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JEAN-LUC MARION AND THE CATHOLIC SUBLIME

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This article aims to reveal the catholicity of Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology, but not by analyzing his descriptions of explicitly Catholic things. It focuses instead on Marion's revision of subjectivity, examining how Marion resists Kant's Enlightenment ethos. It adds the suggestion that Marion's revised subject, *l'adonné*, promises to resist the recent deformation of the liberal modern ethos by neoliberalism, or neoliberal capitalism. Thus it describes Marion's phenomenology as catholic inasmuch as it promises to aid Catholic theological resistance against anti-Catholic forms of life, like the artificial freedom of the Enlightenment and the foreclosed freedom of neoliberalism. By the article's end, Marion's recent phenomenology of sacrifice comes to the fore as particularly ripe for a theology that maintains subjectivity so as to stave off neoliberal attempts to erode the subject into human capital. Instead of human capital, Marion advocates for a church of persons capable of deciding for God.

Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology is a comprehensive mode of thinking, and inasmuch as it is comprehensive, it is Catholic.[1] This article aims to reveal the catholicity of Marion's phenomenology, but not through the conventional route of examining his works on the Eucharist, scripture passages, the writings of St. Augustine and Dionysius the Areopagite, or icons. Instead, I focus on his revision of subjectivity in *l'adonné*, and in particular how Marion uses the Kantian sublime to invert and to expand the Enlightenment ethos Kant espoused.[2] I add to this the suggestion that *l'adonné*, resting as it does on Marion's phenomenology of the gift, promises to resist the recent deformation of the liberal modern ethos by neoliberalism, or neoliberal capitalism. Thus I describe Marion's phenomenology as catholic inasmuch as it promises to aid Catholic theological resistance to anti-Catholic forms of life, like the artificial freedom of the Enlightenment and the foreclosed freedom of neoliberalism. Marion's phenomenology can be deployed diagnostically and constructively, to separate the restrictiveness and pathological sacrifices of modern subjectivity from the decision demanded by the Catholic ethos: whether or not to recognize God's abundant gifts.

I. COMPREHENSIVENESS

Tamsin Jones recognizes a fundamental tension in Marion's works, 'between a universal method that yields pure givenness, and the experience, reception, and interpretation of a phenomenon.'[3] Jones's description of this tension can help me articulate a connection between Marion's philosophy and the theological idea of catholicity. In fact, we see in this tension a philosophical correlate to an analogous tension latent within catholicity between universality and particularity.

The late Jesuit ecclesiologist Avery Dulles explains, 'Unlike universality, catholicity is a concrete term: it is predicated not of abstract essences but of particular, existing realities.

Furthermore, it always implies intensity, richness, and plenitude. Unlike fullness, it implies a unitive relationship among things that are diverse.'[4] At least ideally—and we all know how infrequently this plays out in practice—catholicity preserves particular existents, even as it insists on something like universality. Catholicity allows particulars to live in all their variety, richness, and fruitfulness.

'Catholic,' after all, transliterates the Greek words *kata-holon,* according to the whole, meaning that holism or comprehensiveness is proper to catholicity, and narrowness is its opposite. More words from Dulles prove helpful:

> Catholicity is a dynamic term. It designates a fullness of reality and life, especially divine life, actively communicating itself. This life, flowing outwards, pulsates through many subjects, draws them together, and brings them into union with their source and goal. By reason of its supreme realization, which is divine, catholicity assures the ultimate coherence of the whole ambit of creation and redemption.[5]

This theological view of catholicity has many biblical warrants, but most apposite here is a passage that Marion has used to explicate the scope of phenomenology.

It comes from the Gospel of Luke: 'There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in darkness will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed on the housetops' (Lk 12:2–3).[6] This is, rather clearly, an eschatological passage, echoing the apocalyptic judgment scenes of Matthew 25 and Revelation 20 and 22. The ecclesiological idea of catholicity is grounded eschatologically. Jesus' words indicate that in the fullness of time, God's light will reveal all things, the good and the sinful, for precisely what they are—without dissimulation of any sort. The comprehensive scope of the Christian church, with its numerous prayers, devotions, liturgies, and social and political structures is properly situated only within this eschatological framework, which takes into account creation's whole life.

Interesting for us is that the eschatological grounding of catholicity relates smoothly to the aspirations of phenomenological method as expressed in Husserl's principle of all principles: 'that every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originarily (so to speak, in its 'personal' actuality) offered to us in "intuition" is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.'[7] While lexical and substantive differences distinguish Husserl's principle from the principle of catholicity expressed in Dulles's theology and the Lucan Gospel passage, undeniable resonances draw them together. They commit similarly to comprehensiveness, be it fullness of life within the whole ambit of creation and redemption (within salvation-historical limits) or full acceptance of originary presentive intuitions (within phenomenal limits).

