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REJECTION OF RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON IN KANT AND ITS REHABILITATION BY MARION

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1. Introduction

When philosophy turns its critical investigation towards religion, the philosopher has an unenviable task at hand. For, religion presents a veritable minefield of issues before which philosophy betrays its impotence. Religious phenomena like supernatural revelation, the Transcendent, etc. are not objects proper to philosophy at all if Kant has his way regarding the conditions of the possibility of experience of objects. Much of what goes on under religion should then be treated in history, sociology and psychology of religion and not in philosophy of religion. Kant held that any prospective candidate of phenomenon should appear in space and time as well as be guided by the categories of understanding. This is to say that a phenomenon should don an empirical garb. Kant is loath to yield an inch to so-called supra-empirical phenomena that crowd the domain of religion. "He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him" (John 1:11) – this Johannine regret referring to the rejection of Jesus at the hands of Jewish authorities as well as common people gives expression to the rejection of the claims of religious phenomena of all hues at the doorstep of critical philosophy of Kantian strand.

Kant has mandated that any self-claimed *religious* phenomenon should first attest its credentials of phenomenality, i.e., its right to appear. In recent times, it is Jean-Luc Marion who has taken up the cudgels on behalf of religious phenomena. He concedes that in a strictly Kantian framework, "religious phenomenon … amounts to an impossible phenomenon, or at least it marks the limit starting from which the phenomenon is in general no longer possible."[1] With unmistakable Johannine overtones, Marion laid bare the predicament that the religious phenomena were in: Religious phenomenon was "a phenomenon … that

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[1]Jean-Luc Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," in *Phenomenology and the 'Theological Turn': The French Debate*, Dominique Janicaud, et. al., eds., New York: Fordham University Press, 2000, 176.

the world could not accept… Having come among its own, they did not recognize it; having come into phenomenality, the absolutely saturated phenomenon could find no room there for its display."[2] The predicament was that since a religious phenomenon was a transcendent phenomenon, transcending the legitimate bounds of appearing, it was an impossible phenomenon. Marion's strategy, as Robyn Horner points out, was to show that "phenomenology contains the possibility of referring to the impossible" since it is no less than "a radical thought of transcendence."[3]

Simply put, Marion wants to show the possibility of religious phenomenon. This is too grandiose a task that is easier said than achieved. Hence Marion proceeds in steps. Marion starts with the admission that inquiry into the possibility of a religious phenomenon should begin first by showing the possibility of phenomenon, that is, any phenomenon. On further reflection he concludes that "The question concerning the possibility of the phenomenon implies the question of the phenomenon of possibility."[4] This brings Marion to taking a close look on Kant. Kant may be accused of closing the doors of philosophy before the transcendent phenomena of religion. Strange as it may seem, it is in Kant's philosophy itself that Marion looks for and indeed finds the key to unlock the doors for religious phenomena.

2. The Phenomenon of Possibility

In Kant's definition of the modality category of possibility, Marion finds hints for the development of a full-fledged phenomenology of religion. For Kant, "That which agrees with the formal conditions of experience, that is, with the conditions of intuition and of concepts, is *possible*."[5]

Marion finds Kant's definition of possibility helpful for his own project in dual modes. In a positive mode, Marion finds in the definition an intimate tie between possibility and phenomenality which he seeks to take advantage of. In a negative mode, on the other hand, Marion discerns that the definition limits any phenomenon to humans' finite power of knowing.

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[2]Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," 208.

[3]Robyn Horner, "The Betrayal of Transcendence" in *Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond*, Regina Schwartz, ed., New York/ London: Routledge, 2004, 63.

[4]Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," 177.

[5]A 218/ B 265(References to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are to the paginations of the first (1781) and second (1787) editions, indicated as "A" and "B," respectively. The text used is, Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

3. Phenomenal as the Only Possible

The possibility of a thing, as the definition shows, is tied to its phenomenality. This is what is said when the definition stipulates that to be possible a thing should agree with the formal condition of intuition which is always sensible. In other words, to be possible one should appear. But why this privileging of intuition over the concept? Marion is quick to point out that this privileging is very much inherent in Kant himself.

> Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. It is thus just as necessary to make the mind's concepts sensible (i.e., to add an object to them in intuition) as it is to make its intuitions understandable (i.e., to bring them under concepts).[6]

It is not to be denied that both concept (thought) and intuition (content) are *conditio sine qua non* for knowledge. Think of two cases in which concept and intuition are respectively absent. Kant called the one without concept blind while the one without intuition empty. Marion uses this unevenness between concept and intuition to assert that "[i]n the realm of the phenomenon, the intuition, rather than the concept, is king."[7] He elaborates:

> To be sure, the intuition remains empty, but blindness is worth more here than vacuity: for even blinded the intuition remains one that gives, whereas the concept, even if it alone can allow to be seen what would first be given to it, remains as such perfectly empty, and therefore just as well incapable of seeing anything at all. Intuition without the concept, even though still blind, nevertheless already gives matter to an object; whereas the concept without intuition, although not blind, nevertheless no longer sees anything, since nothing has yet been given to it to be seen.[8]

Marion sees no arbitrariness in the privileging of the intuition. Terming the intuition 'pure givenness,' Marion argues that "[b]eing, appearing, effecting, or affecting become possible and thinkable only if they happen, before each and every specification of their respective venues, first as pure givennesses… Nothing arises that is not given."[9]

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[6] A 51/ B 75.

[7] Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," 190-1.

[8] Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," 190.

[9] Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, 54.

4. Possibility of Phenomenon as Tied to the Finite Power of Knowing

Marion is all praise for Kant as far as the privileging of the intuition goes. However, it is a different story thereafter. That the possibility is tied to phenomenality, that is, to the givenness of a thing, is not the whole story of phenomenological experience. Kant's definition of possibility has an important clause which is not to be overlooked. He stipulates that only such an experience is possible "which agrees with the *formal conditions* of experience." With the clause "formal conditions of experience" Kant ties phenomenality to humans' power of knowing. This is a well-founded inference given Kant's explanation that the categories of modality (and the category of possibility is one of them) "express only the relation (of the concepts) to the faculty of cognition" (A 219/ B 266).

The tying of the possibility of phenomenon to the power of knowing results in huge consequences. The phenomenon loses its independence in appearing. Its fortunes are wedded to human mind's power to know. Every phenomenon is reduced to a "conditional phenomenon." And a greater paradox is that the condition for it is put forth by a mind that itself does not appear. "[T]he possibility of appearing never belongs to what appears, nor phenomenality to the phenomenon."[10] Marion argues that this outsourcing of the phenomenon's condition to appear to a total outsider, namely a mind, is not unique to Kant. Before him, Leibniz had worked out a similar paradox with his principle of sufficient reason. Leibniz had determined that any possible phenomenon should attest a sufficient reason to appear before the tribunal of an infinite mind. "[N]othing is done without sufficient reason, that is, that 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."[11]

The conditioning of phenomenon whereby its possibility is conditional to an agency outside it brings grave difficulties to philosophy of religion. When the phenomenon concerned is a Transcendent phenomenon, will it, in appearing, even with its overwhelming infinitude, have to measure up to the conditions set by a finite mind? Precisely that is what Kant demands. Precisely because God cannot be subsumed under the conditions of the finite mind, Kant keeps God eternally waiting outside, knocking at the doors of the finite human mind. W. H. Walsh explains the constraints Kant had when faced with the issue of the phenomenon of God. "As for the suggestion that God can be experienced directly, it is clear that

[10]Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," 179.

[11]Quoted in Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," 178.

Kant would not have accepted it." This was because Kant had concluded that "no fact could be established by mere intuition, since 'with us men' all knowledge demands conceptual as well as interpretative elements."[12] Remember for Kant "intuitions without concept are blind" (A 51/ B 75).

