ABSTRACT

Without Measure: Marion's Apophatic-Virtue Phenomenology of Iconic Love

Amy Antoninka, Ph.D.

Mentor: Thomas S. Hibbs, Ph.D.

I investigate Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of love and its relation to ethics. I argue that his phenomenology of love provides a possibility for developing ethics. I rely on the saturated phenomenon of the icon and his phenomenology of love. I establish that the icon provides a rich sense of relation, a need to modify certain appraisals of justice, and provides a descriptive account of the virtue of receptivity. In chapter one, I give an exegesis of Marion's phenomenology of the icon. He argues that the icon moves toward charity, yet does not relate to ethics. Experience of the icon gives transformed vision that voids universal laws and frees the beholder to experience communion. In chapter two, I provide three examples of iconic experience that emphasize the importance of justice for the icon in contrast to Marion's formulation that justice is equivalent to revenge. I argue that Marion attacks justice because of its link to a deontological definition; yet, freed from deontology, Marion makes room for an apophatic way that moves toward a virtue ethic. In chapter three, I look at Marion's reasons for leaving ethics out of the icon. His critique of Kantian ethics, as well as his use and critique of the Levinas suggest that he opposes modern metaphysical ethics. In discussion of the receptivity to the call of the Other, he relies on the virtues. This reliance shows that Marion has room for a descriptive account of ethics, and that ignoring ethics undermines his overall project. I investigate Marion's claim that the icon opens up to charity by reading the apophatic doctrine of the icon in concert with the erotic reduction. I conclude that

Marion's phenomenology can be viewed as a counter-ethics a way to see phenomenology as a virtue practice, to unify reason and love in ethics, to remove the ego from the central concern of ethics, and to see the need for openness and vulnerability to the iconic other.

Without Measure: Marion's Apophatic-Virtue Phenomenology of Iconic Love

by

Amy E. Antoninka, B.A., M.A.

A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of Philosophy

_____

Michael D. Beaty, Ph.D., Chairperson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved by the Dissertation Committee

_____

Thomas S. Hibbs, Ph.D., Chairperson

_____

Anne-Marie Bowery, Ph.D.

_____

Scott H. Moore, Ph.D.

_____

Stuart E. Rosenbaum, Ph.D.

_____

Peter Candler, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School
December 2009

_____

J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Page bearing signatures is kept on file in the Graduate School.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Hibbs, Bowery, Moore, Rosenbaum, Candler.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Love without measure perhaps seems a topic more fitting to a poet or a mystic than a philosopher. Yet, love decides in advance the orientation of humans. The poet gives a language to discuss it. The mystic gives a posture to receive it. The philosopher, however, gives questions. The questions of love derive neither from being nor knowing. They yield neither concrete conceptions nor rational explanations. Love bears the mark of what Jean-Luc Marion calls the principle of insufficient reason. Love has its own logic, the logic of the heart, and reason is insufficient to define the limitless, the infinite, the measureless.[1] Yet love concerns humans fundamentally. Love presents the possibility of the impossible.[2] Love makes eternity a present reality. Love makes the transcendent immanent. Love makes humans human. And love remains the first name of philosophy. Marion's phenomenology of love requires that appellation, utilizes the language of the poet (and the philosopher), and adopts the receptivity of the mystic (and the theologian). The questions of love are central here. They are: How does the icon open the possibility of love? How does love transform the relation of the self to the Other? And, does love provide an ethic by which every particular Other can be received as an icon?

Jean-Luc Marion explores the themes of the icon and love as early as his *Idol and Distance* (originally published in French in 1977/2001 in English) and the ground-breaking

---

[1] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 5.

[2] Or, as Marion calls it the "impossibility of the impossibility" meaning that being assured of love for eternity assures the present, past and the future of loving and being loved, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 26-37, 209-212.

God Without Being (1982/1991). Marion, a central figure in current phenomenology, maintains these themes as he (along with Jean-Francois Courtine, Jen-Louis Chretien, and Michel Henry among others) turns toward the relation of phenomenology to theology. Moving away from modern metaphysics, and its pursuit of knowledge about God as Being, Marion emphasizes a pre-modern understanding that God gives gratuitously as revelation. Modern attempts to equate God to philosophical concepts make God an idol, merely reflecting finite human capacities and understanding. Neither the experience of revelation nor the gift of love can be known according to metaphysical deductions of being. In addition to Marion's rich phenomenology of God as gift, he has written extensively on Descartes, Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida, and Levinas. Marion's writings have influenced the move away from the self and toward the Other. With his recent trilogy of books (*Reduction and Givenness,* 1989/1998*; Being Given,* 1997/2001*;* and *In Excess,* 2000/2004) he revisits and reinterprets phenomenology. In these works he emphasizes that the work of phenomenology is neither focused on Being, with Heidegger, nor on objects, with Husserl, but on phenomena that give themselves. These saturated phenomena, as they break through the limited horizons of individuals and exceed intuition, make space for the possibility of revelation. With his examinations of art and the icon (*The Crossing of the Visible*, 1991/2004), and love (*Prolegomena to Charity*, 1986/2002; and *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 2006/2007) he reintroduces the primacy of love to philosophy.

In Marion's phenomenology, as well as in Eastern Orthodoxy, and Catholicism the icon opens up to love. By connecting the icon to love (or charity – Marion uses them interchangeably) Marion proposes to explain the process by which relations are transformed from objectification into revelation. He asserts that the icon reveals the invisible glory of God - mediated through the saint, Virgin Mary, Christ, or another human - and awakens

love in the beholder. The beholder suspends judgment and allows the other to offer herself as a gift irreducible to an object of comprehension, mastery or manipulation, as a source of infinite responsibility, and love. Beyond Marion's account, the theology of the icon reveals that the love, disclosed through the icon, refines the beholder who is moved to imitate the works of charity and compassion depicted in the icon. Love, mediated through the iconic, illuminates the injustice of the world and inspires the beholder to alleviate suffering. Eastern Orthodox theology allows that other humans, as image bearers, are icons of God.[3] Bringing the Orthodox theology of the icon to bear on Marion's account I hope to provide a place for the unmasking of injustice central to the Orthodox account but incommensurate with Marion's, and to develop an apophatic ethic that agrees with Marion that revelation and transformation occur with prayerful veneration.

Love appears in the developments of icon as image and the face of another person. In the first case veneration of the saint, Virgin, or Christ results from devotion to God. The veneration of the image, transferred as adoration to God, reflects back to the beholder the love of God. With the face love appears also as an act of faith, as a surrender to the gaze of the other person.[4] My goal in investigating Marion's phenomenology of love is to take seriously Marion's most recent investigation of love, and to allow what he calls the "erotic

---

[3] I use *Three Treatises on the Divine Images* by St. John of Damascus and *On the Holy Icons* by Theodore the Studite as authorities on icons and their function in the Eastern and Western Church. Concerning the theology of creation as iconic, I follow Vladimir Solovyov, "Beauty in Nature," in the *The Heart of Reality: Essays on Beauty, Love, and Ethics,* trans. Vladimir Wozniuk (University of Notre Dame Press, 2003); and Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995). For contemporary appraisals of the theology of the icon I rely on Leonid Ouspensky, *The Theology of the Icon* vol. 1and 2, trans. Anthony Gytheil, (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992); Vladimir Lossky and Leonid Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons* (Boston Book and Art Shop, INC, 1952); Michel Quenot, *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom*, trans. A Carthusian Monk (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002). Finally, I follow Pseudo-Dionysus and Maximus the Confessor in interpreting the apophatic way of entering into the experience of the icon.

[4] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 101.

reduction" to inform and deepen understanding of the icon as an image and a face. A final goal in examining love in relation to the icon is to return to the ethical with an enhanced sense of love and ask what a phenomenology of love of the face of the neighbor would look like.

The connection of love to the icon is the primary concern here. In the first chapter I give an exegesis of Marion's phenomenology of the icon. I sketch some of the commonalities of all icons - images and the face.[5] He argues that the icon moves toward charity, yet does not relate to ethics. Experience of the icon does not give universal laws. Instead, the icon gives transformed vision that voids universals and frees the beholder to experience communion. In chapter 2, I provide three examples of iconic experience that emphasize the importance of justice for the icon in contrast to Marion's formulation that justice is equivalent to revenge. I argue that Marion attacks justice because of its link to a deontological definition; yet, freed from deontology, Marion makes room for an apophatic way that moves toward a virtue ethic. Marion's descriptions resist universal maxims, yet offer the possibility for an ethic based on virtues of self-emptying, humility and self-sacrifice. In chapter 3, I look at Marion's reasons for leaving ethics out of the icon. His critique of Kantian ethics as well as his use and critique of the Levinasian injunction "Thou shalt not kill" suggest that he opposes modern metaphysical ethics; but he relies on the paradigmatic character of Jesus Christ to describe a self-emptying process akin to ethics. Marion's use of Jesus Christ is significant because He becomes an example of the virtues needed to approach the Other as an icon and to begin to formulate an ethic of receptivity to the iconic Other.

---

[5] In *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffery L. Kosky (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002) pp. 232-234, and *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* trans. Robyn Horner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), pp. 113-127 Marion equates the face and the icon. In *Crossing the Visible*, *Prolegomena to Charity* and *God without Being* he treats them separately.

In the fourth chapter I investigate Marion's claim that the icon opens up to charity by reading the apophatic doctrine of the icon in concert with the erotic reduction. Marion concludes the *Erotic Phenomenon* saying that I am assured of being loved because I was loved first. Since I was unable to love properly without first being loved, I wonder now: Can I love second?

Chapter Two: The Phenomenology of the Icon

Marion's account of the icon displays four unique qualities. First, the icon is a saturated phenomenon that gives itself as content to the mind that can neither conceptualize nor master it but experiences it as irregardable, immeasurable, unforeseen, and irreproducible. Second, icons appear in a paradox of invisibility made visible.[6] Focusing on the pupils, the place on the face where nothing can be seen, the beholder, in a position of vulnerability and exposure, is seen by the other. Third, the "otherness" experienced by the beholder consists neither of comprehension nor assimilation, but in feeling awe and bedazzlement, fear and joy, as the other is "presenced," or present as the gift of being present to the other's subjectivity. Fourth, the iconic experience opens onto charity. With the image the beholder's veneration is transferred to the prototype as adoration.[7] The faithful service of the saint and the saint's benevolent gaze inspire devotion and love in the

---

[6] Marion makes a distinction between the *l'invu* (or the unseen) and the invisible. Three sides of a box remain unseen even as one looks at the other three. The unseen sides can be constituted or represented in the mind. What Marion has in mind with the invisible becoming visible is not turning the box to see the other three sides, but an invisible that cannot be looked at (*l'invisable*, the untargetable, or irregardable) but is given and remains invisible. For example, I see that my gaze is seen by the other person just as I see that other person's gaze sees mine even though the gazes are not sensible according to sight. See *Prolegomena to Charity*, 81; *Crossing the Visible,* 25-29; *Being Given*, 240-241; *In Excess*, 109-113.

[7] In *Crossing the Visible*, (85-87) Marion summarizes the qualities of an icon in a slightly different way. My appraisal adds the face as icon to the list of general qualities. Marion's list describes the icon as image as 1. inexhaustible and irreducible to the spectacle; 2. liberating the image from mimetic rivalry between the visible and the invisible; 3. exposing the beholder through the process of veneration; and 4. transferring the veneration of the beholder to the prototype.

beholder. With the face the beholder becomes responsible for the other person to the point of relinquishing rights. In return, the beholder receives indispensability (by surrendering to responsibility the beholder becomes unsubstitutable to the other).

Marion's description of the icon as a saturated phenomenon requires some explanation. A saturated phenomenon gives itself to intuition in excess of what can be comprehended. The process by which objects are known by the ego is reversed. When the ego intends (or aims at) an object in order to understand it and represent it to consciousness, the ego grasps it, conceptualizes it (whether through perception, imagination, memory or evaluation). The saturated phenomenon as self-giving breaks through and interrupts the ego's horizon. The saturated phenomenon cannot be captured as an object (with Husserl) or as Being (with Heidegger). The intentional object is an intuited givenness, mastered by the ego's ability to know it. With a saturated phenomenon, perception is reversed. The ego does not conceptualize an object outside itself and make it present to the mind; the phenomenon gives itself as content (meaning), entirely from itself, and appears only insofar as it gives itself.[8] Negatively defined, saturated phenomena cannot be aimed at because they are unmeasurable; they cannot be anticipated because perception cannot bear to see them for their excessive intensity; they cannot be made analogous to anything because they cannot be reproduced; and they cannot be recounted accurately because the experience is indescribable.[9]

Though saturated phenomena provide a framework for understanding Marion's description of the icon (namely that they defy attempts to measure them according to quantity, quality, analogy, and cause), nearly any experience that cannot be repeated qualifies

---

[8] *Being Given*, 119-120; *In Excess,* 30-127.

[9] "Saturated Phenomenon," in *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn The French Debate*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson, ed. Jean-Francoise Courtine (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), pp. 199-202

as a saturated phenomenon. In fact Marion describes the event, the idol, and the flesh as saturated phenomena in addition to the icon. The event cannot be quantified because of the infinite number of descriptions that can be made of it from indefinite points of view. The idol is indeterminate according to quality because of the unbearable nature of its bedazzlement. The flesh undoes the category of relation by being both what touches or feels (affects), and what is touched or felt (affected). The icon cannot be defined by quantity, quality or relation, and also, it cannot be determined by cause.

> Like the historical event, [the icon] demands a summation of horizons and narrations, since the Other cannot be constituted objectively and since it happens without assignable end; the icon therefore opens a teleology. Like the idol, it begs to be seen and reseen, though in the mode of unconditioned endurance; like it the icon therefore confronts it. Like the flesh finally, it accomplishes this individuation by affecting the I so originally that it loses its function as transcendental pole; and the originality of this affection brings it close, even tangentially, to auto-affection.[10]

The degree of givenness of the icon makes possible the unpredictable: revelation (what Marion calls saturation of saturation).[11] The icon as a saturated phenomenon allows the breaking in of Revelation as a paradox that admits the impossible into possibility. With the example of Christ, quantity is exceeded as the historical event of his Incarnation continues to be told. Quality is suspended in that Christ cannot be seen by the senses; He is unbearable to according to the fear and joy that accompany perception. Christ saturates every possible horizon of relation; He is outside time, space, life, death and ability to name him. As an irregardable icon He escapes modality. He regards all witnesses without being constituted and transfers respect and veneration to God.[12]

More generally, as a saturated phenomenon, the icon cannot be constituted or looked at. With the icon one experiences an event unforeseen, inexhaustible, and unable to

---

[10] *Being Given,* 233

[11] *Being Given*, 235

[12] *Being Given*, 232-241.

be reproduced. The icon gives itself without reserve,[13] like an overexposed picture that appears blurry not because of a lack of light but because of an excess of light.[14] The beholder of the icon cannot foresee the icon's self-giving. Neither can the beholder

[13] "Saturated Phenomenon," 189

[14] "Saturated Phenomenon," 197. The question arises: How do I know whether I have experienced revelation or an idol, whether the picture is over exposed or just blurry? Inherent in Marion's phenomenology is an epistemological tension. On the one hand, the icon gives experience of the Unknowable irreducible to knowledge and concrete description. On the other hand, the experience of the Unknowable provides pure content such that I learn something ineffable: I *know* my previous attempts to conceptualize the transcendent fell short of the experience and that knowledge changes me. Though I have the change that takes place to demonstrate that something real occurred, I am at a loss to describe the experience of revelation as verifiable according to some standard of knowledge (such as justifiable true belief, as meeting the criteria for coherent or compatible truth). Yet, Marion asserts that love's knowledge surpasses knowledge of objects. Love succeeds in knowing another as subject. The person who loves knows that he loves, or does not love.

In this sense Marion's epistemological claim shows similarities to William James's claims about saints: love changes the individual. James argues mystical experience (of conversion, revelation, Oneness with God, love, etc.) can be verified, and accepted as true because of the exemplary lives the saints led (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985, Lectures 14 and 15). Marion however contends that this verification falls short because it remains a process of evaluating objects. My experience of love, of the self-giving of the icon, cannot be verified from a neutral stand point of observation. I must subjectively decide whether I love or do not love, whether I have experienced love as gratuitous gift. Merold Westphal comes closer to describing what an appropriate verification could be placing the grounds of justification on possibility. He says, "The difference between phenomenology and theology is that what the theologian offers on the basis of faith as actual, the phenomenologist describes as possible. ("Transfiguration as Saturated Phenomenon," *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture*, vol. 1, 1, 26-35, p.28)" His response then is that if the phenomenology is rigorous enough with respect to demonstrating possibility, Marion need not answer the epistemological question because it is irrelevant.

Yet, Marion himself poses an epistemological response that moves away from mere possibility to actuality. He states that everyone knows when they love or do not because of their response to the questions: "Have we helped our neighbor, given even from our surplus, loved the least among us? This is the only criteria, the only crisis, the only test (*Prolegomena to Charity*, 154-155)." With this questioning he affirms that love, given as the fruit of revelation – kindness, generosity, humility – can be verified, at least to the extent that one asks these questions and responds truthfully. The closest response comes from Stanley Hauerwas, following Iris Murdoch, who describes moral goodness in terms of moral vision. Relinquishing fantasies about the world one desires to see and embracing the world of reality through vision instructed by humility begins the process of attentively seeing the world "under the mode of the divine (*Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection*, (Notre Dame, Ind., Fides Publishers, 1974, 46))." This assessment of vision presents Marion's own concern that one see the Other not as a mirror of oneself, but as a subject. Marion adds that this vision only becomes possible if one is seen by and vulnerable to the other as well. In both cases the epistemological question is resolved through humility that does not impose its own desires, or make the Other a mirror, but resigns not to see the other as an object, and allows the other to present herself to be seen in her reality. The question "Have I experienced the icon's/Other's self-giving revelation?" can only be answered subjectively, "I am humbled. I love. The Other transgressed my horizon of conceptualization and I experienced otherness as pure content."

exhaustively comprehend the icon or reproduce the experience. The icon redefines the subject-object relation. Instead of the beholder grasping the object with comprehension, the beholder recognizes that the icon sees the beholder, and its inimitable effects: awe, bedazzlement, and amazement. Meditation before an icon reveals that the ultimate icon is a "living icon of charity,"[15] just as Christ, as an icon, is the living Revelation of love. Marion presents three types of icons: the image of a saint, the Virgin, or Christ; the face of another person; and love.[16] In addition to being saturated phenomenon, these icons give the invisible to be seen in the visible. In venerating the icon, the icon transfers the veneration to the One who gives all that gives, to God as adoration.

Icon as Image

Just as Marion defines saturated phenomena in contrast to regular phenomena,[17] an icon as image comes clear in contrast to art.[18] An icon as an image sets itself apart from art and other visible spectacles because it stands outside of perspective and does not appear upon or through a screen. Perspective, in painting, allows space to be organized, allows the unseen (*l'invu*) to be seen. An artist utilizes the invisible in creating perspective to situate objects, making visible objects more apparent.[19] With the icon the invisible reveals more

---

[15] *The Crossing of the Visible*, 85.

[16] This is not to say that there are only three types of icons, nor that these three represent exclusive categories. All three types have some commonalities with the others.

[17] Marion makes explicit two kinds of regular phenomenon in *Being Given*: poor (these phenomena include mathematical and logical concepts) and common (phenomena with which the intentional aim fulfills intuition, such as sense data, significations, or mechanical objects that can achieve adequation), 221-228.

[18] In *Being Given* (pp. 229-231) and *In Excess* (pp. 54-81) Marion uses the painting as his example of the idol because the painting begs to be revisited again and again without satisfying the gaze, yet mirroring desire. Marion says the painting shows to the beholder "not only or first what it gives to look at, but especially the measure of this look itself. Name your idol and you will know who you are. The first visible of a look is also an invisible mirror." (*In Excess,* 61)

[19] *The Crossing of the Visible*, 3-4, 11-12.

than the differentiation of objects on a canvas. A real gaze belonging to a human face looks out at the believer; and the believer discovers himself seen by the painted gaze of the icon.[20] A painting requires a viewer to see it; but, a painting, despite its inexhaustibility, remains an object of intention, something the viewer experiences as the consciousness aims at and interprets it.[21] The icon presents a new relation between the visible and the invisible. No longer utilized to organize objects according to three dimensional space or to reveal the unseen, the visible, painted face of the icon, serves to illuminate the invisible gaze of the saint.

The icon removes the screen that protects the viewer of a spectacle from being seen by that at which the viewer aims. The visible spectacles, available to the viewer on television, offer images to be seen on a screen, the television set, and filtered through the screen of what the viewer desires to see. The televisual spectacle makes the real world fictitious as it offers images that satisfy the desires of the viewers. As Marion plays on the double meaning of screen, he plays on the word "image," describing it both as something pictured, seen and evaluated, and as the creation of a public persona desirable to others. Thus, the spectacle delivers an image of an image: an idol of what the viewer desires to be (or desires to appear to be seen as).[22] The spectacle shields the viewer from the real first by providing a screen to hide behind, allowing the viewer to remain unseen by those whom she views, and second by displaying what she already desires to see on a screen. No screen or image of an image provides access to the icon. Instead, a third, altogether different meaning of image applies to the icon. The beholder expects to be seen by the benevolent person painted on wood. In a

---

[20] *The Crossing of the Visible*, 20-21.

[21] *The Crossing of the Visible*, 13.

[22] *The Crossing of the Visible*, 50-53, 85.

liturgical dialogue the beholder of the icon confesses that she is seen, vulnerable, constituted by the saint.

In the gaze of reverence that looks prayerfully to the icon, the invisible gaze of the saint looks at the beholder. The beholder glimpses the invisible as the gaze of the saint crosses the gaze of the beholder. Both the beholder and the saint are transformed as their gazes cross. The beholder undergoes a self-emptying in experiencing fear and joy.[23] The beholder feels humility and contrition as the saint's communion with and faithfulness to the prototype become evident. The saint "undoes his own prestige" and transfers the veneration of the beholder to the prototype as adoration. Both relinquish postures of grasping conceptualization and recollect the Original who fills them with content, inexhaustible and irreproducible meaning.[24] With the meaning given to the beholder through the icon, the beholder is transformed, given to himself. The beholder learns who he is from the Other who precedes him and whose gaze speaks to him in silence.[25]

Icons set themselves apart from idols because they deserve and demand veneration from the faithful. Whereas the idol results from the gaze that aims at it, "the gaze alone makes the idol,"[26] the icon summons sight and allows the visible to be saturated by the invisible. The icon gives rise to infinite gazing, always returning, teaching, correcting, and summoning the beholder. The icon as visible grace always surpasses itself. The icon only receives veneration in order to transfer it as adoration to the prototype, to the source of holiness. Through the icon the Unthinkable, God, "enters our thoughts and crosses them

---

[23] *The Crossing of the Visible*, 62, 86.

[24] *The Crossing of the Visible*, 65.

[25] *Being Given*, 233.

[26] *God without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. Thomas a Carlson (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 10.

out."[27] Icons, of course, may remain unseen, or may be seen idolatrously as art objects. Without the expectation on the part of the prayerful that something transcending the ego will be seen the image remains an idol. The icon, as freedom from the tyranny of images, as the appearance of the unfiltered reality of grace, provides the opportunity for communion and discloses love. "In the icon, the visible and the invisible embrace each other from a fire that no longer destroys but rather lights up the divine face for humanity."[28]

Icon as Face

The face of another person expresses a demand as well. Like Emanuel Levinas, Marion privileges the face as the path to access the alterity of another person. The face both sees and feels.[29] Like the image of a saint, the Virgin or Christ, the gaze of another person aims at and sees a beholder. Even as an icon may remain unseen or may be objectified as art or the spectacle, another person's iconicity may remain hidden or an object. One may experience love for another person as a passionate encounter. Yet, the other person remains an amalgamation of lived experiences in consciousness. The loved one may remain only an "accidental cause" of passionate feelings.[30] Or, the other person becomes merely an opportunity to love the feeling of loving.[31] To love one's own loving persists as self-

---

[27] *God without Being*, 18

[28] *The Crossing of the Visible*, 87.

[29] *In Excess*, 113.

[30] Marion compares this form of love to Blaise Pascal's description of what love is not. Pascal asserts that if someone loves another for beauty, judgment, rank, office, or other perishable qualities he does not really love, for the qualities are merely borrowed. *Pensees*, trans. W. F. Trotter, §323/688.

[31] A comparison to Søren Kierkegaard's understanding of preferential love makes the love of love, and love of Other clear. An exclusive love for one other person degenerates into love of self. According to Kierkegaard, "That passionate preference is another form of self-love. ….Just as self-love centers exclusively about this *self*—whereby it is self-love, just so does erotic love's passionate preference center around the one and only beloved and friendship's passionate preference for the friend. The beloved and the friend are therefore called, remarkably and significantly enough, the *other-self*, the *other-I*—for one's neighbor is the *other-you*, or more accurately, the third-man or equality...."

idolatry.[32] Even if one realizes the transcendence and irreducibility of another person and attempts to love intentionally, one can never reach the other person's uniqueness and essential alterity.[33] Marion says, "The intentionality of consciousness indeed opens consciousness infinitely, but opens it to the horizon of objects and thus closes it radically to the encounter with the other subject, with the other as such."[34]

One, however, is not stuck without possibility of truly encountering another person. To avoid self-idolatry and objectifying another one must give up trying "to see" the other person.[35] The other person whom one does see also aims at, sees and constitutes objects. If one avoids "seeing" the other person, avoids directing an intentional aim at the other person as an object to be grasped and mastered, the possibility opens up that the other person will offer himself. Marion insists that one can escape constituting and objectifying another in the crossing of invisible gazes. By gazing at the face, specifically the pupils of the eyes, the invisible becomes visible. The black vacuity of the pupils offers nothing to see, yet the beholder is aware that he is seen by the gaze of the other and aware of the other's self-giving.[36] The face gives itself in such a way that it cannot be mastered, envisaged or made to appear.[37] Marion privileges the face because it is flesh: it both affects and is affected, sees and is seen, hears and speaks. "The flesh can feel nothing without feeling itself, and feeling

---

Works of Love, trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), 66.

[32] *Prolegomena to Charity*, trans. Stephen Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 73-77.

[33] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 77-78.

[34] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 80.

[35] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 80.

[36] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 82; *In Excess*, 112; *Crossing the Visible*, 21.

[37] *In Excess*, 117.

itself feeling (touched, or indeed wounded, by what it touches)."[38] The gaze of the other person reveals she also is flesh, that she senses, feels, is wounded; and the gaze gives access to her autonomy. The pupils of the eyes become important in that nothing can be seen in them. In looking at a face I might find it looks innocent or guilty, good or deceptive; but those assessments may be inaccurate.[39] The pupils prevent me from making the other into an object restricted by my appraisal of physiognomy. Relinquishing "seeing" by looking into no-thing of the eyes prevents intentional aiming and forces me into a position of waiting and receptivity.

In receptivity to what he has to give, the face appears with submission to its injunction: "Thou shalt not kill."[40] The gaze brings about a questioning and a trial in the one who beholds it. The beholder feels responsible, obligated, and respectful beyond capability to do for the other person. "I owe *myself* to him: in order for him to live, I owe it to him to dedicate myself."[41] By seeing the beholder, who is judged and obligated by the other person, the beholder is de-centered, no longer the only one who constitutes a world. As both gazes cross, the weight of the experience creates a tension from which neither are released or desire to be freed. They balance each other through a common lived experience of love.[42]

The injunction of the face operates as an icon: making visible the invisible, giving itself to be seen, and making its call heard.[43] The call generates responsibility and respect as well as a desire to show oneself and enter into an infinite hermeneutic. A surplus of

---

[38] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 38.

[39] Cf. *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 166-171.

[40] *In Excess*, 116; *Prolegomena to Charity*, 85-86.

[41] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 86.

[42] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 89-90.

[43] *In Excess*, 118-119.

information is never reached. "Love is not spoken, in the end, it is made."[44] More time is needed. More about the other needs to be known.[45] The Other opens an infinite hermeneutic in that the horizon of intention is transgressed by love that experiences the other as an infinite, indispensable, and unsubstitutable subjectivity. In the call of responsibility, desire for further interaction, and dedication to that other person, the beholder who awaited the approach of the other is given to herself. She also becomes indispensable and unsubstitutable because of her call to dedicate herself to the other.[46]

Chapter Three: The Icon and Justice

Marion's phenomenology of the icon parallels theological explanations to a point. The icon is an instrument of revelation. The icon illuminates the invisible, the mysterious, and, in correspondence to scripture, becomes an opportunity for communion. Through the icon, the beholder gains meaning as knowledge of God, as experience of love, and as a call of transformation.[47] For Marion this call means that the beholder is given to herself. She gains individuality, illuminated by Divine grace, that makes it possible to bear the splendor of love,[48] to know God – even if incompletely or in misunderstanding,[49] as present (in the

---

[44] *God without Being*, 107

[45] *In Excess*, 122.

[46] It is not clear whether for Marion every Other can serve as indispensable and unsubstitutable. Theologically, since every Other is my neighbor, I must try to view each as an icon. The Orthodox theology of creation and humans makes clear the divine-human connection. As Vladimir Solovyov puts it, true humanism is belief in God-man, furthermore, the Divine Image of another human is perceived concretely and vividly in love ("The Meaning of Love," in *The Heart of Reality,* 105-106). Thus without love, without belief in divine-humanity, another person cannot be viewed as an icon, cannot usher in an experience of revelation.

[47] Marion does hint in *In Excess* at a distinction between Revelation of and from God and revelation that "deploys a particular figure of phenomenality." (29) He quotes Dionysus the Areopagite, "God is known through all things and also apart from all things. God is known by knowledge and also by unknowing….And it is the most divine knowledge of God that one knows through the unknowing (149-150)." Thus, everything, every person may serve as a way to know God, at least apophatically.

[48] *Crossing the Visible*, 65

sense that God is with, present to, the beholder and in the sense that God gives as a present, or gift).[50] She gains herself as unsubstitutable even through the guilt and lack felt as she surrenders her rights and passes beyond responsibility to love of another.[51] Yet, for Marion the icon stops short of ethics. What one gains through the icon is not reducible to morality or synthesized into universal laws, but an experience of another as other. Even the command to love is not a moral injunction.[52] Instead, as imitation of Christ, love presents an opportunity to accomplish communion as the trinity does.[53] Marion fears that making love of another a universal law, with Kant, or face, with Levinas, risks making the other person an idol, only as valuable as the one who evaluates it.[54] Without love that accepts that the counter-gaze of the Other is as valuable to the beholder as her own, that sees it as unfiltered reality, not merely a spectacle, and that relates to the gaze as not reflecting any of herself back to her, the Other remains object. Marion interprets Kant's moral law as pertaining to "rational love."[55] The beholder who evaluates the gaze of another person with rational love attaches more value to the law than the Other. With Levinas's commitment to a duty based ethic of the face, Marion fears that the only way the other person can impact the beholder is through violence. Instead, with love the beholder approaches the other person as a "personal other" in order to give him space to appear freely. Instead of restricting the other through ethics, Marion asserts space needs to be provided for the other

---

[49] *Crossing the Visible*, 73

[50] *Crossing the Visible*, 77

[51] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 86-95

[52] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 141

[53] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 144-5; *Crossing the Visible*, 87. Here Marion remains committed to the Pauline doctrine that the "Father is given in and as the Son," (*Crossing the Visible*, 85; 84-87) that Christ is true icon of God. Bruce Ellis Benson traces the etymology and history of the *ikon* in, *Graven Ideologies* (Intervarsity Press, 2002), 17-38.

[54] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 166

[55] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 159

person to affect, provoke, and love (or hate) freely.[56] I explore, in more detail, Marion's view of ethics in Chapter 3. The important distinction with respect to the icon is that Marion privileges experience of otherness over ethics. I argue in agreement with Marion that the fundamental function of viewing another person as an icon is, as the Dessert Fathers said, to "look upon our neighbors' experiences as if they were our own. We should suffer with our neighbor in everything and weep with him, and should behave as if we were inside his body."[57] I diverge with Marion as I argue that this way of living moves one to self-sacrificial *justice*, focused on alleviating the suffering of others.

Marion, of course, is not indifferent to suffering; but, he does question the nature of justice. He develops the thesis that justice is equivalent to revenge. The desire for justice arises from suffering or evil:[58] the one suffering wants it to stop. To suppress suffering, the cause must be suppressed which means to take revenge on someone else.[59] The sufferer is self-centered – my pain, my hurt, my innocence – so, as I suffer, I accuse someone, distort that one's character, and try to destroy the cause of the hurt.[60] What I consider justice perpetuates evil by causing or desiring the harm of another. The only one exempt from continuing the cycle of revenge is Christ. Christ as "the just man is precisely he who endures evils without rendering it, suffers without claiming the right to make others suffer, suffers as if he were guilty."[61] Though no one can claim innocence as Christ can, the Orthodox tradition defines justice in relation to self-sacrifice. The iconic experience transports me out of my own obsession with my hurt, makes me aware of the suffering of others, and purifies

---

[56] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 167

[57] cited in Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 68.

[58] in French the phrase *faire mal* means evil and hurt.

[59] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 2

[60] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 4-8

[61] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 9

my love through mercy and grace. With this purification comes a self-emptying. My desires, my rights, my pain conflict with the reality that I have caused another person's suffering.[62] I realize our interdependence, our communitarian relation, that any action effects every Other, that "we are all of us responsible for everyone,"[63] and desire to relinquish my rights and make the suffering of the other person my own. Alistair MacIntyre describes a similar point with respect to the virtue of "just generosity."[64] Because humans are interconnected and dependent upon one another, I owe the other person thanks, remembrance, honor, and uncalculated giving. What is owed the other (in the virtue of just generosity) is giving liberally and beneficently out of pity, from "attentive and affectionate regard." Defining justice as connected to generosity (MacIntyre) and self-sacrifice (the Dessert Fathers) presents justice not according to what one thinks one deserves through calculation of give and take, but according to what one understands of empathy through uncalculating mercy and grace.

With this definition of justice, I interpret a central theological purpose of the icon as unmasking injustice. Seeing injustice moves the beholder to alleviate the suffering of others without taking revenge, without harming another. Solovyov describes the experience of another as an icon, "To believe in man is to recognize in him something *more* than what is present; it means to recognize in him that power and that freedom that connect him with the Deity."[65] With this experience the beholder recognizes the inter-connectedness of all creatures and longs for harmony through justice. The three examples of icons that follow

---

[62] Simone Weil puts the point this way, "The whole effort of mysticism has always been to become such that there is no part left in his soul to say 'I'." *The Weil Reader*, 55

[63] *The Brothers Karamazov*, 318.

[64] *Dependent Ration Animals: Why Human Beings need the Virtues*, (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1999), 120-128. He applies this virtue to the case of regard for the disabled as people from whom one can learn, 136-138.

[65] "Three Addresses in Memory of Dostoevsky," in *The Heart of Reality*, 25.

give support to my assertion that the icon has an ethical role. By following the example of a saint, Bishop Nicholas, the Miracle-Worker, credited with great works of charity, one begins to act charitably. By being present to the loving relation between the Mother of God and the Christ Child, in the icons of Loving Kindness, one begins to empathize with those who suffer and works to comfort them. By seeing the love of a fictional character, Shatov of Dostoevsky's *Demons*, for his estranged wife, one is inspired to embrace forgiveness and to love without revenge.

The icon of Bishop Nicholas of Myra depicts scenes from his life. These scenes show him helping people in their adversity: he liberates a boy captured by Arabs, drives demons from a well, heals a woman's withered arm, influences Emperor Constantine to release unjustly accused prisoners and rescues mariners who pray to him. The beholder of the icon sees Nicholas's meek and humble character, and is moved to imitate his kindness and gentleness; and, the beholder desires to preserve and protect others from injustice. The beholder follows Nicholas's call to "live no longer for oneself but for others." The life of Bishop Nicholas provokes the beholder to see beyond self-centered desires of comfort and gain, to become a defender, protector, and intercessor for those who suffer unjustly.[66]

The icons of Loving Kindness depict the intimate relation between the Mother of God and the Christ Child. They are shown full of natural human feeling. The Mother grieves at the future suffering of her son and also for the suffering of humanity. The Child displays feelings of fear, as he reaches to his Mother for comfort, and tenderness, as he calms his mother's grief. The Mother and Child do not relate exclusively to each other; but the action of the icon connects them to the world. People who behold the icon gain wisdom

[66] See Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*

from contact with suffering that is turned to joy. And as they share in the common feeling between the Mother and the Child, their hearts are moved to mercy and all-embracing love.[67]

Fyodor Dostoevsky's commitment to the patristic formula "God became man, so man might become god" shows even in his darkest novel, *Demons*. Ivan Shatov demonstrates a willingness to absorb the suffering of another without rendering it. He welcomes his wife after three years separation, though she is about to give birth to another man's child, though she mocks and ridicules his kindness. He gives her all he has without bitterness, without the desire for revenge, "so that in his view it came out he himself was guilty before her for everything."[68]

With the examples of Shatov, Bishop Nicholas, and Mary and Christ the inherent ethical function of the icon can be shown. If these figures represent paradigms of de-centering, of iconic perception that allows the Other to reveal her or his own unique manifestation of the Divine, then the possibility remains that the virtues they possess can provide ways to become just, to live for others, to love, as Marion suggests, without measure.[69] Yet assembling a list of virtues implies activities one can practice to achieve charity. The qualities most notable here relate to receptivity, to silence, to self-emptying, and to unknowing. By following the mystical theology of Pseudo Dionysus and Maximus the Confessor, two central figures of Marion's arguments against onto-theology and to the Eastern Church, I hope to arrive at an apophatic way that allows love to bring about the desire for justice as self-sacrifice.

---

[67] See Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*

[68] *Demons*, trans. Peaver and Volokonsky. 569; cf. *Prolegomena to Charity*, 9, "Christ vanquished evil only by refusing to transmit it, enduring it to the point of running the risk, in blocking it of dying, the just man is precisely he who endures evil without rendering it, suffers without claiming the right to make others suffer, suffers as if he were guilty."

[69] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 10

Chapter Four: Ethics and the Icon

An apophatic-virtue approach to ethics fits naturally with Marion's project as a whole for a number of reasons.[70] First, by defining apophaticism as a practice of contemplation that relinquishes mastery of concepts, suspends desires to describe and define, and embraces openness to revelation, apophatic unknowing parallels Marion's phenomenological reduction.[71] He is concerned with phenomena that give themselves of themselves in excess of intuition (saturated phenomena).[72] The task of the phenomenologist concerned with saturated phenomena becomes one of receptivity (along with the suspension of judgment, the avoidance of abstraction, etc.). Second, the saturated phenomena of the icon invoke r/Revelation as does the mystical theology that commends apophaticism. Neither are concerned with developing hypothesizes about who God is or abstracting from experience. They wish instead their understanding to be transformed by the revelation that breaks through and negates any idolatrous attempts to quantify God and others. Third, the apophatic way relies neither on ontology or metaphysics. No pretensions are made to deduce rules or decide on universal actions. Like Marion's phenomenology of the icon, whereby the beholder focuses on the no-thing of the pupils of the eyes of the face or the

---

[70] For Marion's own appraisal of mysticism, see "What Do We Mean by 'Mystics'?" trans. Gauth Gollard, in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, ed. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 1-7. Like Pseudo Dionysus, he stress here that saturated phenomena give themselves through the negative way, but that is inseparable from the affirmative way. In other words, I must give up my own conceptions, but permit that which gives to fill me as content, "I am no more what I am but what the grace of God gives me to become. (5)"

[71] Edmund Husserl first developed the phenomenological reduction as a rigorous philosophical practice that frees one from preconceived understanding of objects and from uncritical acceptance of empirical psychology. Husserl's method works regressively to give descriptive accounts of experience by removing *a priori* judgments, and avoiding theorizing, abstracting, and generalizing. Marion relies heavily on Husserl's account of phenomenology, but finds that objects are not proper to a truly phenomenological reduction. See *Logical Investigations* vol II, 5 and 6, trans. J. N. Findley (Routledge, 2001).

[72] For Marion's critique and reformulation of Husserl's reduction see *In Excess*, 1-29; and *Reduction and Givenness*, 1-40.

saint, the apophatic mystic focuses on the dark side of God.[73] Fourth, following the Eastern interpretations of Pseudo-Dionysus the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor, the telos is unity through revelation. The goal of Marion's phenomenology likewise is authentic communion: which is equivalent to true charity. The Orthodox and the phenomenologist both await the Revelation to come of love that will transform their relations, without deciding it in advance. Regardless of these converging points between the apophatic way and the way of the erotic reduction, these ways still evade classification as "virtue theory."[74] The main reasons for linking Marion to something akin to virtue ethics is to demonstrate the rich ethic possible through Marion's phenomenology, and that he is not against all ethics, but against ethics that make humans into objects, obligations, universals, and abstractions (Kant), or that make human relations products of the violence of the Other who first must wound me before I desire to dedicate myself to that one (Levinas). Marion still remains committed to charity as the telos of the icon, and as that which makes humans human.

Though I emphasize the possibility for ethics in Marion's phenomenology, he provides some strong arguments against allowing ethics to decide charity. If the ethical function of the icon is charity, Marion contends that ethics cannot produce it. Love stands

---

[73] Vladimir Lossky describes this process as of renunciation of senses and reason that leads to purification and freedom from things seen. "[A]t the extreme height of the knowable one must be freed from that which perceives as much as from that which can be perceived: that is to say, from the subject as well as from the object of perception. God no longer presents Himself as object, for it is no more a question of knowledge but of union." *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 28. See also Pseudo Dionysus's description of the dark side of God in *Mystical Theology*, trans. C. E. Rolt, (London, 1920), I, 3, P.G., III, 1000-1001.

[74] Virtue theory has been defined in many different ways. Even following a Thomistic virtue theory presents some problems. Thomas defines virtue as a fitness to act (*Summa Theologica*, 23, 55, 1). The point of apophaticism and the erotic reduction however is not action but receptivity. Though Thomas does follow his definition of virtue with the statement that it is better to *love* God that to *know* God, (*ST* 23, 66, 6) it is not clear whether a way of detachment, quietness of soul, unknowing and de-centering can be gleaned from his theories. However, reading Thomas with Josef Pieper fills in some of the possibilities of developing a "virtue" theory consistent with Thomas and with the apophatic emphasis on receptivity. See *The Four Cardinal Virtues,* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 10-22.

outside moral systems. Sacrifice risks unmorality. Charity eludes reason and evidence. Philosophy erred as modern metaphysics situated ethics in either power (politics) or desire (individuality),[75] and tried to deduce freedom and love through metaphysics. Marion sees Kant's principle of universal legislation as an abstraction that evades concrete action and signifies nothing.[76] Moral imperatives mean nothing to individuals because they arise in the noumenal, ideal realm. If the ideal realm of reason is privileged then the real world must be modified according to the rational ideal. Commitment to the rational gives privilege to reason over experience, in turn gives rise to ideologies; and these ideologies provide justification for the destruction wrought by totalitarian governments (that subject people to moral imperatives derived from particular perversion) and technology (that makes objects of people).[77] These cases are extremes of hypothetical morality, but demonstrate Marion's point that "A maxim stirs me only by remaining particular: I act in a certain way only if the maxim of my action *cannot* become universal law."[78] Marion is critical of universal maxims on the grounds that they refuse subjectivity, and give no respect to humans. Universals deny the will its desire to be itself, thus the will hates the limits and prejudgments set by ethical norms. Furthermore, universals keep one indifferent to others. If all are equal and dependent on the same norms, all are determined by reason and yield to the norm out of

---

[75] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 31-32

[76] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 32-33; *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 107

[77] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 33-37

[78] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 40; Here Marion pushes language to its breaking point by making maxims particular. Yet, his emphasis on the particular intends to break the grip of duty that makes love an onerous obligation. Dostoevsky's Father Zosima puts the point this way, "Brothers do not be afraid of men's sin, love man also in his sin, for this likeness of God's love is the height of love on earth… Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love animals, love plants, love each thing. If you love each thing, you will perceive the mystery of God in things. Once you have perceived it, you will begin tirelessly to perceive more and more of it every day. And you will come at last to love the world with an entire universal love (*The Brothers Karamazov*, 318-319)." The maxim Zosima presents is to love each thing. Love of each thing can only be performed in relation to the particular. Without the emphasis on particularity perception does not attain to the mystery of God, and the possibility is lost to love all.

obedience, and, hence, out of hate.[79] The point of love is to experience the transcendence of another person, to know that one, not just as an object limited by intentional apprehension, but radically as subject.

The reversal of perspective that accomplished experience of transcendence of the icon opens to the possibility of knowing the other person as subject. By focusing on the pupils of the eyes the other person cannot be aimed at or made an object. The other comes upon me by force, with authority and primacy that accuses me and exposes me. I discover myself obliged, summoned as I feel respect and responsibility for the other person's fate. In the gaze of the other, in my naked openness, I am judged, and I am at fault because I have not fulfilled my obligations. No longer the center of my own world, no longer blind to my shortcomings and obligations, my right to justice dissolves.[80] The obligation, or injunction, "Thou shalt not kill," makes me responsible for the fate of the other. The injunction holds not because it arises from the transcendental ego that legislates its obligatory status from its universalizability, but from the self-giving of the other person that redefines my relation to the other person. Simone Weil states a similar point this way, "Not to exercise all the power at one's disposal is to endure the void. This is contrary to all the laws of nature. Grace alone can do it. Grace fills empty spaces, but it can only enter where there is a void to receive it, and it is grace itself which makes this void."[81] My experience of the other and the other's experience of me cross, balance each other, even as they weigh upon one another in a common, unique tension.[82] Likewise the injunction does not come from the other. It arises

---

[79] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 37-40

[80] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 78-86

[81]Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Arthur Wills (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

[82] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 89

in me (yet, not from me) as a lived experience in which the rights of the other take precedence over my own.

The injunction arises like a duty, but it addresses me in relation to the particular person against whom I have transgressed, to whom I submit, the one whom I find irreplaceable.[83] The egalitarianism of universal laws of action toward people denies them dignity. "I am responsible not in front of the law by means of the other, but directly for the other by means of the injunction itself; the death of the other, or his life, depends directly on my regard for his open face."[84] Marion's phenomenology resists the universal face Levinas embraces. Where Levinas moves from a face to every face, Marion maintains that only "just such" a face whose invisible gaze enjoins me to respect and responsibility can establish love of this person as irreplaceable and unsubstitutable.[85]

The injunction can move to love, or to mere enjoyment of passion, or to perversion. The injunction binds as I surrender to it and as I am given to myself as indispensable. The summons of the injunction requires each to risk exposure, yet gives individuality. "I owe the other for making me, under his absolutely unsubstitutable gaze to the point of nakedness also unsubstitutable, individualized, and naked."[86]

With the phenomenology of the face the injunction commands "Thou shalt not kill." I fear this command is inconsistent with Marion's move away from Levinas and specifically Levinas's description that wounding initiates ethical relations. It requires that each face fears murder, that, before being commanded, no one is loved, or loved enough. It also implies that I am in danger of violating the injunction every time I meet a stranger. To deduce the

---

[83] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 92-93

[84] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 93

[85] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 95-98

[86] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 100

possibility of sacrificial love from a command not to kill requires nullification of the command. Though I agree with Marion that regarding another person as an opportunity to fulfill my duty to a universal maxim denies that person a unique and irreplaceable position as transcendent, the problem of regarding every other person this way seems unaccomplishable starting from "Thou shalt not kill." The purpose of the injunction seems not so much a reiteration of the sixth commandment but a way of approaching another person humbly and without prejudgments. Marion makes clear that the icon demands and deserves veneration. This veneration holds true in relation to the other person as well, and provides a clue toward the development of ethics from Marion's perspective. The other person demands veneration because I am responsible for her, because we are interconnected, because she conceptualizes as I do, and because she is mysterious and transcends my ability to know her. With this formulation of the injunction, the command is reversed (just as intention and intuition are reversed with the saturated phenomenon). The command no longer is an order to refrain from taking another person's life, but an order directed to myself, to "kill" myself. I must deny my prejudgments, and objectifying grasp; I must kill my attempts to enclose him in my conceptual schema and my claims to determine his insufficiencies and qualities. I must negate my knowledge of him and humbly await his self-presentation.

Shatov's humility before Marie demonstrates this negation. After three years, Marie was a stranger to Shatov. He did not recognize her. He saw someone in need, sick, but also loveable. When he recognizes her as Marie, knows her condition and desperation in returning to him, he welcomes her. His desire to love her and nurture her (and to again be loved by her, perhaps) reveals no murderous intents, no moments in which he must be told, "Thou shalt not kill." Furthermore, he awaited her arrival for three years, always assured that she loved him, if only for a time, always assured that he loved her. Marie, likewise,

suspects no harm will come to her. The mariners, who are in danger, pray to a stranger for deliverance. Bishop Nicholas saves them from their peril. No person was going to bring them harm, only protection. Even in the face of death, the Mother and the Christ child comfort one another and have compassion for the suffering people of the world. These examples relate to the central virtue of apophaticism, self-emptying. They demonstrate anticipation without demand, attention without abstraction, and assurance of significance without advanced determinations of what that significance entails. Related to this "virtue" of self-emptying are humility, stillness of soul, simplicity, receptivity to beauty, the beyond, the unknowable, and a desire for union with God and neighbor.

The Orthodox understanding of humanness maintains that a combination of Divine and earthly resides in each person. Beauty permeates even the most corrupt heart. The Orthodox view resolves not to view others cynically, as potential murderers, and not with misguided optimism that views others naively. The belief in the interconnectedness of all people however moves Orthodox believers to realize the relation of their actions to others. Recognizing and emphasizing the beauty in another person may reconcile. Believing in and contemplating the divine in another human reveals an inner mystery and transforms relations. Realizing guilt and inattention to the beauty of others moves one to act justly and sacrificially. The Dessert Fathers believed that "We should look upon our neighbors' experiences as if they were our own." Following this path reconciles and provides an opportunity for communion.

Self-emptying, the apophatic task that imitates Christ's kenosis, is difficult: for I too want to be loved, I too want not to be judged, I too want someone to look upon my experiences as if they were his own. Though these desires may not be vices, they may be impediments to an iconic reception of another person in love. Marion, so I argue, provides

a phenomenology that traces these impediments and the overcoming of them toward a fulfillment of love. My task here then is to describe Marion's account in conjunction with an apophatic interpretation. Once reaching the fulfillment of love my task is to return to the start and see if the addition of the apophatic doctrine allows love without measure. In *The Erotic Phenomenon* Marion wants to return love to philosophy as its first name by demonstrating love's unity, rationality and primacy.[87] Humans distinguish themselves as humans in loving and being loved. "I am not, except insofar as I experience love."[88] The phenomenological reduction of love shows that love is univocal, rules with the reason of the heart, and develops in a horizon outside being.[89] Marion attempts to bring love back to philosophy by giving a phenomenology of love.

He asks two questions and makes one statement that develop the erotic reduction in three contexts, each building from the first. The first question "Does anybody love me?" relates to the unity of love. The second question "Can I love first?" relinquishes the question of reciprocity and deals with love's rationality. The final statement "You loved me first" demonstrates loves primacy by revealing that love was always present, because the first two questions could not have been asked unless I was loved from eternity. Looking at Marion's questions and statement in conjunction with his claims of love's unity, rationality, and primacy provides a phenomenology of what love is not (and therefore provides an apophatic path to renounce false conceptions about love). Love is not distracted or equivocal,[90] finite or economical,[91] temporalized or repeatable.[92] To accept unity requires

---

[87] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 4-5.

[88] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 8

[89] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 4-5

[90] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 11-40

[91] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 73-82

decertifying a plurality of definitions and kinds of love. Eros and agape are not different loves: "Univocal, love is told in *one way*."[93] To affirm love's logic requires relinquishing a rationality that deals in quantities. Irrationality and madness are not effects of love; instead, "Love falls under an *erotic* rationality."[94] To embrace love's primacy requires liberating concepts from the confines of reductions. Love has its own horizon – "that of a *love without being*."[95] Leaving these descriptions behind becomes a path to availing oneself to the impossibility of the impossibility: God's eternal, measureless, perfect Love loves in spite of, loves through, loves from eternity to make each lover and beloved.

Beginning with the question "Does anybody love me?" one avoids the vanity of the Cartesian cogito that cannot be assured it is worthwhile as long as its identity resides in questions of certainty and "being." The questions of certainty distract. These questions yield facts of low importance, but high certitude. The answers are susceptible to another questioning: vanity's.[96] The certainty of knowing keeps one stuck in time relying on thought to think itself into certainty. Certainty gives no assurance against uselessness because even though the objects of certainty remain certain, they do not reassure of the worth of a self.[97] Similarly metaphysical deduction about being maddens because it depends on the self to certify itself.[98] The ego cogito is susceptible to the question "What's the use?" To be freed

---

[92] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 192-210

[93] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 5

[94] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 5

[95] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 6

[96] Marion refers to the vanity defined as uselessness most often in this section (*The Erotic Phenomenon*, 16-19). Yet the vanity of self-centeredness may be at play here as well. Self-assurance from questions of knowing and being derive answers from a solitary self who questions that same self. The uselessness realized from these questions is entailed in the self-obsession that believes it can produce certainty of itself for itself.

[97] *The Erotic Phenomenon*,17-18

[98] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 18-19

from vanity the question "Does anybody love me?" arises. Reading this section apophatically reveals that assurance, as well as lack of assurance, distract and keep one submerged in and attached to the self. Love arises from (im)possibility, outside the self, that someone loves or could love me. Love assures me against vanity as it exposes me, makes me susceptible, comes to me in advance of myself and from elsewhere.[99] This question of love forces me to give up my vanity, self-centeredness and certain but useless autonomy. I become receptive to the advance of love, prepared to receive the shock that contradicts my intentional understanding of the world. The question "Does anybody love me?" questions me as well. In expectation of love my identity is decided, from outside myself. Love arrives, if it does, as an unforeseen event, as a present imposed upon me and as unsubstitutable flesh that discovers me affected.[100] Yet, the assurance desired from a love outside myself is not sustainable. Likewise an internal assurance of self-love is unattainable. The question requires reciprocity to give assurance and demands less self knowledge (or a different kind of self-knowledge) to believe I am loveable. With the question of love I escape vanity and no longer calculate the objects of the world according to being or knowledge; I gain attention and humility from the question of love, but I do not yet have love without measure.

Since I cannot assure myself that I am loved, and since I cannot find another to love me, the second question "Can I love first?" takes reciprocity out of play. The one who asks this question wonders if asymmetrical, risky love that does not require reciprocation can assure me. This attempt to love asymmetrically relates to a self-emptying humility that orients the self in the mystery of the Other, recognizes the Other's infinite worth, and tries to, "love without being loved – this defines *love without being*."[101] The one whom I attempt to

---

[99] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 23-26

[100] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 29-40

[101] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 72

love then cannot be finite because she evades all conceptualization. Furthermore my love cannot be achieved by an exchange. I do not lose love when I love this way; instead the more love loses the more love gains.[102] Love abolishes exchange and economy. Reason suggests that loving without return is foolish and refuses to follow the lover. Reason is insufficient because I have no reason to love, no need of knowing whom I love, and no need of seeing or measuring love.[103] Yet, in humility, or perhaps despair, I find that I can neither assure myself that I really do love or that I am loveable. I gain through humility the awareness that I have defined love badly, that I have over estimated my progress with respect to love, and that I need another – I am not able to love from my own initiative.

I must advance toward a unique and infinite other, who provokes me to initiate an advance. This advance could end with objectifying, possessing, i.e. seduction, or as love – the unhoped for hope.[104] Yet I remain unassured that I love or am loved because I initiated the advance, or because of the fear of hatred, jealousy, or the end of love.[105] Some dangers to love are assertions of autonomy, momentary enjoyment, or deception. In the exchange of oaths I promise to love and a promise to love is made to me. The oath assures me that I love and am loved; but it only assures for a time and must be renewed continually. Marion visits the possibility that a witness of the oath could provide assurance of love. Several witnesses are rehearsed; the child of the lovers appears the best candidate. Yet, the child cannot be herself if she is only a mirror of the lovers' love. And the child eventually leaves the lovers.[106] God becomes the witness that assures love for eternity. The statement "I am

---

[102] *The Erotic Phenomenon*,73

[103] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 75-82

[104] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 82-89

[105] *The Erotic Phenomenon*,89-97

[106] *The Erotic Phenomenon*,184-206

loved first" transfigures the relation in the light of eternity and provides the sought after assurance.[107] Love's primacy is discovered. The preceding questions became possible because of the Love from eternity. Love now resides outside time, assured from eternity. And love now becomes an unrepeatable infinity. Each love is unique, as each lover is unique.[108]

The erotic reduction makes room for friendship and familial love, among other kinds of love, and provides descriptions of the impediments to love and the fulfillment of love through the *A Dieu.*[109] So, since an encounter with "just such a one," just such a beloved, should be anticipated at every moment, I revisit the question "Can I love first?" in light of the assurance from eternity to develop communal and ethical dimensions of love. In the assurance of the *A Dieu*, that for all eternity I am loved first, the question "Can I love first?" is transformed to "Can I love second?" With the assurance I no longer question whether I am loveable. I need not fear that another will not love me. I need not fear advancing to the Other, because I know he is as capable of love as I – because this other person also is loved for eternity. Further, I no longer need reciprocity from the other; I no longer risk not being loved. In the light of the assurance of eternity the risk of exposure and vulnerability becomes a feeling of unencumbered freedom to love – even if I am rejected or killed. Thus with the completion of the erotic reduction have I unlearned enough of the impediments to love in order to love each Other? Am I freed from the tendency to universalize love for all

---

[107] Marion's account of God being the assurance of love presents two problems: 1) Marion relies on a theological account to fortify his phenomenological account. 2) Since love ultimately depends on an original source of love, God, if theology is abandoned for pure phenomenology the source of love presents only aporia. Marion contends that without God the assurance of love would evade eternally. Since the possibility of God is confirmed in love, and the possibility of love is confirmed in God there is no escape to the aporia that excludes God from love or love from God.

[108] *The Erotic Phenomenon*,206-215

[109] The lover's passage to God (*a dieu*) and the accomplishment of the oath to God (*adieu*) and the fulfillment of assurance (*A Dieu*) that you loved me first; see *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 206-215

humanity and love no one in particular?[110] Or freed from self-doubt that comes from the knowledge of my inability to believe I could be loved truly, and squandering love on self-pity?[111] Love that works creatively, through iconic vision, to bring about love of the neighbor may be closer because of the erotic reduction and the apophatic tradition. Love that creatively transforms suffering to beauty, that dissolves confusion in Divine Mystery, that unites and reconciles differences, and that frees from bondage may be made true through the Incarnation of Christ - that makes true communion possible. Iconic love may reveal what it means that "God became man that we might become god."

---

[110] Ivan Karamazov speaks to this love saying, "I could never understand how one can love one's neighbors. It's just one's neighbors, to my mind, that one can't love, though one might love those at a distance[…] For any one to love a man, he must be hidden, for as soon as he shows his face, love is gone."

[111] Ophelia's obssessional love for Hamlet may describe this love. She cannot endure her beloved's indifference and commits suicide. "O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown! / […]And I, of ladies most deject and wretched, / That suck'd the honey of his music vows, / Now see that noble and most sovereign reason, / Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh; / That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth / Blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me, / To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!" (*Hamlet*, III,1)

CHAPTER TWO

Phenomenology and the Icon

Introduction

Before preparing the wood, applying gesso, or painting the iconographer prays. The iconographer prays for wisdom, illumination, and unity, for guidance, direction, and vision. The iconographer also prays to subvert personality for the advancement of the Church. The iconographer wishes to portray Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints through a visual medium that leads to the beauty of the invisible. The iconographer censures personal creativity and imaginative interpretation to protect the authenticity of what is presented. The iconographer effaces individuality that the personal presence of the one pictured might eclipse the artist. An analogical process accompanies the phenomenologist's method. The phenomenologist engages in a rigorous asceticism to obtain a view of reality distanced from psychological motivations, interpretations, and predictions. In keeping with this practice, Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology subverts the ego to make possible the reception of the gift of revelation.