Commitment to a revised version of Husserl's principle of all principles is Marion's signature as a phenomenologist.[8] This commitment drives Marion's resistance toward metaphysics. Near the beginning of *Being Given* he underscores the difference between phenomenological method and the methods of modern-subjectivist metaphysicians like Descartes and Kant. Metaphysical methodologies aim to foresee, to predict, or to produce phenomena. Such methodologies foreground the knowing, constituting subject and its control of phenomena. By contrast, a phenomenology committed to Husserl's principle of all principles 'has no other ambition than to lose [its own] initiative as quickly and completely as possible, seeing as it claims to connect the apparitions of things in their most initial originarity to the so-to-speak native state of their unconditional manifestation in themselves, therefore starting from themselves.'[9] As Jones describes it, Marion's 'method cannot *yield* . . . phenomena, for the whole point is that only the

phenomena themselves can, and do, contest the subject and resist any objectification or external constitution.'[10] In fact, then, his phenomenology goes beyond Husserl's concerns with cognition and presentational limits. This is why Marion does not retain the principle of principles, but proposes and employs an alternative principle, 'So much reduction, so much givenness.'[11]

This is also why we must consider the theme of subjectivity in Marion. For him, the subject must get out of the way of phenomena, so they may manifest themselves wholly, or catholically. But this catholic manifestation is also enabled by the reduction, so the subject must remain active and engaged. Marion's catholic thinking, then, consists in identifying a model of subject beyond autonomy and heteronomy.

II. SUBJECTIVITY

Recent critiques of phenomenology contend that it is ineluctably bound up with subjectivity in a strong sense. Speculative realists like Quentin Meillassoux and Tom Sparrow charge phenomenology with 'correlationism': objects are knowable through their correlation with subjects only, and subjects can never extricate themselves from being related to objects.[12] The subject cannot, therefore, get out of the way as Marion would have it. Even Marion's supporters like Ian Leask worry that Marion's particular iteration of the phenomenological subject does not relinquish the priority of the ego and still retains privileges over against the phenomenon.[13] Marion is haunted, Leask argues, by the 'classic ambiguity' of Husserl's 'principle of principles': that givenness, while originary, must be reduced to the 'I'.[14]

Such concerns are understandable, but misplaced. If in fact Marion maintains a stronger subject than speculative realists and Leask would like, this is advantageous for his thinking's catholicity. By retaining the subject, Marion strengthens Catholic philosophical and theological resistance toward pathological varieties of subjectivity.

Joeri Schrijvers has narrated best Marion's philosophical itinerary from the transcendental subject through the interlocuted self to *l'adonné*, so I will not retell the story here.[15] Instead, I focus on certain aspects of Marion's account of *l'adonné* that place it into direct conflict with the Enlightenment model of subjectivity as autonomy purveyed by Immanuel Kant, and into possible conflict with a newer model of subjectivity: the neoliberal figuration of the subject as human capital. With respect to this latter conflict, I employ a technique learned from Marion's reading of Husserl's principle of principles. Marion gently nudges Husserl in directions he did not quite go, always for the sake of greater phenomenological comprehensiveness. I nudge Marion in a direction he does not quite go, for the sake of catholicity.

Kant and Enlightenment Subjectivity

Marion resists the Enlightenment model of subjectivity because this model alienates objects, subsuming them completely under the subject's representational gaze.[16] Such alienation is the negative correlate to the emancipatory dimension of the Enlightenment subject, summed up in Kant's dictum '*Sapere aude!*'[17] The subject who dares to think (and act) for himself also dares to submit all reality—including other people and God—to his thought and action.

Marion resists this model of subjectivity in a passage on three philosophical predecessors to the saturated phenomenon: Descartes's idea of the infinite, Kant's sublime, and Husserl's internal time consciousness.[18] The second example is especially revealing. The Kantian sublime anticipates the saturated phenomenon inasmuch as sublime feeling confronts the subject with its manifest inability to control excessive phenomena. Marion writes, 'The relation of our faculty of judgment to the phenomenon is therefore reversed to the point that it is the phenomenon that

from now on "gazes" at the I in "respect".'[19] The phenomenon gazes at the I. This counters the Enlightenment subject, whose gaze always constitutes the phenomenon.

This passage connects with a major step in Marion's case for *l'adonné*. He argues that Kant moves in the direction of *l'adonné* by decentering the self-identical I in his account of the feeling of respect.[20] Marion discusses two relevant aspects of respect, but I shall treat only the second, which impinges more directly upon our discussion. Respect 'consists precisely in stripping the I of its position as transcendental a priori and relativizing the self-identity that secures it its definition as an "I think (myself)." This happens by affecting it counter to itself.'[21] The language Marion uses to describe respect, which follows very closely Kant's description of it in the second Critique, is also reminiscent of Kant's linking of sublime feeling and respect in the third Critique.[22] In both cases, the I is met with a negative feeling that humbles it. The autonomy of the thinking I is placed into question and is superseded by a higher call. *L'adonné* is born through such a call, as Marion describes later in *Being Given* book five.[23]

Marion could and probably would concede that for Kant sublime feeling (and perhaps respect) coheres with a strong view of subjectivity defined by autonomous activity over against the manifold of nature. On Kant's account in the third Critique, sublime feeling gives rise to a subjective attempt to organize something that defies ordering. This attempt results from a 'feeling of superiority' over nature. The Kantian sublime is rife with ambiguity. Surely it has some affinities with the saturated phenomenon and its opposition toward subjective constitution. But ultimately the Kantian sublime preserves autonomous Enlightenment subjectivity, its self-legislation of the moral law, and its power over nature.

Marion admits that he commits 'a bit of violence' in his readings of metaphysical construals of the subject, and it seems that the same applies to his reading of the Kantian sublime and respect.[24] He uses force to place these Kantian ideas in genealogies of the saturated phenomenon and *l'adonné*. In fact, one could say that Marion inverts Kant rather than staying true to the letter of his thought. Even with this caveat, Marion's inversion of Kant is especially productive.