Intuition or the givenness of the phenomenon is not supreme. It has to play second fiddle to the knowing subject. This tyrannical subjugation of the phenomenon by the finite subject is the greatest paradox in the philosophy of religion. When the finite subject extends its tyrannical subjugation even to an infinite and transcendent phenomenon, the paradox becomes surreal. Such a paradox cannot be avoided since, as Marion notes, "the principle of the *donating* intuition does not authorize the absolutely unconditioned appearance, and thus the freedom of the phenomenon that gives itself on the basis of itself."[13]

By all accounts, the relation between the infinite phenomenon and the finite knower is grossly asymmetrical. Naturally the phenomenon suffers distorted recognition or even rejection at the tribunal of the knower, given the restricting and restraining transcendental conditions under which the knower has to function. The subject with its transcendental conditions of possible experience forbids a free appearing of the phenomenon. "It is forbidden to appear!" asserts Marion and thinks of ways to recuperate the phenomenon from the structures of the transcendental ego.[14]

Marion marks out three phases in any phenomenological experience in each of which the asymmetry plays out: the shortage of intuition, the limits sets by a horizon, and the phenomenon-constituting I.

4.1. The Shortage of Intuition

Experience is in Kantian understanding the result of interplay between the concept and sense content or intention and intuition. For the experience to be complete or truth to be whole the exchange between the intention and intuition should be adequate; the intuition or the given should adequately fulfil the concept. Essentially, however, Kant ruled out any adequation as far as human experience was concerned since, we, humans, are entitled only to a finite (i.e., sensible) intuition. "We should … know only our mode of intuition, that is, our sensibility. We should, indeed, know it

[12]W. H. Walsh, *Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics*, Edinburgh: University Press, 1997, 221.

[13]Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," 181.

[14]Marion, "Metaphysics and Phenomenology: A Summary for Theologians," in *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader*, G. Ward, ed., Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, 289.

completely, but always under the conditions of space and time – conditions which are originally inherent in the subject."[15]

The subject's knowing powers are inherently limited. Its finitude vetoes the infinitude of the giving phenomenon. This alters the harmony. Intuition is no more the king; intention is. The finitude of sensible intuition in humans can never do justice to the given. "The senses deceive, not with a provisional or accidental deception, but with an ineluctable powerlessness: even an indefinite sum of intuitioned adumbrations will never fulfil the lowest level of intentionality aiming at real objects."[16] Our sensible intuition suffers from the limitations spatiality and temporality engender. What we perceive is characterised by here, there or somewhere (never an everywhere) and by now, then or sometime (never an always). "[I]ntuition is characterised by scarcity, obeys a logic of shortage, and is stigmatized by an indelible insufficiency."[17]

4.2. The Limits Set by a Horizon

As if the logic of shortage that our finite intuition suffers is not enough to checkmate many a phenomenon from appearing, Marion discerns another limiting factor in phenomenology. This is the limit set by a horizon. Any new experience we may have is received into the canvas of the previous experiences. Our consciousness to which any phenomenon appears is a coloured consciousness, coloured by all that have appeared to it previously. If to appear, a phenomenon has to appear to this canvas of consciousness. "Within the horizon, the unknown refers in advance to the known" since the "intention always anticipates what it has not yet seen, the result being that the unseen has, from the start, the rank of a pre-seen."[18] The horizon is, in the language of Robyn Horner, "a border … that fences an economy of thought and action."[19] The net result is that all seeing is a prejudiced, prejudged seeing and there is a "forbidding (of) all genuinely new arising."[20]

4.3. The Phenomenon-Constituting I

Thirdly and more unsettling from the point of the phenomenon's right to appear on its own terms, there is the all-pervading transcendental *I* which,

[15]A 43/ B 60.
[16]Marion, *Being Given*, 192.
[17]Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," 181.
[18]Marion, *Being Given*, 186.
[19]Horner, "The Betrayal of Transcendence," 66.
[20]Marion, *Being Given*, 187.

rather than passively receiving the phenomenon, in fact, goes out to actively constitute it. "[T]he givenness of a phenomenon on its own basis to an *I* can always veer toward a constitution of the phenomenon by and on the basis of the *I*."[21] Any thing in being experienced as an object becomes an object of and for a subject. In this self-transfer, it will have lost considerable originality it may have had. The loss of originality is only inevitable since the *I* does not go out of itself to meet the phenomenon in the latter's horizon; rather, it receives the phenomenon within a horizon which is originally its own. Ultimately, a sort of reducibility marks the phenomenon since "transcendental or not, the phenomenological *I* remains the beneficiary, and therefore the witness and even the judge, of the given appearance; it falls to the *I* to measure what does and does not give itself intuitively, within what limits, according to what horizon, following what intention, essence, and signification."[22] In short, the appearing phenomenon, once in the tribunal of the knowing subject, is constituted by it.

