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Givenness, Grace and Marion's Augustinianism

By Felix Ó Murchadha

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It is not surprising, perhaps, that the author of *Being Given* turns in his later work to Augustine, the 'Doctor of Grace'. Grace understood as the 'gift of love' can indeed be understood as the core – if not always acknowledged – question in Marion from his early meditations on 'distance' to his later work on love. Furthermore, Marion engages in an Augustinian critique of the 'capable ego' from Descartes to Kant. Although Augustine is hardly mentioned within the text of his *Erotic Phenomenon*, the latter work amounts to a meditation on the words which form a second epigraph in the English (but not French) edition of that book "*nemo est qui non amet* (there is no one who does not love)". The ego which displaces the capable ego is the "gifted (*l'adonné*)", the one who is understood as the potential recipient of grace. If such an ego is to be understood in Augustinian terms, we must also be aware that Marion is here engaged in a debate which from Descartes and Pascal to Kant and Kierkegaard has marked modern philosophy, namely that between Augustine and Pelagius – or more precisely the Augustinian and the Pelagian approaches to grace.

At issue here is a question of disciplinary distinctions between philosophy and theology, but this question is one which relates directly to shifts in conceptions of nature, reason and faith. Kant in his later work, *Religion within the Bounds of mere Reason* developed a concept of grace which, contrary to Augustine, attempts to place it within the limits of critical reason, while recognizing its validity within those limits. For Kant, only critical philosophy, which

clearly guards and regulates the difference of sensible and supra-sensible, can demarcate between human endeavour and divine grace. By questioning in an Augustinian manner the basis of such a demarcation Marion problematizes not alone the difference between theology and philosophy, through his critique of the capable ego, he tends to undermine the Kantian account of autonomous action and in so doing opens philosophy up again to Jacobi's and Kierkegaard's claims concerning the *salto mortale*, the leap of faith, suspending critical reason.

I

Marion dedicates to Henri de Lubac a chapter on 'capable/capax', on the transformation of the notion of capacity in the Latin *capax* as passive receptivity to capacity as power in Descartes, and describes it as "marginal footnote" to de Lubac's "magisterial and fundamental work" on pure nature.¹ De Lubac and the "*nouvelle théologie*" movement in post-war France was highly influential on Marion's formation as a theologian and philosopher. In this context Marion is referencing a fundamental theme of de Lubac namely his contention that the theological notion of 'pure nature' is an early modern construct, which is at variance with the thought of Catholic theologians from Augustine to Aquinas. Attempting to protect the integrity of fallen humanity, on the one hand, and the gratuitousness of grace, on the other, the concept of nature proposed that human beings had two ends, one natural which could be achieved by their own volition and endeavour, and one supernatural, which required divine aid. De Lubac traces and critiques the development and implications of this theological innovation.² Marion in this chapter is showing its effects philosophically. Published in the same year as Janicaud's *Theological Turn*, this chapter demonstrates the theological background to Descartes understanding of the ego as capable, hence as active, and ultimately as sovereign with respect to knowledge. Positioning him between Jansenists

¹ Marion, 1999, p. 180.

² Cf. de Lubac 1998 and de Lubac, 2000.

and Jesuits, Marion shows how Descartes' use of *capax* places him within the theology of pure nature. As Marion points out, Descartes in line with the theology of pure nature distinguishes between two forms of blessedness, that which is within the natural capacity of the human and that which exceeds that capacity and is thus supernatural. "*Capacitas (posse)* now defines a naturally self-satisfied power whose self-sufficiency enables it to demarcate itself from unattainable supreme felicity."³

Crucial here is the place of Augustine in these debates. The "capable ego" which Marion is critiquing marks from Descartes to Kant a philosophical response to a theological question concerning grace and justification. The influence of Augustine, in particular in the earlier stages of this development, is crucial, but it is an Augustine who is understood ironically in the light of a Pelagian question, whether freedom or grace, grace or nature. Philosophically the Augustine-Pelagian debate—in its original occurrence as well as the manner in which it was renewed in modernity under different guises—is significant because it addresses what became a fundamental set of philosophical questions in modernity, namely those of the autonomy of reason, the nature of the will and the project of mastery of nature. Although Augustine refused this question, his supposed response to it, denying human freedom, provided a context in which a philosophically articulated account of the self as a self-sufficient ego could emerge.⁴

At the roots of such an account is the Stoic conception of freedom in terms of an indifferent, unmotivated will.⁵ Pelagianism is the conduit of such an account into Christian thought and hence into Modernity. Such a view of freedom understands the self as sovereign with respect to its motivations and its power of choice. The capable self is at root such an indifferent self. This self is one which is capable of fulfilment and yet (if we exclude Spinoza here) stands in

³ Marion, 1999, p. 94.

