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SUBJECT AND TIME:  
JEAN-LUC MARION'S ALTERATION OF KANTIAN SUBJECTIVITY

*"L'homme s'y trouve dépris de lui-même."  
"Man finds that he has lost his fondness for himself."  
-Jean-Luc Nancy*

Husserl reached the impasse long ago: the subject is the one who constitutes his world, yet nevertheless lives in, and gains inspiration from that very world he constitutes. This phenomenological principle dictates that we attend to the double-bind present at the basis of any attempt to understand subjectivity, namely, between the self's self-constitution and its being-constituted from the outside. Religious Studies is plagued by a similar and lingering double-bind, one symptomized according to either a subjective appropriation of religion as "myth," or an ambitious, normative conception of religion according to the basic principles of the enlightenment – a presumably stable self in an unchanging, constituting world. Are religious phenomena damned to being conceived according to the two extremes of either myth or enlightenment? Or is there perhaps a way to navigate this dialectic without falling into either extreme?

Dissolving the problem must occur on both fronts of phenomenology and theology. One attempt to do so has come from Marion, whose work is in constant oscillation between these two distinct, yet at times concentrically overlapping fields. He would likely agree with Nancy's assessment that the post-enlightenment humanist's emancipation of the subject from the social institutions previously holding that subject in contempt has reinvented it as more individualistic.<sup>1</sup> This living theory of subjectivity doesn't represent an appropriate recognition of the aforementioned tension known by Husserl, and ultimately leads, as Marion recognizes, to theological idolization.

Thus, Marion seeks to reconceive subjectivity on both fronts. His "subject" is reducible to being but one among many other phenomena, almost like any other thing in phenomenal experience. But as such, the subject (or "given" as he calls it) is always in an inter-communal, co-constitutional, and temporally structured relationship with the one from whom this subject receives himself. In order to

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 164. And as he put it in his recent (2012) *Adoration*, "the individual was created in the movement that emancipated him." Beyond the need for the sacred, one trusts his own subjective freedoms. And thus, says Nancy, "We don't need more humanism or more democracy: we need to begin by questioning anew the entire thought of 'man,' returning it to the workshop." J.L. Nancy, *Adoration* (New York: Fordham Press, 2012), pgs. 8-14.

gain a new vantage point from which we might better understand Marion's conception of this subject, we turn to Kant, a true philosopher of subjectivity, and one whose work on these matters Marion – perhaps surprisingly – does not completely disavow. The wager of this article is that Marion's theory of the subject doesn't necessarily contradict Kant's, but can be read as the attempt to logically complete it by taking it a short step further. Though one could certainly gain entry into Kant's notion of subjectivity through his moral and practical philosophy, this short survey is limited to his logic and epistemology in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. By reading Kant's conception of subjectivity as a foil for further clarifying Marion's, we will be implicitly afforded a retroactive insight into Kant's work as it is read against the grain of Marion's. And this is all in order to take one more step towards determining whether or not Marion's conception of the subject can go beyond the impasse Husserl reached and traverse the aforementioned religious, socio-political, and phenomenological challenges.

#### KANT'S TRANSCENDENTAL APPERCEPTION

In Kant's schema, the self has two aspects: that which appears in our empirical experience (in the phenomenal realm, i.e.), and that which always transcends that empirical self. This aspect of the self, crudely put, is the self of the noumenal realm – the free, unbound self. Kant's notion of self presupposes this distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal, between which the self might be conceived as a bridge. As bridge, the self is charged with the task of making sense of both realms, thus synthesizing the world of experience with the inner "world" of reason.

This inner world leads to Kant's description of the "transcendental apperception," which begins with the awareness "that I am conscious to myself *a priori* of a necessary synthesis of representations -- to be entitled the original synthetic unity of apperception."<sup>2</sup> Before any thinking occurs, the self must first be conscious of itself, and the way in which it synthesizes the various representations of itself that come to it (thus the "transcendental" synthesis). Under the transcendental apperception the "I" becomes something of a category that is constructed prior to any consideration of things outside itself, like a pen and paper. In constituting such objects, the "I" employs a "transcendental synthesis of imagination" that preconditions all experience.<sup>3</sup> The I is world making, and this project first starts with the sub/unconscious making of the self; an act that appears detached from any and all experience.