The aforementioned three-fold restrictions subject a phenomenon to three-fold limitations that render it a poor phenomenon – a) it suffers from a poverty of intuition. It is not able to satisfy expectations of an intending subject; b) it is restricted by the pre-defined horizon that the subject brings; and c) its status is relative to the intending subject which masters and even constitutes it. This three-fold phenomenological conditioning ensured that every phenomenon remains essentially a poor phenomenon. This forestalled any religious project in phenomenology. The religious domain claimed to have unconditioned and absolute phenomena. How could an unconditioned and absolute phenomenon give itself to the constituting faculties of a finite subject?

Marion's strategy to let religious phenomena, which are irreducible and unconditioned quite contrary to a poor phenomenon, into philosophy involved two steps: first is a hypothesis that "unconditioned and irreducible phenomena would become possible only if a non-finite intuition ensured their donation."[23] Second is his conclusive assertion that there are instances of such non-finite intuitions which he called "saturated phenomenon."

[21]Marion, *Being Given*, 187.
[22]Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," 183.
[23]Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," 194.

5. Religious Phenomena as Saturated Phenomena

Marion asks,

> To the phenomenon that is most often characterized by a defect of intuition, and therefore by a deception of the intentional aim and, in particular instances, by the equality between intuition and intention, why would there not correspond the possibility of a phenomenon in which intuition would give *more, indeed immeasurably more,* than intention ever would have intended or foreseen?"[24]

Marion grants the possibility of such a phenomenon. What chiefly characterizes such a phenomenon is its surplus of intuition in the place of the shortage of intuition of the common phenomena. Precisely with this surplus intuition, it stifles the conditioning agency of the finite, knowing subject. "Such a phenomenon will doubtless no longer allow the constitution of an object, at least in the Kantian sense."[25] Religious phenomenon is no object at all. Even if it is, it is something that calls the subjectivity of the knowing subject into question. Marion takes the Kantian route itself to explain it, although in a way that lays bare the inherent limitations of the Kantian way itself.

Kant had held that merely by a pure givenness of sensible intuition, we cannot know. Without concepts, intuition remains blind. Pure concepts of understanding which Kant called categories are required to make the otherwise disparate sense-content knowable. "[F]or by them alone can it *understand* anything in the manifold of intuition, that is, think an object of intuition" (A 80/ B 106). Categories are devices through which the subject constitutes its object in experience. Marion's contention is that faced with a saturated phenomenon, these categories become powerless. Kant classified the twelve categories under four groups on the basis of the way they functioned, i.e., categories of quantity, quality, relation and modality. Marion's point is that under the weight of the overwhelming saturation of the intuition, the categories far from assisting the subject in constituting the object, leaves the subject high and dry; further still, they end up in letting the subject itself constituted.

6. Categories of Quantity and Incommensurability of Saturated Phenomenon

According to Kant, the role of the categories of quantity in the act of knowing comes as assistance by way of making possible a representation of the whole on the basis of the representation of its parts (A 162/ B 203).

[24]Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," 195.
[25]Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," 197.

This possibility of representing the whole even before one has actually seen each and every part of the whole attaches a characteristic of foreseeability and predictability to our experience.