An icon, according to the Christian tradition, portrays reality: transfigured, purified, deified spiritual reality. The graphic narrative depicts an interior and incorporeal beauty that calls the faithful to participate in the family of the saints. The visual portrayal of divine revelation affirms the doctrine of Christ's full humanity and that humans are now templates and bearers of God. Every element of an icon, line, color, face, intends a specific meaning, dictated by Cannon.[1] The purpose of the rules and the icon is to translate, enrich and revive

[1] The Cannons of the 7th Eccumenical Council, 787, the Council of 100 Chapters, 1551, and the Decree of the Council of Moscow (yr), provide strict rulers for iconographers.

the Tradition. The purpose of the method of phenomenology is to revive philosophy, to release it from metaphysical abstractions and idolatrous conceptions.

An encounter with an icon brings joy and sadness, attraction and repulsion. This ambivalence derives from the icon's proclamation of the Kingdom transfigured, and the sadness of asceticism that turns from the reign of the world and the flesh. This combination of affects reflects the mystery that the triumph of the Resurrection cannot be attained without the suffering of the Passion. This mystery, in turn, reflects an inverted perspective. In a painting that adheres to the dictates of aesthetics, the vanishing point (where lines recede to create depth) moves the eye behind the painting. In an icon the vanishing point moves to the beholder, in front of the painting. Perspective in an icon connects the beholder to the image, it draws the beholder into a participatory relation.

Marion phenomenolizes the beholder's interaction with the icon. He describes the icon's paradox in phenomenological terms (and theological terms) as freeing the mind from efforts to organize the experience. The over-abundance of meaning given from the icon overwhelms the beholder. The icon cannot be controlled by predictable categories of experience, or fully comprehended according to logical relations. The icon typifies the qualities of what Marion calls a saturated phenomenon. A saturated phenomenon gives itself as unforeseen, irregardable, immeasurable , and irreproducible. The phenomenological method, that prepares a way to receive the icon's excessive giving, reflects the asceticism of the iconographer, and the faithful one who prays before and venerates the image presented. The phenomenologist wishes not to interpret reality through personal predeterminations, but to deny prejudgments and allow the phenomena to give themselves as they are. Marion, like the iconographer and the beholder, denies admittance of presuppositions, psychological interpretations, and personality wishing not to distort, prevent, or manipulate the gift.

The main thesis of this chapter is that placing the phenomenological method along side the practice of icon veneration adds concrete description to Marion's understanding of the icon. The phenomenological method attempts to remove obstacles to experience and to describing the icon. It might be put, "To the icon's themselves." The practice of self-abnegation of the iconographer and the humility and asceticism of the beholder are actions that reflect the desire to receive the presence of God through the mediation of the person pictured. The addition of the experience of the icon amplifies Marion's descriptions, and provides further constraint on what can and cannot be an icon. Furthermore, Marion's emphasis on the community created through the icon can be enriched with the Eastern tradition because it presents a communal practice of icon veneration.

In order to make this argument, I first introduce the phenomenologies that form the background of Marion's. I briefly provide an account of Edmund Husserl's phenomenological reduction, and then develop Marion's criticisms and reformulation of Husserl. Marion disagrees with the focus of the phenomenological reduction. For Marion, objects (the focus of Husserl's reduction) are not the proper subject of a phenomenological investigation. Objects are presented to consciousness in acts of perception. Marion focuses on elements of experience that escape the bounds of that which is pointed to by consciousness (e.g. love, the Eucharist, fraternity, and, the specific topic of this chapter, the icon) that cannot be thought, imagined, or willed. Awareness of them can be certified and described (albeit inadequately and incompletely), not according to consciousness of an object, but according to the interruption of consciousness. Next, I briefly introduce Martin Heidegger's response to Husserl; and explain Marion's reading of Heidegger. Heidegger thought Husserl was untrue to the principles of phenomenology because he neglects the nature of beings. Marion, in turn, accuses Heidegger of returning to ontology and

metaphysics. After developing Marion's criticism of his predecessors I develop Marion's "third reduction," the phenomenological method that makes possible the reception of the gift of giveness, makes possible the experience of the saturated phenomena.

Next I present the three main criticisms of Marion's phenomenology. Jacques Derrida and John Caputo question whether a phenomenology of givenness is possible. Their criticisms focus on the nature of the gift itself. They contend that a true gift is impossible because it is always subject to the economy of exchange. The second line of criticism comes from Dominique Janicaud. He asserts that Marion has violated the principles of phenomenology by smuggling in theological concepts. The third criticism makes a variation on the second. John Milbank thinks that Marion has violated revealed theology by making it the handmaiden of phenomenology. After presenting these criticisms I give Marion's response.

In the next section of the chapter I place the theology of the icon in conversation with Marion's phenomenology. Focusing on the phenomenological account Marion gives of the icon, I compare them to theological accounts of the icon. I develop the correlates between the theological account and the phenomenological account. Finally, I argue that the icon's theological description adds to the phenomenological reduction and to the understanding of the experience of the icon because the icon gives the gift of relation. I support Marion's phenomenology of the icon's infinite hermeneutic, and suggest that the emphasis on the relational aspect of the icon provides a rich account that moves to a place where ethics can begin to be developed.

Marion, and Phenomenology

Marion's account of the icon develops in two distinct phases. In *Idol and Distance* and *God without Being*[2] he presents a theological perspective that demonstrates the idolatry of modern conceptions of God. In his recent trilogy, *Reduction and Givenness*, *Being Given*, and *In Excess*,[3] he presents a "pure phenomenology" of givenness. *The Crossing of the Visible* and *Prolegomena to Charity*[4] form a bridge between these accounts. They do not reject the theology of the former, but also provide access to the method of the latter.[5] The project of *Idol and Distance* and *God without Being* concerned ways of overcoming metaphysics with revealed theology. The project of the recent trilogy turns to phenomenology to overcome metaphysics, and makes room for the possibility of revelation through the study of non-quotidian phenomena (saturated phenomena). The pure phenomenology makes room for theology by presenting the possibility of revelation.[6] By bracketing everything but pure givenness, Marion asserts that he has cleared the obstacles that prevent reception of that which gives. Put differently, a phenomenology of givenness ultimately and radically achieves the goal of phenomenology by bracketing out what prevents revelation, what prevents the

---

[2] *The Idol and Distance*. Trans. Thomas A. Carlson. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy Series); *God Without Being*. Trans. Thomas A. Carlson. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[3] *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*. Trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998); *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, Trans. Jeffery K. Losky (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002).; *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* Trans. by Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York : Fordham University Press, 2002).

[4] *Crossing of the Visible,* Trans. James K. A. Smith (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004); *Prolegomena to Charity*, Trans. Stephen E. Lewis and Jeffrey L. Kosky (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

[5] Robyn Horner asserts that *The Crossing of the Visible*, and *Prolegomena to Charity* are strictly theological works. See *On God and the Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, (New York, Fordham University Press, 2001), I disagree with her assessment 1) because in the case of *The Crossing of the Visible* Marion provides a phenomenology of experience – of the particular experience of the icon of the cross; 2) because in *Prolegomena to Charity* the face is phenomenalized just the cross was.

[6] Marion makes a distinction between small "r" revelation as a possibility and capital "R" Revelation as an historic actuality. See *Being Given*, p 246.

iconic from interrupting presuppositions and prejudgments about the world, and from surprising and overwhelming experience. He admits his method is paradoxical: by entering into the phenomenological reduction I deny my ability to make something appear to me in itself; and, by denying my ability to predict or produce something, I allow that which gives to take initiative and give itself. Thus, Marion's phenomenology presents a philosophical method that leads to the possibility of revelation. Revelation as an historic event, he leaves theology to explain and interpret.

The importance of Husserl and Heidegger to Marion's "third reduction"[7] cannot be underestimated. He devotes *Reduction and Givenness* to a revised interpretation of their phenomenologies. In *Being Given* Marion address the criticisms of the former work and completes his phenomenological method in conversation with Husserl and Heidegger. *In Excess* provides his phenomenology at work, as he provides accounts of the event, the idol, the flesh, the icon (saturated phenomenon), and makes room for the possibility of the saturation of saturation: revelation. In this section I trace Marion's phenomenology by providing brief accounts of Husserl's and Heidegger's methods and then providing Marion's reinterpretation of Husserl and criticism of Heidegger.

Marion's Phenomenological Roots: Husserl and Heidegger

Experience of the world comes in relations with things and people. Some of these experiences go unnoticed in their everydayness. Some go ignored due to their complexity. Some are taken for granted as the furniture of commonsense. Nonetheless complexity of experiences expresses the way Husserl sees the human situation: submerged in and inextricably connected to the complexities of the world. The world may be too much with

[7] The first reduction appears in Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* V as he reduces Otherness to the sphere of ownness. The second reduction appears in Heidegger's *Being and Time* as he reformulates the question of Being. The third reduction is Marion's reduction to givenness.

us, but at the same time the person who acts and lives in the world may be too little present with it. The mundane things often are relegated to the background of experience. They go by without acknowledgement, without awareness, or without arousal of thought of their dynamic interplay with the world. Husserl wants to explore the abilities any person has to attain direct knowledge of experience. Describing knowledge from a first person perspective, detached from presuppositions about the world, provides a means to certainty.[8]

Though modern philosophers seek certainty, they often complicate the richness of experience with questions that relate to whether the world exists independent of the mind. Modern philosophy moves away from what can become certain, knowledge of experience. Thus, the philosophical "I" gets no closer to understanding experience than the person that examines it from a non-philosophical (natural) attitude. Experience of the world remains unreachable from the thought that thinks itself into existence (Descartes), or from the *a priori* propositions that allow the deduction of experience (Kant). The philosophical "I" relates to the world only through itself. For Descartes, the philosophical "I" places itself not in the world, but in itself, reduced to awareness of existence without a history, and without exposure to others.[9] The cogito certifies itself as absolute and independent subjectivity. With certainty of the cogito established, the "I" grounds all further understanding of the world in and from itself.[10]

---

[8] For Husserl knowledge means elimination of contingency and "apodictic grasp of essences." See Lauer, *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*, 23.

[9] For Husserl's own description of the pitfalls of the cogito see *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology,* (hereafter, *Ideas I*), trans. Boyce, §58 p. 156-8. §28 p. 94; See also Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon*, pp. 12-15; M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), p. xii; Quinten Lauer's introduction to Husserl's *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Western Philosophy*, p. 20; And Emmanuel Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. André Orianne, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 30-32.

[10] Husserl often expressed great indebtedness to Descartes, saying that Descartes had gotten close to phenomenology, to the pure foundations upon which philosophy should rest. Husserl

Kant's transcendental "I" further removes itself from the world. Focusing on *a priori* concepts, Kant distinguishes inner states that make experience possible. One can use the transcendental deduction to determine how things in the world should be, but cannot confirm them in experience.[11] Husserl introduces his method[12] (the phenomenological reduction) to avoid conceptual schema, like Kant's categories, that claim to deduce the way things should be without relying on experience of how those things actually are. The world itself, the world of phenomena, in all its complexity and interrelatedness is the field in which philosophers toil.

Descartes, Kant, and Husserl start their respective "scientific" investigations with certainty as their goal. The question "How do I gain (access to) certainty?" leads to three distinct groups of questions. Descartes's questions proceed from "What can be affirmed as indubitable?" This question leads to the questions entailed by his methodological doubt.

---

follows Descartes's methodological doubt and rules for the conduct of the mind a good way before critiquing them. See for example Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), Meditation I, pp. 7-23; and Husserl's introduction to the English translation of *Ideas I*, § 31-32, pp. 97-100. Also see Timothy J. Stapleton, *Husserl and Heidegger: The Question of a Phenomenological Beginning*, (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1983) p. 31-35; M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, xiii; Dan Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology* (Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 9-11; and, Dermont Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology,* (Routledge, 1999), p. 16.

[11] Husserl credits Kant with moving toward phenomena themselves; however, Kant misinterprets phenomena psychologically, and abandons the pursuit of them. See Husserl *Ideas I*, §16 p. 70, §62 -63 p. 166-173; on the *a priori* see the author's preface to the English edition, p. 19; *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science*, in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy,* trans. Quinten Lauer, p. 85-86. Lauer asserts the Husserl, like Kant, "is directly concerned not with the truth or falsity of what is judged, but rather with the validity or invalidity of the act of judging." p. 29; see also *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 12-15; for an expansive account of the relation of Husserl to Kant, see Ricoeur, *Husserl*, pp. 175-201. Here Ricoeur argues that Husserl overcomes the limits set on thinking by Kant, as he returns to the evidence that fulfills it; but, Husserl cannot overcome the solipsism that prevents knowledge of the Other as present.

[12] Husserl wrote many more than one introduction to phenomenology. He was a philosopher concerned with beginnings. (See for example Maurice Natanson, *Edmund Husserl: Philosopher of Infinite Tasks*, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 6-11; Merleau-Ponty's introduction to *The Phenomenology of Perception*; Stapleton, *Husserl and Heidegger*, 8-12, 35-53.) Beginnings are crucial to the phenomenological method because without appropriate starting places presuppositions, abstract conceptions, or naïve attitudes threaten to prevent getting to "the things themselves."

Kant's questions follow from "What *a priori* conditions are necessary to confirm the validity of my thoughts?" This question leads to questions about the structures necessary for thought and for the establishment of reason's limits.[13] The question to be asked of experience, according to Husserl is not "How is it possible for me to authenticate experience?" nor "How do I gain access to certainty?" but, "What is my experience?"[14] This question leads to questions related to how to avoid inferring causality of and projecting conceptual schema onto experience (as Kant does), and how to move beyond the thought of the thinking subject (Descartes's cogito) to the things presented to thought. Husserl looks at the datum of thought, not the thinking subject or the matrix that makes thinking possible, and examines experiences in which things are given.

His method gets its start by removing that which distracts or prevents pure experience from being the objects of consideration.[15] With respect to the specific object,

---

[13] See Jean-Luc Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*, Dominique Janicaud, Jean-Francois Courtine, Jean-Louis Chretien, Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, and Paul Ricoeur, trans., Jeffrey L. Kosky and Thomas A. Carlson, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), pp. 178-179. Here Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason also comes under scrutiny, in Marion's reading of Kant. Though Leibniz grants that the mind could be infinite (or at least indeterminate) the "Great Principle" that reverses the order of knowing and experiencing "Nothing happens without it being possible for the one who sufficiently knows things to give a Reason that suffices to determine why it is so and not otherwise" (op. cit. *Principles de la nature et la grace*, (Paris, 1954), ed. A. Robinet, vol. 7, p. 45). Marion interprets Kant and Leibniz as saying that the possibility of knowing precedes and implements what appears. "For appearance to actually appear does not suffice to justify its possibility; it must still resort to reason, which – while itself not having to appear – alone renders possible the brute actuality of the appearance because it renders the possibility of that appearance intelligible." p. 179.

[14] See Lauer's introduction to *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, p. 21.

[15] Husserl calls this process "epochē." When not engaged in the phenomenological project of establishing certainty of objects presented to consciousness, one naturally believes the world exists. The epochē puts such assumptions out of play, not to assume a position of skepticism toward the natural world, nor to deny the world exists, but to resist familiar pronouncements about the status of the world and to focus on the appearing itself (see Ricoeur, *Husserl,* pp. 9-10, 87-89). Husserl puts it this way, "*We put out of action the general thesis which belong to the essence of the natural standpoint*, we place in brackets whatever it includes respecting the nature of Being: *this entire natural world therefore* which is continually 'there for us,' 'present to our hand,' and will ever remain there, is a 'fact-world' of which we continue to be conscious, even though it pleases us to put it in brackets."

bracketing out (reducing) the mundane, common sense understanding of the appearance of the object under investigation, Husserl believes he can get to what is given by the object to thought because seeing becomes authentic as it is freed from the limitations set by natural presuppositions about it and its status in the world. The beliefs I have about the world inhibit my ability to see. I am a psychological captive to my beliefs until freed by the phenomenological reduction. This process does not mean I "doubt" my beliefs or that the world exists, rather, I abstain from participating in any beliefs that may contaminate or limit my seeing what presents itself to be seen.[16] The object needs extracted from its background (e.g. preconceives psychological assumptions, causal relations, subjective assessments, and appraisals of value judgments) to get to its intrinsic meaning.[17] Within the background of everything that appears, "a possible series of perceptions…leads to those systems of perceptions in which the thing in question appears and is apprehended."[18] Husserl's phenomenological reduction proscribes a method to remove obstacles that prevent access to or manipulation of the experiences given to thought (to intuition). These objects of thought give themselves not as singular, distilled, pure object, but as entangled in history, familiar or strange, and in a unique context, contiguous or disjointed. Once given the subject may automatically attribute to it motivations, provide it with interpretations, place upon it predications, or the subject may ignore it because of distractedness or the common-

---

Ideas I, § 32, pp. 99-100. In the epochē existential considerations are eliminated, and in the reduction the phenomenon is presented to consciousness in a distilled pure form.

[16] Cf. *Ideas I*, §§ 18-19, pp.72-76

[17] *Ideas I*, § 115

[18] *Ideas I*, § 45, p. 129; see also Levinas, *Theory of Intuition,* "What exists for us, what we consider as existing is not a reality hidden behind phenomena that appear as images or as signs of this reality. The world of phenomena itself makes up the being of our concrete life. It is a world of phenomena that have no clearly defined limits and are not mathematically precise; they are full of "almost" and "so to speak," obeying the vague laws that are expressed by the word "normality," pp. 22-23, op. cit. *Ideas I*, §§ 44, 46.

placeness of the object.[19] All these contingencies that prevent access to experience itself are set aside in the performance of the phenomenological reduction as the phenomenologist moves toward consciousness of things themselves (intentionality). I do not focus on my consciousness of an object, nor on the process by which I become conscious; but, I move to the thing of which I am conscious. By this focused attention (intention), I discover the things as given (intuition).[20] I discover the thing in an inter-subjective process (constitution): as the object appears to consciousness as given and as I establish an inter-relatedness to it, I discover myself as part of the world, and as I return back to the world and identify successive stages of understanding this process of constituting enlivens and elucidates the world of experience.[21]

Experience of an object can be had from different views. I look at a box and perceive three sides. I turn over the box and perceive the three other sides. Perception of different views of external objects changes depending on the view. The box's sides cannot be perceived all at once in perception, and at times may appear clearer or more obscure.[22] Objects immanent to consciousness do not change. They are given fully (or are adequate)

---

[19] This position of encumbered or neglected objects of experience given to thoughts Husserl calls the "natural attitude." "Philosophy can take root only in radical reflexion upon the meaning and possibility of its own scheme. Through such reflexion it must in the very first place and through its own activity take possession of the absolute ground of pure pre-conceptual experience, which is its own proper preserve; the, self-active again, it must create original concepts, adequately adjusted to this ground, and so generally utilize for its advance an absolutely transparent method. There can be no unclear, problematic concepts, and no paradoxes." *Ideas I*, p. 20.

[20] See Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, trans. Eduard G. Ballard and Lester Embree, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1967), p. 10.

[21] Cf. Maurice Merleua-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, (trans. and ed. Leonard Lawler and Battina Bergo, (Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 2002)), "The entire perceptual field of things insofar as it is a constituted multiplicity of things appearing perspectivally is a harmonic unity of perspectivity." p. 132.

[22] *Ideas I*, § 44, pp. 127-128.

and absolutely without discord.[23] Consciousness for Husserl then, is not the presence of subjective perspectives of external phenomena, but a continual presence of phenomena that make it possible to understand the meaning of what appears in consciousness.[24]

The appearance of things in experience remains relative, while consciousness unifies experiences, removing their contingency and relativity. "All experiences are conscious experiences."[25] Thus, reality can be doubted, but consciousness cannot be. Ricoeur states, "Evidence, according to the original is the presence of the thing itself in the original (in contrast to the presentation, memory, portrait, image, sign, concept, word); one would be tempted to say presence in flesh and blood. This is the self givenness (*Selbstgegebenheit*) which Husserl calls originary."[26] With the reduction consciousness is necessary and absolute because consciousness is always consciousness of something. Each process of consciousness (each intentional act) means something, directly identifies itself with the "whatness" of the object by harmonizing the respective appearances of the object as neutral, presuppositionless evidence of Being in-itself, present in consciousness.[27]

The phenomenological reduction accomplishes its scientific goals through unifying evidence as a "world – a whole universe of being."[28] Yet Husserl recognizes that he has not achieved an account of the experience of other persons. No matter how carefully and fully I represent another person to myself in consciousness, that person remains resistant to

---

[23] *Ideas I*, § 44, "no vestige of the meaning of the givenness of the thing would be left over," p. 126.

[24] *Ideas I*, § 46, pp. 130-132.

[25] *Ideas I*, § 45, p. 128

[26] *Husserl*, p. 101. Note that Husserl considers non-real objects to have the same status with respect to givenness as real objects of perception. He calls these objects (such as signs, memories, concepts, imaginings, etc.) categorial.

[27] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, III §28, p. 62.

[28] *Cartesian Meditations*, IV § 41, p. 87.

constitution. I cannot experience what the other person experiences. The other person and the other person's experience cannot be unified as evidence of objects. To continue the reduction of experience with the Other as the object of investigation results in solipsism. My representation of the Other inadequately captures the other's transcendence. The Other is an other ego. Attempting to grasp the Other objectively, besides denying the Other transcendence, undermines the possibility of the completion of the reduction as arising in and from my consciousness. Ricoeur describes this problem as, "the tension between two requirements of constituting the Other *in* me and constituting him as *Other*."[29]

The world presents Others to me as objects. Yet, Others also experience the world, and are subjects to whom the world presents objects.[30] Husserl, however, sees that according to consciousness the Other's "whatness" arises in and from my intentional acts and unifying constitution. He proposes to reduce the Other to "ownness," or, in other words, to consider the Other form the point of view of what is my own.[31] I make abstract all in the Other that is alien to me.[32] I experience my own body, and can employ that experience to express that I am a reference pole for all other physical bodies.[33] The movements and perceptions of my body are mine; their totality makes up my "owned body." Because of the status of ownership (under the reduction), the owned-body is not an object in

---

[29] *Husserl*, 116. The "problem" of Others is the subject of *Cartesian Meditations*, V §§ 42-62, pp.89-151.

[30] *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 43, p. 91.

[31] *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 44, p. 93.

[32] Ricoeur, *Husserl*, p. 118.

[33] "[T]here belongs within my psychic being the whole constitution of the world existing for me and, in further consequence, the differentiation of that constitution into the systems that constitute what is included in my peculiar ownness and the systems that constitute what is other. I, the reduced 'human Ego' ('psychophysical' Ego), am constituted, accordingly, as a member of the 'world' with a multiplicity of 'objects outside me'. But I myself constitute all this in my 'psyche' and bear it intentionally within me." *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 44, pp. 98-99.

the world, but a spiritual-ownness-sphere (or as Ricoeur calls it a primordial nature).[34] In this sphere, the Other is antecedent and secondary, still an object in the world, reduced to my body.[35] My understanding of myself, then, makes possible knowledge of the Other, and is made possible by my experience.[36] Everything that I experience is my own, for-me, because everything alien was bracketed out. Yet, I still cannot get to experience of an Other.

Husserl moves to an analogical position to grasp the Other as an Ego. I encounter another person's body as an "immanent transcendency." Only my own body can be constituted originally; yet,

> the body over there, which is nevertheless apprehended as an animate organism, must have derived this sense by an *apperceptive transfer from my animate organism*, and done so in a manner that excludes actually direct, and hence primordial, showing of the predicates belonging to an animate organism specifically, a showing of them in perception proper. It is clear from the very beginning that only a similarity connecting, within my primordial sphere, that body over there with my body can serve as the motivational basis for the *'analogizing' apprehension* of that body as another animate organism.[37]

Husserl demonstrates both respect for the Other as one who experiences the world originarily, and that the experience of the Other is rooted in the owned-sphere of the Ego that develops the analogy.[38] The Other has similarities to me, and differences from me. But the differences I can attempt to overcome by realizing that these are only moments of difference. I can imagine myself where the Other is, and hence, I assimilate the Other's

---

[34] *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 44, pp. 98-99; Ricoeur, *Husserl,* p. 121.

[35] "[T]he members we distinguish in this, my peculiarly own world-phenomenon, are *concretely* united […]. Hence the reduced 'Objects' – the 'physical things', the 'psychophysical Ego' – are likewise *outside one another*." *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 44, p. 98

[36] *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 45, p. 99

[37] *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 50, pp. 110-111.

[38] See Ricoeur, *Husserl*, pp. 123-130, for a detailed account of Husserl's analogical grasping of the Other. He emphasizes a second stage in Husserl's argument that makes behaviors of the Other. Since the Other can address me, the Other shows independence from me. The third stage demonstrates the otherness of perspective the Other has. Her here is my there. My here is his there. But despite the naming of the here and there, I can imagine what it would be like to be there. *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 48-54, pp. 105-120.

difference into my own sphere.[39] This moment when I see the Other over there, doing work, I have two undivided experiences that at once are "alien" to me and an "identical unity of multiplicities."[40] Though we look at an object from a different viewing point, and experience it each in our own Ego, I have all the modes of givenness available to me as the Other.[41] Furthermore, I am able to verify our interconnectedness because I have developed a new mode of understanding. I understand the Other no longer as an alien other but as an alter ego with a unique subjective life confirmed through behaviours, animations, and movements that express analogues of my behavior. The analogues of behavior provide identification between two previously alien spheres that can be synthesized in such a way "that 'I can find again' or 'reproduce' the same identifying evidence at different moments of my life."[42] The task now is to make certain that our experiences are harmonious, and this requires a temporal community.[43]

This process of equating my experiences with that of another can be repeated with each Other that I encounter. Since I experience both my own subjective psyche and my own flesh, I must establish a mutuality with the other members of my community. I can establish the same harmony with them as I had with the first. Yet, I realize that the first Other is an Other for the rest, just as I am an Other to them. This community of Others, with its endlessness of possible interactions, Husserl terms transcendental intersubjectivity.[44] A reciprocal relation between all of us Others develops, a "*mutual being for one another*,"[45] as we

---

[39] *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 54, pp. 117-120.

[40] *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 55, p. 123.

[41] *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 55, p. 125.

[42] Ricoeur, *Husserl*, p. 134; *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 55, p. 127-128.

[43] *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 55, pp. 127-128.

[44] *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 56, p. 130.

[45] *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 56, p. 129.

see ourselves with and among each other, both tied to and distinct from one another.[46] We now have a culture in which what is common to all of us is primordial. In this concrete world we relate to our community practically, and vitally, as we "are related to it in undergoing and doing."[47]

Husserl's most famous student, Martin Heidegger, though committed to phenomenology as a way to uncover, or clear a way for, things to reveal themselves, denies that Husserl's concern with epistemology yields any meaningful insights about the nature of beings.[48] Heidegger claims that the insistence on objects that give themselves to be seen cannot attain to a comprehensive understanding of Being as such. The everyday aspects of living, doing, working, using, shaping, acting, and articulating provide a better way to allow Being to be revealed. Heidegger is not concerned with the "whatness" of things, but about what it means to be a certain kind of thing in general.[49] Husserl's understanding of objects gives way to Heidegger's understanding of Being. For Heidegger, this understanding only comes about through the understanding of those who can understand. Humans understand not by bracketing out that which is alien, but by examining the practical affairs in which they engage. Human affairs along with moods and affectations reveal relations to the world, possibilities for authentic individuality, and involvement with others.[50] The human is submerged in these moods, activities, and involvements. Interpretations of these conditions reveal how understanding is possible and leads to the meaning of Being in general.

---

[46] *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 58, pp. 132-134.

[47] *Cartesian Meditations*, V § 58, p. 135.

[48] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), § 7, pp. 58-63.

[49] See Martin Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstander (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 21

[50] *Being and Time*, §§ ?, pp. 58, 59

Though Husserl asserts that bracketing the mundane elements of and the naïve predictions about the world enables one to gain evidence through direct experience, Heidegger regards these elements as fundamental to a pretheoretical understanding of the nature of Being. They make it possible to understand that which can understand Being: Dasein. Humans are thrown into a world not of their choosing, and naturally make predictions about their future by acting in the world, and shaping their lives.[51] Discourse about Dasein's relations to the world, others, and itself reveals the existential orientation of Dasein; it discloses the entanglements, and states of mind of Dasein.[52] The moods of Dasein are ways in which Dasein finds itself in the sense of "how one is," or "how one is fairing," and in the sense of coming to itself by perceiving itself. [53] Phenomenology should undertake an interpretation of Dasein's moods to disclose conceptually Dasein's primordial nature.

Heidegger's account of anxiety demonstrates how Dasein's disclosure provides access to its ontological foundation in its totality. Dasein's anxiety reveals it as self-interpreting as it acts in and engages with the world. Dasein naturally finds itself absorbed it the concerns of the world. Often these concerns demonstrate inauthenticity, showing that Dasein is closed off from itself.[54] In a state of anxiety Dasein flees from the world; yet, the world is not the source of Dasein's anxiety.[55] Anxiety is characterized as a threat from "nowhere and nothing;"[56] yet someone who is anxious is anxious about something. Anxiety

---

[51] *Being and Time*, § 6, p. 42

[52] *Being and Time*, § 38, p. 224

[53] *Being and Time*, § 29, p. 173-174

[54] *Being and Time*, § 40, p. 229; § 27, pp. 163-168

[55] *Being and Time*, § 40, pp. 229-231

[56] *Being and Time*, § 40, p. 231

is anxious over being itself.[57] One who is anxious is anxious about possibility and potentiality, about being an authentic self in the world. This orientation of anxiety reveals Dasein as "*Being-possible*."[58] This possibility means that Dasein is oriented toward the future and toward the freedom to choose to become and take hold of individuality. In anxiety Dasein feels that it is not-at-home, that it is, thrown into a world not of its choice.[59] Yet Dasein's potentiality is also revealed in its orientation to the future, its actions in the world shape Dasein's future authenticity or inauthenticity.[60] As this movement of Dasein is articulated it defines itself as unfolding temporally through acting in the world.

The task of the phenomenologist, according to Heidegger, then, is to clear the way for Dasein to reveal itself. Discourse about what it means for Dasein to live and act in the world provides a means to interpret Being as such. By grounding phenomenology in ontology Heidegger asserts he can find what structures of understanding make possible understanding of human's everyday practices that constitute humans identity.

Marion's Reinterpretation of Phenomenology: The Third Reduction

Husserl and Heidegger see the task of phenomenology as clearing a way for understanding. For Husserl this clearing occurs with the epochē that removes presuppositions and thereby allows phenomena to give themselves fully to intuition. For Heidegger this clearing means allowing entities to show up by getting to the background conditions where they appear. Marion's close reading of Husserl and Heidegger leads him to a third reduction: a reduction to givenness. Marion focuses on phenomena that give

---

[57] *Being and Time*, § 40, p. 232

[58] *Being and Time*, § 40, p. 232

[59] *Being and Time*, § 40, p. 233, 236

[60] *Being and Time*, § 40, p. 237

themselves freely without anticipation, measure, comparison, and causality. He amplifies Husserl's method that sets aside preconceptions, and inferences of causality,[61] and opens the space in which that which gives may give itself of itself. Put otherwise, Marion suspends prejudgments of metaphysics, ontology, and theology in order to make room for revelation. More radically, he sets aside the constituting "I" and the "Dasein" to allow an unrestricted opening to be summoned, called, or named.[62] His methodology (as described in *Reduction and Givenness* and *Being Given*) purports to bracket the certainty claimed by theology to make room for faith, to set aside the claims of ontology to allow the Other to appear freely, and to deny *a priori* constraints of metaphysics to open space for the possibility of revelation to become the historical accomplishment of Revelation.[63] Marion's theological leanings of *Idol and Distance* and *God without Being* give way to the radical phenomenology of givenness. The theological descriptions of the icon that revealed the idolatry of metaphysical deductions of God give way to a method that leads to the possibility of revelation. Further, the negative description of the icon, as unlike the mirroring of the idol, gives way to a more descriptive account of the icon as a saturated phenomenon.

Phenomenology, Marion says, frees transcendence by providing the means by which possibility can exceed actuality. But, the possibility of phenomenology "no longer consists in reestablishing the scientific objective of objectivity, but nor does it consist for all that in

---

[61] Marion emphasizes the formulation of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, and compares it with the formulation in *Ideas I*, in *Reduction and Giveness* and "The Saturated Phenomenon;" he gives priority to *Ideas I* in *Being Given*. This latter work attempts to defend the criticisms of the former two. The relation between the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I* becomes important for Marion as he emphasizes method in *Reduction and Givenness* and *Being Given*. He asserts that the "phenomenological way of thinking rests solely on its protocols. … For one does not overcome a true thinking by refuting it, but rather by repeating it, or even by borrowing from it the means to think with it beyond it. Then even failure suceeds," (*Reduction and Givenness*, 3). I take this to mean that he has continued to develop and rework his methodology, through greater rigor. Ricoeur also emphasizes phenomenology as method, see *Husserl*, p. 4.

[62] *Reduction and Givenness*, 198.

[63] *In Excess*, 29.

passing beyond that objective with a view to the *Seinsfrage*."[64] Marion's third reduction comes by way of a critique and reinterpretation of Husserl and Heidegger. Marion claims his method provides a more authentic, presuppositionless interpretation of Husserl. Marion finds Husserl's first principle: "So much appearing, so much Being" fails because it makes Being and appearing equivalent.[65] This equating makes Being indeterminate. Marion also finds faults in Husserl's second principle: "To the things themselves," because Marion finds no distinction between appearing and things in Husserl. The principal fails because it is redundant.[66] Husserl's phenomenological method attempts to gain a pure and certain understanding of things as they are in themselves (a pure intuition). His method works by suspending psychological assumptions, avoiding judgments about the world and looking at the qualities of things as they appear in all their multi-faceted unities in experience. Though Husserl claims a presuppositionless method, Marion finds that Husserl makes intuition *a priori*.[67]

If phenomenology begins with what appears (phenomena) and the reduction brackets out what restricts phenomena from appearing, and what prevents access to the

---

[64] *Reduction and Givenness*, 166

[65] *Being Given,* p. 11; Heidegger critiques this formula etymologically. He notes that "*phaënomenon*" means "that which shows itself in itself." Appearing gives only a veiled relation, a relation to a reference of a phenomenon. "Phenomenon, the showing itself-in-itself signifies a distinctive way in which something can be encountered." *Being and Time* §7, pp. 54, 51-55

[66] In *Reduction and Givenness*, Marion asserts that the dictum "To the things themselves" conflicts with the Principle of Principles, p. 49.

[67] See *Being Given,* p. 12; see also Michel Henry "Quatre principes de la phénoménologie," *Revue de Métaphysique dt de Morale*, No. 1, 1991, pp. 3-26. Henry develops Marion'ss argument in *Reduction and Givenness* further, and cloncludes that limiting phenomenology to appearing denies a more radical order, the order of giving, "Le thème auuquel elle se limite, le phénomène en tant qu'il se montre, n'implique encore qu'un apparaître abstrait, incapable de subsister par lui-même, et qui comme tel renvoie constamment à son contraire, à l'élément opaque et mort de la determination ontique. Mais pourquoui la phénoménologie classique s'est-elle à l'apparaître de l'étant, au point d'ignorer tout ce qui en fait d' apparaître serait radicalement d'un autre order, sinon parce que c'est l'étant qu'elle a pris pour guide?" (p. 17) See also, Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xiv; and Natanson, p. 78-83.

experience of phenomena, then the third principle, "the Principle of Principles," that asserts that intuition is the source of authority for knowledge becomes impoverished.[68] Husserl explains, "*every originarily giving intuition* is *a source of right for cognition* – that *everything* that offers itself *originarily* to us *in intuition* (in its fleshy actuality, so to speak) *must simply be received for what it gives itself,* but without *passing beyond the limits in which it gives itself.*"[69] In the assumption of intuition, that the thing that appears can be immanent to the mind, Marion retorts, "[I]ntuition becomes in itself a priori."[70] In other words, the work of giving meaning to what appears belongs to the ego. The Principle of Principles, Marion asserts, denies phenomena the freedom to give themselves by placing conditions on possibility; and the

---

[68] *Being Given,* p. 12; op. cit. *Ideas I*, §24 p. 83; In French "le droit" means law in addition to "right." Alternate English translations such as "authority," or "legitimizing source," might be preferable. See Etant donné, p. 20-1. See also *Reduction and Givenness,* here Marion gives a negative translation of the Principle of Principles: "…the *norm* that we should follow as phenomenologists: *to claim* [*in Anspruch zu nehmen*] *nothing that we cannot render essentially evident to consciousness itself* in its pure immanence." Marion further notes that Heidegger found the Principles of Principles objectionable on the grounds that it gives a science of consciousness, not objects, and thereby phenomenology becomes metaphysics, p. 51; op. cit. Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 69-70.

[69] Cited in *Being Given*, 12. See Husserl, *Ideas I,* §24, p. 83.

[70] *Being Given* p. 12; see also *Reduction and Givenness*, "Intuition itself cannot be understood as a last presupposition, since it is neither presupposed, nor posited, nor given, but originarily giving. Intuition sees what theories presuppose of their objects; as intuition gives, with neither reason nor condition, it precedes the theories of the given, in the capacity of a 'theory of all theories," p. 9, 9-15. Here Marion refers to Husserl's early formulations of the "principle of principles" (*Logical Investigations,* § 6). Husserl argues that intuition's givenness derives not from the sensual experience of a real object but from categorical forms (Kant's universal essences). The categorical forms give a type of universal.

For example, when I look at the coffee mug on my desk, I no not first receive the intuition of the particular white mug, but a universal species of "mug." But, as Marion goes on to note, the categorical intuition and the sensual intuition are inseparable in the sense act. When I look at my white mug, I experience it according to its type, "mug," and according to my senses, "this white mug." Theses two experiences (more precisely, the combination of an act of aiming at the mug corresponding to an adequate fulfillment of intuition) combine to form "the white mug is" (*Reduction and Givenness*, 14-15). This formulation becomes important for Marion because he finds that a group of experiences cannot be fulfilled through categorical intuition. No preexisting universal species can account for experiences like a painting by Monet, my own flesh, 9/11, or the icon's self-giving. These saturated phenomena cannot be aimed at (intended) as sensual objects. They cannot be assimilated into categories of universal types (fulfilled by categorical intuition). In other words, with the excessive gibing of the saturated phenomena, the presupposition of categories or species of objects fails to fulfill intuition, but overwhelms intuition.

appearance of the object in consciousness comes into question. Marion writes, "nothing constitutes an exception to intuition, and therefore nothing escapes its reconduction into the full light of presence; neither the sensuous, nor essence, nor the categorial form itself – nothing will remain invisible from now on, since a mode of intuition tracks and hunts down each of these objects as so many modes of presence."[71] The notion of presence (or evidence) creates a situation in which everything is exposed for intuition. This exposure of objects and imagined things makes "invisible" things unable to enter consciousness.[72]

What Husserl calls immanent Ricoeur calls a sign.[73] What is present to consciousness is not the actual thing but a re-presentation of the thing, a symbol, signification, concept. Marion questions the reason to prioritize the presence of the thing in the mind because it is a re-presentation of the original thing itself. Husserl refuses to recognize these re-

---

[71] *Reduction and Givenness*, p. 15

[72]Marion presents further objections to Husserl's Principle of Principles. Marion is concerned that Husserl has left open the possibility that intuition may be impoverished. The impoverishment becomes problematic because Husserl assigns, or gives, authority to intuition. Thus if the source of authority of the phenomenological reduction (and the principle of principles) can be called into question (because of possible lack of right/authority) then the phenomenological reduction can be questioned. Husserl does not attempt to calculate this lack. Without pursuing the nature and scope of the possibility of impoverishment, it becomes impossible to decide what it takes for an intuition to be sufficient. Marion's further objections state:

> 1. Intuition becomes a priori, making the reduction determined by a presupposition.
> 2. Husserl assumes "source of right [authority]" is lacking from what claims to appear – a lack occurs because intuition implies possibility of impoverishment (*Being Given*, 12).
> 3. Husserl does not give parameters for the possibility of the lack, further demonstrating indeterminateness of the Principle of Principles (*Being Given*, 188).
> 4. Husserl limits intuition to the fulfillment of intention – he limits appearing to intention, "Intuition finally contradicts phenomenality because it itself remains submitted to the ideal of Objectifying representation" (*Being Given*, pp. 13, 189-191, 199); thus, "objectivity is extended beyond real objectivity, in a manner parallel to the broadening of intuition beyond the sensible; and it is necessary to note above all that these two broadenings lead to the same – categorical – horizon" (*Reduction and Givenness*, p. 11).
> 5. The Principle of Principles comes prior to the performance of the reduction (*Being Given*, 14-15). Robyn Horner puts the issue this way, "If Husserl values most highly the presence of the thing itself…he is not taking into account that this presence can never be the presence of anything more that a sign." *Jean-Luc Marion: A* Theo-*Logical Introduction*, p. 29

[73] *Husserl,* 101.

presentations as signs.[74] According to Robert Sokolowski, what a sign represents and the meaning it has to the one who thinks it are not so far removed as Ricoeur suggests.

> [A] sign that is used to mean a thing brings that thing to mind and then holds on; it lets the thing be presented a presented by the sign and by the one who uses the sign, to the one who 'takes up' the sign. Thus the name of a thing does not just present the thing; the name stays around a presenting the thing, and the thing remains suffused as being what the name refers to. The thing and the name belong together in a way in which the thing and its indication-sign do not belong together. And once the thing has been presented by its name, we can go on to inquire *how* the thing is meant by the use, even by *this* use, of the word. When we do this, we inquire after the meaning of the word.[75]

If the sign and the meaning are related more closely than Ricoeur argues, Marion still worries that the object presented is still decided by intuition a priori. The consequences of making intuition the authority are that consciousness determines the presence of phenomena, and that phenomena are reduced to objectness.[76] Marion recognizes that Husserl's principle dictates that everything that does appear appears "in the mode consciousness silently imposes on them."[77] Appearing is accepted only because intuition authorizes it as originary. This priority of intuition further implies that any object can present itself to my consciousness, and its presence in my consciousness is sufficient for me to accept it. The

---

[74] In "The Saturated Phenomenon" (in *The Theological Turn in French Phenomenology*) Marion cites three problems with Husserl's formulation of the Principle of Principles. First, the unconditioned giving of the phenomenon is limited by the intuition; the intuition frames the conditions of possibility and thereby denies phenomena the chance to give themselves of themselves (pp. 180-181; see also *Being Given,* 185). Second*,* Husserl presupposes a horizon of donation. As included within the limits of a horizon, Husserl contradicts "the absoluteness of intuitive donation" by making my horizon the very possibility for appearing ("The Saturated Phenomenon" pp. 183, 181-183). Third, the phenomenological *I* determines what can and cannot appear. Donation must be led pack to the *I* and therefore bars any phenomena from appearing that are not reducible to the *I*. Husserl makes the giving of an irreducible phenomenon impossible ("The Saturated Phenomenon" pp. 183-184; see also *Being Given*, pp. 188-189). See also Horner, *A* Theo-*Logical Introduction*, p. 29.

[75] Robert Sokolowski, "Exorcising Concepts," *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 40, no. 3, issue 159, March 1987, pp. 451-465; p. 457.

[76] *Reduction and Givenness*, p. 54

[77] *Reduction and Givenness,* p. 52; see also *Being Given*, p. 189

legitimacy to appear is also the possibility of appearing.[78] John Manoussakis reformulates Marion's worry saying that, in Husserl's formulation, everything outside what I can imagine possible becomes impossible and meaningless (because it is unimaginable). Marion thinks the principle of givenness needs consistent treatment by Husserl. Though Husserl tried to avoid presuppositions, by restricting the appearances to the intuition, Husserl has reinstated Kant's synthetic judgment.[79] Phenomena gain the "right to appear" not from the phenomenological *I*'s intuition or horizon, but by taking the principle that "higher than actuality stands *possibility*" seriously.[80] Heidegger, anachronistically, finds a similar fault with Husserl. Being must be thought according to givenness.[81] Marion emphasizes that Heidegger interprets the advent of Being [*Ereignis*] in a double process of givenness: coming forth (unveiling), and withdrawing. "Being withdraws from beings because it gives them; all givenness implies that the giving disappear (withdraw) exactly to the degree that the gift appears (advances) precisely because giving demands leaving (it behind)."[82] With this analysis of Heidegger Marion concludes that "Givenness alone uncovers beings in (and

---

[78] *Being* Given, p. 14; John Panteleimon Manoussakis, "The Phenomenon of God: From Husserl to Marion," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 78.1, Winter 2004, pp. 53-69. In the first case he says, "with no intuition given to intention there is no possibility for any phenomenon to appear." In the second, "with no intention to receive this intuition there is no phenomenon of any possibility of an appearance," pp. 58-59.

[79] Emmanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 194.

[80] "The Saturated Phenomenon," 184; see also *Reduction and Givenness,* "For often what Husserl opens in the way of possibility he does not see, where as what he thinks he sees best, sometimes, closes possibility. But it is for this very reason he remains for us a nourishing ground" (p. 166). See Heidegger, *Being and Time* §7, p. 63.

[81] Cf. Marion, *Being Given*, p. 33; Heidegger, *Being and Time* (§2, p. 26), "Being lies in the fact that something is, and in its Being as it is; in Reality; in presence-at-hand; in subsistence; in validity; in Dasein; in the 'there is' [*es gibt*, 'it gives']." Marion translates "*es gibt*" literally as *"cela donne*" or "it gives," see *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 185-186, 197ff. Marion justifies this translation with Heidegger's understanding of the poetry of Rimbaud. See *Being Given*, pp. 334-335, n. 60; p. 336, n. 75.

[82] *Being Given*, p. 36

without) their Being."[83] Heidegger wants to get beyond consciousness of objects. Being cannot be made apparent in categorial intuition; Being calls Husserl's phenomenological *I* into question.[84] Yet Heidegger's method, returning to the ontological question by invoking Dasein, ends in circularity (Dasein uncovers only Dasein), or the nothing allows being to appear in boredom or anxiety. Neither moves result in the understanding of being, according to Marion. In the first case Heidegger wrongly asserts that Dasein escapes the subjectivity that, for Husserl, constitutes objects without a world or background.[85] With Dasein "selfhood (ipseity, *selbstheit*) alone renders possible, through its absolute coincidence with itself…If the Self did not determine the *I*, no being would be such that it might in itself bring itself into play in its very Being."[86] Furthermore, the ontological difference that would differentiate Being from beings (the meaning of Being in general and the sense of being) cannot be attained by Dasein.[87] Heidegger, like Husserl, misunderstands givenness. In the double process of the advent of Being (*Ereignis*) as manifestation and hiddenness, Heidegger recognizes the excess of being, and the call of being; but, Marion argues the call can only be received in the response. The givenness outside Being only serves as a transition to the advent. For Heidegger the advent of Being stops short of the reception of the call, and thereby misses givenness.

In the case of the icon, Husserl's assumption means that the mind precedes the content the icon gives. Marion objects on the ground that without the self-giving of the icon no content could be possible for the mind to receive as given, i.e. no unmediated perception

---

[83] *Being Given*, p. 36

[84] Jean-Luc Marion, "*Le Interloqué*," in *Who Comes after the Subject*, eds. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p. 237

[85] *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 104-105

[86] *Reduction and Givenness*, p. 105

[87] *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 151-152; see also Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift*, pp. 85-90.

of an object could occur. To presuppose immanence detracts, or denies, the icon limitlessness, unpredictability, irreproducibility, and inexhaustibility. The icon relegated to the status of an object, present to and validated by the mind reveals nothing the mind could not produce of itself. Husserl insists on the privilege of givenness in *Ideas I*. Marion follows this insistence to a new principle: "So much reduction, so much givenness.[88] Marion finds that even as Husserl restricted givenness to the phenomenological *I*, he makes room for a richer notion of givenness by leaving the term undefined.[89] Marion takes up the undefined givenness and makes it the arbiter of phenomenology. "For nothing appears except by giving itself to pure seeing, and therefore the concept of the phenomena is exactly equal to that of a self-givenness in person."[90]

Those phenomena that lie outside the mind's capacities for prediction, reconstruction, masterability, and categorization as a certain kind of object are pure forms of givenness.

> What would occur, as concerns phenomenality, if an intuitive *donation* were accomplished that was absolutely unconditioned (without the limit of a horizon) and absolutely irreducible to a constitution *I*)? Can we not envisage a type of phenomenon that would reverse the condition of a horizon (by surpassing it, instead of being inscribed within it) and that would reverse the reduction (by leading the *I* back to itself, instead of being reduced to the *I*)?[91]

Marion can imagine this kind of phenomenon. He further asserts that this saturated phenomenon presents a new possibility for the phenomenology of religion. The possibility Marion points to allows God to give God-self[92] while maintaining that the giving cannot be contained by intuition. Marion does not claim recourse to theology, at this point, but

---

[88] *Being Given*, p. 14; *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 203-204

[89] *Being Given*, pp. 26-27

[90] *Being Giver*, p. 27

[91] "The Saturated Phenomenon," p. 184

[92] While Marion's God is quite masculine, I prefer gender-neutral references to God in order not to speculate or draw conclusions about God.

emphasizes the possibility that a phenomenon can give immeasurably more than can be anticipated or apprehended by the mind.

Givenness has priority over the mind's ability to constitute (to let the object be present). The given presents itself to the mind as by surprise, overwhelming the mind's ability to grasp it fully. These phenomena that overwhelm in their giving, Marion calls saturated phenomena. The idol, the flesh, the event, and the icon appear and give themselves without predictability, finitude, cause, or relation to other phenomena. The mind cannot manipulate their appearance in advance, cannot finesse objectivity out of them through pre-conceived concepts, and cannot, upon their appearing, illicit being from them.

Marion focuses on the methods of phenomenology to provide a way to allow these saturated phenomena to give themselves. Marion's method, "so much reduction, so much givenness," prescribes, on the one hand, inviolability by adherence to rigorous method, and, on the other hand, invulnerability by preventing exploitation of what is given. The icon presents the need for a new beginning, a new reduction.[93] The icon presents possibility of experiencing that which transcends the senses: something given without my considering or thinking it into my consciousness.[94] I aim at the eyes of the saint pictured to be emptied of my natural attitude; in turn, the eyes of the saint aim at me to present me to myself. This experience occurs without direct apprehension on my part. The icon gives me intuition:

---

[93] Despite the great controversy surrounding Marion's third reduction, Marion remains true to Husserl, at least insofar as Husserl maintained that each new field of phenomenological study required a new beginning, a new starting point. Cf. Lauer, pp. 4-5; and Husserl's introduction to the English edition of *Ideas I*, p. 39, "…in addition to other adjustments *a new way of looking at things* is necessary, one that contrasts *at every point* with the natural attitude of experience and thought. To move freely along this new way without ever reverting to the old viewpoints, to learn to see what stands before our eyes, to distinguish, to describe, calls, moreover, for exaction and laborious studies." This commitment to methods and beginnings is confirmed by Heidegger as well (*Being and Time*, §7, pp. 49-50), though Heidegger's reduction also fails to allow the gift to be given by the reduction to Dasein.

[94] My concern is the treatment of the icon and the possibility it contains to open up to revelation. My treatment of the other three categories of saturated phenomena will not be as full.

pure unmediated seeing. My certitude of the natural world no longer has priority: an alternative world reveals itself as more certain.

Boredom also fails to disclose Being. In *What is Metaphysics* Heidegger attempts to demonstrate that boredom opens onto Being through nothingness.[95] In the state of boredom with oneself the general meaning of life remains concealed. Yet, boredom, in its indefiniteness and indifference, can receive all beings as a whole because boredom takes away distinctions.[96] Marion sees two possible ways for being to emerge from boredom: either through the call of the advent or through wonder. But boredom renders Dasein "Deaf to the call […and] indifferent to all wonders even to the 'wonder of wonders that being is.'"[97] Marion moves to Lévinas to demonstrate that the call cannot originate from Dasein in its state of boredom. The call comes from elsewhere, from something prior to being. The face of the neighbor (and not the fact that being is, or the claim of Being) is the call of God.[98] Heidegger's claim of Being needs replaced by the reduction to the pure call that precedes (and therefore has priority over) Being, Dasein and the *I*.[99] When the call is made to me I respond. "The call thus appears as the originary scheme of the two previous reductions, precisely because it alone allows me to reconduct to…, in that it demands that one give oneself over."[100]

---

[95] Martin Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Freid and Richard Polt (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 20-27

[96] *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 172-173. The difference between boredom and anxiety is that beings remain indistinct in anxiety because of the fear of the "Nothing" and thereby allows access to nothing. According to Marion, however, access to Nothing is still indeterminate. Interpretation needs to be employed to uncover Being (see *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 175-183).

[97] *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 194, 192-194

[98] *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 196-197

[99] *Reduction and Givenness*, p.197

[100] *Reduction and Givenness*, p.198

Since the first and second reductions abandoned givenness, the constituting *I* and Dasein cannot be given over to the call. The one who can respond to the originary call, Marion names *l'interloqué*.[101] *L'interloqué* discovers that she is already in relation by finding herself called (summoned, convoked).[102] *L'interloqué* suffers a surprise. The foreignness of the call prevents *l'interloqué* from comprehending and constituting the convocation (or summons).[103] The response to the summons provokes *l'interloqué* to identify himself with the claim and recognize himself as called. Finally, *l'interloqué* finds himself judged.[104] "A facticity therefore precedes the theory, but it is no longer a matter of my facticity as Dasein; it is a matter of the absolutely other and antecedent facticity of the claim convoking my by surprise."[105]

Marion does not name who or what calls *l'interloqué*. First, naming the caller is unnecessary because it precedes being and the phenomenological *I*.[106] The third reduction is to the call not to whom or what calls. The more strictly one observes the reduction to the call, that is more original than the one called, "the more things give themselves amply" to the one who performs it.[107] Husserl's and Heidegger's reductions exclude what does not have to be,[108] (constitution and Dasein) and renders givenness accessible. First, by leading *l'interloqué* back to the indeterminate, the call becomes absolute. Second, the call gives *l'interloqué* to herself; and third, gives according to the horizon of the unconditioned call and the

---

[101] *Reduction and Givenness*, p. 200; *L'interloqué* can be translated as the disconcerted one, the one taken aback, or the one made speechless. All these meanings have significance for Marion; thus, I follow the translator, Thomas A. Carlson, and leave it untranslated.

[102] *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 200-201

[103] *Reduction and Givenness*, p. 201

[104] *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 201-202

[105] *Reduction and Givenness*, p. 202

[106] *Reduction and Givenness*, p. 202

[107] *Reduction and Givenness*, p. 203

[108] *Reduction and Givenness*, p. 204; see also Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift*, pp. 92-93

unconstrained response. Fourth, by not predetermining the conditions or determinations of the call, the caller can give without restraint.[109]

Saturated Phenomena and the Icon

The call is unexpected, overwhelming, bedazzling. The call gives one to oneself by saturating the horizon of experience immeasurably. Like the call the saturated phenomena surprise by their excess. Marion's saturated phenomena exceed Kant's categories of understanding (quantity, quality, relation and modality). Kant finds that a phenomenon can be foreseen by summing its parts (quantity), that they can be measured by intensive magnitude (quality), that they can be represented through aproiri concepts (relation), and that they can be related to thought in general and known absolutely (modality) Saturated phenomena exceed Kant's categories of intuition as invisable, unbearable, absolute, and irregardable. The event, the idol, the flesh, and the icon give these excesses to intuition.

The event cannot be foreseen because it cannot be aimed at, and therefore exceeds quantity.[110] I cannot sum its parts because they continue to be added on, and I constantly am amazed. Nothing that comes before the phenomenon announces or explains it. When it comes forward, no summation or enumeration suffices to capture it.[111] What the icon gives, as an event, precedes me. The icon's "charged" history pre-exists me and imposes itself on me without my foreseeing its splendor. "[I]t happens by itself to me, takes me in and exposes itself on me."[112] The occasion of coming upon the icon eludes complete description

---

[109] *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 204-205

[110] *Being Given*, p. 199

[111] "The Saturated Phenomenon," pp. 198-199.

[112] *In Excess*, p. 32; throughout this section I bring the icon's description to the three saturated phenomena Marion develops independently. This work intends to study the icon. Marion demonstrates that the icon gives as the first the saturated phenomena in addition to giving as irregardable. Therefore, I keep the icon in the fore as I look at the first three.

in words. The icon shows itself starting from itself and escapes my attempts to constitute it.[113] Were I to try to describe what occurred, I would need to explain exhaustively what happened, what it meant, the perspective from which I started, my motivations (personal and spiritual), and the consequences of it. Such and explanation would never end.[114] "We never put into play the event (nothing is more ridiculously contradictory than the would-be 'organization of an event'), but itself, at the initiative of its *self*, it produces us in *giving itself to us*. It produces us in the scene that opens its givenness."[115]

The event demands an "I" to receive it.[116] L'adonné, the gifted one, the one who receives himself from what he receives, originates from reception and response. More than called, as l'interloqué, l'adonné in reducing what claims to appear to a given (including the phenomenological *I* and Dasein) "removes the weight of the *self*," and allows the originary giving to validate, confirm and give the self to the self.[117] In the reduction l'adonné performs the function of passive recipient; but, by phenomenalizing the given, l'adonné receives herself as the gift reveals her to herself.[118] The unforeseen event of the experience of the icon makes one gifted and a self.

---

[113] *In Excess*, p. 33

[114] *In Excess*, pp. 33-34, 36

[115] *In Excess*, p. 34

[116] *In Excess*, p. 46

[117] *In Excess*, p.45, 47-49; Marion, in this movement, reformulates Lévinas's phenomenology. I become myself by taking responsibility for another. The neighbor summons and I answer for the neighbor. I substitute myself for him and "In substitution my being that belongs to me and not to another is undone, and it is through this substitution that I am not 'another,' but me." (Emmanuel Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being: Or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1981), p. 127) Marion does not name the other or the source of the gift; nonetheless, the reception of the gift gives one to oneself.

[118] *In Excess*, p. 50. Richard Kearney presents an interesting parallel to Marion. In *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion*, Kearney asserts that, conceived as possibility, God acts from the future as a not yet accomplished promise. As humans respond to God's possibility transformation occurs and moves humans toward the *eschaton* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001). See also John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in*

Like the quantity of a saturated phenomenon, its quality cannot be anticipated. The reality of the saturated phenomenon gives without limit and the recipient of the giving cannot bear the intensive magnitude of the gaze. The idol (and the gaze of the icon) bedazzles by the glory, joy and excess of its giving intuition.[119] The unbearable glory one perceives, suffers, or undergoes, like an intensity of light, becomes available to the sensible and intelligent intuition.[120] But, the gaze cannot sustain the excessive and unmeasurable visibility. This process reveals the finitude of the one who gazes at the icon. [121] The common act of seeing involves picking out and aiming at items available to sight, unifying those items by imposing ends on them, and making clear and distinct objects of them.[122] The icon eludes objectification just as it cannot be borne by sight.

Painting provides a privileged experience of the visible. The painting dazzles the spectator because of the concentration of visibility. A painting captivates me, it gives too much to see. My gaze no longer moves from object to object but is held in admiration. The common objects could not sustain my attention because they lacked excess of visibility. But the painting is a transformative experience. The painting shows what I want to see and do, it reveals my hopes and desires. What I look at and admire judges me, decides who I am. "Name your idol and you will know who you are."[123] The "most apparent" become the "most desirable" in a painting as it "reduces what gives itself to what shows itself."[124] The painting excludes the invisible and presents only the unbearable radiance of the idol. The

---

Personhood and the Church, where the community performs the Eucharist as a realization of Christ-likeness (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993).