But where does this self receive the content for developing himself? Can Kant's

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<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* Trans F. Max Müller. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), p. B135. See Richard D. Chessick's "The Problematical Self in Kant and Kohut" *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 49:456-473, 1980. See also Klaus Düsing's "Constitution and Structure of Self-Identity: Kant's Theory of Apperception and Hegel's Criticism" *Midwest Studies In Philosophy*. (1983).

<sup>3</sup> See C. Thomas Powell's *Kant's Theory of Self-Consciousness* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1990). See also Morwenna Griffiths. *Feminisms and the Self: the Web of Identity*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 4.

self ultimately be founded upon the noumenal “realm” of reason, and thus an *a priori* beginning to all thinking? All of this self-speak for Kant is only with the intent of seeing a self as a thinking thing, a thinking self. And his fascination with the possibility of certainty and objectivity is partly responsible for the establishment of his own redux version of Descartes’ *res cogitans*.

#### SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

This leads to another layer of Kant’s understanding of selfhood. To be a conscious self is to be a thinking self; thus Self-consciousness is the starting point for Kant, but in a different way from Descartes. For Kant, since we are conscious of our own self-identity, we are able to represent things in and through this self-consciousness. This self-consciousness, along with self-identification is *a priori* consciousness, but not *a priori* knowledge of “my particular identity as an empirically knowable individual.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, one “has” this self, one has this identity, but one simply does not *know* it, or know precisely what it is that one has, as one’s awareness of it comes about independent from experience and is empirically unknowable. Every experience requires the necessary condition of self-consciousness: the basis of Kant’s entire epistemology. In a limited sense, his entire system relies upon an “inner perception” of the self, one that is always in flux:

No fixed and abiding self can present itself in this flux of inner appearances...what has necessarily been presented as numerically identical cannot be thought as such through empirical data. To render such a transcendental presupposition valid, there must be a condition which precedes all experience, and which makes experience itself possible.<sup>5</sup>

For Kant, this “condition” is the self. This self is discoverable, but is incapable of being empirically known. Indeed, there is *nothing* to know or experience, as it is “a given” discovery prior to any true experience of the self.

However, though we don’t exactly know what this self is, we must have “the *permanence* of the agent.”<sup>6</sup> The *Ego*, then, becomes transcendental in itself. There is a continuity of “existence” that allows the self to self-identify and to have this identification (once and for all) after its first being established. The unchanging, Transcendental Ego, the self-as-knower, is the fundamental basis for knowledge. For Knowledge, in order for it to be *known*, must first be knowable by a subject.

This marks a discrepancy in the secondary scholarship on Kant’s subjectivity. The knower or the one who first of all thinks, as Arendt believes, is reducible to

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<sup>4</sup> See here Pierre Keller, *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge Press, Cambridge UK, 1998), p.30.

<sup>5</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* Trans F. Max Müller. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), p. A107.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63. Cf footnote A, p. B422. Kant’s thinking self signifies “something real that is given, given indeed to thought in general and so not as appearance, nor as thing in itself (noumenon) but as something which actually exists, and which in the proposition, ‘I think,’ is denoted as such.”

*Das Ding an Sich*, but others, like Melnick, see this subject as having something of a “third status” that is neither an existing self, nor a thing in itself (because it progresses temporally). This third status is opposed to a view that allows for a person to be a material substance, and thus Melnick’s Kant holds a subject to be simply a “series of states suitably connected by psychological relations.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, it is contested that Kant’s subject isn’t necessarily noumenal, as a bearer of thoughts and perceptions. But most agree, however, that Kant demands the postulation of an absolute unity of the subject, in order to *speak* of the subject, for though the “whole of a thought may be divided and distributed under many subjects, the subjective can never thus be divided or distributed.”<sup>8</sup> As an indivisible thinking subject, one must have a *logical* identity, and thus we must have a *positive* affirmation of the Pure *Ego*, that is, not one achieved through apophatic projects of cognition. Again, the basis of a “self-as-knower” is necessary in order for the possibility of knowledge as such.<sup>9</sup>

