JACQUES DERRIDA AND JEAN-LUC MARION
ON THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF NEGATIVE THEOLOGY

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Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

In a series of discussions culminating in a conference organized by Villanova University, Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion argue the impossibility of negative theology.

For Derrida, negative theology operates *via* "denegations" that lead to a hyper-theology affirming God as *hyperousious*. "Mystical theology" embodies this hyper-movement and, so, is no longer apophatic. For Marion, negative theology is not self-sufficient but ushers the hyperbolic and pragmatic mode of knowing God by *unknowing* or "denominating" God. Mystical theology is a "theology of *absence*", a higher apophasis that overcomes both affirmation and negation.

However, Derrida understands mystical theology as a discourse of *presence*. It promises union with God, a *teleological* fulfilment of presence that is more ontological than apophatic. Marion disagrees, arguing for the possibility of a presence exceeding ontology: The "Saturated phenomenon" (Revelation), where intuition of presence *exceeds* and disqualifies all concepts and intentions. Presence exceeds knowledge; it precedes being. As such, Marion's phenomenology welcomes *all* phenomena. Derrida finds this problematic. As their discussion on "the Gift" shows, Marion's phenomenology makes room for revelation as an appearing of the divine *itself*. Derrida questions if this is still phenomenology that welcomes the other as *tout autre*, absence.

Beginning with Heidegger's *destruktion* of ontotheology (Introduction), this discussion subsequently analyzes the respective arguments of Derrida and Marion on the possibility of negative theology (sections 1 and 2). Their arguments reflect the points mentioned above. These are evaluated in light of the conference round-table discussion, "On the Gift" (Conclusion). The conclusion evaluates Derrida and Marion's discussion as an ideal *enactment* of the tension between philosophy and theology – a tension that Heidegger identifies as inherent in ontotheology.

1. Introduction: God, Ontotheology, and Negation

This essay proceeds as follows: First, it recalls Heidegger's project of "overcoming metaphysics" as a prelude to Derrida's and Marion's efforts to overcome ontotheology (Introduction); second, it analyzes Derrida's Jerusalem lecture, 'How to Avoid Speaking', the basis of Marion's critique of Derrida's interpretation of negative theology (Section 1). Subsequently, Marion's paper, 'In the Name', is analyzed to uncover the issues Marion has with Derrida and deconstruction (Section 2). The issues identified in Derrida's and Marion's lectures, respectively, are explored in light of their discussion, 'On the Gift' (Section 3). Finally, this essay will evaluate the discussion between Derrida and Marion as an "enactment" of the tension between philosophy and theology – a tension Hediegger identifies as inherent to ontotheology (Conclusion).

1.1. The Event

Villanova University organized a conference, 'Religion and Postmodernism' (September 25–27, 1997), to discuss "the question of religion at the end of the millennium".[1] An important objective was to facilitate a face-to-face dialogue between Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) and Jean-Luc Marion (1946–   ) on two issues: Mystical theology and the Gift.[2] According to John D. Caputo:

> The conference was an attempt to seize a particular moment in recent work in philosophy and theology, a moment in which the 'overcoming of metaphysics' characteristic of continental philosophy since Heidegger and questions of a profoundly religious character have become increasingly and surprisingly convergent.

Indeed, this was the first public meeting between Derrida and Marion. However, their discussion on negative theology began as early as 1968:[3] In his essay,

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1   Another four conferences on separate themes related to 'Religion and Postmodernism' have since been held at Villanova University: 'Questioning God' (October 14 & 15, 1999), 'Confessions' (September 27–29, 2001), 'Transcendence and Beyond' (September 18–20, 2003), and 'Athens and Jerusalem on the Polis' (October 26–28, 2006).

2   John D. Caputo and M. J. Scanlon, eds., *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 1. Dawne McCance, *Derrida On Religion: Thinker of Difference* (London & Oakville: Equinox Publishing, 2009), p. 93.

3   For the philosophical and religious development of negative theology, see: Raoul Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, 2 vols (Bonn: Hanstein, 1986); Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God – Negative*

'Différance' (1968), Derrida distinguished deconstruction from negative theology, the latter being an attempt at establishing a "superessentiality";[4] Marion critiques Derrida's interpretation of negative theology in his, *The Idol and Distance* (1977), a critique Derrida picks up in, 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials' (1986),[5] where he also refers to and critiques Marion's *God Without Being* (1982);[6] Marion responds to Derrida with his conference paper, 'In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of 'Negative Theology'';[7] these culminate in the conference round-table discussion, 'On the Gift', moderated by Richard Kearney.[8]

With Derrida and Marion, two trajectories of thinking converge: First, the "overcoming of metaphysics" effects a religious turn in philosophy of the 'apophatic' kind;[9] second, "questions of a profoundly religious character" motivate efforts to

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Theology In the Platonic Tradition: From Plato to Eiugena, Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs 19 (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1995).

4   'Différance' was originally an address given at a meeting of the Société française de philosophie (27 January 1968).   Simultaneously published in the *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* (July–September 1968).   Translated into English by Alan Bass and published in Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 1–27.

5   Originally delivered as a lecture in Jerusalem (June 1986) for the opening of the colloquium, 'Absence and Negativity', organized by the Hebrew University and the Institute for Advanced Studies of Jerusalem.   Translated into English by Ken Frieden and Elizabeth Rottenberg and published in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume II*, ed. by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. 143–195.   Referred to as HAS in the present essay.

6   Both works originally published in French as *L'Idole et la distance: cinq études* (Paris: B. Grasset, 1977) and *Dieu sans l'etre* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), respectively.

7   There are two editions of Marion's essay.   The original is found in Caputo and Scanlon , eds., *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, pp. 20–53.   Marion later published an version in the collection, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. by R. Horner and V. Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), pp. 128–162.   The original will be our primary source, since it is closest to the paper he delivered during the Villanova conference.   Furthermore, Derrida's response is also contained in the original.   For citation purposes, the original essay published in Caputo and Scanlon is abbreviated, 'IN'; the later edited version published in *In Excess* will be abbreviated as, 'INE'.

8   See 'On the Gift: A Discussion Between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion', in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism*, pp. 54–78.

9   For the postmodern turn of continental philosophy to apophaticism, see William Franke, 'Apophasis and the Turn of Philosophy to Religion: From Neoplatonic Negative Theology to Postmodern Negation of Theology', *International* Journal *for Philosophy of Religion* 60.1–3 (December 2006), pp. 61–76.   Volume 60 of *IPJR* is reprinted as *Self and Other: Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion*, ed. by Eugene T. Long (Dordrect, Netherlands: Springer, 2007).   Michael Sells poses the question, "Is apophasis dead?", and suggests that it ressourcement lead to a critical re-evaluation of contemporary philosophy.   Sells, 'Apophasis in Plotinus: A Critical Approach', in *The Harvard Theological Review* 78.1/2 (January–April, 1985), pp. 47–65.

"reclaim the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Jesus."[10]   These modes of thinking produce a "philosophy of the religious" and a "philosophical theology", respectively. As this essay demonstrates, although not immediately apparent, Derrida approaches the former, while Marion the latter.   What defines their respective approaches is a deep appropriation of thinking stemming from two sources: Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Martin Heidegger's critical philosophy.   Phenomenology will be discussed later.   Presently, Heidegger's project of "overcoming metaphysics" needs explication.   Derrida's and Marion's efforts to overcome ontotheology and metaphysics owe much to Heidegger's *destruktion*, which moves philosophy from metaphysics to thinking itself.[11]

1.2. 'Questioning Back':   Overcoming Metaphysics and the *via negativa*[12]

Heidegger's *destruktion* is a critique of the inadequacy of the metaphysical understanding of the *ground* of being.[13]   In *What is Metaphysics*? (1929), Heidegger recalls Descartes' metaphor: Philosophy is a tree; metaphysics is its root; the trunk is physics; the branches are the sciences (including theology).[14]   Insofar as the *ground* (Being) is confused with metaphysics, thinking is unable to arrive at its source.   The only way is to go beyond the roots, to overcome or 'step back' from metaphysics. *Radical* thinking about being then truly begins.   Heidegger shifts his inquiry to the

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10 Caputo and Scanlon, 'Introduction: Apology for the Impossible: Religion and Postmodernism', in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, p. 11.

11 A good and concise account of these two developments in Western philosophy of religion is found in Eugene T. Long, *Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion 1900-2000* (Netherlands, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000; repr Dordrecth: Springer, 2000), pp. 424–452; on Derrida's and Marion's influences on deconstruction and hermeneutics, see pp. 441–446 and pp. 446–452, respectively.

12 An excellent work addressing the need to for theology to overcome metaphysics is Joseph O'Leary, *Questioning Back: The Overcoming of Metaphysics in Christian Tradition* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Winston Press, 1985).   See also Merold Westphal, 'Overcoming Onto-Theology', in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, pp. 146–164.

13 The discussion in this present section is indebted to John Macquarrie's, 'Being and Giving: Heidegger and the Concept of God', in *God: The Contemporary Discussion*, ed. by F. Sontag and M. Darrol Bryant (New York: The Rose Sharon Press, 1982), pp. 151–167.   See also Diogenes Allen and E. O. Springstead, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, 2nd edn (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), pp. 192-194.

14 Descartes uses this metaphor in his essay, *Principles of Philosophy*, originally published in Latin in 1644.   See *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, trans. by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 186.

ground from which metaphysics (the root) itself arises. Although such thinking "overcomes" philosophy, it does not *destroy* philosophy with an 'anti-metaphysical' purpose. 'Overcoming' connotes going beyond and toward Being, the grounding of philosophy itself, not its destruction.

> A thinking which thinks of the truth of Being can no longer be satisfied with metaphysics, though its thinking is not opposed to metaphysics. ...[I]t does not tear up the roots of philosophy. But it digs and ploughs the ground for philosophy. *Metaphysics remains the origin of philosophy, but it does not attain the origin of thinking. Metaphysics is overcome in the thinking of the truth of Being.*[15]

This 'stepping back' is, simultaneously, an overcoming of *ontotheology.* "Ontotheology" is the metaphysical inquiry into the highest or most excellent being as the source or ground of all other beings. Theology calls this source, 'God'. When theology employs metaphysics to understand God, it inscribes God (*causa sui*, prime mover) within the horizon of beings. For Heidegger, this dangerous conflation of philosophy and theology results in the forgetfulness of what he calls, "ontological difference". God is reduced to "the status of a superbeing pitched on the same plane as creation."[16]

A such, Hiedegger's critique works on a negation, a denial: Being *is not* God. This involves a *double* negation. 'Stepping back' from metaphysics negates philosophical thinking about 'God' in terms of ontology; at the same time, it negates theological thought about God as the *causa sui*, the 'first cause', the 'unmoved mover' of metaphysics. So "overcoming ontotheology" involves a two-fold negation. Being – the 'god' of philosophy – *is not* the God of theology. Therefore, Heidegger writes:

> …...[T]he cause as *causa sui*. This is the right name for the god of philosophy. Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god. The god-less thinking which must abandon the god of philosophy, god as *causa sui*, is thus perhaps closer to the divine God. Here this means only: god-less thinking is more open to

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15 Cited in Macquarrie, 'Being and Giving', p. 161.