Marion tries to show that as far as the saturated phenomenon is concerned, the categories of quantity fail to comprehend it. The intuition that gives the saturated phenomenon exceeds every concept that tries to comprehend it so that it "can neither be divided nor adequately put together again by virtue of a finite magnitude homogeneous with finite parts."[26] The saturated phenomenon is immense and hence immeasurable; since immeasurable, it is also unforeseeable. We cannot foresee, anticipate, measure and aim at a saturated phenomenon. By its sheer immensity, it exceeds all our measures. It is incommensurable. Since we fail to measure it, it amazes us. Marion says that although we do not see all that the saturated phenomenon shows, yet what little is seen is "imposed on us with a power such that we are submerged by what shows itself, most likely to the point of fascination."[27] Here we can unmistakably trace a lineage to Rudolf Otto's description of religious experience as *tremendum et fascinans*.

7. Categories of Quality and Unbearability of Saturated Phenomenon

In the Kantian scheme, whereas the categories of quantity dealt with the extensive magnitude of an intuited thing by means of the representation of the whole of its finite parts, the categories of quality deal with the intensive magnitude. By intensive magnitude Kant means "a degree of influence (of sensation) on the sense" (A 166/ B 208). The quality or the intensity of an intuition can vary from zero (in which case there is almost a lack of intuition) to a higher measure (which can be marked by a higher digit).

When the question is about the intuition of a saturated phenomenon, Marion says that it "attains an intensive magnitude without measure, or common measure, such that starting with a certain degree, the intensity of the real intuition passes beyond all the conceptual anticipations of perception." Besides, the perception "can no longer bear its most elevated degrees."[28] Our senses can no longer stand the severity of the intuition coming from its excess. It is like going blind gazing at the midday sun. This blindness is not to be equated with not seeing; it is rather the suffering caused by the too much seeing. "[N]ot bearing is not simply equivalent to not

[26]Marion, *Being Given*, 200.
[27]Marion, *Being Given*, 200.
[28]Marion, *Being Given*, 203.

seeing… It concerns a visible that our gaze cannot sustain."[29] We can in this context refer to Biblical paradigms. "Go away from me, Lord,"[30] pleads Peter with Jesus when Jesus' divinity is revealed in the miraculous catch of fish. Peter is just not able to cope up with what he sees.

Kant held that an experience of object and hence its constitution is possible only if the intensity of its perception takes place on a measurable scale somewhere between the degrees of zero and maximum. Once the intensity of the intuition exceeds the maximum, and hence the measurable parameters, there is no constitution of object possible. "For … there is always a maximum, a threshold of tolerance beyond which what is seen is no longer constituted as an object within a finite horizon."[31] The absolutely unconditioned and irreducible phenomenon of religion has a paradoxical dimension in that when it gives itself to humans who are finite, their finite horizon of knowledge ruptures under the weight of the excessively given.

8. Categories of Relation and Absoluteness of Saturated Phenomenon

Kant saw relation as a transcendental condition for the constitution of experience. "Experience is possible only through the representation of a necessary connection of perceptions" (A 176/ B 218). He found the representation as working out in three modes: relation of inherence of accidents in a substance, of causality between cause and effect, and of reciprocity between substances within a community. These three modes of relation form a network within which alone an experience becomes possible. In other words, this is a site or horizon within which every phenomenon should appear. Kant will not consider a happening outside this network as an experience at all.

Marion questions such a demarcation of finite, inviolable boundaries for any experience. "Is it legitimate," he asks, "to rule out the possibility that a phenomenon might impose itself on perception without assigning it either a substance in which it resides like an accident or a cause from which it results as an effect, or even less an interactive *commercium* where it is relativized?"[32] Any phenomenon that shows itself within a boundaried framework is already relativised and conditioned by that framework. It is already situated in a site or, as in Kantian language, constituted as an object by a transcendental subject within the latter's horizon of already

[29]Marion, *Being Given*, 203.
[30]Gospel of Luke, 5:8.
[31]Marion, *Being Given*, 206.
[32]Marion, *Being Given*, 207.

lived experiences. Marion asserts that a transcendent and unconditioned phenomenon is an "unforeseeable phenomenon (in terms of the past), not exhaustively comprehensible (in terms of the present), (and) not reproducible (in terms of the future) and therefore defies every limit of a preconceived horizon. As defying every limit and as unyielding to every condition, it is absolute and therefore dissimilar to anything else.[33]

Then, not only no single horizon, but no combination of horizons, could successfully tolerate the absoluteness of the phenomenon, precisely because it gives itself as absolute, that is to say, free from all analogy with common-law phenomena and from all predetermination a network of relations, with neither precedent nor antecedent in the already seen or foreseeable.[34] A religious phenomenon being a saturated phenomenon is dissimilar to any ordinary phenomena in our horizon of knowledge. However we may search, we will fail to find analogies for it in our framework of already lived experiences. Not surprising, then, that we are not able to house it in the world of our experience. The unconditioned, religious phenomenon suffers an epistemological rejection at the doorstep of our world of knowledge.