#### REPRESENTATION

Another aspect of Kant’s understanding of subjectivity concerns how things must be *represented* by a subject, the *first person* as the means through which one understands representation as experience.<sup>10</sup> Concerning this first person, he concludes that “the abiding and unchanging ‘I’ (pure apperception) forms the correlate of all our representations insofar as it is to be at all possible that we should become conscious of them.”<sup>11</sup> This “I” is the new grounding, and becomes the end of a chain of signification and flux. A sign is allowed to shift only insofar as it, itself, is shifting or fluctuating. Although, representation in itself becomes problematic when it attempts to provide an apodictic, assured, and grounding notion of a sign and its signified. Though “myself” is never “permanent,” for Kant, it is a place of grounding in his thought, as nothing permanent “is given in inner intuition insofar as I think myself.”<sup>12</sup>

Husserl critiques the fourfold constituency of signification, and the way in which my thinking is always in conflict with the object I am thinking and my actions towards that object. One must trust that the represented is always in relation with, and is never detachable from the representer. And thus, representation can only be a form of mimicry, for with every copy, a thing becomes further distorted in its reproduction. That which is referred-to is not necessarily “meant” to be

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Melnick, *Kant’s Theory of the Self* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), p. vii.

<sup>8</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* Trans F. Max Müller. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), p 255.

<sup>9</sup> A. C. Paranjpe, *Self and identity in modern psychology and Indian thought* (New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1998), p. 111. See also Patricia Kitcher, “Kant on Self-Identity.” *The Philosophical Review*. (91:1, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> See again Pierre Keller, *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge Press, Cambridge UK, 1998), p. 30. And 36.

<sup>11</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* Trans F. Max Müller. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), p. A123.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p B420. And as Arendt notes, it is important to recognize that “the faculty of thinking, however, which Kant, as we have seen, called *Vernunft* (reason) to distinguish it from *Verstand* (intellect), the faculty of cognition, is an altogether different nature.” Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 1977), P. 57.

represented by a referrer.<sup>13</sup> One can observe an implicit engagement with this problematic nature of representation in Kant's description of all phenomena as "re-presentation." In naming phenomena *Vorstellung*, he indicates that all phenomena are to be "understood" as only and ever *tentatively available* as such, as only representations.

Once again, Kant's thinking *ego* is the beginning of Representation. Essentially, I *am* this representation, and "I cannot determine my existence as that of a self-active being; all that I can do is *represent to myself* the spontaneity of my thought... But it is owing to this spontaneity that I entitle myself an *intelligence*."<sup>14</sup> Notably, *das Ding an sich* is never accessible in its purity, and since in this case the "I am" is a thing, I must represent myself to myself. Even myself is mediated, but I can never access the essential essence of this self.

Overall, the Transcendental Dialectic is the "metaphilosophy" that reflects, yet often differentiates itself from a Cartesian, rationalist epistemology. "The understanding" always presupposes an "understander" and produces or creates objects and their appearance as things, while reason collects concepts in order to understand their representational character. Under the Transcendental Dialectic, one might only have knowledge of objects, of the appearances of phenomenal things. And similarly, the faculty of understanding can only act towards a *possible* object of experience. This is a delimitation that operates with rules that, in and of themselves, cannot appear to pure intuition. Given this background, we might better understand the work of Marion, and how he alters Kantian subjectivity.

#### JEAN-LUC MARION AND SUBJECTIVITY

Any sketch of how the self relates with understanding bears significant consequences for "first philosophy," or "meta-philosophy," which when referenced, indicates both a temporal and spatial priority over other fields of thought. Is it possible to have a first, grounding philosophy without a stable, transcendental subject who might allow for the consistency and repetition of particular thoughts and experiences? As it will now be shown, Marion attempts to work out this originally Kantian concern for the subject. We might consider Marion's understanding of subjectivity according to four themes: 1.) The temperament of phenomena, 2.) Representation and epoché, 3.) Subjectivity and God, and 4.) Subjectivity and time.