16 Rupertt Shortt, *God's Advocates: Christian Thinkers in Conversation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), p. xii.   Also, Macquarrie, 'Being and Giving', pp. 156–157.

Him than onto-theo-logic would like to admit.[17]

Heidegger insists theology approach the divine with "god-less thinking" – that is, a thinking of God not represented by any concepts conceived by philosophy. Philosophy can conceive of a principle of source of being, but this would not be the God of theology. Being is not a 'God' one can pray to.

Philosophy is otherwise than theology. In *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1953), Heidegger pushes this distinction further. He remarks on Leibniz's question, "why are there essents rather than *nothing*?"[18] 'Nothing' contrasts with essents or being. Whatever is, is *being*; 'Nothing' is *other* than being. So just as the ground of the tree is *other* than the tree, so the source of thinking must be other than metaphysics, philosophy, and the sciences – all are preoccupied with being. Therefore, Heidegger insists that thinking of the Nothing must lead to the source of thinking the *ground* of being.[19] It is 'beyond' being, a nonbeing (non-thing).[20] Here, Heidegger resembles Meister Eckhart (*c*. 1260–*c*.1328), for whom God "cannot be hypostasized and set over against the world as a transcendent being."[21] Likewise, Heidegger strives for a 'being-less' thinking in philosophy, which may be not so different from the 'God-less' thinking that Heidegger prescribes for theology.

Nevertheless, in thinking Being, Heidegger acknowledges the intimate relationship between theology and philosophy. Theology is an ontic science (like mathematics); it arises from the same source of thinking as philosophy.[22] As such, theology and philosophy share the same roots. So to arrive at the source of thinking *itself* would be to overcoming *both* philosophy and theology. The same passion for the source of thinking flows through both, which implies that theology is traceable in

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17 Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. by J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969), p. 72.

18 Italics mine. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans R. Manheim (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1969; repr Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1961), p. 2.

19 "...[H]ere we have to do with a reality more real than any of the things that are..." Cited in Macquarrie, 'Being and Giving', p. 161.

20 Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding The*ology, 193.

21 Macquarrie, 'Being and Giving', p. 163.

22 Heidegger, 'Phenomenology and Theology' in *The Religious*, ed. J. Caputo (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002), p.p. 49–66.

philosophical discourse, and *vice versa*.   Indeed, as Wolfhart Pannenberg suggests, the philosophical desire for God provided the impetus for Christianity's eventual success in the Gentile world:

> Such an appeal to the philosophical doctrine of God must not be interpreted only in an external sense as an accommodation to the spiritual climate of Hellenism. ... The appeal to the philosophers' teaching concerning the one God was the condition for the emergence of a Gentile church at all. ...[T]he connection between Christian faith and Hellenistic thought in general – and the connection between the God of the Bible and the God of the philosophers in particular – does not represent a foreign infiltration into the original Christian message, but rather belongs to its very foundations.[23]

In other words, philosophy gave expression to theology.   However, philosophy also initiated a *return inquiry* [*Rückfrage*] against the God and gods of myth, religion and poetry.[24]   Philosophers demythologized religion, replacing it with the task of thinking God, and essentially distinguishing theology from philosophy – which Heidegger does so well.   In the absence of such a distinction, the question about whether or not philosophy can properly think or speak of God apart from theology gains no credence.[25]   Indeed, Heidegger not only works out this distinction but evaluates theology as being inferior to philosophy.   In *Being and Time*, he says:

> *Theology* is searching for a more original interpretation of human being's being toward God, prescribed by the meaning of faith and remaining within it.   Theology is slowly beginning to understand again Luther's insight that its system of dogma rests on a 'foundation' that does not stem from a questioning in which faith is primary and whose conceptual apparatus is not only insufficient for the range of problems in theology but rather covers them up and distorts them.[26]

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23 Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, trans. by Phillip Clayton (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 11–12.   Likewise, John Macquarrie understands ontology to be a foundation or presupposition of theology, not external to theological inquiry.   Without metaphysics, theology would not have the expression it needs to objectivize God in concepts and language. John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology: A Comparison of Heidegger and Bultmann* (London: SCM Press, 1955; repr Middlesex: Pelican Books Ltd, 1973), pp. 6–9.

24 Pannenberg, *Metaphysics*, p. 13.

25 *Ibid*, p. 16.   For Pannenberg's own critique of Heidegger's stance on philosophy's right to speak about God, see pp. 8–7.

26 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Stambaugh, rev. ed. (Albany: SUNY, 2010), p. 9*;* cited in Macquarrie, *Existentialist Theology*, pp. 7–8.

According to Heidegger, theology should confine itself to religion, the task of which is not thinking.   For its part, philosophy must not indulge in theology.[27]   There should be no confusion: "A 'Christian Philosophy' is a round square and a misunderstanding."[28]   Ontotheology is a misconception about theology and philosophy sharing the same path of inquiry.   Heidegger insists they are not and overcoming metaphysics and ontotheology means overcoming this misunderstanding, namely, philosophical theology as workable project.

1.3. Athens and Jerusalem Again

Derrida and Marion acknowledge themselves as *philosophers*, not theologians.[29] However, regarding Marion's works, criticisms have been raised about the religious influences on his philosophy.[30]   Certainly, Marion's criticism of Derrida shows phenomenological and theological inclinations, particularly in his use of theological sources that includes patristic sources.   As will be seen in later, his conception of phenomenology makes room for theology, for the possibility of God's presence *as* phenomena.

Derrida's "deconstruction" is a *return inquiry*.[31]   It questions traditions and

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27 Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 6.   "For the original Christian faith, philosophy is foolishness."

28 *Ibid*, p. 6.

29 This is more true of Derrida than Marion, whose work is regarded more as a 'theological' form of phenomenological-hermeneutics.   Cf. V. E. Taylor, 'A Conversation With Jean-Luc Marion', *Journal for Cultural & Religious Theory* 7:2 (Spring 2006), pp. 1–2.   Also, "God and the Gift: A Continental Perspective," in *God's Advocates*, p. 150.   And, Tamsin Jones, *A Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion: Apparent Darkness* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), pp. 15ff.

30 See *Being Given: Toward A Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. by J. L. Kosky (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 234–24, where Marion posits Jesus Christ as "the sole example and paradigm" of the *possibility* of Revelation.   Shane Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess: Jean-Luc Marion, Saturated Phenomenon, and Hermeneutics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), p. 178.   Against his critics (e.g. Dominique Janicaud), Marion insists he is merely arguing for the possibility of religious phenomena *contra* those who would *a priori* preclude it as a phenomenological possibility.   See Marion, *Being Given*, pp. 4–5, and p. 236.

31 Derrida owes this aspect of his thought to Edmund Husserl's notion of *rückfrage*.   See Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl:The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), pp. 107ff.

structures of thinking, writing and speech that claim absolute closure of meaning – that is, the ability to fully re-present the object of thought in its own particular discourse.[32] As such, deconstruction inquires into the *difference* between thought and what thought thinks, between speech and what speech refers to. It suggests *deference* between them, that what is thought and spoken of is never present to the thinker or the speaker. Derrida calls this *différance*. So, in theology, 'God' never coincides with discourse that takes place about God – not even in the most negative or mystical theological discourse. As Derrida explains, all discourse is already "late": All speech and thought are conditioned by a more primal and originary *presence*, but a presence that never appears in the appearing of discourse. Any *return inquiry* performed in order to re-present the originary source of any discourse is already late; it can only study its *trace*.[33] Theological discourse is *impossible*. However, for Derrida, it continues to name the object of its prayers and praises; negative and mystical theology are no exceptions. They attempt to bring God into the horizon of being (*presence*) by naming God, to inscribe God in the horizon of experience. For Derrida, as long as theology continues to be a way of speaking about God, is can never be free of ontotheology,

Marion takes issue with Derrida's *return inquiry* of theology. Theology – and, mystical theology, in particular, is never preoccupied with inscribing God in the horizon of experience. Marion recognizes that this would be ontotheology. But Marion acknowledges another threat to theology, namely, deconstruction. Indeed, Marion is uncomfortable with theology falling under the scrutiny of deconstruction, which seems to dictate what theology should be in view of an impossible God – a God who is never presence. For Marion, on the contrary, God is always a *possible* phenomenon, a

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32 See Derrida, 'Letter to a Japanese Friend', in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume II*, ed. by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. 1–6. Derrida explains that deconstruction is not a concept, method, or critical theory. It is both "nothing" and "not everything". Deconstruction is "a discourse or rather a writing that can make up for the incapacity of the word to be equal to a 'thought.'" 'Letter', p. 5. In other words, it is the thinking of the *difference* that underlies the identity of thought to writing. Deconstructing theology would mean questioning the identity between *thinking* God and writing (or speaking) about God.

33 Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, pp. 107–8; also, Marian Hobson, *Jacques Derrida: Opening Lines* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 180: "a *return inquiry* is asked on the basis of a first posting." And, especially, Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's* Origin of Geometry*: An Introduction*, trans. by John P. Leavey, Jr.. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 50: "Like *Ruckfrage*, return inquiry is asked on the basis of a first posting. From a received and already readable document, the possibility is offered me of asking again, and in return, about the primordial and final intention of what has been given me by tradition."

possible presence.   He makes this clear in his saturated phenomenon, which is discussed below.   Marion thinks that philosophy and deconstruction, in particular, has usurped the role of theology and religion in thinking about God.[34]   This is more than a polemical charge.   Marion is arguing for theology's right to think about God and, moreover, that philosophy and deconstruction refrain from preventing theology doing so.   So, while Marion argues that deconstruction can assist theology is purifying thought and speech about God, it should not dictate what is possible or impossible for theology, which has complete autonomy when it speaks about God.   In his refusal to bow theology to philosophy, Marion hopes to liberate theology from ontotheology.

In this regard, although Derrida and Marion follow closely Heidegger's project of overcoming ontotheology, even if both express this overcoming very differently. Derrida stands further from Heidegger's distinction of philosophy and theology. Marion is much closer.   Yet, because both are greatly indebted to Heidegger, Marion's thinking remains close to Derrida.[35]   Derrida and Marion achieve this overcoming of metaphysics and presence in different ways.   Presently, it is necessary to provide a background to Derrida's method of *deconstruction vis-vis* Marion's phenomenological hermeneutics.   This is illustrated through a series of interviews between Richard Kearney, Derrida and Marion.

