion a response. (14:) This *aporia* can be seen at work in his deconstruction of "generosity" in Baudelaire's "Counterfeit Money." Derrida concludes that generosity – which he defines as the "desire to give" – demands both the intent to give a gift, as well as a hope for something in return for that gift. Thus, generosity can only result in an exchange with the other. Yet as Marion concludes, since desire is not economical, on the grounds that it harbors its own rationality, then generosity – or the desire to give – can play an important, participatory role in the gift's being-given. The gift comes from its own register of givenness, and love/desire comes from an "elsewhere" independent of a lover's cognitive apprehension.[11] (15:) The result of love having an "elsewhere" is that when one desires and attempts to give, the giver *participates* in the moment or event of the gift. Participation is an essential element of the overall gift event for Marion, for one's participation in an event does leave one in any such control over it. Therefore, one can generously give a gift that does not demand a return-gift from its recipient, for one's desires are filtered through participation in the *event*. Yet since Derrida insists upon desire remaining economical, then any intent to give *out of* generosity can only result in a "gift of debt" to others, never (ever, ever) the free and unbridled gift *as such*. Debt is that which is "given" to the other, and this is because one can determine that desire, a priori, by its very definition, always wants something in return, for it originates "in the other" to whom one finds oneself already indebted.

[10] Derrida even considers deserting the word "Gift," "since this word finally is self-contradictory, I am ready to give up this word at some point." Jacques Derrida, "On the Gift" in *God, The Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 67.

[11] It is important to recall, also, the role of "the other" in the coming/stalling of the gift. For Derrida, "the other" is another cause for the ruptures between gift and desire, while for Marion, though the other plays an important role in phenomenology, it is givenness – not the other – that causes the "first" rupture. Recall that the gift need not have a giver (nor does it always need a recipient).

9.2 Gift and Desire in the Context of Phenomenology and Deconstruction

9.2.1 Derrida and Deconstruction

These central tensions between Derrida and Marion on the gift and desire are reflected in their approaches of deconstruction and phenomenology respectively. Derrida's phenomenologically inspired deconstruction seeks to break from the phenomenological tradition by uncoupling theoretical reason from the hindrance of practical reason.[12] One's reasoning according to the *telos*, interest, aim, and intent of practical reason predetermines the ways in which phenomena appear or "give" themselves in speculative reason, which should remain unconditional (*unbedingt*). Since the gift can only happen independent of one's conscious knowledge or insight, these interests or desires preclude the gift's *arrival* according those interests being unconditioned, open, and "disinterested." Disinterestedness must be total. To attain disinterestedness one must be open towards the empty spaces of difference and waiting for that which is to come. For as long as one remain disinterested, deconstruction can allow access to that which was previously closed or sealed-off according to the interests to which one is beholden in practical reason. Disinterestedness helps to free the way from any obstruction that might limit the impossible experience or occurrence of the gift event.

Further, deconstruction does not work according to what has happened in the past, and is indeed not "experience driven." This is because any philosophy that is "experience driven" employs a desire to recreate or represent something that happened in the past through the access of some kind of stable transcendental essence. Deconstruction, which does not attribute a subject with an "intentionality" that marks "lived experience as philosophy's sole legitimate point of departure" instead begins in the intuitive disruptions of *différance*, the "giver" of expression.[13] There is no subject capable of shouldering the possibility of acting as the originator of the gift. One reason for this is that Derrida's semiotics is thought by him to be sutured to the manifold of difference, not to a desiring subject who experiences the variation of differences. Of course, given the emphasis this theme has in the works of his French philosophical contemporaries, Derrida could not have *ignored* the topic of desire. He certainly had to be aware, for example, of the "intratheoretical" work of Kristeva, who openly challenged semiotics for its remaining limited, precisely for its not allowing access to "desire." In *Desire in Language* Kristeva accepted that semiotics could lead one to observe the multifarious "play" of signifiers *in language*,

[12] Recall here in *Rogues* where Derrida refers to Husserlian phenomenology as reflective of the Kantian "conditioning" of theoretical reason with the duty of practical reason. See also Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin, 1965), pp. 126–28.