[119] "The Saturated Phenomenon," pp. 199-201; *Being Given*, pp. 202-203

[120] "The Saturated Phenomenon," pp. 201; *Being Given*, pp. 204

[121] *Being Given*, p. 206

[122] *In Excess*, pp. 55-56

[123] *In Excess*, p. 61

[124] *In Excess*, p. 68

painting, uncapturable by any instance of contemplating it, requires that I return to it again and again. It requires that I see it anew. Each time I see it, the painting (and the icon) presents something new and unsubstitutable. I return to it again and again because it opens an indefinite series of things to see, infinitely more than a finite object.[125] "The idol rises up before us, silent, irresistible, adorable."[126] The icon, like the painting, dazzles and captivates attention, but the icon reveals more than my own desires, more than myself; the icon makes the invisible visible, and beholds (envisages) me.

The saturated phenomenon of the flesh distinguishes itself from common phenomena by evading analogy to other experiences. Kant's category of relation presupposes the unification of experience according to an accident of substance, cause and effect, and commonality among substances. Marion contends that these functions of analogy are deployed in advance of experience; the horizon of understanding constrains what can appear.[127] Marion proposes that instead of limiting an intuition to a certain horizon of understanding, multiple horizons are required to accommodate the excessive givenness.[128] One can further imagine a phenomenon that gives itself absolutely and as absolute. This phenomenon would be freed from any analogy and, thereby, any horizon because it would have no dependence on the comprehension of experience.[129] I cannot see the overabundance as an object. I cannot constitute it as a fulfilled intention. I realize instead my impotence when confronted by pure donation. The intuition that overwhelms me constitutes me.[130]

---

[125] *In Excess*, pp. 70-72

[126] *In Excess*, p. 74

[127] "The Saturated Phenomenon," pp. 208-209; *Being Given*, pp. 207-209

[128] *Being Given*, p. 210

[129] *Being Given*, pp. 211-212

[130] "The Saturated Phenomenon," p. 210

The flesh surpasses the status of relation by being both what sees and is seen, hears and is heard, feels and is felt: what affects and is affected.[131] Though I may forget myself in daily concerns about others, this self-forgetfulness comes from assuming self-sufficiency.[132] "I come back to myself in experiencing myself, and I experience myself in taking flesh."[133] Marion establishes the flesh as a saturated phenomenon by addressing a flaw in Descartes's reasoning. Descartes attempts to deny feeling as something that could establish self-certainty; yet, Marion (following Michel Henry) demonstrates that the thinking subject comes about through an act of feeling.[134] Husserl makes the same discovery in the *Cartesian Meditations*. I recognize others as physical bodies, in the reduction; but, I recognize myself as flesh. I experience the world through passively or receptively suffering the world. I feel that I feel and that I am felt.[135] I phenomenalize the world through my flesh; and, my flesh fixes me to myself. Not merely a function of sensation, "the self only attains itself in feeling itself."[136]

Pain and pleasure demonstrate that the flesh gives me self-identity. If I burn my finger on the stove, I do not identify my pain with the stove's heat, but with the feeling I suffer by my flesh. Likewise, pleasure overcomes me in spite of will or reason as it accomplishes sensation passively in my flesh.[137] The play of time on the flesh further assigns

---

131 *Being Given*, p. 231

132 *In Excess*, p. 82

133 *In Excess*, p. 82

134 *In Excess*, pp. 83-86; see also Michel Henry *Généalogy de la psychonanalysis: Le commencement perdu,* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985), 35.

135 *In Excess*, pp. 87-88; Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, V, §55.

136 *In Excess*, p. 88

137 *In Excess*, pp. 92-94, Marion relies heavily on Descartes and Levinas to demonstrate the flesh's passivity with respect to pain, and on Pascal to demonstrate the flesh's passivity with respect to pleasure. Op. cit. René Descartes, *Passion de l'âme,* §152, AT XI, p. 445, 18-20; Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard Cohen (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1987), p. 69; Blaise Pascal, *Pensées,* §795.

me to myself. By accumulating in the "ruin" of my body, the lines on my face do not return me to a prior state, but "I am finally given to myself."[138] I have my sense of individuality through my flesh, in that it "gives me to myself in giving itself to me – I am given over [adonné] to it."[139] Flesh relates and refers back to itself. Everything felt by my flesh remains unique.[140] Moreover, the unique posture of being given to myself attests that I am "alone and first in the world" prior to the assertion of a cogito.

The description of the flesh's irreducibility to analogy applies to the face as well. The face sees more that can be seen in it, according to visibility. The face of another person escapes attempts to assimilate it into my experience, to understand it according to constitution. As the icon, the face gives itself to be seen by me as it gazes at me. The gaze of the other or the icon demands a plurality of horizons; the icon happens to me, imposes on me, decides me as it calls me to respect the weight of its glory.[141] With the icon, I receive myself as the gifted one, *l'adonné*.

The icon exceeds quantity as unforeseen, quality as unbearable, relation as absolute, and modality as irregardable. Kant's category of modality maintains that the experienced

---

[138] *In Excess*, pp. 96, 94-96

[139] *In Excess*, pp. 99, 97-99; Like *l'interloqué*, *l'adonné* has more than one connotation for Marion. It could be translated literally and the one given over, the one who begins with what gives itself, or in addition the one who emerges. See Jeffery L. Kosky, "Philosophy of Religion and the Return to Phenomenology in Jean-Luc Marion," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 78, 4, Fall 2004, pp. 629-648, p. 638.

[140] *In Excess*, pp. 99-100; See also Michel Henry, *I am the Truth*: *Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 30-31. Henry describes Life as the fundamental experience of enjoying itself. In the phenomenality of the flesh I experience what reveals and that which is revealed simultaneously, as the same thing. Henry calls this experience Life, "Experiencing oneself as Life does is to enjoy oneself [*jouir de soi*]. Enjoyment does not presuppose any differences similar to those in which the world is born: it is homogeneous phenomenological material, a monolithic affective body whose phenomenality is affectivity as such. […] The self-revelation of life is its enjoyment, the primordial self-enjoyment that defines the essence of Living and thus of God himself. According to Christianity, God is Love. Love is nothing other than the self-revelation of God understood in its *pathētik* phenomenological essence, specifically, the self-enjoyment of absolute Life."

[141] *In Excess*, pp. 113-119

phenomenon must agree with formal conditions of knowledge. The power of thought sets the requirement for the possibility of the phenomenon's appearing. Marion finds the possibility of phenomena that do not agree with the power of knowing. With the icon, agreement between intuition and concept cannot occur.[142] The icon provides, not objectification of a phenomenon, but an excess of saturation that refuses the mind's effort to make it fully present. The icon escapes attempts to aim at it; it is "*invisable*," untargetable.[143] The icon, not controllable by the one who sees it, gives too much to see. The gaze confronted by the icon cannot master it because the gaze cannot receive all that it gives, making the icon "irregardable" (unable to be looked at, or unable to "keep and eye on it").[144] The immediate actuality of the icon comes forward and affects me directly.[145] I am subjected to the icon as a witness that cannot provide meaning to the experience. The icon gives meaning, submerging me in its abundance.[146] I find the icon more originary than myself, already there, already given. Since I cannot interpret adequately what the icon gives, I am judged by what I cannot say or think.

The icon achieves the characteristics of the prior the kinds of saturated phenomena. The icon, like the event, cannot be constituted because it demands endless perspectives without termination and opens up a teleology for the gifted one, l'adonné. The icon, like the idol, demands seeing it again and again, opening up the unbearable glory and joy of unsubstitutable excess. The icon, like the flesh, affects originarily opening up freedom from any horizon and establishing uniqueness. The icon, freed from objectness and beingness,

---

142 "The Saturated Phenomenon," pp. 208-209; *Being Given*, pp. 212-213

143 *Being Given*, pp. 213-214; *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 33; *Prolegomena to Charity*, 81

144 "The Saturated Phenomenon," pp. 209-210

145 *Being Given*, p. 216

146 *Being Given*, p. 217; *In Excess*, p. 113

opens the possibility of revelation.[147] The gaze (of the face of another or the icon) remains unseen but reveals an invisible content. "Phenomenology is not first required where phenomena are already given and constituted, but only where they remain dissimulated or still invisible."[148] With the icon invisibility provides more than visibility.[149] The painted face of the saint the Virgin Mary, or Christ, or the face of another person looks at the beholder and fixes the gaze on the beholder's gaze. The pupils offer nothing to see.[150] As I focus on the pupils no-thing visible is seen, but the invisible is revealed.

Beyond the analogy that Husserl deploys to certify knowledge of other, and the moods of Dasein that reveal Being of beings, the gaze of the Other takes initiative and "speaks to me in silence."[151] Through the injunction of the face of the Other, "Thou shalt not kill," I renounce my ability to master the Other.[152] "The weight of its glory weighs upon me, when it inspires respect."[153] The face offers an infinity of meanings in its expressions; yet, the demand (or call) not to constitute it (and thereby obliterate the Other) requires that I wait for the Other to give his own alterity, his unique and never-ending story.[154] The face, moreover, accuses me and exposes me. I see that I have arrived too late, I have not given

---

147 *Being Given*, pp. 232-233

148 *In Excess*, p. 110

149 Phillip Blond suggests that Marion does not value visibility. Since Marion makes intentionality (the objectifying distillation of another that obliterates otherness and the Other) the target of his critique of the first and second reduction, he does not "devalue visibility, making it blasphemous." Instead Marion makes possible an ethics of seeing. Seeing that attempts to control, manipulate, summarize, contain, or measure the Other denies the potential, the possibility, for the Other to give itself. Marion wants to thwart the pre-emptive strike of intentionality (ala Lévinas) that negates otherness and prevents the particular from encroaching upon sight, prevents the call. Phillip Blond, "Introduction: Theology before Philosophy," in *Between Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Phillip Blond (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 37-38.

150 *In Excess*, pp. 114-115; *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 81; *Crossing of the Visible*, pp. 20-23

151 *In Excess*, p. 116

152 *In Excess*, pp. 116-118

153 *In Excess*, p. 119

154 *In Excess*, p. 121-122

the respect due him. I must expose myself to the Other and take responsibility for his fate.[155] "I can never say anything to the other except my shortcomings and my belatedness. But it is these very things that open me up to him by detaching me from the intentionality of the *I*."[156]

Icons properly belong to Marion's reduction because they give themselves to intuition in excess of the mind's ability to aim at, foresee, bear, or reproduce them.[157] The objects of Husserl's phenomenology are presented to the mind (to consciousness) in acts of perception. By contrast, perception, though an element of the experience of a saturated phenomenon, occurs as an excess of givenness. Perception and the mind cannot capture or contain the inexhaustible, the unbearable, the unforeseen or the irreproducible. Saturated phenomena become privileged because they overwhelm consciousness and because they allow a study of experience completely absolved of natural attitudes about the world. "[The icon] alone permits all the dimensions of phenomenality to be glimpsed, explores the region of saturated givenness, thoroughly inventories it, and when one glimpses it, one finds it cannot be eluded."[158]

Marion, fully aware that he may be charged with ideology by allowing the question of God to arise in phenomenology, asserts that he liberates possibility from the constraints of Husserl's objectness and Heidegger's ontology. That revelation remains a phenomenological

---

[155] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 85-86; *In Excess*, p. 125-126

[156] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 86

[157] Marion asserts that the idol, the flesh, and the icon also are saturated phenomena. The idol is inexhaustible, the flesh is unrelatable, and the event is irreproducible. The icon has all these qualities and is unforeseen.

[158] My translation, "…qu'elle seule permet d'invisager toutes les dimensions de la phénoménalité, explore la région de la donation saturé, l'inventoire à fond et, quelque réponse qu'on envisage de lui trouver, ne peut s'esquiver." *Etant donné*, 326. The passive tone, while not as elegant as Kosky's translation, emphasizes that the call, the giver, and the gift precede the gifted one.

possibility cannot be denied anymore than givenness.[159] Marion emphasizes that revelation (a "fifth type of saturation," the "saturation of saturation") remains a phenomenological possibility. The broadening of phenomenology admits it as a possibility. "Phenomenology cannot decide if a revelation can or should give itself, but it can (and it alone can) determine that in case it does such a phenomenon of revelation should assume the figure of the paradox of paradoxes."[160] The possibility of revelation, the paradox of paradoxes, falls within the domain of phenomenological description; but that an actual revelation appears, phenomenology has no right to decide.

Criticisms of the Third Reduction

Several questions arise at this point. First, has Marion returned to theology and transgressed phenomenology? Are Marion's saturated phenomena theological concepts that cannot be broached by phenomenology? Second, has Marion, by circumscribing the possibility of revelation with phenomenology, also circumscribed God? Has Marion contradicted his original intention, and confined revelation, thereby returning to idolatry? Or, third, has Marion truly provided an account of possibility for the gift? Are the saturated phenomena gifts? Is the gift possible at all?

From Husserl's first inception, phenomenology refuses to go beyond the data available to consciousness, beyond what occurs within my experiential horizon. Marion's third reduction originates outside my horizon, interrupts my attempts to make experience clear, undoes my imaginative construals that confidently assert certain knowledge of what appears within consciousness. The call comes from outside me, from elsewhere and

---

[159] *Being Given*, 235

[160] *Being Given*, 235

otherwise. The call transgresses the "claim of being."[161] Dominique Janicaud finds that the third reduction has not so much transgressed the "the claim of being" as transgressed the method of phenomenology. A reduction to the call, to the unconditioned, and uncontainable, to the original and the absolute, is incompatible with phenomenology inasmuch as it tries "to render phenomenological what cannot be."[162] Janicaud claims Marion has attempted to bring an a priori ideology to bear on phenomenology.[163] "In Marion's work, there is no respect for the phenomenological order; it is manipulated as an ever-elastic apparatus, even when it is claimed to be 'strict.'"[164] Janicaud contends (in inflammatory terms) that the caller is a poorly disguised introduction of God into phenomenology. Instead of strictly adhering to phenomenological principles, Marion manipulates these principles, and establishes "pure givenness" as another metaphysical species.[165] For his part, Marion attempts only to show the possibility of the saturation of phenomena. If saturated phenomena are available to consciousness then they are available for phenomenological study. That Marion veers into theological territory becomes clear to Janicaud as he analyzes the use of "Givenness" in Marion.[166] Janicaud asserts that the use of "Givenness" betrays the Heideggerian meaning and attempts to make theological claims about God.

---

[161] Dominique Janicaud, "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology, Veerings," in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn:" The French Debate*, Dominique Janicaud, Jean-François Courtine, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, and Paul Ricoeur, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), pp. 50-69.

[162] Janicaud, "Veerings," pp. 56-62

[163] Janicaud, "Veerings," pp. 63-64

[164] Janicaud, "Veerings," p. 65

[165] Janicaud, "Veerings," pp. 64-65.

[166] Dominique Janicaud, "Question de la rédaction," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, no. 1, 1991, p. 65

Marion's response to Janicaud takes two forms. First, he repeats that with, and since, *Reduction and Givenness* he concerns himself with purely phenomenological concepts. Givenness in Husserl's and Heidegger's formulations finds itself trapped in consciousness of objects and differences between beings. Marion pushes their phenomenologies to free givenness for phenomenology such that all phenomenality would be defined according to givenness itself.[167] The questions of the origins of phenomena lead to metaphysical abstractions; but, the question of givenness leads to a purification of the phenomenological reduction (not to a theological or a causal reference point) that permits phenomena to give themselves authentically.[168] Second, Marion contends he does not manipulate language. The uses of givenness admit ambiguity; yet, Marion maintains he has not tried to use this ambiguity for his own purposes, but has tried to illuminate and unify the ambiguities.[169] Furthermore, to try to evade the questions of givenness would be to lose the act of giving, the gift, the giver, and the givee. To make sense of and organize these related concepts requires givenness.[170] That God may be the Giver relates to theology; and, Marion adamantly stresses that he will not encroach upon theology's territory. [171]

John Milbank, in contrast, thinks Marion has encroached upon theology, not to the detriment of phenomenology, but to the detriment of theology. Milbank finds no difference

---

[167] *Being Given*, pp. 39; 336, n. 80; 342, n. 2

[168] Cf. *In Excess*, pp. 23-25

[169] *Being Given*, p. 61

[170] *Being Given*, pp. 61-62; 340, n. 112

[171] Jacques Derrida, concerned with articulating the one called, the response, and the gift, questions (like Janicaud) whether Marion has named a caller. Derrida notes that in Marion's first formulation he refers to no specific caller, wishing to leave the caller undetermined, but that Marion adds a footnote that names the caller as the Father. The footnote in question refers to a quote by Heidegger, and does not seem intentionally to name the caller as the Father. Derrida also questions the translation of *Gegebenheit* with givenness. (Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 50-52, n 10. See *Reduction and Givenness*, pp. 196-197; 248, n. 82).

between philosophy (even phenomenology) and metaphysics, and asserts all metaphysics should be abandoned.[172] Milbank suggests that Marion, despite his efforts to leave the giver unnamed, needs to name the giver as God.[173] "Revelation may colour everything from the very commencement, since, according to the best Christian tradition, it arrives simultaneously as both exterior event of appearance and inner illumination."[174] In Milbank's desire to privilege theology, his criticism passes over the delay, the belatedness of *l'adonné*. The delay establishes *l'adonné* as unable to name the caller. Even once called, *l'adonné*'s attempts to name the caller fall short, display inadequacy, and incompleteness in understanding. This inadequacy maintains the excessiveness of the call, and the continued receptivity of *l'adonné*.[175] Even if faith (necessary for theology, but not for philosophy) precedes the call (which it does in the respect that one must want to hear before one does hear the call), *l'adonné* could not anticipate the caller, could not, prior to being called (or even after being called) name the caller properly. Anticipation of the "unhoped for hope" could not "measure the Divine." Jean-Louis Chrétien describes the shock of the one in

---

[172] John Milbank, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," in *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997)

[173] John Milbank, "The Soul of Reciprocity (Parts One and Two)," *Modern Theology*, 17, 2001, pp. 335-389, 485-507;

[174] Milbank, "The Soul of Reciprocity," p. 368

[175] On the necessity of the delay, see Thomas A. Carlson, "Blindness and the Decision to See: On Revelation and Reception in Jean-Luc Marion," in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart, (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 2007), pp. 153-179, 158-159. Carlson argues, in addition to the necessity of the delay, that having maintained the anonymity of the caller Marion escapes the charge of metaphysics.

The delay holds true for the erotic reduction as well. The realization proclaimed in "You loved me first," is that the call of love establishes my identity, establishes that I am loved and therefore I can love. This ability to love and receive love comes about through the delay. "I at last comprehend that in this advance, the other had already began to make herself a lover well before me; that by walking blindly on the way of the erotic reduction, in fact, I had, doubtless from the outset, already found what I thought only I was searching for; or that, more exactly, what I was searching for had already found me and guided me right to it. In order for me to enter into the erotic reduction, it was necessary for another lover to have gone there before me, love who from there calls me there in silence" (*The Erotic Phenomenon*, p. 215).

anticipation saying, "Every divine action disturbs: it foils our expectations and our calculations, our hopes and our fears, in a striking manner. Such a shock, showing that we are not the measure of the divine, and that the divine escapes us at the same moment that we do not it, relates us to it essentially."[176] The arrival of revelation could not be anticipated, even by faith, for the arrival exceeds the expectation, surprises the one called with its superabundance.

Jacques Derrida (following Marcel Mauss) makes a striking criticism related to the possibility of the gift itself. As soon as a gift is called a gift, the gift is cancelled, because it is always subjected to the economy of exchange. Giving and receiving demands reciprocity and makes an exchange.[177] Even thanking the giver for the gift cancels the gift, as the giver received gratitude in exchange. Second, the one who receives a gift must not give anything back, must not incur a debt. The recipient may achieve this condition by not realizing that a gift has been given.[178] Third, giving must not allow the giver to feel superior to the givee. "In exchange for my unrecognized gift, I receive – from myself? – the certain consciousness of my generosity. In losing it I give my gift to myself, or rather, I get myself in exchange for my lost gift."[179] Fourth, the gift cannot be present either to the giver or the givee. If the gift

---

[176] Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped for*, trans. Jeffery Bloechl, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 99

[177] Derrida, *Given Time*, "For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt. If the other *gives* me *back* or *owes* me or has to give me back what I give him or her, there will not have been a gift…" p. 12

[178] Derrida, *Given Time*, pp. 12-13; *Being Given*, p. 76; see also Søren Kierkegaard, "Love Does not Seek Its Own," *Works of Love*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995). Kierkegaard argues that for a gift to be given the recipient must be made to believe that it was already his own, even if this way requires some deception, pp. 274-279. "Truly, [the one who loves] does not seek his own, because he gives in precisely such a way that it looks as if the gift were the recipient's property…in this way nothing at all is changed in existence, except that the loving one, the hidden benefactor, is shoved aside, since it is every human being's destiny to become free, independent, oneself" (p. 278).

[179] *Being Given*, p. 77; *Given Time*, p. 14

is present to the recipient the gift is subject to the economy of exchange annuls the gift; and, if the gift is not present, then there is no gift at all.[180]

Marion agrees that these conditions for the gift make givenness seem an unlikely possibility. Yet, Marion asserts the possibility remains open that renouncing Being - disentangling oneself from oneself such that one abandons oneself, abandons Being as presence - transforms the gift, and makes possible giving without presence. True charity desires no reward, gives of itself without expectation of return. "The question of givenness is not closed when presence contradicts the gift, but, to the contrary, it opens to the possibility of the present without presence – beyond Being." [181] Even though the conditions of the gift establish what it cannot be, what cannot be named as a gift, it has not abolished the gift *as such*.

Marion, Derrida acknowledges, attempts to clear a space for the givenness by removing it from the metaphysics of presence. Marion thinks of the problem of the economy of the gift in terms of causality; even the conditions of exchange fall under efficient causality. Marion disposes of this causal economy by demonstrating that the gift can arise outside exchange and causality, can arise without prompting, commerce, orientation, without

---

[180] *Being Given*, pp. 78-79; *Given Time*, p. 15, "[I]f there is not gift, there is no gift, but if there is gift held or beheld *as* gift by the other, once again there is no gift; in any case the gift does not *exist* and does not *present* itself. If it presents itself, it no longer presents itself."

[181] *Being Given*, pp. 79-80, 80. Translation modified, "La question de la donation ne se clôt pas quand la présence contredit le don, mais s'ouvre au contraire sur la possibilité du présent sans presence – hors d'être" (Étant Donné, p. 116). See also Derrida, *Given Time*, p. 12, 56. For Derrida in contrast to Marion the conditions for the possibility of the gift are also the conditions for the impossibility of the gift. Yet, Derrida, a philosopher of the impossible (as John Caputo calls him), thinks that impossibility must remain such, or there would be no need for faith, or prayer, or praise. Metaphorically, Derrida describes the possibility of the Messiah coming as an impossibility. If the long awaited Messiah comes, so does the end. Impossibility for Derrida means holding out hope against hope. By contrast, Marion thinks that the impossible is a reality (or in his phenomenological writings at least a real possibility). By impossible Marion means something slightly different that Derrida. For Marion impossibility means knowing that the impossible God visits, gives, overwhelms and surprises humans, but comprehending what that gift is and means remains impossible - or idolatrous.

interest and motive. Marion proposes a third *epochē*. In the giver-gift-givee triad, Marion tries to escape economy by suspending the transcendence of the each term in turn. He first suspends the givee (the recipient). In a position of expectation of a gift the recipient precedes the gift. The recipient's presence creates a causal economy and nullifies the gift. If the recipient appears or is named, the giver might seem to give out of obligation or desire for a return. The recipient can remain anonymous in situations such as giving to a charity. The recipient of the gift remains unseen by the benefactor, and never needs to repay the giver. The organization to which the giver gives also is obscure, a corporation whose employees one does not know. Even if the giver succeeds in suspending the givee, and giving "with abandon," the recipient becomes the enemy (by definition, the one who cannot repay is the enemy). But even in this situation the enemy, to whom one gives for no reason, with no thought of gain, makes the gift possible by removing the possibility of commerce.[182] The one who gives to the community, or makes a sacrifice for his country gives to a recipient that never knows the giver, and whom the giver never knows. The gift can be accomplished by bracketing the givee.[183]

---

[179] *Being Given*, 81-85

[183] *Being Given*, 85-89; Marion also describes the possibility of the ingrate who refuses the gift because she desires to refuse indebtedness. Yet, the desire of the giver to give does not annihilate the possibility of givenness. "But at the same time, the ingrate manifests, *a contrario* and in all its purity, the gift reduced to givenness, since he proves that this gift is perfectly accomplished without the givee's consent. The ingrate lays bare the pure immanence of the gift. He is a figure of the reduced givee, absolutely governed by the pure givenness of the gift" (p. 91).

Giving to the enemy and giving from altruism both seem to make the giver a recipient of good thoughts about himself. They fall prey to what I would call the "Ivan fallacy." Ivan Karamazov makes the case that one cannot love one's neighbor except in the abstract. One can love humanity in general, but not the neighbor in particular. Giving to abstract humanity seems feasible first because the humanness of the other person cannot offend, and second because giving would be attached to some kind of obligatory duty. Giving a gift seems to necessitate giving, not to ease one conscience or to an invisible someone who is no one in particular, but because the charity one has for a particular person makes giving neither obligatory nor dutiful, but joyful. See *The Brother Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), p. 236. Charity motivates the givers in Marion's example of Christ as the anonymous givee. Christ says he will judge by what has been given. "In truth, I say to you as you did to the

Bracketing the giver would create a situation where the gift was achieved without the recipient knowing or repaying the giver. The state represents such a situation. The state does not give me a gift, but the tax payers, whom I cannot name or identify, do. Even when I pay my taxes I am not returning the gift to them since I do not owe them and do not repay them. The case of inheritance presents a similar situation. I cannot repay the giver, because the giver is no longer alive. "[A]bsence (nothingness, disappearance, death) give, not like one among many possible givers but par excellence."[184] The unconscious giver truly gives because she does not know if she gives. Giving itself gives the withdrawal of the giver (which is equivalent to the giver giving herself).[185] As a self (self-conscious) always finds itself already given by something that preceded it; and it finds itself always in debt to an unknown and transcendent giver (in Lévinas's sense that the Other is always transcendent).

---

least of my brethren, so will you have done unto me." (*Being Given*, 92; Matthew 24: 30) Christ here takes any form of one in need, and thus the particular person (the face of the Other) does not motivate the giving. Even if the giver expects no repayment, if the gift is motivated by abstract love of humanity, the giver may expect some return, even if it be calling herself virtuous.

Milbank makes a similar criticism. Charity cannot be a pure act of the will, "the blindness of a one-way self-sacrificial charity construed as the ultimate gesture. And such 'charity' is surely more assertion than true gift, since it is charity to no-one. By contrast there can only be a gift to *someone*, if only an imagined someone, else the gesture of giving, even the originating gesture of gratitude, is indiscriminate and inattentive to an other's reality and needs, such that its out going might equally well be the outgoing of poison or destruction… [T]here cannot be gift except when there is already relation and reciprocity" ("The Soul of Reciprocity, Part One," pp. 350-351). This conception of the gift can be seen clearly in "Divine Creation." Creation as given by God exists as given, and through relation Creation has its existence (p. 351). Marion responds to this objection saying, "Each genuine gift happens without any objective counterpart ("On the Gift," p. 63). When one give oneself, one's life, or time, when one give one's word, not only is no *thing* given, but much more. A giving-relation can exist with an unknown (as the example of giving to the unknown person in need without knowing the giving was to Christ), likewise an unknown giver can give (as in the example of inheritance).

[184] *Being Given*, pp. 96, 94-96; cf. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, "One who is dead is not an actual object; he is only the occasion that continually discloses what resides in the one living who relates himself to him or that helps to make manifest the nature of the one living who does not relate himself to him" (p. 347). Kierkegaard goes on to describe the one who loves the deceased as the one who loves unselfishly, because one can gain no-thing (Marion's word, not Kierkegaard's) from the deceased except the freedom of loving one who can give nothing in return (pp. 345-358). Kierkegaard does not presuppose an inheritance, and thereby makes a stronger case against the recipient acting out of reciprocity in loving the deceased.

[185] *Being Given*, pp. 97-98

The recognition of the debt still can support the gift in the risk of love. Only when the giver withdrawals can the recipient risk loving. Even without the giver the gift can be accomplished.[186]

Having bracketed the giver and the recipient, the gift is free to give itself from itself and no longer relies on the efficient cause of a giver or a recipient to make it a gift. The gift still must be freed from being (as a transfer of being to another being) and from the object (as a transfer of a good from one person to another). This gift, distinct from transfer (and thus distinct from being and object) gives nothing, no-thing. When I give a promise, friendship, love, a blessing, or a curse, no-thing I possess becomes another's property. These gifts cannot be called real objects: the less they are objects (the less reality they possess as objects or being) the more they increase in intensity; and, the more they give, the more "they surpass all expectation." The gift is givable in its positive potential to become a gift. The gift wins acceptability from the recipient by showing itself as a giving of itself. The gift gets its givenness in the reduction from its intrinsic character: "The gift is given intrinsically to give *itself*."[187] The gift given in this triple reduction escapes economy because it excludes reciprocity, by hiding the giver or the givee, and by making the gift no-thing; the reduction, likewise, does not demonstrate that the gift is impossible, it makes the gift a phenomenological possibility.

John Caputo finds that though Marion rids the gift of causality, he cannot do away with the economy of exchange because in receiving the gift I am indebted to God.[188]

---

[186] *Being Given*, pp. 97-102

[187] *Being Given*, pp. 113, 102-113; Charity has no basis unless it is given. The giving in itself makes it a gift. Likewise, the more that charity gives, the more it is able to give to both the recipient and the donor. There is no loss associated with its giving. And still charity escapes objectness and being.

[188] "Do we not come into a universal indebtedness to God the giver, even though the gift has been released from a causal economy? Economy for Marion means causality." "On the Gift," in

Caputo's worry is a reformulation of Derrida's. Making the gift a phenomenological possibility may destroy the impossible. In other words if the gift is possible, it can no longer be a gift since according to Derrida the gift by definition is impossible. Derrida, in a roundtable discussion with Marion says,

> What I am interested in is the experience of the desire for the impossible. That is, the impossible as the condition of desire […] 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, in the same way that we do not give up the idea of pure hospitality […] we go on dreaming or thinking of pure hospitality, of pure gift, having given up the idea of the subject, of a subject-giver and a subject-receiver, and of the thing given, object given. We continue to desire, to dream, *through* the impossible.[189]

The impossible provides an opportunity for the gift, for one to struggle with attempting to give, even when one fails. The impossible must remain wholly other, inaccessible, and transcendent to motivate the richness of desire, to give in the face of the acknowledged failure of giving, according to Derrida. Marion contends that giving, as givenness, remains immanent even if the gift comes from a transcendent source. The phenomenologist does not act as much as receives, and receives passively what gives. Marion as phenomenologist, in the posture of passive receiver, wants to protect phenomenology from the "ambitious ego" that tries to master and control beings, objects, and even God, as first cause.[190] Marion's gift represents as mysterious an impossibility as Derrida's, although it demonstrates the possibility that the impossible could break into experience. In other words, the

---

God, the Gift, and Postmodernism, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael D. Scanlon (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 77; see also "Apostles of the Impossible," ibid., pp. 200-203.

189 "On the Gift," p. 72

190 See, "On the Gift," p. 70, "I am not interested in assigning a giver to a given phenomenon. I am interested in saying that our deepest and most genuine experience of the phenomenon does not deal with any object that we could master, produce, or constitute, no more that with any being which belongs to the horizon of Being, where onto-theology is possible and where God can for the first time and in the first place play the role of the first cause."

ambitious ego that thinks it can master beings and objects deceives itself about givenness. The recipient experiences the impossible as unexpected and immeasurable; but that knowledge does not allow the recipient to master or control the gift. Where Derrida claims that the gift's impossibility means that it can never come on the scene, Marion claims that the impossibility of the gift relates to its inexhaustible, ever-giving meaning that cannot be comprehended fully. Derrida's claim that making the impossible immanent destroys the impossible and the desire for the impossible is irrelevant to Marion's account of the impossible. The impossible is not destroyed by becoming immanent, but remains impossible to comprehension; likewise, desire is not destroyed, but heightened as the impossible gives more than was desired.

The Icon and The Gift

Marion's attempt to leave the giver unnamed, and unknowable, leaves a gap that he attempts to fill by constructing an infinite giver. The icon requires an infinite hermeneutic because "what it expresses, what it stands for, or what it means to say" never ceases, never closes, constantly renews itself. The face tells its story in what it becomes in undergoing, in suffering, in loving, and finally in death.[191] The infinity of meanings told in the face resists conceptualization and reduction to concepts. The expressions that appear in the face can lie or contradict other expressions, the face does not know always what it expresses; thus, I

[191] *In Excess*, pp. 122-123; In *In Excess*, Marion privileges the face of the Other as the icon, following Levinas. In "From the Other to the Individual," (in *Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond*, ed. Regina Schwartz, trans. Robyn Horner (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 43-59) Marion provides a detailed exegesis of Levinas's development of the ethics of the face of the other, and the move beyond ethics. The final analysis shows that the infinite Other, as she addresses me, individualizes me and herself. This meeting of love makes us unsubstitutable, unique. Only this transcendence of the Other through love can go beyond phenomenology because I can now confront the face as a particular and not a universal. Love alone provides a relation with the Other as unique. With the accession to the infinite hermeneutic of the loved one who dies, Marion reopens the possibility of construing the pictorial icon as an infinite hermeneutic as well.

cannot envisage the Other face, I cannot contain what it expresses, I cannot accede to the truth of its story. I can await the Other, can give up my attempts to constitute his face, I can endure with the Other in love, in friendship; but, only in the last moment, at the point of death do I "see the other finally, in truth […] in the end, closing his or her eyes."[192] Death of the Other strips away the appearances of expressions that obscure the face's truth, and opens up access to an ultimate meaning as mourning and memory work without end. Yet, I cannot do justice to the Other, because I realize how much I did not know about her. All I can do that respects her as infinite is interpret her in loving her. Love is endless and only love can be defined by infinity.[193] I cannot judge the Other; but, I can, in full view of my finitude, try to construct a "coherent interpretation." I must be wary of over-simplification, giving into ideology, and passion; and, most importantly, I must deny that I can access and know a final meaning.

Every attempt to uncover the meaning of the face ends in aporia. I must wait with faith that the face of the other will appear "in the glory of its truth," just as one awaits the return of Christ. Theological faith imposes itself as a unique correct approach, because always differed to the end of time, to the face of the other, 'my fellow, my brother or sister.'"[194] Because phenomenology cannot establish the certainty of immortality of the Other one must "infer the possibility of another idea of reason, the immortality of the soul as a place of indefinite progress from freedom toward moral holiness."[195] This holiness

---

[192] *In Excess*, p. 123

[193] *In Excess*, pp. 124-127; Marion quotes Husserl at this point, "…*love is without end. It is only love in the infinity of the loving* [*in der Unendlichkeit des liebens*]." Op. cit. Edmund Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923-1924)*, Husserlia VIII, ed. Rudolf Bochem (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), §29, p. 14; *In Excess*, p. 127

[194] *In Excess*, p. 124

[195] *In Excess*, p. 125; Marion extrapolates from Kant's "as if" of freedom and immortality (in the First Critique) and the formulation of the Categorical Imperative (in the Second Critique) to

denotes particularity (respect that does not objectify), and progress toward the infinite (through the endless hermeneutic that makes the loved one's face immortal). As I attempt to remember, and to discern the meaning of the one who has died, I know "that it would take an eternity to envisage this saturated phenomenon as such – not constituting it as an object, but interpreting it in loving it."[196] Marion reworks Kant's metaphysical argument for the necessity of freedom into phenomenological terms to demonstrate that the phenomenality of the face of the other becomes a holy site of "indefinite progress to the infinite."[197] The face that speaks to me and enjoins me with the injunction "Thou shalt not kill [me]!" gives rise to respect. I must not objectify the other person, which means I must recognize the other person as unknowable, as an irreducible autonomy, as "the unforeseeable center of initiatives and intentionality."[198] Michel Henry describes the effects of objectifying the other person like Marion and Lévinas as murder. He says,

> Those who murder life are those who, depriving life of the self-revelation that constitutes its essence at the same time as that of all livings, and thus denying the very fact of Living and holding it to be nothing, reduce everything that lives, and experiences itself a living, to a set of blind processes and to death.[199]

I recognize something in the face of the other beyond what can be constituted or known as a metaphysical truth: "an idea of infinity." This notion of infinity as a living revelation cannot be arrived at through Kant's notion of duty to the moral law, nor through intentionality. These means of access to the other person always result in deficit. "I will only be able to bear this paradox and do it justice in consecrating myself to its infinite hermeneutic […] Thus, every face demands immortality – if not its own, at least that of the one who envisages

---

demonstrate that freedom and immortality provided through the face, especially the face of the loved on who has died, become particularized and holy with the unsubstitutability of this one's face.

[196] *In Excess*, 126-127

[197] *In Excess*, p. 125

[198] *In Excess*, p. 126

[199] *I am the Truth*, p. 39

it."[200] Every intentional aim at the face demonstrates my deficiency. To progress toward the infinity of the other's face I must pursue an endless hermeneutic that respects the face's immortality. The love I have for the other person opens onto an endless loving interpretation and also "compels me to believe in my own eternity."[201]

The endless hermeneutic of the icon preserves the infinity of the other by continually demonstrating that I cannot master the other person. I cannot constitute or contain the Other; and, if I try to master the Other by reaching a final judgment I, as Kierkegaard says, "think it to pieces, think it to nothing."[202] Kierkegaard's description of the work of love in recollecting the dead provides a similar hermeneutic to Marion's. Kierkegaard's account provides an ascetic method that broadens the hermeneutics of the face and leads to an ethical practice similar to veneration of the icon. Though Kierkegaard's account turns on the "lack of distinction" death provides to show equality, the recollection of the dead, more importantly, describes a process (akin to a phenomenological reduction) that prevents objectifying the other person. The recollection of the dead presents an opportunity for pure unselfish love of the one who is dead. The one who is dead offers no gift, no opportunity for repayment, no-thing to the one who recollects. If I love the one who has died, I do not do so because I am compelled by any expectation of reward, but from unconstrained freedom.[203] I am the unworthy servant of the one who has died, I have come too late – I

---

[200] *In Excess*, p. 126

[201] *In Excess*, p. 127

[202] See *Works of Love*, p. 345. Kierkegaard, anticipating Lévinas and Marion, argues that the dead are exemplary models of how one can be receptive to another person. By making oneself "no-one" the dead allow the other person to disclose himself to the other without disturbance of influence. If I make myself "no-one" in relation to another I do not impose on or influence him, but allow him to be seen. Kierkegaard uses "no-one" in a sense that Marion echoes. John Milbank also notes the similarity of Kierkegaard's chapter in *Works of Love* called "The Work of Love in Recollecting One Who Is Dead" to Marion's description of the infinite hermeneutic of the one who has dies. See John Milbank, "The Soul of Reciprocity (Part One)," p. 345.

[203] Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, pp. 348-353

only love unselfishly, sacrificially, now that the beloved is gone. Neighbor love drives Kierkegaard's move outward to the love of the one dead. The Divine, who disrupts the individual's selfishness, mediates the relation. The faith required for Marion to move to the eschatological hope of the full manifestation of the Other, in Kierkegaard's treatment, becomes a work of love that practices faithfulness to relation with one "who is no *actual* object."[204] Marion's move to the reduction to the gift opens love that is freed from the desire to control and manipulate the other. With the one who has died, I have no control, I refrain from abstracting and universalizing love. While Kierkegaard advocates love of the dead because it rids of distinctions, Marion recognizes the particularity of the beloved with whom I had a unique relationship and history, and of whom I tell a particular story. Closing the eyes of the beloved and faithfulness to the one who has died provide new avenues to interpret the relation and to interpret my responsibility to that one.

The infinite hermeneutic that opens in relation to the one who is dead applies to the icon as well. The call of the painted icon, and of the face of the infinite Other demand a response; yet, my response can never do justice to the call, never exhaust the call's possibilities, never accomplish what it demands of me in silence. The calls precedes me, shows me my responsibility, gives me its anonymity even as I realize myself as summoned, called to respond endlessly.[205] I receive myself from the call that transforms givenness into a manifestation of a personal Other that precedes me. I answer for what shows itself to me because I receive myself from what gives.[206] As an aspect of Divine revelation, the icon

---

[204] Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, p. 355

[205] Marion, *Being Given*, 287-304

[206] *Being Given*, pp. 262-267; see also Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being*, pp. 47, 53. Marion defers to Lévinas who describes inverse intentionality that cannot be reduced to consciousness as a recognition of responsibility calls me to be someone.

shows me a picture of my humanity as "theophoric," as a template and bearer of God.[207] With the icon I become myself as I move to my true theophoric self. The icon removes the obstacles, "strip[s] away the scales that covered our spiritual sight."[208] Humans, according to Eastern Orthodox theology, have fallen away from their true nature, as bearers of God. The icon restores the original image by uniting humans to divine beauty.[209] Like Marion's description of the saturated phenomenon of the icon, the reversal of intentionality of the face that imposes itself on me, the face that I must "face up to" and respond to, the icon calls me, makes me gifted, makes me realize my theophoric identity. As the icon inverts the gaze, what Marion calls counter-intentionality (the icon's gaze that gazes at my gaze), makes me aware of its call, and I submit to it. I find myself shocked by the summons (*la convocation*).[210] I lose my independence and self-sufficiency as I find that relation precedes my individuality. Michel Henry presents the phenomenological possibility of Christian revelation as intersubjective relation with Truth in *I Am the Truth*. Henry's argument resounds with theophoric language. He asserts that if looked at phenomenologically (as opposed to historically, scientifically, or epistemologically) the Truth of Christianity reveals God is Life, and that "*Life engenders itself like the Living that Life itself is within its self-engendering*."[211] Put otherwise, Life experienced phenomenologically as Christianity is expressible only as a uniting that is a process of continually experiencing relation in oneself

---

[207] Michel Quenot, *Icon: Window on the Kingdom*, p. 40

[208] Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis*, trans. Donald Sheehan and Olga Andrejev, (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), pp. 68-69

[209] Leonid Ouspensky, *The Theology of the Icon, Volume I*, p. 151

[210] *Étant Donné*, 369-370; *Being Given*, 268

[211] Michel Henry, *I Am the Truth*, p. 60. Henry's use of capitalizations denotes Christian as opposed to worldly uses of "life," "living," etc.

as self-enjoyment. I only have Life as a template and bearer of God, as I experience this relation as self-enjoyment.[212]

Marion realizes that I may not recognize this relation; I may not want to hear the call or see the gaze of the other. I may see another person or an icon indifferently. I, in a state of busy, self-obsession, refuse to welcome her. I may assume that I know her already, and prevent her from giving, arrogantly believing I can constitute the unconstitutable. I might view the icon as an art object, an idol that I admire and look at again and again; or, I ignore the icon because I am distracted. I may remember the story told in the icon, but view it as myth, or merely quaint. To open myself to the Other, I must train myself, discipline myself, and desire to see. I first must want to hear and want to see, and I must decide to see and to respond before I can see. I continually confront my limitations and finitude, the inadequacy and insufficiency of my response.[213] To see (and hear the call of) the icon Eastern Orthodoxy describes a process of self-purification to drive out my pride, conceit, and my certainty of objective reality. Self-purification empties me of my attachments to my own understanding of the world. In my pride I mask the superior reality of the spiritual world.[214] The spiritual world, incomprehensible and mysterious, comes to me, lifts my soul, leads me beyond the visible to the invisible "like light pouring forth light […] we can only describe our experience as seeing it as *a beholding that ascends.*"[215] Bringing the theological account of the icon into conversation with Marion's account provides a complementary view that

---

[212] *I Am the Truth*, pp. 61-63

[213] *Being Given*, pp. 304-305

[214] Florensky, *Iconostasis*, pp. 44-49; see also Maximus the Confessor, "The Four Hundred Chapters on Love," "For if he looks down on them as those who unable to perform good deed he is evidently putting himself forward as someone who acts uprightly on his own power; but this is impossible, as the Lord told us, 'Outside of me you can do nothing.'" Century II, §38, in *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings,* trans. George C. Berthold, (New York, Mahwah, Toronto: Paulist Press, 1985), p. 52

[215] Florensky, *Iconostasis*, p. 72

broadens the phenomenological landscape of the icon. The implication of this broadened view is a corrective to Marion's account as well. Marion's account necessitates a communal perspective that comes forth naturally through the theological writings of Pseudo Dionysus. In what follows I demonstrate that Marion's reduction to the gift and the call can be equated to a reduction to relation. Though I agree with Marion's account I think he underemphasizes the possibility that the gift is relation. The emphasis I place on relation makes obvious the communal role of the icon, and provides a place for ethics to be developed.

Like Marion's phenomenological account, surprise seizes and overwhelms me, leaves me in wonder as it contradicts my intentional aims. As *l'interloqué* "I receive *my self* from the call that gives me to myself before giving me anything whatsoever."[216] In the call I am opened to alterity, to the particularity of the Other as indeterminate, unknown, and over abundant. "[N]ever has a mortal lived, be it only for an instant, without discovering himself preceded by a call already there."[217] The super-abundant is the source of all beauty, all unique individuality. According to Pseudo Dionysus, "The beautiful uniquely preexists in terms of their source. From this beauty comes the existence of everything, each being exhibiting its own way of beauty. For beauty is the cause of harmony, of sympathy, of community."[218] The beauty of the icon reveals my unique place in the world, my calling and connection to others. The longing for beauty brings me to myself, brings me to the realization that I am given a unique beauty, a unique identity. The beauty of the

---

[216] *Being Given*, pp. 269, 268-269

[217] *Being Given*, p. 270

[218] Pseudo Dionysus, *On the Divine Names*, in *Pseudo-Dionysus: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luinheid and Paul Rorem, (New York, Mahaw: Paulist Press, 1987), PG 704A, p. 77. The implications of "harmony, sympathy, and community" relate to the ethics of the icon. I am no longer an isolated ego concerned solely with my own wants; I am part of a community of unique and beautiful individuals for whom I must care, respect, and have community with. I return to the ethical considerations of the icon below.

indescribable, given through the icon, fills me with ecstasy so that I no longer belong to myself but to the more originary Giver. "The divine yearning brings ecstasy so that the lover belongs not to a self but to the beloved." [219] I am gifted, *l'adonné*, by being exposed to what gives, by allowing givenness to unfold of itself and by offering myself to and being received by givenness.[220] I receive myself in receiving love. As *l'adonné* I am defined by givenness; in the language of Dionysus, I am defined by a unique manifestation of beauty. The import of the call transforms me, accomplishes the privilege of givenness and gives me to myself. According to the theology of the icon, the call is to realize likeness to God as a possibility, and a dynamic task, to realize in myself the possibility of "the union and harmony of everything and unite all the universe to God."[221]

According to Marion, the impact of the call transforms me, accomplishes the privilege of givenness, and gives me to myself. As has been shown, he thinks the giving of the call occurs outside the economy of exchange because with the reduction of the givee and the giver to "no one," and the gift to "no-thing," causality is removed, and the gift is freed. In his analysis of Caravaggio's "The Call of St Matthew," Marion provides three elements that make the one called gifted (*l'adonné*). First, the paradox of the call makes the invisible visible. The invisibility of the call is represented in that it is heard, and that the call decides the vocation, i.e. the call is decided by the response itself. Matthew asks himself, ""This is

---

[219] *On the Divine Names*, PG 712A, p. 82

[220] *Being Given*, p. 282

[221] Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon, Vol. I*, p. 156; see also St. John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images: Three Apologies against Those Who Attack Divine Images*, trans David Anderson, (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), "All images reveal and make perceptible those things which are hidden. For example, man does not have immediate knowledge of invisible things, since the soul is veiled by the body. Nor can man have immediate knowledge of things which are distant from each other or separated by place, because he himself is circumscribed by place and time. Therefore the image was devised that he might advance in knowledge, and that secret things might be revealed and made perceptible. Therefore, images are a source of profit, help, and salvation for all, since they make things so obviously manifest, enabling us to perceive hidden things. Thus, we are encouraged to desire and imitate what is good and to shun and hate what is evil" p. 74.

mine? This is for me?' – thus he is at once given over the 'unto whom' of what gives itself and, with this very fact, notifies him of the call."[222] Second, in receiving the call, givenness is freed to unfold. In responding to the call the gifted feels its weight, feels no option in responding or chance in its giving, but affirms the gift as irreducible and continuously giving. Third, by affirming the givenness, and giving herself over to it the gifted "receive[s] himself by receiving the given unfolded by him according to givenness."[223] The gifted one surrenders to what calls, to what undeniably makes him gifted, and thereby receives uniqueness. In the picture, Christ calls St. Matthew. In the icon, the beholder who venerates the one pictured is called, and through the icon the possibility of revelation is brought about.[224]

Christ's appearance to St. Matthew can also be parsed in terms of the theology of the icon. Christ appears in person as a natural "image of the invisible God."[225] To the unseen call, "Follow me," St. Matthew responds immediately by leaving everything behind and following. Matthew is decided by the gift of vocation. With the icon, I am called to respond by imitating the Saint. I am called to be like the one who has advance in love, who has followed (like St. Matthew) and continues to proliferate the gift. What is given in the call is

---

[222] *Being Given*, pp. 285, 282-285

[223] *Being Given*, p. 282

[224] Marion in *Being Given* and *In Excess*, does not give the icon the same status of revelation (as he had in *The Crossing of the Visible* and *Prolegomena to Charity*), yet revelation and the icon both escape the four categories of intuition. In agreement with Marion, I think the icon is not revelation itself, but in disagreement, I think the icon provides an opportunity for revelation to occur. Marion seems reticent to claim the icon as instrumental in revelation because revelation represents a higher degree of saturation: the saturation of saturation. Holding to the Orthodox doctrine of humanity that states that to become more divine one must become more human (as Christ was fully human, and demonstrates what full humanity means for every individual), I argue that revelation and the icon cannot be separated into varying degrees (though what the icon gives may be refused or unseen). The revelation given through the icon as image and as another person point to the same revelation: divine-humanness. Cf. Vladimir Solovyov, "Beauty in Nature," ref.; see also Leonid Ouspensky, *The Theology of the Icon, Vol. I*, "The justification and the value of the icon do not, therefore, lie in its beauty as an object, but in that which it represents – an image of beauty in the divine likeness…a revelation of the spiritual flesh to come" p. 185.

[225] St. John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, pp. 74-75

given endlessly. "Following" requires continual transformation, continual reception of the revelation that continually resists my ability to grasp it, even as it gives me over to myself as transformed in the present, and as moving toward that which I am to become. The call gives me a future and requires a return to hermeneutics oriented toward the future. I must interpret the theophoric possibility that unmasks my potential personhood, my potential that pre-exists me and moves me toward "harmony, sympathy, and community." The call continues through the "Desire to see" what Dionysus calls "the Divine longing" that seeks more of the super-abundant Good. St. Matthew does not have the time, between being called and following, to comprehend what is taking place, who is calling him, to what he is being called. Yet, he goes, he follows, and he receives himself as a moving toward, as a progression in, as a future in the present, as possibility.

The decision to see escapes metaphysical restrictions first because the will to see "converts that which gives itself to that which shows itself." The function of the will is to admit and receive the self, but not to conceive.[226] Second, because the self-giving revelation always precedes the decision as unconditioned and unrestricted, the decision to see arises from givenness itself.

> When the gifted is, hypothetically, condemned to decide a saturated phenomenon, for example the paradox of the icon, in short when he must decide to expose himself without protection to the gaze that crosses his own and the face that sees him clearly, in a word, when he must resolve himself to love (or to not deny loving), he finds himself in such indifference. The more passion increases, the more indifference does too.[227]

Before the icon's self-giving I cannot decide what the icon gives, nor overcome my finitude to receive all the glory of the icon's giving. I, instead, abandon my ability to contain the giving with reason, and am taken up in a hermeneutics that actively refuses to constitute the

---

[226] See, *Being Given,* p. 305; *Étant Donné*, p. 420; see also Carlson's insightful interpretation in, "Blindness and the Decision to See," pp. 163-164.

[227] See, *Being Given,* p. 307

given, but receives it as excess. Humbled by my double belatedness (that I am late because the self-giving always precedes me, and I am late because I had not desired to see previously), and my powerlessness to constitute the excess, I deny my arrogant self-reliance and gain, through my inadequacy, the enjoyment of the paradox and the "full status of *adonné*."[228]

The painted icon reflects the humility that refuses to assert that it can contain the self-giving of revelation. Shunning imaginative interpretation, and the realist perspective that portrays the ineffable with human and earthly attributes, the icon imposes nothing that can be expressed directly through imitation of reality or conjured up by abstractions. The icon speaks a language that expresses the inexhaustible, and calls (*καλέω*, summons; *ἐκκαλέω*, convokes) the beholder to participate in the mystery it reveals.[229] With the experience of the icon, I do not see an external, material reality, but I am summoned to see what cannot be expressed directly through the visible.[230] In prayer, in humility, in renunciation of my own personality and understanding, the icon invites me to access the beauty of the mystery of the Incarnation.[231] The one pictured in the icon gazes at me, sees me, before I see it in veneration. "Before the icon […] I feel myself seen."[232] The icon gives itself to me to see it, even as it humbles itself, "effaces itself," so that I can see the gaze that sees my gaze.[233] The one pictured addresses me, communicates a state of prayer to me, and invites me to

---

[228] *Being Given,* p. 306; *In Excess*, pp. 24-25

[229] Ouspensky, *The Theology of the Icon, Vol. I*, pp. 17-18

[230] Michel Quenot, *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom*, p. 66; Ouspensky, *The Theology of the Icon Vol. I*, pp. 17, "…the Christian attempted to convey not only that which is visible to the human eyes, but also that which is invisible, i.e., the spiritual content of that which was being represented," p.65.

[231] Ouspensky, *The Theology of the Icon, Vol. I*, p. 60

[232] Marion, *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 59

[233] See *The Crossing of the Visible*, pp. 60-61, "The visible surface [of the icon] must, paradoxically, efface itself, or at least efface within it every opacity that would obfuscate the crossing of the gazes [*le croisée des regards*]: the icon *dulls* the image in it in order to there prevent any self-sufficiency, autonomy, or self affirmation."

participate in communion.[234] Vladimir Lossky expresses the relation of the icon to the beholder saying, "An icon […] does not exist simply to direct our imagination during our prayers. It is a material center in which there reposes an energy, a divine force."[235] The icon gives itself in its inversion of perspective; it gives itself to me to lead me away from my own naturalistic perspective, to lead me to others: to Christ, the Trinity, the Theotokos, and the Saints.[236]

Every element of the icon draws me toward communion, toward harmony with the invisible. The materials used to create the icon come from the material world, from plants and minerals, and demonstrate the participation of the entire cosmos in the process of transfiguration.[237] The elements of the material world used in the icon serve to show the relation of the material world to the Creator. John of Damascus writes,

> Never will I cease honoring the matter which wrought my salvation! I honor it, but not as God. How could God be born out of things which have no existence in themselves? God's body is God because it is joined to His person by a union which shall never pass away. The divine nature remains the same; the flesh created in time is quickened by a reason-endowed soul. Because of this I salute all remaining matter with reverence, because God has filled it with His grace and Power.[238]

The colors in the icon radiate energy, positively and negatively. They create an otherworldly atmosphere in a hierarchy, from darkest to lightest, that gives the "effect of shining light and joy."[239] The other items often pictured, the vine, fish, herbs, lambs, provide access to the symbolic language, give spiritual direction, and "brings within our reach that for which we

---

[234] Ouspensky, *The Theology of the Icon, Vol. I*, p. 79

[235] Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), p. 189

[236] Quenot, *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom*, p. 77

[237] See Quenot's description of the rigorous method of icon painting, *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom*, pp. 83-85; see also Nicholas Constas, "Icons and Imagination," *Logos*, 1:1, 1997, pp. 114-127, especially pp. 118-119.

[238] St. John of Damascus, *On Divine Images*, p. 23

[239] Quenot, *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom*, pp. 107-119

long but are unable to see."[240] Further these items, along with the architecture, the people pictured, the absence of naturalism, the lack of fixity in time and space, demonstrate participation in the divine harmony.

The inverse perspective of the icon moves the focus of the painting outward toward the viewer. As I gaze at the face the gaze looks outward at me and invites me into communion even as it reveals to me that my reason inadequately comprehends the mystery it gives. With the inverse perspective of the icon, the focal point comes forward to me. The icon refuses the depth a background grants, and exists as spirit, outside space and time. In this reversal of perspective, the one pictured comes forth, radiates forward, opens up before me and meets me.[241] Through the gaze I see that for which I long, the beauty of God. St. Dionysus explains, "…he illumines all things, like light, pouring out beauty from that radiant source which wells up from itself." The icon illumes the beauty of God as the gaze radiates something not of its own, but of its prototype. Marion describes the icon's procession to the beholder this way: "The icon inverts the modern logic of the image: far from claiming its equivalence with the thing while flaunting itself in glory, instead it removes the prestige of the visible from its face, in order to effectively render it an imperceptible transparency, translucent for the counter gaze. The icon does not expect one to see it, but rather gives itself so that one might see or permit oneself to see through it."[242] A painting surprises and gives the unexpected, and fulfills desire. But the icon exceeds even desire and the will to see. The icon reverses, inverts, anticipation by "substituting its own aim – its aim towards us – in place of ours toward it."[243]

---

[240] St. John of Damascus, *On Divine Images*, p. 20

[241] Quenot, *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom*, p. 106

[242] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 61

[243] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 33

The centrality of the face in the icon emphasizes its movement toward me. The face, in its centrality and frontality, attracts me. The wide high forehead shows wisdom and love; the long thin nose seems to smell the sweet fragrance of Christ; the thin closed lips portray silent contemplation and the absence of the need for nourishment; and the long ears, that appear as enclosed within the face, show attentiveness to the interior voice of God.[244]

I notice the largeness of the eyes that stare boldly at me, and fascinate me. The eyes gaze outward at me, and I become aware that the eyes are animated by the sublime vision the icon renders visible. The eyes are transfigured, and admit no naturalism. They perceive the spiritual; and through their sober gaze, that sees me, the icon leads me to gaze interiorly. The gaze exposes me, and opens me to participate in the spiritual life. The face of the one pictured appears disfigured because it sheds "the visible splendor of its own visage." The lack of naturalism, of likeness to other human faces, astonishes because it appears no longer like a human, but, like Christ, "gives shape [*donne figure*] to a holiness that would have remained invisible without the shrine [*écrin*] (not screen [*écran*]) of his body."[245] In the face of Christ (and the faces of the Saints, and the Theotokos) the trace of God is given transparently through the gaze.

The gaze of Christ demands love even as it lifts me to see the Father through Christ.[246] "The veil of Veronica wipes away not a visible image but the kenosis of every figure – the kenosis of the image, 'the condition of the slave' (Philippians 2: 7) – and allows the trace of the invisible to appear, which envisages us."[247] The icon does not give a spectacle, does not exhaust my desire to see, but opens me to the invisible image of the love

---

[244] See Quenot, *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom*, 87-101

[245] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 61

[246] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 57

[247] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 62

of the Father. The icon ushers me not to itself but to the prototype, "the image then becomes the site of a reciprocal transition, thus the instrument of communion."[248] The icon does not admit a one-sided seeing, as a painting might where I objectify the spectacle; but, I see through veneration. The veneration I give transfers to the prototype. The icon "defines itself as the other gaze of the prototype," and gives love in its gaze as it saves from the illusion of the idol: "the image that takes up the role of the icon again becomes the bond of communion," "the living icon of charity."[249]

This sense of the icon as charity, as love, I argue, relates to the nature of the gift as relation. The relation given in the icon gives as a continuous unfolding, and a continuous development. The giving of the icon initiates me into the awareness of relation to the on pictured and to God. And the gift of relation moves me toward a future. Richard Kearney discusses a similar view of relation as gift with the story of God's relation to Moses. God promises Moses that He will free the faithful from Egypt's enslavement. The promise God makes does not imply an economic exchange, "the promise is granted unconditionally, as pure gift. But God is reminding his people that they are free to accept or refuse this gift. A gift cannot be imposed; it can only be offered. A gift neither is nor is not; it gives."[250] Giving represents continuity, progress, development in relation, and accession to communion.