1.4. Phenomenological Hermeneutics and Deconstruction

In 2001, Kearney published, *The God Who May Be*, which addresses philosophy's 'turn-to-religion'.[36]   Especially after 9/11, philosophers and theologians

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34 On Marion's affinity with Heidegger's view that philosophy and theology do not mix, see his *God Without Being*, p. xxi.   See also Long, *Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion*, p. 448. Marion calls "God according to onto-theology" the "first idolatry" which, when deconstructed, unmasks a "second idolatry", "God according to Being" – in reference to Heidegger's thinking of the *ground* of being as also susceptible to the charge of idolatry.

35 Marion himself acknowledges his affinity with Derrida.   See Marion's preface to the English translation of *God Without Being*, p.xxi; Long, *Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion*, p.446.

36 Richard Kearney and J. P. Manoussakis, 'Thinking at the Limits: Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion in Dialogue with Richard Kearney', *Philosophy Today 48.1* (Spring 2004), p. 3.   This interview followed the publication of Kearney's, *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), which exemplifies philosophy's turn to religion *via* hermeneutics as an overcoming of ontotheology.   Another excellent analysis of this turn-to-religion in philosophy is Hent de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* ((Baltimore: The

experienced a deeper or more serious *hermeneutical* dimension in thinking about religion.   Subsequently, between 2001 and 2003, Kearney interviewed Derrida and Marion.   Kearney's interview with Derrida quickly establishes the tension between 'hermeneutics' and 'deconstruction'; the interview with Marion reveals a difference between Kearney's hermeneutics and Marion's phenomenology.[37]

Hermeneutics involves interpretation about the purpose or meaning of human existence.[38]   It strives to identify or locate a 'teleology', a ground or foundation for life, a 'purpose' that resolves the indeterminateness and paradox that existence offers.   Such *telos* is determinate, fixed and identifiable as the *reason* or *principle* that guides all events, relationships, and identities.   However, Derrida sees teleological thinking as *conditional*.   Any rigorous relation with the *other* takes place only in absence of any anticipation of purpose or goals, implying the absence of any interpretation of a transcendental *telos*.   Derrida acknowledges that, although he sympathizes with Kearney's hermeneutics, he cannot follow – in particular, Kearney's hermeneutics of the resurrection, which is Kearney's way of overcoming ontotheology, as well as overcoming deconstruction's *khōra*.[39]   For Derrida, hermeneutics problematizes *faith*; faith is sacrificed for certainty and 'determined' hope.   Identifying the resurrection as the horizon of hope is to *know*.   It is no longer faith.   Faith is *not* hermeneutical, lest it becomes knowledge.   Therefore, Derrida acknowledges: *"That's why sometimes, you call me an atheist..."*[40]

Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

37   Kearney and Manoussakis, 'Thinking At the Limits', p. 3; Kearney, 'Foreword', in *Traversing the Imaginary*, p. ix, where Derrida thinks Kearney is too 'hermeneutic'.   Kearney explains that his interview/dialogue (New York, 16 October 2001) with Derrida took place just weeks after 9/11.   It was their last meeting together before Derrida passed away in 2004.   Kearney, 'Foreword', in *Traversing the Imaginary: Richard Kearney and the Postmodern Challenge*, ed. by P. Gratton and J. P. Manoussakis (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), xii.   The interview, which Kearney sees as "a postscript to our twenty years of shared intellectual traversals," is republished in *Traversing the Imaginary*, pp. 18–28.

38   Flew, Antony, *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd edn (New York: Gramercy Books, 1999), p. 146.

39   'Thinking at the Limits', p. 10.   For Kearney's understanding of the possibility of "possibilizing God" – and his criticism of Derrdia's deconstruction as a preference for "ghosts to gods", see *The God Who May Be*, pp. 80–100, especially pp. 93–99.   In the same way, Derrida is unable to reconcile with Marion's liturgical 'hermeneutics' of baptism in Marion's interpretation of negative (mystical) theology.

40   Italics mine.   'Thinking at the Limits', p. 10.   Kearney corrects Derrida: "...Someone who rightly passes for an atheist..."   For Derrida's own account of the relationship between faith and knowledge, see his 'Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone', trans. by

1.4.1. *Khōra*[41]

Kearney asks: What, then, makes faith possible? For Derrida, faith is *indeterminate*, uncertain and always filled with a kind of *absence* or 'spacing' that reminds one of the *trace* of something other than what is present. He calls this *khōra*, which is borrowed from Plato's *Timaeus*. It is the "pre-philosophical, pre-originary non-locatable non-space that existed without existing before the cosmos."[42] It is that which is *nameless* and absent but, nevertheless, conditions the possibility of everything – even the prayer.[43] More interestingly, Derrida thinks that *khōra* conditions the possibility of 'God', Other, spacing, *difference*. But *khōra* is not God, Other, or spacing; it is the "impossible" that conditions all things, including faith.[44] What faith interprets as 'God', we pray to; and what in philosophy is conceived as the Other, we respond to. However, *khōra* is not something we can pray or respond to; it is not an experience.[45] In saying this, Derrida is going beyond metaphysics 'God' as *causa sui*. *Khōra* is not.

1.4.2. Phenomenological Hermeneutics

Kearney's interview with Marion is more extensive. Both share a similar approach: phenomenology.[46] However, unlike Kearney, Marion is "slower" to apply hermeneutics to what phenomenology is able to describe.[47] This is due to Marion's 'Saturated Phenomenon', which prevents hastiness in interpretation. The saturated phenomenon is a *pure event* that has no horizon or context and *exceeds* the judging gaze

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S. Weber, in Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. by Gil Anidjar (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 42–101.

41 See below, pp. 36ff.

42 Lucy, A Derrida Dictionary, p. 68.

43 'Thinking At the limits', p. 11.

44 *Ibid*, p. 3. The tension between Marion's notion of the *possible* and Derrida's notion of the *impossible* is discussed below.

45 *Ibid*, p. 11.

46 The interview with Marion comprised of three instalments – two with Kearney, one with Manoussakis.

47 *Ibid*, p. 12.

of the knower or agent; it escapes or exceeds interpretation.   So, for Marion, phenomenology is prior to hermeneutics, which does not imply the absence of hermeneutics.[48]

Marion explains the Saturated Phenomenon in terms of a binary: Intuition (surplus) over concept or intention (deficit).   Phenomenon exceeds what concepts or intentions can grasp.   Such excess calls for more concepts and, therefore, the need for hermeneutics.   Saturated Phenomenon necessitates hermeneutics, which is also necessarily an *endless* hermeneutics.   Following Paul Ricoeur, Marion believes endless hermeneutics implies there can never be a final interpretation.[49]   An endless hermeneutics is what the saturated phenomenon makes possible.

Here, Kearney presses Marion with a question: "Can we have a hermeneutics of God *qua* saturated phenomenon?"   In other words, can God still be interpreted, known, even when revealed as a saturated phenomenon?   For Marion earlier remarked that, the saturated phenomenon is not directly related to Christian revelation; it is not a revelatory event in the theological sense.[50]   However, Kearney observes that Marion thinks otherwise when, for instance, Marion proposes a 'theology of absence'; speaks of a "eucharistic hermeneutics"; and, states that the bishop is the only true theologian.[51] For Marion, these are *hermeneutics* of the Saturated Phenomenon, where the "delay to [of] interpretation" caused by the Saturated Phenomenon delegates the eucharist, bishop (theologian), and community, the task of performing a "eucharistic hermenutics" (that is, the liturgy).   Marion's Saturated Phenomenon translates into "*theo*logical" hermeneutics.[52]   This is most explicit when Marion acknowledge Revelation to be the

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48 *Ibid*, p. 12.   Kearney states his disagreement with Marion at the outset: "There is no pure phenomenon as such [since what appears] always already involves an interpretation of some kind." In light of these observations, Kearney poses this question to Marion: How do we interpret or judge the saturated phenomenon without betraying it?   As will be seen in the later part of the present essay, Derrida poses the same challenge to Marion.

49 *Ibid*, p. 13. There is never "at any moment an adequate, final concept [or interpretation]."

50 *Ibid*, p. 12.

51 *Ibid*, p. 13:   "[T]hose that do not participate in the praxis of the eucharistic phenomenon seem to be excluded not only from its experience but also from its interpretation [hermeneutics]."   For Marion's association of the Saturated Phenomenon, absence of hermeneutics, eucharistic community, the bishops' status as theologian, see Marion, *God Without Being*, pp. 139–158, especially pp. 156–158.

52 See also Long, *Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion*, p. 452:   For Marion, "[o]nly a *Eucharistic hermeneutics* allows the Gospel message to pass through to its referent, and for Marion,

saturated phenomenon *par excellence*.[53]

What Marion highlights through his "eucharistic hermeneutics" is the possibility of a phenomenology of revelation not confined or reduced to 'Christian revelation'. However, revelation remains *beyond* reason, philosophy, metaphysics.[54]   It is *theological*.   Reason is incapable of defining what revelation is, or what is "natural" and what is "revealed".[55]   No one decides *a priori* if revelation is or is not a phenomenological possibility.   It is always open to phenomenology; it is always an endless hermeneutics.   Therefore, Marion explicates in *God Without Being* the gathering of the Eucharistic community in the presence of the bishop, the theologian *par excellence*.[56]   This sort of hermeneutics and, therefore, *knowledge* of revelation is possibility because of the saturated phenomenon.   Moreover,   this   demonstrates Marion's positive affirmation of Christian theology *as* hermeneutics grounded on *authority*.[57]   On this basis, Marion argues how theology was supposed to be, alluding to the long-standing issue between theology and metaphysics.[58]   Ontotheology has distracted *theo*logy from how it *should* be done, namely, as a communal event.[59] Marion has thereby stated what theological discourse *should be*.

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this means that ultimately only the Bishop can speak the Word. The postmodern beginning ends in appeal to the authority of the church.   Marion comes close it seems to giving us a kind of Roman Catholic version of Barthianism."   (Italics mine.)   In *God Without Being*, Marion writes theological as "*theo*logical" as opposed to "theo*logical*" *to* emphasize the phenomenon of divine revelation over hermeneutics, which can lapse into ontotheology.

53   'Thinking At the Limits', p. 14.

54   *Ibid*, p. 15.

55   *Ibid*, p. 15.   "[T]o assume that you must already know what revelation is or does is the same as saying that the hermeneutics of revelation is now over, that revelation has nothing to reveal any more, and thus, by definition, that there is no revelation. If we speak of revelation, then, we have to accept that hermeneutics is still going on, that revelation is open since history is still in the making. There is no contradiction in saying that everything was fully revealed and achieved but that, even today, we don't know, we can't know, how far it reaches."

56   *Ibid*, p. 16.   In his defence, Marion replies that his reference was not to present-day differences between, say, bishops and theologians. Rather, he was referring to a tradition where bishops (e.g. Gregory, Basil, and so on) were also great theologians who formed the hermeneutic tradition of the Church.   Kearney, however, is quick to remind Marion that such bishop theologians were also responsible for the burning of books deemed heretical or placed on the index (e.g. Meister Eckhart, John Scotus Eriugena, and even Aquinas). Many of these were not bishops.