[13] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 10.

but it only could aid in one's understanding of one's disinterested relationship with "origins." For her, "semiotics" cannot properly address the question of desire, for this "science of linguistics has no way of apprehending anything in language, which belongs not with the social contract but with play, pleasure or desire."[14] "Language" is not merely a series of socially constructed signs, but a vast process of apprehension via the affections of "desire," which relate according to a certain "signifying process." Yet, Derrida still rejects desire from playing a role in the signifying process, in part because it is too interconnected with "voluntarism" (c.f. *Speech and Phenomena*). There can be no voluntarism of "the will" when it comes to the experience of "meaning." One does not choose or decide upon meaning but rather "deconstruction happens to us." Phenomenological intentionality, the apprehension of the will, and the interests of desire all seek the control of expression. This is one of the central problems that run throughout Husserl's 1901 *Logical Investigations* (most importantly the first investigation), which subsequently leads Derrida to question the ways in which "the sign" functions independent from "intentional acts" in the 5th and 6th of Husserl's *Investigations.* For Husserl, as Derrida critiqued, the sign functions like a tool according to the will of the one performing the reduction, and thus the force of the sign is "tamed" and reduced to *Bedeutung*, or meaning. The desire, choice, or intent of the one "interpreting" those signs get in the way of the infinite, free play that *prelinguistic* signifiers have to express. This free play is not motivated or initiated by a desiring subject who "means," but by the undistinguishable force of *différance*, which does not give "meaning" but "sense" (*Sinn*).

This is why meaning, much like the event of the gift, must "happen" upon us. There is no "wanting to say" that can express sense in any firm or infallible way, and similarly there is no way in which the gift can be "intended." Unlike phenomenology, deconstruction thrives from the *involuntary* action or force of expression that is not capable of being *grasped* by the efforts of consciousness according to a resolute or determinate subject or agent who "animates" the sign and thereby gives "it a *Geistigkeit*."[15] Expression must be freed from any voluntary and conscious exteriorization. Instead of phenomenology, wherein the shackled prisoners can only imagine, desire, and construct that which the flickering flame behind them casts in shadows upon the wall, deconstruction is the liberating force that unshackles them, not as a result of their desire or will to be free, but on the "grounds" of *différance,*

[14] Reflective of her Lacanian influence, Kristeva holds that language is not operative according to a system of socially constructed signs, as in the case of Derrida, but comes about through a "signifying process," namely, through desire. This lends to the understanding that one is affected both by one's social structures, as well as one's unconscious drives and desires. Certainly Derrida was well aware of these critiques, but it is yet to be determined as to whether or not he escapes them. Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York, NY: Columbia Press, 1986), p. 26.

[15] As Derrida contends, in Husserl's *Investigations* "expression is a voluntary exteriorization; it is meant, conscious through and through, and intentional. There is no expression without the intention of a subject animating the sign, giving it a *Geistigkeit*." Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 33.

which freely gives without that gift being known.[16] More specifically, meaning is disrupted by "the gift." Within the text there is what Derrida calls "…the disruptive force of deconstruction" that suspends that text from fixing and economizing meaning.[17] Since the *aporetic* relationship between gift and economy must "exceed the limits of […] even philosophy" the gift might here be understood as that which does the specifically disruptive work within "tight" or "restricted" economies of meaning; forms of desiring-to-say that seek the control of expression.[18] Deconstruction must "just happen" without one's involvement. As he puts it his 1983 "Letter to a Japanese Friend," "deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one" because its very movement is in the disruption of one's will to proceed structurally and methodologically.[19] Methods are the product of the intent and purposiveness of desiring subjects, and while desiring subjects may "get" what they want, they don't get what deconstruction might have for them.[20] Deconstruction yields or *gives way* to the force of expression, and when "deconstruction takes place, it is an event."[21] The gift operates at the level of this event of deconstruction's taking place.

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[16] Recall Derrida's claim that under Husserl's thesis "expression" becomes an intentional, entirely voluntaristic movement that takes place in consciousness: "..the concept of intentionality remains caught up in the tradition of a voluntaristic metaphysics – that is, perhaps, in metaphysics *as such*." Ibid., p. 34.

[17] Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul Deman*. (New York: Columbia University press, 1986), p. 73.

[18] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 30.