#### THE TEMPERAMENT OF PHENOMENA

Marion is by no means entirely opposed to operating out of a Kantian framework. In fact, his five "Saturated Phenomena" correspond directly to

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<sup>13</sup> See also Paul Ricœur's *Husserl: an analysis of his phenomenology*. Translated by Edward G. Ballard and Lester E. Embree. (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967), as well as David Wood's *On Paul Ricœur: Narrative and Interpretation*, (New York: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> *Emphasis mine*. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* Trans F. Max Müller. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), footnote a, p. B158. Cf p. B246.

Kant's divisions within the table of categories, with the exception of his fifth type, "revelation." This subtle exception has vast consequences, however, entailing that there are phenomena within, yet capable of exceeding Kant's categories of understanding, and as such, are not *simply* constituted objects. The appearance of phenomena, for Kant, comes, as Marion notes, from the "conditions of experience for and by the subject."<sup>15</sup> And it is here possible to detect Marion's unique alteration of Kant's thesis: the subject does not constitute the phenomenon, but must "leave it [the phenomenon on] – finally – the initiative of appearing on the basis of itself..."<sup>16</sup> Instead of directly contradicting Kant, he is instead applying and *broadening* Kant's notion of the self to the conditions of phenomena. Each phenomena has qualities much like a self, and as such can constitute itself and show itself to us. Each of these phenomena are experienced as if they first had a kind of personality or temperament in and of themselves. These phenomena appear to us, without our asking or intent, lacking an objective identity in themselves and coming from givenness. In this sense, the self of all phenomena *is* givenness:

The origin of givenness remains the 'self' of the phenomenon, with no other principle or origin besides itself. 'Self-givenness, *Selbstgebung, donation de soi*' indicates that the phenomenon is given in person, but also and especially that it is given of itself and on the basis of itself.<sup>17</sup>

It is this ascribing a *kind* of self to phenomena (which appear to be reducible to his construction of givenness) that Marion believes allows him to circumvent any worries over subjectivity in phenomenality. And again, as a development on Kant's work, now a phenomenon's appearance is not the result of a subject's action or intentionality, but rests on the necessary grounds that all<sup>18</sup> phenomena maintain a sense of excess beyond the abilities of the subject and her consciousness, leading to new, surprising occurrences for the subject.

This subject is henceforward conceived as "the given," she who receives, "*l'adonné*." This does not entail that the subject altogether disappears, for she somehow still holds an important role in phenomenality. This role is not purely active (as in Kant) nor merely passive, a false dichotomy Marion's phenomenology would lead him to avoid all together. Instead, "*l'adonné*" goes beyond "passivity as activity, because in being liberated from its royal transcendental status, it annuls the very distinction between the transcendental *I* and the empirical me."<sup>19</sup> What's wrong, though, with this language of activity and passivity, the transcendental and the empirical?

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<sup>15</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p.181.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 181.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> What Marion names "Poor" or "Common Law" Phenomena, notwithstanding. These specific phenomena lack such excess or saturation.

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* Trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 48.

Heidegger, who is strangely familiar to Kant in this regard, situates *Dasein* (most explicitly in *Sein und Zeit*, but also in his later work) as the world mediator and shepherd of Being. Though Heidegger recognizes that the relationship between *Dasein* and Being is irreducible to the problem of “passivity” or “activity,” he appears to privilege the latter, intentionality, in *Sein und Zeit*.<sup>20</sup> World is, for the “early” Heidegger, simply a part of *Dasein* itself. So the impasse between passivity and activity, broadly construed, once again marks the deeper concern or paradox, of the subject who makes the world, and is also made by/in it.

Does Marion’s project ultimately succeed in negotiating passivity and activity, intentionality and intuition in phenomenality? One might challenge his project on the grounds that a subject—though not “the” subject who is *receiving* a phenomenon—is a phenomenon of experience for someone else. Since one might receive the other directly, and does not mediate this experience of the other, the other is, through givenness of course, *becoming a self* to the subject. This becomes further evident in Marion’s Saturated Phenomenon of “flesh,” for this flesh is not given to me by myself, but myself is only given *to me* by another. I receive myself time and again, from the other. It is out of this concept that we can explicate Marion’s most explicit notion of “self:” my flesh is the first phenomenon “in the world, and that by which the rest of the world is in turn rendered phenomenal for me.”<sup>21</sup> But if Marion succeeds in establishing phenomenality in givenness, as opposed to its being directly mediated by the subject, we are left with pure excess and the *pure trauma* that comes or appears to a perhaps unwilling, incapable, or entirely *non-discerning* subject. Nevertheless, it is perhaps Marion’s wager that this problem is circumvented, not by thinking the subject as a stand-alone entity, but as “*l’adonné*” (the gifted) in “*interloqué*,” thus replacing both Husserl’s transcendental *ego*, and Descartes’ *ego cogito*.