57   Marion's works exhibit a similar inclination *via* his extensive references to the Church Fathers and doctors, particularly Pseudo-Dionysius and Gregory of Nyssa.   See Jones, *A Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 13–43.

58   'Thinking at the Limits, p. 15.

59   *Ibid*, p. 16.

1.4.3. The Possible

Theological discourse *should* be about the possibility of God, God as *the possible*. This stands out in John Manoussakis' interview with Marion in 2002, where Marion expresses emphatic agreement with the title of Kearney's book, *The God Who May Be.*[60]

To illustrate his agreement, Marion translates the 'name' of God in Exodus 3.14: A God who *may be*, not a God who *is – possibility* over and against *actuality.* God is a messianic "possibility", one "who comes", Christ, "the name of the God who may be."[61] With Heidegger, Marion thinks that, "possibility stands higher than actuality."[62] Nevertheless, the God who may be (the *possible*) is a *transcendent* one. This *possible* God is *not* part of objective reality.[63] God as possibility stands beyond everything that *is*, everything *actual.* And since experience is the experience of *actuality*, we "need to direct back to God [possibility] every experience [actuality, being] of the world." Actuality of experience must now be understood in the horizon of possibility. In this way, Marion and Kearney hope to safeguard – to be "fair" – to God by preserving the name of God in some hermeneutical circle, by saying what the name *must* or *should* be, that is, *possibility*.

For Derrida, however, since he denies the possibility of hermeneutics as a ground for faith, there is no safe way to be "fair" to God. To insist on this, one must first know what the possibility of God consists of. Yet, this is impossible for Derrida, since to know the *tout autre* or wholly other is to annul the other as *other.* God as *tout autre* is impossible. Derrida's notion of "impossibility" will be brought out clearer in the

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60 'Thinking at the Limits', p. 17. Kearney's book is, for Marion, is a new way of thinking of God "that provokes us to think of the phenomenon of God in new ways."

61 *Ibid*, p. 17.

62 *Ibid*, p. 17. Kearney's 1984 thesis, *La Poétique du Possible*, was under Paul Ricoeur. Marion reads *The God Who May Be* as a fuller realization of Kearney's first intuition on the significance of possibility. For Heidegger's remark on possibility, see *Being and Time*, p. 36: Phenomenology "does not consist in its *actuality* as a philosophical 'movement'. Higher than actuality stands *possibility*. We can understand phenomenology soley by seizing upon it as a possibility."

63 *Ibid*, p. 17. That is, "[not] part of our language, [not] part of our experience of the world."

discussion below.

1.5. Mystical Theology and the Saturated Phenomenon: Excess and Desire

Marion insists that the Saturated Phenomenon that leads to a eucharistic or liturgical hermeneutics is not engaged with knowing.   Rather, it responds to a *desire* in light of a phenomenon that exceeds knowledge – a desire for the *other* than knowledge, being.   "Mystical theology" builds on this desire for the *other*, which is to be distinguished from negative or apophatic theology.

Negative theology can be traced from Pseudo-Dionysius and the Church Fathers, notably Gregory of Nyssa. [64]   However, it is also discourse stemming from Plato through the Neoplatonists and Plotinus.[65]   However, in Pseudo-Dionysius and the Church Fathers, negative theology is succeeded by a higher form of discourse that exceeds affirmation and negation.   According to Marion, mystical theology is the culmination of a three-staged discourse: the *kataphatic* (affirmation), the *apophatic* (negation), and the hyperbolic.[66]   While *negative* theology is negation, mystical theology engages with the saturated phenomenon, an excess that opens an "endless hermeneutic" repeatable for "other *logia*".   This has no absolute or final hermeneutic. So, while mystical theology is a path to knowledge, it *goes beyond* knowledge and presence.   It is a hyper-movement beyond affirmation and negation

Since mystical theology moves beyond affirmation and negation, it transcends reason, philosophy and metaphysics.   The latter are unable to adequately respond to

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64 See his *Mystical theology*, ch. 3.   All references to the works of Pseudo-Dionysius is taken from *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987). 'CH' – *The Celestial Hierarchy*; 'EH' – *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*; 'MT' – *The Mystical Theology*; 'DN' – *Divine Names*. Marion mentions his preference to leave the omit 'pseudo-' when referring to Dionysius for he is convinced that the author's choice of name validly refers to the historical author as representative of the authentic tradition established in the name of Dionysius the Areopagite.   Both are in effect interchangeable and, therefore, the prefix is irrelevant.   IN, p. 34n13 / INE, p. 134n12. Denys Turner also refers to the author as just 'Denys', omitting 'pseudo-', *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; repr 1999), p. 12n1.

65 For the development of apophatic and negative theology in Christianity, see Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*, pp. 19–49 and pp. 137–185.

66 'Thinking at the Limits, p. 19.   Marion, 'The Unspoken: Apophasis and the Discourse of Love', trans. by A. Conty, *Proceedings of the ACPA*, 76 (2003), p. 42.

the saturated phenomenon. They fail to clarify what Marion calls the *ground* or "backstage" of knowledge and metaphysics, namely, *desire* – not the desire of psychoanalysis, an unconscious drive, but "eschatological desire" as opposed to "ontological desire".[67] Ontological desire "strives for possession, fusion, atonement, and appropriation", while *eschatological* desire arises from a "superabundance, excess, and surplus."[68] Eschatological desire responds to the saturated phenomenon.

Since Derrida identifies God (*tout autre*) with the "impossible", he identifies with another type of desire, namely, the "prophetic", messianic or "apocalyptic" desire. Apocalyptic desire desire is a desire for what is absent, lacking. Caputo has identified this as "derriderian destinnerance", a wandering and desert-like desire.[69] On the other hand, Marion's eschatological desire is guided by a hermeneutic, logic, *telos*.[70] If mystical theology is rooted in "eschatological" desire, as Marion claims, then it is guided by a logos and *telos* – in other words, it is already a discourse and experience inscribed in the horizon of presence, being. It is a "theo*logic*" in as much as it is a "*theo*logic".[71]

Derrida and Marion desire to overcome ontotheology – Derrida through deconstruction, and Marion through the saturated phenomenon and mystical theology. This introduction indicates several areas where Derrida and Marion diverge: First, on the right of deconstruction to determine theological discourse; second, whether theology

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67 'Thinking at the Limits', p. 21. Kearney also calls ontological desire, "onto-theological desire": "[T]he destruction of onto-theological desire might be more properly conceived as a spur to transcend our captivation by all that is (*ta onta*) for another kind of desire – a desire for something that eye has never seen nor ear heard. That is to say, *eschatological* desire." Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, pp. 61–62.

68 'Thinking at the Limits', p. 21.

69 See John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 96 and 351n31. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), chs. 5 and 6 (pp. 120–186).

70 Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, p. 96. A desire guided by a purpose "toward which each moment strains in a rational process of ongoing development; the *logos* of the *eschaton*, of the extreme end point..."

71 In *God Without Being*, Marion distinguishes "*theo*logy" from "theo*logy*" – the former referring to discourse in light of Revelation, the Word; the latter referring to discourse about God in light of metaphysics. See *God Without Being*, pp. 148ff. Robyn Horner likewise applies the term, "*theo*-logic(al)" throughout his *Jean-Luc Marion: A* Theo-*Logic Introduction* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2005), to place emphasis on Marion's pragmatic understanding of theology in contrast to theo-*logy* or ontotheology.

is a discourse of presence; third, if the saturated phenomenon inscribes God in the horizon of being; fourth, if God should be phenomenally known as a possibility or impossibility; and, fifth, whether mystical theology is a hyper-discourse that overcomes ontotheology. The following three sections will explore these five aspects by respectively analyzing three sources, namely, (i) Derrida's 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials", (ii) Marion's 'In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of 'Negative Theology'', and (iii) their discussion on the Gift.

2.   'How to Avoid Speaking':   Hyper-Theology and Denegation:[72]

This section analyzes Derrida's lecture, 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials'. Derrida explains that negative and mystical theology are unable to truly escape ontotheology due to the hyper-affirmative discourse that mystical theology enforces. Through a complex discussion on Plato, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Heidegger, Derrida illustrates how theology as discourse always fluctuates between the desire to name God and to be silent about the name.   Derrida's conclusion is that theology is a supplement to a pure *desire* for the other, who is always an absence or lack that discourse tries to fill to no avail.   This pure desire for the wholly other is *faith*.

2.1. Hermeneutics of Suspicion[73]

A hermeneutics of suspicion surrounds negative theology.[74]   But Derrida is most interested in the critique that sees negative theology as a *hyperbolic* discourse. When God-talk pushes language beyond all affirmation and negation, it ultimately affirms a hyper-reality or divinity – an eminent or superabundant source of all things, including God-talk itself.[75]   Negative theology is *hyper-theology*.[76]   However, a hyper-theology no longer remains negative discourse becomes affirmative or kataphatic.[77]   No doubt it denies that God is commensurable with everything: God *is*

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72 A very good discussion on Derrida and Marion on negative theology is John D. Caputo, 'Apostles of the Impossible: God and the Gift in Derrida and Marion', in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, pp. 185–222.

73 This is a phrase borrowed from Marion.   See IN, p. 25 / INE, p. 136.   He insists that "[t]he hermeneutics of suspicion always runs the risk of arbitrariness and therefore should intervene only in the last instance, when no other interpretation appears possible any longer."

74 HAS, pp. 145–146.

75 *Ibid*, p. 146.   Carabine notes that, "the prefix '*hyper*', which is indicated in every negation, is ultimately a linguistic device which provides the key to the central dialectic in Dionysian thought: it indicates something positive, but it is an affirmation which can no longer be thought."   Carabine, *The Unknown God*, p. 293; see also p. 312.   Derrida is only too aware of this paradox: Even as a *linguistic device*, the affirmation that "can no longer be thought" is, nonetheless, still an affirmation (albeit performative) and, therefore, ontological.

76 *Ibid*, p. 145.   In negative theology, "[e]very negative sentence would already be haunted by God or by the name of God... it would produce divinity...in order to say that divinity is not produced but productive" – that is, divinity "is the origin of this work of the negative [so that] God would be the truth of all negativity."

77 HAS, p. 145.

not creation. However, this incommensurability leads to creation being understood as effects of God's productivity. God is *without* existence but God is also present as *cause*. God is "the *without cause*".[78] Inadvertently, negative theology results in an ontological argument for God's existence. This, Derrida says, is "the first mark of respect for a divine cause that does not even need to 'be'".[79] God's existence is affirmed in His effects, proving that negative theology is hyper-theology. As cause *without* a cause, God is posited as *hyperessence*. Yet, as hyperessential cause, God is unknowable. Hence, the aporia of a negation that is also an affirmation.