[19] And Derrida continues: "Deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one. Especially if the technical and procedural significations of the word are stressed. It is true that in certain circles (university or cultural, especially in the United States) the technical and methodological "metaphor" that seems necessarily attached to the very word deconstruction has been able to seduce or lead astray. Hence the debate that has developed in these circles: Can deconstruction become a methodology for reading and for interpretation? Can it thus be allowed to be reappropriated and domesticated by academic institutions?" Jacques Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in *Derrida and Différance*, eds. David Wood and Robert Bernasconi (Warwick: Parousia, 1985), p. 4. As one commentator puts it concerning this rejection of "method," Derrida is "careful to avoid this term because it carries connotations of a procedural form of judgment. A thinker with a method has already decided how to proceed." Richard Beardsworth, *Derrida and the Political* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), p. 4.

[20] Deconstuction is about openings of expression and "releasing" possibilities. Jacques Derrida, *Points …: Interviews, 1974–1994*. ed Elisabeth Weber (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 429.

[21] And Derrida continues: "It is not enough to say that deconstruction could not be reduced to some methodological instrumentality or to a set of rules and transposable procedures. Nor will it do to claim that each deconstructive "event" remains singular or, in any case, as close as possible to something like an idiom or a signature. It must also be made clear that deconstruction is not even an act or an operation. Not only because there would be something "patient" or "passive" about it (as Blanchot says, more passive than passivity, than the passivity that is opposed to activity). Not only because it does not return to an individual or collective subject who would take the initiative and apply it to an object, a text, a theme, etc." Jacques Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in *Derrida and Différance* eds. David Wood and Robert Bernasconi (Warwick: Parousia, 1985), p. 4.

9.2.2 Marion and Phenomenology

Derrida relied on the earlier Husserlian development of intentionality in the *Logical Investigations*, even claiming that "a patient reading of the *Investigations* would show the germinal structure of the whole of Husserl's thought."[22] Yet in his interpretation of intentionality, Marion mostly relies on the "intentional acts of consciousness" developed in the 1913 *Ideas* (esp. *Ideas I*), which after 1910 is claimed by Husserl to be the basis of allowing him to insist upon "Philosophy as Rigorous Science." In *Ideas I*, Husserl proposed that phenomenology can suspend the natural standpoint and is therefore not a science "of fact," but is one that is non-derivative in its "pure" or "eidetic" inquiries into the various modes of appearing *independent* from "objective" facts. It is likely that Marion is interested more in the *Ideas* for it is there that Husserl's charge for phenomenology becomes more explicit: to have a "new way of looking at things" through the performance of various reductions that allow one to access things in their most basic, essential, non-contingent, and a priori states of being.[23] Yet despite the differences in Husserl's development of intentionality (which were explored in previous chapters) between these two volumes of work, Marion never faults Derrida's project for having an incorrect reading of Husserlian intentionality. Instead, Marion accepts a number of conclusions made by Derrida in *Speech and Phenomena*, namely because Husserl's approach, even concerning "givenness," is centered on the subject's attempt to access that which appears in consciousness through a *pure* and *eidetic* science that is intended or "directed upon the universal in its original intuitability."[24] Marion's redux version of a phenomenology of givenness ultimately demotes intentionality from playing a significant role, and Marion instead emphasizes the importance of "giving" intuition (often paying little attention to Husserl's distinction between "sensuous" intuition, and "categorical" intuition). For Marion, one can even employ phenomenology to further reduce the dichotomies that appear to exist even within consciousness, those between intention and intuition and their corresponding distinctions, such as that between activity and passivity.

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[22] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1973), p. 3. Though there is some debate concerning the significance of the transitions Husserl makes in his thought between the two flagship collections of the 1901 *Investigations* and the 1913 *Ideas*, neither Marion nor Derrida signal to any importance of what some have named the "early" and "late" Husserl. Those who have expressed any need for imagining this distinction suggest that it is rooted within Husserl's emphasis upon "transcendental idealism," which Husserl espouses in the 1913 *Ideas,* yet does not raise as a topic in his *Investigations* 13 years earlier. Thus, many suggest that there is a kind of "transcendental turn" in his thinking.

[23] Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. William Alston and Georege Nakhnikian (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), Ibid., p. 43, cf. 46. In general, Husserl's *Ideas I* is arguably the more influential of the two volumes of the *Ideas*, and is, it seems, the volume Marion appears to privilege. Yet in general, Marion often relies more closely on *The Idea of Phenomenology*.

[24] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, Volume II*, trans W.R. Boyce Gibson (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972), p. 11.