#### REPRESENTATION AND EPOCHÉ

Like Heidegger, Marion wants phenomena to reveal themselves, but this is only possible if they have some basis for being shown. One might speak here of Marion’s version of givenness as that which opens the possibility of the given itself. There is no perceivable or experiencable given without its givenness. And similar to Heidegger, Marion holds that “what is shown in a phenomenon [is] regarded as the thing itself rather than as a representation of something else.”<sup>22</sup> It is here that Marion and Kant’s thought appears irreconcilable for, in Marion’s sense, one *can* experience the thing itself.

For Kant, a thing’s intelligibility determines its existence, and a thing’s thinkability is hedged and protected by the principle of non-contradiction. If a thing’s thinkability is that which determines its existence, and the self is

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<sup>20</sup> “The wherein of self-referential understanding, as that for which one lets entities be encountered in the way of Being of involvement, is the phenomenon of the world.” Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Trans John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. (New York: Harper Collins, 1962.) p.18, 119.

<sup>21</sup> See Shane Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess: Jean-Luc Marion, Saturated Phenomena, and Hermeneutics*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), p. 138.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

primarily qualified by its thinking in general, then we can conclude that, as earlier mentioned, Kant's "self" is determined by thinking. As a result, the noetic process maintains a certain priority over other human faculties such as bodily senses, emotions, etc. With this notion in mind, his understanding of the self unabashedly maintains a primordial residue of the Cartesian *cogito*. For Kant, a thing must first be conceivable, but this conception is not in experience and therefore relinquishes a sense of intentionality. The *cogito* allows one to draw ontological conclusions, but only in the service of epistemology on the grounds that "being" must be first thinkable. In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant shows how ontology relies upon *a priori* knowledge, which leads to the reliance of "being" upon its first being conceived or conceivable.

Marion recognizes that this foundation on the noetic authority relies "entirely on the primacy of the *I*. But can the *I* itself be founded in a sufficiently radical way to ensure its primacy, that of 'first philosophy'?" Here, one can see that "the *I* can only legitimately exercise its noetic primacy in assuming a transcendental status – not that of one object among others, even transcendent, but of a unique, non-object like authority, which fixes the cognitions of possibility of the knowledge of objects..."<sup>23</sup> In other words, Marion's critique of a stand-alone *cogito* is that this thinking thing must necessarily ground its noetic reliance upon itself. And indeed, this noetic primacy "has a price: the disappearance or the putting in parenthesis of the one who plays the role of first, without being [*l'etre*]." <sup>24</sup>

For Kant, the *internal* individualization of the self is what provides the basis for thinking, determining an *external* spatio-temporal designation or determination.<sup>25</sup> Is it a problem for Kant to hold, on the one hand, that the self must rely upon its being-thought, and on the other, that the possibility of thinking relies upon a structured and determined self? And, if we must intentionally sketch a determination of time itself in order to truly experience it, is time reliant upon experience and, consequentially, a particular view of the cause/effect relation?

Of course, the search for a metaphysical grounding has been relinquished, but Marion wants to rework (not just overcome) some of the essential Kantian principles in his qualification of what he calls "Common-Law phenomena" through the reduction or *epoché*. For Kant these phenomena must "be fitted into the rules of experience, therefore of time, in admitting in advance a relation with precedents."<sup>26</sup> That is to say that time is linear for Kant but, as Marion notes, certain phenomena are built into the "rules" of time. So in this case, time, as a pure intuition, is problematized because it in some way relies upon experience. If it is the case that Kant's notion of time is imbued with a presupposed notion of

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<sup>23</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* Trans. Robyn Horner, and Vincent Berraud. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Michel Henry, *I am the Truth*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 123-124.