2.1.1. *Différance* vs Hyperessence

This leads Derrida to recall a remark about his own work on "deconstruction", which speaks of *différance* as that which conditions everything and, yet, is itself conditioned by nothing. So, when Derrida's essay, 'Différance' (1986),[80] was first presented, someone in the audience commented that *différance* is negative theology. Derrida responded, "It is and it is not... It is above all not..."[81] While *différance* resembles negative theology, it "derives from no category of being, whether present or absent".[82] It is not a word or concept, nor is it a discourse of any sort, not even a theology.[83] Unlike *différance*, negative theology establishes the "superessentiality" of God. On the other hand, *différance* is not.

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78 *Ibid* S, p. 146.

79 *Ibid*, p. 146. Hence, "one thus arrives at a kind of proof of God, not a proof of the *existence* of God, but a proof of God *by his effects*, or more precisely a proof of what one calls God, by the name of God, by effects without cause, by the *without cause*."

80 Originally delivered as a lecture to the Socíéte Française de Philosophie in 1968. English translation published in Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 1–27.

81 David Wood, and Robert Bernasconi, eds., *Derrida and Différance* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p. 84. Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, p. 2. For the original discussion following Derrida's presentation of "Différance", see Wood and Bernasconi, eds., *Derrida and Différance*, pp. 83–95.

82 Derrida, *Margins*, p. 6.

83 HAS, p. 305n2. "...not even in the order of the most negative of negative theologies, which *as one knows* are always concerned with disengaging a superessentiality beyond the finite categories of essence and existence, that is, of presence, and always hastening to recall that God is refused the predicate of existence, *only in order to acknowledge his superior, inconceivable, and ineffable mode of being*."

Marion objects to Derrida's interpretation of negative theology, claiming that it never predicates anything of God in light of being.[84] Apparently, Marion thinks negative theology is apophatic through and through.   However, Derrida observes that Marion, through his own critique of negative theology, tries to distance himself from it. In Marion's interpretation, "[it seems necessary] to distinguish the bottom (the thinking of the gift, of paternity, of distance, of praise, etc.) from this concern with superessentiality."[85]   Marion's own "deconstruction" of negative theology in terms of the gift, distance, praise, and so on, reflects a desire to negate negative theology. Beyond negative theology, Marion posits *mystical theology* as the more apophatic discourse about God.   However, Derrida argues that mystical theology is a hyper-theology as well.   It does not escape ontology either.

Différance is not negative theology; it is not anything. [86]   Since *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida's 'deconstruction' of logocentric thinking questions the absolute unity and privilege given to the word, noun, or name.[87]   *Différance* – interchangeable with "deconstruction"[88] – questions closed systems of language, meaning, and naming.   It is not an analysis, a critique, method, event – not even a word or concept.   Rather, it "marks" the trace in language of the wholly other (*tout autre*) – other than being, presence, essence.   *Différance* is negative theology's other.   It does not posit a hyperessential reality, unlike Pseudo-Dionysius' "*hyperousios*" that designates "God as being beyond being or also God as without being."[89]   The same language is also at work in Meister Eckhart (*c*.1260–*c*.1327), who does not deny being to God but moreover, *elevates* it in him.[90]   For mystical theology, God is hyperessence

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84 "What is meant by 'one knows' here? ...[N]egative theology, *at bottom*, does not aim to reestablish a 'superessentiality', since it aims neither at predication nor at Being; how, *a fortiori*, could it be a question of existence and essence in Dionysius, when he still speaks a Greek original enough not to have either the idea or the use of them?"   Derrida's emphasis. *Idol and Distance*, p. 230n41; cited in HAS, p. 305n2.

85 HAS, p. 305n2.

86 As with the term, "deconstruction", to ask *what is it?* or *what is it not*? Betrays a misunderstanding of *différance* (and deconstruction).   'Letter to a Japanese Friend', in *Psyche II*, p. 4.

87 HAS, p. 147.   Deconstruction puts into question structures of thinking that "privileges not only the indestructible unity of the word but also the authority of the noun or the name...."

88 'Letter to a Japanese Friend', in *Psyche II*, pp. 5–6.

89 HAS, p. 147.   See especially p. 306n3.

90 *Ibid*, pp. 147–148.   "[W]hen I have said God is not a being and is above being, I have not thereby denied Him being: rather I have exalted it in Him."   Meister Eckhart, Sermon Sixty-Seven, "*Quasi*

– *without* being, *more than* being.   The 'without' establishes God's eminence above all being.

      Différance goes beyond the 'without'.   It "*does not mean to say anything*", since it alludes to "'something' 'before' the concept, the name, the word" and, therefore, would not be present, 'is' nothing, and not an essence.[91]   If *différance* thinks God, it is as absence *without* the possibility of grasping any essence.   God, the wholly other in theology, is absolutely impossible.   That is another reason why Derrida confesses his "uneasiness" with mystical theology: It is discourse that promises God's presence as *given* to intuition or vision – a promise presence, affirmation, beyond all negation.[92]   Pseudo-Dionysius himself describes this vision as "an intuition in the 'brilliant darkness' [*hyperphoton*]", an "immediacy of presence", which leads "to a union with God".[93]   It is a "union" of 'presence', a grasping of essence beyond thought and words, symbols and figures, where intellect "will turn silent completely, since it will finally be at one with him who is indescribable."[94]   So, unlike *différance*, this 'economy' of the mystical suggests a *telos*, vision, experience of (with) the ineffable.

      Nevertheless, *différance* – because it promises no consummated presence with the wholly other – obliges speech about the unspeakable.   Mystical theology promises a union with God that will result in silence, fulfilment and, therefore, the annulment of desire for the other any longer.   In *différance*, desire for the wholly other remains unfulfilled.   This is why speech becomes a "must", since the *other* leaves its *trace* in language, in the very desire to speak of this *other*.   Even silence bears witness to this trace of the other.   The trace of the other in language obligates speech about the other. The 'early' Wittgenstein once said, "[t]he inexpressible, indeed, exists. It *shows itself*; it is the mystical."[95]   Furthermore, "what we cannot speak of we must pass over in

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Stella Matutina", in *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart,* trans. and ed. by M. O'C. Walshe, revised by B. McGinn (New York: Herder & Herder, 2009), p. 342.

91   *Ibid*, p. 148.

92   *Ibid,* pp. 148-149.

93   *Ibid*, p. 149.   Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Mystical Theology*, ch. 1, 998B–1000A, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, p. 135.

94   HAS, p. 149; cf. p. 153.   *MT* ch. 3, 1033B–C.

95   Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuiness, rev. edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974; repr London and New York: Routledge, 2001),

silence."[96]   Derrida is lured to the phrase, "we must [*il faut*]". For Derrida, Wittgenstein's "injunction of silence" only makes sense in light of a desire – a *promise* – of *having to* speak.   Demanding silence signals a *prior* promise of speech.   Therefore, for Derrida, Wittgenstein's denial of speech is an affirmation of the need to speak: "[I]t is necessary [*il faut*] – not to avoid speaking".[97]   The promise and obligation to speak arises from the trace of the other, who is wholly other, who manifests itself in its absence.   This *other* is no longer a promise but a destination, a place, in mystical theology.

2.1.2. *Trace* and Promise

Trace is important for Derrida, for deconstruction.   It marks "the absence of a presence, an always-already absent present".[98]   It shows the active but hidden presence – a *lack* that makes all thought and speech possible.[99]   Therefore, *trace* is interchangeable with *diff érance*, which is in turn synonymous with the *tout autre* that is wholly other than presence.   The *trace* of the other obliges or *promises* thought and speech about the other.   The *trace* is also the *promise* to discourse.   Put another way, discourse happens *because* the promise conditions its possibility.   When discourse happens, the promise had already preceded it.

Therefore, as Derrida says, when he promised to speak on negative theology, he was already doing so.   Pragmatically speaking, a *promise* to do something is already the act of doing it.[100]   This *prior* condition that commits Derrida to speaking, to making promises, is what Derrida calls the promise *as such*.   Without it, no discourse can take place, including negative theology.   Negative theology itself is discourse preceded by "the open space of the promise", the promise of the other.   It is this

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6.522, p. 89:   "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words.   They *make themselves manifest*.   They are what is mystical."   Cited in HAS, 150.

96 Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 7; cited in HAS, 150.

97 HAS, p. 150–151.

98 Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by G. C. Spivak, rev. edn (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. xvii.

99 Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. xvii.

100 HAS, p. 151.

promise of the other that keeps discourse ongoing. The other has not arrived; the promise is not fulfilled and, so, one *must* speak out of this desire for the other *as* promise. Discourse takes place but *within* the promise, which is never present, never fulfilled.[101] Should the promise as such present itself – that is, *appear* – it would be fulfilled and there would be no more need for discourse.

The promise as such is *impossible*. It is impossible because it can never be fulfilled. Derrida himself can only make *promises* to speak of negative theology. He will never actually succeed doing so, which would imply fulfilling the promise.[102] But such fulfilment leads to abandonment of all discourse since there is no more promise to fuel a desire for thought and speech of the other. Therefore, "it is necessary to be silent and to be silent about what one cannot speak of."[103] In other words, one cannot speak of a promise that has been fulfilled. Discourse continues as long as the promise remains *as such*, namely, the promise. It is already present in every discourse, including negative theology. Since the promise *itself* is never present (fulfilled) in discourse, it "will have always escaped this demand for presence."[104]

2.2. Negative Theology as Discourse

The *promise* of negative theology – negative theology *as* promise, is not the discourse called negative theology. Derrida distinguishes negative theology *as such* from negative theology as a "tradition". However, because this distinction has been overlooked, the tradition of discourse known as negative theology has become a source unto itself. On the contrary, Derrida argues, there are existing discourses called "negative theology" but no one discourse is negative theology *as such* – negative theology *as* promise[105] The moment one speaks or writes *a* negative theology, a "pluralizing of discourse" on negative theology occurs. But the promise of negative

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101 *Ibid*, p. 152. "It is not certain that I will keep my promise today, but nor is it certain that in further delaying its fulfilment, I have not, nevertheless, already kept it." Which is why Derrida says he "will speak of a promise but also within the promise." (HAS, p. 153)

102 *Ibid*, p. 153.

103 *Ibid*, p. 153.

104 *Ibid*, p. 153.

105 HAS, p. 143. Hence, Derrida's question: "Is there *one* negative theology, *the* (only) negative theology?"

theology – negative theology *as such* – never takes place, is never fulfilled, in any one discourse or tradition of negative theology.

This is true even of Pseudo-Dionysius' theology. Derrida agrees with Marion that Pseudo-Dionysius' theology contains no negative theology *as such*. Indeed, when Psuedo-Dionysius mentions the way of negation (apophasis, denial), it is always in the context of affirmation.[106] In mystical theology, negative theology never stands alone but always in the company of positive or kataphatic discourse. This is why negative theology *as such* is impossible in Pseudo-Dionysius. Furthermore, Derrida does not deny that other discourses share a family resemblance with "negative" discourses. Yet, in light of their rhetorical similarities they are mistaken to be negative theology *itself*.[107] One type of "discourse" may be an exception to this criticism, namely, *prayer*.