This is so because Marion reverses the direction of 'suffering' and 'sacrifice' in the Kantian sublime. For Kant, the imagination suffers under the weight of an experience and is sacrificed in favor of the higher cause of reason.[25] This suffering and sacrifice, in turn, bolsters autonomous subjectivity, rooted as it is in reason. Marion discovers a way to preserve the imagination, and thus phenomena, by resisting the Kantian configuration of 'suffering' and 'sacrifice.' *L'adonné*, the reduced subject, suffers phenomena just as much as the Kantian subject, but does not perform Kant's double sacrifice of the imagination and phenomena. *L'adonné* is not a site of destruction, but the source of a truly free—rather than artificially free—rapport with all phenomena as they arrive.

Neoliberalism's Refigured Subject

Marion's objections against Enlightenment autonomy are familiar. I would like to explore a possible, as yet unmade connection. Marion's thought is ripe for being directed against the recent refiguration of the subject by neoliberal political-economic reason.[26] I wish to examine this refigured subject because many theorists consider it the dominant model of conceiving of human life in the world today.[27] Furthermore the neoliberal subject is seen as turning the Enlightenment subject inside out, so it appears as a rival to Marion's inversion of this subject. This is a story of competing inversions.

According to political theorist Wendy Brown the neoliberal subject has three distinctive characteristics. First, the human subject is understood completely as '*homo oeconomicus* and

only *homo oeconomicus*'—human subjectivity is completely reduced to its economic aspect. Second, the neoliberal subject 'takes its shape as human capital seeking to strengthen its competitive positioning and appreciate its value, rather than as a figure of exchange and interest'—thus the economization of the subject is even more reductive still. Third, 'the specific model for human capital and its spheres of activity is increasingly that of financial or investment capital'—so the economization of the subject results in the human person being reduced to what Brown calls its 'portfolio value.'[28] The subject is remade on the model of a firm, and comports itself toward all reality as a firm does: for its own profit maximization.[29]

Even though this refashioning of the subject promises subjects freedom, in reality they are robbed of freedom. They become 'managed' by markets, 'integrated' into a grand project of economic growth, alternately 'massified and isolated' depending on their collective usefulness or individual uselessness for economic growth, and so are 'sacrificed' to capital.[30] The neoliberal subject is a peculiar distortion or disordering of the Kantian, autonomous subject. Autonomy is twisted into entrepreneurship, which in any case is heteronomous—completely answerable to the externally-legislated mandate to advance the interests of capital.[31]

Whereas Marion's phenomenology is designed specifically to resist the overactivity of the modern subject, it should also be seen as bearing possibilities for resisting the intransigent passivity of human capital. My chief support for this claim is Marion's definitive defense of the gift in 'The Reason of the Gift.'[32] At the outset I must emphasize the word 'reason' in the essay's title. Brown's contention, with which I concur, is that neoliberalism is a form of rationality.[33] Marion's rationality of the gift may be deployed against this rationality.

The rationality of the gift consists in a logic outside of and prior to economic logic. In order to defend this thesis, Marion must answer the objection that the gift is impossible because all giving ultimately reduces to exchange. Marion's response begins by interrogating the central presupposition of the 'exchange' critique: 'that a gift implies a perfect and pure gratuity.'[34] This would mean that a gift is not a gift unless it is pure of the dynamics of exchange. On this objection, though, this very thought is contradictory, since all giving is, by definition, exchange. Marion asks, though, 'If the gift contradicts itself when we impose gratuity on it, why have we made that imposition?'[35] Why is giving automatically defined as exchange? Instead of stipulating this definition of giving, one could just as well define giving in terms of gratuity. Such a definition, which is just as viable as the other definition, could extricate the gift from an exchange economy.

The real problem with defining the gift is that one must surmount commonly held assumptions about the conditions of the possibility of experience. The objection Marion has been answering equates 'the requirements of exchange and of the economy' with 'the conditions of the possibility of experience.'[36] To agree to such a rendering of the experience's conditions would be to make a fatal concession. Economic logic would appear to have a monopoly on reason. This would become a phenomenological problem because the gift, which contradicts the logic of exchange, would be judged unreasonable in principle. Thus its phenomenality would have to be excluded from phenomenological consideration.[37]

Marion then attempts to evade this critique by thinking about the gift as 'irreducible to exchange and economy.'[38] The theoretical path runs through the giver, the givee, and the gift, phenomenological accounts of which contribute to the reduction of the gift to its givenness.[39] There is a potential problem with this method. Removing any sense of exchange from the giver's action, the givee's reception, or the gift's transferal risks canceling the gift as a phenomenon.[40] Marion ventures to allay this concern through a phenomenological description of fatherhood, a phenomenon that involves giving, but without reciprocity and with excess.[41] This phenomenon is not given in search of a return on investment, and when it is given it is

given as transcendence of self. This phenomenon defies exchange. It demands nothing back and it gives more than should be possible. This phenomenon threatens normal economic operation, inasmuch as economics depends upon reciprocal, non-excessive exchange.[42]

It would seem that the gift really is impossible, and that ultimately the 'exchange' critique holds. But Marion makes one final step: the gift redefines possibility altogether. The gift, properly reduced, appears in two modes of possibility: 'givability' (for the giver) and 'acceptability' (for the givee).[43] These modes of possibility are not imposed from the outside, by the logic of exchange, the metaphysical principle of sufficient reason, or any other external standard. Instead, givability and acceptability pertain to the gift itself, as it disposes itself from itself for giving or acceptance.[44] The gift comes with its own reason. Marion calls this 'a greater reason' than metaphysical or economic reason.[45] The greatness of the gift's reason derives from its arrival without demands, without removing anything, without taking anything from anybody.[46] Marion claims that the same goes for all phenomena, provided that they arrive on their own terms and are not commandeered by an external logic. Phenomenology, if it obeys the revised principle of principles and allows unconditional manifestation, is counter-economic logic.