<sup>26</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* Trans. Robyn Horner, and Vincent Berraud. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p 115. Cf. p. 95. Anecdotally, Marion sees time not as that which passes, but as "something" that collects, and appears most explicitly on my face; this is what allows for the possibility of my being interpreted by the other. Time needs to accumulate so it can leave a trace, without which, there can be no hermeneutics.



experience, then how should we think “the self?” If Kant’s self must rely upon experience, which is always changing with time, then is it dubious to conceive the self as anything but indeterminate, ever-changing and in flux.

For Marion, this self is only given, as “*l’adonné*”; that is, the one who is itself received from what it receives. *L’adonné* is “the gifted,” she who receives, “the one to whom what gives itself from a first self... gives a second *me*, the one of reception and of response.” Marion wants to challenge any such “pretension of any *I* to a transcendental function, or, what comes down to the same thing, the pretension of a possible transcendental *I* to the last foundation of the experience of phenomena.”<sup>27</sup> Simply put, being an “*I*” is not the root of one’s life in the world. Everything does not begin with the *I* as a foundation. There is no foundation, but there is a life outside of our own that sustains, gives, and re-gives both the possibility of the appearance of phenomena, and the phenomena themselves. Well aware of the metaphysical traps of Onto-theology, and how this conclusion smacks of God-talk, Marion attempts to also overcome these concerns.

#### TOTALITER ALITER?

The “place” for the presencing of a self can only be opened-up by another, a “maximum alterity” of whom man is a resemblance.<sup>28</sup> Yet, since man is but a reflection of this wholly other (read: Lévinas), there will always be an aspect of man inaccessible, even unto himself. The subject has no “proper essence,” and this places him in a necessary relation with a “lack” that only the other can come to fulfill. This lacking is not a negative attribute, but rather denotes the opposite - - a clandestine quality of surplus that cannot be observed, understood or perceived. Through an original interpretation of Augustine, Marion suggests that “man is defined by the very fact that he remains without definition - the animal properly without property.”<sup>29</sup> The most essential aspect of a human is its undefinability. And further, any attempt to become a whole, complete and autonomous self are the direct result of the subject *losing* its connection to “bearing the image” of this other. In order to properly be in relation with this other, the self must always remain *potentialis*, in relation to nothing visible or necessarily intelligible.

This is why Marion has his own critiques of the Cartesian *ego cogito*, which presupposes a reliable self, while attempting to establish that self as a thinking-thing. But lacking in stability, and shifting tectonically, Marion demands a rethinking of this thinking-thing in terms of what might come to stand in its place, the question raised in his recent work (2012) on Augustine, *Au lieu de soi*,

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<sup>27</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* Trans. Robyn Horner, and Vincent Berraud. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 45.

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, “Resting, Moving, Loving: The Access to the Self According to St. Augustine” *The Augustinian Moment: Reflection at the Limits of Selfhood Conference*. Unpublished. (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago, May 26, 2010), p. 2. Essential reading here is, of course, Marion’s *On the Ego and God: Further Cartesian Questions*. Trans. by Christina M. Gschwandtner. (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

or *In the Self's Place*.<sup>30</sup> It is ultimately *eros* that becomes the foil for how Marion reads this problem, and that which gets injected into the neutral zone between the subject and the other.

But the proud ego that has come to be associated with metaphysics unfortunately often forgets that its knowledge begins with self-knowledge (Husserl). Perhaps this is why Husserl turned to the modesty of a project like phenomenology, which concerns itself with appearances, both the already-experienced, and the newly-minted.<sup>31</sup> The only possibility for the subsistence or stability of a self is that it remain in dialogue with the other, and in taking the work of Derrida and Lévinas a short step further, Marion confirms that this can only occur in a confession (a "speaking-with") the other. Creation, or self-ownership, is not that which renders possible the confession, but rather, it is the confession that makes creation possible, taking the true place of the self (*Au lieu de soi*).<sup>32</sup> At the risk of oversimplification, the self becomes actualized according to its relation with the other.<sup>33</sup>