9. Categories of Modality and Irregardability of Saturated Phenomenon

The categories of modality concern the relation of the object with the various faculties of the subject that knows it. "The categories of modality … express … only how the object, together with all its determinations, is related to understanding and its empirical employment, to empirical judgment, and to reason in its application to experience" (A 219/ B 266). In other words, the categories of modality determine the agreeability of the object to the subject. An object that fails to conform to the requirements of the knowing subject is denied access to the domain of experience. What is important to note here is that in the dynamics between the knowing subject and the thing, the balance is heavily tilted in favour of the subject. Phenomenologically, there is the reduction of the phenomenon to the *I* (the subject). The phenomenon loses its autonomy and undergoes "alienation from itself" since it "lets itself be constituted (constructed, schematized, synthesized, etc.) by whoever precedes and foresees it."[35] Kant had with

[33]Marion is pleased with Spinoza's conception of only One Substance. Since it absorbs into itself every possible determination of beingness, it drowns all finite horizons of Cartesian metaphysics. The therefrom emerging Being defying all finite determinations can be deemed as an example of a saturated phenomenon. See Marion, *Being Given*, 210.

[34]Marion, *Being Given*, 211.

[35] Marion, *Being Given*, 213.

his idea of transcendental apperception ensured the precedence of the knowing subject over everything it will ever know.

Now no cognition can occur in us, no connection and unity among them, without that unity of consciousness that precedes all data of the intuitions, and in relation to which all representation of objects is alone possible. This pure, original, unchanging consciousness I call *transcendental apperception* (A 107).

The saturated phenomenon, on the other hand, in virtue of its absoluteness refuses to let itself be measured or relativised by the subject. It thereby questions any claim of precedence the subject may make over it. If the subject cannot precede it, neither can the subject constitute it. "The saturated phenomenon contradicts the subjective conditions of experience precisely in that it does not admit constitution as an object. In other words, though exemplarily visible, it nevertheless cannot be looked at, regarded."[36] Marion uses the word "regard" in a unique sense that its French root *regarder* allows, namely, "to keep" or "to guard." That the saturated phenomenon cannot be regarded would then mean that the subject cannot keep it in its custody; the subject does not precede or constitute the object. In short, the unconditioned, irreducible phenomenon by its incommensurability, unbearability, absoluteness and irregardability makes impotent all claims to precedence, metaphysical or epistemological, by a finite subject like the *I* of Descartes' "I think" or Kant's Transcendental *I.*

10. Conclusion

What Marion wants to prove by showing the futility of Kantian categories and the knowing subject's epistemological anteriority is that as far as a transcendent phenomenon is concerned, a theoretical experience of it is not possible. He is not however denying a phenomenological experience of the Transcendent. The Transcendent shows itself; it does appear; it does become a phenomenon. But it should be received outside the canvas of the theoretical horizon. It should be thought otherwise than metaphysical categories like being. Denying him access holding the transcendental conditions of experience as sacrosanct Marion finds intriguing. Whatever the case might be, there is nothing astonishing in the fact that one inquires after Gods' right to inscribe himself within phenomenology. What is astonishing is that one should be stubborn … about denying him this right, or rather that one is no longer even surprised by this pigheaded refusal.[37]

[36] Marion, *Being Given*, 214.
[37] Marion, *Being Given*, 243.