L'adonné, to return to Marion's concern with subjectivity, is tasked with holding open the phenomenon's redefined possibility and countereconomic logic. In this way, *l'adonné* countervails the neoliberal model of subjectivity. I have already explained that neoliberalism's restriction of the subject's field of activity leaves the subject with a mere semblance of freedom. The neoliberal subject is wholly dependent on capital providing it with investment opportunities. The life of the neoliberal subject is a sublime sacrifice to capital. *L'adonné* may also seem heteronomous, wholly dependent on phenomena, even sacrificed to them. But Marion's meticulously wrought case in 'The Reason of the Gift' should suggest otherwise. *L'adonné*'s relationship with phenomena hinges on coappearance, not codependence.

The role of the reduction is crucial for understanding this. The reduction reveals that the appearance of phenomena is a matter of personal manifestation, and the relationship between phenomena and *l'adonné*, the reduced subject, is one of mutual respect. The arrival of the gift to the gifted occurs without demands, without removal, without taking. The gift, the paradigmatic phenomenon, arrives without expecting exchange! Unlike capital, the phenomenon demands no competition, no investment, no sacrifice.

Maintaining the Subject

Near the end of *Being Given,* Marion makes several clarifying statements with regard to his project of overcoming subjectivity. He explains, 'The phenomenology of givenness has finished radically ... with the "subject" and all its recent avatars. It succeeds in this, however, precisely because it tries neither to destroy nor to suppress it.'[47] In contrast to several postmodern attempts to articulate what comes after the subject, Marion insists that what comes after the subject must in some way maintain the subject. He does not advocate destruction or suppression.[48] He continues, clarifying why one must maintain the subject: 'Destroying the "subject" by denying it all actuality amounts to assigning it all the more an ideal definition ... The subject therefore always rises again from each of its pretended destructions. To have done with the "subject," it is therefore necessary not to destroy it, but to reverse it—to overturn it.'[49] What I am calling Marion's maintenance of the subject he understands to include an overturning of the subject; hence my earlier language of inversion.

In the same passage, Marion anticipates the critiques with which I began this part, which worry precisely about the issue of the subject's maintenance, and which deem insufficient an inversion of the subject. They are concerned with the privilege Marion affords to his revised

subject. To these objections, Marion answers that *l'adonné*'s 'privilege is confined to the fact that he is himself received from what he receives.'[50] He does not deny *l'adonné*'s privilege as the agent of the reduction, but he adds that this agency is received: not pathological dependence, but sublime gift.

III. CATHOLIC RESISTANCE AND MARION'S PHENOMENOLOGY

An impasse has arisen in theological commentaries on Marion regarding the question of whether his phenomenology shirks ethical, social, and political responsibilities. Illustrative of this is the relatively recent exchange in *The Heythrop Journal* between then-colleagues at Saint Louis University Brian Robinette and Joseph Rivera. Robinette suggests supplementation of Marion's phenomenology of the call and the gift with prophetic Christologies from liberation and political theologians like Gustavo Gutiérrez and Johann Baptist Metz. Rivera gainsays such a need for supplementation, since Marion's work readily coheres with the prophetic-ethical call of Christ's Cross.[51] Gerald McKenny's chapter on Marion and ethics in the influential edited volume *Counter-Experiences* mounts a position somewhere between Robinette and Rivera, chastising Marion for conceding too much to the restrictive modern framing of ethical questions, but discovering in Marion's works on love a genuine opening toward work for justice.[52] Even more recently Boston College theologian Andrew Prevot concluded a masterful essay on Marion and prayer with a tantalizing suggestion for a future project: to read Marion in dialogue with *mujerista* theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz's writings on the struggle for justice.[53]

It is telling that Robinette and Prevot recommend outside conversation partners to unlock Marion's ethical potential, and that when Rivera and McKenny insist upon the prophetic-ethical capacity of Marion's phenomenology, it emerges only by theological inference. Theologians may be right that Marion's phenomenology remains at a remove from ethical and political questions. I wish to submit a new proposal for how Marion's work may connect with prophetic concerns. It has to do with resistance. Again, I replicate the sort of strategy Marion applies to Husserl, pushing the logic of his thought further than he himself does—though my proposal is not nearly as far afield from Marion's actual thinking as might be surmised.

In many respects, Marion's phenomenology constitutes a practice of resistance. He resists misconstruals of Descartes. He resists ontotheology. All of his works in some way resist metaphysics. The phenomenological trilogy resists Kant, and the Enlightenment ethos more widely. Later theological works resist contemporary tendencies toward idolatry, constricting the space for revelation, or prizing apart faith and reason. It is plausible, then, to characterize Marion's work as Catholic discursive resistance to objectionable ideas, intellectual standpoints, and forms of life. This part argues that Marion's thinking on crisis and sacrifice, which develops further his logic of the gift, may contribute to Catholic resistance to neoliberalism, particularly its logic of sacrifice.

Which Crisis?