⁴ On this question see Hanby, 2003, pp. 117-143, see also Ó Murchadha, 2012.

⁵ Cf. *ibid*, 134-143.

relation to the supernatural which through grace elevates it to a level incommensurable with its nature.

The question of human capacity and its relation to grace is one which comes to a certain conclusion in Kant. What is striking about Kant's account is that he pursues a Pelagian concept of the moral subject, as one which can be judged only on its own merits, one which can will the good by a choice which is independent of external motivations, a moral subject which cannot be obliged morally to do what it is incapable of doing (ought implies can), and yet this same self depends on divine grace for salvation and can achieve that justifying grace through no merits of its own, but only through divine benevolence, from a god which owes us nothing.⁶ While practical reason demands that the self gives the law to itself, the problem of radical evil leads Kant to the view that she can never know that it is successful in doing so. Only an incarnate moral being can be radically evil, because such a being is fundamentally conflicted between its own particular embodied desires and interests (self-love) and the injunctions of the moral law.⁷ Because the self can only know itself phenomenally and the depths of its freedom remain inscrutable to it, its inner motivations remain opaque to it. Indeed, only God can see and judge those motivations, according to Kant.⁸ The revolution of the heart, necessary for a conversion to moral rectitude, while practically speaking is a matter of human endeavour, may not be possible without divine grace for Kant.⁹ Kant is clear, however, that once this revolution has taken place no further grace is necessary for perseverance in moral rectitude. In this he is following Calvin rather than Augustine, but is doing so for philosophical reasons: the capable ego, that ego which is capable of doing what it ought to do, cannot depend on divine grace to persevere in its obligations, even if it may need divine help to orientate its heart towards goodness. But the self is incapable of changing

⁶ Kant, 1998, p. 91. On the question of grace and justification in modernity see Kolakowski, 1995.

⁷ Kant, 1998, pp. 58-59.

⁸ Kant, 1998, p. 66

⁹ Ibid, p. 68.

the past, even in a moral sense. Past transgressions cannot be made good by present actions and only divine action – action out of benevolence rather than justice strictly speaking – can undo past transgressions and lead to salvation.

Kant repeats Descartes's pure nature, distinguishing between the practical domain of human capacity and moral faith in divine grace, a distinction which indeed is textually demarcated between the four parts of the *Religion within the Limits of mere Reason* which are based in human capacity, critical reason, pure nature, and its four parerga, which in various ways address the supernatural, the suprasensible and the actions of divine grace.

II

As the capable self of modernity responds to theological thinking on grace, so too does Marion's account of the self reflect the 'new theology' account of grace which we find articulated particularly by de Lubac. Marion charts not so much a "theological turn", as a philosophical reflection of a turn in theology. Marion's own phenomenology of givenness can in that context be understood as both critiquing the modern philosophical mirroring of a theological innovation and as itself reflecting that which became the theology of Vatican II.¹⁰ It is not so much that Marion's account of givenness can be reconciled with theology as the discourse on god known through and in grace, it is rather that the account of givenness as revelation (small r) is an account of grace. Marion is in effect repeating Descartes in making a philosophical response to a theological turn, but the turn in question is diametrically opposed to that of early modernity. What Marion is responding to is the turning away from the account of pure nature. Of course, this theological turn has implications not alone for how we see the self, but also makes the modern division of theology and philosophy and fideist implications of that division more problematic. Crucial here is the question of desire: as the proponents of 'pure nature' refused any account of desire for that beyond the natural capacity

¹⁰ See Mettepenningen, 2010.

to fulfil it, because such an account would entail that God owed human beings the means to fulfil a desire rooted in their nature, the new theology understands the human being as having within its own nature a desire for that which it cannot fulfil.¹¹ The account of the self which emerges from this is much closer to that which we find in Augustine's writings on grace: a restless self incapable of goodness, beauty or truth when depending on the sufficiency of its own powers.¹²