However, although Marion "discards" intentionality, he does not "disregard" it. Where Derrida attempts to entirely jettison intentionality from deconstruction, Marion seeks to subvert (or "invert") intentionality to the overruling power of phenomenological intuition. Husserl's phenomenology is too rich in *intention* and lean in *intuition*, whereas Derrida's deconstruction is too rich in *intuition,* and lean in *intention*. In this sense, Marion's phenomenology of givenness might be seen as a kind of "carburetor" that seeks to finely tune the mixture between intuition and intention, which are often misunderstood according to a passive/active dyad. Marion wishes to "to play and win on both scores," of deconstruction and phenomenology in order to retain selected elements of both.[25] While any directedness of consciousness cannot have a universal essence as its focal point of interest, there is a sense in which "intent" as it relates to "desire" is kept by Marion, namely, as he imports aspects of "desire" into intuition. Yet this is certainly not the Husserlian "intentional acts" that form a grounding of the 5th and 6th of the *Logical Investigations*. Instead, for Marion one might have desire *for* the appearance of a thing in such a way that the phenomenon can be given in conjunction with its being desired. Desire does not *ensure* the phenomenal arrival of gift, yet it also does not *preclude* its coming. Most importantly, perhaps, is that desire is even "frustrated" or transgressed by the active, excessive work of givenness. This is indeed inherent within the very definition of desire, which, were it to be "satisfied," it would cease to operate as such as a "resource" of lack. Givenness has the power to satisfy *particular* desires, but in a way that is not entirely known by the one who does the desiring. Overall, one's attempt to perform the reductions (the transcendental-phenomenological, the *eidetic*, and Marion's own reduction to givenness), which all bear some degree of effort, must involve some kind of engagement *with* desire. Yet the performance of bracketing and the active suspension of constitutive phenomena entail that desire *actively* becomes passive and *receptive*. This is quite distinct from Husserlian intentionality in that both givenness and desire are given their own registers or *ratio*, and therefore need not flow from a cognitive directedness upon things. Yet one is still capable of experiencing the phenomenality of these forms of rationality, namely on the grounds of the paradoxical assurance or "negative certainties" that they provide independent from the control of economy, possibility, or the noetic, mental activity of perceiving.

How, though, do these things "give themselves" in relation to love? In spite of there not being any explicit engagement with either love or desire in Heidegger's work, it is curious that Marion insists that Heidegger held "love, as [the] basic *motive* for phenomenological understanding" and to be phenomenology's "privileged theme."[26] Is Marion here *claiming* that love is implicitly central to Heidegger's work, or is Marion applying a liberal interpretation to Heidegger's understanding of phenomenology's supposed "privileged themes" in order to reinterpret

[25] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 164.

[26] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness,* trans Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 324.

phenomenology and its "strict sciences" according to what Marion thinks to be more fundamentally human-being-in-the-world? At the very least, for Marion love has been and still is the "privileged theme" of philosophy in general, and of phenomenology in particular, for they both should follow the interests of love according to their distinctly unique forms of thinking. To some degree at least, love motivates one's dedication to allowing things to appear on their own accord. Love drives one to and through the reductions in order to arrive at the finer minutia and details of "things," the clarification of which is certainly a goal of phenomenology. The performance of the reductions takes a certain *interest* in the vast appearance of things, inspired by a presumed hope that their surprising manifold of appearances might indeed appear. Surely, at the very least, the love of the phenomenologist *matters*. It matters in terms of *how* one presents oneself to those things, how those things give (along with their phenomenal content) a certain prescribed comportment in order for them to become intelligible, and how one comes to experience the excessiveness of those things and the generous *potentia* out of which they operate. This is perhaps one reason as to why, for Marion, when a gift appears *in* phenomenal presence (although not as a "present" as such), there is a sense in which it must be desired or loved in order for the *adonné* to receive itself and its givenness. This is not a desire that *makes* the gift appear or *insists* upon it, but one that plays the role of activating the "passive" modes of intuition or "awareness," even its outcomes are inevitably marked with frustration.