#### BETWEEN SUBJECT AND TIME

The subject is also to be ascribed its place in relation to time. A relationship with the future relies upon interpreting the given-excess, which is mediated by one's experience with an other. Experiences are always in the past, but can be relived and even reshaped in the present. The past is never simply left in the past, just facticity, or that which has passed by. It lives on. For Marion, "time, especially according to the having-been, does not pass but ... accumulates. The past is ... accumulated in the flesh of my members, muscles and bones. Above all, the weight of time is accumulated there where my flesh is most openly visible – on my face."<sup>34</sup> This understanding of temporality doesn't entail a stark determination of the self, but simply allows for the revelation of differing manifestations of "selves" to the other. But there is still no truly reliable, *subsisting* self. One of Marion's most significant attempts to reconfigure subjectivity, which rings throughout his corpus, is that one does not most innately desire subsistence, or a persisting self (*conatus in suo esse perseverandi*). Instead, the subject is essentially that which *is* one's primary concern, of which one is not necessarily cognizant. The subject's own certainty or subsistence of itself is not the primary concern of the subject. Rather, *loving and being loved* are the subject's central concern, and this is central to understanding how Marion

<sup>30</sup> Jean-Luc Marion. *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*. Translated by Jeffrey L. Kosky. (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> See also Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and The Revealed*. (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 149. The "proud ego," one associated with metaphysics, is (in thinking with Sartre) one that is obsessed with the creation of a metaphysical identity.

<sup>32</sup> For Marion "La creation ne rend pas la confessio possible, comme le lieu ontique de son exercice, mais elle ne devient elle-meme possible qu'a partir de la confessio, son prealable liturgique." Jean-Luc Marion, *Au lieu de soi. L'approche de Saint Augustin*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2008), p. 325.

<sup>33</sup> Though Marion may not be doing this intentionally, this notion has the appearance of a positive inversion of Sartre's *por-soi/en-soi* polarity.

<sup>34</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* Trans. Robyn Horner, and Vincent Berraud. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 95.

aims to reconceive subjectivity. Love, as gift, entails an especially important, temporal delay that is productive.

In his replacement of the self, love plays the role of both the affirmation and disturbance of the subject in time. The self is given as *l'adonné* ("the gifted"); that is, in receiving her desire and love (and also, giving this love in the same instant), she also receives herself. Because of this, *l'adonné* replaces "the subject." This replacement is named as such because *l'adonné* is the one who intuits and receives the gift of phenomena. There must be something beyond "the gifted" that fulfills this role, as it stands outside one's subjective experience with temporality, and is thus not necessarily dependent upon its rules. To be-given-to interprets an excess that, at any point, can overwhelm the subject beyond prediction.

Thus, not only is a subject unreliable for shaping its own future, but in order to gain any kind of status as a subject, it must always be in relation with both the other and the excessive.<sup>35</sup> *These are temporally structured relationships.* In a kind of supplementary inversion of Lévinas' intersubjective time, whereby the other poses a temporally infinite demand on me, Marion develops the subject less according to the subjective responsibility *for* the other, but more so in terms of how the other contributes to, and co-constitutes the subject. Such relationships do not simply lead the subject to the recognition that his projected self actually falls short of being a self, but instead, that this new "self" – the one that gains a particular kind of actualization *in* confession with the other through excess – *far exceeds* what he thought to be his originally self-projected self. Givenness always overwhelms and over-gives the projection of a self, and when the self is displaced, the experience of excess is at work. In this sense then, excess poses a threat to any attempt to constitute an autonomous self - - past, future, or present. This lack of a stable grounding places the subject in a modality similar to what Nancy has called a "crisis of sense."<sup>36</sup>

#### LOVING TO KNOW, OR KNOWING TO LOVE?

Though it at first may seem the case, Marion is *not* calling for a relativized, individualistic subject, or for the total eradication of self-identity. Instead, he is attempting to take the work of his phenomenological forebears seriously (Derrida, Lévinas, Henry) in their disillusionment with the self, while at the same