This notion of communion, of living charity, underemphasized in Marion's reduction to givenness, I think, may be seen as gift itself: a gift that remains no-thing while portraying

---

[248] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 86

[249] *Crossing of the Visible*, p.87

[250] Richard Kearney, *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 29

something (though it precedes me) transformative: relation.[251] The phenomenology of the icon gives a reduction to communion, to relation – as gift, and as call. The call teaches that in isolation, I have no self; I have a solipsistic identity that mistakes subjectivity for personhood, mistakes metaphysical categories for humanness. Without the iconic approaching me, calling me forth, I have no face. I am a slave (*aprosopos*, the Greek name for a slave, literally means one who has no face) to the spectacle, and view the screen upon which the spectacle plays as reality. Dostoevsky famously calls rebellion the greatest sin. For Dostoevsky rebellion is not merely experimenting with prohibitions, but denying one's place in the community, and in Tradition.[252] Rebellion moves one to isolation, and ultimately disintegrates into nihilism by asserting that the spectacle is reality.[253] When I think that I can interpret existence from my own ability and reasoning, I rebel against tradition and my community. I set myself up as an authority on the world. Like Ivan Karamazov, I assert that my collection of newspaper clippings proves the evil of the world, and my only

---

[251] Marion discusses relation in *Being Given*, "…relation precedes individuality [in the summons]. And again: individuality loses its autarchic essence on account of a relation that is not only more originary than it, but above all half unknown, seeing as it can one of the two poles – *me* – without at first and most of the time delivering the other, the origin of the call…Individual essence thus undergoes a two fold relativization: resulting from a relation and from a relation of unknown origin. Whence a primordial paradox: in and through the summons, the gifted is identified, but this identification escapes him straightaway since he receives without knowing it. He therefore receives himself from what he thinks neither clearly nor distinctly; he is, despite the failure in him of the 'I think (myself)'" p. 268. The relation as Marion briefly sketches it here maintains the focus on the reduction to the call and loses the richness that relation adds to givenness. To the relation that precedes me a mutuality is added as I respond to the call, and, moreover to *a* caller, even if the caller remains unknown or hidden. Beyond respect (which Marion does discuss) the relation between the caller and the called develops: in faithfulness, obedience, trust, and love, or in broken faith, disobedience, mistrust, and hate. Regardless of how the relation unfolds, a third dimension comes forward with relation. If, as Marion proceeds to demonstrate, the call begets a response, the possibility of a reduction to communion arises. This notion of relation as gift benefited greatly from discussion with Jessy Jordan and John Lippitt.

[252] Alyosha exclaims that Ivan's desire "to return his ticket" is rebellion, *The Brothers Karamazov*, II.2.4. p. 245

[253] John Panteleimon Manoussakis describes the gift and rebellion in terms of freedom. See "Prosopon and Icon: Two Premodern Ways of Thinking God," in *After God: Richard Kearney and the Religious Turn in Continental Philosophy*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 280-281. He follow John Zizioulas's *Being as Communion*, p. 43

reasonable response is to reject it. Alyosha's response to Ivan prefigures Marion's erotic reduction. Aloysha wonders about Ivan's future saying, "And the sticky little leaves, and the precious graves, and the blue sky, and the woman you love! How will you live, what will you love them with?"[254] Alyosha recognizes that Ivan cannot live without community, that he cannot love in isolation. Alyosha's questions to Ivan echo Marion's asserts, "I am not, except insofar as I experience love." [255] And for the Eastern Tradition this exclamation is equivalent to saying, "I am not except in so far as I experience communion." The one in isolation lives without love, without identity, without a face. The love exchanged between people reveals the communal nature of love.

The relation that the icon gives is communion.[256] With the painted icon it is communion with God and the Saints. With the face of another person it is communion that anticipates the divinization of humanity. The face of the icon (whether a painted icon, or the face of another person) that gazes at me and envisages me shatters the illusion that I can exist outside communion, outside love, outside the iconic gift. I realize I am someone, I realize my humanness, that I have a face (*prosopon*) in relation with someone. I am a person as part of an on-going, ever-changing, and developing relation that cultivates a history, that nurtures love, that provides a future, and that gives the hope of the eschaton.[257] Marion's

---

[254] Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 263

[255] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 8

[256] Cf. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 49, "The life of God is eternal because it is personal, that is to say, it is realized as an expression of free communion, as love. Life and love are identified in the person: the person does not die only because it is loved and loves; outside the communion of love the person loses its uniqueness and becomes a being like other beings, a 'thing' without absolute 'identity' and 'name,' without a face. Death for a person means ceasing to love and to be loved, ceasing to be unique and unrepeatable, whereas life for the person means the survival of the uniqueness of its hypostasis, which is affirmed and for maintained by love."

[257] See Richard Kearney's discussion of the eschaton in *The God who May Be*, p. 25-29; see also John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, "The crucial point lies in the fact that being is constituted as communion; only then can truth and communion be mutually identified" p. 101. Zizioulas uses the word "being" in a nuanced way. Being reflects the nature of the trinity. He emphasizes that as three

example of the kenosis of Christ represents a disfigurement. Christ's humanity empties Him of his divine appearance. Yet, Christ's humanity testifies to the "trace of God."[258] Christ's appearance in 'the condition of the slave' (*aprosopon*) provides an opportunity for me to see invisibly the 'splendor of love' that ultimately gives me the face to face relation (*prosopon*).[259] The paradox of Christ's appearance, Marion writes, "becomes intelligible only if we can release the icon from the logic of the image – and thus only if we ourselves can escape from the tyranny of the image."[260] One escapes the tyranny of the image by abandoning preconceptions, only by responding to the call. As gifted by the call, I am no longer self-sufficient. Thus, this relation that makes me gifted, that gives me to myself, is a relation that makes me a possible future, or in Kearney's words, "a promise of rebirth,"[261] that connects me through Christ to all humans. Christ's self-emptying releases me from my enslavement and idolatry. I become myself as I realize the gift of relation. The icon reveals this relation as it reveals the prototype through its loving gaze.

The icon's transferal of love to me does not rest with me, does not end in me. I become like the icon in that I continue to transfer the gift of love back to the icon, to the Other, and to God. I turn outward to others as I imitate the one pictured. With the experience of the icon I realize and continue an on-going, non-intentional, proliferation of giving-through. The nature of the gift, as relation, has a dynamic force that adds to the call

---

distinct persons They have communion. His reading of the church Fathers privileges the three *persons* over the one *essence* of the mystery of the trinity. This emphasis sets in motion his argument that humans, just like the persons of the Trinity, exist through communion (see pp. 41-50). In introducing this conception of communion Zizioulas writes, "This meta-historical, eschatological and iconological dimension of the Church is characteristic of the Eastern tradition, which lives and teaches its theology liturgically; it contemplates the being of God and the being of the Church with the eyes of worship, principally of Eucharistic worship, image of the "*eschata*" *par excellence*" (p. 19).

[258] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 62

[259] Cf. *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 65; cf. Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, pp. 40-45

[260] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 58

[261] *The God Who May Be*, p. 19

by envisioning something that I had not seen there before: a relation that redefines me as called to participate with the gift. I may abstain from the relation, but the relation always precedes me, opens me to the possibility that I can decide to see. The kenosis of Christ makes the relation one I can endure, one that liberates me from idolatry and possessiveness of constituting objects.[262] Marion's phenomenology of the icon culminates in the crossing of the gazes: the gaze that sees my gaze and the gaze of the Other that I see cross invisibly, but are seen by both. With the reduction to the call I am given to myself, as *adonné*, as I passively receive the excess of the call that precedes me. Marion's reduction avoids the charge of economy by making the gift no-thing. He avoids the charge of metaphysics and theology by demonstrating that the unnamed caller precedes the gifted one. The move to relation maintains the reduction to the gift as no-thing. Relation has no property, substance, or being. Relation is a shared good, still no-thing, yet is mutually given and mutually received, ever giving, ever receiving, and ever calling. The relation represents the transformation that occurs as the Divine likeness of the iconic Other makes me aware of the divine energies that radiate through the Other, given totally and remaining incomprehensible.[263]

Every icon – every painted icon of the Saints, the Theotokos or Christ, and every human – portrays the prototype invisibly, just as the Incarnate Christ reveals the Father invisibly. St. John of Damascus writes of icons, "Embrace them with the eyes, the lips, the heart; bow before them and honor them; love them, for they are the likeness of God incarnate, of His mother, and of the communion of saints, who shared the sufferings and

---

[262] See *Crossing of the Visible*, pp. 68-78

[263] See Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), pp. 58-61. Lossky contends that everyone is given the energies of God fully. Yet, only as one advances in grace do they become perceptible.

the glory of Christ."[264] As the iconic of the Other becomes more recognized the relation expands and grows, as St Maximus says, the relation "advances in divine things and recognizable its own dignity and finally transfers its whole longing onto God."[265] As I am transfigured by the icon, I become more human, more incarnate. As I become more human, I recognize more of the iconic in the Other, I recognize the Other more fully as *prosopon*. Richard Kearney describes the recognition of the Other as *prosopon* saying, "it signals the otherness of the other in and through the flesh-and-blood person here before me. Trans-cendence in and through, but not reducible to, immanence. *Prosopon* is the face of the other who urgently solicits me, bidding me answer in each concrete situation, 'here I am."[266] In his analysis of the etymology of *prosopon* John Manoussakis underlines the relational aspect by demonstrating the ecstatic and personal nature that invites one toward an other, reciprocally.

> *Prosopon* strongly implies the reciprocity of a gaze through which the self is interpolated by the Other and, ultimately, 'othered.' […] Personhood, far from being a synonym for selfhood or identity is never to be understood as a fait acompli or a once-and-for-all given that somehow we possess. Rather, to be a person suggests a process continuously occasioned by the unreserved exposure to the Other.[267]

The reciprocity denoted by relation with the icon may demonstrate a relation of debt, yet the debt is circumscribed within a radically different kind of economy. This economy does not permit the exhaustion of the gift, nor does it deal in equivalencies. This economy multiplies that which is given such that the gift grows and expands, overflows the recipient's

---

[264] St. John of Damascus, *On The Divine Images*, p.58, see also p. 75 for a discussion of the prototype.

[265] Maximus the Confessor, *Four Hundred Chapters on Love*, in *Selected Writings*, p. 71

[266] Richard Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, p. 18

[267] John Panteleimon Manoussakis, "Prosopon and Icon: Two Premodern Ways of Thinking God," in *After God: Richard Kearney and the Religious Turn in Continental Philosophy*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 279-297, p.p. 284-286. Manoussakis brings the concept of *prosopon* to bear on the icon by demonstrating that like a person the icon cannot become an object. The icon presents a depiction of the relational aspect of the trinity (pp. 290-293). As the icon come forward toward the beholder, the beholder becomes a participant in the mystery of relation with the person pictured.

ability to receive. This economy eludes quantification for it engages me in a process that continually renews the gift. With respect to the icon the economy is worked out through relation that connects me to God through veneration. As I gaze at the icon in prayerful veneration, my veneration is transferred to God through the person venerated as adoration.[268] The gaze of the person reveals God's love, reveals the saints progress in God-likeness, and reveals that, through the example of the saint's life, I can go further in love. In this interaction I become indebted to the saint and to God. Yet, contrary to economic indebtedness to God cannot be worked out in terms of exchange of debit and credit; and indebtedness to the saint provides an opportunity for a greater communal good to be proliferated. In other words, even though the experience of the icon demonstrates a relation caught up in an exchange, the gift of mutual relation can be considered gift because of its nature and the process by which the giving occurs, i.e., how relation is given and received.

The giving and receiving of relation presents inexhaustibility; in fact, the nature of relation demonstrates that as I am given to, and as I return the gift, the super-abundance of the gift (the mutual love shared in relation) increases the more the exchange continues.[269] The economy of love, the economy of relation, cannot be dealt with in quantities, because even as love is given "away" it gives no-thing, and yet is never exhausted.[270] In fact, the

---

[268] Cf. *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 77

[269] For God to have debtors can only be understood by analogy. I may owe a friend money, a meal, a place to stay, etc., but my "debt" to God cannot be placed under similar categories without implying 1) the God *needs* something from me, or 2) that I can *give* something to God. The ideas of reverence of God and veneration of the person pictured in the icon fall under different categories of debt. The praise and gratitude I give to God are part of reverence, not of economy. This notion of indebtedness points to realization of relation, of humanness, and of community. The praise and gratitude I give to God may reflect a feeling of indebtedness; but, I think that feeling continues the gift from God and increases love as a gift to be shared. In other words, in receiving love (love that loves me prior to my ability to receive it) I can only return love to God through praise. In returning love to God through praise I continue to receive, and as I receive I cannot but give from the over-abundance.

[270] Kierkegaard presents a parallel discussion to the economy of the gift as no-thing in his discussion of mercifulness. He compares the gift of the rich man and the widow's mite. The world,

more it is given the more abundant and excessive is it revealed to be present. In Michel Henry's phenomenology of Christianity he expresses that Life, as self-revelation, is equivalent to the revelation of God.[271] Life is a ceaseless process, a continual coming forth, a constant movement that keeps relation in a state of movement and renewal. As I experience this renewal I experience Life as absolute relationship.

An exchange that might come closer to a relation of debt with respect to love, might be that as God loves, and as I receive that love, I find myself indebted to others: I must share that love as I have received it, or the love cannot have any coherence as the gift of excess. The icon's role in this argument might come from the side of the one pictured. The one pictured is the recipient of the gift, and that the gift radically changes that saint's relation to the world. The giving of the icon presents a unique position with respect to the gift. The saint is the *mediator* of the exchange; as such the saint is the giver and the receiver (giver of adoration to God and receiver of veneration from the beholder). Since the gift does not rest with the saint, the role of debtor and creditor becomes meaningless. The saint "owes" nothing to the beholder, and the beholder "gives" nothing to the saint; nonetheless, the saint

---

he writes, "says that the rich man gave the most, and why does the world say that? Because the world understands only about money – and Christ only about mercifulness. And just because Christ understood only about mercifulness he was so precise about its being only two pennies the widow gave, and for that very reason he would say that it did not need to be even that much, or that one could give even less and yet by giving even less give even more. What a wonderful arithmetic problem, or rather what a wonderful kind of arithmetic […] Mercifulness works wonders. It makes the two pennies into a large sum when the poor widow gives them, it makes the stingy gift into a larger sum if the poor person mercifully does not upbraid the rich for it, makes the morose giver less guilty if the poor man mercifully hides it…If power of money has conquered completely, then mercifulness is completely abolished also. *Mercifulness is able to do nothing,*" pp. 318, 323.

[271] Henry inquires into the meaning of Christianity if epistemological, historic, and scientific questions are suspended. He asserts that Christianity is best understood as phenomenological, as an experience of Living that cannot be explained through conceptions of intentionality or Being. He says the self-revelation of Truth to someone makes that one "the son of Truth, the son of God." This thesis is the essential Truth of Christianity (*I Am the Truth*, p. 10). The conceptions of life as epistemological, historic, or scientific define life as outside oneself. Whereas Christianity shows that "it is relation itself that is constituted as a relation with Life, that draws its essence from within it." (See *I Am the Truth*, pp. 55-61, 61).

both receives and gives. The relation of giver, gift, recipient becomes: giver, receiver-mediator-giver, receiver, even better: giver-receiver, receiver-mediator-giver, receiver-giver. Furthermore, the saint challenges the perspective of a passive receiver.[272] As I receive the excessive gift, I do not remain merely recipient; but, I becomes recipient-giver. As I am given I give– as the icon models the giving and loving of the saint.

The icon implicates me in an ethical relation. As I share in the gift, I am moved to share the gift. Henry describes it this way, "It is impossible to touch this flesh without touching the other flesh that has made it flesh. It is impossible to strike someone without striking Christ. And it is Christ who says: 'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me' (Matthew 25:40)."[273] The person of the icon models how I am to see myself, and how I am to treat others. The emphasis on relation, both in Marion's account of the gift and in the Eastern Orthodox perspective, provides a means by which ethics can be thought that does not fall prey to metaphysics. The icon initiates me into a community. This community is made up of unique individuals, individuals who reflect Divine Beauty in particular ways. In viewing someone iconically I must maintain that particularity. The ethics of the icon must likewise reflect particularity. Relation provides a means to hold to particularity while continuously discovering my calling, while continuously developing respect for and responsibility to the individuals with whom I have communion.

---

[272] See, for example, Tanis Jones Farmer, "Revealing the Invisible: Gregory of Nyssa on the Gift of Revelation," *Modern Theology,* 21:1, January 2005, pp. 67-85, p. 70. Farmer demonstrates through the theology of St. Gregory of Nyssa the triadic relation of the gift makes the recipient part of a "set." The recipient and the giver are not isolated; they are a community because they are gifted. Human giving and yearning, according to Gregory, are corrected and lead to revelation as God continually guides and gives the capacity to receive. The giving of revelation escapes exchange, "it comes from one source to the recipient and is distributed again to a third extended set of recipients. In other words, God's gift to creation is not directly returned but dispersed outwards on a horizontal plane. Secondly, as Gregory notes, the donor receives more from the donee in the act of giving than what she actually gives; there is an excess in the return."

[273] *I Am the Truth*, p. 117.

Just as each individual reflects a particular beauty, I must receive from them a particular call that moves us toward a deeper sense of communion.

CHAPTER THREE

Justice, Revenge, and the Icon

Introduction

Evil occurs with logical precision. I respond to it just as logically: I try to make it stop. And to make it stop I react, I accuse, I take revenge to suppress the source of the evil. In short, I harm another, and bring more evil into the world. As I pursue justice as a response to evil, I am absorbed into evil's logic. I seek revenge against the person who has harmed me by accusing that person. When I pursue justice I pursue another's harm. Jean-Luc Marion's account of justice maintains that justice and revenge are intrinsically linked. I sympathize with Marion's account of justice in "Evil in Person,"[1] but find that his account needs further exploration. That this essay appears first in his collection of essays, *Prolegomena to Charity*, indicates that 1) evil must be contended with phenomenologically as an initial move toward a concept of charity; and 2) Marion is not stating a final word on the nature of evil, justice, revenge, or charity. His preliminary remarks on justice, ethics, charity and love, that "prolegomena" implies, need extension, development, and treatment as a saturated phenomenon. The essays in *Prolegomena to Charity* question philosophy's assumptions and assurance that it can deal with these concepts philosophically. Marion's treatment of these concepts reveals that charity and love are not subject to reason's rationality, but a higher reason that treats only of "loving and being loved." For a concept of justice or of ethics to be held within the greater rationality of love, justice cannot be a species of retribution, revenge, or punishment, nor can ethics be a species of idolatry that places an imperative over

[1] Jean Luc Marion, "Evil in Person," in *Prolegomena to Charity,* trans. Stephen Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), pp. 1-30; "La mal en personne," in *Prolégomènes a la charité*, (Paris: Éditions de la difference, 1986), 11-42

an iconic human. Justice and ethics must reveal that love defines them from the outset. It is in the realization of the other - who has harmed me (as in justice), or for whom I am responsible (as in ethics) – as an icon, as irreplaceable and unsubstitutable that justice and ethics have their full meaning. If I deny the iconic in the other person I see (even if she perpetrates an injustice against me, even if I am overwhelmed by my responsibility toward him) I am guilty of injustice, and have not shown love or charity. How I respond to the evil, pain, and suffering that confront me reveals me, and reveals the nature of justice and ethics. Thus, to get to a concept of justice I first must take seriously the evil of injustice; to get to a concept of charity I must account for suffering; and, to get to a concept of love I must contend with "evil in person."

In this Chapter I focus on Marion's account of justice. I provide his account, and then treat the experience of injustice phenomenologically, hermeneutically, and within the context of the icon. The experience of injustice can produce the cycle of revenge Marion describes, yet a phenomenological analysis yields opportunities to escape this cycle through the embracing of community, through a renewed conception of personhood informed by experiencing another person as an icon, and through the virtues of receptivity and humility that share the suffering of another as if it were one's own. The hermeneutical turn I employ re-opens the closed system in Marion's account of justice. Hermeneutics allow for the meaning of injustice to be transformed and forces me to grapple with a surplus of possible meanings. Injustice causes suffering by its nature and also by the difficulty of making sense of it. Interpreting injustice by creating a narrative helps me to make sense of, to mourn, and to heal from injustice. I am able to see the one who has harmed me differently. I see that she also has suffered, he also has been a victim, and that suffering and victimization do not eradicate the possibility of seeing them as icons, as people who bear the mark of and

possibility to attain to divinity. Thus, working through injustice by hermeneutically creating a narrative provides a way to move from accusation to charity. Stanley Hauerwas's notion of vision, and Alasdair MacIntyre's notion of just generosity provide support for justice as seeing others with proper dignity and openness to their humanness. The icons of the Virgin of Tenderness, Saint Nicholas of Myra, and the literary icon of Ivan Shatov provide examples of suffering that promote justice through community, good works, and forgiveness.

Marion suggests that charity provides a privileged kind of knowledge, that charity is "the first among the virtues and the instance of grace."[2] Knowledge as a product of charity, virtue and grace yields a transformed concept sense of justice that can provide a way to approach ethics. The phenomenology of the experience of injustice that moves from accusation to reconciliation recovers an iconic notion of humanness and a way to approach ethics from a virtue perspective. I focus on the virtues of receptivity and humility to show that receiving another as an icon transforms the desire for revenge into compassion that seeks to venerate the love present in the other.

With receptivity and love the role of relation again comes to the fore. Like Marion's reduction to the gift and his phenomenology of the icon, seeing another person as an icon provides a way to conceive of justice without revenge. In this case, love, revealed through the icon, informs justice and opens the possibility of ethics. The gift of relation appears as I realize I am called by another who precedes me, who gives me to myself, and who inspires a relation of love. I agree with Marion that the concept of love is broader that the concepts of justice or ethics. Yet the breadth of love need not destroy justice, exclude ethics, or deny their possibility within phenomenology, but, in fact, transform justice and ethics. Marion

---

[2] *Prolegomena to Charity*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), p. 168

fails to see the need for justice to overcome inequities, to stop abuse, or to name betrayal. The absence of justice may result in passivity or quietism that establishes the default conditions of humans as victim or victimizer. Theses conditions, furthermore, produce idolatry. When I experience injustice, I am self-obsessed to the point of worshiping my suffering. When I cause injustice, I experience another person as someone to control and manipulate for my own benefit; and I worship my own power. Injustice perpetuates idolatry and a lack of justice is a lack of love. To allow abuse to continue results in injustice to both the victim and the abuser. Secondary sense of justice mean to put aright, to deal with appropriately, to make balanced, and to restore peace. If abuse continues through passivity out of fear of harming the abuser through accusation, nothing is put aright. If the victim finds in suffering a source for self-congratulatory praise, nothing is made appropriate. Neither realizes their humanness, their capacity to love, nor their capacity for love. The passivity implied in refraining from accusation denies humanness to the victimizer, because it denies him the possibility that he could do otherwise, that he could love and be loved; and, it denies the victim the right to mourn her suffering, to heal from it, and the possibility of reconciliation. Though Marion sees justice (as accusation) as an attempt to master, control, possess, conquer, or consume the victim and the victimizer in a cycle of revenge, a broader concept of justice serves to correct injustice by encouraging a view of humanness that recognizes the potential all people have of theosis.

Like Marion I think humanness rests in loving and being loved. One way to describe this concept of humanness comes from St. Evagrius. He admonishes monks to consider "all people as god – after God." He suggests that this consideration requires one to detach oneself from one's own self-interest in order to realize the dignity common to all, the true

nature common to all people.[3] With this love at the core of humanness, I see justice as recognition of the Other, and injustice as ignoring the capacity of the other to love, denying an opportunity for reconciliation and community. This view of justice emphasizes the need to recognize the humanness of another person, in the victim or the victimizer, and to recognize that the other person is capable of loving and being loved. Marion's description of love, the love received through the experience of the icon, guides my inquiry into justice. When I experience another person iconically, he cannot become an object for me, I cannot manipulate or abstractly relate to him; but I must love him as unsubstitutable, dynamic, and infinite. The icon invites this transformed understanding of the other person as it invites me to live out the charity it reveals. As I receive the possibility of transformation and communion, I become attuned to the iconic nature of each person I encounter; and, I see that I am loved and called to love. I see that I am called to imitate the character and acts of compassion, mercy and justice of the Saints, the Theotokos, Christ, as well as the one whom I encounter face to face. I am called to see the possibility of divinity in each person, the love each person reveals to, and inspires in, me. Before showing how the icon provides the transformation of relation that undergirds a species of virtue ethics, I provide Marion's account of justice as the cycle of revenge.

The Logic of Revenge

Justice and revenge operate under the same logic, according to Marion. Love obeys a different reason, "Love treats only of the reason of loving and making oneself loved: as long as we refuse to enter into this tautology, we inevitably degrade love to a metaphor of relation with objects (possession, production, conquest, consumption, and so on) and

[3] Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*, trans. John Eudes Banberger (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1981), "Chapters on Prayer," ch. 123, p. 75

thereby miss it completely."[4] I want to enter into the tautology of love in what follows, and redefine justice according to love. Marion's critique of justice establishes revenge as the motivation and safeguard for the logic of evil, ceaselessly perpetuating hurt and pain. Following Marion's admonition, and drawing from the Desert Fathers, Evagrius, and theological and phenomenological accounts of the icon, I redescribe justice as a way of seeing humans iconically. This way of seeing relates to Stanley Hauerwas's description of moral vision and Alasdair MacIntyre's description of just generosity.[5] These perspectives redefine injustice as the refusal to recognize the possibility of divinity in another person, and justice as working through love to overcome injustice by recuperating and restoring the dignity common to all.[6] If injustice results from possession, production, conquest, and consumption, justice results from restoration, transformation, recuperation, and reconciliation. In this section I provide Marion's account of the cycle of revenge justice perpetuates, that leads to a need for a phenomenology of injustice and provides the possibility to recover relation through justice informed by iconic vision.

Marion's account of injustice reveals a deep insight about how humans pursue it. Justice becomes unjust when I seek to ease my suffering by harming another person. This insight provides a way to evaluate motives and reassess what passes for justice but fails. Two alternatives remain: pursue justice and risk revenge and more injustice, or refuse to seek justice and passively condone evil and injustice. These alternatives demand attention and provide a way to reconsider justice more broadly. First, in equating all pursuits of justice to

---

[4] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. x.

[5] Stanley Hauerwas , *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection*, "The significance of Vision: Toward an Aesthetic Ethic," (Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides Publishers, Inc., 1974), pp. 30-47; Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1999)

[6] See also Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), p. 122

revenge he construes justice too narrowly. If his equation is correct, no room is allowed for healing, for victims to make sense of their suffering, nor is there honesty about the past, or the nature of injustice. Furthermore, a too narrow construal cuts off possibilities for community, for ones who suffer to share stories with one another, or derive comfort and acceptance through this community. Community provides a way to remove the pointlessness of suffering. In community, suffering is worth something to someone. Second, a broader construal of justice makes hermeneutics necessary. Besides making the pain stop, the one who suffers wants to understand why it occurs and to alter the conditions that allow it to occur. A hermeneutic approach allows justice to be seen as something beyond evil; it allows another level of justice to be explored: making fair, level, plumb, or right what has been made wrong in injustice. Marion does not allow for any variation in "evil," "harm," or "suffering." Just as a surgeon must wound to heal, accusation harms to set aright. Third, Marion underestimates the destruction of accusation to the one who accuses. Pointing out the wrongs of others becomes an addiction that blocks off the possibility of community, and of iconic vision by continuously affirming the virtue of the accuser. Thus accusation (as judgment and self-glorification) provides no satisfaction, no healing from suffering. Accusation as story telling and righting wrongs moves toward community as mutual recognition, not to isolation. Fourth, Marion's account does not recognize personhood. Justice recognizes that the act of injustice does not define the one who commits the injustice. Just accusation provides a way to say that what occurred was wrong *because* the person who committed it was capable of doing otherwise. Fifth, Marion's account does not provide for the possibility that injustice and justice occur as saturated phenomena. Though Marion cannot have been expected to anticipate the developments that occur in his later work in this work, bringing the phenomenological description of his

account of the saturated phenomena to bear on justice and injustice helps to re-construe justice and injustice.

Marion's conception of the injustice of justice proves compelling and insightful. Evil and hurt prove their reality, according to Marion, in the physical and moral pain I feel. "Evil, before all else, hurts."[7] I react to pain by trying to make it stop, by trying to stop its cause. I plead my innocence and accuse another. My accusation targets another person, seeks to harm as retribution for harm. In essence I imitate the one who hurt me in accusing that one.[8] Someone has caused my pain, and my hurt confirms the certainty of evil. My hurt obsesses me. I find causes for my pain everywhere, from acts of violence, betrayal and infidelity I suffer, to the indignities of mockery, not receiving due recognition or being passed over, to political injustices of inequality and discrimination. No matter the source of pain, the certainty of my innocence heightens as my pain persists. In my accusation I try to target an objective source of the pain. Whether the source is one individual or a multitude, I need to put a face to my suffering.

> To put a face to the cause of one's suffering is to be able, at once, to plead one's cause efficiently. I can only accuse a face, and the worst of sufferings consists precisely in not having any face to accuse. Anonymous suffering redoubles the evil (the hurt) because it prohibits the innocent from pleading his cause. Thus, as evil grows, the charges grow; and so, too, must grow the dignity (or the number) of the guilty.[9]

---

[7] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 1, translation modified; *Prolégomènes a la charité*, p. 13

[8] Marion's assessment of the logic of revenge shows affinity with René Girard's conception of conflict. Conflict occurs according to Girard through imitating the desire of another. If someone desires my harm I develop a mimetic rivalry with her such that I desire her harm in return. Cf. "Stereotypes of persecution," where Girard writes, "Negative reciprocity, although it brings people into opposition with each other, tends to make their conduct uniform and is responsible for the predominance of the *same*. […] the coherence of the process of persecution [is] the sort of logic that links all the stereotypes of which it is composed." *The Girard Reader*, ed. James G. Williams (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), p. 109

[9] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 4

Beyond preventing me from pleading my case, Marion does not explain why anonymous suffering intensifies the hurt of injustice. I suggest that without a face to accuse my suffering feels chaotic and irreconcilable.[10] I may say "I hurt," "I am suffering," but without an origin to the suffering I feel more than the pain I suffer, I also feel the helplessness and confusion of despair. Paul Ricoeur views justice similarly to Marion, while Marion sees all accusation as adding evil to the world, Ricoeur privileges the particularity of the incident of injustice and theorizes that accusation is part of a story by which sense is made of the incident, and from which dialogue emerges to provide a way to reconciliation, and to mutual recognition. Ricoeur provides an alternative to the confusion of suffering without cause. He suggests that hermeneutics work to place an account of the incident in time, to create a coherent narrative that allows sense to be made of suffering, and to move from suffering to mourning, and healing. Telling one's story is required for mourning to begin. Finding the cause of my suffering allows me to begin a hermeneutic of healing as I work to transform the particularity of the chaos and confusion of suffering into a story that ends in catharsis.[11] Ricoeur goes further and suggests that sharing stories provides a way to move to mutual recognition through dialogue. In *In Excess* Marion calls the saturated phenomenon of the icon the "infinite hermeneutic."[12] He also responds to criticism that he neglects hermeneutics. Marion notes that the unquantifiable, overwhelming, unconstitutable

---

[10] A parallel to Girard is relevant here as well. His notion of conflict shows affinity to Marion's conception injustice. Finding a scapegoat to purge me or society from an arbitrary evil repeats and continues the harm arising out of conflict. "Instead of natural, distant, and inaccessible causes, humanity has always preferred causes that are *significant from a social perspective and permit of corrective intervention* – victims." " History and the Paraclete," in *The Scapegoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 204

[11] See Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, "Evil, a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology," trans. David Pellauer, ed. Mark I. Wallace, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1995), 258-261.

[12] Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies in Saturated Phenomena*, "The Icon or the Endless Hermeneutic," trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), pp. 104-127

nature of saturated phenomena requires hermeneutics.[13] Like the infinite hermeneutic that Marion describes as beginning at the death of a beloved, the hermeneutic that works to understand suffering, works to construct a "coherent interpretation" of why I am suffering as well as why someone would cause my suffering.[14]

The addition of Ricoeur provides a way to emphasize the role of accusation in making sense of and healing from injustice. Without someone to accuse I cannot begin to interpret my suffering, I cannot mourn, and I cannot heal. When I find the source of my suffering I move from "I hurt" to "You hurt me," from here I can inquire, "Why did you hurt me?" I can describe suffering phenomenologically as an elaboration of "I hurt." This description entails my feeling sad, angry, anxious, frightened, or disappointed. Yet I also must describe that I feel bewildered, confused, and overwhelmed. To remain in the realm of description leaves the confusion unresolved, and allows it to heighten my pain. The move to accusation, to "you hurt me," requires hermeneutics that provide a place for me to begin to make sense of suffering. When I say "You hurt me," I accuse someone; but, to accuse is also so say "You were capable of doing otherwise. You *are* capable of love." To seek someone to accuse, and to seek justice, is to seek an interpretation beyond revenge and retribution. The privileging of "why" questions over "who" questions provides a place where hermeneutics can work to form a narrative of suffering that can open a route to mutual recognition. Hermeneutics provides a corrective to accusation by allowing dialogue, and stories to be shared. Where stories can be told, reconciliation may start. I return to the

---

[13] For criticisms of Marion's lack of hermeneutics cf. Richard Kearney, *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: Indian University Press, 2001), pp. 31-33; John Panteliemon Manoussakis, "The Phenomenon of God: From Husserl to Marion," *American Catholic Quarterly* 78:1, 2004. Marion's response appears in a footnote to *In Excess*, p. 33, note 3; and in an interview with Richard Kearney. See Richard Kearney, *Debates in Continental Philosophy: Conversation with Contemporary Thinkers*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), pp. 20-21

[14] Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies in Saturated Phenomena*, pp. 104-127

need for hermeneutics below and suggest that to find an interpretation is to make justice into the pursuit of the ultimate possibility of humanness: to love and be loved.

Without a "who" I have no one to tell my story to, I lack an objective source, and my suffering heightens. With no one to blame I may become the source of my own suffering. I become an object of contempt to myself without someone to accuse because I have no objective source by which to offset the pain I feel, I have no hope for its cessation. Even if I do not become my own source of pain, if I can discover no direct cause, I can find no escape from it. Without someone to accuse the frustration and confusion of suffering *for nothing* leaves me feeling lost and hopeless. Marion describes cases where no cause is to be found (such as malnutrition, unemployment, political oppression, or the suppression of human rights) and shows that a face still needs to be located to plead with.[15] A name can be assigned to the source. The name of the government or economic power, the name of the company that lays off workers, or the name of the tyrant that uses ideology to deny human rights, gives me a face to accuse and to recognize and makes suffering concrete. Yet this process of identifying the cause initiates me into the logic of evil. By seeking to destroy the cause of suffering and I add more evil to the world. "I can struggle against the evil that affects me only by affecting the world with an evil first reified, unveiled, and fixed by me. To rid myself (*me défaire*) of the evil in me, I must first make (*faire*) of it a not-me, that is to say, give birth to it – point it out to all the world, and thus put it in the world."[16] As Marion sees it, my reaction to injustice requires someone to blame, demands accusation. So as I search out a source and accuse I add evil to the world. The notion of the "*not-me*" provides a source of escape from revenge by looking at the objectifying effects of accusation. Making

---

[15] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 4

[16] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 4-5

an object of the source of my pain affords me the control I lack.[17] I now can operate within the realm of possession, production, control, manipulation, and mastery. Yet, I find that my suffering results from having been made an object of production, possession, control, manipulation, and mastery. Because I am an "other" to my victimizer, I feel the need to make my victimizer see me as a subject, as a subject who feels the full dehumanizing impact of his actions. The problem of justice, when parsed in terms of objectification, is not merely the giving birth to evil, but killing the possibility of seeing another as a subject.

The emotionally tortured character, Kate, of Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*, expresses well the need to put a face to suffering. She expresses envy over her cousin's war experience. She says, "How simple it would be to fight. What a pleasant thing it must be to be among people who are afraid for the first time – when you yourself have a proper flesh and blood enemy to be afraid of. What a lark! Isn't that the secret of heroes?"[18] The secret of heroes, the secret of wars, the secret of ending one's suffering consists in assigning the cause of it to an enemy, a visible flesh and blood enemy. A face removes the anonymity of suffering and provides an opportunity to transfer pain to that face, to the real, present, and identifiable enemy. The enemy, the face that I blame for my pain provides a way to ease it. Giving the enemy a name, a face, alleviates my pain by supporting my assurance of innocence.[19] In response, I attempt to destroy the cause of my suffering by destroying the humanity, the subject, the face of the other.[20]

Marion's account of the cycle of evil and revenge generated by suffering proves universal. "I become just as guilty as those I accuse, precisely because I do nothing but

---

[17] Cf. Rene Girard, "Stereotypes of Persecution," in *The Scapegoat*, pp. 17-23

[18] Walker Percy, *The Movie Goer*, (New York: Vintage International, 1960), p. 58

[19] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 4

[20] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 5

defend myself: it is in wanting to deliver myself from evil that I perpetuate it and universalize it."[21] The sufferer cannot be judged or advised to do otherwise; yet the sufferer cannot claim innocence.[22] Whether by accusing another, or by causing another person's suffering, the one who suffers, just as the one who causes the evil and pain, is guilty. The pursuit of justice ends always with revenge. Revenge appears as the only remedy for evil; and, justice provides a means to transmit revenge "by compensation, readjustment, reparation, in short by justice itself, without ever being able to stop."[23] I may give revenge other names: assigning responsibility, finding the culprit, determining accountability, nonetheless all these names accuse another and produce evil by causing another to suffer.[24]

I want not merely to deliver myself from evil. I know well that evil occurs and occurs to me. What Marion's account disregards is that I require a way to make sense of the evil I suffer, and a way to make sense of the evil I cause. I begin to make sense of evil through interpretation. I guess about the reasons for suffering at first. I ascribe motivations and explanations to the event and check them according to the actual events. The interpretive efforts create conflicting accounts, more than one motivation is in play and more than one possible explanation can be given. Interpretation provides places where mediation works to make the conflicting accounts intelligible and find the truth of the situation. From deciphering the truth of the various alternatives narrative works to create, a narrative emerges to explain why I suffer, why someone has harmed me, why I desire her harm in return. Without a narrative, I cannot explain what occurred, nor escape the cycle of revenge. If I refuse to accuse, I exclude myself from the possibility of making sense of

---

[21] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 7

[22] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 5-6

[23] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 8

[24] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 5, 8

injustice, act dishonestly; and worse, I give passive permission to my victimizer to continue the abuse, the unfair labor practices, the economic disadvantages, the human rights neglect. Each of these instances of injustice occurs in a particular context and involves particular people. Hermeneutics provides a way to deal with injustice in its particularity and a way to deal with the phenomenology of evil in person and the notion of humanness Marion emphasizes that each person has - to love and be loved.

Marion suggests three alternatives to revenge: absorbing the pain and evil without transmitting it, suicide, and blaming Satan. In the first case, refusing to transmit evil by taking it upon oneself proves possible only for one who is perfect, only for Christ.[25] In the second case, suicide, as an attempt to stop the cycle of revenge, results in an act of revenge against oneself. Suicide fails to overcome revenge by cutting off the possibility for reconciliation, and by assuming power through self-negation.[26] In the third case, Satan acts through a deception by refusing responsibility, by accusing the accuser and trapping the accuser in self-accusation.[27] Satan's deception operates by making one believe he or she is unable to do good, to love, and unworthy of being loved.

The precision of revenge's logic proves inescapable. Evil is done, revenge is sought. Injustice occurs, injustice is rendered. Guilt belongs to the perpetrator and the victim. Blaming, assigning responsibility, pursuing reparation, punishment - seeking justice - proves unjust, adds evil to the world. "Without a doubt, the only way not to perpetuate evil would consist in not attempting to rid oneself of it (*s'en dèfaire*), so as not to risk engulfing someone else in it. To keep one's suffering for oneself, rather than making a hypothetical culprit suffer it: to endure it, or as ordinary language puts it so well: to absorb the cost – as one can

---

[25] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 8-11

[26] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 11-18

[27] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 22-29

absorb a counterfeit bill."[28] Only a break in the cycle can end evil's continuous progression. Bearing the weight of evil "bearing its shock" breaks the transmission. The cycle cannot be broken by assigning blame or responsibility to another. When God questions Adam about the apple, Adam blames Eve; Eve blames the serpent; and so it goes (to borrow from Vonnegut) no end to suffering, no end to blaming, no end to transmitting evil. One exception appears in Christ. Though innocent, Christ takes on the guilt, "vanquishes evil only by refusing to transmit it, enduring it to the point of running the risk, in blocking it, of dying; the just man is precisely he who endures evil without rendering it, suffers without claiming the right to make others suffer, suffers as if he were guilty."[29] Humans remain caught within the blame game, accusing one another and God for the evil in the world. But God responds by becoming the culprit and not the avenger.[30] Silently, Christ bears "accusation exasperated by universal evil."[31] No human is capable of such a burden. Thus, for Marion, the "death of God" becomes the good of the world. As the one condemned, and the one who dies, Christ refuses judgment of the world and humans alone judge themselves and others.

---

[28] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 9. A primary problem with this passage is that Marion does not take into account any measures that would prevent the one who committed the original injustice from continuing to commit similar injustices. Thus, Marion's model of absorption falls into the same logical system as revenge: injustice continues without accusation, since the perpetrator is not told to stop. A secondary problem with this passage is that Marion makes no allowance for any value to be derived from suffering. For example, people who have cancer, are victims of abuse or violence, recovering from addiction, etc. derive comfort and support from sharing their sufferings with one another. Others find suffering a route to empathize with others by creating relief organizations, serving in charitable capacities, working in prevention, and counseling. Still others recognize that lessons were learned and wisdom gained from suffering that could not have been any other way. And most pertinent here, the one who suffers accusation may recognize the dignity of the one harmed and not commit further instances of injustice. "Absorbing the cost" of a counterfeit bill cannot be made unconditionally analogous to suffering.

[29] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 9

[30] Cf. Girard, "That Only One Man Should Die," *The Scapegoat*, pp. 112-129

[31] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 10

With the example Marion provides of Christ as one who refuses to enter into the cycle of revenge, I think a possibility to imitate, even if imperfectly, Christ's refusal to transmit suffering occurs. Love is what makes humans human. True justice must account for this definition. Yet, the cycle of revenge, generated by justice, blocks community and thereby the possibility of seeing other humans as loving. I take Marion's definition of the just person seriously, "the one who endures evil without repaying it, suffers without claiming the right to make others suffer, who suffers as if he is guilty."[32] To break the cycle of revenge the just person must, according to Marion, absorb the evil and hurt as Christ did, without transmitting it to anyone else. The risk Christ incurs, in refusing to further evil, is death. Yet Marion focuses on the death of Christ as the only way to prevent the continuation of suffering, ignoring the way Christ lived in the face of suffering, the way Christ loves. Christ's life demonstrates not only the refusal to perpetuate the cycle of revenge, but also the possibility to transform relations by embracing love. The work of Christ in reconciling humanity reveals a way to move away from the picture of justice as a "measure for measure" repayment of evil, to a picture of mercy that works to recuperate relation by emphasizing the possibility to love and be loved.

Two examples from Christ's life demonstrate that accusation can be loving and transformative without continuing to add evil to the world. First the example of Christ's conversation with the Samaritan woman shows that accusation can occur without engendering vengefulness; and second, the interaction with the adulteress woman who was to be stoned shows that justice must recognize the guilt of the accusers. The story of the Samaitan[33] begins with a conversation that, according to cultural customs should not take place. A Jew should not speak with a Samaritan. But as they converse He reveals her secrets

[32] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 9, trans mod. *Prolégomènes à la charité*, p. 21

[33] The Gospel according to St. John 4: 5-42

to her: the man she is living with is not her husband, and she has had five husbands. He reveals her guilt to her, He accuses her of sin. Instead of being angry, or seeking revenge, or even being hurt by the accusation she believed in Him and converted many Samaritans. Called Photine, she became a great preacher and Martyr. In other words, accusation became an occasion for transformation: she abandoned her previous way of living and took on a new vocation.

In the story of the woman caught in adultery, the accusation turns on the accusers of the woman. Christ said to the accusers, "Let he who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."[34] The accusers find reasons to accuse themselves, and each leaves without throwing a stone. Accusation then becomes a means by which I no longer wish seek the harm of another. In the realization of my own guilt, I cannot judge another. Father Zosima, of Dostoevsky's *The Brother's Karamazov*, relates the same effect of acknowledging one's own guilt. He advises,

> Remember especially that you cannot be the judge of anyone. For there can be no judge of a criminal on earth until the judge knows that he, too, is a criminal, exactly the same as the one who stands before him, and that he is perhaps most guilty of all for the crime of the one standing before him. […] For if I myself were righteous, perhaps there would be no criminal standing before me now. If you are able to take upon yourself the crime of the criminal who stands before you and whom you are judging in your heart, do so at once, and suffer for him yourself, and let him go without reproach.[35]

---

[34] The Gospel according to St. John 8: 7 (New American Standard Version)

[35] Pt. II, Bk. 6, Ch. 3, pp. 320-321. Zosima gives this advice to monks in his care. The implications his advice has for people who live in the world are unclear to an extent. Taken with his comments on the need for Ecclesial Courts he seems to want to apply this self-judgment to judicial contexts as well. Yet, the advice seems most relevant to inter-personal relations. Self-judgment creates humility, awareness of sin - specifically the ways I may cause the misfortune of another. This reflection on my own state makes me guilty of the crime to the extent that my lack of proper care, provision, respect, etc. made crime the only option. The main point of the quote within the phenomenology of injustice, is that self-accusation makes forgiveness and mercy more likely.

Awareness of my own guilt, being accused, creates awareness that I am unworthy to judge another.[36] In this awareness I imimtate Christ's living justice, however imperfectly, as I receive the capacity for mercy through self-accusation.

Richard Kearney presents a similar criticism. He worries that Marion's God is too transcendent, and has left nothing for humans to do. "If removed entirely from historical being, God can become so unknowable and invisible as to escape all identifications whatsoever."[37] Marion's account of Christ presents only the mystery of the passion, only the paradox of the one innocent accepting the guilt of the world. Humans' actions only incur more guilt. Kearney writes, "We have little or no part to play in the Transfiguring mission of the Word—e.g., the quest for historical justice."[38] For us to play a part, Christ must not only die but live. John Manoussakis finds the neglect of the incarnation tantamount to limiting God's possible self-manifestations, and limiting the possibility of human reception of revelation. He writes, "Revelations and apparitions of God, saturated or otherwise, still have to be perceived somehow by someone. They have to be seen and felt somatically […] they have to become *incarnated* in certain figures, schemes, colors, sounds and smells if they want to be epiphanies at all."[39] Without an incarnate God only the death of God matters and no justice enters human experience. How Christ lives can only matter if human living can be influenced by it. Since Christ pursued justice as a human, humans also may pursue justice, even at the inevitable risk of becoming guilty.

---

[36] There is at least one problematic to this account. The abused spouse should not assume guilt for the abuser. But the abused should accuse the abuser. In this accusation however the abuser is told that he can act otherwise. He is told that he is not living in a manner consistent with personhood. It is not loving of the victim to allow the spouse to continue the abuse.

[37] Richard Kearney, *The God Who May Be,* p. 31. Kearney's criticisms of Marion are waged against Marion's *God without Being.* Nonetheless, the criticism applies to his account of Christ.

[38] *The God Who May Be,* p. 32

[39] John Panteleimon Manoussakis, ""The Phenomenon of God: From Husserl to Marion," *American Catholic Quarterly* 78:1, 2004

Marion provides a second alternative to escaping guilt: suicide. Escaping guilt, and the transmission of further evil, seems possible with suicide. But, as Marion states, "With every logic of revenge, evil triumphs in suicide, its ultimate figure."[40] Attempting to escape the cycle of revenge by suicide ultimately deceives. No mastery over evil occurs since with death nothing is left to master.[41] Suicide prevents justice by destroying the conditions that make relation possible.[42] I cannot be just to someone with whom I have no relation; I cannot seek reconciliation; and, I cannot escape the cycle of revenge if I take vengeance against myself. Even living can take the form of suicide, "a suicide can last a lifetime; he who hates himself can never have enough life left in which to accuse himself, knowing as he does how to find within himself motives and pretexts for infinite (self) implication."[43] The deception of suicide is that by it I can gain something, whether that be escape, release, or revenge; all suicide offers is nothing, but annihilation.

Satan, like suicide, operates by deception, operates by evasion, by slipping away, and exerting his own only power: making humans impotent to love.[44] "There still remains the trace of what he effaces, enough of the personal so that – when his evasion hides behind 'nobody' (*personne*) – we might know what he kills in us after having killed it in himself: the icon of the invisible."[45] Satan works by removing one's humanity, which essentially is the freewill to love. Convincing humans of their powerlessness to love achieves what suicide

---

[40] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 15

[41] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 16-18

[42] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 18-21; Marion's account of the cycle of evil initially makes no room for the possibility of reconciliation, nor does he emphasize reconciliation elsewhere in the section. Though neglected, I find reconciliation to be a key element of the pursuit of justice, and a way to make justice consistent with the saturated phenomenon of the icon.

[43] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 14

[44] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 25

[45] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 27

does: "we willfully annihilate our will."[46] Marion's account of Satan's deception hints at resolution to the cycle of revenge. His emphasis on love and humanness provides a starting point to rework justice in the light of the icon, and his development of saturated phenomena.

While the accusation inherent in justice may not lead to love, love may lead to a transformation of justice. My love for another person moves me to seek justice not for myself, but for the other person. The justice I can provide comes from a transformation of vision. St. Evagrius's advice, that I view all people as god, provides a way to redescribe injustice, and to see the other person "as the image of God," as "the icon of the invisible." If I can detach myself from my individual limitation, from my self-obsession with my horizon of experience, and my inabilities and desire to control and master others, I can "rediscover the nature common to all," and realize the true nature of the person I see.[47] To view another as an icon is to realize the divinity present in him or her. This kind of seeing requires a living and personal God, a God whom I know and love (in part) through others. Manoussakis puts it this way, "God 'appears' while He remains invisible; He appears, nevertheless, in me and only in me, a fact that indicates that, insofar as I am the Other for God, an Other that He can look at and be in relationship with, God is in *need* of me as the horizon that possibilizes His (otherwise impossible) appearance. The human person, and therefore every human person, is understood as the sacred place of God's epiphany."[48] Kallistos Ware describes this kind of vision as fundamentally relation. He writes, "to be

---

[46] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 29

[47] Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 122

[48] Manoussakis, "The Phenomenon of God," p. 68.

human is to be in relation with our fellow humans."[49] For Ware this relation is the imitation of the "*perchoesis* (interchange of mutual love) that unites the three members of the Holy Trinity" in the relation that makes competitive, possessive individuals into persons who have communion with each other. To see another person as divine repudiates the drive for control, manipulation, mastery, and possession, and it embraces community as a dynamic and continuous discovery of the possibility of theosis. "By virtue of the divine icon placed in our hearts we are capable of mutual love, open to unending growth."[50] In ethical terms this transformation of vision means that I look upon another, not as a cause of my own suffering, but as a realization of humanness. Injustice results from not seeing the other person, or seeing her from the limits of my individuality. Within the framework of Marion's analysis, this limited vision sees the other person suspiciously, as a possible (or actual) source of pain. The alternative vision Evagrius (along with Ware, Zizioulas, and Manoussakis) suggests comes closer to the vision possessed by Marion's *l'adonné*. This vision sees the unlimited potential of the other person to saturate my experience, overwhelm my understanding, and reveal his personhood and my call to see him as an icon. Justice, from this perspective, becomes the activity of recuperating and restoring a correct understanding of her humanness: her ability to love and be loved.

Marion's treatment of ethics develops in similar ways to his account of justice. He focuses on ethics that treat humans as subordinate to metaphysical systems. These systems fail to view humans in their particularity and hence as unique embodiments of love. Marion critiques these systems and shows that these systems perpetuate the cycle of revenge. The

---

[49] Kallistos Ware "'In the Image and Likeness': The Uniqueness of the Human Person," in *Personhood: Orthodox Christianity and the Connection between Body, Mind , and Soul*, ed. John T. Chirban, Westport, Connecticut, and London: Bergin and Garvey, 1996), p. 3

[50] Ware, "The Uniqueness of the Human Person," p. 11; cf. John D. Zizioulas, "Personhood and Being," in *Being as Communion*, (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), pp. 27-65

transformation of justice does not begin with ethics, according to Marion, at least not the ethics of metaphysics. Marion defines ethics as the willing of conduct "to take the role (*persona*) of a will willing irremediably."[51] The ethics of metaphysics ultimately fails because they presuppose foundations for norms that operate by power or desire.[52] Kant's norms result in abstraction of humans and to the advancement of moral injunctions.[53] Hegel's concept produces ideology and totalitarianism. Post-Hegelians emphasize what ought to be over what is, and act to make reality conform to the ideal. In the movement toward the ideal, they condone the destruction of what does not conform and thereby give rise to totalitarianism.[54] Reason is employed to judge the world instead of the person who reasons.[55] Science and technology operate as instrumental products of rationality and give rise to the means by which totalitarianism deploys violence.

> The amoral morality of ideology imposes itself on subjects and is justified in its own eyes (if not theirs) as precisely what it is – the potency of a power.[…] But this very establishment ruins ethics: if the injunction is justified only as power, power is enough for an utterance to become normative; in short, any utterance whatsoever can become normative so long as a power guarantees it in light of the fact that no utterance can, on its own, lay claim to being imperative. Ethics goes down in the equivalence of utterances, where power does not challenge it so much as *annul* it.[56]

Power destroys ethics by employing norms that guarantee the maintenance of power.

Marion contends that any system of morality founded on metaphysics succumbs to Nietzsche's critique of nihilism. The morality of Kant, most notably, operates by applying abstract principles of reason to practical affairs.[57] The universality of the categorical

---

[51] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 31

[52] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 32

[53] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 39

[54] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 33-34

[55] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 35

[56] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 37

[57] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 37-38

imperative offends sensibility by rejecting particularity. "The universal lacks respect, because I suspect that I am irreducible to the noumenal. Within me, desire wills to be itself, and therefore wills its particularity, and not reason. A maxim stirs me only by remaining particular: I act in a certain way only if the maxim of my action *cannot* become universal law."[58] The universal limits my judgment and my desire, and makes morality a disinterested activity I hate. I serve the norms of morality only inasmuch as I voluntarily will them. The will provides the norm and forces me into servitude. The Kantian account of morality concludes in nihilism. "In the end morality comes down to a will that, in morality, wills its own enslavement [… A]ccording to Nietzsche's thought, the will to power first denies that which is not immediately itself, so as thus to appear as such. Only the will that wills itself remains: the rest, including, above all, morality, affords only the will's symptoms."[59]

Though metaphysical ethics falls to the will to power, Marion suggests that one can still *act* ethically even if reason cannot justify it. I can still risk moral action though I cannot prove the act moral, or describe the source of moral action. "The act becomes moral when it accepts to sacrifice totally its author for, perhaps, the illusion of morality – acting morally is certified when one takes the risk of losing all for, perhaps, immorality. Moral is the act that remains so, despite the risk of not being so."[60] Marion reads Nietzsche as denying the possibility of morality. Marion however finds the attempt to perform a moral act compelling. Even if an act cannot be certified moral by metaphysics, I still can attempt to moral acts, even at the risk that they are immoral.

I return to Marion's objections to ethics in the next chapter. Here I want to focus on the problem of justice and how it may lead to rethinking the moral act. I want to rethink

---

[58] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 40

[59] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 41-42

[60] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 43-44

the description of justice as an extension of the task of the one whom Marion calls the *l'adonné*. Inasmuch as this task involves an undergoing, an experience that I cannot constitute or to which I cannot attribute a concept that adequately or completely determines it, the experience of injustice is an experience of a saturated phenomenon. "*L'adonné* [the given over, or the gifted one] is therefore characterized by reception. Reception implies indeed passive receptivity, but it also demands active capacity, because capacity (*capacitas*), in order to increase the measure of the given and to make sure it happens, must be put to work—work of the given to receive, *work on itself* in order to receive."[61] If suffering brings about an experience of excess, an experience by which I am determined, given to myself, and upon which I must work, then it requires a phenomenological treatment as a saturated phenomenon. Since Marion makes clear that suffering accompanies the experience, or, more precisely, the counter-experience, of the saturated phenomenon, the suffering of injustice comes forward to demand phenomenological description.

I undertake a phenomenology of injustice to see justice from the perspective of the one who is hurt. This phenomenology extends Marion's account of justice to show the effects of injustice on personhood. I show that when I encounter injustice I confront the possibility of accepting myself and the one who hurts me as not human. As I grapple with this condition I find that the one who has acted unjustly toward me has done so from a similar sense of lack. My abuser, tormentor, victimizer, humiliator ignores my personhood to provide a means of asserting her own. Yet, this abuser, through acting unjustly, extends the support for a lack of personhood by behaving against persons, against even herself. A second problem with Marion's account is that he conflates individual and political injustice. My particular suffering of injustice is the source by which I find solidarity with those who

[61] *In Excess*, p. 48, my emphasis

also are oppressed politically. But without developing an account of personhood, I may attain political justice by treating groups of individuals as objects.

Phenomenology may have the means by which political justice can be treated without constituting humans as concepts to be freed from ideologies, and examples of such a pursuit are available in Martin Luther King, Ghandi, and Bonhoeffer. The phenomenology of political justice however requires a more refined treatment than I present here. Since my primary concern relaties to ethics as a response to injustice I focus on the possibility of recuperating relation and an iconic view of another, and not on political conceptions of justice as political, legal, or juridical.

The Phenomenology of Injustice

Marion's account of justice as the cycle of revenge provides no escape. Past evils give rise to current sufferings. Former injustices incite present brutalities. If I choose not to accuse, I do not eradicate the former evils anymore than I relieve my present suffering. Yet contrary to Marion, if I do not accuse, I fear, that I give passive consent of the unjust act, I give silent permission to the one who has committed the act, and most importantly for my concerns here, I do not recognize the humanness of the other because I submit to view the other as unjust. That view of the other person encapsulates her, makes her a possession of my suffering. She becomes one whom I can control, because I know her, I constitute her. True injustice comes in not recognizing the possibility that she maybe more, or otherwise than, her act leads me to believe; it comes in receiving the gaze of the Other who constitutes me. Within the cycle of revenge, or even without revenge, Marion's account leaves injustice as the status quo of humans; and, neither of us are human any longer.

I recall a story of a young therapist working with inner city kids. The therapist was meeting with two siblings. The girl, around six, clingy and affectionate cannot conceal her

desperate longing for love and attention. These traits greatly irritate her older brother, around eight, whose solemn, cheerless disposition conceals, he hopes, the same need to be loved. Walking into the office where the children wait already, the therapist finds the boy striking the girl repeatedly, mercilessly. The therapist cries to the boy, "What are you doing? You love your sister." The boy turns to the therapist. He is altered dramatically. His anger washes away in the tears that roll down his cheeks, and in the grateful look he gives the therapist. The look says, "No one has ever told me I was capable of love. No one ever believed or recognized this before. I do love my sister, and I love you for believing this about me." This story demonstrates that accusation can provide a means to reorient the understanding without passively accepting injustice as the norm. The accusation is present in the story. The boy knows he is being accused of doing something wrong. But without the accusation, the injustice continues not only as violence toward his sister, and her retaliation, but also as the lack of recognition of his capacity to love and be loved.