Marion employs the phenomenological reduction to think this "incapable" self. As is well known, he engages in a radicalization of the reduction which he sees as completing the work of Husserl and Heidegger in this respect. The third reduction is, as with Husserl's an "unnatural habitus of reflection" (as Marion quotes him)¹³, but one which leads back neither to the subject nor to being, but rather to givenness, more specifically gratuitous givenness, grace. The force of Marion's account here is not that he is adding one more reduction, but rather that he is disclosing the inner logic of the reduction itself. The reduction leads away from the natural directedness of human thought and action and in doing so uncovers within experience itself – a posteriori – those conditions which make it possible (apriori). The appearing of the apriori only in experience itself reflects the structure of grace – as Rahner says grace is not experienced *as such* but always in *terms of*.¹⁴ The difference between the natural and philosophical attitude uncovers through a process of radicalization, characterized by Marion as the epistemic, ontological and erotic reductions, the self-manifesting of manifestation anterior to, and hidden by, the pretensions of the capable ego. That which is anterior Marion names the "pure form of the call", which is the "originary scheme of the two previous reductions".¹⁵ In *Reduction and Givenness* Marion understands the self which

¹¹ See de Lubac, 2000, pp. 170-172.

¹² Cf. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Bk. 8, ch. 5, Augustine, 2002, p. 50: "For it [the mind] is not sufficient to itself, nor is anything at all sufficient to him who departs from Him who is alone sufficient."

¹³ Marion, 1998, p. 6

¹⁴ On this issue see Purcell, 2008.

¹⁵ Marion, 1998, pp. 197-198.

emerges here as an *interloqué*, the one addressed. This figure is to be understood on the basis of the “absolutely other and antecedent the claim convoking me by surprise.”¹⁶ While this claim is not discussed in theological terms here, and certainly not described in terms of grace, Marion is setting aside the capable ego of pure nature and arguing phenomenologically for a self which responds to a claim which is absolutely other and for which it is not capable, but on the contrary “discovers itself as a subject always already derived starting from a relation, a subject without subjecti(vi)ty.”¹⁷ Such a subject is the one to whom is spoken, convoked by the call, and in the givenness of that call finds itself as the gifted, *l’adonné*. Such a self understands itself through its own reception of the gift of givenness. Rejecting Kant’s priority of apperception as based on a prior claim to originality of spontaneity, hence of the capable ego¹⁸, Marion understands the self as the gifted which “receives itself entirely from what from what it receives”.¹⁹ Indeed, Marion describes Kant’s transcendental ego as the ‘counter-model’ to the gifted. Here we are in the logic of grace, of that which turns the heart so as to receive it.²⁰ The ego receives not alone the given but receives itself as the one who receives the gift. The efficacy of the call is not simply in letting itself be heard, but more originally in giving the self to itself.²¹

Crucially the call occurs in surprise, through which the self is taken over by that which precedes it. The alterity which is opened up here is anonymous in the sense that it precedes any name the self can give it, not because it is pre-linguistic, but because it speaks from a place before the Babel of the self’s responses. Finally, the “call gives me to and as myself ...because it separates me from all property or possession of the proper by giving it to me and

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 202.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 201.

¹⁸ See Marion, 2002, p. 251.

¹⁹ Ibid, 271 [translation modified].

²⁰ See Augustine’s discussion of the line from Zechariah: “Turn to me ... and I will turn to you” in Augustine, “On Grace and Free Will”, in Augustine, 2010, p. 166.