9.2.2.1 The Gift *Par Excellence*

There is another, rather different sense in which Marion's understanding of love relates with the gift, namely, concerning the gift as given and received by others. In this case, either love is a motivation behind a gift's being given, or love is an appropriate response to a gift. Whenever the gift arrives *some-one* gave it, and whenever someone gives a gift, it bears the marks of love. Irrespective of whether or not one "knows" who the giver was, every gift given entails a certain kind of knowledge of the gift by either the giver *or* receiver. Every gift event does not necessitate a giver *and* receiver, although there must be at least one of the two involved. In this case, love necessarily would be involved in either a gift's being received *or* its being given. At the very least, the gift would be given lovingly, or lovingly received. Love, as the gift *par excellence,* is an experience of *the* gift *as such*. Although love may very well interact with the givenness of all things, Marion indeed makes the important distinction between the gift *as such* and the more colloquial *es gibt* of that which is given or "appears" to consciousness. According to the latter, all things, in general, are "given." Yet, it is not claimed that *all* things "given" are gifts *of* love or that there is no variation in *quality* among that which is given. To do so would be to reduce love, which is associated with the gift as such, to a certain banal abstraction (from which Marion precisely is attempting to save love). However, this indicates a certain problem, for the language of "gift" already presupposes a certain relation with love. Is there a way to avoid the banal abstraction that all phenomenal content

and data are "given" in accord with "love?" What about cases in which there is no "other?" If love is necessarily a part of givenness, and if there is no recognizable "other" from whom these gifts come, would this necessitate that Marion's project be sent back to the original concern raised by Derrida, that givenness implies a "cosmic giver," a point of origination, a god? Further, if all things given are given in accord with love, what of the "givenness" of violence, trauma, addiction, and a host of other forms of negative sociality? How are they given in a "loving" way?

One way of treating these intertwining problems is to invoke a certain conception of desire that is described by Marion in *The Erotic Phenomenon,* namely, that desire, although often metonymic with love, is on occasion distinguished from it. There is a certain sense in which love begins in and as the "desire to love." Although there are problems associated with any attempt to synthesize love with the giveness of *all things*, it could be that all things, even the most "common," could be given in such a way that desire is accorded a particular role or place in their being given. After all, in the experience of saturated phenomena, one is "shocked" by excess, and one's desires are therefore "transgressed" in varying degrees. If it is in fact the case that all phenomena have varying "degrees of givenness" as Gschwandtner interprets, then they also carry varying degrees of how one's desires are shocked or transgressed. To a certain extent, this leads back to the importance of the distinction between givenness and the gift. Givenness performs with the abundance to saturate and exceed all things that are given in general (with the minor exception of "poor" or "common-law" phenomena), whereas "the gift" as such is a specific "case" of givenness that is capable of enacting an abundance of saturation. Since Marion insists that his claim "the more reduction, the more givenness," is to be taken as a phenomenological dictum, "the gift," when further bracketed and reduced, easily provides more intuitive "data" to consciousness due to both it's "dazzling" excess as well as its relation with the gift *par excellence*, love.

Another matter concerning the gift/love relationship in Marion's work is that it cannot be dissociated from his persistent reliance upon the apophatic themes of privation, lack, and nothingness. Love is described as a gift that one does not *have* to give. Desire is conceived as the "resource" of lack. One does not "have" love, for indeed love is developed in certain relations with desire, which embodies particular relations with lacking. In *The Erotic Phenomenon*, love *is* often conceived as the gift of nothing, of not-having, and this redefines love according to its means of relation with the other. When loving, one allows the other the opportunity to love, and thus to love is, in part, to give to the other the resource of "one's privation" or "lack." Despite the seemingly abundant resources a self-confident ego may have to give, if it is incapable of giving it's "privation" in the form of *receiving* the gift of love from the other, then it is incapable of *giving* love. This marks the paradox of love, as it is inherently founded upon privative desire. This is one reason as to why Marion claims in *Being Given* that the "best" gifts are those that effectively *give nothing,* and why he demonstrates in *Certitudes négatives* that the most saturated of

phenomena are paradoxically the least likely to reify in an object.[27] Love, in the form of lacking, and the gift, in the dimension of deprivation, are what allow for a certain "dazzling" excess of intuitive data and the necessary overcoming of "who" one thinks one "is." This all remains consistent with Marion's interest in integrating a certain *para-doxical* logic into the fabrics of our everyday life-worlds. The ways in which one takes it that things straightforwardly appear, seem, "shine" (*schein*), or "glorify" (*doxa*) is precisely *the means of relating with things that phenomenology must seek to overcome*. The things themselves, in accord with their varying levels of saturation, invite us to go beyond (*para*) their appearances, and Marion turns to givenness as the register for conceiving of this very difference between straightforward appearance, and *how* that appearance itself *calls* one to conceive of it otherwise. That is, one's attunement to givenness is not to mark only the banal *way* things appear, but rather precisely the opposite: how things paradoxically, each and every time, are to given *otherwise from how they straightforwardly appear*. This is one contribution Marion wishes to make to phenomenology.