Accusation serves a similar function as what St. Thomas describes as fraternal correction. Fraternal correction works for the benefit of another who commits a wrong. He discusses it in relation to charity. "[F]raternal correction […] is directed to the amendment of the sinner. Now to do away with anyone's evil is the same as to procure his good: and to procure a person's good is an act of charity."[62] Accusation can draw attention to injustice in such a way that it aids in recovery, protects from harm, and show mercy.[63] Yet, St. Thomas warns that fraternal correction may serve to hide one's own guilt from oneself by focusing on the guilt of another. He quotes St. John Chrysostom's insight: "What you want is, not to save others, but to hide your evil deeds […] and to seek to be praised." Correction then must be preceeded or accompanied by self-assessment, examination of personal guilt,

[62] *Summa Theologica*, II, 33, 1

[63] *Summa Theologica*, II, 33, 4

humility, and pity. Augustine commends self-examination, "and if we find we are guilty of the same sin we must not rebuke him, but groan with him."[64]

Accusation, as charity, turns toward mercy through self-examination, and confession. For Augustine confession is self-accusation and praise of God. Ricoeur, likewise, suggests confession arises to dissolve separation of humans from God and one another.[65] Self-accusation serves to prevent adding evil to the world by identifying and removing motives of pride, revenge, or retribution from accusation of another. Self-accusation humbles the accuser by revealing connections to others through recognition that I cause evil in the world as well as suffer it.

With proper self-assessment, and humility, accusation can remove evil from the world, not merely add evil. To accuse for the good of another, or for a group of others readjusts the way things are to make them fairer, more balanced, to put thing aright, and to restore peace. Without the abused spouse decrying the abuse, permission is granted for the abuse to continue; and, the abuser is not told that he could act otherwise, that he can love and be loved. Without the worker accusing the big corporation of unfair labor practices, all the workers suffer; and, the heads of the corporation continue to see their employees and themselves as variables to be altered to achieve a favorable bottom line. Without the brave African-American woman who refuses to sit at the back of the bus, consent is given to a system of oppression. Accusation need not add further evil to the world. Accusation can provide a way in which the humanness of perpetrator and victim can reveal the dignity common to all. In what follows I provide phenomenological sketches of injustice. I provide accounts of the experiences of injustice that demonstrate the need for accusation, and

---

[64] Op. cit. De Serm. Dom. In Monte ii, 19

[65] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan, (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967), pp. 7-8

provide a means of reconciliation through transformed vision that sees the other and the self as capable of loving and being loved.

In the experience of injustice I see from the point of view of being, from the point of view of isolated individuality. I desire control, possession, mastery, and conquest. I want to manipulate the situation to my benefit, which forbids seeing the other as an icon. With injustice I encounter my finitude as I realize my vulnerability, powerlessness, humiliation, and fear. The injustice does not fit my expectation. I am overwhelmed, confused, unable to comprehend what has occurred, why someone has done this, and done this to me. In this state of groping for understanding I try to assess the motivation of my abuser, torturer, humiliator. I try to find reasons for his mistreatment, for her insult, for their oppression. I am obsessed with why he would act so hurtfully toward me. In this obsession with the motivation of my tormentor, I realize I am determined by her. I am given to myself, not as a unique self, not in my own alterity, but as Other, as victim. My obsession with "my pain, my hurt, my suffering" is an obsession with the one who determines my condition.

This obsession with the one who has harmed me can move me to attack and accuse the one who hurt me and others as well. I become cynical mistrustful of everyone. I suspect that everyone seeks my ill. I assume even kindness to be motivated by the desire to manipulate. I ascribe deceitfulness to those who show concern. These accusations are not for my potential comforter, but for me. When I attack the motives of others, I turn away from them to assure myself that I am saving myself from further harm, and to assure myself a privileged position. In this state of fear and paranoia, I relish in my suffering. I wear it as a badge of honor. I use it to justify my retreat from community, as I say, "You cannot know what I've experienced. You cannot understand." I cannot allow anyone to understand

because that would take away the glory of my suffering. I worship my suffering because it attests to my great virtue and perseverance.

So I hide my condition from myself and others, even the one who has harmed me. I isolate myself further from my community, assuming no one can understand, assuming more suffering will occur, because no one can understand. Bearing the suffering alone I commend myself, and turn my suffering into an idol. I see my suffering as a sign of my humility, and worship my own "virtue." Yet, this self-assured virtue reveals a deep pride, and a deeper, though subtle, revenge. My understanding of my virtue places me above the one by whom I suffer, and above those whom I assume are not suffering as I; and no one can understand what I suffer, what I endure, and how humbly I bear it.[66] My self-condemnation turns to self commendation and reflects the arrogance of the deceit that I have no need of my community, that I have true humility, and that I have not made others suffer through my forbearance. Katerina Ivanovna, the betrayed fiancée of Dmitri Karamazov in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, portrays this humility that is arrogance. She refuses to set Dmitri free from their engagement though she has the right to, and though she loves another. She does not love Dmitri, but her suffering. "You precisely love him as he is, you love him insulting you. If he reformed, you would drop him at once and stop loving him altogether. But you need him in order to continually contemplate your high deed of faithfulness, and to reproach him for his unfaithfulness. And it all comes from your pride. Oh, there is much humility and humiliation in it, but all of it comes from pride…"

Pride removes the impact of any honest appraisal because it dissolves my relation to my community, and my dependence on others. In my isolation, I have no one left to accuse but myself. I accuse in order not to be determined by the one who harms me. I wonder if I

[66] *The Brothers Karamazov,* p. 192

have hurt her, if I have deserved or encouraged it. I search out any way to regain control or to deceive myself that I have control. This drive for control still shows the mark of being as desire for mastery and control. Control is difficult to attain, and often requires deliberate self-deception. Even if I convince myself I am to blame, I still feel powerless to change my condition of victim.

Even if I do not worship my suffering, or take pride in my great humility, I deceive myself in continuing to bear it alone. I convince myself of my loathsomeness, of how deserving I am of suffering, of how shameful I am. Though I may be motivated to view the offender in a good light, and to take responsibility for encouraging her offense, I do so at the price of self-deception. I lose sight of my humanity, lose sight of the possibility that I am able to love, or deserve to be loved. Taking the suffering on myself result in greater injustice: the injustice to my community, the injustice of masked revenge, and the injustice of not seeing myself rightly.[67] Even when I do not pursue justice, as accusation, retribution, or revenge, I continue the injustice through deceit; yet the deceit does not provide a possibility for recognition of injustice or reconciliation.

The deceit to which suffering testifies moves to addiction. I need to certify my virtue (and my loathsomeness) constantly. I collect instances of injustice and keep them as prized possessions. They assure me that I am right (or that I am always wrong); they relieve me of the doubt that I may be deceiving myself. Frederica Mathewes-Greed describes the delight of anger, as a delight in the certainty of being right. She writes,

> But, oh, how sweet is anger. When I'm angry, I'm not in the wrong. Somebody else is in the wrong, and for once I have peace. A delicious peace that gnaws over the wrong like a lion with a ragged bone. It is delicious and compelling enough that it urges me to accumulate other wrongs and hold them greedily close. I love to be wronged; only then, for that brief moment, can I be sure I'm right. It is intoxicating

[67] Cf. John Manoussakis, "The Phenomenon of God," p. 68

> in its sweetness, this brief joy in being right. It is good to be a victim, because victims are sinless.[68]

The love of anger, of being wronged marks my experience of injustice. Yet, addiction to anger and to self-acclaimed virtue restricts my understanding, confines my possibilities, reveals my idolatry. I understand only my anger and my anger confirms that I am right. With anger I assume the position of control. Yet this control serves only me. It leaves me alone with my anger and my continuous rehearsal of how she is wrong and I am right. But I am no more satisfied with this control than with being right or with being wronged. I create a prison for myself with my anger. I can try to follow Marion's "impossible" path and try to absorb the injustice without passing it on, without accusing the one who wronged me. Yet, in this way I become a paragon of virtue to myself, loving my injustice as a certainty of my great humility and forbearance. In this way I do take revenge on the who wronged me by making myself higher than him. I need to be told, like Katerina Ivanovna, that I worship my own suffering, and praise myself for virtues I do not really possess.

The transience of assurance, the compulsion to seek out and collect wrongs, does not satisfy for long. I either must continue to repeat the process, or find an alternative. I could share my suffering with the one who has committed the injustice. If I accuse her of betrayal, disloyalty, deceit, humiliation, abuse, torture, I may accuse to hurt, to make her suffer as I have. But I may also accuse to escape from the confinement of my own anger. It no longer satisfies, or provides comfort. I want to be released from its trap. I realize that I need to distinguish between the pain I feel as victim, the source of my suffering, and a way to heal from it. All my efforts at control, through self-deceit, isolation, and attack, revolve around a need to make sense of suffering, or to deal with the knowledge that I cannot make

---

[68] Frederica Mathewes-Green, *Facing East: A Pilgrim's Journey into the Mysteries of Orthodoxy*, (San Franscico: Harper Collins, 1997), p. 103

sense of it. The range of reactions to the experience of injustice overwhelm me, provide a continuous need to blame and control, sustain a litany of explanations, but give no release. Injustice remains overwhelming, surprising, uncontainable. It defies mastery, and attempts to control and know it. It exceeds my capacity to give a "sufficient reason" for it, or comprehend the limits of its horizon. No single explanation seems adequate or consoles. The ambiguity, confusion, overwhelmingness of my experience and inability to constitute the experience heighten my suffering.

These scenarios of injustice provide a way to explore the experience of injustice as saturated phenomena. For Marion, saturated phenomena, in general, provide a "counter experience." Something occurs, happens, that shapes me and gives me to myself. With the event, the unforeseen shapes and modifies me, as it exceeds the category of quantity. With the idol, the experience the unrepeatable and unsubstitutable exposes my desires and aims, and exceeds the category of quality. With the flesh, I am given to myself as what both affects and is affected, as what is in*vis*able, and exceeds the category of relation. The icon exceeds all the previous categories along with the category of modality. As the icon is unconstitutable, it gives me to myself as it takes the initiative and envisages me. By utilizing Marion's accounts of saturated phenomena, I want to show that injustice can be included and broadened by these phenomena, and that justice (as recognition of personhood) can be included in his account while maintaining consistency with his workings of them. I do not think Marion has been inconsistent in his phenomenological endeavors; yet, "Evil in Person" was written 20 years before *Being Given*, and 24 years before *In Excess* (where he works out the fullest descriptions of saturation). I re-evaluate justice in light of his more recent work. Marion sees his essays in *Prolegomena to Charity* as an initial step, leading to the fuller and more precise treatment given in the later works, my assessment hopes to keep mindful of that.

The phenomenology of injustice shows that it can be understood as an event, an idol, and the flesh, and provides an opening toward the icon. I differentiate injustice and accusation in terms of their phenomenality. Injustice can be understood as a saturated phenomenon, and accusation (as Marion describes it) cannot. Saturated phenomena, in general, surprise and overwhelm; but, if I have been unjust to someone, I expect to be accused (or at least know it is a possibility); I commit an injustice at the risk of being accused. Accusation does not arise from an unforeseen event, nor outside an unknown cause.[69] This distinction makes injustice different from accusation, provides the possibility that the "evil" of accusation may not add more evil to the world but works to correct it, and indicates that injustice requires a different treatment than accusation. However, when accusation moves away from emphasis on "who" (as in "You hurt me.") to "why" (as in "You could have done otherwise.") a new dynamic of accusation emerges. In pursuing "why" I open myself to the possibility of the Other, to the possibility that he is more than his action, that she has suffered too, and that I have failed to see, to show mercy, and to forgive.

Beginning from the event, injustice clearly shows itself to be a saturated phenomenon. While Marion's example of the event in *In Excess* details the occasion of a lecture, and points to the "banality of saturation," the unfortunate banality of injustice does not exclude it from consideration as a saturated phenomenon. In fact, his descriptions apply equally well to the experience of injustice as excessive in saturation. Since nothing that precedes the event announces or gives enough information to explain it, the experience of

---

[69] Cf. *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans Jeffery L. Kosky, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 159-173; *Etant donné: Essai d'une phénoménology de la donation* (Paris: Presses Universitaites de France, 1997), pp. 225-244; *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002); *De surcroît: Études sur les phénomènes saturés,* (Paris: Presses Universitaites de France, 1997)

injustice "*precedes its cause*."[70] Injustice is known by the "effect of the effect:"[71] I reread the circumstances surrounding the pain to find what caused the pain and find more possible parts, but nothing that can capture it. Injustice is an effect of an unknown cause: the unknown motivation that brought about the act of injustice, the unknown causes that provide motivation for it. "*The event does not have an adequate cause* and cannot have one." This means that accusation does not sort out the cause of injustice, accusation is just a step in groping to understand "why" I suffer.[72] The event of injustice comes about *of itself*. Pain needs little examination or interpretation to know what it is; it hurts. Accusation needs little explanation to the one who has committed an injustice; it is anticipated. But, finding the cause – the person, the reason for the hurting – needs interpretation. The event arises unforeseen, and because I could not predict it, I need to interpret it.[73] According to a preexisting and uncontrollable past, according to the infinite details and particularity of the present, and according to the inexhaustible explanations and witnesses of the future, the event of injustice needs phenomenological description and hermeneutical interpretation that "deploy without end."[74]

Marion's sketch of an event provides a starting point to reanalyze injustice phenomenologically and hermeneutically. The event as particular and unrepeatable cannot be explained by any one cause. It appears as something "discontinuous and unique,"[75]

---

[70] *Being Given*, p. 167

[71] *Being Given*, p. 165

[72] *Being Given*, p, 167

[73] In *In Excess* Marion responds to criticism that the earlier *Being Given* did not adequately provide for hermeneutics. See p. 33, note 3.

[74] *In Excess*, pp. 33, 32-34

[75] *Being Given*, p. 169

unrepeatable, excessive, and possible.[76] The same event cannot occur at different times; "the event is individualized only by its irreducibility to a cause."[77] Marion, in this passage emphasizes unrepeatability to justify the event's status as a saturated phenomenon. Placed alongside the descriptions of time's influence on the event, it is defined by its indeterminability. No one cause gives rise to it, no one explanation can contain it. "[T]he event begins a new series, in which it reorganizes the old phenomena – not without violence, but by the right that events have to open horizons."[78]

The phenomenological description of "Evil in Person" remains incomplete without hermeneutics since the event "gives *itself* to us starting from its *self*, to the point that it affects us, modifies us, almost produces us."[79] The phrases of victims of injustice ("I'll never be the same," "It's changed my life forever," "I don't think I'll ever recover from this.") confirm that injustice is a saturated phenomenon, an event. Moreover, the process of trying to come to terms with suffering and its indeterminate causes confirms that it may manifest itself as an idol. When I am dazzled by, and addicted to the self-ascribed virtue and nobility I derive from suffering injustice becomes an idol.

> My idol determines what I can bear of phenomenality – the maximum of intuitive intensity that I can endure while keeping my look on a distinctly visible spectacle, all in transforming an intuition into a distinct and constituted visible, without weakening into confusion or blindness. In this way my idol exposes the span of all my aims – what I set my heart on seeing, and thus also want to see and do. In short, it denudes my desire and my hope. What I look at that is visible decides who I am. I am what I can look at. What I admire judges me.[80]

---

[76] *Being Given*, pp.170-172

[77] *Being Given*, p. 171

[78] *Being Given*, p. 172; *Etant donné*, p. 240

[79] *In Excess*. p. 34

[80] *In Excess*, p. 61

By turning suffering into an opportunity for self-praise, I become an idol to myself: I keep looking for new reasons to be angry, to be wronged, and am captivated by them. "The idol rises up before us, silent, irresistible, adorable."[81] Injustice provides an indefinite number of opportunities for self-praise, but in my captivation with the idol of my virtue, my desires are revealed. I see myself through my suffering because it makes the suffering worth something, because it makes me worth something, makes me interesting, unique, myself. By idolizing my suffering through praising my own virtue the "confusion and blindness" of indistinct and indeterminate suffering turns into a "distinct and constituable visible" that exposes my desires to be valued, praised, and esteemed for my virtues. But as I do, my desire to be valued also makes a façade of me.[82] The depth of the impact of injustice lies hidden under the compulsion to derive self-worth from suffering, under the self that contemplates and is dazzled by my forbearance. "Evidently the façade does not look at us: only a face can do so, because it alone comes to expose itself in the mode of encounter."[83] To myself and to others I show what I want to be seen, but do not offer myself to be seen as a face. I know this to be true inasmuch as I need constantly to rehearse new wrongs, as I realize how unsatisfying it is, how little it heals.

My flesh makes my suffering distinct and particular. With the idol I see myself through my desire: I see what I want to see. But with the flesh I am given a self-identity through the passivity and receptivity of suffering. The horizon of understanding, exposed in desire, is phenomenalized through the flesh that receives and suffers the world.[84] "[M]y flesh fixes me definitely to its *here*, which becomes my *here*, the only one possible for me,

---

[81] *In Excess*, p. 74

[82] *In Excess*, pp. 75-77

[83] *In Excess*, p. 77

[84] *Being Given*, p. 125

because the sole means of all phenomenalization."[85] Through suffering I am fixed to myself "as soon as I suffer it in, and by, and for myself."[86] I cannot put myself at a distance from myself "the self only arraigns itself in feeling itself."[87] The direct access I have to myself through suffering also fixes me in time.[88] The past sufferings accumulate and show on my face. Marion contrasts the impersonal forces at play in politics and argumentation to the flesh. The abstract universality of conflict becomes personal and particular as it is experienced by the flesh. Suffering, the flesh, gives me to myself as a unique individual: "my pain, my pleasure remain unique, incommunicable, unable to be substituted—in an absoluteness without compromise, without anything like it or equal to it."[89] Since the flesh is defined by its suffering (in the sense of suffering pain and undergoing affectation) and passivity the experience of injustice takes on flesh.

Marion asserts that with the flesh I become *adonné* for the first time, I am given over to my flesh.[90] Moreover, I am "alone and first in the world,"[91] I am irreducible. Since the face is also given to me as flesh (as that which is seen and that which sees), when I see other faces I realize that they also see more that they give to be seen. The face contains an in*vis*able horizon that I cannot constitute, or see except in its invisible gaze. The untargetable and irregardable gaze confronts me as it gives me too much to see.[92] Under the gaze of another (whether one who suffers like me, for whom I cannot give enough, or the

---

[85] *In Excess*, p. 89

[86] *In Excess*, p. 92

[87] *In Excess*, p. 91

[88] *In Excess*, pp. 94-95

[89] *In Excess*, p. 100

[90] *In Excess*, p. 99

[91] *In Excess*, p. 100

[92] *Being Given*, 213-214

one who causes my suffering, to whom I cannot appeal enough for mercy) I find myself given over to the other as I renounce mastery over her.[93] It is the face of another, "an icon of the invisible," that forces me to renounce my mastery, that exposes, and *accuses* me.[94] Only if I see and receive the Other as an icon can accusation become saturated. To say to one who makes me suffers, "You did this to me," maintains the reciprocal exchange of hurting unless I also express, "You could have done otherwise." This expression recognizes the possibility of the Other as more than a deed, more than an adversary; it recognizes the humanness of the Other. As I try to make sense of my suffering I realize the suffering of the one who made me suffer, "I can never say anything to the other except my shortcomings and my belatedness. But it is these very things that open me up to him by detaching me from the intentionality of the *I*."[95] If I can detach myself from my own limitations, my own self-interest, my own suffering, and pride, I can open myself up to the experience of the other person, to viewing him as inexhaustible, and desire to take responsibility for him. My accusation recognizes the humanness of the other, but also turns on me as I realize how little I know of her, how easily I made assumptions about her motivations. With suffering and with self-accusation, I gain humility that makes reception of the other possible. I find community with others who also suffer as I do, and I am moved to be compassionate for others who suffer, and to alleviate their suffering.

Within the context of the saturated phenomena injustice appears as an excessive experience that moves from the event's search for causes, to the idol's vainglory, to the flesh's individuation, and possibly to the icon's embrace of relation. Marion's emphasis remains on describing the phenomenon, and asserting their possibility; yet, when

---

[93] *In Excess*, p. 110-114

[94] *In Excess*, pp. 116-118

[95] *Prolegomena to Charity*, 86

superimposed upon injustice they mark a clear distinction between injustice and accusation. With injustice one experiences excess and incomprehension, but with accusation, one experiences the expected and predicted, unless accusation seeks to identify humanness through humility. Conflating accusation and injustice would not lead to the icon. Only from an iconic perspective of the other person can I begin to move outside the "logic of revenge" to embrace the mystery and the weight of the other who impacts me, and for whom I am responsible.

The Hermeneutic Response to Injustice

The preceding analysis of the phenomenology of injustice leads to two central conclusions. First, injustice and accusation initially differ in their phenomenality. While injustice exceeds my capacity to understand and make sense of it, accusation can be understood, and made sense of. This distinction means that accusation and injustice are not equivalent, and leaves a place in which accusation can promote justice without vengeance. Accusation tempts because it seems to provide clarity, because it seems to console. But, suffering cannot be made perfectly clear, and explanations for suffering do not heal of themselves. The inability to comprehend the causes of injustice (and hence the causelessness of injustice) intensifies the experience of suffering. My second conclusion is that, as a saturated phenomenon, injustice overwhelms my ability to constitute it. Puzzlement over why injustice occurs heightens the suffering and requires a hermeneutic response. Interpreting the occurrence of injustice by constructing a narrative provides the possibilities that 1) suffering can be located in time; 2)sense can be made of suffering; 3) the truth of the motivations that caused the injustice can be approached; 4) dialogue can emerge that mediates and allows for mutual recognition.

Marion's analysis of injustice and saturated phenomena and Ricoeur's conception of hermeneutics complement one another. Ricoeur sees evil in a way similar to Marion, but finds room for blame and lament to give rise to "the impatience of hope."[96] Accusation tempts because it seems to make suffering intelligible, and thereby it seem to heal. Yet, due to its saturation, injustice cannot be fully intelligible, and accusation cannot contain suffering's variegated causes. Marion rightly draws attention to the temptation in accusation as does Ricoeur. Ricoeur describes the enigma of evil as that which "makes us feel ourselves to be victims in the very act that makes us guilty."[97] Caught in the cycle of revenge, I lose myself to the evil I suffer. Though I seem obsessed with my pain, I am not a subject but an object to the one who has hurt me. No matter what I do to try to explain the reason for my suffering, no matter what accusation I bring, I remain an object if I try to over-simplify injustice. I cannot enter into the work of mourning unless I acknowledge the complexity of injustice and seek to understand my own suffering, and that of the one by whom I suffer without giving in to the temptation that intelligibility heals of itself. My thoughts about suffering remain caught in an aporia: I can neither find an explanation for suffering, nor escape the certainty of being made an object (a victim) of evil. Yet, this aporia can become a productive, according to Ricoeur, in the work of mourning.[98] Similarly, Marion's saturated phenomena occur without end. No full account captures the dynamic nature of the event; no viewing, or series of viewings, exhausts the fascination with the idol; no analogy suffices to describe the flesh; and no one horizon encapsulates the gaze of the icon. Saturated

---

[96] Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, "Evil a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology," trans. David Pellauer, ed. Mark I. Wallace (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 260, pp. 249-261

[97] "Evil a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology," p. 250

[98] Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1992), pp. 148-151; 166-168. Here Ricoeur discusses the loss of identity.

phenomena, in their excessiveness, demand open-endedness. The open-endedness Ricoeur describes is that suffering can become a gift. Suffering that the innocent endures, that escapes legal balance sheets, "that is *outside* retribution," moves from desire for punishment to desire for mercy, compassion, and generosity.[99]

Suffering is still "unthinkable," and "incomprehensible" yet a way is found to work through mourning to understand suffering, and free accusation from retribution. Following Freud, Ricoeur states that mourning "is a step-by-step letting go of all the attachments, cathexes, and investments that make us feel the loss of a loved object as a loss of our very own self."[100] The first stage he describes moves from self-blame as complaint to catharsis. At this level catharsis begins as accusation and becomes a realization that this is not how things should be. Catharsis purifies responses to tragedy and injustice through deliberation. Fluctuating between terror and pity, the nature of conflict, and the tragedy it brings about, reorients understanding and makes apparent the aporias of identity narrative seeks to work out.[101] Narrative permanence in time gives constancy to the self who endures suffering. Assured of the self in this way, the one who suffers is able to move away from the language of ownership (e.g. conquest, mastery, possession, manipulation) to establish the "primacy of the other than the self over the self."[102] Though creation of narrative moves away from desire for retribution by way of recognition of the Other, suffering may not end, catharsis, on its own, may not heal.

At the second stage I blame God. The cry of the Psalmist, "how long O Lord?" accuses and expects. God is accused of permitting suffering. The work of narrative, here, is

---

[99] *The Symbolism of Evil*, pp. 325-326

[100] "Evil a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology," p. 259-260

[101] Cf. *Oneself as Another*, pp. 159-168, 241-245

[102] *Oneself as Another*, p. 168

not to change God, or to demand a solution, but to give a response to the continuation of suffering. The response itself does not remained fixed to the time of suffering, but moves to the future: "our accusation against God is here the impatience of hope."[103]

The third stage Ricoeur describes discovers "that the reasons for believing in God have nothing in common with the need to explain the origin of suffering."[104] I begin to see the good in suffering "including our indignation against evil, our courage to bear it, and our feeling of sympathy toward victims."[105] Kallistos Ware makes a similar point as he describes Abba Isaias's teachings that "anger […]can be employed in a positive way against demons; jealousy can be transformed into zeal for righteousness; even pride can be put to good use if it leads us to affirm our meaning and value in God's eyes when assailed by self-hatred and despair."[106] Ricoeur notes that some advance beyond the third stage to find meaning and in suffering, or renounce accusation and complaining, and recognize the transformation suffering can yield.[107] Myths of suffering connect humans to the sufferings of others, help make sense of them, give a language to discuss them, and ways to make sense of personal suffering. Naturally for Ricoeur, these myths help decipher the meaning in suffering. He quotes Augustine, "We must understand in order to believe, but we must believe in order to understand."[108] The belief that there may be a reason for suffering helps me to understand suffering; and understanding suffering helps me to believe there is some purpose to it.

These movements require some form of accusation in order to transform pain and suffering into something that can aid healing. For Ricoeur, these movements are compelled

---

[103] "Evil a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology," p. 260

[104] "Evil a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology," p. 260

[105] "Evil a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology," p. 260

[106] "The Uniqueness of the Human Person," p. 9

[107] "Evil a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology," p. 261

[108] *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 351, pp. 347-357

by the work of narrative that strives to make sense of the memory of the hurt. "It is then the 'translaboration' or 'working out' which makes recollection a work of memory." Narrative works to refigure the complaint (against another, myself, or God) "to make sorrows *bearable* and to make us able to endure them."[109] Narrative works to "tell differently" the reality that creates the suffering. Ricoeur's important insight is that forgetfulness, or passivity, denies and harms truth by denying the injustice, by forgetting it. Without recognizing the injustice, the one who suffers is not permitted to mourn; and mourning gives "people the right to start anew by remembering in such a way that we may overcome obsessive or compulsive repetition.[…] Narrative has a crucial role here[…]whereby memory is both created and preserved by telling stories."[110] In addition to providing a means by which one can mourn, the creation of a narrative (an accusative narrative) makes room for self-understanding in the one who suffers, and makes room for mediate understanding to occur outside the isolation of memory.[111] If I do not tell my story, the one who has harmed me has no opportunity for reconciliation. Likewise, if I am not told I harmed you, I may find no need for reconciliation. Accusation provides a place where hurt can turn toward mutual understanding. The exchange of stories creates an opportunity for dialogue, for mutual respect, and recognition of the primacy of the other essential to Marion's phenomenology of the icon.

---

[109] Paul Ricoeur, "On Narrative Imagination," in Richard Kearney, *Debates in Continental Philosophy: Conversations with Contemporary Thinkers*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), p. 36; in this interview Ricoeur connects his essay, "Evil a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology," to his earlier working out of the role of narrative in *Time and Narrative.*

[110] "On Narrative Imagination," p. 42

[111] Cf. Oneself as Another, p. 164. "The art of story telling is the art of exchanging *experiences*." There is a strong similarity to this understanding of stories and Marion's counter-experiences. Offering myself to be seen by the other, or to be constituted by the icon, I open myself to approval or disapproval, praise or blame. Ricoeur's emphasis on exchange, however adds more that an ethical element, it adds the element of reciprocity, and mutuality that make relation a gift shared. (See the previous chapter)

Iconographers do not call what they do painting; they call their work *writing* an icon. They tell a story, provide a narrative that compels me to work toward reconciliation, to progress in compassion, to bear suffering, but not to forget. The great suffering of Mary is not hidden, not ignored, not denied in the icons written of her. In her suffering she mourns for her Son and for the world who suffers with her. Her story unites me with her in suffering, but also points to the triumph of suffering, the hope of union, of communion, with her. If human relations are to be "otherwise-than-violent" (as James K. A. Smith aptly puts it),[112] the mutuality of exchange in stories must be paralleled in the exchange of gazes. If I am to be able to be "given over" to another, I must be able to find a way to support the vulnerability and passivity needed to receive the iconic other, without being self-deceived.

Vision, Virtue, and Reception of the Icon

The dialogue that emerges from the hermeneutic construction of stories opens a path to see differently. I see myself with my faults and shortcomings, and see that I deserve to be judged. I also see that I have failed the one whom I accuse. To see myself in error is to see the other through humility, and to see that the truth of the Other exceeds my capacity to know her. My certainty of being right (through being wronged) gives way to certainty of my error, and to the desire to see the Other more virtuously. Responses to injustice can be amended through vision that seeks to see the other as human, as capable of good, of love. This movement from accusation through mourning to transformation requires a renewal of vision that leads one past one's self interests to a vision of the other as iconic. Stanley Hauerwas and Alasdair MacIntyre provide complementary perspectives on the virtues of seeing well. Hauerwas describes how vision oriented to the Good provides a way to view

---

[112] "The Call as Gift: The Subject's Donation in Marion and Levinas," in *Hermeneutics of Charity: Interpretation, Self-hood, and Postmodern Faith*, ed. James K. A. Smith, and Henry Isaac Venema, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2004), p. 226

humans as divine. MacIntyre discusses the virtue of just generosity to demonstrate that every person has something to give, has something from which to learn. These perspectives provide a way to develop virtues (such as humility, hospitality, and receptivity) that provide a way to transform injustice into iconic seeing and receiving.

Suffering, as has been shown, heightens with the inability to bear its reality because no explanation makes it intelligible. The phenomenology of injustice shows that gaining a sense of control is an attempting to bear it. Yet, I deceive myself about my own value, and the value of the Other as I attempt to glorify my suffering and demonize the Other. The dialogue that emerges from hermeneutics shows that alternative interpretations and perspectives of injustice may lead to a new understanding. Hauerwas provides the metaphor of the "vision of the Good" to help escape self-protective illusions. Closely following Iris Murdoch, his account emphasizes that the possessive nature of control maintains illusion and promotes self-assertion. Another person has a distinct and particular reality that I caricature as I impose a "pre-conceived image" on him.[113] Like Marion and Ricoeur, Hauerwas recognizes that "morality is more than adherence to universalizable rules; it also encompasses our experiences, fables, beliefs, images, concepts, and inner monologues."[114] Likewise, justice cannot be encapsulated in a set of rules, nor make a balance sheet of exchanges of evils. The rationality of Marion's "logic of revenge" proves too narrow to account for irreducible particularity of people who commit or are victims of an act of injustice. When accusation is treated more broadly it becomes instrumental in guiding vision. I can affirm the particularity of the Other as I see my own faults and aim at the Good of the other.[115] "Vision of the Good" works to embrace differences, contingencies,

---

[113] Stanley Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue*, (pub info.), p. 33

[114] *Vision and Virtue*, p. 35

[115] *Vision and Virtue*, p. 37

and particularities through love.[116] Like Marions's account of the icon, love calls me out of my self-interest to embrace a transcendent reality. This reality, for Murdoch and Hauerwas, forces me outward, outside myself, and for Marion gives me to myself as it calls me.

Vision reorients understanding. But vision must be trained by humility to become "a just and loving gaze."[117] Paying attention requires letting go of preconception and fantasies of how I want the world to be. Just and loving vision requires purification through humility and "progressive attmpt[s] to widen and clarify our vision of reality."[118] Vision that can be widened and clarified to see the "significance of human life" and the divinity of all people is just. Marion's understanding of veneration of the icon fits well with Hauerwas's account of moral vision. Veneration of the icon and receptivity to the Other are acts of humility. According to Marion, the experience of the icon overwhelms me; I feel awed, bedazzled, fearful, and joyful in the experience of the otherness of the icon. Hauerwas's account of vision provides a proscriptive to Marion's descriptive account. With the practice of humility, as a de-centering, and a way to "unself," one is able to receive the other as an icon, without imposition, caricature, or violence. The contrast Marion draws between common, or poor, phenomena and saturated phenomena parallels the passiveness of preconception with the vision of transcendent reality. Despite the commonalities in these accounts, Marion's account leaves a gap. Between the ego that masters an object of intention, and *l'adonné* who experiences the unforeseen, inexhaustible, invisable, and unconstitutable lies a chasm. Without practice in seeing justly and lovingly, in receptivity, and in humility receiving another as an icon may not occur. Without a change of disposition – from control to welcome, from constitution to receptivity, from mastery to vulnerability – I do not see

---

[116] *Vision and Virtue*, p. 39

[117] *Vision and Virtue*, p. 41

[118] *Vision and Virtue*, p. 44

another as human. Again, Kearney's criticism of Marion proves relevant. "Once it is revealed […] there is nothing for us to say, or think, or do."[119] With everything decided from transcendence, all one has to do is experience it. Yet, without being in a position of receptivity, I may miss it. Without practice in the virtues of humility, and seeing justly and lovingly, I may prevent its appearance. Thus, these virtues provide a way to fill the gap, a way to remain aware of the desire to control, and a way to move beyond this desire to recognize the possibility of the Good in the particular person whom I encounter.

One striking example of the need for a change in vision through the practice of the virtues comes from Alasdair MacIntyre. The disabled, who are usually viewed as presenting an opportunity for benevolence without reciprocity, become an opportunity for learning. MacIntyre emphasizes that humans are interdependent. Through "attentive and affectionate regard" for every particular person, even those "whose extreme disablement is such that they can never be more than passive members of the community," provide occasions for learning.[120] With a disabled person I must reassess and judge my desires, I recognize a lack of self-knowledge, and my dependence on others.[121] When I am blind to my own defects, and to my dependence on other, I may also be blind to the Good in others.[122] I may judge others on the basis of appearance, presuppositions, and errors in judgment. In these judgments, and this blindness, I act unjustly by failing to see that they provide opportunities "of learning something essential, what it is for someone else to be wholly entrusted to our care, so that we are answerable for their well-being."[123]

---

[119] *The God Who May Be*, p. 32

[120] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 122, 127

[121] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 136

[122] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 138

[123] *Dependent Rational Animals*, pp. 138-139

When I see justly, I also realize the connection of justice to generosity. Giving more than is owed from beneficence and pity (*misericordia*), welcoming the stranger willingly and ungrudgingly, and taking on the suffering of another as if it were my own can occur through the cultivation of the virtues.[124] Practicing attentive and affectionate regard, acknowledging my dependence on others, and denying the illusion of my self-sufficiency trains my dispositions and feelings. In order to see the other justly, I must see myself justly. Like Hauerwas, MacIntyre emphasizes that seeing others well promotes virtue, it enables "uncalculating giving," remembrance, honor, gratitude, respect: "just generosity."[125] Marion recognizes the need for uncalculated giving, but his descriptive account does not provide a place for interdependence, nor a way to move from self-sufficiency to relation. He says,

> Remorse delivers to *me* the sole consciousness of myself, which will not perish, because it delivers the *I* unreservedly, already destroyed before being, to the invisible and silent injunction of the other, whose fate comes down to *me*. The rights of the *I* collapse beneath infinite obligations that come down to *me*. I can never say anything to the other except my shortcomings and my belatedness. But it is these very things that open me to him by detaching me from the intentionality of the *I*.[126]

Marion shows the need for self-evaluation, and the desire to honor and respect the Other. Yet, his account collapses into self-denial that permits no mutuality, no recognition of dependence, nor any way to put myself in a position to receive the Other. Relation comes dangerously close to self-negation or masochism. What humbles me before the other is not only my lack and belatedness, but also the uniqueness and particularity of the other that opens me to see differently. MacIntyre notes the importance of these relations in creating community. "But to recognize another as brother or friend is to recognize one's relationship to them as being of the same kind as one's relationship to other members of one's own

---

[124] *Dependent Rational Animals*, pp. 122-126

[125] *Dependent Rational Animals*, pp. 120-121

[126] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 86

community. So to direct the virtue of *misericordia* towards others is to extend one's communal relationships so as to include those others within those relationships."[127] In terms of justice, this means I owe the other beneficence, uncalculated giving, empathy, and mercy. MacIntyre's comments on just generosity related to the vision of another as an icon by instructing my dispositions toward others. I must receive them as I would a friend, or relative; I must humble myself to receive what they have to teach me; and, I must see my dependence on community to experience relation.

Three Icons of Justice

Passively enduring injustice as a way to avoid revenge deceives because it prevents reception of the Other as an icon, ignores the role of community, and denies humanness. Vladimir Solovyov describes the experience of another as an icon, "To believe in man is to recognize in him something *more* than what is present; it means to recognize in him that power and that freedom that connect him with the Deity."[128] With this experience the beholder recognizes the inter-connectedness of all creatures and longs for harmony through justice. The three examples of icons that follow give support to my assertion that the icon transforms justice by guiding my vision, and teaching me to see the possibility of divinity in the Other. By following the example of a saint, Bishop Nicholas, the Miracle-Worker, credited with great works of charity, one begins to act charitably. By being present to the loving relation between the Mother of God and the Christ Child, in the icons of Loving Kindness, one begins to empathize with those who suffer and works to comfort them. By seeing the love of a fictional character, Shatov of Dostoevsky's *Demons*, for his estranged wife, one is inspired to embrace forgiveness and to love without revenge.

---

[127] *Dependent Rational Animals*, pp. 125-126

[128] "Three Addresses in Memory of Dostoevsky," in *The Heart of Reality*, 25.

When I gaze upon the icon of the Virgin of Tenderness I see injustice foreshadowed in Mary's sad look. Yet I also see the intimacy between the Mother and the Child, the gentle embraces that comfort both the ones pictured and the beholder. Though Mary's sad gaze sees the suffering her Son will endure, her gaze also invites the beholder into the intimate moment. The icon instructs me on how to deal with injustice. It shows me that though suffering will occur, I am called to imitate Mary's tenderness, her willingness to comfort, her love for her Son and for all humans. When I gaze on the icon of St. Nicholas, I see his bravery as he prevents the unjust execution of the young men. I see his actions as portrayed in the Apolytikion hymn, "Your flock has recognized you by the brilliance of your works. You are a model of kindness, a rule of faith, a teacher of self-control. Your lowliness has brought you to the height of fame, and your poverty has filled you with riches." I am called to imitate his kindness, faith, and self-control. As I read the story of Ivan Shatov, I see true humility and love that forgives injustice, betrayal, and abandonment. And I am called to model that forgiveness. The icons of the Church, the icons of literature, and the icons I see each time I encounter another person instruct me in love and justice. With the icon I am called to see *otherwise*, to see without possession, control, manipulation, or mastery. I am called to see the other as irreplaceable, as gifted, as an icon, as "God Himself." These ways of seeing are just. And these ways of seeing are advised by the Seventh Ecumenical Council who defend the practice of icon veneration, in part, "so that we may be lifted up to the level of their conduct."[129]

The icon of Bishop Nicholas of Myra depicts scenes from his life. These scenes show him helping people in their adversity: he liberates a boy about to be executed, drives demons from a well, heals a woman's withered arm, influences Emperor Constantine to

---

[129] Op. cit. Anton C. Vrame *The Education Icon: Teaching Wisdom and Holiness in the Orthodox Way*, (Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross University Press, 1999), fn 2. p. 18

release unjustly accused prisoners, and rescues mariners who pray to him. The beholder of the icon sees Nicholas's meek and humble character, and is moved to imitate his kindness and gentleness, and the beholder desires to preserve and protect others from injustice. The beholder follows Nicholas's call to "live no longer for oneself but for others." The life of Bishop Nicholas provokes the beholder to see beyond self-centered desires of comfort and gain, to become a defender, protector, and intercessor for those who suffer unjustly.[130]

St. Nicholas lived as an ascetic, and practiced the hesychast tradition of the desert. He knew that seeing another as an icon, as one for whom he was responsible, could not occur with an act of will alone. Seeing properly requires practice in asceticism. Practice in fasting, for example moves one to realize dependence, to assist in conforming the will through struggle against the passions, to detach one from worldly concerns, to make one attentive, and to promote communion. The great ascetics, such as St. Nicholas, gained humility, and receptivity to others through such practices. His intention was to move to a higher life, what John Baggley describes as, "the progression of the soul from the realm of the passions to a full union with God in dispassion, stillness and deification."[131] Thus when St. Nicholas saw acts of injustice he viewed the injustice as an injustice against the whole community, as an act that diminished and caused suffering for all – even the one acting unjustly. The ascetic life promotes love of others, a way of seeing others as bearers of God. St. Nicholas's icon shows this concentration of attention, receptivity, and humility. His forehead is disproportionately large showing wisdom and contemplation. His thin nose receives only sweet fragrances of God. His small mouth reflects his silence. His inward

---

[130] See Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*

[131] John Baggley, *Doors of Perception: Icons and Their Spiritual Significance*, (London and Oxford: Mowbray, 1987), 79; here detachment means being detached from the cares of the world, specifically material possessions.

turned ears listen for the spiritual reality within. His large eyes "have been opened to marvel at the sublime and at the vision of the works of our Creator."[132]

The icon of St Nicholas provides more than stories of heroism from his life, it provides a means to move toward justice through imitation. It provides a means to see that humans may become divine. The practice of icon veneration aids the beholder in rediscovering the nature common to all. Like the vision of the Good prescribed by Hauerwas, icons attune vision because they help me realize my own faults, and orient me toward others. I am humbled by the saint's great works of charity, courage, humility, and generosity; and I am moved to imitate them. I see St. Nicholas defend against injustice and suffering, and learn from his wisdom. Looking at an icon is an education in how to see. It depicts a truer reality than is immediately apparent, and guides my seeing in other situations.

St. Nicholas, in particular, demonstrates the connection between asceticism and practice of the virtues. Asceticism is not a good in itself, but a sustained practice of detachment from the cares of the world that promotes the virtues of receptivity, attention, humility, simplicity, and discernment. The practice of stilling the mind develops through silence and prayer and promotes receptivity and vision. The practice of detachment from passions develops through fasting and meditation, and promotes attention and humility. St. John Climicas notes the relation of prayer and dispassion to mercy and bravery. "If prayer is a matter of concern to you, then show yourself to be merciful.[…] Always be brave, and God will teach you your prayer." Yet, before one achieves mercy and bravery, one is commended to be attentive, to "guard and watch the intellect," to attain "perfect stillness of heart and blessed state of soul." Asceticism aids the one who desires to practice the virtues by disciplining the passions, and providing insight into the temptations of vice. "When the

[132] Quenot, *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom*, p. 97

heart has acquired stillness it will perceive the heights and depths of knowledge."[133] The inner stillness of St. Nicholas allows him to pay attention and be receptive to others, and to see his own faults. Further practice begets humility and courage in the face of injustice. Having trained himself he can pursue justice, and commend himself and others "to live no longer for oneself but for others." The practice of asceticism becomes a means to humble oneself to receive the other as an icon. St. Anthony the Great shows how the sense become transformed though ascetic practices. "The Spirit will teach your eyes to look purely, your ears to listen patiently and with peace, your tongue to speak only good, your hands to be raised in prayer and to works of mercy, your feet to walk in the ways of righteousness, in harmony with the will of God."[134] St. Nicholas demonstrates the virtues MacIntyre discusses. St. Nicholas humbles himself before his "flock" to meet their needs; he opens himself to others to heal; he attunes himself to love to overcome injustice. His hesychast practices foster relation with others by fostering vision that sees others as humans, as icons. This vision allows one to welcome the stranger as a friend, to embrace another's suffering as if it were one's own, and to restore justice through mercy, love, and accusation.[135]

---

[133] *The Philokalia*, Complete text, Vol. 1, trans G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1979), pp. 182, 185

[134] *The Letters of St. Anthony the Great*, trans. Derwas J. Chitty, (Oxford: SLG Press, 1980), p. 4

[135] Some accounts of the Life of St. Nicholas demonstrate with stark brutality his commitment to justice. At least two reports are given of St. Nicholas appearing to people after his death and beating them for misdeeds. An Abbot who refused to perform the Christmas liturgy was beaten by Nicholas until he agreed to stop being lazy and perform the liturgy. In the second account Nicholas appears to a young man who is using deception to try to seduce on of his followers. He beats the young man until he agrees not to entertain impure intentions against the woman. Yet, these beating contrast greatly with his generosity. An incident while still alive shows his great generosity and mercy. A widower with three daughters can find no other escape for poverty than to sell his daughters into prostitution. On hearing this plan, Nicholas borrows money from a benefactor; and at night tosses a bag of gold coins into the man's house. The man rejoices, and gives the gold as a dowry to marry his eldest daughter. Yet, poverty returns, and again, a second and third time, the man decides to sell his two remaining daughters. Again Nicholas finds a way to anonymously give a bag of coins in both situations. The contrast between these two kinds of stories about St. Nicholas suggests that He was able to discern appropriate reactions to different kinds of injustice. Cf. Charles

Mercy saturates the icons of Loving Kindness which depict the intimate relation between the Mother of God and the Christ Child. They are shown full of natural human feeling. The Mother grieves at the future suffering of her son and also for the suffering of humanity. The Child displays feelings of fear, as he reaches to his Mother for comfort, and feelings of tenderness, as he calms his mother's grief. The Mother and Child do not relate exclusively to each other; but the action of the icon connects them to the world. People who behold the icon gain wisdom from contact with suffering that is turned to joy. And as they share in the common feeling between the Mother and the Child, their hearts are moved to mercy and all-embracing love.[136] In prayer to Mary supplicants ask for all manner of relief – from sin, physical pain, emotional pain, poverty, injustice. The very posture of the Theotokos in her icon demonstrates that she recognizes suffering because she suffers. And because she suffers she invites others to her for comfort, consolation, communion, instruction in bearing suffering, and in uniting those who suffer together in hope. Despite (in fact, because of) her great suffering, she invites others to lay their suffering on her. The hymns of Holy Week reflect the connection of suffering and hope in Mary.

> Today the blameless Virgin saw you, O Word, hanging on the Cross and she wept and her heart was deeply wounded. With hair disheveled, she groaned in agony from the depths of her soul and in her grief she beat her breast and tore her hair crying out: 'Alas, my divine child! Alas, Light of the World! Why, O Lamb of God, have you vanished from my sight?' Then the armies of the heavenly hosts trembled and cried out: 'O unfathomable Lord, glory to you.'/Praise the Lord, all you nations; praise him, all you peoples. / Seeing you hanging on the Cross, O Christ, Creator and God of all, she who gave birth to you without seed cried bitterly: 'Son, where is the beauty of your form? I cannot endure to look upon you crucified unjustly. Hurry, then, to arise, that I too may see your resurrection from the dead on the third day.'[137]

W. Jones, *Saint Nicholas of Myra, Bari, and Manhattan: Biography of a Legend*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. 1978)

[136] See Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*

[137] Vespers of Great and Holy Friday, *The Services for Holy Week and Easter, ΑΙ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣΒ⊔ΟΜΑ⊔ΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΣΧΑ*, trans. Nomikos Michael Vaporis (Brookline, Massachusetts, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1993), p. 203

Her grief is not only for her suffering as a mother. She aches for the pain of her son, and for the world who have lost their Light. In her anguish she tears her hair, and beats her chest, yet even in the throws of anguish she moves from the pain of injustice to the hope of resurrection. Though her icon shows suffering, it shows serenity as well. She is not overcome by it, but at peace in the face of it. This paradox attracts others who suffer to her. Her posture, and her composure reorients the beholder who is taught to transform suffering: to turn it from focus on personal pain to union with others who suffer, from hopelessness to hopefulness, from sorrow to joy.

In hymns Mary is called blessed, pure, humble, invincible, incorruptible, compassionate, the hope of all the hopeless, and full of grace. In the metaphoric language of Saint Joseph the Hymnographer, She is called the container of joy, the branch that budded forth the unfading rose, the table that holds the holy bread of life, the never empty fountain of living water, a ladder that elevates the earth by an act of grace, the fiery chariot of the Logos, the living paradisal garden that contains the tree of life, the oyster that produces the divine pearl, in addition to a vine, a harbor, an anchor, a lily, the gate, and a pure and guileless dove.[138] In her icon she wears red to symbolize life, love, light, and purity. The association of red with blood points both to life and to sacrifice: her willing sacrifice, and her Son's. Her inward looking eyes show emotion, tenderness, concern, gentleness, as well as contemplation, attentiveness, wisdom, and love. Her concern for her son extends to all creation. All these attributes attract people to her and, moreover, provide a model to imitate in times of suffering. They also inspire love of creation in the beholder. St. Isaac describes the loving-kindness that overcomes one inspired by mercy saying,

---

[138] *Canon of the Akathist*

> Great and powerful compassion fills a man's heart, and great suffering wrings it, so that he cannot endure, hear or see any harm or the least pain suffered by a creature. This is why he prays hourly, with tears, for dumb creation, for the enemies of truth, for those who harm him, that they should be preserved and shown mercy; he prays also for reptiles with a great compassion which wells up in his heart without measure until he becomes likened in this to God.[139]

St. Isaac's description of transformation through loving-kindness is what the beholder of the icon of loving kindness sees in Mary as she embraces her Son. She desires to be a vehicle of compassion to those who suffer, and inspires those who receive comfort from her to become compassionate and merciful to others – enemies, strangers, oppressors, and oppressed. The relationship between the Mother and the Child depicted in the icons of Loving Kindness reveals the broken nature of human relations, forcing the beholder to reevaluate suffering, blame, and accusation. Mary reveals the possibility of restored relations and instructs the beholder in *theosis* whereby the beholder becomes, "a steward of creation, using it to satisfy all proper needs and wants, but not exploiting it, learning about it and learning from it, and forming it insofar as humanity completes God's act of creation, so that the material world is an expression of fellowship with the divine."[140] Mary's attention to her Son is attention to an alternate vision of the world. Her vision is of a transformed world in which humans relate to one another in mercy and loving kindness, relate to one another as divine. Nicholas Canstas describes the experience of an icon saying, "The silent voice of the icon comforts the downcast, reconciles those in discord, and urges all to put nothing in the world before the love of Christ."[141]

---

[139] Op cit. *Ascetic Discourses of our Holy Father Isaac of Syria*, in Lossky and Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons,* pp. 92-93

[140] Anton Vrame, *The Education Icon: Teaching Wisdom and Holiness in the Orthodox Way*, (Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1999), p. 171

[141] "Icons and Imagination," *Logos* 1:1, 1997, 114-127 p. 119,

Fyodor Dostoevsky's longing for the fulfillment of relation through the fulfillment of the patristic formula "God became human, so humans might become god" shows even in his darkest novel, *Demons*. The novel intends to show that transformation of "the great sinner" can occur with the self-mastery gained by asceticism. Dostoevsky uses the teaching of St. Tikhon Zadonsky, a nineteenth century Russian saint, as a model for the way forgiveness and mercy can result from conquering evil inclinations. Through suffering, misfortune, and temptation one learns to conquer "pride by humiliation, anger by gentleness and patience, hatred by love."[142] Like Father Zosima, St. Tikhon believed that evil, suffering, and even crime could serve to enlighten and purify humans. Remorse, contrition, and humility result from self-examination, specifically the self-examination that occurs with asceticism. Egoism promotes the desire for control, mastery and power. These forms of pride and arrogance prove futile. Self-mastery, on the other hand, proves regenerative as self-dominance leads to self-sacrifice. One story form the life of St. Tikhon impresses how self-mastery turns into humility. In a quarrel over questions of faith with a land-owner, the land-owner strikes St. Tikhon on the face. Immediately, Tikhon kneels before the man who struck him and begs his forgiveness.[143] What becomes important for Dostoevsky in this story is not the immediate reaction of the land-owner, but the demonstration that a human can overcome pride, and the desire for retaliation through asceticism.[144] St. Tikhon expresses the need for humility saying,

---

[142] See Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865-1871*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 376-379

[143] Frank, *The Miraculous Years*, p. 377

[144] The motif of this story appears throughout Dostoevsky's later works. Alyosha begs the forgiveness of the boy who bites his finger, and the forgiveness of Grushenka. Prince Myshkin asks the forgiveness of Burdovsky, who falsely claims to be the illegitimate son of his benefactor and demands compensation. From the time of *Notes from the Underground* Dostoevsky desires to show the Christian alternative to a consequentialist view of human conduct. Actions are not to be judged by the results they yield, but by the heart that struggles constantly to overcome evil with good. His close

> Try to know yourself, your own wickedness. Think on the greatness of God and your wretchedness. Meditate on the suffering of Christ, the magnitude of Whose love and suffering surpass our understanding. Ascribe the good that you do to God alone. Do not think about the sin of a brother but about what in him is better than in yourself.... Flee from glory, honors and praise, but if this is impossible, be sorry that such is your lot. Be benevolent to people of low origin. Be freely and willingly obedient not only to those above you but to those below.... The lowlier we are in spirit, the better we know ourselves, and without humility we cannot see God.

Though a minor character of *Demons,* Ivan Shatov presents an example of the regenerative possibilities of humility, self-mastery, and asceticism, and examples of just vision, forgiveness, as well as accusation. Shatov had been part of a group of nihilists whose goal had been to overturn tradition. Shatov becomes disillusioned with the group's ideals as he examines the impact it has on his character. He sees that the group aims to accomplish its goal by deception, crime, and violence. He chooses to denounce the group publicly even though they will retaliate. When Shatov confronts the leader of the group, his accusation comes from deep respect, and even love for Stavrogin. Shatov makes demands, yet the demand and accusations come from concern for Stavrogin. Shatov pleads with him to "Take a human tone. At least for once in your life speak in a human voice. Not for my sake, but for your own."[145] Shatov is concerned that Stavrogin has lost his personhood to the mask he wears. Shatov speaks frankly of his scorn for the group, their ideals, and actions. The scorn however arises from the corruption he sees in Stavrogin. Shatov thinks he has lost his humanness. Shatov mourns the corruption of the world, even as he demonstrates a willingness to absorb the suffering of another without rendering it. He

---

friend, Solovyov puts his concern this way: "Another's conscience is unknown to us, and other's concern's are not within our power. It is not within our power that other's will relate well to us, but it is within our powers to be worthy of good relations. And it is not for us to think what others will say to us, but what we will say to the world." (*The Heart of Reality*, p. 19) One undertakes self-mastery through asceticism, and renunciation to make community possible. The tragic ending of *The Idiot* makes clear that humility and meekness do not always create transformation; yet, neither does it deny the possibility that transformation can in fact occur.

[145] *Demons*, trans. Peaver and Volokonsky, (New York: Vintage Classics, 1994), II, 1, 6, p. 246

knows the consequences of his renunciation, yet seeks to save Stavrogin even as he is about to be harmed.

Shatov's self-examination enables him to try to save his friend, just as his self-accusation enables him to show forgiveness and mercy to the wife who abandoned him. After three years, he welcomes her, though she is about to give birth to another man's child, and though she mocks and ridicules his kindness. He gives her all he has without bitterness, without the desire for revenge, "so that in his view it came out he himself was guilty before her for everything."[146] He arranges all the necessary things for her to give birth. With each jesture of kindness her anger and mockery grows more bitter. She abuses him verbally, demands contradictory things of him from one minute to the next. Yet, his only concern is for her. He talks to her of his plans to work, to follow a path of regeneration, and "preach Christ," to make up for his association with "the enemies of living life; outdated little liberals afraid of their own independence; lackeys of thought, enemies of the person and freedom, decrepit preachers of carrion and rot!"[147] She mocks his renunciation, his plans, his charity; and, still he shows her love and compassion. His neighbor sums up his actions saying, "You don't forgive anything because there's no longer anything to forgive."[148] Shatov's self-examination creates a blindness to his wife's faults, even as it creates an awareness of her humanness. When the baby finally arrives, Shatov becomes overjoyed. The midwife also mocks his tenderness. But he replies to her with gentleness, "Be glad, Arina Prokhorovna…This is great joy. […] The mystery of the appearance of a new being, a great

---

[146] *Demons*, 569; cf. *Prolegomena to Charity*, 9, "Christ vanquished evil only by refusing to transmit it, enduring it to the point of running the risk, in blocking it of dying, the just man is precisely he who endures evil without rendering it, suffers without claiming the right to make others suffer, suffers as if he were guilty."

[147] *Demons*, III, 3, 2, p. 579

[148] *Demons*, III, 3, 5, p. 590

mystery, and an inexplicable one. […] There were two and suddenly there's a third human being, a new spirit, whole, finished, such as doesn't come from human hands, a new thought and a new love, it's even frightening…And there's nothing higher in the world"[149] Without any thought he accepts the baby as his son. Marie, still fearful of his kindness continues to reproach him for rudeness. But he has already forgiven her, or more precisely, he has not noticed any offense, but is certain he has offended her. He feels that she has suffered, that she has been victimized and hurt. Her hurt has made her suspicious, untrusting, and independent; yet she returns to a man she abandonded because she knows he will still be kind to her. He follows St. Tikhon's teachings on love: "For love does not seek its own, it labors, sweats, watches to build up the brother: nothing is inconvenient to love, and by the help of God it turns the impossible into the possible.... Love believes and hopes.... It is ashamed of nothing."

Love, as Marion asserts, is broader than justice. With these examples of icons, however, justice proves to be more than revenge. With the examples of Shatov, Bishop Nicholas, and Mary and Christ the inherent ethical function of the icon can be shown. These figures represent paradigms of de-centering, of iconic perception that allows the Other to reveal her or his own unique manifestation of the Divine. The virtues they possess can provide ways to become just, to live for others, to love, as Marion suggests, without measure.[150] Marion's phenomenlology of the icon remains relevant. Beholding an icon gives unforeseen, irreproducible, inexhaustible content. St. Nicholas's actions cannot be understood fully, just as Mary's serenity remains paradoxical, and Shatov's forgiveness escapes perfect comprehension. The qualities most notable here relate to receptivity, to silence, and to self-emptying,. Fasting, silence, meditation, prayer, and other ascetic practices

[149] *Demons*, III, 3, 7, pp. 592-593

[150] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 10

make one more able to be humble, generous, receptive, and just. When informed by love the virtues and the practice of iconic vision, justice promotes proper vision of another as human. The icon teaches me how to see as it models justice and love. The icon also makes me aware of my faults and encourages me to engage in self-accusation, self-discipline, and attentiveness to others. These lessons relate to the possibility of receptivity of the other as a human icon. While Marion's account emphasizes the passivity of the beholder, the teachings of the icons emphasize that one must prepare oneself to receive, to open oneself to the possibility of Divinity in the Other. Anton Vrame writes, "love is the ability to see and recognize another person as a person and neighbor, allowing each person to become the neighbor to all."[151] Love sets the parameters for justice. Viewing another as a neighbor, as an icon, means viewing another as someone from whom I learn, and to whom I have responsibilities. Sometimes the responsibilities I have for another involve accusation; yet, when done for correction, from love, and according to the vision of the Good, accusation need not add more evil to the world.

Conclusion

Marion's account of the cycle of revenge provides insight into the nature of justice. The response to the evil of injustice is the evil of accusation. Accusation adds evil to the world through retaliation, retribution, and revenge. Revenge is not justice, but an attempt to make another suffer. Marion provides an indispensible warning about the possibility of the injustice of justice. Yet, he treats all accusation as necessarily evil. Accusation that serves to correct, to prevent harm, and to show love need not propagate more evil. Injustice causes suffering that is aggravated without an account of why suffering occurs in its particularity. Understanding suffering requires accusation. Furthermore, accusation helps make sense of

[151] *The Educating Icon*, p. 79

suffering by creating a story that temporalizes the event of injustice, provides a way for the truth of the event to be shared with others who suffer and the one who acts unjustly. Accusation provides a way to prevent the repetition of the original act, to restore relations, and create community. Just accusation views the perpetrator as a human capable of doing otherwise. The accuser recognizes her own faults and crimes and acts from mercy, and from the view that the other is an icon. Guided by the vision of the good that seeks to receive the other with humility, and just generosity accusation serves to correct, to welcome, and to love both the accuser and the one accused. The icon provides a model to imitate, an opportunity to become aware of faults, and corrective to retaliation. The dynamic relation that develops through viewing another as an icon is an opportunity to practice the virtues necessary to make the reception of all other individuals as icons possible. The icon proves instrumental in formulating an ethic of personhood whereby each person is viewed from the possibility of love, and from the possibility of divinity.