²¹ Marion, 2002, p. 270.

letting this proper anticipate its reception by me and as me.”²² In short, the gifted is given to itself as that which is impossible for it. That impossibility is essential to the self, it is that impossibility which shows the self its dependence on that which comes before it, but which meets it on its way. In this Marion repeats Augustinian’s *memoria dei*, where in recollection the self finds itself having already anticipated the good and as having been anticipated by it.²³

This is confirmed by Marion’s later work on love. At the beginning of *The Erotic Phenomenon* Marion objects to any radical divergence of eros and agape understood as possessive and gratuitous, rational and irrational, and here his target is not so much Anders Nygren as it is Descartes and Kant. The Kantian distinction between a rational love directed towards the moral law, affecting the ego as respect and the pathological love of self and possessible others, is rejected in the name of love which is one way / has one sense (*sens unique*).²⁴ Nygren had already castigated Augustine as one of the major thinkers who had undermined the distinction of eros and agape. In denying any fundamental divergence between these two aspects of love, Marion is reaffirming Augustine. Indeed, the erotic far from being driven towards possession is liturgically structured towards loss and as such “loving loses nothing from the fact of not being, because it gains nothing from the fact of being.”²⁵ Towards the end of that book, he states, that there is no “equivocality of love, but instead the strict opposition between the desires for possessible worldly objects, which in no way concern love, and the one way (*sens unique*) of love, which is recognized in the exercise of the reduction and against the trial of elsewhere.”²⁶ He goes on to say of the lover’s eros that it “reveals itself to be just as much an oblation and gratuitous as the agape, from which, moreover, it is no longer distinguished.”²⁷ The word ‘oblation’ here is crucial – eros is a self-

²² Ibid.

²³ Cf. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Bk 14.

²⁴ Marion, 2007, p. 5.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 72.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 218.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 221 [translation modified]

giving in response to the other who owes me nothing, the other who gives me myself only through the grace of love. Our very flesh attests to this for Marion: “my flesh experiences itself by receiving itself from another flesh.”²⁸ Furthermore, through the erotic reduction I come finally to recognize myself as already beloved: “the logic of love lead[s] me insensibly, but ineluctably, to comprehend that another loved me well before I loved her.”²⁹

III

The theme of the relation of philosophy and theology has been at the background of the discussion to this point. It is question which is raised again and again in discussions of Marion’s work.³⁰ Marion’s response is on the face of it straightforward enough: philosophy concerns possibility, theology actuality. The philosopher is concerned to sketch out the possibility of revelation, the theologian is concerned with the accounts of putatively actual revelations.³¹ In a certain sense Marion reproduces here the approach which inaugurates the philosophy of religion in Kant. However, there is an ambiguity: does philosophy give us an account of possibility, such that theology has a benchmark against which to judge its own account or does philosophy uncover the possibility of a specific account, namely the Christian account of revelation in Christ? In other words, does philosophy lead seamlessly to theology or is theology a positive science which has no privileged connection to philosophy? In addressing this question, I will compare Marion again to Kant, specifically in relation to evil. While Kant privileges Christianity, he does so on critical, philosophical grounds (whether rightly or otherwise is another issue). Marion, in his book on Augustine, denies – at least with respect to Augustine himself – the providence of the distinction of theology and

²⁸ Ibid, p. 181.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 215

³⁰ Cf. Horner, 2001, pp. 177-183,

³¹ Cf. Marion, 2009.

philosophy.³² More than this, the Augustine book is a “reciprocal trial” which hinges on the post- or non-metaphysical nature of the phenomenology of givenness.³³ If the phenomenology of givenness finds confirmation in this reading of Saint Augustine, the thought of the “Doctor of Grace” finds expression in that very phenomenology, such that Augustine points the way towards a post-metaphysical, but also post-philosophical and post-theological, way of thought. But such thought seems, at least on this reading, to be tied necessarily and not simply contingently to a certain reading of Christianity. The questions grace and evil are central to testing this possibility and its implications. These questions set inspired the great dispute between Augustine and Pelagius and it is the theological question of evil which Kant attempts to place in a philosophical setting, while recognizing the “poetic arts (*Dichtkunst*)” of the priestly religion.³⁴ Furthermore, with Kant we find the philosophical problem of a critical understanding of grace, a discussion necessitated by the radicality of evil.

Radical evil, as Kant tells us, is rooted in the inscrutable depths of our freedom. It is invisible, unknowable, surprising. The very capable ego, the autonomous self, which is that which the moral law requires, is cut off from itself through the possibility of evil. It is important to read *Religion within the Boundaries of mere Reason* in relation to Rousseau. The title indeed is taken almost verbatim (whether consciously or not) from *Emile*, where Rousseau in the course of the “Profession of the Vicar of Savoyard” states, “the greatest ideas of divinity come to us by reason alone (*par la raison seule*)”³⁵. Yet, Kant’s appropriation of Rousseau is not uncritical and the distance from Rousseau can be gleaned in the first pages of *Religion*.