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<sup>35</sup> For a recent and similar, yet far more hyperbolic meditation on subjectivity, see Peter Sloterdijk's *Rage and Time*. For him, the self is but a bumbling ball of rage that disturbs, traumatizes and is essentially *irritatus*: "I irritate, therefore I am." As rage, the self is at any point, "ready to explode or be transferred." Though Sloterdijk's work often runs contrary to most phenomenological approaches, he strikes a very Marionian chord here. Peter Sloterdijk, *Rage and Time*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy. *Being Singular Plural*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University. Press, 2000), p. 165. For Nancy, the singular never gives us a ground from which we can all begin, but rather exposes us to a limited amount of signs, which we must put together to form sense. We are grappling for signs. This is a crisis that must always remain crisis; it can never be overcome, nor should we fantasize its being overcome. This crisis, for Nancy, is a perennial one. See also B.C. Hutchens. *Jean-Luc Nancy and The Future of Philosophy*. (Montreal, CA: McGill U Press, 2004), p.162.

time searching for another way to selfhood by claiming that the self must always be *in relation* with the excessive, and that which is beyond it-self. Thus, there is still a kind of definition of the subject, but its outline and identity can only come to be seen *in its own murky reflection on the face of the other*.<sup>37</sup> This represents Marion's attempt to reconcile these problems for both phenomenology and religion -- both of which must reconceive a concept of the subject that is not reducible to originating in the principles of either myth or enlightenment.

This becomes all the more clear when juxtaposing Marion with Kant on the matter of subjectivity. Marion implicitly draws attention to the problematic attempt to use the self as a foundation to an epistemological framework because such a self is *temporally* in-motion, and thus unable to allow for consistency and repetition of particular thoughts to "condition the experience." In efforts to dissolve this problem, Marion poses that there are certain phenomena that exceed Kant's categories of understanding, and as such, are not constituted objects, thereby capable of acting as an adhesive to thoughts and experiences similarly to the way that Kant's categories do.

Next, and also in terms of temporality, the appearance and revelation of particular phenomena always do so in a particular moment in space and time. It is not the properties of things -- which includes subjects also -- that individualize them because these properties could be identical and the things still be different. For Kant, space and time are specifically *a priori* forms of intuition, that is to say, ways of *appearing* and of making things appear (or at least representing them in such a way that we recognize their appearance). Space and time are *ways* of showing.

But since there is never a repeatable combination of space and time, then one subject is always distinct from another in its being formed by and through space and time. It is different every "time" we return to that thing. Individualization can only occur through a very particular, finite relation with space and time, unless there is something or someone mediating a diachronic relation with time, and its appropriation within a determinate space. *Thus, manifestation must itself be manifested in the very same "moment" in space and time.* Manifestation, we might conclude, isn't based upon a simple cause/effect relation, but rather is an intricate mechanism for excessive revelation, or in a more phenomenological mode, givenness. This points to the necessary relationship that the subject has with excess, and how the other must co-constitute such a subject.

But ultimately, does the subject care whether or not it thinks and has its own subjective being? Kant and Marion do agree on a fundamental point: it is there in the world, in life itself, that the subject somehow wants to be "found" by another.<sup>38</sup> But where Kant first sees a conscious, knowing self to be the bedrock

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<sup>37</sup> But we still do not necessarily have a subject who expresses singularity, not real subjectification. In this way, Marion is quite close to Emmanuel Lévinas, whose understanding of "ipseity" (the most reduced "core" of the subject) maintains a fissure or breach, which is a result of the subject's connection with the other.

<sup>38</sup> This is why Sartre wished to do away with, or at least postpone, the notion of essence, and place it in subordination to existence. "...The idea that essence is prior to existence;

of subsistence, Marion first sees a subject that does not most innately desire subsistence but rather, love. For, instead of wanting to be a persisting self (*conatus in suo esse perseverandi*), the subject *is* that which is her primary concern. One's own certainty or subsistence are secondary concerns, far less important than loving and being loved. And it is here that we may have a stalemate between the fundamental interests of Kant and Marion: one, proposing that we know in order to love, the other, demanding that we love in order to know.

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something of that idea we still find everywhere, in Diderot, in Voltaire and even in Kant... in Kant, this universality goes so far that the wild man of the woodsman in the state of nature and the bourgeois are all contained in the same definition and have the same fundamental qualities. Here again, the essence of man precedes that historic existence which we confront in experience." Jean-Paul Sartre, from *Existentialism and Humanism*, quoted in Albert B. Hakim, *Historical Introduction to Philosophy*. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006), p. 569.