"Love treats only of the reason of loving and making oneself loved." Justice falls under this alternate rational inasmuch as justice recognizes humanness –the divinity, the capacity to love and be loved – of both the victim and victimizer. Within the contest of the icon an alternative to revenge presents itself as just. To see a person as an icon is to see more that the reality of external circumstances, and to act from alternatives to control, mastery, manipulation, power, and conquest. Christ's ability to "endure evil without repaying it," and thereby to act justly, becomes possible with the icon. The incarnate Christ provides a model to move beyond revenge, and the Theotokos, and the Saints are venerated because they model Christ. The imitation of Christ, Mary, and the Saints requires humility that recognizes faults and guilt, detachment from passions, and receptivity that recognizes relation makes humans human. Relation makes on gifted (*l'adonné*) to the extent that one

receives the other as an icon, as someone from whom I learn, to whom I have responsibility, and with whom I realize our mutual capacity to love and be loved.

Iconic justice removes the isolation of revenge, and moves toward relation and community. Iconic justice removes the temptation that accusation heals suffering, and moves me to seek the truth of the particular instance of injustice. The truth of injustice is that it impacts not only the victim, but also the community, and the victimizer. Constructing narratives and sharing stories that interpret injustice provide a vehicle through which to recognize, heal from, and begin to transform injustice's impact. Revenge oversimplifies the impact and falsely consoles. No single explanation exhausts an injustice, and no accusation proves adequate to alleviate the suffering of it. Yet, without accusation the truth of injustice remains hidden. Accusation serves to correct injustice by stating that an action was wrong, and also by acknowledging things could have been otherwise. Accusation connects people who suffer together through common (but unique) stories, makes suffering worth something, and provides hope of reconciliation. Accusation is not antithetical to love (or justice). But for accusation to escape revenge it must be informed by love and the virtues of humility and receptivity. To see another as capable of love is to see through the vision of the Good; and to see oneself justly is to see one's faults, and allow this awareness to generate mercy and compassion. Icons provide models for how to see, and give opportunities for practice in seeing justly. They accuse, even as they show mercy and compassion. They teach justice even as they model virtue. They direct vision to the Good, as they demonstrate how, after God, "consider all people as god." The icon promotes this sense of justice by promoting charity. Marion emphasizes the icon as an image of living charity. The icon transforms through charity. "In the icon, the visible and the invisible embrace each other

from a fire that no longer destroys but rather lights up the divine face for humanity."[152] Marion's description remains incomplete without providing a way for the light, for the embrace to be received, and for them to be instrumental in iconic justice.

---

[152] *Crossing of the Visible*, p.

CHAPTER FOUR

Ethics and the Icon

Introduction

Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of the icon emerges from his phenomenological reduction to the gift. The theology of the icon provides a way to view the gift in its relational richness. The veneration the beholder offers to the pictorial icon transfers to the prototype who returns love to the beholder through the one pictured. The theology of the icon unfolds as relation, as communion. When moving to the phenomenology of the face as icon, this notion of relation remains just as important. The face that takes the initiative and envisages me ushers me into relation, and in this relation, I am given to myself. Relation is the gift that remains no-thing even when given and received, even as it is reciprocated. This idea of relation as gift informs my interpretation of justice that escapes the logic of revenge. Relation with a human who is seen as an icon can escape the logic of revenge – the rendering of evil for evil – by viewing injustice as the failure to see the other person as an icon, and one who is capable of relation, and of theosis. These ideas of relation and justice provide a start to developing the possibility of ethics in Marion's phenomenology. I find that his phenomenology of the icon contains such a possibility. Yet Marion does not pursue ethics. To develop the possibility of ethics in Marion first, I provide Marion's critique of ethics. I find that Marion's reticence to pursue ethics on his own may stem from viewing ethics as a continuation of the metaphysics of Being. In his critique of Kantian ethics he worries that the categorical imperative becomes a way to reduce all morality to duty. The problem with this approach to ethics is that it subordinates the phenomenality of excess to respect for the impersonal dictates of reason. In his critique of Lévinasian ethics he worries

that Lévinas stops short of love. The counter-gaze that Lévinas describes as overcoming the questions of Being and constitution fails to venerate the uniqueness of individuals by making each "Other" substitutable for any "other." The Other becomes, according to Marion, just another concept. Only love can accede to experience of the other outside of conceptualizing.

Second, I establish that Marion makes space for ethics. I see space for ethics in three places. First, in emphasizing the knowledge of love over the knowledge of reason, Marion enjoins one to pursue love through a process of unknowing. This requires the virtues that make one receptive to the other without imposing preconceptions upon her. Marion avoids ethics to avoid metaphysics, yet Marion's resistance to ethics undermines his account of givenness. Marion not only inadvertently commends the practice of the virtues, but moreover he needs a descriptive account of the virtues for one to be receptive to love. Second, Marion states that he wants to restore charity to its rightful place as first among the virtues. Though Marion regards ethics narrowly, as Kantian duty, he views charity broadly. Charity (or, the interchangeable, love) makes humans human, it is both a passion and a virtue, involves both our emotions and our intellect; and, it makes clear whether one has succeeded in being charitable and loving, and thereby implies ethics. Marion emphasizes that love, the call and relation precede *l'adonné*. *L'adonné* finds herself in relation to herself and another that demands true charity: giving without calculation—giving of herself to the Other. The relation realized in the call gives rise to respect and care for the Other who is irreducible to an object. Marion's reduction to the gift is a reduction to the relation of love. The mutuality and care that relation demands means that charity implicitly involves ethics. Third, Marion asserts that "work on the self" is necessary to receive and give love. Thus, when Marion states that it is necessary to will love, he paves the way for seeing the virtues of generosity, humility and prudence (receptivity) as habits that make willing love possible.

Third, I show that virtue is already at work in Marion's phenomenology; in fact, phenomenology, as Marion defines it, relies on practices of virtues. I focus on his discussion of the idol that provides a way to see how one errs with respect to love. The idol teaches self-knowledge, specifically how one's desires reveal the judgments that prevent receptivity. The idol functions negatively to judge and correct desires, and positively as a guide to proper vision.

Fourth I examine the icon. The icon demands a way of seeing and venerating the other that relies on the virtues. I develop the virtues with respect to the sources on which Marion himself relies, namely Pseudo-Dionysus, and St. Maximus the Confessor. Marion relies on Denys and St. Maximus to develop his account of love; and, Denys and St. Maximus rely on the virtues to develop their accounts of love. Love and the virtues cannot be separated. The virtues support a phenomenology of love; without the virtues, love disappears as well. Denys and St. Maximus emphasize that certain practices, such as contemplation, detachment and kenosis, enable one to love. These practices do not serve as a substitute for love, nor do they surpass love; but, these practices make one humble, generous, and receptive to others. Without these love is diminished or absent.

Marion's History of Modern Morality

Marion's objection to traditional ethics, especially Kantian and Lévinasian ethics, arises from his concern with objectifying others. The universal dictates of practical reason ignore the particularity of the unique person who is the neighbor, who loves and is loved, and for whom I am called to be responsible. Kant's ethics may hold some place for love, but the love Kant enjoins is a "rational love." Respect for the moral law subordinates personal relation to impersonal duty. Furthermore, the categorical imperative vitiates individual dignity and uniqueness. I begin to hate duty because it implies I also lack a unique

individuality. "The universal lacks respect, because I suspect that I am irreducible to the noumenal. Within me, desire wills to be itself, and therefore wills its particularity, and not reason."[1] Universal maxims provide the conditions for hate, not love. The irreducibility of the other is to be received as a gift through love, otherwise love becomes an object that duty masters and possesses. Love alone, according to Marion, receives the other without possessiveness, recognizes that the other is infinite and cannot be conquered or controlled, and risks "the overabundance of the gift."[2] Duty, under Marion's analysis, proves too abstract to respect persons, too impersonal to recognize their unique dignity, and too possessive to love them in their particularity.

Marion views Lévinas as a precursor to his own phenomenology, yet Marion denies that phenomenology, specifically the phenomenology of the gift, necessitates the move to ethics as first philosophy. The ethics of the face that Lévinas develops excludes the call of the other saturated phenomena, and occurs through violence. For Marion the counter-experience of the saturated phenomena is the site where the beholder receives himself from what gives. The injunction forces a relation of responsibility for her fate. The ethics of the face are transferable, in Lévinas, from one face to all faces, and blurs the distinction between one particular other and any other as well as the distinction between the other and the Divine. The face of another, as formulated in Marion's description of the icon, presents a unique and irreplaceable Other who cannot be substituted. With the saturated phenomena of the icon Marion finds an avenue of relation that avoids the ethics of objectification and of obligation as self-defining. Even if I have arrived too late, and have done too little for my neighbor, love and the call it speaks makes me a self, just as it reveals the irreducibility of the one who convokes me.

---

[1] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 40

[2] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 64

In admonishing against objectification, encouraging receptivity, and embracing love, Marion wants to replaces ethics with a phenomenology of love. Yet, love implicates ethics. The tension between love and ethics in Marion's thought provokes Gerald McKenny's remark that "love and ethics appear to involve one another in an endless intrigue in [Marion's] thought: love seems to be a necessary condition for an ethical relation to the other, while ethics seems able to complete itself only by surpassing itself in love."[3] Love itself suggests ethical criteria such as respect, care, and putting another's best interest before one's own. Though modern ethics does not respect the particularity that, in part, defines love, love implies ethical treatment of the beloved. Love obligates me to recognize the transcendence of the one I love; love summons me to responsibility; and, love denies the possibility of objectifying the other.[4] Marion affirms that love and ethics cannot be mutually exclusive categories and affirms that love requires a different way of knowing that surpasses reasoning. That love requires a different order of knowing also may mean that love requires a different order of ethics. The entanglement of love and ethics need not mean that ethics must return to metaphysics (and thereby destroy love), it may mean that love offers something substantial to ethics that makes it irreducible to universal maxims.

Despite the intrigue between love and ethics, Marion critiques rather than develops ethics. Marion's reticence to pursue ethics derives from two strains of thought. First ethics, as metaphysics develops it, is not sufficiently broad to include love and charity. Ethics that presuppose duty elevates reason, and displaces the individual making humans objects, and thereby making love and charity secondary, and perhaps irrelevant. Second, ethics has not overcome the destruction of metaphysics. Nietzsche attempts the destruction of morality

---

[3] "(Re)placing Ethics: Jean-Luc Marion and the Horizon of Modern Morality," in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart, (Norte Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 339-355, p. 340

[4] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 86-87

(i.e. the metaphysical conditions of the free will formulated by Kant) by replacing the will that must act as if it is free with the instincts. Freedom for Nietzsche is not a product of rationality but opens to possibility itself. Though Nietzsche intends for possibility to destroy metaphysics, Marion finds that it also makes ethical action possible. A person may risk acting ethically, though a person has no grounds by which to assess whether the action is ethical or not. Though no grounding of moral action can be given, and though the will to power destroys the freedom of the will as the condition for the ethical, freedom itself gives rise to the possibility of a phenomenological reappropriation of ethics beyond metaphysics. The freedom that Marion established through Nietzsche's destruction of metaphysics opens the horizon of possibility, and "opens man himself as the unique instance and stake in possibilization [coming into possibility] in general."[5] Marion views freedom as openness to respond to the gift. The unlimited freedom of Nietzsche only can have meaning for a person if it attaches to a task, to a call to which one can respond freely by accepting the call or rejecting it. Yet, Nietzsche's freedom does something important for Marion's history of modern morality; it destroys metaphysics and the metaphysical conditions for morality.

Marion traces the destruction of metaphysics and the destruction of Kantian morality, but does not close the phenomenological possibility that one may act ethically. Marion's attack against ethics in *Prolegomena to Charity* and *Being Given* shows that modern ethics result in totalitarianism, and that ethics limits the responsibility of the one who is called, who is gifted. In both places, however, Marion leaves open the possibility of ethics (broadly construed) as he displays the complex tension between love and ethics. Modern ethics privileges an ethics of objectification, and denigrates love. Love becomes irrelevant to modern ethics derived from universal duties, and to the will to power. Marion's reduction to

[5] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 52; cf. Gerald McKenny, "(Re)placing Ethics," pp. 343-344

the gift attempts to keep the possibility of freedom open and with this possibilization he attempts to move beyond metaphysical ethics to a phenomenology of love that does not exclude the possibility of ethical action. Marion does not want to resuscitate an ethics of duty, nor to engage in the nihilistic project of Nietzsche; instead, ethics as possibility means that one can respond to the call of the saturated phenomena. For Marion possibilization relates to a particular call that demands a particular response. The response is neither universilizable (with Kant), nor is it indeterminate (with Nietzsche).

Kant's abstract universality targets no particular other, but "reason as such," reason as "abstract and universal."[6] Kant's ethics focus so much on reason that he forgets that ethics relates to unique humans. Kant's universality betrays humans, and ignores the fact that ethical action impacts particular people. Applying the universal rules of reason to particular actions makes reason, at best, partial: "reason is put into practice only as nonuniversal, nonformal: all reason is to us, the reason of something."[7] No matter reason's claims to universality, reason requires action and action requires considerations of persons. Only love can see persons in their particularity. Reason and love operate under different modalities. Reason operates through constraints while love operates through free surrender.[8] Limit and confinement of action, sensibility, and the will determine whether an action is moral or not. Freedom, and limitlessness of receptivity and responsibility open to love. The constraints of reason "humble," "impose on," and "wound" sensibility as the moral law conforms desire to it, and thus come to me from an outside source.[9] I may

---

[6] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 32, 38

[7] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 38

[8] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 59-61

[9] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 39; Cf. *Being Given*: "The very one who transgresses [the categorical imperative] grasps it perfectly and could not do so without this transgression. But the practical impossibility of its denial flows more essentially from its theoretical status: it shows itself perfectly a priori because it remains unscathed by the subjective conditions of experience and is given solely by

choose to accept or reject the moral law, but I cannot refuse to recognize it and its universality. Self-condemnation and distrust of reason inevitably result from respect for the moral law since "the universal most often hides a determined interest."[10] The particular application of the moral law interests me, while it simultaneously betrays the universality required of the moral law. I fail to meet the moral law's universality even as I attempt to act upon it. I realize the self-interest at play in desiring a maxim; and, I do not respect it since it denies particularity, since the particular is more pressing. Since I no longer respect the universality of the moral law in myself, I no longer respect it in others. "A maxim stirs me only by remaining particular: I act in a certain way only if the maxim of my action *cannot* become universal law. Desire rejects ethical norms as such because it refuses to let the universal (be it authentic or apparent) judge or limit it; in short desire does not so much evade the moral norm as *hate* it."[11] Application of the moral law fails to match my desire, my self-interest – not because it demands too much of me, but because it imposes a limit. For Marion this limit renders duty inadequate and unworthy to accomplish what love would: limitless obligation.

In stark contrast to the limitlessness of love stands the imposition of the imperative that operates by power. The imperative inspires respect, if it does, not through imposing

---

its fact without having to become the object of any sensible intuition. Without any other condition besides itself, the fact of reason is not inscribed in the *I*'s experience of the world, but precedes and exceeds it. Its a priori is therefore not confused with that put into operation by the *I*, which follows it and comes after it. In short, the *I* knows a priori the fact of reason, but nevertheless it discovers this fact always already done; the *I* never constitutes it. The *I* therefore receives it a posteriori. The fact of reason thus includes one of the radical determinations of the call and last principle—an a priori always already given, always a posteriori." p. 280

[10] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 40; cf. *Being Given*: "humiliation and respect go together like two sides of the same coin, emitted into the sensible by the one and only authority of the fact of the moral law…I respect the moral law all the more as I know that I am not able, or don't want, or cannot want to accomplish it. Duty itself is always announced as a 'duty contrary to my self,' which diverts me from my essence itself." p. 281

[11] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 40

norms, but by the sheer force of its power. If power makes moral norms respected the norms are not respected of themselves, but through the power of ideology and technical production, or the power that establishes authority. With Kant the power of reason motivates, with Hegel and Nietzsche the power of history and the power of freedom motivates the production of ideology. The ideology that develops from Hegelian ethics, and the will to power that develops from Nietzschean revocation of ethics do not establish respect for the moral law as such, but respect for the authority that determines norms through power. In the first case, ideology attempts to establish moral rules that make reality conform to an ideal. Leninism and Nazism present examples of political authorities that impose political and economic power on society in an effort "to establish the concept of a supposed particular good as the only good that is rationally thinkable, and therefore morally justifiable."[12] The terror, destruction, violence, and annihilation used to conform society to the concept ultimately fail because power cannot destroy thought, religion, or imagination. Even if society conforms to the established rules in action, terror cannot make people respect the value of the concept imposed on them.[13] Ethics, as normative, is annulled by ideology. "One must therefore conclude that every morality, in its ground, offers one of the possible faces of the will that, by such means, seeks to will itself—the will to power."[14] Here the will to power is not merely a limit of my own desire, but a limit to everyone's action.

With Nietzsche ethics is revoked inasmuch as norms are revoked. For Nietzsche, acceptance of an exterior moral norm amounts to willing one's own enslavement. The will to power opposes all external validations, and affirms itself as spontaneous and free – as the

---

[12] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 35; Marion's analysis of ideology has great continuity with Hanna Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Hartcourt, 1976)

[13] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 41

[14] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 41

will to power.[15] The will to power destroys metaphysical ethics by contradicting it, by making the theory of ethics nonsensical. Even if Nietzsche's revocation of ethics destroys the thought of ethics as norms, it cannot destroy the possibility of the moral act. The will to power, paradoxically, may manifest itself in the will *not* to act, the will to *nothingness*, the will *not* to decide, the will *not* to assert power; and, it thereby may risk acting morally:

> the act becomes moral when it assumes the risk of deciding in favor of non-power through the risk that this non-power is an illusion. The act becomes moral when it accepts to sacrifice totally its author for, perhaps, the illusion of morality - acting morally is certified when one takes the risk of losing all for, perhaps, immorality. Moral is the act that remains so, despite the risk of not being so. Moral is the act that accepts losing itself in the sole hope, rather than the assurance, that this loss is moral. The moral act costs so dearly not on account of the sacrifice but on account of the risk of sacrificing all for a nonmoral cause.[16]

Though the Nietzschean will to power destroys metaphysical ethics, the possibility of acting morally remains, even if it is an illusion of moral action.[17] "The will to power can eliminate morality, but cannot eliminate one's venture at morality – at self-interpretation as moral rather than as beyond good and evil."[18] Freedom enables one to risk a moral action even if it means willing something other than the self. Freedom – the freedom to will oneself, or to will a moral act – refutes determination by rationality.[19] Marion proceeds cautiously with freedom. He does not advocate unlimited freedom that could as easily will nothing as will morality. Instead he turns freedom toward a task – toward *l'adonné's* calling. Freedom opens one to the possibility of a call – a call that gives *l'adonné* a task.[20]

---

[15] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 42

[16] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 43-44

[17] Marion is not asserting that action in itself makes for morality. He recognizes that one may be deluded about the morality of the act dues to partiality, bias, arbitrariness, imperialistic, perverse, or harmful motives. See *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 43.

[18] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 45

[19] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 45-46

[20] Cf. Adrienne Pepperzak, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993), p. 71

The history of modern morality, according to Marion, destroys any possibility of moral norms, views moral norms as destroying themselves and their conditions for appearing. The subject of metaphysics wills what is contrary to itself, wills its own humiliation through respect of the moral law that offends and transgresses sensibility. Likewise, the will to power wills its own annihilation in risking the moral act. What remains is neither a cause for morality, nor a Nietzschean a-morality, but a phenomenology of morality beyond metaphysics.[21] The saturated phenomena that overwhelm and surprise consciousness, that allow for no intentional aim nor any constitution as object, subvert the respect for the moral law as they call the beholder to languish in the superabundance of the gift. The moral law does not respect persons, and the will to power does not respect morality; but the counter-intentionality of the saturated phenomena respects the transcendence of both by respecting love.

Levinas, as much as Marion, wants to overcome the morality of the moderns. He characterizes the modern project as an endeavor to justify the possessive aims of the quest to know. He finds the project unjustifiable because it lacks justice. Levinas attempts to overcome the modern morality of possession through a reversal of intentionality. The face of the other provokes me to justice by viewing me as her other, and by revealing to me that I have attempted to control her through the quest to know. Levinas finds that when confronted by the personal Other, I realize myself as already in a relation to the Other, and that relation is ethical. As a phenomenologist, Levinas wants to describe the ethical relation; and, he describes this relation in terms that Marion uses and expands. Yet, Marion denies that his project relates fundamentally to ethics as Levinas describes. Without going so far as

[21] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 48-50; Cf. McKenny, "(Re)placing Ethics," p. 344

to assert that Marion's phenomenology of love is equivalent to Levinas's phenomenology of ethics, the similarities between the two cannot be denied; and, these similarities lead me to conclude that Marion is engaged in (what I tentatively call) a "love ethics" that resonate with what Levinas calls first philosophy. I take a close look at some of the criticisms Marion raises against Levinas, and find that in some instances his criticisms fail because he has not been true to the meaning Levinas intended and in other instances his criticisms may be accurate, but fail to deny that the ethics of Levinas are relevant (if not integral) to Marion's own project. I conclude that inspite of Marion's criticism, he leaves open the possibility of a descriptive ethics of the icon.

Marion's project shows many similarities to Levinas's. Both philosophers emphasize counter-intentionality, the anteriority of the Other, the surprise that occurs with the advent of the Other, the role of the injunction "Thou shall not kill," and the movement beyond being. Though Marion's phenomenology develops themes similar to Lévinas, he avoids the phenomenological ethics of Lévinas. For Marion and Lévinas access to the other comes through the counter-look that takes the initiative. Levinas describes this encounter as the advent of the ethical. But for Marion, access to the otherness of the Other always comes through love, not ethics. *L'adonné*, the gifted one, appears like the figure of the most distant neighbor Lévinas describes and, like Lévinas, receives the neighbor neither as an object nor as Being. Though Marion concedes that access to the otherness of the Other comes through the counter-gaze, he emphasizes that only the knowledge love provides makes access to the otherness of the Other possible. *L'adonné* is defined first by exposure to the paradox of the call. Second as she receives the given, givenness is freed to give radically. And third, by giving himself over to the gift, *l'adonné* becomes defined by its givenness.[22] The givenness of

[22] *Being Given*, pp. 281-283

the gift prioritizes love and subordinates the ethics of responsibility. For Levinas, however, the ethical relation to the other defines the accession from ontology to phenomenology, the overcoming of Husserl and Heidegger. Marion thinks that ontology and metaphysics finally are undone with pure givenness. Love (not ethics) decides for abandon and surrender to the gift and escapes the confinement of being.

Much has been made by Marion of his debt to and break with Levinas. As Levinas's student Marion remains close to Levinas in the desire to overcome ontology and the metaphysics of presence. Yet, Marion criticizes Levinas for failing to overcome the ontological difference found in Heidegger. Marion finds that Lévinas, in *Totality and Infinity*, merely reverses the terms of ontological difference by emphasizing beings (or more precisely a particular being, the neighbor) instead of the Heideggerian Being of beings. Christina M. Gschwandtner discusses the nuanced relation between Marion and Levinas in "The neighbor and the infinite: Marion and Levinas on the encounter between self, human other, and God" and finds that Marion has misinterpreted Levinas.[23] She finds that Marion makes two critiques of Levinas, and shows these critiques fail because they rely on an inaccurate reading of Levinas. First, she finds that Marion criticizes Levinas for failing to overcome ontological difference in *Totality and Infinity*. This criticism resolves itself easily, as Levinas and Marion agree on it. Second, she finds that Marion criticizes Levinas for not distinguishing the human Other from the Divine other clearly. This criticism relates to a third criticism that I find Marion makes. Marion accuses Levinas of not having a sufficient concept of freedom. Levinas's understanding of the subject of ethics, the hostage, does not freely choose the ethical. Marion wants to show that without freedom to respond to the call, the self cannot identify the call as call, nor receive herself from freely responding to the call. Looking at

[23] In *Continental Philosophy Review*, 40:3, July 2007, pp. 231-249

these criticisms, and the response Gschwandtner makes from a careful reading of Levinas provides a way of understanding Levinas. I use her analysis as a way to make an inroad to ethics in Marion. In short, I find that Marion remains closer to Levinas than he believes he is, and that Marion may be engaged in a project that provides a descriptive account of the ethics of love.

Beginning with the first criticism that Gschwandtner makes, that Levinas merely reverses ontological difference, reveals that Levinas and Marion agree that Heidegger must be overcome by moving beyond ontology. Heidegger famously asserts that philosophy has forgotten the question of the Being of beings. His project becomes an interrogation of this question. Levinas finds in this interrogation a manifestation of egology, an over-concern with the self at the expense of the other. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas works within the Heideggerian tradition to replace the primacy of the I and the concern with the essence of Being with a self who is decentered, dislocated, and displaced by the accusation of the Other who is prior to the I. Levinas agrees with Marion first criticism that, in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas has inverted the ontological difference, and is concerned with a particular being, the Other, who accuses me, in other words, that he has reversed the Heideggerian notion of ontological difference.[24] In *Otherwise than Being*, however, Levinas attempts to overcome ontology altogether by demonstrating that ethics is before and beyond ontology. The Other of ethics demands that I recognize her transcendence, infinity, and irreducibility to being. Marion recognizes this difference between Heidegger's *Dasein* and Levinas's *me voici* (here I am). "*Dasein* neglects the originary access to the Other, while *here I am* accomplishes this

[24] Levinas responds to Marion's criticism in *Idol and Distance*,(see especially p. 219) in *De l'existence a l'existant,* 1977 p. 12; Levinas also notes the use of ontological language and the possibility of moving beyond it through experience of trandcendence in *Difficicile Liberté: Essais sur le Judaisme* (Paris: AlbinMichel, 1963), p. 379.

access by passing outside Being."[25] Marion's concern shifts from ontological difference to the status of the I that is accused and the Other who says "here I am."[26] In this context, Marion gives the criticisms regarding the confusion between the human and Divine Other. This confusion is complicated by the question of identifying the accused subject;[27] and, I find can be resolved by understanding their notions of freedom.

The one who is accused by the other's speaking "here I am" becomes decentered by becoming the hostage of the Other.[28] What concerns Marion at this point relates to whether there could have been an I or a center from which to remove it. The status of hostage takes choice and decision away; the hostage is not free to decide:

> …whether this exposure to the other grants me a suffering, a pain, a pleasure, or a joy will depend neither on my choice nor on my responsibility: the decision is in the hands of the other, and I remain not responsible for it. Always innocent or always guilty—the two hypotheses are equivalent from the moment that, as hostage, it does not belong to *me* to decide. I do not have to decide to expose myself to the other, nor to choose this or that other, nor to begin or to suspend this exposure, nor to comport myself in it as an innocent (or as a criminal). Hostage, I do not decide anything whatsoever and above all not *to be* hostage. Ethics begins when the freedom to decide *ceases* and when the irrevocable precedes me.[29]

---

[25] Jean-Luc Marion, "A Note concerning Ontological Indifference," trans. Jeffery L. Kosky, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 20(2), 21(1), pp. 25-40, p. 35

[26] Gschwandtner notes this transition as well saying that "Marion's interpretation has moved us imperceptibly from the other who faces me and turns me into a hostage to an emphasis on the call or claim that 'can make a hostage of me.' Furthermore, Marion seems to suggest that Levinas' important achievement consists in being able to speak of the self without the language of being, in rupturing the ontological difference through the call of something or someone utterly other." "The Neighbor and the Infinite," p. 234. Though this overcoming of ontological difference plays an important role in Marion's understanding of Levinas, also of concern is the status of the hostage. As will be developed below, Marion sees the transition from *here I am* to the hostage a problematic. "A Note concerning Ontological Indifference," pp. 35-37.

[27] Joeri Schrijvers considers the existential implications of ontological difference in "Ontotheological Turnings? Marion, LaCoste, and Levinas on the Decentring of Modern Subjectivity," *Modern Theology*, 22:2, April 2006, pp. 221-253

[28] See, for example, Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1998), pp. 112-115, 145-149

[29] "A Note concerning Ontological Indifference," pp. 35

Though Marion accepts passivity as a precondition for *l'adonne* to hear and receive the call, Marion views the decision to hear and recognize the call as essential. On the one hand, Marion views Levinas as helping him move toward his phenomenology of donation by freeing the subject from ontology, and as a precursor to his notion of the call. On the other hand, Marion sees omissions in Levinas: Marion cannot locate the one who calls and summons the hostage, nor can he locate the capacity for the subject to hear and respond to the call. This capacity depends on freedom. The first omission relates to Marion's concern that the human other and the Divine might be confused in Levinas. The second relates to Marion's concern that one freely choose to respond to the call. While Marion's *l'adonné* is defined by the freedom to choose to receive the call, Marion asserts that Levinas's hostage is held captive by the Other. This distinction becomes crucial for Marion because he understands freedom as necessary for love, and because response to the call gives *l'adonné* to himself.[30] Yet, a closer examination of freedom in Levinas and Marion reveals that both have a similarly restrictive view of freedom. Neither believe that freedom means absolute indeterminacy, nor do they believe that freedom means that they can generate responsibility or the call. For both, freedom relates to choosing to accept or reject responsibility or the call. This sense of freedom means that one other these choices – the choice to accept responsibility of the call – further restricts freedom since it disallows some possibilities by accepting the task that responsibility or the call gives.

Marion and Levinas agree that freedom cannot be defined with the Moderns as choosing the rational. In the first place freedom as rational choice perpetuates the game of

---

[30] Gschwandtner neglects the criticism Marion makes concerning the importance of freedom. I find that this criticism is more important to Marion than the overcoming of ontological difference (to which Levinas concedes in *De l'existence a l'existant*), and through freedom Marion thinks he is able to dissolve the confusion between the Other and the Divine). For Marion without free decision to surrender to the call of the Other *l'adonné* does not take a risk for love. In the risk of loving the freedom to chose to love or not (partially, though crucially) defines the possibility of love.

possession that Levinas marks as the modern project; and in the second place, freedom as rational choice would exclude love, for Marion, who views love as the reason of the heart.[31] For the moderns, most notably Descartes and Hegel, truth is free appropriation of what is alien and exterior. To know requires the freedom to destroy the otherness of what is outside oneself and take possession of it. Hegel formulates this definition of freedom as "the reduction of all Otherness to the Same."[32] The pursuit of truth ends up as the tyranny of the same and the enslavement of the other. Levinas and Marion both wish to escape this violence, and view their respective projects of counter-intentionality as ways to avoid it. Marion's worry about freedom amounts to a worry about enslavement. Though Marion does not develop this line of thought, I think Marion's desire to avoid the violence of enslavement frees the self to choose, and just as importantly, frees ethics to move beyond a response exclusively to the Other's destitution and poverty. The freedom to receive the call frees the one who hears it as she chooses to accept the call, and it also frees the Other to show herself as more than her poverty and destitution. I return to this discussion below.

For Marion, the call (with the icon) arises from the pupils of the eyes, precisely where there is nothing to see. Like Levinas's, Marion's Other is unnamable and infinite; yet, Marion finds that what the call of the Other invokes is a gift, and not justice. Yet, justice for Levinas is an orientation toward a particular face. The responsibility the face of the Other calls me to is the foundation of justice. He writes, "The respected one is not the one to whom, but with whom justice is done. Respect is a relationship between equals. Justice

---

[31] I discuss Marion's understanding of the "reason of the heart" below in the section subtitle "Making Space for Ethics."

[32] I follow Adriaan Peperzak's analysis of freedom throughout this section. See his *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993), pp. 49-75

assumes that original equality."[33] Though Marion may want to contend with the notion that justice deals in equivalencies, Levinas seems to mean that justice is what is revealed when I recognize someone as beyond being – as an infinite Other -for whom I am responsible. The Other is a possible source of the call for Marion as well. The starkest difference between Marion's criticism of justice and Levinas's embracing of justice is that Levinas holds out hope for social equalities such as economic equality, equal freedom from violence and corruption, what he calls a "kingdom of pure respect."[34] Marion, to the contrary, finds that social justice has perpetuated the logic of revenge, returning one evil for another. Though they disagree about what justice is, they seem to agree that one's responsibility to another involves charity – charity as a virtue and as giving. I do not think Levinas would object a description Marion gives for charity: "…when it comes to charity, no excuse, no way out, no explanation is of any avail. I love or I do not love, I give or I do not give. […] Have we helped our neighbor, given even from our surplus, loved the least among us? This is the only criteria, the only crisis the only test." [35]

Another place where there is a difference between Marion and Levinas is the source of the calls. For Levinas, the other is the one who makes me responsible. All of the saturated phenomena Marion describes provoke a response to the call. The call with the icon means that the one who is called may choose to accept freely. And the one who chooses to respond to the call becomes gifted by being given to herself. For Marion, the call requires the anonymity of the caller. Gschwandtner reads this emphasis on the anonymity of the one who summons me as minimizing the role the other plays in Levinas. She says,

---

[33] *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 35

[34] *Entre Nous*, p. 36

[35] *Prolegomena to Charity*, pp. 154-155

"Marion insists that the origin of the claim must remain anonymous to preserve its purity. No evidence of the other who makes the claim is required; in fact, such evidence would merely intrude."[36] Marion wants to purify the call such that I can respond to it in surrender; and, Marion thinks one can surrender only to pure donation – to pure gift. Anonymity, for Marion means first that the anonymity of the call gives it priority over the identity of the one who calls and the one who is called, in turn, this priority makes the one who is called dependent on it, and second that the freedom to choose to surrender remains intact – choice cannot be made by a prisoner or a hostage, at least not free choice. Freeing the call from the other who may be the jailer, tormentor, friend, or God, frees the self to make a real decision to surrender to the summons. Additionally, Marion thinks that only by maintaining anonymity can I be surprised by the unpredicted call, and thus be shaken out of my status as one who objectifies and constitutes the other.[37] The surprise of the call decenters me, gives me to myself, no longer in the nominative case (Husserl's I), genitive case (Heidegger's of being), or accusative case (Levinas's you, as in you/thou shall not kill), but in the dative (as, I receive *myself* from what gives). In the dative case, the I no longer can claim a right to think of itself as pure actor, nor as the one accused, but finds itself constituted by the other – as recipient. The dative case maintains the possibility of receiving the pure givenness of the call by denying any a priori status. To receive myself from what gives requires that the call is

---

[36] "The Neighbor and the Infinite," p. 240

[37] Gschwandtner seems correct in saying that Marion emphasizes the call over the particular other. Maintaining the anonymity of the call may keep surprise and freedom to respond intact, yet it also makes the identification of the one who calls ambiguous. Anonymity prevents Marion from falling prey to Derrida's accusation of doing theology instead of phenomenology, yet seems to fall prey to the accusation he aims at Levinas: blurring the distinction between the Other and God. Marion's response to this accusation relates to his understanding of phenomenology as describing the conditions for the possibility that God could reveal Godself. Gschwandtner contends that even without anonymity the call can surprise. I think she is correct in this assessment. Yet, since Levinas and Marion agree that surprise is necessary to decenter the *I* such that it can receive the other, I want to focus instead on the issue of how ethics might find a place in Marion's philosophy. See "The neighbor and the infinite," pp. 241-243

anterior to *me*.[38] He says, "To discover myself summoned would have no rigor if the surprise did not definitively deprive me of knowing…by what and by whom the claim is exerted."[39]

For Levinas the call, or more precisely the accusation, always comes from a particular human who is prior to my awareness of her. Because I have come too late, because I have evaded responsibility I find myself infinitely obligated to the Other who accuses me with his poverty and destitution. For Levinas, I become an I through my obligation to the other, through my condition as a hostage. Responsibility is the priority of the hostage, not, as Marion would contend, the call. My responsibility to a concrete other, to have compassion for the other, even to the point of giving the bread from my own mouth, puts me and my subjective, autonomous self in question. The overwhelming responsibility makes me realize that the Other is beyond being: "Otherwise than being, that is disinter-ested, carrying the misery of the other….The responsibility of the hostage must be heard in the strongest sense of the word. For it remains incomprehensible to me that the other concerns me."[40] Gschwandtner writes this status of a hostage "is not mere surprise, but even a traumatic event, a paradox. The paradox is expressed by a saying and not reduced to the said. In this saying an anterior or independent signification is expressed, a responsibility that is not reducible to ontology and ruptures the rationality of founding."[41] For Levinas the accusation of the other that makes me responsible is a paradox. This paradox reveals that

---

[38] For a discussion of the use of the dative case in Marion see Ian Leask, "The Dative Subject (and the 'Principle of Principles,'" in *Givenness and God: Questions of Jean-Luc Marion*, eds. Eon Cassidy and Ian Leask, pp. 182-189

[39] "The Final Appeal of the Subject," in *The Religious*, ed. John D. Caputo (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 2002), pp. 131-144, p. 142.

[40] Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, trans Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 205

[41] "The Neighbor and the Infinite," pp. 243-4

what I thought I comprehended is incomprehensible, and places me in the position of "carrying the misery of the other."

While Marion sees a paradox in the face to face relation, he thinks of the paradox, or in Marion's parsing - para-*doxa*, according to the Greek *doxa*, an experience that exceeds comprehension and blinds me with its glory. For Marion this para-dox means the possibility of revelation through any of the forms of saturated phenomena. "For example the event can take the figure of the miracle, the given becomes election and promise, the resistance of *l'adonné* is deepened into conversion of the witness, the transmutation from the *self*-giving into the *self*-showing."[42] Marion's addition to Levinas's understanding of paradox relates to the notion of glory – the glory of the Other, of the event, the idol, the flesh, or God.

Though Marion finds freedom lacking in Levinas, I find that Levinas has made a room for freedom. The most important difference between Marion and Levinas becomes what makes me respond to the Other's call. Before discussing this difference I provide Levinas's account of freedom, which proves closer to Marion's than he acknowledges. Levinas wants to demonstrate what happens to the I when confronted with the otherness of the Other, and he finds that the I chooses a task similar to *l'adonné*'s. Like Marion, Levinas tries to escape the violence of the modern project by showing that the Other radically impacts me. Levinas thinks that the Other calls my freedom to know into question.[43] The Other makes me aware that what I took for fact I did not respect, since I actively tried to take possession of it. The face of the Other confronts me with my imperialism, my desire for domination and possession. The other makes me critical of myself, since the Other forces me to justify my violence. In the realization of my injustice to the Other I relinquish

---

[42] *In Excess*, p. 53; see also *Being Given*, p 246.

[43] *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 82-84; *Otherwise than Being*, pp. 17-19; Pepperzak, *To the Other*, pp. 52-53

my claim to the freedom to know. Yet, I cannot demand the same self-criticism from the Other without a return to the tyranny of the I, without the murder of the Other. The Other is not a fact to be known, nor an obstacle to knowing that needs to be overcome, but the infinity, the perfection, against which I must measure myself. "The idea of the perfect is not an idea but desire; it is the welcoming of the Other, the commencement of moral consciousness, which call in question my freedom." [44]

In recognizing the transcendence of the Other, I limit my claim to freedom and own up to my shame.[45] Yet, I do not find myself completely devoid of freedom; instead, I find my desire for the Other rid of the desire to possess and manipulate, and I find a new meaning in the task – the invitation to justice – that the Other gives me. The disinterestedness of the desire that springs from the Other recasts freedom as the discovery through shame of a higher task. The Other becomes "him over whom I *can*not have power [je ne *peux* pas pouvoir], whom I cannot kill."[46] Under the gaze of the Other I desire justice as the renunciation of the arbitrary violence of my former freedom, as welcome of the Other, and as the one who is put in question. My autonomy, likewise, is called into question as I find that, on the one hand, I have found myself in a primordial relation with the Other, and on the other, that the significance of this relation comes from the highness of the Other. The Other "invests" me with the significance of the task to orient and dedicate myself to the service of the Other. Adriaan Pepperzak describes this new freedom saying, "It does not violate free will but rather gives it direction in giving it a task and a meaning. The subordination protects free will from the confusion of a magical union by maintaining the

---

[44] *Totality and Infinity*, p. 84; this notion of desire comes to bear on Marion's thinking as well. See *The Erotic Phenomenon*, pp. 97-111

[45] "The welcoming of the Other is ipso facto the consciousness of my own injustice—the shame that freedom feels for itself." *Totality and Infinity*, p. 86

[46] *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 84

separation between the Other and me; it avoids the negations of freedom that submit it to a cosmic determinism or a supreme and irresistible *moira*."[47] I orient myself toward the Other not in a relation to something I could know, but as toward a transcendent Other; and, I have a relation with the Other as an immediate revelation. Thus, like Marion's *l'adonné*, one becomes gifted, or given a task, by freely choosing to respond to the Other.

For Levinas, the task I choose is to pursue justice on the Other's behalf. The invitation to justice that the relation with the Other offers is also the site where God come on the scene. "God raises to his supreme and ultimate presence as a correlative to the justice rendered unto men…A God invisible means not only a God unimaginable, but a God accessible in Justice."[48] Levinas's God is completely transcendent and appears only as a trace in the face of the Other; and, the identity of the Other is also unnameable and infinite.[49] Levinas insists that the distinction between God and the Other is not blurred. God is a second other. As Marion reads Levinas, however, the face can be "assigned equally to Other or to God."[50] Marion sees this confusion as resulting from uncertainty about the source of the call. He wonders if the demand that arises from the Other originally proceeds from God.[51]

---

[47] *To the Other*, p. 71; It is worth noting that what Pepperzak describes as separation has an analogue in Marion's concept of distance. For Marion and Levinas, distance and separation make relations of non-possession possible.

[48] *Totality and Infinity*, p. 78

[49] See for example, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 78-9

[50] Jean-Luc Marion, "The Voice without Name: Homage to Levinas," in *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God: Essays on the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Jeffery Bloechl (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), p. 227

[51] "The Voice without Name," p. 228

Marion and Levinas agree that one responds to the revelation of the paradox with praise. Marion defers to Levinas who says: "the essence of discourse is prayer."[52] Yet the possibility of the Revelation of God is different for Marion and Levinas, since they view how God appears differently. For Levinas, God enters into the face to face relation as a third, as an Other beyond other. No direct access to God can occur for Levinas. Instead, "The dimension of the divine opens forth from the human face. A relation with the Trandcendent free from all captivation by the Transcendent is a social relation…The proximity of the Other, the proximity of the neighbor, is in being an ineluctable moment of the revelation of an absolute presence (that is disengaged from every relation), which expresses itself."[53] Direct access to God is impossible for Levinas. But one can experience the Divine as one attempts the work of justice. The way I comport myself toward the Other makes a relationship with God and through the Other possible. Yet, this relationship to God is not direct access to God. The Other, through poverty and destitution, reveals the need for justice, and the need to pursue the Good. "There can be no 'knowledge' of God separated from the relationship with men…The Other is not the incarnation of God, but precisely his face, in which he is disincarnate, is the manifestation of the height in which God is revealed."[54]

---

[52] *In Excess*, p. 145 (op. cit. Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre* (Paris: Éditions Grasse et Fasquelle, 1991), p. 20). Though Marion does not make explicit mention of this difference between his and Levinas's conception of the Other as glory versus as poverty, I think that Marion's description of para-dox shows that the Other impacts me not merely because of her destitution and poverty, but because the poverty of the other directly contradicts the glory of the Other's revelation, of the Other's capacity to give. With this distinction, Marion provides a way to deepen Levinas's account of the ethical by freeing the Other to give more than an appeal. I deal more with this distinction below.

[53] *Totality and Infinity*, p. 78

[54] *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 78-9

Gschwandtner surmises that the transcendence of God makes God irreducible, always evading our conceptions, our knowledge and understanding. Further, she finds that this irreducibility sustains Levinas's ethics. She writes,

> I can reduce the other, can refuse to respond to the other's call, can turn my back on the responsibility that I will always owe to the other. I can reduce the other if I so desire, can live alone in my world, can stay outside of ethics. It is God, it seems to me that prevents a total collapse of ethics for Levinas. […] While the other can be reduced to the same, can be murdered, this is impossible to do with God. One cannot ever get enough of a grasp on God that would allows us to hold the divine or squeeze it within our hands. Thus, God is the otherness behind the other that always reiterates my responsibility even as I try to evade and subvert it.[55]

By making the other iconic, Marion adds an element of this irreducibility to the other. Gschwandtner is correct to say that I can attempt to reduce the other to object intentionality, and thereby kill the other; but this murder of the other is analogous to the reduction of God in onto-theology. First, the other as icon points to God as in*vis*able. Seocnd, because the death of the other opens to the infinite hermeneutic that reveals her irreducibility. And third, with God, one can attempt to reduce God to a series of rational concepts. Onto-theology fails by claiming to know more of God than one can know. I think that ethics may also fail by claiming to know too much of the neighbor. By describing the face of the other as an icon, Marion makes the Other irreducible to a finite set of concepts, makes the murder of the other (whether through neglect of responsibility, isolation from the other, failure to respond to the call, etc.) closer to the failure of onto-theology than to the failure of ethics as such.

Marion, however, is not willing to take the discussion in this direction. Instead, he finds that Levinas's description of God's manifestation does not clarify the distinction between Other and God. Returning to Gschwandtner's analysis of the relation of Marion to Levinas, I find that her understanding of Levinas does not necessarily clarify Marion's

[55] "The neighbor and the infinite," p. 246

position. When she accuses Marion of "collaps[ing] Levinas' distinctions between the (divine and human) Others" in order to "return to the pure call, the claim as such"[56] she accuses Marion of denying an identity to the caller. She finds that Marion emphasizes the saying of the call to the result that the one who speaks the call becomes diminished. Though Marion does move to the call as such, I find that he is not attempting to diminish the caller, but leave open the identity of the caller so that it retains its primacy, and cannot become an object of intentionality. Marion, as seen above, does assert that the response that gives me to myself is to the call itself, and not to the one who calls. Again, Marion's desire in responding to the call is to allow for a variety and infinity of callers (God, the Other, Being, life) since the call does not depend on the name of the one who calls, but on the call as such.[57] For God to appear as Revelation would further compromise the possibility of naming the caller. "Here, the call—if it turns up—would bear no name because it would assume them all. The anonymity would be reinforced by the very excess of the paradox, which would require an infinite denomination. In this way, no call would offer less of a name than that of a phenomenon of revelation."[58] Though clearly Marion and Levinas have different notions of how God comes on the scene, and what role God plays in ethics and love, they agree that God serves as a third. For Levinas God provides the possibility of justice, and for Marion the possibility of the assurance of love.

I turn to Marion's *The Erotic Phenomenon* to develop the idea that the third is an idea revealed by Levinas that Marion uses to uncover the erotic reduction. In *The Erotic Phenomenon* Marion relies on a third to provide the assurance of love. This assurance is found

---

[56] "The neighbor and the infinite," p. 239; Marion admits this as well saying, "Levinas collapsed difference into the relation to the Other, but by keeping a temporal horizon for it, which presupposes more than it shows, that the Saying differs from the said according to a lapse of time." *Being Given*, p. 294

[57] See *Being Given*, "The Call and the Responsal," pp. 282-296

[58] *Being Given*, p. 297

in being assured that "you loved me first." This statement signifies that the beloved has made me a lover, provides assurance from outside myself that I am loved and that I love.[59] Marion's phenomenological investigation of love begins with the discovery that loving (desiring) comes before knowing. I only know after I desire it. This overturning of Descartes's order leads to a questioning of love, since I am one who is defined first by loving – by wanting to be loved and to love. The first question that is developed is "Does anyone love me?"[60] This question fails to provide me with the assurance of love as it makes me the focus of the question and leads to vanity. I know too well what makes me unloveable; moreover, I realize that by posing this question I am concerned with loving myself. This realization makes necessary exteriority provide assurance. Yet, with the statement, "you loved me first," I find the question resolved. Marion writes, "I know now what I wanted to know then. I have learned that I never could have asked myself, 'Does anyone out there love me?' if another did not love me first. […] In fact, no one can claim, at least without lying to oneself or contradicting oneself, that no one loves him or has loved him."[61] Furthermore, with this assurance of love the question of assymetrical love expressed in the question "Can I love first?" becomes unnecessary. I find myself already loved by the best possible lover, God. Marion sees humans as loving the same way as God.

> …[L]ove is only said like it is given—in one way—and if, moreover, God names himself with the very name of love, must we conclude that God loves like we love, with the same love as us, according to the unique erotic reduction? Clearly, one may hesitate, but nevertheless we cannot avoid this conclusion. For, in fact, God does not only reveal himself through love and as love; he also reveals himself through the means, the figures, the moments, the acts, and the stages of love, the one and only love, that which we also practice.[62]

---

[59] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, pp. 212-215

[60] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, pp. 19-46

[61] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, p. 215; Marion's notion of limited freedom is at work here as well.

[62] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, p. 221

The perfection of God's love, makes it infinitely better than humans love, yet the love is the same. In this unity of love, God becomes the first lover, the one who makes me a lover, makes the beloved a lover. God loves "first and last."[63]

Making God the first and the last changes what Levinas claims of God. God, by being the first and best lover, becomes incarnate in love. Like Levinas, however, Marion reveals that God is revealed through relation with others. In this revelation of God as love, of the Other as loving in the same way as God, in my loving this same way, I find that Marion again provides a way to ethics that emerges from paradox as glory and destitution. Instead of the critiques discussed above, I find that Marion provides two critiques of Lévinas that add to Levinas's phenomenological ethics instead of defeating them. First, Marion asserts that Lévinas stops short of love. Lévinas's ethics fail to venerate the unique and unsubstitutable particularity of the other. Only love, Marion argues, can prevent the other from being reduced to a concept; and only love can know the excess that rises from the weight of the counter-gaze. Second, the givenness of the gift calls me to responsibility, yet, contrary to Lévinas's account, the face of the other is only one source of the call. All the various forms of saturated phenomena open to the excessive intuition that evades constitution as an object. The reversal of intentionality that attests to the primacy of the ethical in Lévinas characterizes all the saturated phenomena.[64] "The visibility of appearing now [with the saturated phenomena] arises against the flow of intention –following a paradox, a counter-appearance, a visibility counter to the aim. And in fact, each type of saturated phenomenon (or paradox) inverts intentionality, therefore makes a call possible, indeed inevitable."[65] The event, the idol, the flesh, and the icon accomplish givenness as the gifted

---

[63] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, p. 222

[64] *Being Given*, pp. 266-267

[65] *Being Given*, p. 267

receives its phenomenality, and the gifted becomes responsible for the received givenness. The gifted one now must respond to the call of the givenness, and be transformed by the gift.

The implications of the latter critique are the irreducibility of experience, and experience's transformative impact. When confronted with the excess of the saturated phenomena the gifted (*l'adonné*) must yield and submit to what it has to give. Each of the saturated phenomena arises counter to intentionality and calls *l'adonné* in multiple ways. First, the call denotes a summons to which the gifted submits and surrenders. The summons displaces the gifted. Her individuality no longer stands at the fore, but "relation here precedes individuality."[66] The reception of the other in the summons transforms identity as individuality submits to the more originary relation. Second, the call denotes surprise that manifests from the overwhelming shock of the summons. Surprise seizes the gifted since his attention to the other makes him unable to act. The gifted can only watch attentively, be available, and suffer the ecstasy of surprise.[67] Third, the call denotes an interlocution where the gifted find herself addressed by the other. "[I]nterlocution opens onto the indeterminate or anonymous Other. Thus the gifted is delivered straightaway—with its birth—from solipsism." Fourth, the gifted finds himself "preceded by a call already there." That the call precedes and defines the gifted makes the call an undeniable facticity. The call is more originary than the self, even to the extent that "it opens only onto this very fact that some gift happens to *me* because it precedes *me* originarily in such a way that I must recognize that I proceed from it."[68] These meanings of the call prevent the gifted from being defined exclusively by asymmetrical responsibility to the other. Marion worries that

---

[66] *Being Given*, p. 268

[67] *Being Given*, pp. 268-269

[68] *Being Given*, p. 270

without a richer notion of response to the multifaceted call the gifted collapses into a state of difference from the other.

> Responsibility cannot be restricted to just one of the paradoxes [saturated phenomena]—the icon, however privileged it might be—nor confined to just one horizon, be this the ethical. Responsibility belongs officially to all phenomenality that is deployed according to givenness: what is given (the call) succeeds in showing itself as a phenomenon only on the screen and according to the prism that the gifted (the responsal) alone offers it.[69]

Lévinas's notion of responsibility for the Other cannot respond to the different ways the gift is given, and therefore cannot be fully open to the gifted. Marion admits that Lévinas's phenomenology of the face provides the way to move beyond constitution, but fails to maintain the individuality of the one who responds to the call.

Responsibility for the Other is not all that is gained in the call. Likewise, the gifted is more than her responsibility to the Other. The two critiques of Lévinas that Marion provides come together in the need to maintain individuality. Marion suggests that Lévinas's injunction, "thou shall not kill," might be expressed differently by different persons. One might hear alternatively, "Become who you are," "Determine yourself as the being for whom being is at stake," "Love your God with all your heart, soul and mind" "Do unto other as you would have them do unto you," or "Love me."[70] In the different expressions of the call, different faces are seen; just as different responses are give – even sometimes in silence. The particularity of the call avoids what Lévinas cannot – the universalization of the face of the Other such that any other can be substituted for the Other.[71]

---

[69] *Being Given*, pp. 293-294

[70] *In Excess*, p. 118

[71] Cf. *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 93

Marion does not deny the moral implications of Lévinas's ethical phenomenology, but he is more concerned with maintaining particularity in the caller and in the gifted.[72] The experience that gives me to myself comes from a uniquely gifted Other to whom I owe a unique response. Marion says that the knowledge of the heart, the knowledge that love make present (even though it cannot be constituted) supersedes any ethical concern. What love knows – namely the unique other – is more important than what love does. Marion provides a way beyond the impersonal morality of Kant and the substitutability of the other in Lévinas. Yet the order of knowing and doing, I find, both relate to love. Namely if it is valuable to get to the knowledge of love, there must be practices, or at least postures, that make reception of love more likely. As Marion says, one must train the will to want to love.

Yet, Marion provides few clues to loving without judgment, and through particularity other than willing love. "Only the will that loves," he writes, "can welcome the other's gaze." But, I wonder, how do I will love? Does simply wanting to love make one able to love? And if willing love works, does this love manifest itself automatically without possessiveness, desire to control, or to judge? Does willing love enable one to "give even from our surplus, love the least among us"? The distance between desire to love and actually loving can be broached by clarifying what willing love looks like, by attuning willing love to the practice of the virtues, and the ascetic practices that make them possible. Training the will follows from the practices that involve prudence, humility, and generosity.

---

[72] See, for example Marion's "From the Other to the Individual," in *Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond*, ed. Regina Schwartz (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 43-59. He expresses the idea that Levinas has little more capacity to get to the otherness of the Other, since Levinas is also tangled in the trap of impersonal duty. He writes, As much a respect for the law, and for the same reasons, the face only remains an epiphany of morality in keeping itself indifferent to any particular person. To pass from the Other to a particular Other, or even to On such Other, would be equal to turning away from the universal imperative –"You shall not kill" –which every face dictates, as also to invalidate the universality characteristic of the moral law—"Act in such a way that the maxim of your will can *always* be valid *at the same time* as a principle of *universal* legislation. (p. 51)"

These virtues are described by St. Maximus the Confessor and Pseudo-Dionysius as practices that make one able to love God and neighbor. Marion recognizes the need for the virtues. He sees the need for self-judgment with respect to love and charity, and "that sometimes we do not love charity."[73] Further, he points to some places where "work on the self" can move toward love of charity, and reception of the neighbor in love. Kenosis and apophaticism present two routes toward aligning the will with the desire to love. Even as they represent movements away from metaphysics they provide ways toward ethics.

Though Marion's criticisms of Levinas focus on ontological difference, freedom, and the blurring of the human and the divine, Marion shows enough kinship with Levinas to allow that ethics escapes the confinement of being, and that the account of love that Marion develops includes some key aspects of Levinas's ethics. Likewise, Levinas, in a debate with Marion in 1986, agrees that love need to have primacy over ethics.[74] Adding the icon to the phenomenology of the face does more than allow for freedom of response, it provides an alternative way to view the Other. With Levinas, what moves me to devote myself to the other is her destitution and my shame. With Marion's account, I find, the Other is more than his destitution, the Other, as icon, is truly a para-*doxa*, a confrontation between the glory and the destitution of the human. Moreover, the confrontation with the Other becomes more than that of a hostage, but a free response to both the destitution and the beauty of the Other who reveals more than the injustice of life, but its possibility as well.

---

[73] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 155

[74] Levinas explains, "I am completely in agreement. I would like to add that 'irreversible relation' suggests a relationship with diachrony. What does this relation signify: Or rather, from where does it gain its ground: At what moment? I know that it is not an intentionality, but it has a sense; and the reason why I say this word more easily, this word which it too beautiful or too pious or too vulgar…is because it signifies that the relation with the other is the relation with the unique. I do not speak immediately of the unique one who commands it [God?], I speak of the one who is the 'object' of love: the Other, the unique and thus the individual who is still part of a genus. It is even the only possibility for the unicity of concrete being. It is concrete in love." In "From the Other to the Individual," p. 54 (op. cit. *Autrement que savoir* (debate at the Centre Sèvres, June 3, 19860, Paris, 1988, p. 75).

That the Other can appear as beautiful, as ineffable, as glorious in the face of poverty and destitution is what truly surprises me, what leaves me unable to comprehend the mystery that is the Other.

Marion expresses this notion of paradox with the icon of Christ in *The Crossing of the Visible*. Christ, as human, undergoes a process of kenosis and empties himself of his divine appearance. Christ appears as a slave, disfigured, as the ultimate paradox of God become human. This paradox contains the poverty and destitution of the human condition as well as the promise of the glory and "splendor of love."[75] The icon of Christ and the icon of the face of the other accomplish the paradox of glory and splendor in destitution and poverty. To receive the call of the icon is to enter into relation with the other that liberates me from my one-sided understanding, from my constituting aim that assumes it can know the other as an object, that liberates from the economy of exchange that sees the other as a "charity project."[76] Through this paradox, "Love is defined by its ignorance of the other."[77] In other words, love is defined by receiving the paradox as an excess, as what makes it possible to enter into relation, and to act ethically. With the paradox, Marion accomplishes liberation of the human face from its exclusive identification with poverty, and to allow it to impact me with its abundance of glory as well. What he accomplishes is a way to thing about ethics beyond (though still including) what I can (or ought to) do for the other as one who is merely in need, one who needs me, but a way of opening myself to receive the uncontainable glory of the other, whom I need, who gives me to myself, who comes before me and makes it possible for me to love, to receive, to give, and to engage in ethics.

---

[75] *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 62

[76] Cf. *The Erotic Phenomenon*, p. 4

[77] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 157

A metaphorical example of this difference can be seen in the way Ivan and Alyosha view the story of St. John the Merciful. For Ivan the story of this saint lying down with the sick man to keep him warm betrays a lie, the lie of misplaced duty. He says, "I'm convinced that he did it with the strain of a lie, out of love enforce by duty, out so self-imposed penance. If we're to come to love a man, the man himself should stay hidden, because as soon as he shows his face—love vanishes."[78] Ivan sees the action of the Saint as disingenuous, and goes on to explain that all potential benefactors view the suffering of another as an occasion to show their magnanimity, as a way to keep a distance between the one who receives benevolence herself. Ivan claims that all benefactors act arbitrarily "not even from the wickedness of his heart," but from the fact that the human up-close is unlovable. Alyosha, however, thinks that because the Other person is capable of loving, that loving the Other might be possible. Without the confrontation with the glory of the Other, without the confrontation with the Other's capacity for love, the Other makes me a hostage, and in my shame I devote myself to the Other out of a misplaced sense of duty and not out of love. Only when the Other's glory – the Other's capacity to love and be loved – confronts me with a paradox of glory and destitution can the possibility of ethics beyond duty – an ethics of love – emerge. The glory of the face of the Other makes the Other unconstitutable, makes the Other transcend my capacity to know her as an object.