2.2.1. Prayer and Praise[108]

Prayer is *performative*, always an *addressing* of the *other*, a discourse *to* the other.[109] This "posture" of address precedes discourse itself, even apophatic utterances.[110] Since negative theology is also discourse in the presence of a wholly other, it is rightly preceded by prayer, invocation. For Derrida, prayer – like trace,

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106 *Ibid*, 304n.1. See Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. by T. A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), p. 145n.6. Marion's reference is to Dionysius' *Mystical Theology*, II–III, 1025A-1033A, in Pseudo-Dionysius*, The Complete Works*, trans. by C. Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 37. The term "aphairesis" used by Pseudo-Dionysius means, "clearing aside", which the translaters have rendered as "denial".

107 HAS, p. 144. According to Derrida, some critics therefore charge that, "...for those who have nothing to say or who do not want to know anything, it is always easy to imitate the technique of negative theology." Derrida's own work has been subjected to the same criticism. While repetition of techniques of negative discourse is possible, Derrida would insist that negative theology itself is not subject even to the perfection of rhetorical techniques.

108 "To ask whether God exists...[i]f it is to mean anything at all, it is to wonder about praising and praying; it is to wonder whether there is anything in all that. This is why philosophy cannot answer the question 'Does God exist?' with either an affirmative or a negative reply.... 'There is a God'...is an expression of faith." D. Z. Phillips, *Religion Without Explanation* (Oxford, 1976), p. 181; cited in Davies, *Philosophy of Religion*, 24. Phillips' attitude to philosophical inquiry as conceptual clarification in religion is salutary. It is what Derrida is doing here. See also Phillips' *The Concept of Prayer* (New York: Seabury Press, 1965).

109 "To use a performative expression is not to make a statement but to perform an action." Gertrude Ezorsky, 'Performative Theory of Truth', *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd edn, ed. by Donald M. Borchert, vol. 7 (MI: Thomas Gale, 2006), pp. 195–196.

110 HAS, p. 145.

promise, *différance* – conditions negative theology.

But prayer can be ritualized, inscribed in texts, and repeated mechanically, becoming discourse, becoming traditions.[111] Derrida thinks that prayer *as* discourse does not precede or condition negative theology. Rather, the discourse of prayer is often *conditioned* negative theology itself. Negative theology can lead to a moment of (and respect for) *prayer*, as Derrida points out with Pseudo-Dionysius' and Heidegger's thinking. However, prayer conditioned by negative discourse is still not that which conditions or "marks" the beginning of theology; prayer *as* discourse is not *pure* prayer, prayer *itself*.[112]

As Derrida explains, *pure* prayer precedes discourse, speech, and writing. It is a posturing or orientation toward the other, the addressee of all subsequent discourse. As such, all discourses are supplements to prayer, the address of the other. The wholly other elicits a posturing of address, which is the beginning of prayer *itself*. So, prayer itself is "not a preamble, an accessory mode of access [that is, not a mode of discourse]" but, rather, "[i]t constitutes an essential moment... by addressing itself to the other, to you, albeit the You that is higher than any other."[113] Negative theology, too, is discourse conditioned by prayer *itself*.

Pure prayer is pure addressing of the other as referent. So it is performative and not predicative; it is not discourse.[114] Despite this, prayer can translate into "praise" or "celebration (*hymnein*)" that "qualifies God, *determines* prayer, *determines* the other, the One to whom it addresses itself...invoking the other even *as* the source of prayer."[115] When prayer translates into praise, it is no longer performative but predicative as well. So, for Derrida, pure prayer *is not* praise. This distinction, he

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111 *Ibid*, p. 145. "...prayer, invocation, and apostrophe can also be imitated, and can even lend themselves, as if despite themselves, to repetitive technique." In other words, prayer can become *types* or *kinds* of discourses, and all discourse are affirmative and predicative by nature.

112 *Ibid*, p. 145. "This risk [of prayer being reduced to repetitive technique] is inscribed in the structure of the mark." The "mark" is another of Derrida's phrases that points to différance – here, the difference between the *mark* of writing and what precedes or conditions writing itself.

113 HAS, p. 176.

114 *Ibid*, p. 176.

115 *Ibid*, p. 177.

argues, has suffered confusion in the hands of theologians such as Pseudo-Dionysius, for whom praise (*hymnein*) is *almost* a saying (predicating) of God.[116] Derrida observes that Marion, as well, "gives the impression all too quickly that the passage to praise is the passage to prayer itself".[117] Marion, for his part, argues that Aristotle states that, "prayer is a λόγός, but neither true nor false".[118] Following Aristotle, Marion says that prayer *predicates* but is not *apophantic* – that is, does not affirm or reveal anything. However, Derrida points out that Aristotle himself does not say whether *praise* (*hymnein*) is apophantic or not. The issue here is that Marion, with Pseudo-Dionysius, conflates prayer with *hymnein* (praise), which names and determines what is being praised. While *pure prayer* is not apophantic, *praise* is: "*The performative in itself does not always exclude predication.*"[119] And Marion's references to Pseudo-Dionysius concern *praise* (*hymnein*) and not prayer *per se*. As *hymnein*, Marion's prayer is predicative. Moreover, it is predication of the ontological kind:[120] According to Derrida:

> If prayer, at least according to Dionysius, *tends toward union with God*, praise is not prayer: it is at most its supplement: what is added to it, when the union [with God] remains inaccessible or is lacking, in order to play the role of substitute but also to determine the referent itself, which is also the cause (the Requisite, Marion would say) of the prayer. It can incite to prayer, it can also follow it, but it is not identical with it.[121]

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116 *Ibid*, p. 177; see also p. 309n16. Derrida cites Balthasar: "When it is a question of God and the divine, the word *hymnein* nearly replaces the word 'to say'." Cited from Marion, *Idol and Distance*, 184n68.

117 HAS, 309–310n16. In *Idol and Distance*, Marion writes: "...Denys tends to substitute for the *to say* of predicative language another verb, ὑμνεῖν, to prause. What does this substitution signify? It no doubt indicates the passage from discourse to prayer, for 'prayer is a λόγος but neither true nor false' (Aristotle). But how, in its turn, can prayer constitute a rigorous language that nevertheless remains in distance? What cannot be said must not be silenced. For it is necessary to merit a silence that holds for that very thing about which one must be silent. *Denegation would here remain dishonest, through defect.* It is therefore necessary to pass beyond the categorical alternative, in order to reach another model of discourse. Let us describe it as a discourse of praise." (Italics mine.) *Idol and Distance*, pp. 184–185. Marion's interpretation of the direct "passage" from prayer to praise is Derrida's object of critique here.

118 Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, VII, 17a, 4.

119 Italics mine. HAS, p. 310n16.

120 See *Idol and Distance*, p. 184n60. The relevant citations Marion makes from Dionysius' work are: *DN*, 593c–d; 596 a–c; 637b; 641d; 652a; 681d; 701c; 709b; 713c; 816b–c; 820c; 824a; 868a; 872a, c; 909b; 969a, c; *MT* 1025a. Marion makes special mention of *DN* 816b–c.

121 Italics mine. HAS, p. 310n16.

Dionysius uses *praise* as a "supplement" or "substitute" for *pure prayer* in light of a lack, namely, experience of the divine. In the presence of this lack, Pseudo-Dionysius is obligated to employ predicative discourse, *praise*, in order to *say* and *determine* "the very thing that it cannot show and know, and to which it cannot unite itself even by prayer."[122] Praise is a device that allows the *tout autre* to appear, to be determined. If prayer is praise, then it is a prayer that names. But this means it is no longer prayer *itself*, but discourse.

So Marion, with Psuedo-Dionysius, still stands within the horizon of presence, albeit a *hyper*-presence or eminent being. Marion, however, is convinced otherwise. Prayer *is* praise, to the extent that it "does not aim to bring to light...the superessential essence inasmuch as it is superessential…but much rather to praise the procession that makes essences and that comes to all beings from the [trinitarian] Thearchy, the principle of essences."[123] Prayer *as* praise already determines the principle of essences to be addressed. Marion sees prayer as discourse, a way "to begin speaking in order to determine the addressee of the prayer…a trinitary beyond being, a thearchy as principle of essence."[124] Whereas for Derrida, "*pure prayer* asks only that the other hear the prayer, receive it, be present to it, be the other as such...".[125] It does not name the other to whom one prays, unlike the prayers of Pseudo-Dionysius and Marion that 'name' the other.

Prayer (*eukhē)* is praise (*hymnein*) when it *speaks* or *says* or *names* God in its own way.[126] While *pure* prayer "does not speak *about* but *to*", praise *determines* who or what we are addressing.[127] The conflation of these two structures occurs when no absence or lack separates God from us but urges a union between us and God.[128]

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122 *Ibid*, p. 310n16.

123 Italics mine. *DN* 5:816B, cited in HAS, p. 310–311n16; *Idol and Distance*, p. 184n68.

124 HAS, p. 311n16.

125 *Ibid*, p. 176.

126 *Ibid*, p. 177. Derrida sees the same conflated structure in *all* religious prayers, not just the Christian. But in saying this, Derrida is also acknowledging that: "To refuse this no doubt subtle distinction, inadmissible for Dionysius and perhaps for Christians in general, is to refuse the essential quality of prayer to every invocation that would not be Christian."

127 *Ibid*, p. 177.

128 *Ibid*, pp. 177–178; Dionysius, *DN* 3:680B.

For Derrida, what ultimately conditions all kinds of prayer as *hymnein* is *pure* prayer itself, which does not name.

2.2.2. *The Secret* and Negative Theology

Prayer *itself* is purely an address to the other, without naming this other. The Other remains *other*, a *pure secret* never disclosed to the one who prays.[129] For Derrida, prayer *itself* precedes prayer *as* discourse, never disclosing the secret *itself*, never naming the other to whom prayer *as* praise is addressed. Prayer is the *secret* done *in secret*. As Derrida observes, keeping promises and secrets is something humans do best. They can *promise* not to speak – to keep a secret – while animals cannot.[130] Humans can refrain from manifesting what they are capable of doing so. So the ability to keep a secret presupposes the capacity to reveal it, which makes possible 'secret societies'.[131] These are structured on the *promise* to *keep* a secret and also *share* it – a characteristic some critics have attributed to deconstruction and deconstructionists. Derrida denies this. For him, the secret is impossible; so are secret societies.