In August of 2014 a video lecture by Marion called 'Quelle crise?' (What crisis?) was published by the Académie Catholique de France.[54] Marion discusses the economic crisis. He insists that it is a non-crisis, since crisis (from its Greek root, *krinein*) means decision, and the economic 'crisis' is the latest of many moments of indecision, of seeming incapability to act. Marion contends that the so-called economic 'crisis' is really decadence, the latest form of nihilism. In response to this decadence, the church is a crisis, in the proper sense. The church requires decision, for or against Christ—or, following Christ, a decision for or against a will other than

one's own (Jn 6:38). Unlike the economic system, judicial system, medical system, the army and various other this-worldly systems, which struggle always to stay the same, the church demands reform. The church must always reform itself to fulfill its mission. Marion refers to the medieval dictum *ecclesia semper reformanda est* (the church is always in need of reform). The church puts the world in crisis, confronts the world with a decision. A decision for Christ would be the world's way out of its decadence.

This recent video is reminiscent of Marion's 1983 essay, 'The Crucial Crisis,' which similarly analyzes the term crisis, demonstrates its inapplicability to situations to which usually it is applied, and clarifies it using theology. The opening pages are fascinating in their resonance with the case on subjectivity that I made in part two. Marion discusses the impossibility of true crisis in terms of lacking citizenship and economic agency:

> To speak of an economic or a political crisis is meaningful only insofar as, within a democracy and a liberal economy, each individual, as citizen or economic agent, participates in decisions that are nonetheless global or collective. If all these modes of participation ceased to function, it would no longer be necessary to speak of a crisis, but simply of unfavorable states of fact. In this sense, when the victims cannot make an effective decision for resolving the conflict, it becomes illegitimate to speak of a crisis, and still more of individual responsibility.[55]

The 'crises' of the early eighties—Marion names 'stagflation' in particular—precisely instantiate this kind of failure of political and economic participation, and Marion seems to notice that this has happened not by accident but by design.

It is a perverse sort of design. The 'deciding powers,' as Marion calls them, like multinational companies and imperial powers, ceaselessly make '"official" decisions' about the economic and political order. In doing so, they 'can only claim to dominate, unchecked and unlimited, simply to satisfy the incoercible necessity of their own growth.'[56] The perversity of 'official' decision-making lies in the fact that even the decision makers, let alone the subjugated citizenry, are not really calling the shots. Instead, they serve 'growth,' which Marion could rightly have called, 'capital.'

A further statement illustrates the point: 'The more they decide for the increase of their power, the more they show themselves to be decidedly "decided" by the logic of power, rather than the "deciders" of the terms of the debate.'[57] Growth and consolidation of power are merely circumlocutions for capital, and neoliberal capital specifically, although in 1983 relatively few people would have called it that.

Beyond this point in the essay, Marion's argument becomes less interesting for our purposes, since he develops an individualized eschatology, where the 'crucial crisis' refers to the last judgment, whose rule is charity.[58] That being said, the point at which we just arrived regarding growth and power may prove very generative. It brings us back to the theme of sacrifice, which first emerged in this article in conjunction with the sublime.

Sacrifice

The deciding powers to whom Marion refers cannot really decide because they must satisfy the necessity of economic growth. The modes of political and economic participation to which he refers have ceased to function. Deciding powers and individuals alike are robbed of agency by the logic of power—they are decided by it. Another way of saying this is that all parties in the burgeoning neoliberal economic and political structure of the early 1980s have begun to sacrifice everything to capital. This sacrifice makes true 'crisis' impossible.

Wendy Brown confirms that neoliberalism demands sacrifice. Just as the neoliberal order converts citizens into human capital, it 'retains and transforms the idea of citizen sacrifice.'[59] The human subject is made at once into an individual firm that must fend for itself, and into part of a greater whole for whose benefit it must be willing to engage in 'shared sacrifice.'[60] This is no longer the same kind of shared sacrifice that citizens of Allied nations undertook during World War II, because the goal is not the defeat of a common enemy and the achievement of peace. Instead, the goal is unrestricted capital accumulation at the expense of human capital. This is truly a revolutionary rearrangement: 'In place of the social-contractarian promise—that the political aggregate . . . will secure the individual against life-threatening danger from without and within—individual *homo oeconomicae* may now be legitimately sacrificed to macroeconomic imperatives.'[61] The forms of this sacrifice should be familiar to all of us, given frequent mention in the news of 'austerity' politics, but surely the reality of austerity (or fiscal responsibility, or balanced budgets, or other euphemisms) is most keenly known and felt by people who depend on state and municipal services to aid their lives and livelihoods. The argument in favor of austerity always involves common people (*never* corporate executives) tightening their belts—or risking destruction—to set the economic order aright. Thus Brown relates neoliberal 'shared sacrifice' to a common-sense notion of religious sacrifice: we 'make an offering to a supreme power on which we are radically dependent, but that owes us nothing. We are called to offer life to propitiate and regenerate its life-giving capacities . . . but without any guarantee that the benefits of this sacrifice will redound to us.'[62]

Marion's recent 'Sketch of a Phenomenological Concept of Sacrifice' relates more closely to this discussion than it may first seem (since it would seem that it is more nearly a conceptual intervention than an essay replete with social-critical potential).[63] In my prior exposition of 'The Reason of the Gift,' I indicated how Marion develops a counter-economic logic primed to resist neoliberalism's refigured subject. Marion's essay on sacrifice extends the logic of the gift, and so it extends his phenomenology's capability for resisting neoliberalism. Much of the sacrifice essay recounts Marion's phenomenology of the gift.[64] It does so to pinpoint the incorrectness of normal concepts of sacrifice, which treat sacrifice as a matter of exchange or economy. As with his writings on the gift, Marion seeks a logic more adequate to the phenomenon.