9.3 The Finishing Act of Constitution

In recent decades, phenomenologists have sought to recover the essential elements of its method after the supposed weaknesses Derrida and others have revealed it to potentially bear. Derrida's deconstruction of intentionality, and his efforts to study "the gift" were at the center of how those weaknesses were revealed. Marion's response to Derrida's deconstructive efforts led Marion to reconceive of "the gift," "the given" (the *adonné*), and the gifted – themes that are at the heart of how one experiences the generosity of things as they are given to one in consciousness, and the ways in which those things can be studied through a phenomenological optics. The givenness of things in this sense indeed already implicates certain aspects of love and desire. Can that which is desired be "given?" Can love, as a gift *par excellance* also entail certain implications for Marion's phenomenology of givenness? If the gift necessitates a giver or receiver, then love is already implicated. "The gift" as such is not given without love. Yet to what degree might one implicate love in phenomenology more generally, in the "givenness" of all things? If all things are given in such a way that they come from the fountainhead of givenness, which Marion maintains to be "saturating," paradoxical, and excessive, and if givenness gives that saturation in varying degrees, (ranging from quantity, relation, quality, and modality) then it remains necessary to see how even the most basic or "common" of everyday phenomena can be given with at least some level of saturation. And *if* all things given bear at least some degree of saturation, then such things have some necessary relation to the "family" of the gift in general, thus also holding at least a

[27] See also Marion's "The Banality of Saturation" in Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Christina Gschwandtner and others (New York NY: Fordham University Press, 2008).

minimal relation to “the gift as such,” which is the highest of imaginable “gifts.” Therefore, since “the gift” bears a resemblance to love, which is the gift *par excellence*, then all gifts bear at least some *degree* of “love.” If so, then it may be possible to suggest that there are also varying *degrees of love* that coincide with those of givenness. From loves ranging from short-lived episodes that end in the cessation of such desires, to loves that suffer the opening of Marion’s erotic reduction in the profusion of desire, love offers to givenness a certain “why” of the appearance of things. Despite Husserl’s attempt to suture all of the reductions to a certain hermeneutic reflection upon one’s “finishing act” or constitution of phenomena, his approach still remained too distant from the realities of what Marion conceives as one’s “ultimate concern.” Love is precisely one’s ultimate concern, and it therefore should be that of phenomenology also. When seen in concurrence with the reduction to givenness, Marion’s erotic reduction is poised to reach the heart of such a concern, namely, through providing a way in which one can *ask* how and to what *degree* one can bear and endure being “the first to love.” Such a combination of reductions (the erotic reduction and the reduction to givenness) may even result in a more accurate interpretation of how, phenomenologically understood, love can endure and shoulder the givenness and ubiquity of all things. Yet love’s definition cannot be reduced to an abstract level of “preference” or to a debased and banal sense of how love “gives” all things. In order to avoid these concerns it would be necessary to conceive of how there are varying degrees of love, and in which particular degrees it can and cannot be said that love is yoked to the generosity of things themselves as they are given in phenomenal experience. Only then would it be possible to claim that “love,” in the most phenomenological of senses, indeed withstands, endures, and “bears all things.”

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Appendix

On the Gift and Desire: An Interview with Jean-Luc Marion (Jean-Luc Marion, Jason W Alvis, *Café L'ecriture*, Sorbonne, Paris, 23, October 2012)

JA As you are aware, I am currently working on understanding the connection in your work between the gift and Eros; givenness, of course, and Eros. You mention in *The Erotic Phenomenon* that love is a gift that one doesn't have – to love is to give a gift one doesn't have, in the first place, to give. This reveals some immediate connection, I believe, between these concepts. You also, in *Etant Donne*, at the very end, in the last paragraphs, in gesturing towards Heidegger you conclude the book by saying that love is the motivity, the force behind, and for the sake of understanding phenomenology. And then in the beginning of the *Erotic Phenomenon* you say that "all of my work, up until this point, has been so I can write this book [*Le Phenomene Erotique*]." This possibility of a connection between gift and desire/love could use some explanation. Can you say something about how you understand those connections, and their significance?