The story that Ivan tells reveals something important about the how I can respond to the Other; it reveals that when I find the other absent of love, I only see the other as "foul

---

[78] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), pp. 236-237. Levinas was influenced greatly by this work, and throughout his corpus he uses Zosima's dictum, "we are all guilty for all, before all, and I most of all" to explain his own understanding of ethics. What I find is lost in Levinas's understanding of this saying is that the highness of the Other comes not only from my shame and guilt at not having done enough, but also from the recognition of the glory of the image of God that Zosima see in the Other. In what follows, I do not follow Levinas strictly. I attempt, instead, to show the difference that Marion sees between his understanding of the other and Levinas's.

and festering," and can only approach the other with the "strain of the lie of duty." The two main dangers I find in Levinas's account of ethics are first that he reduces humanness to suffering, and second that the face represents abstract humanity, and not the particular Other. To take on the guilt and suffering of humanity in response to the face of the Other ignores the unique beauty of that person. Without including the beauty of the other, I can act out of self-righteous arrogance (and see myself as God), out of self-serving masochism (and take pleasure in pain), or out of self-deluded and insincere affectation toward the other (and evade love).

Alyosha provides an example of how the paradox of the face impacts me. When the boy, Ilusheka bites Alyosha's fnger, the suffering of the boy is obvious to Alyosha. What lies hidden is how Alyosha has become an instrument of his suffering. The accusation of Illusheka's face moves Alyosha to see himself as responsible; but it also moves him to see Ilusheka as is responding to the plight of his family, out of love for his mistreated father. Alyosha sees suffering and love in Ilusheka.[79] This way of viewing Ilusheka provides a way toward reconciliation. The glory of the human face can resolve the conflict between poverty and love. When the Other confronts me with the paradox of glory in destitution – in the capacity to love even in the midst of poverty, I am gifted by the Other, given to myself as capable of loving and being loved also. Alyosha becomes gifted through Ilusheka – given a task to see his pain and his capacity for love, to alleviate his suffering and to reconcile with him. Ivan finds abstract love the only possible way to love humans. This view of love makes it purely ascetic. Love becomes an impossible and unbearable duty. Love of the particular Other who confronts me requires the paradox.

[79] Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 180ff

Though Marion does not take his phenomenology in this direction directly, he hints at it in *The Erotic Phenomenon*. He moves, in this work, from the cogito's attempt to justify itself through knowing. The cogito fails to establish itself as worthwhile through mere knowing because it is always susceptible to the question "What's the use?" The question has a ring of Levinas in it. Levinas moves to ethics to escape the possessiveness of the quest to know. He finds that knowing is trivial in comparison to the height from which the Other calls, and the debt I own the Other for having come too late and done too little. What's the use of knowing, of possessing, of manipulating, of controlling if I have neglected what reveals itself as Transcendent? The question of "What's the use?" is resolved for Marion with the love of God that love me first, last, and best. This love does not obviate the need for justice or ethics, but provides an infinite resource from which to attempt to achieve them in loving.

The union of love between humans mediated through God defines the iconic relation. The gaze of the other person reveals the love of God, reveals a divine likeness, reveals a relation that surpasses economy, possessing, controlling. The icon as the instrument of the gift of relation moves beyond ethics as a task. Ethics becomes transformed by relation to the iconic. Love surpasses ethics, yes; but, love cannot escape ethics. If I am able to become like St. John the merciful or Alyosha, it is not because I was able to commit myself to the other out of a perverse sense of duty, not because I did what duty commanded despite my revulsion at the sight of the Other, but because I was able to love the other as God loves. Love makes ethics possible, but does not eliminate them.

Making Space for Ethics

Having found in Marion an advance beyond the destitution of the Other to the glory, or the capacity of the other to love and receive love, I now try to show where space

can be made for an ethics of love in Marion's phenomenology. Marion's phenomenology of saturation is laden with ethical language. He seeks to remove philosophy's preoccupation with constitution of objects and their inseparable link with conquest, mastery, and control. He seeks instead respect for particularity, openness to receive, restoration of charity, and willing of love. He wants to open space to receive what gives in all its complexity, elusiveness, mystery, and excess. Receiving what gives without possession or arrogance, without demanding from it or limiting its appearance, removes the temptation (and error) of metaphysical narrowness, and philosophical blindness to the richness of experience and the unknowability of the transcendent. Yet, removing the limits also removes ethics from its central position. The ego has the central position of all metaphysics since it is its own object of study, and since it asserts an "illusory" autonomy.[80] Ethics as metaphysics construes it maintains the centrality of the ego and the constitution of objects.

Marion's phenomenology of givenness, contrary to metaphysics, focuses on what gives freely and gratuitously of itself, focuses on that which de-centers the ego, on that which can only be received. To receive what gives becomes the site of transformation. The givenness of the gift cannot be comprehended or controlled, but gives the receiver to herself – shapes, calls, and decides her. "It is a matter of being exposed in one's intending a non-object, exposed to the point of receiving from this non-object determinations that are so radical and new that they speak to me and shape me far more than they teach and inform me."[81] Exposure and transformation, for Marion, point to something more like conversion than ethics. To consider transformation as part of an ethic that teaches and informs fails to do justice to the transcendence of the experience by reducing the irreducible. Yet,

---

[80] Cf. *On Descartes' Metaphysical Prism: The Constitution and the Limits of Onto-theo-logy*, trans. Jeffery L. Kosky (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 322ff.

[81] *In Excess*, p. 148

transformation implies an ethic. At the very least, it values the particularity and transcendence of otherness and thereby arouses respect. Further, the theology of the icon does not make a distinction between transformation and instruction. According to St. John of Damascus what the icon gives makes "advancement in knowledge possible" by revealing the invisible. "Therefore, images are a source of profit, help, and salvation for all since they make things so obviously manifest, enabling us to perceive hidden things. Thus, we are encouraged to desire and imitate what is good and to shun and hate what is evil."[82] For the Damascene transformation and instruction are not mutually exclusive, but intricately connected, in fact mutually supporting of one another. With the icon, the gift transforms and calls; and, the gift teaches and instructs. Ethics are implicated in the gift because it creates relation and because it instructs one in the virtues. Moreover, a certain species of ethics seems necessary to want to receive, to be willing to expose oneself, to refuse to objectify what gives, and to learn how to receive.

Since Marion focuses mainly on one species of ethics, Kantian, he finds that ethics neither transform nor teach, but command. The rational law excludes an experience of irreducible excess. The universality required of the categorical imperative forbids receptivity of the particularity of otherness by privileging respect for the moral law. The moral law creates abstractions and denies the other's uniqueness. While Marion sees Kantian ethics as incompatible with the phenomenology of givenness, and Marion's phenomenology may exclude universal duties, it may not exclude ethics as such. The emphasis on receptivity opens a space for an ethic that emphasizes preparing oneself to receive what gives, veneration of particularity, and love that exceeds measurement.

---

[82] *On the Divine Images: Three Apologies against Those Who Attack Divine Images*, trans David Anderson, (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), p. 74

Veneration of the icon prepares one for revelation. Without training one's desire to see through meditation, through relinquishing expectations, and through humility, the icon retains the phenomenality of the idol. Marion notes that *l'adonné* must also receive; *l'adonné* is gifted only insofar as she receives. Marion defines *l'adonné* according to receptivity, and thus according to preparing to receive. In this space between preparing to receive and receiving, the possibility for a non-Kantian ethics of love opens. *L'adonné*, Marion writes, is "the one who *receives* itself from what it receives."[83] Receptivity has two implications for Marion: passivity and activity. Passivity means receiving without imposing on what gives according to preconceptions, or desire. Activity means "work on itself in order to receive."[84] The phenomenology of the gift opens space for ethics first through the relational nature of giving and receiving, and second by advising "work on the self." To discern between the idol and the icon requires proper relation to the self; and, to receive the other in love requires love (charity) to take the first place among the virtues.[85] With "work on the self" and the priority of the virtue of charity, Marion reveals that he is not in opposition to ethics as such, but to ethics that, on the one hand, deny the other's unique and transcendent particularity, and, on the other, that privilege moral obligations over love. An approach to ethics that emphasizes relation as a gift, and that focuses on virtues that open one to receive love maintains Marion's privileging of charity while attempting to fill out what "work on the self" might mean with respect to charity. The phenomenology of the gift reveals that love precedes me and moreover, it reveals that relation precedes me. With the gift of relation (or as I conclude above, the gift as relation) I retain Marion's emphasis on transformation that exceeds my capacity to constitute another person as an object, his privileging of love, and his denial of

---

[83] *In Excess*, p. 48

[84] *In Excess*, p. 48

[85] Cf. *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 153

an economy of debt and credit in relation, while providing a place for mutuality, for deepening of relation, and for communion.

Inasmuch as relation implicates work on the self and receptivity implicates the virtues, Marion's phenomenology implicates ethics. If I am to have a relation with another person, I must work on extricating objectifying conceptions of him. If I am to receive the other as a gift that exceeds my ability to master and controls her, I must practice virtues that make me humble enough to see her without wanting to possess, that provide a way to give generously and without calculation, and that open me to want to receive her.

Charity, as the center piece of Marion's phenomenology of saturation, demands new approaches to thinking and acting, even as it provides new ethical requirements, albeit negatively. With Marion's critique, ethics no longer can appeal to foundations, or universals developed from abstract reasoning. Ethics no longer can claim to predict human action. And ethics can no longer value principles or duties over individual persons. Were Marion to develop an ethic, its requirements might include vigilant attentiveness to the insufficiency of reason, to the particularity of persons, and to the present, in the sense of temporality and gift.

For Marion the virtue of charity commences in the present because it "renders the gift present, presents the present as a gift."[86] In each moment charity is at play revealing whether I have loved or not, "helped [my] neighbor, given even from [my] surplus, loved the least among us."[87] This rigor of charity provides a kind of test for love, but does not

---

[86] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p.154

[87] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p.154-155; In *The Erotic Phenomenon* Marion presents a more nuanced notion of love's temporality. When articulating the promise to love, an oath is made. In the present love "accomplishes the promises of eternity without waiting (p. 209)," in uttering the oath. In a strong sense, for Marion, this means that finitude and temporality are done away with, by bringing eternity in to time. Claude Romano presents an insightful analysis of the "eschatological temporality" of Marion's erotic reduction in, "Love in Its Concept: Jean-Luc Marion's *The Erotic*

provide a way to recognize the neighbor, or the dignity of the least among us. To develop these views of love, I approach the gift of relation from the perspective of the virtue of receptivity. Receptivity as a virtue moves in two directions. First, it forces me to relinquish ways of thinking that make other persons objects of consciousness; it forces me to give up the ego's claims to know the other as a mirror of myself. Second, it enjoins me to develop virtues that promote generosity and openness to others; it helps me want to receive the irreducible otherness of the other. A virtue approach recognizes that the past, at least in part, influences the present, influences how I receive the other in the present. If one has lived as a curmudgeon, assuming the worst of people, judging them harshly, and evading contact with them, one may never be open enough to experience love in the present as a gift. But if one chooses a task like that of Mother Theresa, to see the face of Jesus in every face, to venerate each person as unique and valued, that one may be more likely to experience overwhelming, and excessive love of another. As the past informs the present, work on the self involves the future. Work on the self becomes an effort to move toward openness, and to see others iconically. This move to a virtue perspective need not be deduced from metaphysics, nor prescribe a set of universal laws. I find that Marion's phenomenology lends itself to such an approach. A virtue perspective can support a phenomenology of charity because of the ethical admonitions that phenomenology implicitly supports.[88]

Phenomenon," in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 319-335; pp. 327-328.

[88] The rigorous method of phenomenology encourages a kind of asceticism that prepares the phenomenologist to receive what gives. The efforts undertaken to deny preconceptions, to dislodge oneself from the natural attitude, and to illuminate psychological motivations present an interesting analog to the pursuit of virtues that are also gained through asceticism.

Furthermore, Marion's admonishment *that* one must will love needs to explain *how* one can will love.[89]

Marion emphasizes the insufficiency of reason to "know" love. Ethics, as much as epistemology, he claims, fails to know other persons as love knows. Love evades knowledge of another as object. Love reverses to order of reason. One does not know in order to love, but loves in order to know. Reason makes the other an object of consciousness, and confines humans to "being." Reason fails to recognize that knowledge is erotic: I desire to know before I can know. Reason deceives by forcing love to traffic humans in the currency of being and its essential properties. Furthermore, this exchange does not satisfy my desire to know. I am less concerned with the question "What is being?" than the questions "Am I loved?" and "Do I love others?"[90] The priority Marion gives to the questions of love reverses the order of knowing, and removes the pretensions of knowing as constituting being. Constituting the other forbids knowledge of another person as a unique subject. Marin explains,

> my consciousness – is the very thing that forbids love, for love should, by hypothesis, make me transcend lived experiences and my consciousness in order to reach pure alterity. Whence the infernal paradox, universally suffered by all unfortunate lovers as their definitive fatality: when I love, what I experience of the other in the end, in reality arises from my consciousness alone […] Love appears as an optical illusion of my consciousness, which experiences only itself.[91]

Thought about the other must be interrupted – overcome – by a different order. "The order of charity" knows differently, knows beyond reason, constitution, and being, knows not

---

[89] Cf. *Prolegomena to Charity*, "What Love Knows," pp. 153-169; my wager here is that there are certain virtues that make one more likely to want to love. Further, the development of these virtues can be seen in Marion's work, and in the works of the Patristics on whom he relies. For example, Pseudo Dionysus's apophatic way provides a path by which one can relinquish objectifying others; and St. Maximus the Confessor provides ascetic practices that aid in the development of the virtues, and love. I develop these perspectives below.

[90] Cf. *The Erotic Phenomenon*, "The Silence of Love;" and *Prolegomena to Charity*, "What Love knows," pp. 155-156

[91] *Prolegomena to Charity*, p. 75

through seeing, grasping, judging, or conquering, but knows through the luminosity and radiance of love.[92] To know according to love transgresses reason. Though Marion wants to move beyond reason, he does not want to evacuate cognition. Like Pascal, Marion thinks that the heart has its own reason. He thinks that loves (or the heart's) way of knowing rehabilitates cognition since sentiment has a cognitive element.

Following Pascal's three orders of knowing, Marion demonstrates that what is known according to reason, the second order (according to Descartes's *ego*), denies love's knowledge by focusing only on self-knowledge. "[T]he *ego* must be known before all else; thus it cannot be loved to the exclusion of all else […] As it is necessary to see the *ego*'s dignity, it is necessary to hate the *ego* in the realm of charity."[93] The content of love eludes the ego's grasp since it demands the first position, and thereby guarantees its own dignity. Just as the appetites, the ego desires satisfaction. Yet, the erotic drives of the appetites and the ego point to the fundamental relation of love to all experience. Humans desire love. And love motivates human action. The *ego cogito* creates an unnatural relation to love and knowledge. By displacing the priority of love with thinking, Marion finds that Descartes must redescribe what it means for him to be human. Marion concludes that the *cogito* must admit "I am a thinking thing, that it to say, one who doubts, who affirms, who denies, who understands some things, who is ignorant of many, who wills, who imagines, and also even, who feels. Fine, except that it follows by omission that I am no longer supposed to love,

---

[92] *On Descartes' Metaphysical Prism*: *The Constitution and Limits of Onto-theo-logy in Cartesian Thought,* trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 319; Robyn Horner finds that Marion is not clear about the relation between knowing and loving. Love that escapes constitution knows (*connait*) through "personal recognition" rather than through conceptual knowledge that knows (*sovoit*) according to reason. Though Marion is consistent in his use of the two kinds of knowing his appraisal of how and what love knows is not always clear. See Robyn Horner, "The Weight of Love," in *Counter Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (Norte Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 235-251.

[93] *On Descartes' Metaphysical Prism*, p. 324; For an account of Pascal's account of the heart's reason see Thomas S. Hibbs, "Habits of the Heart: Pascal and the Ethics of Thought" *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 45:2, June 2005, pp. 203-221.

nor to hate; or better, I am of the sort that I neither have to love nor to hate, at least in the first instance."[94] To define oneself according to knowing tilts self-understanding to objectness, and creates a deception. "[W]e can never, without lying to ourselves, claim to arrive at a fundamental erotic neutrality."[95] With respect to ontology the ego is deceived about its identity. With respect to ethics the ego (as well as Kant's "good will" and Lévinas's responsibility) is deceived about its motivations. Neither ethics, nor metaphysics, as first principles, can reach the order of love since self-love (love of one's capacity to reason) dominates the rational order.

Kant emphasizes duty and denies that inclinations secure moral worth, and thereby excludes love from ethics. Lévinas reverts to the universality of the face to gain access to the other, and fails to achieve particularity that love necessitates. Descartes focuses on self-knowledge, and fails to recognize that loving is prior to knowing. The knowledge of love cannot be obtained through abstraction, universality, or self-reflection. Love knows by submitting to the gaze of the other, by suffering and passivity that no longer asks to be known by the other but receives what cannot be known through reason.

Yet, Marion emphasizes that loves does *know* something. Love does not know by evidence, by clear and distinct ideas, according to qualities of judgment, or other attributes. Love knows by the reason of the heart, by removing the self from the center of consciousness. "Central in thought, the *ego* is shown to be peripheral in charity. *I* could no longer be a *me*, decentered from *I* to the point that, already, *I* is an other – not another *me*,

---

[94] Translation modified. *The Erotic Phenomenon*, "The Silence of Love," p. 7; *L'phénomène érotique*, " "Le silence de l'amour," p. 17

[95] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, "The Silence of Love," p. 7; *L'phénomène érotique*, " "Le silence de l'amour," p. 17

but an other than *I*."[96] When the ego knows by assimilating it knows only itself. Love knows by loving; and love comes to know by being loved. Love rehabilitates knowledge by removing the *I* from the focal point of cognition. Just as the call precedes *l'adonné*, the beloved precedes the lover. Thus, the content of love (or what love knows) coincides with the act of loving. In being loved the lover knows love.

In *Prolegomena to Charity* knowing love comes about by being loved by God. "For our nearest neighbor – '*Interior intimo meo'* – is always Christ."[97] The neighbor that loves best provides the content of love by loving; and by knowing this love one becomes able to love. The content of the knowledge of love is not like stagnant propositional knowledge that the ego knows. The content of the knowledge of love is a dynamic transformative knowing. What love knows undoes what the ego knows. The ego knows "object of representation," but "only love opens up knowledge of the other as such."[98]

Marion shows that love opens up knowledge of the Other as other by comparison to how otherness is overcome by Husserl and how Kant describes the good will. Husserl attempts to move beyond knowledge of the other as knowledge of an object by analogy.[99] But in the end, I often fail because 1) analogy maintains the priority of my flesh and my ego to make comparisons; 2) I fail to admit the status of another as equal to myself; and 3) daily activities make me inattentive to the other.[100] Analogy might work to get to the humanity of

---

[96] *On Descartes' Metaphysical Prism*, pp. 325-326. Marion's analysis of the nominative (*I*) and the accusative (*me*) reflect his commitment to the passive reception of the other in love. The *I* functions according to the grasping and constituting of the *ego*, while the *me* requires another and forces the *I* to relinquish its autonomy.

[97] p. 156; An analogue to this knowing is found in *The Erotic Phenomenon* as well. Here, God acts as the one who assures love by being the first and last, and best lover. God assures that I was always already loved; and, as always already loved I am gifted as the love (pp. 221-222).

[98] *Prolegomena to Charity*, "What Love Knows," p. 160

[99] Cf. *Cartesian Meditations*, "The Fifth Cartesian Meditation," trans. Dorion Cairns, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960)

[100] *Prolegomena to Charity,* "What Love Knows," pp. 160-163

another were I to "will it and will it well;" however, the process of willing makes the other an effect of my will.[101] Marion's use of the will refers to Kant's "good will." Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative maintains that the good will would act only in such a way that one treats another as an end in itself, never only as a means to an end. This formula, according to Marion, means simply that "I truly will that the other be for me another person," more bluntly, "another *myself*."[102] Husserl's analogy cannot establish the particular "otherness" of the other even by seeing the other through the categorical imperative. Furthermore it can get beyond the demand for reciprocity that the universal, "golden rule" demands. By invoking the command to "do unto other as you would have them do unto you," neither analogy nor the categorical imperative get beyond the economy of exchange. Marion concludes from Husserl, Kant, and Descartes that the *I* (whether formulated as the intending subject, the good will, or the *ego cogito*) cannot reach the knowledge of the other; and, in fact, at each moment it tries to insist it knows the other, the *I* proves it only knows itself.

Only charity can know the other as more than another *I*. Yet charity and love get misinterpreted. The common uses of love and charity involve regard for another, interest in her well-being, concern for him, etc. These views of love miss the knowledge of otherness by assimilating the other's needs into one's own. The other becomes a mirror, and reflects my gaze back to me (as with the idol). My concern is not with knowledge of his uniqueness but with what the other thinks of me.[103] Charity operates differently. It opens space for the other to be a "personal other." The personal other is allowed to appear by freeing myself from my expectations and demands. "The other appears only if I gratuitously give him the

---

[101] *Prolegomena to Charity,* "What Love Knows," p. 163

[102] *Prolegomena to Charity,* "What Love Knows," p. 164, my emphasis

[103] *Prolegomena to Charity,* "What Love Knows," p. 165.

space in which to appear; and I have at my disposal no other space than my own; I must, then, 'take what is mine' (John 16:15), take from myself, in order to open the space where the other may appear."[104] I experience the other as a trial. I cannot control her gaze, nor can I impose my desires upon it. The weight of the gaze forces me to choose for or against charity. If I choose charity I reach the invisibility of his appearance, of his gaze that emanates from the "blackness and the emptiness" of the pupils. This gaze "judges us, frees us or constrains us, in short, loves us or hates us."[105] The suffering of the invisible gaze proves whether I have willed love or not. If I have freely allowed the other to appear, and opened myself to her judgment, I am transformed by the other's gaze; and, I gain knowledge of the otherness of her through love. The knowledge of love exceeds the knowledge of objects, of metaphysics, and common understandings of love.

With Marion's account of the knowledge of love, it is evident that ethics can help in this process. If I am to love, I must learn to renounce my self-interest, to embrace freedom, and to accept vulnerability. The kenotic processes of self-emptying, the apophatic process of unknowing, and relinquishing control are supported by Marion's phenomenology; yet, they also suggest a need to practice the virtues that make me more willing to be freed from desiring control, reflections of myself, and certainty. The practices of the virtues of humility, generosity, and prudence create habits of action and thought that engender receptivity in charity. Humility provides a way to see the neighbor without judgment, with full awareness of faults, and without the desire for praise. Generosity provides a way to welcome the neighbor without possessiveness, with the recognition of common dependence, and without calculating gain or loss. Prudence provides a way to understand the needs of the other

---

[104] *Prolegomena to Charity,* "What Love Knows," p. 166

[105] *Prolegomena to Charity,* "What Love Knows," p. 167. Here again the paradox of the human face, as glory, is at play.

without presumption, with what Joseph Pieper calls "the kind of open-mindedness which recognizes the true variety of things and situations to be experienced and does not cage itself in any presumption of deceptive knowledge."[106] The virtues of humility, generosity, and prudence function negatively as safe guards against assumptions and preconceptions about the other as they break down habits of judgment; and they function positively as the allow the truth of the other to give itself freely. The virtue perspective I propose focuses on the "work on the self" that makes reception of the other a function of apophatic practices that eschews pre-judgment, and the dismissive objectification judgment implies, makes space for the other to give without fear, and receives the other in love and truth.

The Virtues of the Idol and the Icon

Making space for the Other means making space for ethics. The phenomenality of the icon makes *l'adonné* the one who has made space, the one who has given of herself so that the Other may appear. The icon shows the beholder an exemplar of virtue; and, the one who receives the Other as an icon exemplifies receptivity. The beholder recognizes in the icon "a face (and not a spectacle), a counter-gaze (and not a reflection of my own) [that] depends uniquely on my willing it so."[107] The beholder must decide for or against love, must will love in each moment, and in "the whole span of a life."[108] This decision suggests that the willing of charity involves an inward change, and an effort to shape the will. The implication of the will implicates the virtues as well. Without the practices that imprint the choice of love on the will, I argue, Marion's phenomenology loses its force. The phenomenology of love relies on the virtues that make one want to love another person.

---

[106] Joseph Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Fortitude, Justice and Temperance*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, Lawrence E. Lynch, and Daniel F. Coogan (New York: Hartcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1965), p. 16

[107] *Prolegomena to Charity*, "What Love Knows," p. 166

[108] *Prolegomena to Charity*, "What Love Knows," p. 155

Specifically, the virtues of humility, generosity, and receptivity involve practices that open one to receive the Other lovingly. Humility prevents a distortion of the claims of self interest and independence, and moves one to see one's dependence. Generosity prevents a resumption of calculations of loss and gain, and allows one to give even of one's own space. And receptivity prevents a refusal of vulnerability, and opens one to that which one cannot anticipate or contain. Without the virtues, and the practices from which they emerge, the Other remains an object (as in Descartes *ego cogito*, or Husserl's analogy), an abstraction (as in Kant's categorical imperative), or and instance of violence (as in Lévinas's substitution). In what follows I explore the relation of the virtues to the idol and the icon. These sources provide an account of how one makes space for the Other. Unexpectedly, the idol turns out to be a source from which to learn and to train the will. The idol reveals what prevents reception of the Other as it judges desire, teaches one to see, and thwarts preconceptions. The painting, the privileged phenomenon of the idol, purifies vision and thereby makes receptivity possible. The icon surpasses the painting by giving the "invisible." The surpassing of the visible by the invisible demands that the beholder see through the icon to its invisible glory, and see through abandonment of possessiveness, control, and expectation.

In *The Crossing of the Visible* Marion explores the phenomenality of the painter and the painting, and the spectator and the spectacle as a way to transition from the idol to the icon. In this analysis, I find that Marion's true painter creates only through kenosis, whereby she risks her identity to allow "what gives" to appear and overshadow her. The painting gives the unforeseen; and the unique and irreplaceable painting opens the spectator to its glory. Confronted by the mystery of creation the painting gives, the viewer becomes surprised, disoriented, overwhelmed, and is trained to see without attempting to control or master the visible. The painting teaches the viewer surrender before what gives and provides a transition to the humility to receive, and the generosity to make space for the icon. The

painting trains the spectator to receive the visible, and thereby prepares the beholder to welcome the invisible gaze of the icon. The icon provides a route to unpossessive love, and thus to the virtue of charity. That love develops from the idol, from what the painting and the painter teach of virtue, I argue, puts ethics in play in Marion's phenomenology. The painter exemplifies practices that open to the virtues. And the painting teaches the virtues of perception that open to love. The intrigue between ethics and love intensifies with the intrigue between the idol and the icon. Ethics becomes as necessary to love as visibility is to the painting, and as invisibility is to the icon.

Before returning to the discussion of the idol and the icon, I briefly want to suggest a broader implication of this perspective. What I want to suggest is that phenomenology itself is a kind of virtue practice. The virtues of generosity, humility, and prudence are part of Marion's phenomenological tool box. In fact without these virtues, a phenomenology of givenness is impossible – ending in the solipsism, abstraction, or violence that Marion seeks to avoid. Robert Sokolowski explores this dimension of phenomenology by distinguishing the natural attitude from the phenomenological attitude.[109] The natural attitude makes up the everyday perception of the world. In this attitude, one goes about interacting with things and people in the world – in conversations, working, shopping, eating, identifying and articulating experiences and feelings. In this attitude the world is accepted as it is, as real. Furthermore, in this world this *I* is the center. The condition of the I presents a paradox: the world is there for the I, and also the I is part of the world. Drawing attention to this paradox requires that one move to the phenomenological attitude. In the phenomenological attitude the phenomenologist disengages from the natural attitude and focuses intensely.

---

[109] *Introduction to Phenomenology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 42-51; Sokolowski applies the phenomenological method to ethics in his *Moral Action: A Phenomenological Study*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985).

The phenomenologist wants to look at and describe particular phenomena without taking part in them and without changing them. This way of viewing the world requires detachment. The word Husserl uses to describe this action is reduction. It means leading oneself away from the natural attitude in order to be led back to more particular targets. The practice of phenomenology requires restraint, restraint from judgment and restrain from accepting or being influenced by presuppositions and beliefs about the world.

The phenomenologist, no less than *l'adonné*, fails without the virtues. The task of the phenomenologist, as Marion sees it, is to receive what gives in all its complexity and excess without judgment and presupposition. Marion's description of *l'adonné* is also a description of the phenomenologist. The work of the phenomenologist advances through vulnerability and openness, through receptivity and refusal of judgment. Phenomenology is a practice of the virtues.[110] And as a phenomenologist, Marion attributes virtues to the ultimate figure of his reduction, *l'adonné*. To deny that the reduction to the gift requires the virtues – requires ethics – denies the efficacy of *l'adonné* to receive the call, and to receive herself. Likewise, without the virtues the phenomenologist errs in describing the experience of the subject who becomes *l'adonné*. Without the virtues the subject reverts to the solipsism of a "self-

[110] This argument has parallels in virtue epistemology. Certain moral virtues are considered to make one better equipped to know, as in, for example, scientific research. Linda Zagzebski lists intellectual virtues that coincide with those of the phenomenologist. For example, sensitivity to detail, adaptability, creativity, open-mindedness, fairness, humility, perseverance, diligence, care and thoroughness broadly apply to persons who endeavor to know something accurately and without prejudice. Furthermore, these virtues place the one who desires to know within the moral sphere. (Cf. "The Nature of Knowledge," in *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 259-263) Israel Scheffler makes a similar claim. Scientists and mathematicians have a love of truth that motivates them to cultivate certain skills that make truth more likely to be attained. A certain way of approaching science and math (namely with humility and a capacity for surprise) makes one able to learn "from experience—capable, that is of acknowledging the inadequacies of our initial beliefs, and recognizing their need for improvement. It is thus that the testing of theories, no less than their generation, calls upon appropriate dispositions." (*Science and Subjectivity* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1982), p. 152). The phenomenologist that Husserl describes also requires these virtues as the natural attitude is suspended. That Husserl describes his method as akin to science, makes this comparison poignant especially as circumscribed within ethical and intellectual virtues. Furthermore, Marion's own emphasis on "givenness" makes these virtues all the more pertinent.

sufficient" ego. Without the virtues the prospect of the violence of substitution perpetuates a relation of violence, or an economy of exchange. And without the virtues the subject becomes no less an abstraction than the moral law. In a strong sense, Marion commends a practice of virtues, a practice inherent to the vocation of the phenomenologist. Though Marion does not admit that the virtues function ethically to develop the type of character that can receive the call, and the Other lovingly, the phenomenologist cannot proceed without them.

Viewed from the other side, virtue ethicists operate under similar constraints as phenomenologists. Most notably, virtue theorists who study specific virtues, by looking at agents who practice them well or poorly, utilize phenomenological techniques.[111] The phenomenological reduction becomes, in the hands of the virtue ethicist, a stance from which to observe the virtues without allowing presuppositions to skew their descriptions.[112] The phenomenologist and the virtue ethicist are connected in certain methodological commitments and in generating descriptions free of presuppositions. Marion's phenomenology provides the prospect of not just rich description of givenness, but also of the virtues that aid in receiving givenness. To ignore that receptivity involves the virtues, and, in fact, is a virtue, I find, impoverishes his account. Finally, an account of the virtues does not compromise the prospect of love. Just the opposite proves true. The virtues, when practiced, shape a person such that the "will to love" becomes more efficacious. I think Marion is right to say that love surpasses ethics; but, getting to love without ethics, I

---

[111] I am not attempting to attach the virtues to a metaphysical scheme. Phenomenology is a fundamentally descriptive task. The kinds of seeing and openness to receiving it involves provide ways to describe the virtues; and, furthermore, these virtues impact how one sees, receives, and describes. The descriptions need not attach to, or emerge from ontological or metaphysical claims to add to an account of the experience of love, and how it can be practiced.

[112] I am grateful to Robert C. Roberts for his discussion of the phenomenological attributes of the virtue ethicist.

think, is at best inconsistent with what humans know of love, and at worst impossible. Thus, my goal is not to demote love, but to examine how the virtues relate to love's reception and development.

Marion's project elucidates the virtues of receptivity, and their connection to love. With his description of the true painter, a description of the virtue of receptivity and the related virtues of generosity and humility emerge. Along the way, I find he develops a critique not just of Modern ethics, but of Aristotle's conception of eudaimonistic life as "self-sufficient."[113] The painter whom Marion describes seems a good candidate for the life of self-sufficiency. Though the painter works independently, the true painter is, paradoxically, a figure of interdependence. The painter is not extolled for reproducing what already appears to sight, but "grants visibility to the unseen, delivering the unseen from its anterior invisibility, its shapelessness."[114] The painter models the virtues by advancing beyond mere visibility. In this way, the painter teaches one to see. Marion writes, "if we entrust our eye to the eye of a painter, as though one were following in the footsteps of a guide, this would thus only be in order to see something other than what is visible to us. We look at what is offered by the painter only in order to see a visible that remains inaccessible

---

[113] Marion deals with Aristotle in this essay, but not with his ethics. Marion critiques Aristotle's definitions of form and matter. Marion sees in Aristotle's description of the desire of matter to take form an incomplete understanding of painting. As we shall see below, desire is undone in painting. The painter must lose the desire for the visible to attain to the unforeseen. Further, the painting itself become the judge of the desires of the viewer. See, *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 26; and Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Lambda.

It also seems possible that Marion is alluding to the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius. Dionysius denies Aristotle's assertion that negation and affirmation are opposites. Instead, Dionysius says, "Now we should not conclude that the negations are simply the opposites of the affirmations, but rather that the cause of all is considerably prior to this, beyond privations, beyond every denial, beyond every assertion." (*The Mystical Theology*, in *Pseudo-Dionysius the Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), 1000B). As shall be discussed below, Marion views the painter as working beyond sight and knowledge. This work requires negation and affirmation, but does not attain to the union of the mystical way.

[114] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 26

to our vision."[115] Normal seeing neither surprises nor respects what gives itself to be seen. Seeing here works mechanically – managing, storing, and organizing the visible. Seeing works in everyday vision through "the stupid serenity of calm possession."[116] Visibility satisfies sight since one normally guards against the breaking through of the unexpected and unforeseen. Normal seeing assures with the expectation of the mundane. "One knows what one sees and what one must see; one assures oneself that only what one sees coincides with what one must see, in a calm possession, without search, without surprise."[117] As comforting as this seeing may be, it creates boredom and weariness of self-satisfied possession. Normal seeing does not accomplish receptivity since one cannot receive what one already possesses of the visible.

In contrast to normal seeing, the painter works and sees without possessiveness. Neither reproduction nor imitation, neither management nor assurance describe the painter's seeing. Instead, the painter anticipates what is not yet seen, allows the unseen (*l'invu*) to impose on him and expose him to an "original phenomenon, newly discovered without precondition or genealogy, suddenly appearing with such violence that it explodes the limits of the visible."[118] The painter sees with more than the sense of sight. To get to the unseen

---

[115] *Crossing of the Visible*, pp. 24-25

[116] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 24; In *Reduction and Givenness* Marion shows that the call remains concealed in the state of boredom that Heidegger describes in *What is Metaphysics* (pp. 192-194).

[117] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 25

[118] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 25; By the "unseen" (*l'invu*) Marion suggests more than what goes without notice or detection in seeing, but what would remain unseen without the painter becoming its vehicle to visibility. The painter, then, acts like a prism through which the unseen is refracted and made visible. The contrast between the unseen and the unnoticed can be seen in the description Marion gives of "to look at." ""To look at' therefore means to resist the flux of the visible, the rising of *l'invu*, which, in tight battalion, does not cease, volcanically, to make its new redness shine on the submerged surface of the world. 'To look at' means to avoid the irrepressible discharge of *l'invu* aspiring to be made visible […] I am looking at the visible by subtraction from a frame outside its endless tide, without beginning or limit. 'To look at,' that is to say, 'to manage the excess of the visible,' means to frame it in the frame, the *templum* [temple, sacred space] that the inspection of my look traces." *In Excess*, p. 57

the painter must see beyond the mundane, behind the assurance of appearances, and through the darkness to bring the unforeseen to light.[119] Marion's description of the bringing to the light the unseen is worth quoting at length.

> By what gift [*grâce*] does one become a painter? Certainly it is not enough to be able to see, to be on duty with a gaze, so to speak, to have an eye (*inteuri, in-tueri, re-garder*) for the visible already available and on display every day, since in that case every nonblind person would know how to paint. If the painter rules over the access of the unseen to the visible, his gift thus has nothing to do with his vision of the visible but with his divination of the unseen [*l'invu*]. The painter, like the blind man, sees more than the visible, painting and seeing par excellence. The painter allows his gaze to wander in obscurity on this side of the visible, slipping under the line of visibility, positioned just under the watermark of the visible – as in subwork [*sous-oeuvre*], in the darkened hold of the visible that still saturates the unseen. Thus, in vessels of old, the deepest hold, far beneath the watermark line, always remained filled with sea water. It is even to that point that the blind gaze of the painter descends: he is lost in the unseen, in order to locate there what waits only for him to bring it up to the full sun of visibility. The painter works in the obscure chaos [Genesis 1:2] that precedes the separation of the waters below and the waters above [Genesis 1:7], the distinction between the unseen [*l'invu*] and the visible. He works before the creation of the first light [Genesis 1:3]. He goes back to the creation of the world, half witness, half archangel-laborer. There is also the risk that in finishing the work he will lose himself, as if, by going back before the separation of the waters, before the separation of the light from darkness, he has also gone back before the distinction between good and evil. For certainly more than any of the other arts, painting directly and essentially involves a matter of moral choice.[120]

---

[119] The unseen differs from the invisible, because the unseen can become visible and the invisible cannot. Visibility marks the idol – which refuses invisibility; while invisibility (untargetability) marks the icon – which refuses constitution as an object. Cf. *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 25; *In Excess*, p. 57.

[120] *The Crossing of the Visible*, pp. 26-27; this passage reflects the earlier critique of Nietzsche's will to power. The choice to act morally here is necessitated by going beyond good and evil. The painter Marion describes appears to be part Creator and part Zarathustra. Zarathustra's journey from above to below parallels the painter's journey. Zarathustra's first speech to the people in the market place makes this clear: "One must be a sea to be able to receive a polluted stream without becoming unclean. Behold, I teach you the overman: he is this sea; in him your great contempt can go under." (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), p. 13) Marion describes the vision of everyday seeing as a kind of complacency and boredom. The painter differs from those who look at the world with complacency, as the overman differs from the crowd. Yet, the painter realizes his dependence on the unseen to create, while the overman relies on self-transcendence. The lack of dependence in Zarathustra, paradoxically, becomes the source of his "virtues." "Uncommon is the highest virtue and useless; it is gleaming and gentle in its splendor: a gift-giving virtue is the highest virtue. […] This is your thirst: to become sacrifices and gifts yourselves; and that is why you thirst to pile up all the riches in your soul. Insatiably your soul strives for treasures and gems, because your virtue is insatiable in wanting to give. You force all things to and into yourself that they may flow back out of your well as the gifts of your love." Marion wants to go beyond Zarathustra's gift-giving, beyond forceful taking that

The painter is a creator whose efforts relate more to opening than to capturing what gives itself through the chaos, and darkness. The painter exemplifies the risk of kenosis while performing the act of creation. The connection between self-emptying and creation moves through receptivity. In order to receive the painter cannot assume she already possess what has not yet become visible. Thus, to receive the salvation of the unseen, the painter must lose his control over the visible. Salvation and creation are united in this "resurrection" the painting provides. It only occurs if the painter is willing to lose her very identity. Receptivity marks the painter's endeavor and puts him in a moral situation. The painter becomes responsible for the decision to bear the blindness out of which she creates, for what she witnesses, and for how well she receives.[121]

The painter receives because he embodies the virtues related to receptivity: namely humility and generosity. The imagery Marion uses – blindness, wandering, darkness, lostness, chaos – suggests that to accede to the unseen one must relinquish control of the visible, and must relinquish one's status as possessor and manager of the visible. Humility and generosity work together to make receptivity possible. Humility is necessary here since to relinquish control is to take the risk, perhaps, of giving all one has – one's very identity. To give oneself over to the unkown, and to give up one's mastery is likewise an act of generosity. Humility works to remove obstacles to receiving. Humility moves one away

---

precedes giving. The painter receives through passivity, through giving of herself. The overman and the painter receive in order to give; but only the painter receives in dependence on that which cannot be attained by mere seeing. Nietzsche's will to power must transgress its own a-morality, must risk its own will to power, and risk the moral act.

[121] Thomas A. Carlson analyzes the passage with respect to *l'adonné* who, like the painter, receives salvation from a blind decision to become responsible for "all phenomenality – to the point of resembling the creator and savior." Though I find Carlson's analysis admirable and insightful, I want to emphasize the progression from the painter to *l'adonné* and the virtues from which this progression arises. See "Blindness and the Decision to See: On Revelation and Reception in Jean-Luc Marion," in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 169-172.

from concern about what one can accomplish on one's own, what is within one's own power. Through humility the painter denies self-sufficiency, and accepts vulnerability. Humility thereby begets generosity. By denying that what the painter has within her control can accede to the unseen, she is able to give her talent, her ability, and her self to the unknown. Generosity recognizes that to be emptied of oneself allows one to be filled with what otherwise would be unattainable. Reception of the unseen proves a decidedly "moral choice." The choice of humility and generosity make the painter dependent on what he cannot control; and only in that relinquishing of control can the painter receive what the unforeseeable offers. The impact of this moral choice, Marion suggests, unites the painter both to Christ and to the act of Creation. Marion explains,

> The painter descends to the undecidable frontier of the visible and the unseen only in order to cross it himself. Feeling his way, one by one, he leads the unseens [*les invus*] from archaic obscurity to the light of visibility. […] Each painting gives us a Eurydice, saved (and not lost) because she was seen, even though she remained unseen to everyone other than the nightly diurnal eye of the painter. Orpheus did not sing; he painted. Or better, he saw in the unseen what the shroud of darkness could not hide, with its mute and powerless requirement to appear. He understood, from the vigilance of his benevolent gaze, the anxious desire to appear. […] So it was not for nothing that the early Christians claimed the title of Orpheus for Christ, who led the captive out of Hades [Ephesians 4:8]. Every painting participates in a resurrection, every painting imitates Christ, by bringing the unseen to light. […] The painter must lose himself in order to be saved (and to escape). Like Christ, he is neither welcomed nor saved, because he first gives himself, without ever knowing in advance if he will lose himself or be saved.[122]

Creation, for the painter, becomes an act of sacrifice. The painter relinquishes the desire to see what is evident to sight in order to be emptied of herself. Only in self-emptying can the painter receive what otherwise remains unseen. The tension between desire for control and the desire for (and fear of) the unanticipated heighten as the sacrifice necessary for reception of the unforeseen nears.

---

[122] *The Crossing of the Visible*, pp. 27-28

The virtue of receptivity extends beyond the vision of the unforeseen. In self-emptying, in sacrifice, the painter gives that which is her salvation and undoing. The painter's undoing becomes her salvation if she gives the divination away – gives it to the canvas, and to the potential viewer. The gift does not rest with the painter as a possession. And perhaps, this is the lesson Marion wishes to point to with Orpheus. He can transport Eurydice from the underworld if only he does not look back at her, if only he can resist the possession of sight. If he looks at her, they both are lost. Orpheus is dependent on Eurydice as much as she is dependent on him. He can deliver her only if he remains vulnerable to her willingly following, and only if he does not attempt to master her through the assurance of vision. Orpheus must see without sight, see with love's trustful dependence. Like with Christ, if one looks only at the swollen, bruised corpse taken from the cross - without the unseen vision of the resurrection to come – one cannot see Christ.[123] The mystery of the resurrection cannot be attained by reliance on sight alone. Just as receptivity of the unforeseeable cannot occur on the painter's sight, nor through self-sufficient reliance on one's skill. The painter relies less on technique, perspective, color, or brush work, than on receiving the unforeseeable itself in humility and generosity.

---

[123] Dostoevsky makes this observation in *The Idiot*. A copy of Hans Holbein's painting, "Christ's Body in the Tomb," hangs on the wall of Rogozhin's home. Holbein painted this picture with a drowned man's corpse as his model. Christ appears in it without any life, bruised, discolored, beyond hope of resurrection. In an intimate meeting, Rogozhin tells Prince Myshkin that he likes looking at the painting. Myshkin replies, "At that painting! A man could even lose his faith from that painting!" Rogozhin agrees, "lose it he does." The dead Christ is pictured without any glimmer of the resurrection to come. Dostoevsky, like Marion, points to the hope of the unseen, and the unforeseeable – the resurrection itself – as the only vision that can keep one from losing faith that Christ's death is salvific. But without the death of Christ, and the humility of suffering such a death, there is no resurrection. This pairing of life and death, and death and life, cannot be understood by "looking at it." It can only be understood through the vision of love. It can only be seen through compassion, through non-possessive love. From Dostoevsky's perspective the painting further diminishes one's capacity for faith as it depicts Christ in utter isolation. Dostoevsky's experience before the firing squad becomes relevant here as well. It was only through this experience of suffering that he returns to community, and finds the simple faith of the "peasants" that revives his own faith. See *The Idiot*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 2001), p. 218; see also Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865-1871* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 327-328.

Aristotle's self-sufficiency cannot help the painter to receive the unforeseen – the possibility of resurrection, nor to engage in the moral choice of creation. Though Aristotle and Marion see the painter and the self-sufficient person as like a god, god-likeness operates differently in both. Aristotle emphasizes that the contemplative life is most like the gods' since it is most self-sufficient.[124] For Marion, the painter becomes a teacher to sight, while for Aristotle, the painter relies on skill. At least with respect to the magnificent person, self-sufficiency leads to happiness.[125] The painter Marion describes relies on a different set of virtues that lead to interdependence. The painter is humbled by the chaos and darkness in which he is submerged. The painter must be generous with respect to the vision of the unseen – neither attempting to possess nor control it with thought or action. And the painter must be open to receive what is otherwise than she could have imagined. Furthermore, even with respect to the virtues of character, Aristotle privileges virtues that lend the agent the appearance of self-sufficiency (e.g. in the virtues concerned with money, liberality and magnificence, the one who has the means to give is more praise-worthy than the one who receives; and in the virtues concerned with honor, pride and ambition, the one who is due more honor is more praiseworthy than the one who gives honor). Those who

---

[124] Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1178b25-33, trans. W. D. Ross, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001).

[125] It is true, of course, that self-sufficiency is not Aristotle's only concern. When he discusses friendship, the friendships of use and pleasure have their own sense of self-sufficiency. In these cases self-sufficiency relates to an imperfection in the friendship. The friend is incidental to the use or pleasure derived from friendship. Further, the highest friendship Is one of equality and mutuality. Martha Nussbaum even questions whether Aristotle is interested in self-sufficiency. She thinks that Aristotle's understanding of relational goods may be more like vulnerability. See Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, "The vulnerability of the good human life," (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 343-372.

Yet, much like the virtue of magnificence is a virtue that aides in attaining higher virtues (such as magnanimity and justice), Marion's painter is a precursor to iconic seeing. Their views on painting and its function operate differently. The lesson of Marion's painter is not self-sufficiency but dependence. This dependence makes Marion's painter less like a technician, and more like the vunerable friend Nussbaum discusses.

have the least need for others, and who appear to have the least need, attain to the highest levels of practical virtue.

One interesting case is the magnificent person. Aristotle describes the magnificent person "as like an artist; for he can see what is fitting and spend large sums tastefully."[126] Aristotle's use of the artist as an analog to the magnificent person points to both his conception of giving, and his conception of the artist. According to Aristotle, the magnificent person and the artist perform their activities for a desired consequence. The artist wants to create something that will be admired as valuable; and the magnificent person wants to give in order to receive honor. He says, "The most valuable possession is that which is worth most, e.g. gold, but the most valuable work of art is that which is great and beautiful (for the contemplation of such a work inspires admiration, and so does magnificence); and a work has an excellence—viz. magnificence—which involves a magnitude."[127] Aristotle's artist never loses himself, and never, from Marion's perspective, is saved. For Marion the act of creating is not self-sufficient; in fact, it involves the self only as much as the self submits to that which can either save or undo. Aristotle's artist maintains the status quo of the complacent reception of what one desires. Yet the magnificent person is self-deceived. Ignoring reliance on others, forgetting help of others makes the magnificent person think himself invulnerable, and thereby makes him insensitive to that which is out of his control.[128]

---

[126] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1122a34-35

[127] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1122b14-19

[128] Thomas S. Hibbs makes a similar point with respect to the magnificent person's insensibility to mercy. He says self-sufficiency "erodes our ability to see and respond appropriately to others in need. The root of this vice is a hardening of the heart such that we are not moved to assist the needy. […] Aquinas contends further that 'to repute oneself happy' and invulnerable to suffering is a result of the vice of pride, whose false sense of justice is actually a form of scorn." From this perspective, self-sufficiency does more than block one from receiving as the painter does, but also blocks one from seeing others as icons. I revisit this below. See "Virtue and Practice," in ?, p. 60.

The artist described by Aristotle comes closer to giving what Marion describes as the spectacle. The spectacle delivers what the spectator desires to see. Yet the spectacle blocks the spectator from the moral choice of creation – the true painting or the icon. The spectacle acts as a screen, protecting the spectator from the danger of the chaos of the unknown, protecting the spectator from being seen by displaying what the spectator desires to see on a (e.g. television) screen.[129] What appears on the screen is what one wants to see, the image that she wants to believe she possesses. The difference between the painting and

---

[129] *Crossing of the Visible*, pp. 50-53. Marion returns to Nietzsche here as well, and joins Nietzsche in a critique of contemporary culture. Marion's critique, however, finds Nietzsche as one of its targets. Marion shows that Nietzsche does not overcome Platonic metaphysics, as he claims, but merely reverses the order of metaphysics. Plato's metaphysics emphasize that reality is higher than appearance. And Nietzsche famously traces the destruction of this belief in history. Through Christianity, Kant, and Empiricism the real world moves from something superfluous to something that is abolished along with the apparent world ("How the Real World Became a Myth," *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London and New York: Penguin Classics, 1990) pp. 50-51). Marion sees this outcome as inevitable, but not as an affirmation of Zarathustra. In a culture where identity is decided by image, Marion regards the encapsulation of personality by the image as nihilistic. One no longer chooses between the real and the apparent, one no longer has an identity, not even as an image – as appearance – but one now is an image of an image. "I must constitute myself as an image, no longer first an image of me, but rather an image of the idol expected by the viewers—an idol, the image of a desire, thus of a voyeuristic gaze; I must, in order to be, give myself up, twice: to the gaze and to the desire of the viewers. My own desire to be seen demands, in the end that I let myself be seen as an approximate image of the idol desired by those who, in order to be, see (*Crossing of the Visible*, pp. 52-53)." Abolishing reality, and finally abolishing appearance, results in a metaphysical nihilism that no longer privileges the real, neither does it privilege appearance. When Nietzsche abolishes the distinction between the real and the apparent, he initiates a destruction of the original that he certainly did not desire, but may have created.

Nietzsche's account of the destruction of the real world is consistent with his views of Christianity. Since Christian morality destroyed desire, destroying Christian morality makes it possible for Nietzsche to spiritualize desire. When desire is spiritualized it is purified by the instincts ("Morality as Anti-Nature," *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 62). Yet, even though Nietzsche wants to revitalize desire – to make a life of affirmation possible – by making the desires "rule," Nietzsche loses the vital instincts – war, joy, dancing, laughter – in the caricature that is made of desire. Without morality desire sinks into a dark pit – what Marion calls the image of the image, idolizing something removed from life, from the subject who desires. Thus, Marion sees Nietzsche as perpetuating his own "condemnation of life." The life of desire, when dislodged from one metaphysical system (Platonism or Christianity) and replaced with another (materialism, the eternal return), attaches value to desire as such and makes fulfillment of desire possible without war, dancing, etc., and makes it possible without any kind of activity except "looking at." In this way Marion attaches the formula of the spectacle, "to be is to be perceived," to Nietzsche (*Crossing of the Visible*, p. 52). Only the "real world" is truly destroyed with Nietzsche's destruction of metaphysics. The apparent world, the world as an image of an image, becomes the real metaphysics of Nietzsche; and for Marion this metaphysics is nihilism.

the spectacle is that the spectacle offers itself, without condition, and without surprise, gives itself with the expectation that the spectator had anticipated it already. The spectacle delivers what Aristotle might call the useful and the pleasant. The painting however offers something that shakes one out of the indifference of seeing, something irreducible to either the pleasant or the useful. Marion explains, "The painting lives as human beings do: singularly, for itself, unique and irreplaceable. […] The true painting does not rise from one visible to another but implores the visible already seen to allow itself to be increased and opened by a new glory."[130] Though the painting has its own "self-sufficiency," only the unforeseen, the unpredictable, gives more than was desired, more than is "fitting" and "tasteful," or useful and pleasant. "The authentic painting annuls our desire in order to give rise to a new one."[131]

The painter acts as a guide to the unforeseen, and the painting forces one beyond the common place of self-interested and self-sufficient morality. Marion's true painting puts desire on trial and calls self-sufficiency into question. The viewer of a painting believes, that due to the sheer visibility of the painting, he can judge it. But the viewer finds that the painting judges desire itself. The idol places desire before the viewer, and reveals the viewer's hopes and longings, what he wants and admires. The visible splendor of the painting prevents intentional aims at it, instead it returns the intentional aim to the beholder "after the fashion of an invisible obstacle—or mirror."[132] No matter the expectation, or the concept by which one attempts to welcome it, the painting exceeds expectation and surpasses the concept that sight cannot perceive.[133] The painting gives too much to see, too

---

[130] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 29

[131] *Crossing of the Visible*, p. 29

[132] *Being Given*, p. 229

[133] *In Excess*, 60

much to keep in view. And vision fails to perceive what the painting gives to see. No matter what one grows to understand of the painting, "the givenness of the visible gives rise to other questions."[134] These questions provoke no single answer, no single concept to explain the visible. Instead, the painting summons one to return to it again and again, to see it again and again—to see anew what it gives of visibility. Each new seeing presents a confrontation with a new concept, and not an addition of one intuition to the next. "The intuitive given of the idol imposes on us the demand to change our gaze again and again, continually, be this only so as to confirm its unbearable bedazzlement."[135] As I see it and it confronts me, my horizon is changed by establishing "so many invisible mirrors of myself."

When Marion states "Name your idol and you will know who you are," he reveals the nature of desire. Desire expects what it wants. The desire to see expects the painting to satisfy the look. But, the painting is a "nonobject, unavailable, unmanageable, and unable to be (re)produced, unable to be mastered;" and, in this way, it becomes a teacher to sight. It confronts and overwhelms, giving more than can be seen, but teaching one to see it. "The painting imposes its reception like an ordeal of sight which discovers there the limits of its ability […] To learn from a painting to see a nonobject neither belongs to "aesthetics" nor is limited to that, but rather it concerns the purification of the gaze as such."[136] Marion places responsibility on the painting to purify, to teach and to liberate the gaze from the world of objects. "Art bears the responsibility of what it gives to see and, even further, the responsibility of its power to make us look. […] It therefore liberates the look from all inscription in the world […] and places us in a posture where an ethics of the look could

---

[134] *Being Given*, p. 230

[135] *Being Given*, p. 230

[136] *The Crossing of the Visible*, pp. 42-43

become at least possible."[137] Ethics and aesthetics are not opposed. Art makes ethical choices. The artist makes ethical scenes apparent and presents them to the spectator in an "irremediably ethical intrigue." "Art tears the look from the attraction of the earth, from the fascination of its single landscape."[138]

In these passages Marion connects two ethical ideas to the idol. First, the idol makes the spectator self-critical. In exposing my desire, the painting reveals and decides me. Ethically parsed, the exposure of desire exposes me to judgment, and thereby creates humility. Second, the painting purifies vision. The painting excludes the gaze from seeing within the confines of object and being, and makes the gaze receptive to what it gives. The posture the painting demands to receive what gives may not conform to Marion's understanding of ethics as rooted in action, but it does not oppose an ethic of transformation where one examines and judges desires.

The true painter and the true painting force one to be self-critical. They expose selfishness that blinds from seeing the good, and seeing it in its particularity. A further ethical implication involves the triad of the painter, the painting, and the viewer. The painting reflects its creator and its viewer. The painter may create with an audience in mind; yet, the painting reflects the artist. The viewer sees in the painting that which he thinks he can judge, yet the painting reflects back to the viewer his desires. The triad of the painter, painting and viewer cannot yet attain to community. The painter and the viewer have a mediated relation to one another, yet their relation to one another forces them back upon themselves. What is required for communion, for true community, is respect for the Other as other and openness to receive that Otherness. Only the icon can move to community. Thus, the idol serves as a transition to love – to true community. The painter (the god-like

[137] *In Excess*, pp. 61-62

[138] *Crossing of the Visible*, p.

creator) is a teacher of the virtues of humility, generosity, and receptivity. And the painting (the idol) is a judge of desire. The idol's judgment exposes and purifies desire, and gives an opportunity to relinquish mastery, control and possessiveness, and gives the opportunity to move toward humility, generosity, and receptivity.

Though the painting presents an opportunity to develop virtue through self-correction of desire, and openness to receive, one may be content with the visible spectacle. Not all images obtain to the status of the idol, as the painting does, just as not all who see choose to gaze upon the painting.[139] One may prefer to view an image an as object – satisfied that it has fulfilled one's desire to see. Marion calls this image the spectacle and associates it primarily with television. The spectacle is devoid of any community whatsoever. The isolated spectator makes himself into the image of what he thinks others desire him to be, as does the actor, the news anchor, or the politician. The screen (as that upon which the image is displayed, as the filter through which desire is decided, and that which blocks the spectator from being seen) prevents community.[140] The spectator hides behind the screen and reveals neither her desires, nor herself. She is determined by what she expects (and what she is expected to desire). Desire, played out on the screen, becomes an imitation of desire, and destroys the possibility of love. By conforming the image to the expectation, a substitution of an original subject (a viewer who desires an object) is replaced with an anonymous spectator who no longer decides what he desires, but allows the spectacle to predict his desire for him. Likewise, the spectacle itself devolves from an object of desire to an image of an image, such that no original object of desire can be found. The original, even as an object, is destroyed with the spectacle; just as the spectator, as an individual, is

---

[139] Marion notes that to achieve the status of the idol is a feat not to be dismissed. *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 33

[140] Cf. *God without Being*, Ch. 1

destroyed. The violence of the image "takes hold of our desire itself: the tyranny of the idolatrous image defeats us with our willing consent."[141] The televisual spectacle perpetuates nihilism – of the subject who desires, and of the object which is desired. As there is no longer any subject to desire, or to love, and no object to intend, the spectacle destroys the possibility of relation, as it makes the "self" and the "Other" into the image of an image.

The sheer visibility of the spectacle helps to perpetuate nihilism. Marion finds that the force of visibility relates inversely to the possibility of love. With the spectacle "being" is decided by being seen. The deception of the visible takes hold of identity, imprisoning it with the screen. "The exchange of idolatries requires a screen be for every gaze: I only ever look at the screen that imprisons me outside of the world. The screen closes me off from the world, the channels [*les chaînes*] chain me to the screen, the programs [*la grille*] lock me there all the time…[T]he image tyrannizes the world, things , and souls."[142] Visibility allows the spectator to feel a sense of independence – to the point of complete isolation: "the solitary pleasure of the screen does away with love by forbidding sight of the other's face – invisible and real."[143] The isolated spectator is deceived further by valuing the image (that has become not an image of the original, but an image of an image) as an object. Yet, the image destroys the original and become the tyrant of the spectator. "This equivalence is an absolute tyranny: the entry into the world of images does less to liberate the imaginary for a jubilant pleasure than it does to confine our spirit and our desire outside of things, as in a

---

[141] *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 54; Marion's target here is television and also Nietzsche. Television presents a world with neither reality nor appearance. This world is not, according to Marion, beyond good and evil, but rather a nihilistic abyss. Thus, if we take "twilight" to mean both the time after the sun has set, and the time prior to the rising of the sun (as it does in German) the idols of Platonism and Christianity (the real world) set only to make way for the rising of a new idol (television) that obtains only through nihilism – through the destruction of the real and the apparent worlds.