Secret societies keep secrets to share them.[132] Sharing a secret indiscriminately would mean fully manifesting what is hidden. However, Derrida notes a paradox in secret societies: What "should be hidden" is already known by those who have the

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129 HAS, pp. 155ff. The *animal* or animality was the theme of his last seminar of lectures, "The Beast and the Sovereign" (2001–2003). See *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1, trans. by G. Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. xii. It was also the theme of of the ten-day Cisery conference, "The Autobiographical Animal", for which Derrida wrote the introduction, *L'animal que donc je suis* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2006). See *The Animal That I Am*, trans. David Wills, ed. by Marie-Luise Mallet (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. ix. For Derrida, the animal or animality is a reference to the 'other' than human, a *trace* in the condition of being human and, therefore, that which conditions "unconditional hospitality". See Leonard Lawlor, 'Jacques Derrida', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring, 2014), online <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/derrida/>, accessed March 22, 2014, § 4, 'Elaboration of the Basic Argumentation: The Worst and Hospitality'. Also, Leonard Lawlor, *This is not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

130 HAS, p. 155. Animals can "neither choose to keep *itself* silent [se*taire*] – nor to keep a secret silent."

131 *Ibid*, p. 157.

132 *Ibid*, pp. 156–157. To share a secret is "a power-to-keep-silent [about] a reserved content, of a place of wealth that had to be withheld from just anyone."

power to share the secret.   So there is no secret *as such*, no *pure* secret, since someone already knows it, shares it, and is capable of keeping silent *about* it – precisely because the secret is already *revealed* to them.   There is no secret.   Since deconstruction acknowledges the impossibility of the secret, there are no secret societies for deconstructionists to belong to.   If any esotericism is to be found, it is found in the mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysisus and Eckhart.[133]

In his *Mystical Theology*, Pseudo-Dionysius explains the secrets of revelation and exhorts Timothy not to make this known to those who are still obsessed with knowledge, or the ignorant and profane.   A *double-separation* occurs: First, separation "from the philosophers or the experts in ontology" and, second, separation "from those who would manipulate predicative language as naive idolaters."[134] Pseudo-Dionysius then shares the secret, "that the cause of all ...is itself *situated beyond* all position, whether negative or affirmative – beyond privation."[135]   Therefore, Derrida interprets Pseudo-Donysius' secret as follows:

> [Dionysius] defines a beyond that exceeds the opposition between affirmation and negation. ...it exceeds *position* (*thesis*) itself, and not merely curtailment, subtraction (*aphairesis*).   At the same time, it exceeds privation. ...[This is a *without* that] marks neither a privation nor a lack nor an absence.   As for the *hyper* of the superessential (*hyperousios*), it has the double and ambiguous value of what is above in a hierarchy, thus both beyond and more.   God (is) beyond being but as such is more (being) than being: *no more being and being more than being*: *being more*.[136]

This is a discourse on presence, a *situating* of the *hyperousios.*   A *hyper-ontology* conditions Pseudo-Dionysius's theology, which speaks of the 'cause' as

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133 *Ibid*, p. 158.

134 *Ibid*, p. 158.   For Derrida, this *calling* is "analogous" to those of Levinas and Marion, whose philosophies are "not far from insinuating [*sous-entendre*] that ontology itself is a subtle or perverse idolatry."   For Derrida's critical engagement with Emmanuel Levinas, see Derrida's essay 'Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on Emmanuel Levinas', in *Writing and* Difference, trans. Alan Bass (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 97–192.   Here, Derrida explicitly takes issue with the polemics applied by Levinas and Marion in their critique of metaphysics.

135 Derrida's emphasis.   *MT* 1:1000a–b; cited in HAS, p. 159.

136 HAS, p. 158.

"situated…*beyond* all position."[137]   It situates itself in the community that is *called* to the secret.   Pseudo-Dionysius refers to communions as a special mode of "mediation" or communication known as "Hierarchy", which itself is a *dis-course* taking place between the celestial and "ecclesiastical hierarchy".[138]   However, as Derrida already observes, the hierarchy also serves as a mode of separation from the "multiplicity of what is profane".[139]   The community – served by the ecclesiastical hierarchy – is to "[k]eep these holy truths [about God] a *secret*".[140]   In other words, the secret is already *situated*, located, and presented within the very community enlightened by the revealing of the secret.   This implies that there is no secret *as such*.

However, Marion adopts the Dionysian "hierarchy" as the mode in which *the Gift* gives itself unconditionally and with immediacy.[141]   Marion insists that "[t]he political model of hierarchy" is no obstacle to the hierarchy that "opens to the communion of saints."[142]   However, Derrida questions this, since Pseudo-Dionysius himself speaks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy as integral to the mediation process originating from the celestial hierarchy.   This notion of community and hierarchy find their source in the historical forms of hierarchical institutions and communities.   For this reason, even if mystical theology has a secret to keep, it is not a *pure secret*.   It is already inscribed in the horizon of presence, metaphysics, history, politics, and so on.

For a dissociation to take place, a pure secret can only be kept in a silence that

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137 *Ibid*, p. 159.

138 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, in *The Complete Works*, chs. 1–3, 120A–168B, pp. 145–154.   For Peudo-Dionysius, the "celestial hierarchy" is mediated through the "ecclesiastical hierarchy" to the natural hierarchies present in creation, thereby making possibility an ascent or divinization – an 'uplifting' *return* of all things toward the *cause* of all.   It is a Neoplatonic framework Pseudo-Dionysus employs to explain the process of the "hierarchy".   Pseudo-Dionysius, *CH*, p. 144n4; also, p. 145n7.   This is why Derrida will not be as keen as Marion in distinguishing Christian mystical theology from the Greek "paradigm" of negative theology.   See below.

139 *CH*, ch. 2, 145C, p. 152.

140 *Ibid*.

141 HAS, p. 307n8; see *Idol and Distance*, pp. 163–164, and p. 170.   Marion will relate Dionysius' "hierarchy" with immediacy of the gift, arguing that "[o]nly mediation produces immediacy; abolished, it would give way to barbarianism... [Mediation] ensures an act that aims precisely to give in order to receive, to receive in order to give.   Immediacy... [is assured] by the always recommencing, memorially repeated mediation of the given and giving gift, which each person delivers to his neighbor only in delivering himself to it... Hierarchy allows an immediate mediation." *Idol*, p. 170.

142 *Idol and Distance*, p. 170.

knows nothing.   Derrida refers to Pseudo-Dionysius' interpretation of Moses' ascent to Sinai.[143]   Moses closes his eyes – a symbol of absolute silence, blindness.[144]   So, although Moses entered God's divine *place*, the secret God is still inaccessible to him. God *is not* where he takes place, be it in a temple or in a community.   God remains *pure secret* – never known or revealed, never present.   One has to engage a denial in order the secret safe: "There is no secret" – that is, the secret that is never known remains *pure* secret.   Likewise, with God: "God *is not*" – that is, the God that never takes place, is never named, remains God.

So God, like the secret, is impossible.   Derrida here speaks of a paradoxical "denial (*dénégation*)".[145]   The moment one engages the *secret* in discourse, the secret is no longer secret.   For there to be a secret, the secret must not *be*.   This is why the mystical theologies of Pseudo-Dionysius and Marion are never *radically* apophatic. For Derrida, they do not accomplish what they claim to, namely, *save* the name of God, the secret name.   Mystical theology does goes beyond affirmation (*kataphasis*) and negation *(apophasis)* to glimpse the God who "does not take place [*n'apas lieu*]" – a God who "is and has/takes place [*a lieu*] but [is] without being and without place, without being his place."[146]   Nevertheless, in Pseudo-Dionysius and Marion, this "without place" comes to be situated, above all, in the community.   As Pseudo-Dionysius says, "the presence (*parousia*) of God" *takes place* at the "heights of those

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143 HAS, pp. 159–160.   See *MT* 1:1000c–d.

144 HAS, p. 159.   Derrida identifies three motifs from Dionysius account of Moses' ascent.   First, the order for the enlightened and inspired to be separated from the profane.   Second, the creation of political strategems of social division, or *shibboleth* – leading to a "double inscription" of the theologian's knowledge (whereby the theologian now needs to provide a mystagogy to the community and, at the same time, guard the faith against the profane).   Third, the location of God's *presence* in the *secret* knowledge circulated within communal discourse.   See HAS, pp. 160–164.

145 My emphasis.   HAS, p. 162.   This is the mode of denegation that is implied in Derrida's essay title, 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials' – which has been translated from the original French, "dénégations".   There is something of a concensus that the original French "dénégations" be left untranslated, since "denials" lacks the connotation of the double negation explicated in Derrida's essay.   See Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, p. 33; Mark C. Taylor, 'Non-Negative Negative Atheology', *Diacritics 20.4* (Winter 1990), pp. 2–3n4; H. Coward and T. Foshay, eds., *Derrida and Negative Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 7.   Nevertheless, By 'denials', Derrida refers to something more originary that a Freudian or psychoanalytical repression.   Yet, as Lawlor suggests, by "denial" Derrida is employing a psychoanalytic understanding of negation. When a patient denies or negates something affirmed of him or her, a self-denial or *denegation* is already taking place: What has been affirmed, though denied or negated, turns out to be true. Lawlor, 'Jacques Derrida', § 3, "Basic Argumentation and its Implications: Time, Hearing-Oneself-Speak, the Secret, and Sovereignty".

146 HAS, p. 163.

holy places".[147]   God's presence takes place – *is* His place.

2.2.3. *Trace of the Other*, the Cause of All Discourse

How to avoid speaking? Derrida does not think it is possible.   Before the possibility of speaking or silence, the promise *itself* has obligated him to speak.   This event – or, non-event, is *other* than presence; it is absence, an *absent presence – trace*. It conditions all discourse, which always happens "*too late*".   The wholly other (*tout autre)* precedes discourse.   So, for Derrida, discourse responds to an otherness that remains pure promise, the secret itself.[148]   Discourses – be they promises, prayers, praise, hymns, celebrations, or silence – are possible only in the absent-presence of the *tout autre*.   The other is the event of the trace in all speech.[149]

For Derrida, the *trace* of the other conditions God-talk, theology.   The non-event of the other who is never brought to presence and, yet, precedes theology – this other is recalled when we attempt to speak well of God.   In this way, discourse about God "already proceeds from God."[150]   To speak well of God we must let God be wholly other.   For Derrida, even if speaking properly of God means *avoiding* speech altogether, silence is also "a gift and an effect of God."[151]   God is the absent *cause* of speech about God.   All discourse, including theology, responds to God – *recalls* the call of God who is, nonetheless, the wholly other:

> This is what God's name always names, before or beyond other names: the trace of the singular event that will have made speech possible even before speech turns back toward – in order to respond to it – this first or last reference. ...[152]
>   ….the moment that the question 'How to avoid speaking?' arises, it is already too late.   It was no longer a question of not speaking. Language has begun without us, in us, before us. *This is what theology*

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calls God, and it is necessary, it will have been necessary, to speak."[153]

'God' no longer names a referent, an intelligible place, or a hyperessence. Like the promise, the secret, *trace*, *diff érance*, 'God' never takes place, is never present. Yet, God conditions discourse about God.