A common sense notion of sacrifice understands it in terms of 'destruction of a good.'[65] More refined yet still wrong is the operative concept of sacrifice from sociology of religion, which involves dispossession of a good paired with acceptance of this gift by another. Marion takes issue with the contention that 'my dispossession of a good is enough for the effective accomplishment of a sacrifice,'[66] because we ought not to correlate immediately dispossession on the one side and acceptance on the other. Both the common sense and sociological concepts of sacrifice fail insofar as they assimilate sacrifice into a logic of exchange. This logic fails because sacrifice offers no guarantee of exchange, no guarantee of return, so a sacrifice is either an 'imprudent' or 'illusory' exchange.[67]

The logic of the gift proves pivotal for describing phenomenologically what actually happens in a sacrifice. Rather than being a profligate destruction of an arbitrary good (even for a so-called higher cause), sacrifice involves a gift; it 'presupposes a gift already given.'[68] Rather than being a matter of exchange or a hoped-for return of a good, sacrifice involves a reduction; it 'gives the gift back to the givenness from which it proceeds,' or the 'elsewhere' from which it comes.[69] In this way the gift is 'seconded,' and one could even say that it is reversed toward the giver.[70]

But Marion strictly delimits how one may interpret this reversal: 'At issue is absolutely not a counter-gift as if the giver needed to recover his due (in the manner of an exchange), or to

receive a supplementary tribute (gratitude as symbolic compensation); rather, the point is the recognition of the gift as such, by repeating in reverse the process of givenness.'[71] This description resists views of sacrifice as propitiating an angry God or compensating a wrathful Lord. Marion's re-reading of Genesis 22, the 'sacrifice of Isaac,' confirms this view of sacrifice. The non-destruction of Isaac is seen not as disqualifying this as a story of sacrifice, but of confirming it as a sacrifice in the true, phenomenological sense.[72] When these thoughts are juxtaposed with common sense and sociological notions of sacrifice, it becomes clear that Marion revolutionizes the concept. Sacrifice is precisely not a matter of loss, destruction, or dispossession. The one who sacrifices does not lose the gift sacrificed, but keeps it, now as a common holding with the giver of the gift. The sacrifice resists contracts of exchange, in favor of mutual recognition.[73]

A contrast may now be drawn between sacrifice phenomenologically understood and the neoliberal idea and practice of 'shared sacrifice.' The phenomenological concept of sacrifice entails a gift being reduced to its source in givenness. This process of the redounding of the gift does not allow alienation of any sort. The strict right and power of the gift to appear from itself and on its own terms must be respected; so too must the right of the givee to reduce the gift to its givenness, an act that respects the reason of the gift.

The phenomenological concept rules out neoliberal 'shared sacrifice' on many counts. 'Shared sacrifice' reduces resources, livelihoods, and lives to capital, which demands back what it did not first give. The process of 'shared sacrifice' inevitably alienates the things it requires. Gifts may not be returned to givenness because they are severed from givenness through their reduction to market values and imperatives. Thus there is no question of the rights and powers of gifts or givees, only the financialization of everything and the trampling of the rights of people. These few points should indicate that Marion's phenomenological sketch of sacrifice, while it may seem politically, economically, and socially innocuous, could prove very dangerous to neoliberal business as usual. His phenomenology of sacrifice may open toward a decision neoliberalism seems to preclude.

The Church as Crisis

Let us return to Marion's idea that the church is crisis for the world. To clarify this idea, I shall relate it briefly to a 1968 essay by the German Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner, which he originally gave as a talk for several different audiences around Europe during that tumultuous year. Its title is 'The Function of the Church as a Critic of Society.'[74]

Against the background of socio-political unrest and revolutionary developments in theology and church life, Rahner aims to define the contours of the church's social-critical contribution. He writes, 'It consists in opening up ever anew a perspective which transcends the concrete social reality such that within this perspective the social reality concerned appears in its relative value, and so as capable of alteration.'[75] Then he adds a further factor: 'It provides the opportunity and the power to introduce practical changes into this reality even though it does not supply with this any concrete formula or any absolute imperative for a quite specific new social reality to be introduced by the use of creative forces in history.'[76] Rahner introduces two ideas about the church's social function that cohere well with phenomenology, particularly the reduction. The church's opening toward a broader perspective functions in a way similar to the *epoché,* which provisionalizes a phenomenon by relinquishing the limitations of the natural attitude and revealing the phenomenon as it appears. When the phenomenon is a set of societal structures (a saturated phenomenon, indeed), the reduction of the phenomenon can reveal its contingency, its negativity, and the need for it to change. This in turn opens the opportunity for change. In this way Marion's phenomenology, reconfigured as an ecclesial act of opening a perspective

that transcends concrete socio-economic reality, could foster Catholic resistance to pathological socio-economic structures like the neoliberal order that now dominates the world.

This connects with the phenomenology of sacrifice. Speaking theologically, the church, inasmuch as it is catholic, is the proper realm for sacrifice, phenomenologically considered. The church's catholicity ensures an ethos capacious enough to accommodate all things, redounded to their being created, preserved as freely created by the God of love and mercy. The church faces the neoliberal world with decision because, at least in principle—or phenomenologically—it shapes ecclesial subjects who assume as their freedom this task of redounding God's innumerable gifts. The decision with which the church faces the neoliberal world is sublime, a task elevated beyond capitalistic sacrifices, a task wider than these pathological sacrifices could recognize or enact. Marion's phenomenology of *l'adonné,* paired with his phenomenology of sacrifice, can aid theologians in developing a theory of ecclesial subjectivity primed to critique the sham sublimities insinuated by the dominative ethos of neoliberalism.