What do we make of the phenomenon of the Transcendent if it appears counter to the conditions of the possibility of experience? Kant would say that there is no "experience" at all. The transcendental *I* cannot open its doors to let the Transcendent enter the world of experience. Marion goes a step further and speak of a "counter-experience." "Counter-experience is not equivalent to a nonexperience, but … offers the experience of what irreducibly contradicts the conditions for the experience of objects."[38] The Transcendent can be experienced only as a counter-experience because a paradox marks its experience: "the I cannot not see it, but it cannot any longer gaze at it as its mere object. It has the eye to see but not keep it." We have an intuition of the Transcendent but nevertheless because of the superabundance of its intuitive givenness, it is "blurred by the too narrow aperture, the too short lens, the too cramped frame, that receives it."[39] Before the Transcendent can be "experienced" in this sort of counter-experience, the transcendental *I* should surrender all its tools of constituting object of experience. In the aftermath of this counter-experience, the *I* becomes *me*, constituted by the Transcendent and not constituting it. "The nominative gives way decidedly to that which … appears to be an accusative case."[40] Vis-à-vis the truth, the *I* is not its knower, nor its maker, but merely a "witness."[41] The experience of God is given not to the *I* that knows, but to the *me* that is known by God.

Marion allows God a grand entry into philosophy, not, however, through the doors of knowledge, but through the doors of prayer. In this Marion is offering a phenomenology of prayer. For, he takes phenomenology as the way forward for philosophy. In God we have a phenomenon which our mind or theoretical reason cannot handle because it is a phenomenon that bedazzles and blinds us on account of its phenomenological excess. In our considering this phenomenon, God enters philosophy. But what precisely is this God? What is his name? Marion is clear and direct. In this way of philosophizing on God, we suffer an inability of naming God. Rather, we undergo a baptism whereby we receive a name. The new philosophy leads us to a "baptism, where, far from our attributing to God a name intelligible to us, we enter into his unpronounceable name, in order to receive by surplus

[38]Marion, *Being Given*, 215.

[39]Marion, *Being Given*, 215.

[40]Marion, "The Final Appeal of the Subject" in *The Religious*, John D. Caputo, ed., Oxford: Blackwell, 2002, 137.

[41]Marion, *Being Given*, 217.

our name."[42] "[P]redication must yield to praise," says Marion prescribing a new way for philosophy of religion.[43] Praise, because here the one who prays is overwhelmed by what he experiences and becomes completely passive. Commenting on Marion's conception of prayer, Geschwandtner says that it "merely serves as a name for the awe inspired by the unnameable and as a way of claiming that such awe is no longer predicative."[44] Prayer does not predicate the one to whom it is addressed. This unnameability is very much in tune with the general trend of Marion's thought because according to him, a God-phenomenon that can be named and made an object of our intentionality can no longer serve as a God of religion.

In Marion's conception of prayer, there is a complete reversal of intentionality. Prayer accordingly is not a domain where *we* experience God; it is, rather, a domain where God experiences *us*. In the words of Jean-Louis Chretien, prayer "is the act by which the one praying stands in the presence of a being he believes but does not see and manifests himself to it. If it corresponds to a theophany, it is first of all an anthropophany, a manifestation of man."[45] There is a manifestation of human being as wanting in his/her cognitive faculties and hence finite. In other words, even after God has entered philosophy, human being is not cognitively better informed about God. What can be claimed, rather, is that s/he is more informed about oneself. In short, God enters when we admit our finitude and forgo our intentionality and our horizon determined by the categories of our understanding. Rejection of God from certain philosophical quarters meant, according to Marion, only "the failure of the metaphysical concept of God" which he sought to correct by his attempt "to bring out the absolute freedom of God with regard to all determinations."[46]

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[42]Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud, trans., New York: Fordham University Press, 2002, 157.

[43]Marion, *God without Being*, 106.

[44]Christina M. Geschwandtner, "Praise: Pure and Simple? Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenologies of Prayer" in *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba, eds., New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, 171-2.

[45]Jean-Louis Chretien, "The Wounded Word: The Phenomenology of Prayer" in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*, Dominique Janicaud, et. al. eds., 149-50.

[46]Marion, *God without Being*, Thomas A. Carlson, trans., Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991, xx-xxi.