³² Marion, 2012, p. 9: “I assume the hypothesis that Saint Augustine was brilliantly unaware of the distinction between philosophy and theology because he did not belong to metaphysics.”

³³ Ibid, p. 10

³⁴ Kant, 1998, p. 45. Kant is in this text developing an account of the relation of Philosophy and Theology already worked out in “The Conflict of the Faculties”. See Kant, 1992.

³⁵ Rousseau, 1979, 295. The defence of a religion of reason, the critique of the diversity of cults, the opposition of reason to enthusiasm – *Schwärmerie*, *l’inspiré* -, the moral argument for religion, the critique of revelation, in all these respects Kant echoes and develops themes which we find in the “Profession”.

Kant rejects the Rousseauian account of natural human goodness, which he opposes to the “priestly religion’s” account of a basic fallenness in human nature. In effect Kant here places the cultic accounts of the fall against a natural religious account of human goodness and in concluding that the human being is by nature evil places his account within the ambit of the priestly religion (albeit expressed in conceptual rather than figurative terms).

Despite dispositions for good, the human being has a propensity for evil and Kant’s concern in *Religion* is to account for this propensity and its overcoming. His concern is not so much with the metaphysics of morals, which is assumed in this book, but rather with accounting for evil as a modus of illusion: just as in its theoretical use reason can lead to illusion, the practical use of reason while aiming at the good often fails in the individual to reach the good. The cause of illusion in this case, however, is the reverse of theoretical reason: while in the latter reason oversteps the limits of human finitude, in the former human finitude blocks the full working through of rational consistency. The question then for Kant has to be one of accounting for this conflict in the human self between reason and that which opposes it. The locus of this inner conflict is the heart.

The conflict itself lies in the essence of reason itself, namely its universality. Practical reason does not privilege the situation of the self, nor of its own self-interest within that situation. As a sensible being the human self is placed in a situation of conflict between the universal claims of reason and the particularity of its own being. That conflict, which can be understood as a conflict of love, between self-love and the love of the moral law, concerns the human self in the totality of its being. Kant asks as to the “aesthetic constitution” or the “temperament” of virtue and responds that

a heart joyous in the *compliance* with its duty (not just complacency in the *recognition* of it) is the sign of genuineness in virtuous disposition” and goes on to speak of “a joyous frame of mind, without which one is never certain of having

*gained also a love for the good, i.e. of having incorporated the good into one's maxim.*³⁶

Such joy and love are not incidental to morality, but lie at its core: to follow the moral law in fear and dejection displays a “hidden hatred” of the moral law which is incompatible with the genuine incentive of following the moral law for its own sake, that is for love of it.

The propensity to evil lies in the turning of the heart away from love of the moral law. In its frailty, impurity and depravity the heart is turned away from love of the law through self-love. But what is at issue here is not a choice for Kant between love of the law and self-love, but rather the harmonizing of self-love and love of law: the good heart is a healthy heart in the sense of a heart which has found peace and tranquillity in following the moral law.³⁷ Kant speaks here of a “radical perversity of the human heart”³⁸. Here we find the locus of radical evil, in the manner in which the self lives its own sensible and particular being in relation to the moral law. The evil heart is one which lives its own self-love as other than the love of the moral law, a heart in which the moral law remains alienated from the self, remains other than the self. The autonomy of the self gauged in the heart, that is, in the feeling of identity of the self-love and love of the moral law.

Marion rarely discusses evil, but in account of the saturated phenomenon opens up a radical manner of understanding it.³⁹ What is striking, but quite clearly motivated, that Marion introduces the saturated phenomenon in direct opposition to Kant: the saturated phenomenon is precisely that which does not obey the strictures of critical philosophy. The saturated phenomenon undercuts the Kantian barriers, both in theoretical and practical terms. Theoretically the saturated phenomenon is that which undercuts the structures of the intellect (*Verstand*) and in so doing gives that which is irreducible to sensibility in terms of the

³⁶ Kant, 1998, p. 49

³⁷ Ibid, p. 66: “the inner principle of a contentment only possible for us on condition that our maxims are subordinated to the moral law.” At play here is a distinction which we find in Rousseau between *amour de soi* and *amour propre*.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 60

³⁹ For a more theologically orientated discussion of this question see Robinette, 2007.

intuitions of space and time (as understood by Kant); practically the saturated phenomenon gives appearance to that which (for Kant) only reason can direct itself to.