JLM When I started to study philosophy, I was very much impressed that an issue, which was so important to me (for personal reasons, indeed, but also as a Christian), the question of love, was *so* underestimated, to put it mildly, by classical metaphysics. That is, from Descartes on, (perhaps from Late Scholasticism to Nietzsche) to some extent the issue of love, the question of love, looks more and more degraded into passion, pathology, irrationality and so on. [And this is] in contrast to the central role played by love in our daily experience indeed, and in the first attempts to build a philosophy, where love was central, [for example] in Plato, in Christian thought, but to some extent in Aristotle as well. So, I started to make the "long walk" around this misleading interpretation. So in fact, as early as *The Idol and The Distance* the question of love and gift was, in fact, already asked. Then as a provision for the future I published the collection of papers, *Prolegomena to Charity*. But in fact, what I

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needed was to deconstruct the two main objections to a possibility of love, which were first [rooted] – in our understanding of the *ego* as pure understanding. And this meant, for me, to deconstruct the standard interpretation of the Cartesian ego, and the other thing, the question of the primacy of being over/against love. So it was a long way to go. And I first found my way out of this misunderstanding of love with the question of givenness, when to my surprise, I discovered that givenness could be seen as the core of the phenomenological innovation, and not intended as a new *access* to the question of love at all by phenomenologists, but it *could* be the right door into a new understanding of love. That is what I would say. So really, by reading and studying Husserl, suddenly I've seen the first light in the tunnel. And in parallel, over these many years, I was helped to keep the question of love alive by studying theology, where indeed, there are more [questions of love] than are conceived – at least in some theologians, though not all of them. If you read French, I think that *La Rigueur Des Choses* could help [in better understanding that connection].

JA Yes, of course, your "autobiographical" interviews.

JLM Yes, my intellectual autobiography. It is there that I try to explain the consistency of my work.

JA You mentioned that you were on a path and that you've started to see the light to solutions to considering love. Would you say that you are still on the "love" path, so to speak? Or do you sense that this particular chapter of your work has come to a pause?

JLM No, no – I don't know what yet what will be the next step, but I will try to reverse the relation between love and being (or love and, say, theory, theory of knowledge) and to explain in further details how it may be on the basis of the decision taken in love – according to love, in the field of love, in the horizon of love – that we decide in advance our understanding of being, or our understanding of *what it means to know something*. The first step for me was to free love from the preconditions imposed on it by the ontological *a priori*, or even the interpretation of knowledge as knowledge of objects and so forth. But now, I would try to see how far when we know it in fact [is on the basis of and] comes from a decision, in terms of love, as well as when we experience being, or a way of being, and so on. This comes from the previous attitude, behavior, which can be explained only according to love. This is a reverse situation. When we agree or disagree to a theoretical proposition, to some extent – the question is how far – this follows up from a deeper decision about what we are ready to accept or not, because our way to behave in front of truth, falsity, denial, lying, etc., is not always, and perhaps not first an issue of demonstration. It is an issue of acceptance, affirmation, commitment, and things of this sort. [For example] the very usual question about the – questions of "a strong belief" – what does that mean, a strong belief? – when you say that "truth amounts in the end to a

strong belief supported by good reason," what is that? Why believe? What is supported? How far? What do we mean by "supported?" Why not "a weak belief" with "strong reasons" (which we know is ideology)? There are many other possibilities [in this context]. So I would like very much to deal with love without [dealing with] the rules of theoretical statements; to do with love what Nietzsche has done with will to power. [I think that] when we deconstruct the claim to objective truth, [we] in fact find [something] deeper: What is indeed at work is the will to power. But the will to power itself "rests," so to speak, on the question of love. This *may be* the next step [in my work], if I can.

JA And this engagement between "will" and "love" is, of course, intimately related to the concept of desire, which maintains a set of problems that we can't get away from in this context.

JLM Yes, but the question of desire itself remains puzzling, because I don't take for granted that desire may be the last authority. I mean that, from time to time we face the possibility of a lack of desire. We should not take for granted that desire is always working, because we cannot control desire; we cannot produce it. So where is it coming from? That is the point. And desire as such is less an answer than [it is] a question. This is the limitation of the first psychoanalysis, where, [in order] to put desire beyond question, Freud had to base it on the [drive,], which is a very undecided physiological and psychological basis.