We would do well to revisit the passage from the Gospel of Luke that I invoked earlier as a theological correlate to Marion's phenomenological comprehensiveness. The eschatological grounding of the church's catholicity lies in the coming future revelation of all things precisely as they are, as good or sinful, life-giving or life-destroying. Through its life and discourse, the church may anticipate this final revelation with smaller-scale unveilings of false forms of ethos. Yet again a Marionite idea may be helpful here: anamorphosis.[77] The church may play its role as crisis for the world by describing the contours of this world's injustices, and contrasting them with a divine life of justice that, according to our faith in Christ, is rising to form (Is 65:17, Rom 6:4, 2 Cor 5:17, Rv 21:5).

CONCLUSION

This article argued that Marion's phenomenology qualifies as Catholic not just because Marion himself is a devoted Catholic or because he often treats religious and theological themes, but because his thought's comprehensiveness comports with the catholicity of the church and promises to enliven resistance toward forms of life inimical to Christian living. Marion's catholic comprehensiveness is an example of what I call the Catholic sublime, the grace-filled, elevated holism of Catholic Christianity.[78] I examined Marion's phenomenological comprehensiveness in conjunction with ecclesiological ideas on catholicity. Within this context, I substantively discussed Marion's discursive resistance to Enlightenment subjectivity and constructed an until-now unexecuted critical dialogue between Marion's revised subject and the view of subjectivity purveyed by neoliberal capitalism. Finally I extended the conversation regarding Marion, catholicity, and neoliberalism to suggest even further how Marion's thought might be used to resist catholically/Catholically the malformed ethos that has driven the world into economic crisis (all caveats in place with respect to the precise meaning of 'crisis').

There are advantages and disadvantages to consulting Marion as a resource for theological resistance toward neoliberalism. Advantages lie mainly on the level of principles. Marion can help to diagnose neoliberal human capital (as he has with Kantian subjectivity) as a false abstraction that obscures and militates against real human life. A phenomenological subject like *l'adonné*, though undeniably it functions mainly in high academic discourse, opens remarkable possibilities for describing, appreciating, shaping, and enriching everyday human life. *L'adonné*'s advantage is disadvantageous inasmuch as it still hovers at the level of principle, seemingly impertinent to real life other than at several levels of remove. This is why controversy remains over the political-ethical dimension (or non-dimension) of Marion's work. But it may

be that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. That is this article's hope. If not Marion himself, other thinkers inspired by him can interpret his phenomenology to invigorate ecclesial subjects—the pilgrim people of God—'to prevent the advance of hell upon earth, and to make the earth fit to live in through the light of God.'[79]

Notes

1 I delivered a much briefer version of this article at the international conference, *Breached Horizons: The Work of Jean-Luc Marion*, King's University College, London, Ontario, 29 March 2015. Many thanks to the conference organizers Stephen Lofts and Antonio Calcagno, and to Daniel Rober, Jennifer Rosato, and Jean-Luc Marion for their comments, questions, and affirmations regarding my presentation. Thanks also to Andrew Prevot for reading and commenting favorably on a later draft of the whole article.

2 Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 219–20.

3 Tamsin Jones, *A Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion: Apparent Darkness* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2011), 135.

4 Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 167.

5 Ibid., 167.

6 Jean-Luc Marion, seminar discussion, University of Notre Dame (22 Feb 2007).

7 Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*: First Book: *General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. F. Kersten (Dodrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 44 (§24).

8 See especially Jean-Luc Marion, *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 49–51; idem, *Being Given*, 12–14, 184–5.

9 Marion, *Being Given*, 9.

10 Jones, *Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion*, 135.

11 Marion, *Reduction and Givenness*, 203. For an exemplary explanation of this revised principle, see Kevin Hart, 'Introduction' in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 1–54, at 17–20.

12 See Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (New York: Continuum, 2008), 5 and passim; Tom Sparrow, *The End of Phenomenology: Metaphysics and the New Realism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 86–109.

13 Ian Leask, 'The Dative Subject (and the "Principle of Principles")' in *Givenness and God: Questions of Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Ian Leask and Eoin Cassidy (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 182–9, at 186.

14 Ibid., 189.

15 Joeri Schrijvers, *Ontotheological Turnings?: The Decentering of the Modern Subject in Recent French Phenomenology* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2011), 51–80.

16 Marion, *Being Given*, 248–52.

17 Immanuel Kant, 'An Answer to the Question: "What Is Enlightenment?"' in *Political Writings*, 2nd edition, ed. H. S. Reiss (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 54–60 at 54.

18 Marion, *Being Given*, 219–21.

19 Ibid., 220.

20 Ibid., 278–82.

21 Ibid., 280–81.

22 On respect, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 133–271, at 199–211. On respect and the sublime, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 140–1, 153–4.