Radical evil, as Kant describes it – as invisible, unknowable, surprising – has the characteristics of a saturated phenomenon in Marion’s terms. But precisely the manner of his placement of evil in the will shows, for Marion, the lack of radicality of his account. More specifically Kant fails to reach the radicality of Augustine’s reflections, because he fails to see that evil flows from a “perversity of the will that seeks evil for the sake of evil, in full knowledge”.⁴⁰ For Augustine the will in pursuing evil, does not pursue a good unknowingly, but pursues evil for its own sake. Such a pursuit however is one which enjoys only itself, as willing evil is willing nothingness. Such willing is loving, and as such willing evil is loving evil.⁴¹ But what I love I only recognize after the fact: love draws me, draws the will such that “the self’s place precedes where *I* come from.”⁴² At the close of *Being Given*, evil emerges as a theme precisely has he rejects, in the figure of the “abandoned”, the basis transcendental principle of Kant’s critical philosophy, that the condition of possibility of the experience of the object is the condition of possibility of the object of experience.⁴³ Marion is concerned here with cases in which the gifted “could or simply would not receive” the given.⁴⁴ Focusing on cases in which there is an excess of intuition with respect to the saturated phenomenon, Marion discusses those instances in which the gifted “no longer says what its flesh attests”.⁴⁵ Marion speaks here of the concentration camp, of a suffering “so all-encompassing ... that one can justly call it absolute ... a suffering become a world unto itself.”⁴⁶ The survivors of such a world, seeing that evil which “saturated them in their flesh” could not appear in our shared world denies it and fails to phenomenalyze it.

⁴⁰ Marion, 2012, p. 179.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 181

⁴² Ibid, p. 184.

⁴³ Marion, 2002, p. 309.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 310

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 317

⁴⁶ Ibid

Whatever of the details of this account, what is remarkable is that Marion speaks of evil as a saturated phenomenon, as one which in a manner resembling radical evil in Kant is given but due to the finitude of the gifted cannot be phenomenalized. But contrary to Kant, Marion understands evil phenomenologically, understands it, as it were, beyond good and evil, in the sense that we are no longer here working with moral categories. Derrida has rightly said that for Kant it is simply a fact that diabolical evil is impossible for the human being. But this is so because Kant understands the human as caught between two goods and two loves, the good of self-love and the love of the moral law; evil arises through the subordination of the latter to the former. Marion follows a line of Christian thought running from Augustine to Kierkegaard in rejecting this account and this rejection is in line with his undermining of the 'capable ego'. While for Kant as for Augustine there is no necessary conflict in principle between freedom and grace (as the free act of following the moral law may through the conversion of the heart be aided by grace), in practical terms there is a conflict as only through reliance his own endeavours can a moral subject hope to be pleasing to God. For Augustine, on the contrary, only through divine grace do we know what is right and are we able to do it. Human freedom is fallen in the sense that left to itself it can only choose sin. But such freedom is not that of an indifferent will; freedom is always operating through desire. Desire either aims towards God, or falls to concupiscence. For Augustine the claim to autonomous reason is in principle not distinct from self-love because it separates itself from divine grace.⁴⁷ As such the very difference which for Kant explains the moral struggle is denied and with it the basis of Kant's distinction of philosophy and theology.

Following Augustine in this, Marion's 'gifted ego' acts neither to fulfil its self-love nor to follow the moral law as commanded by practical reason, but finds a place anterior to this difference in answering a call to love. While Kant finds in the good heart the harmonization

⁴⁷ Augustine, 2010, p. 161: "Human beings do not become free of sin by the Law, but rather by grace."

of the love of the law and the love of self, for Marion - following Augustine - such a harmonization can only be mediated by a love of God, a loving of love, which is God, a love which makes all other loves possible.⁴⁸ As Marion puts it, interpreting a passage from Book 12 of the Confessions:

The creature ... should not overcome the distraction of time by trying not to yield to spatial (spatializing, spatialized) changes through correction of its nature (Manicheanism), nor by supernatural knowledge (Gnosticism), but by a loving adhesion to God, in which, as an added bonus, it will find cohesion with itself.⁴⁹

In this Marion's account also resembles Kierkegaard's teleological suspension of the ethical, where again Kant's distinction of self-love and the moral law is suspended in response to an anterior call.⁵⁰ Following a phenomenological path, Marion nonetheless speaks the language of existential decision in a situation of paradox. In this situation, the self understood as the gifted is that one who depends on a prior grace.