[142] *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 54

[143] *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 54

prison of images—an imaginal exile."[144] The tyranny of the image achieves the destruction of the original (and the isolation of the spectator) through the deception of the visible – "what cannot be seen, simply is not."[145] The screen that shields the spectator from being seen is removed with the painting; just as the painting itself recasts desire by giving it something unexpected and unpredictable.

By removing the screen the painting reveals and judges the invisible desires of the viewer. The visibility of the image denies the reality of the original by, paradoxically, denying it invisibility. Even the constitution of an intentional object, such as a simple cube, requires invisibility. When looking at a cube, only three sides can be seen at once, the other three sides are inferred. The cube provides an example of the relation of the visible to the invisible – the relation of what can be seen to what cannot. The unseen sides give a potentially visible that is invisible in actuality.[146] The cube provides a mundane example of the phenomenality of the invisible, and makes the contrast of the spectacle and the painting more poignant. The cube as an ordinary object requires visibility and invisibility to constitute it. The refusal of the invisible with the spectacle means that its status, even if only as an object, is dubious. To view an image as an object denies the image its otherness and its unique identity. But to degrade the image to the spectacle denies it even its status as an object. The painting hereby becomes a teacher to desire, guiding vision beyond the nihilism of artificial fulfillment of desire, to the vision (though invisible) of desire itself.

The contrast between the visible and the invisible becomes more provocative with the face of another person. Though the shape of the other's face, the color of the eyes, and the other details are visible, these details are not what I desire to see in the face. The

---

[144] *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 55

[145] *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 54

[146] *The Crossing of the Visible*, pp. 55-56

expressions the face makes – smiling, frowning, etc – though visible – alter, in many ways, even during the course of a conversation; yet, the face does not vary. In the face of one whom I look at without indifference, my gaze "wants to see everything, since it expects everything. […] I do not want to see what is visibly given to be seen. What is it then that my gaze wants to see if not the visible of the face? Inevitably, it wants to see the invisible."[147] The desire for the invisible is the desire for the otherness of the Other, for gift – it is the desire to love and be loved.

(Counter)-Ethics: The Virtues of Unknowing

To desire to see the invisible overcomes the abyss of the spectacle since desire for the invisible is not univocal with expectation. The spectacle anticipates desire's expectation, and thereby makes it a prisoner. The face gives more than desire anticipates, and overwhelms expectation. To desire to see the invisible, likewise, overcomes the mimetic rivalry of the painting. The desire to see the painting operates phenomenally to judge desire. Though expectation is exceeded with the painting, the excess the painting gives reflects the beholder, confronts me with "so many invisible mirrors of myself." The face of the Other gives no mirror of myself, but the Other's otherness. Put differently, the spectacle's visibility permits constitution of it as an object. I see it as what my desire conceptualizes it as. To view the spectacle is to assume control of an object. Since the spectacle conforms itself to the image of my desire – the image of an image – the spectacle blocks relation by blocking everything but visibility. The painting surpasses the spectacle by giving an unexpected challenge to my constituting aim. By reflecting back to me my desire, the painting challenges my independence, my control over the world of objects. The painting exposes my desires, and exposes me as one who desires to control and manipulate the visible. If I follow the

[147] *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 56

example of the painter, and allow myself to be corrected by the painting, I move closer to relation by practicing humility, generosity, and receptivity. Though the painting exceeds my expectation, the relation between the viewer of the painting and the painter does not obtain to community, but prepares one for it by training the will in the virtues. The painting teaches detachments, and allows one to make space to receive the Other.

Marion's phenomenology of the face (as an icon) provides a way to approach others in loving ways. His description of the invisible is also a description of virtuous practices – of how one can treat another person without indifference, as something other than an object, something other than a means of fulfilling desire, as something more than a visible manifestation that one can intend from an independent and impersonal posture. Marion describes the phenomenology of the face as an icon; and in so doing, he describes ethical vision that moves from the isolation of the spectator to the self-criticism of desire to true community. With the phenomenology of the face, he brings the prospect of incorporating the virtues into the phenomenology of givenness. The apophatic lessons of Pseudo Dionysius, the kenotic teachings of St. Maximus the Confessor, as well as a view of the virtues of St. Thomas have parallels with Marion's phenomenology. Marion's phenomenology provides ways of denying preconception, seeing beyond the merely visible, affirming the irreducibility of otherness that parallel the mystic practice of unknowing, the hesyscasts' self-emptying, and the practice of the virtues. Generosity, humility, and prudence, from this perspective, work together to promote love of the particular flesh-and-blood neighbor and to develop a community of interdependent individuals.

Like the idol, "I learn myself" from the icon – but not merely my desire – I learn my capacity for loving and being loved. The icon summons me to see and see again the gaze of the other that confronts me; and the icon individualizes me, but more radically than with the

idol.[148] Yet the icon overcomes the phenomenon of the spectacle that defines the idol. The spectacle imprisons me in an isolated world where my desires are anticipated and fulfilled through the screen. The painting organizes objects in space to reveal the unseen. The longing for the invisible in the face makes a move beyond self-correction of desire to love. The idol makes evident where the passions and will fail to aim at the right good in the right way, while the phenomenology of the face and the icon demonstrate how love is experienced.

Marion develops his phenomenology with an eye toward relation, making a denial of ethics counter to his goal. Since his phenomenologies of the gift and the icon necessitate relation, promote communion, and define responsibility, an ethic of the icon arises naturally, if not necessarily. Though Marion resists metaphysical ethics, I contend that his phenomenology of givenness supports a "counter-ethics." By the term counter-ethics, I mean an ethics that 1) supports phenomenological asceticism that seeks to remove presuppositions about the other, 2) emphasizes that reason is subordinate to love in matters of ethics, 3) appeals to apophatic-kenotic virtues that remove the ego from the center, and 4) occurs through the counter gaze of the Other that demands that I make myself vulnerable in order to receive.

Marion develops his phenomenology of the face as an icon following and moving beyond Levinas. He shows that the face, in all its phenomenal dynamism, appears only as one moves from the position of constituting subject to being constituted by the Other. This move retains the ethics of respect that Levinas develops. This move also adds to Levinas since Marion provides a description of receiving the gaze of the Other as holy, as glorious, and able to command, or, in Marion's language, to call. In fact Marion's call transforms the

[148] *Being Given*, p. 232-233

command "Thou shalt not kill" into a command to die to oneself, to kill one's own constituting and possessive aims. What I find important about this description is that it provides descriptions of the practices of attentiveness to the Other, opening oneself to receive the call, bearing witness to the para-*dox* of the face, and loving the Other. Marion's unique contribution to the encounter with the Other is how one prepares oneself to receive the Other. Marion's phenomenological description of the icon opens space for a different way to approach ethics: an apophatic virtue phenomenology of the icon. Marion's phenomenology of the face (the icon) develops in a parallel manner to his interpretation of Pseudo Dionysius's mystical theology and to his description of the assurance of love the completes the erotic reduction of *The Erotic Phenomenon*. By putting these elements together I find that a description of an apophatic virtue phenomenology emerges.[149]

Marion begins his phenomenological treatment of the face with a history of phenomenology. He notes that even with an ordinary object one needs to aim at it in a particular way. "Now, no object can truly appear as such if just any aim whatever is exercised on it. In order to appear as such it requires a particular aim, privileged and adapted […]."[150] And even an ordinary object can hide things from view (such as the cube).[151] How much more important does the intention aim become, how much more dynamic must the

---

[149] Marion does not put these elements of his work together, though his interpretation of the mystical theology of the Denys, "In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking It," follows his most prolonged treatment of the phenomenology of the face, "The Icon or Endless Hermeneutic." (See *In Excess*, pp. 128-162, and pp. 102-127 respectively.) The phenomenology of the icon and Marion's theological views are put together in the earlier work *The Crossing of the Visible*. Though Marion does not add the face to the phenomenology of the icon until after this work, it provides a bridge between his phenomenology and theology. I think Marion is right to include the face in the phenomenology of the icon; and I think that this earlier work makes clear the ethical implications of his phenomenology. In putting these works together, I am assuming that the later development of the icon as the face of the Other does not deny the earlier development of the icon as the painted image of Jesus, Mary, or the Saints.

[150] *In Excess*, p. 107

[151] *In Excess*, p. 108

intuition be to receive the givenness of the face? All the saturated phenomena provide an overabundance that cannot be grasped through sensation. The face goes even further: "the face is not seen as much as it sees."[152] Though I might be able to look at the face's features and gain information about eye and hair color, mood, or attractiveness, I would not be seeing the face as a face, but as an object. What interests me in the face of the Other is not her appearance, but her Otherness, her ability to constitute me. Marion emphasizes that "phenomenology is not first required where phenomena are already given and constituted, but only where they remain dissimulated or still invisible."[153] What I desire to see in the face of the Other cannot be seen, cannot be constituted as an object, and cannot become equivalent to my intuition. What I desire to see "does not result from the constitution I would assign to them in the visible, but from the effect they produce on me."[154]

Moving from the phenomenological to the ethical takes little effort: the desire to want to see the Other means that I need to be in a position to want to be impacted by him. I can no longer take the position of the transcendental *I*; instead, I leave off constituting the Other and make myself open to receive. Becoming open to receive means that I must abandon my preconceptions and observations about the Other and what her appearance leads me to believe. I must undertake a process like unknowing. The move from theology to ethics does not take much more effort. The human face that appears as an icon gives Christ's humanity as well. Kathryn Tanner makes this point in "Theology and the Limits of Phenomenology." She writes, "the beauty and glory of the human form need not rival God's since God is the giver of it. Therefore God's work is not done in the disfiguring of Christ—his beating, his scourging—that, for Marion allows Christ's humanity to become an

---

[152] *In Excess*, p. 114

[153] *In Excess*, p. 110

[154] *In Excess*, p. 113

icon referring attention entirely away from itself and only to the Father."[155] Marion makes a similar point in *The Crossing of the Visible*. He provides two criteria that distinguish the idol from the icon. First, the icon deserves veneration; and second, the icon manifests "a trace of the brilliance of the holiness of the Holy."[156] The face of the other person who sees me reveals that she deserves veneration because she is adorned with holiness. The description of how one approaches God and how one approaches another person, then, move in unity. Recognizing the glory of the human other moves one to recognize Christ. Marion describes Denys's (Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite) apophatic theology as a moving through three distinct yet unifying elements.[157] The first move involves affirmation in which I affirm

---

[155] Kathryn Tanner, "Theology at the Limits of Phenomenology," in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 201-231, p. 225

[156] *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 68

[157] The context of this description of Denys's theology is a defense of a way of de-nomination against the criticisms of Jacques Derrida. See Jacques Derrida, "How to Avoid Speaking Denials," in *On the Name*, trans. John P. Leavy Jr., ed. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 35-85; and Jean-Luc Marion, "In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of It," in *In Excess*, pp. 128-162. Two excellent summaries of this discussion and debate are 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 D. Scanlon (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999); and Kevin Hart, "Jacques Derrida: The God Effect," in *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Phillip Blond, (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 259-280.

By inserting this discussion into the ethical structure of encountering the Other, I am ignoring some of the theological context of the debate, in particular the discussion of naming (or not naming) God. Thus, I am not going to attempt to articulate whether or not it is possible to speak of God. However, I am aware that appropriating the discussion in order to move toward considerations of human's ethical relations to one another creates several problems. First, it could be argued that I am making humans the proper object of worship instead of God, and thereby instituting idolatry as ethical. Included in this charge, a species of pantheism could be insinuated in the emphasis on the divinity present in humans. In the first case, I think that Iraneaus provides a response. He says that God became man that man might become God. To view another person as an icon is to recognize this possibility. My argument focuses instead on the ways that making assumptions about another person prevents me from seeing another person as Other, as theophoric – as someone who cannot be captured by assessments of appearances, classifications into stereotypes, or assumptions based on past experiences.) Second, it could be argued that I am using Marion's argument to discuss something irrelevant. Though Marion does not put these sections together, I find that given his phenomenological description of the icon, sufficient similarity exists between the phenomenological and the theological on which to build an ethics of the face in a new an insightful way. I think sufficient parallels exist between his account of the icon, denegation, and

something such as "God is good". This move parallels the affirmation of the beloved as loveable, or also the face as the spectacle. From this position I see the Other as an object, as the fulfillment of desire, or as what I wish for her to be for me. This understanding relates to the questions of the cogito that wants to know. The questions of affirmation of God as good, the beloved as loveable, and of knowledge succumb to several problems. The goodness of God is not like anything I know of goodness, just as the loveableness of the beloved cannot be crystallized into a list of attributes. I want to be able to say what it is that makes the beloved loveable, but these affirmation amount to the question of the cogito that are destroyed by vanity. What is the use of knowledge if it cannot assure the worth of the one knows it.[158] The knowledge I have of goodness, of love, of the beloved fail to lift me out of the constructs of my own mind, and give me nothing of the Divine, of the Other, or of love.

The second move is to deny the affirmations. As I affirmed "God is good," I now must deny that God is good, or more precisely, I must deny that what I know as good can be attributed to God. I also must deny that what I call love of the beloved is something I can know; I must give up the other as an object of constitution, and realize that he constitutes me with his aim. To relinquish constitution for the invisible gaze of the Other that sees me, I must focus on the place on the face where nothing can be seen or affirmed, the blackness of the pupils. Love must arrive from outside myself, from the possibility that the Other, that

---

love to move in this direction. Furthermore, these similarities provide a way to establish an account of ethics in Marion that neither ignores his concerns about love, nor devolves into an account of ethics as metaphysics.

One point of defense I have relates to the way Marion and his predecessor, Hans Urs von Balthasar, interpret the *Corpus Dionysisus*. They both want to listen to Denys and "to learn how to *translate* (and not simply *replicate*) them into something of value for [their] own context, as Tasmin Jones notes in "Dionysius in Hans Urs von Balthasar and Jean-Luc Marion," (*Modern Theology* 24:4, October, 2008, pp. 743-754, p. p. 746). In making Denys relevant to their contemporary contexts, they open the way for a discussion of the relevance to iconic relations between humans as well.

[158] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, pp. 4-5; 11-40

someone out there loves me. I must deny what I know from vanity, self-centeredness, and autonomy. I must give up the questions of knowledge and the questions of whether I am loved, empty myself of the desire to be loved, and risk asymmetrical love. This way of loving gives up reason as assuring of love, and through humility realizes that I have defined love badly, I have over-estimated my progress in love, and that I am not able to love from my own initiative.[159] In denying, I do not deny that God is, nor that love is, but instead deny that my capacity to understand or create them on my own.

The third move is to not be misled that affirmation and denials are contradictions, but to realize that the cause surpasses both, that it is beyond all propositions.[160] In this move propositional discourse is given up for the language of praise. In praise I can only say something like "Hallelujah." Here, the goodness of God cannot become a proposition because it exceeds my ability to comprehend it. Likewise, when I say you loved me first to the beloved, I no longer wish to quantify love, or to love from my own initiative; but, I realize that the beloved made me a lover by loving me. Moreover, I was always loved first because God, as the best lover, loved me.[161] This radicalization of love assured through God as the first and last lover occurs with the icon as well. In venerating the Other as an icon the visible image is transpierced. Through the gaze of veneration, my gaze climbs "back up, to cross the visible image and be exposed to the invisible counter-gaze of the prototype."[162] In the words of St. Basil, this crossing means that, "the honor paid to the

---

[159] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, pp. 73-82

[160] *In Excess*, pp. 134-142

[161] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, pp. 192-210

[162] *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 60

icon is transferred to the prototype."[163] Thus in venerating or loving the Other, that love and veneration is transferred to God as adoration.

That philosophy begins in wonder is nothing new. Maximus the Confessor claims that wonder generates the desire to know God as well. He calls this wonder the "first act of the mind" in the face of the "God's universal infinity…that immense ocean of goodness which is beyond astonishment."[164] The attempt to understand God with the mind is not unnatural. Yet, the desire to know and to affirm, to quantify, to assign attributes and qualities to God, or to the Other, marks a desire to determine the Other or God. These desires, natural as they may be, mislead. Yet, in misleading they lead to something else, a different way to deal with wonder. According to Balthasar's interpretation of Maximus, in affirmation "our words only describe our creaturely efforts to speak of God and so cannot bring the One who is utterly other into our field of vision."[165] Denys also notes this misleading nature of knowing in a letter to the monk Gaius. He writes, "Someone beholding God and understanding what he saw has not actually seen God himself but rather something of his which has being and which is knowable."[166] For example, when trying to understand what it means that God is just, David Burrell recognizes the danger of elucidating the concept. He says, "It is not that God's justice far outstrips ,but rather that any statement made about God's being just would be ill-informed, since it would presume by its very structure that justice is an attribute of God, whereas God—to be God—must be utterly

---

163 Op. cit. *De Spiritu Sancto*, XVIII.45, in *PG*, vol. 32, 149.

164 *The 400 Chapters on Love*, in *Maximus Confessor Selected Writings*, trans. George C. Berthold, (New York, Mahwaw, Toronts: Paulist Press, 1985), 4, 1-2, p. 75

165 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe according to Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Brian E. Daley, SJ, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), pp. 88-89

166 *The Letters*, "Letter One: To the monk Gaius," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid, (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 263, 1065A

simple."[167] As a perfection, God's justice functions to make us aware of the difference between our understand of justice and God's. The desire to know (To know God's justice, goodness, love etc.), however, is part of a process. One must affirm in order to recognize the imperfection of the human understanding of justice. In the process of affirming, one also learns ignorance (to borrow the phrase of Nicolas of Cusa).[168] The desire to know, or to affirm, becomes a way to begin to realize one's own ignorance, presumptions, failings, and idolatry. Affirmations teach that one must give them up, and find a new way to approach God or the Other. Thus, with the icon, I may be able to give an account of the life of the Saint whom I view, I may be able to analyze the way color, inverted perspective, light, space, and symbolism are used to tell the saint's story; but, in this account, I realize that what I see indicates more than I can know: "it testifies to its honor by deposing in it every idolatry; it gives life by liberating us."[169]

Affirmation functions as a way to acknowledge the desire to know, to see how it fails, and to move beyond it. The first thing I notice in the painted icon is the same thing I notice in the face as an icon: the frontality of the face, the fact that the face is looking at me. The wonder could revolve around any number of questions or observations. I might wonder about why she looks sad, why he looks happy, or be dazzled by her attractiveness, or his features. These ways of looking at the face mask the gaze of the Other who sees me, and serve to mask the other, or make him an object. [170] Any of these things I notice relate to

---

[167] David B. Burrell, C.S.C., "From Analogy of 'Being' to the Analogy of Being," in *Recovering Nature: Essays In Natural Philosophy, Ethics, and Metaphysics in Honor of Ralph McInerny*, ed. Thomas Hibbs and John O'Callaghan, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), pp. 253-266, p. 256

[168] See *In Excess*, p. 136; op. cit. *De docta ingnorantia, I,* c. XXVI, in Nicholas of Cusa, *Philosophisch-theologische Schriften*, ed. Leo Gabriel, vol. 3, (Vienna: Herder, 1964), pp. 292-297; *On Learned Ignorance*, trans. Germain Heron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 61

[169] *The Crossing of the Visible*, p. 71

[170] Marion analyses this first stage of encountering another person in *In Excess*, p. 115

more pressing questions about whether this person loves me, could love me, whether that means she will become my friend, ally, adversary, or will be indifferent toward me. From the first instance, I want to know about my status as loved with respect to the face that I notice sees me. Even in the most mundane encounters with others at the grocery store, getting gas, at a restaurant, I am interested in their attitude toward me. I wonder if the check out person will care for my produce, and make sure it doesn't end up under the milk; or if the clerk at the gas station feels impatient as I ask for directions; or if the server minds my request for dressing on the side. These ponderings relate indirectly to the questions of love. I am always concerned about the other person to some extent. These questions, however, can lead to objectifying the other by over-analyzing the situation, intentionally ignoring the fact the he is looking at me, or demanding that she answer me as I would like her to answer. What I want to know of the other interferes with my receiving the other, and makes me aware of my vanity. The vanity of knowing takes two forms. First it arises from my over-preoccupation with myself. And second, it arises from the fact that any response the face gives will not satisfy my need to know if anybody loves me. In vain, knowledge seeks an answer to this question. St. Maximus speaks of this vanity as a misuse of thoughts that lead to the "misuse of things." He continues, "Therefore, those who are careful about this always do good deeds, never bad. So, if you too are willing, banish carelessness and you drive evil away as well, which is the mistaken use of thoughts on which follows the misuse of things."[171] For Maximus, practice of virtue makes possible the escape from vanity. This element of virtue is underemphasized in Marion. Yet, I think Maximus is correct. Only when I practice the virtues do I advance beyond vanity. In commending people to give up

[171] *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love*, 2.78,82, p. 58

objectifying others through viewing them as object of intentionality, Marion is commending virtuous habits.[172]

In the erotic reduction Marion associates the question of knowing with the futility (vanity) of assuring my existence of its worth. He says, "Certifying my existence myself depends upon my thought, and thus upon me. Receiving assurance against the vanity of my certain existence does not depend upon me, but requires that I learn from elsewhere that I am and above all if I have to be."[173] The other becomes an opportunity for me to certify my existence; but, also "exposes me to a radical uncertainty."[174] The face other the other, the resolution of the question "does anybody love me?" cannot be answered by me, depends on "an anonymous elsewhere" that leaves me uncertain, leaves me uncertain that my existence as *cogito* has value. The questions of knowing do not provide me with the assurance of love, even if they provide certainty. The desire for the assurance of love makes humility necessary. To give up on certainty, and to advance in wonder means a shift from certainty to assurance, and from kataphasis to apophasis. I must give up knowing according to "being" and enter actively into "the reign of love, where I immediately receive the role of he who can love, and whom one can love, and who believes that someone must love him – the *lover*."[175] This move away from knowledge requires humility: awareness of the finite capacity of reason, and the realization that the other is more than I can know.

A story from John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* portrays this challenge of knowledge and also the rise of humility. In an intercalary chapter that captures the road-side

---

[172] Brian Gregor makes a similar point in "The Eros that Never Arrives: A Phenomenological Ethics of the Erotic," *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*, 9:1 Spring 2005, pp. 67-88.

[173] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, p. 23

[174] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, p. 27

[175] *The Erotic Phenomenon*, p. 28

diner and the people who populate it, Steinbeck introduces us to Mae, the waitress at the diner who classifies people according to categories. Her three categories of customers are "shitheels," rich travelers afraid they will get dirty in her establishment; the "truck drivers," who are her way to get more business, if they like the food they will tell others; and the families going west who have all the possessions they own piled on their modified vehicles, who sometimes get gas, ask use the water hose, but never buy anything. A father and two children, from the "going west group," ask to buy a "10 cent loaf of bread." Steinbeck narrates the scene saying,

> "The man took off his dark stained hat and stood with a curious humility in front of the screen, 'Could you see your way to sell us a loaf of bread ma'am?'
> "Mae said, 'This ain't a grocery store. We got bread to make san'widges.'"[176]

Mae begins her interaction with the family certain of what they want from her, certain that who she is cannot be equated with whom they demand she be. Yet as the interaction continues, she changes, she loses her assurance, she questions her knowledge of the family. Al, the cook, asks her to sell them the bread, saying he does not care if they run out of bread. As she begins the exchange of money for bread, the man says he can only afford to pay ten cents for bread, but Mae insists that it costs 15 cents.

> The man put his hat back on his head. He answered with inflexible humility, "Won't you – can't you see your way to cut off ten cents' worth?"
> Al said snarlingly, "Goddam it, Mae. Give 'em the loaf."
> The man turned toward Al. "No we want ta buy ten cents' worth of it. We got it figgered awful close, mister, to get to California."
> Mae said resignedly, "you can have this for ten cents."
> "That'd be robbin' you ma'am."
> "Go ahead—Al says to take it." She pushed the waxpapered loaf across the counter. The man took a deep leather pouch from his rear pocket, untied the strings, and spread it open. It was heavy with silver and with greasy bills.
> "May sound funny to be so tight," he apologized. "We got a thousan' miles to go, an' we don't know if we'll make it." He dug in the pouch with a forefinger, located a dime, and pinched in for it. When he put it down on the counter he had a penny with it. He was about to drop the penny back into the pouch when his eye

[176] John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1964), p. 140

fell on the boys frozen before the candy counter. He moved slowly down to them. He pointed in the case at big long sticks of striped peppermint. "Is them penny candy, ma'am?"

Mae moved down and looked in. "Which ones?"

"There, them stripy ones."

The little boys raised their eyes to her face and they stopped breathing; their mouths were partly opened, their half-naked bodies were rigid.

"Oh—them. Well, no—them's two for a penny." […]

"Thank you, ma'am." The man picked up the bread and went out the door, and the little boys marched stiffly behind them, the red-striped sticks held tightly against their legs. They leaped like chipmunks over the front seat and onto the top of the load, and they burrowed back out of sight like chipmunks.[…]

From inside the restaurant the truck drivers and Mae and Al stared after them.

Big Bill wheeled back. "Them wasn't two for a cent candy," he said.

"What's it to you?" Mae said fiercely.

"Them was nickel apiece candy," Bill said.[177]

When the truck drivers leave, Mae finds they have left her an exceptional tip. Mae was certain of the family that had asked to use the water hose and buy bread. The irony this story shows is that knowing evades the truth by denying the personhood of the other, of the father. The man, however is humble, shares his plight, and causes Mae to lose her certainty. Mae's actions become ethical as the narrative moves her from self-concern to generosity. The generosity of Al, the faces of the boys, and the humility of the father make Mae recognize something she had not before. She questions her knowledge of people, moving from certainty and vanity to humility, generosity and negation of the propositions she previously held to be true. Maximus describes a similar transformation saying, "'knowledge makes boastful but love edifies,' link up love with knowledge and you will not be puffed up but rather a spiritual architect building up yourself and all those around you."[178]

Here, in this move from certainty to doubt, from vanity to humility, and from affirmation to denial, the questions of knowing give rise to other ways to see the encounter with the other, other ways to recognize the demands placed on the other, or the attempts to

---

[177] *The Grapes of Wrath*, pp. 141-142

[178] *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love*, 4.59, p. 81

master or possess the other. The negation of affirmations seeks to deny the preconceptions and assumptions that prevent reception of otherness. In negating "God is good," and saying "God is not good," (or alternatively, negating "the families going west are not to be trusted" it becomes "the people going west are trustworthy) a new proposition takes root that admits not that God is evil, but that God is not good according to any finite conception of good I can articulate or understand. Negation functions to eradicate unhelpful, even if familiar, ways to conceptualize God and the Other. Breaking down ones certainty makes reception of the Other or God possible as other. In other words, when preconceptions are denied the Other is freed to give.

What mislead about knowing, as Marion puts it, is that once I know, I think I can dispense with loving.[179] But, as the apophatic-kataphatic project shows, knowing and unknowing are part of the same process. Coming to know and realizing the insufficiency of intellectual knowledge leads, through the process of unknowing, to love of that which exceed conceptualization. The knowledge of love does not deny that concepts are useful, but raises the concepts to a higher rationality. Marion demonstrates a connection to the Augustinian project of *The Confessions*, that faith and understanding, love and knowing are radically interconnected. Marion writes, "I love to comprehend, therefore I love in order to comprehend. I do not, as one might prefer to believe, end up by comprehending enough to dispense forever with loving."[180] This passage echoes Augustine's initial prayer, "let me seek you by calling upon you, and let me call upon you by believing in you."[181] Mae initially is

---

[179] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 10, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 2; Eoin Cassidy connects Marion's *Erotic Phenomenon* and Augustine in "*Le phenomène érotique*: Augustinian Resonances in Marion's Phenomenology of Love," in *Givenness and God: The Questions of Jean-Luc Marion*, eds. Eion Cassidy and Ian Leask, (?,2008), pp. 201-219

[180] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 11, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 2

[181] *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. John K. Ryan, (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1960), 1.1.1, p. 43

misled by assuming she knows in advance, assuming that she does not need love to inform her about the father and his family. Pride and fear work together in Mae to circumvent the possibility of love. Augustine, in the contest of trying to resolve which comes first faith or understanding, notes this connection as well – that God "resists the proud." Desiring to know about the other is not the problem. Knowing without loving is. Marion notes this ordering in philosophy itself. Philosophy's first name is love. "Philosophy defines itself as 'the love of wisdom' because, in effect, it ought to begin by loving before claiming to know. In order to achieve understanding, one must first desire it; put another way, one must be astonished at not comprehending."[182] When isolated from loving, knowing becomes prideful, becomes an instrument of power, and not an emersion in wonder. When this knowing is directed to God or to another person, it leads to idolatry or objectification respectively. Marion agrees with Augustine that, as Eion Cassidy puts it, "it is only by nurturing the gift of desire that we can foster a right relationship to ourselves, to God, and to our fellow human beings."[183]

I suggest that this nurturing of desire can be seen in the three fold process of affirmation, denial, and praise that Marion explores through Denys. In other words, virtue assist in ordering knowledge and love. Knowing is humbled by love which reveals how knowing fails.[184] But knowing also reveals how one fails to love properly. For Mae knowing

---

[182] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 10, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 2 (translation modified). Denys's analysis of the connection of the affirmative and negative ways relates to this connection between knowing/understanding and love/faith. He writes, "God is therefore known in all things and as distinct from all things. He is known through knowledge and through unknowing. Of him there is conception, reason, understanding, touch, perception, opinion, imagination, name, and many other things. On the other hand, he cannot be understood, words cannot contain him, and no name can lay hold of him. He is not one of the things that are, and he cannot be known in any of them." *Divine Names*, 869D-872A

[183] "Augustinian Resonances in Marion's Phenomenology of Love," p. 204

[184] See also, Jeffery Fisher, "The Theology of Dis/similarity: Negation in Pseudo-Dionysius," *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 81, 4, October 2001, pp. 529-548: "What seems to reveal in fact obscures, even deceives, Dionysius's God can never be the semantic *arche*. (p. 532)"

resolved the question of love negatively, making her assume that this family did not love, and specifically did not love her. As she learns their plight, is influenced by Al's compassion, and finds her initial understanding questioned, she learns something of love as well. Namely, she learns that it is unpredictable, it may appear anywhere, in any form; in other words, she learns that she had not known the family, and had not known love. The kataphatic turns to the apophatic as pride turns to humility, as certainty turns to faith. Assuming pre-knowledge of the other kills the other – kills the possibility that the Other can surprise me, kills the possibility of receiving the Other.

Marion claims that love has a higher rationality than that of reason. Reason cannot get to love because it is insufficient; it deals in quantities, equations, and propositions that can be evaluated as true or false.[185] But when love informs knowing, it elevates and unifies reason. The denial of a proposition about God, the other or myself, moves beyond assigning a new truth value to a statement, it suspends the rationale of sufficient reason, and opens to the reason of the heart. Instead, denial functions to free one from the preconditions of reason, and to free one from the economy of exchange. When I love someone because I think that they should also love me, I am demanding reciprocity. When I can free myself from the question "Does anybody love me?" I also free myself from a rational economy. In moving to the risk of asymmetrical love, as I ask "Can I love first?," I escape calculating the return on my investment of love. Marion writes, "If the lover decides to love without any assurance in return, to love first, without requiring any security, he does not only transgress reciprocity, but also and above all he contradicts economy's sufficient reason. As a consequence, in loving without reciprocity, the lover loves without reason, nor

[185] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 15, 125-133; *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 5, 76-82

is he able to give reason…He renounces reason and sufficiency."[186] Reason is insufficient here not because the beloved lacks qualities that make her loveable, or because love is senseless, but because reason cannot motivate love. "The issue is not an inability of the lover to find reasons, or a lack of reasoning or of good sense, but rather a failure of reason itself to give reason for the initiative to love. The lover does not scorn reason: quite simply, reason itself goes lacking as soon as love is at issue. […] Love does not reject reason, but reason refuses to go where the lover goes."[187]

The denial of affirmations, however, does not seek to assign another truth value to a proposition. In denying affirmations, I seek a way to know differently, a way to know through loving. With this desire, the question "Can I love first?" arises. Augustine shows this transition as well. He had thought he could attain knowledge of God "by the unaided use of human reason."[188] Augustine passes from certainty to uncertainty "in the course of being refuted and converted."[189] Denys describes this process as a rejection of the language about God, since through negations the soul stands "outside everything which is correlative with its own finite nature. Such a way guides the soul through all the divine notions, notions which are themselves transcended by that which is far beyond every name, all reason and all knowledge."[190] Negation is also recognition. I recognize my finitude, and the transcendence of God, or the other person. In these recognitions, I no longer can rely on my own capacity to capture God or another person with propositional language.

---

[186] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 129, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 79 (translation modified).

[187] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 129, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 79

[188] Eion Cassidy, "Augustinian Resonances in Marion's Phenomenology of Love," p. 204; Cf. *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, "So much the more sharply did concern over what I could hold with certainty gnaw at my very vitals, so much the more shame did I feel at being so long deluded and deceived by a promise of certainties and for gabbling in childish error and ardor over so many uncertainties as if they were certain." 6.4.5, p. 137

[189] *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, 6.4.5, p. 137

[190] *The Divine Names*, 981B, p. 130

The way of negation is important in another respect as well. The way of negation helps me to decenter. I can risk asymmetrical love because it allows me to escape from the reasons why I cannot assure myself that I do or should love myself. No one knows as well as I what makes me unlovable; and, therefore, I cannot assure myself of being loved. In the risk of loving another person, I can forget myself. I can deny myself in a radical way and focus of the other. Negation provides a way to make space for the Other, because in negating claims about myself – my ability to love, my deservingness of love –I open myself to something other than and beyond me. In this opening I am vulnerable and exposed. The question "Can I love first?" forces me from the center, "the circle is decentered from the *ego* toward a certain other."[191] In taking the initiative to advance in love to the other, I throw off what Maximus calls "self-passion." Freed of envy, spite, arrogance, judgmentalness, anger, and other vices that keep me attached to myself, I can advance to the other in love. For Maximus, this love is active and passive: "the work of love is the deliberate doing of good to one's neighbor as well as long-suffering and patience."[192] The actions of love purify; or, as Balthasar puts it, "our vulnerabilities must be transformed in a positive way."[193]

The question "Can I love first?" presupposes a radical vulnerability. The one who takes the initiative and advances to the other without consideration of reciprocation risks more than rejection, in fact, he risks himself. Since, as Marion asserts, in making the advance of love, the lover "*bears everything* [*supporte tout*]," "Believes everything, and loves "without seeing." The lover bears everything because she takes the initiative to love, and the "other owes no reciprocity whatsoever to the lover […] who risks himself first."[194] To take

---

[191] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 133, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 82

[192] *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love*, 1.40, p. 39

[193] *Cosmic Liturgy*, 342

[194] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 138, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 85

such a risk the lover must presuppose that the other is not an object, but "an actual beloved (beloved by me), and also a potential lover."[195] Much like Kierkegaard's lover, Marion's assumes the capacity of the other for love without seeking evidence of love.[196] In addition to bearing everything, the lover also believes everything. The belief of the lover rests not in the belief that the other will reciprocate love, or on the belief that the beloved will match the lover's love equally, nor on the belief that what is visible of the beloved makes her loveable. Marion draws out the meaning of believing everything saying,

> in the natural attitude, the least unhappy seems to be the one who loved the least, or who stopped loving earlier – because he has lost less, and suffered less when love disappeared; by contrast, in the erotic reduction the least unhappy appears as the one who loved the most, because he does not stop loving, even when the other has disappeared, so that he alone maintains love afloat. He has not lost everything, because he still loves. Indeed, he has lost nothing because he still remains a lover. In the erotic reduction, if one truly wants to win, it is necessary to love and to persist in this advance, without condition – thus the last to love wins the stake.[197]

What the lover believes "without knowing or possessing," requires "unknowing" and "poverty," or belief and hope despite scarcity and shortage.[198] Marion uses apophatic language to emphasize the effort it takes to love without any condition or reciprocity. This language further emphasizes that the risk of love without return requires asceticism.

---

[195] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 139, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 85-6 (translation modified)

[196] Marion classifies this first advance of the lover as "bearing all things," while Kierkegaard, characterizes it as "believing all things." See *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 139-40, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 86-87; and *Works of Love,* pp. 225-245, respectively.

[197] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 140, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 86-87; Here again, Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* warrants comparison. He writes, "We human beings have a natural fear of making a mistake—by thinking too well of another person. On the other hand, the error of thinking too ill of another person is perhaps not feared, or at least not in proportion to the first. … It offends vanity and pride to think or to have thought too well of the swindler, to have been fatuous enough to believe him—because it is a competition between sagacity and sagacity…. But, to put it mildly, should it not seem just as stupid to us to have believed the evil or mistrustingly to have believed nothing—where there was good!...But here in the world it is not 'stupid' to believe ill of a good person; after all, it is an arrogance by which on gets rid of the good in a convenient way. But it is 'stupid' to believe well of an evil person; so one safeguards oneself—since what one so greatly fears is being in error. On the other hand, the loving person truly fear being in error; therefore he believes all things. (p. 232)"

[198] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 140, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 87

This asceticism appears as well as the lover advances without basing love on can be seen. This advance without seeing insures that the beloved cannot become an object, since she cannot be constituted, and also assures that the lover opens up space for the beloved – a gift of the lover's own space "in which their commerce vanishes and the abandon without return may begin."[199] The abandon described by Marion reminds one of the work of the painter. The painter works in total darkness, and makes visible through creating. The lover, by comparison, also works in the dark, but "makes the lover visible." The lover "phenomenalizes what she loves in so very far as she loves it, the lover can even (or especially) love what one does not see (if one does not love it)—and , to begin with, the absentee."[200] The lover loves despite the absence of the beloved – whether the absence is due to the physical distance, death, or because the beloved has not arrived on the scene. Marion sees this lover as loving more freely because she loves "that which is not yet, that which no longer is, or even that which does not have to be in order to appear."[201] Moreover, this lover loves as he does because he is "washed of suspicion," sees with the vision of love, hope, generosity, and not with the eyes of objectification, in other words, through unknowing, through the possibility of "the unhoped for hope" that exceeds even what is hoped for.[202]

Like the way of negation that Denys advocates, the love of the unknown is only a transitory stage, a means of preparation to receive what cannot be seen or known. The lover cannot remain as the lover of the unknown indefinitely without beginning to question

---

[199] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 140, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 87

[200] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 141, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 87

[201] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 142, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 88

[202] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 143, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 89; Cf. Jean-Lois Chrétien, *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped for*," trans. Jeffery Bloechl, (New York: Fordham Universtiy Press, 2002), pp. 105-107

whether she really loves, whether he has been assured that he loves, not because she can neither know that she loves or whom she loves, but because it all depends on the lover.[203] Marion explains, "to claim to love first and effectively is, let us repeat, meaningless: at the instant of his initiative, the lover does not know if he acts of his own accord or under an influence, nor under what influences; nor does he know any better what he is truly undertaking, or how far he will succeed."[204] Yet, this situation is exactly what makes the impossible possible for Marion. John D. Caputo explains it this way, "That confession of non-knowledge, Marion contends, is not simply a failure to know but an opening onto another form of knowledge where what is known of God is God's incomprehensibility. For anything we can know of God conceptually would not be God, not if God is greater than anything we can conceive, not if God always exceeds and overflows our comprehension, our conceptual knowledge."[205] Having escaped knowledge of God as a concept, and the other as an object, an opening to receive love of God (as in revelation, or as in the love that reveals the love of humans as the love of God) is possible.

Marion emphasizes the pragmatic function of Denys's discourse. Praise becomes an act of opening and not closing, purifies language from its predication. Even as negation undoes affirmation, and empties discourse of its concepts, the language of praise (whether Hallelujah, or I love you, or you loved me first[206]) indicates a relation in which the one who praises praises beyond what language can signify, beyond truth values, beyond affirmation and negation. This language of praise brings the one who praises into relation with what

---

[203] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 143-146, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 89-91

[204] *Le phenomène érotique*, p. 146, *The Erotic Phenomenon,* p. 91

[205] "Apostles of the Impossible," p. 192

[206] Marion compares the language of <<*je t'aime*>> and the theological discourse of negations and praise in "Ce qui ne se dit pas – l'apophase du discours amoureux, in *Le visible et le révélé*, (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 2005), pp. 119-142

precedes the one who praises. Praise indicates that the lover is preceded by love, by God who is the first and last and best lover. According to his analysis of Denys, the language of praise is at once a performance, a prayer, an address, a confession, a conversion, and the principle of goodness.[207] This performance "is no longer a matter of naming or attributing something to something but rather of aiming in the direction of…, of relating to…, of comporting oneself towards…, of reckoning with…--in short, of dealing with…By invoking the unattainable as…and inasmuch as…, prayer definitively marks the transgression of the predicative, nominative, and therefore metaphysical sense of language."[208] This transgression of language is also an emersion in an ethical (and erotic) relation. The ellipsis marks a hesitation and an entry. The hesitation recalls the responsibility not to kill the other by assuming one can know it. Thus the language of praise retains the humility and generosity required to receive the Other as other, to refuse to pass judgment on, or confine. The entry recalls the nature of the gift as relation. The language of praise is an act of receiving the gift without conditions and an act of giving the gift of praise. These two terms of the gift make the gift as relation the gift of love that can endlessly give and receive without entering into an economy.

In "What not to speak: On the apophatic discourse of love," Marion explains how the words "I love you" escape predicative language as well. Like the mystical language of praise, the words "I love you" require performative, or pragmatic discourse that emerges from affirmation, denial, and the hyperbolic language of mysticism.[209] For Marion saying "I love you" initiates one into "mystical language [that] does not constitute a marginal or

---

[207] *In Excess*, p. 144; see also Anselm K. Min, "Naming the Unnameable God: Levinas, Derrida, and Marion," *Internation Journal of the Philosophy of Religion*, (2006) 60:99-116

[208] *In Excess*, pp. 144-145

[209] "Ce qui ne se dit pas – l'apophase du discours amoureux," pp. 135-139

insignificant exception to a theory of language, but on the contrary indicates a field much more vast and central."[210] The repetition of "I love you," and "you love me" acts like the oath that the lovers offer to one another. They constantly offer this assurance of love, and find that only God can assure them that their oath is said not only for an instant but for eternity. The assurance to the lovers that "you loved me first" makes the act of praise one of communion. The lovers are united through God to one another. The theology of the icon demonstrates this same relation. Praise – as I love you, or as Hallelujah, or as veneration transfers to the prototype – enunciates the import of the ethical. The ethics that love requires go beyond the language of commands, demands, or duties. Love requires much more, it requires a relation that "speaks of '…knowing the charity of Christ who surpasses all knowledge,' it is not a matter of once again knowing charity in the guise of a formal negation, but of '…taking root and establishing oneself in charity; and nothing other than this."[211]

Conclusion

Reading Marion as an apophatic-virtue phenomenologist provides a way to unify his thought about the icon around ethics. Though Marion hesitates to write ethics, the reason is not because his phenomenology lacks the resources for a robust, descriptive ethics, but because he defines ethics as a purely modern project that denies a role for love in ethics. As has been show, Marion relies on a diverse array of alternatives to modern ethics. These alternatives – including Pascal, Levinas, the painter, Maximus, and Denys – provide a way to avoid the idea that ethics relates to imperatives more than to individuals, and to avoid the

[210] "Ce qui ne se dit pas – l'apophase du discours amoureux," p. 140. My translation, "la mystique ne constitute pas une exception, marginal et insignifiante, dans la théorie du language, mais au contraire l'indice d'un domaine beaucoup plus vaste et central."

[211] See *In Excess*, p.140, Eph. 3:18-19, *Divine Names*, 588B

dehumanization that results. Marion's phenomenological ethics of love, instead, provides a virtuous posture by which individuals can be received lovingly. The virtues of receptivity, generosity, and humility provide ways to view others as icons, to see them lovingly, and to refuse to objectify or quantify them.

Viewing Marion's project as a "counter-ethics" provides a way to see phenomenology as a virtue practice, to unify reason and love in ethics, to remove the ego from the central concern of ethics, and to see the need for openness and vulnerability to the iconic other. Marion's love ethic makes relation a central concern, and thereby it can escape the logic of revenge. Furthermore, this way of viewing relation makes the virtues necessary. The virtues make work on the self possible, just as they make one open to receive the call of the other. The virtue of phenomenology, and the virtue of unknowing both work to make space to receive the other, and to respond to the other lovingly. Love informs and elevates ethics in Marion. This way of viewing Marion's phenomenology provides, at least, the possibility that one can try to love, and to love without measure.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Marion, Jean-Luc. *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, Trans. Jeffery K. Losky. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002.

———. *Crossing of the Visible,* Trans. James K. A. Smith. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004.

———. *On Descartes' Metaphysical Prism: The Constitution and the Limits of Onto-theo-logy*. Trans. Jeffery L. Kosky. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

———. *Etant donné: Essai d'une phénoménology de la donation*. Paris: Presses Universitaites de France, 1997.

———. *The Erotic Phenomenon*. Trans. Stephen E. Lewis. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.

———. *God Without Being*. Trans. Thomas A. Carlson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

———. *The Idol and Distance*. Trans. Thomas A. Carlson. New York: Fordham University Press, 2001, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy Series.

———. *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* Trans. by Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud New York : Fordham University Press, 2002.

———."The Final Appeal of the Subject." *The Religious*. Ed. John D. Caputo. Oxford: Blackwell Press, 2002. pp. 131-144.

———. "*Le Interloqué*." in *Who Comes after the Subject*. Eds. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy. New York and London: Routledge, 1991.

———. "A Note concerning Ontological Indifference," Trans. Jeffery L. Kosky. *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*. 20(2), 21(1), pp. 25-40.

———. "From the Other to the Individual." *Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond*. Ed. Regina Schwartz. Trans. Robyn Horner. New York and London: Routledge, 2004. pp. 43-59.

———. *L'phénomène érotique*. Paris: Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003.

———. *Prolégomènes a la charité*. Paris: Éditions de la difference, 1986.

———. *Prolegomena to Charity*, Trans. Stephen E. Lewis and Jeffrey L. Kosky New York: Fordham University Press, 2002.

———. *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*. Trans. Thomas A. Carlson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998

———."The Saturated Phenomenon." in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*. Dominique Janicaud, Jean-Francois Courtine, Jean-Louis Chretien, Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, and Paul Ricoeur. Trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky and Thomas A. Carlson. New York: Fordham University Press, 2000.

———.*De surcroît: Études sur les phénomènes saturés*. Paris: Presses Universitaites de France, 1997.

———."The Voice without Name: Homage to Levinas." *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God: Essays on the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. Ed. Jeffery Bloechl. New York: Fordham University Press, 2000.

St. Anthony the Great. *The Letters of St. Anthony the Great*. Trans. Derwas J. Chitty. Oxford: SLG Press, 1980.

Aquinas, St. Thomas. *Summa Theologica*

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. W. D. Ross. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. New York: The Modern Library, 2001.

St. Augustine. *The Confessions of St. Augustine*. Trans. John K. Ryan. Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1960.

Balthasar, Hans Urs von. *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe according to Maximus the Confessor*. Trans. Brian E. Daley, SJ. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988.

Baggley, John. *Doors of Perception: Icons and Their Spiritual Significance*. London and Oxford: Mowbray, 1987.

Benson, Bruce Ellis, *Graven Ideologies: Nietzsche, Derrida & Marion on Modern Idolatry*. Dowers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Blond, Phillip. "Introduction: Theology before Philosophy." *Between Philosophy and Theology*. Ed. Phillip Blond. London and New York: Routledge, 1989.

Burrell, David B. C.S.C. "From Analogy of 'Being' to the Analogy of Being." *Recovering Nature: Essays In Natural Philosophy, Ethics, and Metaphysics in Honor of Ralph McInerny*. Eds. Thomas Hibbs and John O'Callaghan. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999, pp. 253-266.

Caputo, John D. "Apostles of the Impossible: On God and the Gift in Derrida and Marion." *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*. Eds. John D. Caputo and Michael D. Scanlon Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Caputo, John D. and Michael D. Scanlon. Eds."On the Gift: A Discussion between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion, Moderated by Richard Kearney." *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*. Eds. John D. Caputo and Michael D. Scanlon Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999.

The Cannons of the 7th Eccumenical Council, 787, the Council of 100 Chapters, 1551

Carlson, Thomas A. "Blindness and the Decision to See: On Revelation and Reception in Jean-Luc Marion." *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*. Ed. Kevin Hart, Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 2007.

———. "Unlikely Shadows: Transcendence in Image and Immanence," *Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond*. Ed. Regina Schwartz. New York and London: Routledge, 2004. pp. 105-125.

Cassidy, Eoin. "*Le phenomène érotique*: Augustinian Resonances in Marion's Phenomenology of Love." *Givenness and God: The Questions of Jean-Luc Marion*. Eds. Eion Cassidy and Ian Leask, ?,2008, pp. 201-219.

Chrétien, Jean-Louis. *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped for*. Trans. Jeffery Bloechl. New York: Fordham University Press, 2002.

Constas, Nicholas. "Icons and Imagination." *Logos*, 1:1, 1997, pp. 114-127.

Derrida, Jacques. *Given Time: Counterfeit Money*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

———. "How to Avoid Speaking Denials," *On the Name*. trans. John P. Leavy Jr. Ed. Thomas Dutoit. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995, pp. 35-85.

Descartes, René Descartes. *Passion de l'âme.*

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Brother Karamazov*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.

———. *Demons*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

———. *The Idiot*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002.

———. *Notes from the Underground*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

Evagrius Ponticus. *The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*. Trans. John Eudes Banberger. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1981.

Farmer, Tanis Jones. "Revealing the Invisible: Gregory of Nyssa on the Gift of Revelation." *Modern Theology*. 21:1, January 2005, pp. 67-85.

Fisher, Jeffery. "The Theology of Dis/similarity: Negation in Pseudo-Dionysius." *The Journal of Religion*. 81:4, October 2001, pp. 529-548.

Florensky,Pavel. *Iconostasis*. Trans. Donald Sheehan and Olga Andrejev. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996.

Frank, Joseph. *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865-1871*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Girard, Rene. "History and the Paraclete." *The Scapegoat*. Trans. Yvonne Freccero, Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

———. "Stereotypes of Persecution." *The Girard Reader*. Ed. James G. Williams. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996.

Gregor, Brian. "Eros that Never Arrives: A Phenomenological Ethics of the Erotic." *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*. 9:1 Spring 2005. pp. 67-88.

Gschwandtner, Christina M. "The neighbor and the infinite: Marion and Levinas on the encounter between self, human other, and God." *Continental Philosophy Review*. 40:3, July 2007, pp. 231-249.

Hart, Kevin. "Jacques Derrida: The God Effect." *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology*. Ed. Phillip Blond. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, pp. 259-280.

Hauerwas, Stanley. *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides Publishers, Inc., 1974.

Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Trans. Albert Hofstander. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982.

———. *Being and Time*. Trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson. New York and Evanston: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962.

———. *What is Metaphysics*. Trans. Gregory Freid and Richard Polt. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000.

———. *Zur Sache des Denkens*.

Henry, Michel. *Généalogy de la psychonanalysis: Le commencement perdu*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985.

———. *I am the Truth*: *Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*. Trans. Susan Emanuel Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003.

———. "Quatre principes de la phenomenology." *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*. No. 1, 1991. pp. 3-26.

Hibbs, Thomas S. "Habits of the Heart: Pascal and the Ethics of Thought." *International Philosophical Quarterly*. 45:2, June 2005, pp. 203-221.

Horner, Robyn. "The Betrayal of Transcendence," *Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond*. Ed. Regina Schwartz. New York and London: Routledge, 2004 pp. 61-79.

———. *Jean-Luc Marion: A* Theo-*Logical Introduction*.

———. *On God and the Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2001.

———.*Rethinking God as Gift*,

———."The Weight of Love." *Counter Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*. Ed. Kevin Hart Norte Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, pp. 235-251.

Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian Meditations*. Trans. Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960.

———. *Erste Philosophie (1923-1924)*. Husserlia. Ed. Rudolf Bochem. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959.

———. *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*. Trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson. New York: Collier Books, 1972.

———. *Logical Investigations*. Trans. J. N. Findlay. New York. Humanity Books, 2000.

———.*Philosophy as a Rigorous Science*, in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy,* trans. Quinten Lauer.

Janicaud, Dominique. "Question de la redaction." *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, no. 1, 1991.

———. "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology, Veerings." *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn:" The French Debate*. Dominique Janicaud, Jean-François Courtine, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, and Paul Ricoeur. New York: Fordham University Press, 2000.

St. John of Damascus. *On the Divine Images: Three Apologies against Those Who Attack Divine Images*. Trans. David Anderson. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997.

Jones, Charles W. *Saint Nicholas of Myra, Bari, and Manhattan: Biography of a Legend*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. 1978.

Jones, Tasmin. "Dionysius in Hans Urs von Balthasar and Jean-Luc Marion." *Modern Theology* 24:4. October, 2008. pp. 743-754, p. p. 746.

Kant, Emmanuel. *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. Boston and New York: Bedford St. Martin's Press. 1965.

———. *The Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1997.

Kearney, Richard. *Debates in Continental Philosophy: Conversation with Contemporary Thinkers*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2004.

———.*The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Works of Love*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Kosky, Jeffery L. "Philosophy of Religion and the Return to Phenomenology in Jean-Luc Marion." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*. vol. 78, 4. Fall 2004, pp. 629-648.

Lauer, Quinten. "The introduction to Husserl's *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Western Philosophy*."

Leask, Ian. "The Dative Subject and the 'Principle of Principles.'" *Givenness and God: Questions of Jean-Luc Marion*. Eds. Eion Cassidy and Ian Leask.

Leibnitz, Gottfried Wilhelm Freiherr von. *Principles de la nature et la grace*. Ed. A. Robinet. Paris, 1954.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Difficicile Liberté: Essais sur le Judaisme* Paris: AlbinMichel, 1963.

———.*De l'existence a l'existant*. Paris: Vrin, 2002.

———.*Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre*. Paris: Éditions Grasse et Fasquelle, 1991.

———. *God, Death, and Time.,* Trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

———. *Of God Who Comes to Mind*. Trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998.

———. *Otherwise than Being: Or Beyond Essence*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1981.

———. *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*. Trans. André Orianne, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

———. *Time and the Other*. Trans. Richard Cohen. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1987.

———. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1969.

Lossky, Vladimir. *In the Image and Likeness of God.* Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001.

———. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*. Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1999.

Manoussakis, John Panteleimon . "The Phenomenon of God: From Husserl to Marion." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 78.1, Winter 2004. pp. 53-69.

———."Prosopon and Icon: Two Premodern Ways of Thinking God." *After God: Richard Kearney and the Religious Turn in Continental Philosophy*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2006.

Mathewes-Green, Frederica. *Facing East: A Pilgrim's Journey into the Mysteries of Orthodoxy*. San Franscico: Harper Collins, 1997.

Maximus the Confessor. *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings,* trans. George C. Berthold, New York, Mahwah, Toronto: Paulist Press, 1985.

McKenny, Gerald. "(Re)placing Ethics: Jean-Luc Marion and the Horizon of Modern Morality." in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart. Norte Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, pp. 339-355.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*. Trans. and ed. Leonard Lawler and Battina Bergo. Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 2002.

———. *The Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. New York: Humanities Press, 1962.

Milbank, John. "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics." *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.

———."The Soul of Reciprocity (Parts One and Two." *Modern Theology*, 17, 2001. pp. 335-389.

Moran, Dermont. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. Routledge, 1999.

Natanson, Maurice. *Edmund Husserl: Philosopher of Infinite Tasks*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

Nicholas of Cusa. *On Learned Ignorance*. Trans. Germain Heron. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books, 1954.

———. *Twilight of the Idols*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London and New York: Penguin Classics, 1990.

Nussbaum, Martha. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Ouspensky, Leonid. *The Theology of the Icon, Volume I and II*. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press. 1992.

Ouspensky, Leonid and Vladimir Lossky. *The Meaning of Icons*. Trans. G. E. H. Palmer and E. Kadloubovsky. Boston, Massachusetts: Boston Book & Art Shop, Inc., 1969.

Pascal, Blaise. *Pensée*. Trans. A. J. Krailsheimer. Penguin Classics. 1995

Peperzak, Adriaan. analysis *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993.

Percy, Walker. *The Movie Goer*. New York: Vintage International, 1960.

Pieper, Joseph. *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Fortitude, Justice and Temperance*. Trans. Richard and Clara Winston, Lawrence E. Lynch, and Daniel F. Coogan. New York: Hartcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1965.

The Philokalia. Complete text, Vol. 1. Trans. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1979.

Pseudo Dionysus. *On the Divine Names. Pseudo-Dionysus: The Complete Work*. Trans. Colm Luinheid and Paul Rorem. New York, Mahaw: Paulist Press, 1987.

———.*The Mystical Theology*. *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. Trans. Colm Luibheid. New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987.

Quenot, Michel. *Icon: Window on the Kingdom*. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press. 1992.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*. Trans. David Pellauer. Ed. Mark I. Wallace. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1995.

———. *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*. Trans. Eduard G. Ballard and Lester Embree. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1967.

———."On Narrative Imagination." in Richard Kearney. *Debates in Continental Philosophy: Conversations with Contemporary Thinkers*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2004.

———. *Oneself as Another*. Trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1992.

———.*The Symbolism of Evil*. Trans. Emerson Buchanan. New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967.

Romano, Claude. "Love in Its Concept: Jean-Luc Marion's *The Erotic Phenomenon*." *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*. Ed. Kevin Hart. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, 319-335.

Scheffler, Israel. *Science and Subjectivity* Indianapolis: Hackett, 1982.

Schrijvers, Joeri. "Ontotheological Turnings? Marion, LaCoste, and Levinas on the Decentring of modern Subjectivity." *Modern Theology*. 22:2, April 2006 pp. 221-253.

The Services for Holy Week and Easter. ΑΙ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣΒΔΟΜΑΔΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΣΧΑ. Trans. Nomikos Michael Vaporis. Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1993.

Smith, James K. A. "The Call as Gift: The Subject's Donation in Marion and Levinas." *Hermeneutics of Charity: Interpretation, Self-hood, and Postmodern Faith*. Ed. James K. A. Smith, and Henry Isaac Venema. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2004.

Sokolowski, Robert. "Exorcising Concepts." *Review of Metaphysics*. vol. 40, no. 3, issue 159, March 1987. pp. 451-465.

———. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

———. *Moral Action: A Phenomenological Study*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985.

Solovyov, Vladimir. "Beauty in Nature." *The Heart of Reality*. Trans. Vladimir Wozniuk. Notre Dame, Indiana. University of Notre Dame Press. 2003.

———."Three Addresses in Memory of Dostoevsky," *The Heart of Reality*.

Stapleton, Timothy J. *Husserl and Heidegger: The Question of a Phenomenological Beginning*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1983.

Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1964.

Tanner, Kathryn. "Theology at the Limits of Phenomenology," *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*. Ed. Kevin Hart. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, pp. 201-231.

Vrame, Anton C. *The Education Icon: Teaching Wisdom and Holiness in the Orthodox Way*. Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross University Press, 1999.

Ward, Graham. "The Theological Project of Jean-Luc Marion." *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology*. Ed. Phillip Blond. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, pp. 229-239.

Ware, Kallistos. "'In the Image and Likeness': The Uniqueness of the Human Person." *Personhood: Orthodox Christianity and the Connection between Body, Mind , and Soul*. Ed. John T. Chirban, Westport, Connecticut, and London: Bergin and Garvey, 1996.

Zagzebski, Linda. *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Zahavi, Dan. *Husserl's Phenomenology*. Stanford University Press, 2002.

Zizioulas, John. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993.