23 Marion, *Being Given*, 282–96: the famous §28: The Call and the Responsal.

24 Ibid., 282.

25 See Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 203–204 on 'resistance to the incentives of sensibility' or 'humiliation on the sensible side' in favor of 'elevation of the moral … esteem for the law itself on the intellectual side'; and Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 153: 'The object of a pure and unconditioned

intellectual satisfaction is the moral law in all its power, which it exercises in us over each and every incentive of the mind antecedent to it; and, since this power actually makes itself aesthetically knowable only through sacrifices (which is a deprivation, although in behalf of inner freedom, but also reveals in us an unfathomable depth of this supersensible faculty together with its consequences reaching beyond what can be seen), the satisfaction on the aesthetic side (in relation to sensibility) is negative.' Kant continues on the next page, underscoring 'the dominion that reason exercises over sensibility' (154).

26 For introductions to neoliberalism, see David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Rob Van Horn and Philip Mirowski, 'The Rise of the Chicago School of Economics and the Birth of Neoliberalism' in *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*, ed. Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 139–78; Manfred B. Steger and Ravi Roy, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

27 This conviction is an organizing principle for the thirty chapters in Alfredo Saad-Filho and Deborah Johnson, *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Pluto Books, 2005).

28 Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Zone Books, 2015), 33–4.

29 Ibid., 34.

30 See Ibid., 72.

31 Ibid., 84.

32 Jean-Luc Marion, 'The Reason of the Gift' in *The Essential Writings*, ed. Kevin Hart (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 156–80. As Kevin Hart notes in an introductory essay, 'The Reason of the Gift' is anticipated by a famous debate over the gift between Marion and Jacques Derrida and by sections of *Being Given* (Kevin Hart, 'Saturation, Gift, and Icon' in Marion, *Essential Writings*, 75–7, at 77). On the Marion-Derrida debate, see Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001). On the gift, see Marion, *Being Given*, 71–118.

33 Wendy Brown, 'Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy' in *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 37–59, at 41: 'Neoliberalism is a constructivist project: it does not presume the ontological givenness of a thoroughgoing economic rationality for all domains of society but rather takes as its task the development of such a rationality.'

34 Marion, 'The Reason of the Gift,' 159.

35 Ibid., 159.

36 Ibid., 159.

37 Ibid., 161.

38 Ibid., 164.

39 Ibid., 167.

40 Ibid., 167.

41 Ibid., 171.

42 See ibid., 172.

43 Ibid., 177.

44 Ibid., 177.

45 Ibid., 177.

46 Ibid., 179.

47 Marion, *Being Given,* 322.

48 While I understand the points she is trying to make, I heartily disagree with Marlène Zarader's reading of this same passage. Zarader thinks that Marion 'has no right' to claim that he has finished with the subject, because he has, to her mind, attempted to destroy it by rendering it utterly passive. See Marlène Zarader, 'Phenomenality and Transcendence' in *Transcendence in Philosophy and Religion*, ed. James E. Faulconer (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2003), 106–119, at 115.

49 Marion, *Being Given*, 322.

50 Ibid., 322.

51 Brian Robinette, 'A Gift to Theology? Jean-Luc Marion's "Saturated Phenomenon" in Christological Perspective,' *The Heythrop Journal* 48 (2007): 86–108; Joseph M. Rivera, 'The Call and the Gifted in Christological Perspective: A Consideration of Brian Robinette's Critique of Jean-Luc Marion,' *The Heythrop Journal* 51 (2010): 1053–60.

52 Gerald McKenny, '(Re)placing Ethics: Jean-Luc Marion and the Horizon of Modern Morality' in Hart (ed.), *Counter-Experiences,* 339–56.

53 Andrew Prevot, 'The Gift of Prayer: Toward a Theological Reading of Jean-Luc Marion,' *Horizons* 41.2 (December 2014): 250–74, at 273–4.

54 Jean-Luc Marion, 'Quelle crise?,' Académie Catholique de France, 9 August 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEzyZo3dNZc, accessed 18 March 2015. All translations/paraphrases are mine.

55 Jean-Luc Marion, 'The Crucial Crisis' in *Prolegomena to Charity*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 102–123, at 105.

56 Ibid., 107.

57 Ibid., 107.

58 Ibid., 116, 118–23.

59 Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 210.

60 Ibid., 210.

61 Ibid., 213.

62 Ibid., 216.

63 Jean-Luc Marion, 'Sketch of a Phenomenological Concept of Sacrifice' in *Essential Writings*, 436–49; this sketch originally appeared in Jean-Luc Marion, *The Reason of the Gift*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 69–90. A light revision of this essay appears in idem, *Certitudes Négatives* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2010), 187–211. Interesting about the version in *Certitudes Négatives* is the pairing of sacrifice and forgiveness (211–41) as variations on the gift. A longer treatment of possibilities in Marion for theorizing Catholic resistance would have to take into account forgiveness, but this is not the proper place.

64 Marion, 'Phenomenological Concept of Sacrifice,' 440–4.

65 Ibid., 438.

66 Ibid., 439.

67 Ibid., 440.

68 Ibid., 444.

69 Ibid., 444.

70 Ibid., 445.

71 Ibid., 445.

72 Ibid., 445–8.

73 Ibid., 448.

74 Karl Rahner, 'The Function of the Church as a Critic of Society' in *Confrontations 2: Theological Investigations 12*, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1974), 229–49.

75 Ibid., 235.

76 Ibid., 235.

77 Marion, *Being Given*, 119–31.

78 This is the main concept developed in Peter Joseph Fritz, *Karl Rahner's Theological Aesthetics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2014).

79 Joseph Ratzinger, 'The Church on the Threshold of the New Millennium' in *The Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, ed. Stephan Otto Horn and Vinzenz Pfnür, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 284–98, at 286.