This relates directly to Marion's account of transcendence. Transcendence in phenomenology, he tells us, remains "immanent to the horizon of being"⁵¹ Yet, God is beyond being, is pure transcendence, which means, he "transcends all delimitation and therefore all definitions supplied by my finite mind."⁵² What this means is that God cannot be experienced or thought, is beyond all intuition and conceptualization, such that

God's infinity can only contradict our finite knowing of the phenomenon. ...If incomprehensibility attests to the impossibility of phenomenizing the infinite, it ...postulates, on a negative mode, a positive experience of the infinite ... the impossibility of the phenomenon of God ... experienced as a counter-experience of God.⁵³

⁴⁸ See Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Bk. 8, ch. 8: "We ... love God and our neighbour from one and the same love, but we love God on account of God, but ourselves and our neighbour on account of God."

⁴⁹ Marion, 2012, p. 250.

⁵⁰ See Kierkegaard, 2006, pp. 46-58.

⁵¹ Marion, 2007a, p. 18

⁵² Marion, 2007a, p. 22

⁵³ Marion, 2007a, p. 23

What this means is that the question of God cannot be settled in rational terms, indeed it leads reason beyond itself. Echoing Pascal, Marion states: “The question of God survives the impossibility of God. Reason itself requires ...that we give up a rational account of this paradox: We must either explain it, or give up and give in to it.”⁵⁴ At stake here is made clear when he goes on to say: “God begins where the possible for us ends, where what human reason comprehends as possible for it comes to a halt.”⁵⁵

If philosophy is concerned with possibility, theological revelation in its actuality concerns the impossible. But, what philosophy is concerned with as it responds to a new theological shift, is the lack of possibility understood as capacity at the heart of human nature. The self which emerges from Marion’s thought is a self which receives itself in a manner which is expressed by Augustine when he states “the will of man does not obtain grace through its freedom, but freedom through grace.”⁵⁶ At the heart of Marion’s account is a logic of grace not simply as contingent actuality of Revelation, but as necessary to the erotic reduction itself. The phenomenological account of possibility is the possibility of an ego subject to grace, subject to impossibility.

This leaves us in a fascinating position. If the capable ego responded to a theological debate, if, as Fergus Kerr puts it, the death of god was an inside job⁵⁷, the post-metaphysical world as Marion is describing it, is one which resurrects not the onto-theological God, but a God of grace, proclaimed by Augustine. This account centres on the gift and as Marion says, ‘freedom of the gift’ corresponds to the insufficiency of its reason. Augustine appeals in this a context to a theological principle – “Give what you command and command what you will”. But of course this theological principle is itself theologically contested. Indeed, it is precisely here that the debate with Pelagius begins. The freedom of the gift obeys the logic of

⁵⁴ Marion, 2007a, p. 24

⁵⁵ Marion, 2007, p. 25

⁵⁶ Augustine, 2010, p. 200. Quoted, Marion, 2012, p. 188.

⁵⁷ Kerr, 1995, p. 360.

the givenness⁵⁸, but how are we to understand the freedom of the gifted? While Kant in the tradition of Stoicism and Pelagius insists that freedom is the self determined by reason, for Marion givenness is beyond reason, brings the self to a freedom which is incompatible with the needs of its rational nature. In such a view it would seem the freedom of the gifted is the freedom of the salto mortale, a leap of faith, which loves, but needs a divine command to do so with orientation, with sense. If this is so, then the phenomenology of givenness, as Marion accounts for it, depends finally on the logic of grace which animates it, the lack of identity of the giver being only a temporary suspension as philosophy reaches its theological fulfilment and the difference of philosophy and theology dissolves post-metaphysically.

⁵⁸ Marion, 2012, p. 106.

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