JA The *Trieb*, the drive.

JLM Yes, the drive – the drive is not, as a hunger, strong. It is indeed not very stable. So why do we have – though not always – from time to time, some desire? The mystery of desire is that it has no object. That's the point. Real desire has no object and cannot be decided by us. So what is going on there? You have the easier, but very unsatisfactory answer to say that desire is the psychological name of the physiological drive, and so forth. But first, when you have said that, you have said nothing. What does that mean? After all, the point is not the – very questionable – objective basis, but that it [the drive] is a psychological fact. My concern is about this type of psychological fact. We have to deal with that. So this may be the next step for me.

JA This sounds similar to Lacan's concept of desire. Have you gestured towards this topic of desire explicitly in your work?

JLM Yes, I made a first step in this direction with my book on Augustine, [*Au Lieu de Soi*], which is now in translation. In fact, the last chapter, where I study the reason and theory of love, is about this unknowability of desire. And Augustine is, indeed, a main thinker in the tradition of desire. I think that Lacan was very well aware that there is no objective desire, which is an Augustinian position, and [one that] is a very polemical thesis against Freud.

But Freud, as a follower of Schopenhauer, had admitted, I think, that there was an objective desire. But it is not clear whether, for instance, the final goal of [Freud's understanding of] desire is self-conservation or preservation. You can argue that, again quite easily, [but of course] it's deeper than that. But I think that Lacan was better on that [topic] than Freud.

JA Another figure that is worth mentioning here is Derrida, so perhaps we can discuss him a bit. When Derrida works with the gift, very little does he talk explicitly about desire and love. When he does engage with the topic of love, he mentions that it is necessarily narcissistic. Perhaps this could have something to do with his position on the impossibility of the gift, and love's interconnection with economy?

JLM Possibly. It could sound a bit strange coming from me, but to *some* extent, Derrida did not push deconstruction far enough. I see this, for instance, on many points [he raised], for example, in his interpretation of love as selfish, as something narcissistic. Why would he think that? Because for him it remained obvious that love was a question of the self. And my point is that love is deeper than the self. In theology [love is based within] the Trinity, it is not [based upon] the self. As for the gift, his final statements about the gift, the condition of possibility of the gift, are, in the same way, [based upon] the condition of the impossibility of the gift. This is brilliant, no question, and actually right to some extent. Nevertheless, one can ask him back: "why do you take for granted that possibility/impossibility can be used that way, about the gift?" What you say is just that the possible/impossible are the main characteristics of being, according to metaphysics. What you said is just that love is not an object for metaphysics. And I agree with him on that, which was exactly my point. But it is not the end of the story, it's the beginning of the story. So, for me, it is very obvious that there was no discussion about how far the possible and the impossible could be used in thinking the case of love. It cannot be used even in the case of [thinking about] death; my death or that of the other. Both Heidegger and Levinas were very well aware that in *that* case, the possible/impossible are not convenient [ways for considering] death. So why would they, [the concepts of the impossible/possible], fit for the description of the gift? So, in many cases, I think that Derrida was not deconstructionist enough.

I have another explanation for that. The most powerful example of deconstruction I have experienced came, for me, from theology. Theology has no choice in the case of dogma, which just cannot fit the requirements of a standard philosophy today. [For example], the two natures of Christ are contradictory to [how we understand] the human and human behavior. So you have to deconstruct it [this contradiction]. The same thing goes for the doctrine of "the two wills," which are [thought to be] in the same person. [Or] when you consider the [problematic] questions of free will and divine omniscience. You need only to stop and consider [how] "will," human free will, decision and so forth, [do or do not relate with] the questions of cause, causation and reason. Upon careful consideration, you have to admit that free will remains *without* cause.

And philosophers today (for example, Davidson) are constantly, again and again trying to find out the causes or the reasons supporting our decisions. [But] in fact, an accurate phenomenological description of the decision making process will come to the conclusion that the most important the decision is, the less it is supported by good reason. When we go to this café or the other café in the square, I have some reasons to go here, rather than the next. I have some good reasons I can argue. But when you decide to love someone, what are your reasons? It is not that simple to explain – not only to explain, but for yourself to understand. Why do you go to *that* place to meet *that* person rather than the other person? These are questions I hope to raise in my future work.

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