For this reason, negative discourse must begin with a prayer that recognizes its destination: "[T]he Other as Referent of a *legein* [Gk from *lego* 'to collect', 'to say' or 'to speak'] that is none other than its Cause [i.e. the cause of speech, discourse, prayer itself]."[154] Here, while Derrida uses "Cause" in reference to the trace of the other, he has a very different notion of *cause* in mind. Marion describes it as *aitia* (requisite), or the cause that conditions and is conditional. Derrida's *cause* is the trace, which is infinite and, yet, is "the very possibility of an experience of finitude."[155] In other words, this cause (trace of the other) conditions finite experiences. As pure possibility, trace is infinite but makes possible the finitude of speech. At the same time, "insofar as it is infinite",[156] the trace of the other never appears in finite discourse or experience. The trace "has no cause or origin" but is the *cause* of all. As such, experience never arises in virtue of itself. Discourse and thinking are always a response to the trace of the other that precedes it. They no longer *belong* to the speaker or thinker but, rather, to that which precedes discourse but is never present in it.[157]

2.3. Three Paradigms of Negative thought

The *secret*, promise, *khōra*, trace − these are the aporias involved in all

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153 Italics mine. *Ibid*, p. 166.

154 *Ibid*, p. 165.

155 HAS, p. 166.

156 *Ibid*, p. 166. Elsewhere, "the infinite differance is finite." Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena, and other essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. by David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 102.

157 In this regard, Derrida refers to a scriptural analogy: Jeremiah's cursing of the day of his birth (Jer 20.14−18). Jeremiah can only *deny* what has, in fact, taken place. An allusion to a seminar on Jeremiah at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Jerusalem, which took place shortly before the colloquium of Derrida's present lecture. On this note, see 'How to Avoid Speaking', pp. 167 and 308n12; and especially, Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989; repr 1991), pp. 129−136n5, where he addresses how a questioning no longer belongs to the questioner, since the question *as such* precedes the questioners question.

discourse.   To illustrate how they condition negative and mystical discourse, Derrida traces "three stages" or paradigms of the *via negativa*:[158]   The Greek, the Christian, and the metaphysical.   It is common to interpret the three paradigms as a historical process of evolution of the tradition called "negative theology".   However, as seen above, since discourse is never the same with what discourse tries to represent, Derrida is cautious of identifying *traditions called negative theology* with the negative theology *itself*.   To say that there is a historical progression of the *via negative* spanning the Greek, Christian and metaphysical, is to acknowledge a hidden teleology at work that eventuates (that is, brings to presence, being) negative theology *itself*.   If this event were possible, then negative discourse and *all* negative theology will cease.   As such, Derrida puts into question this *telelogical* development of the *via negativa* in Western thought.[159]

2.3.1. First Paradigm: Greek (Plato and the Neoplatonism)

The Greek paradigm of negativity consists of the *epekeina tēs ousias* (beyond Being/beings) and the *khōra*.   Derrida sees them as "*two* movements or *two* tropics of negativity."[160]

In the first movement, the *tou agathou* (the Good) is situated *beyond being*.[161] So it is kind of overcoming of ontology.   The Good is situated or takes the place of being.   The Good is "not-being" but it is also "not a nonbeing; it stands, so to speak, beyond presence or essence, *epekeina tes ousias*, beyond the beingness of Being [*l'étantité de l'être*]."[162]   Itself without being or becoming, the Good produces being or essence; itself invisible, it does not belong in being and neither in the order of

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158 HAS, p. 167.

159 At the same time, Derrida detects the *trace* or the "ghosts [specter] of a tradition of thought that is neither Greek nor Christian...what of Jewish and Arab thought in this regard?" (HAS, p. 167)   This remark is autobiographical.   In this lecture on negative theology, Derrida speaks about a tradition that not his own: "I have never yet been able – lacking the ability, the competence, or the self-authorization – to speak of what my birth, as one says, should have brought closest to me: the Jew, the Arab." (HAS, p. 309n13).   This lacuna (absence, lack) is a "void" or an "internal desert" that resonates in his lecture – a lack that motivates him to speak about negative theology.

160 HAS, p. 168.

161 *Ibid*, p. 168.

162 *Ibid*, p. 168.

knowledge.[163]   There is, therefore, an aporia.

2.3.1.1. Hyperbolization

The Good is designated a place *beyond* (*hyper*) being, which is a hyperbolism.[164] Being is negated in a *hyper* movement distinguishing the Good as a *hyper*-reality beyond what *is*, even though the Good produces being just as the sun gives out rays.[165] So this negativity is not *negation* but an affirming of 'superessentialism', which finds a place in Christian apophaticism as well.[166]   Whether it is a hyperbolism of Good or Being, the horizon of presence (being) is re-introduced.   Derrida is apparently in agreement with Thomas Aquinas, who criticizes Pseudo-Dionysius for elevating *Bonum* above *Ens* or *Esse* in the hierarchy of divine names: If the Good is Good by virtue of being *hyperousious*, then 'being' should be above all divine names.[167]   The hyperbolism of the Good in the Greek paradigm does not overcome ontology.   Rather, it affirms the "analogical continuity" between the Good and being.[168]

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163 *Ibid*, p. 168.   In establishing the interrelatedness of the Good and Being, David Burrell similarly highlights the *teleological* feature of this concept of the Good: "...speaking of *good* is not adding anything to discourse about *being,* but rather calling attention to the *telos* inherent in that act of existing which creatures derive from their creator. To speak of ''he good', then, is to call attention to the *eros* of being."   Burrell, 'Reflections on 'Negative Theology' In the Light of a Recent Venture to Speak of 'God Without Being',' in *Postmodernism and Christian Philosophy*, ed. by R. T. Ciapolo (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), pp. 58–67, and p. 60.

164 HAS, p. 168.

165 HAS, p. 169.   Derrida here refers to Plato's analogy of the sun as an illustration of the relationship between the Good, being and knowedge.   See Plato's *Republic* 509b.   This "analogical continuity" demonstrates an affirmation of 'presence', being, insofar as the Good is concerned.

166 *Ibid*, p. 169.

167 *Ibid*, p. 169.   Thomas' critique of Dionysius is a point of controversy.   Because of Thomas' prioritizing of being over Good, Marion himself earlier charges Thomas with falling to ontotheology. In light of critiques by philosophers on Marion's critique of Thomas, Marion later revised his assessment of Thomas.   See Thomas Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 118.   For Marion's critique of Thomas, see his preface to the English edition of *God Without Being*, xxiii.   For references to critiques of Marion's criticism of Thomas, see Hibbs, p. 209n4.

168 HAS, p. 169.   "The negative discourse regarding what stands beyond Being, and apparently no longer tolerates ontological predicates, does not interrupt this analogical continuity. In truth, it presupposes it; it even lets itself be guided by it. Ontology remains possible and necessary." O'Leary states the same observation in this regard. See O'Leary, *Questioning Back*, p. 60.   "In Gregory [of Nyssa] or Pseudo-Dionysius, the language of 'beyond being,' or not-being in a non-privative sense, could be seen as a deepening of his insistence on the primacy of being, not an overcoming of it. Being still serves here as the supreme principle of a metaphysical ordering of reality, although we can only say of this supreme being that it is, not what it is."   Moreover, for O'Leary, if negative theology could go beyond Pseudo-Dionysian negativity, it "could fulfil its counter-metaphysical vocation." (p. 60)   For Derrida, this "counter-metaphysical vocation" is an

2.3.1.2.   The 'Third' and *Khōra*[169]

On the other hand, the Greek paradigm harbours a "hypo" movement.[170]   It is traced to Plato's reference of a "*third* kind" that is "not-being" but, yet, conditions the possibility of opposites to "mix" and "participate" mutually – such as when negation and affirmation are co-present in thought and speech.   Discourse is never purely affirmative or negative.[171]   Thought and speech always affirms; even in its negations, discourse affirms.   Following Plato, Derrida calls this *khōra*, which is other than the hyperbolizing discourse of the Good.[172]   It is a third kind, a *triton genus*.[173]   It is not a mode of mediation suggested by the "hierarchy" of Pseudo-Dionysius and Marion. *Khōra* is unintelligible, forms no sense impressions; it is inadaptable to any type of discourse, hermeneutic, or *telos*.[174]   *Khōra* even precedes Plato's Demiurge and is, therefore, "outside" time.[175]   *Khōra* is the wholly other that escapes thought and language.

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impossibility, unless one is willing to give up discourse, writing, and thinking all at once.

169 See above, p. 11.

170 Caputo, 'Apostles of the Impossible', pp. 216–217.

171 HAS, p. 170.   It "is indispensable to the interweaving (*symplokē*) or to the dialectical intercrossing of the forms or the ideas in a *logos* capable of taking in the other."   See *The Sophist*, 243b–259b, for Plato's description of the paradox of "not-being", which Derrida says is a "dialectic [that] admits the thinking of nonbeing as *other* and not as absolute nothingness or the simple opposite of being."   See especially, *Sophist*, 256b–259b; and, 262e–264b.   Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12, *Cratylus, Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman*, trans. by Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1921), online <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0172> (accessed 23 March, 2014).

172 HAS, p. 170.   Derrida mentions "forthcoming text", which is "[a] long introduction to [a] work in progress" in honor of Jean-Pierre Vernant.   Derrida's long introduction to this work is entitled, *Chora*. See also Derrida's "*Khōra*", trans. by Ian McLeod, in Derrida, *On the Name*, pp. 89–127.

173 HAS, p. 171.   For Plato's allusion to a "Third Kind", see *Timaeus*, 48e, 49a, and 52a.   All references to Timaeus are from, Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9, 'Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Menexenus, Cleitophon, Timaeus, Critias, Minos, Epinomis,' trans. by W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1925), online <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0180> (accessed 23 March, 2014).

174 HAS, p. 171.

175 *Ibid*, p. 171.   *Khōra* is "the 'there' itself, outside time or in any case outside becoming, in an outside-time without common measure with the eternity of ideas and the becoming of sensible things."

In this 'other' language – language of the wholly other – Plato leaves behind metaphors and figures to explain *khōra*. It is no longer a "receptacle" for being, that is, it is not a linguistic or textual vehicle of naming or expressing being.[176] *Khōra* does not present itself; it is not a *given* or a *givenness* – not the Event of the gift. As such, *khōra* is also not the *Ereignis* that *gives* itself in giving being.[177] "...[O]ne cannot even say that it *gives* place or that there *is* [*il y a*] the *khōra. The es gibt, thus translated, still announces or recalls too much the dispensation of God, of man, or even that of Being of which certain of Heidegger's texts speak (es gibt Sein).*"[178] This is technically not a lack or privation, since the *khōra* is "above all not an experience."[179] It is "only a *philosophical* way of naming an *X*" that escapes all categories of thought and being.[180] It is not an experience.

So it seems impossible to speak of *khōra*. Indeed, one can suggest writing *khōra* under erasure (~~khōra~~). But this would be merely to affirm the presence of *khōra*, to let it appear under erasure, a denial of *khōra*.[181] The only "rule" for referring to *khōra*, says Derrida, is to *"always to refer to it in the same way*. Not to give it the same name...but to call it, to address oneself to it, in the same way... [by] appellation, a way of addressing oneself.*"[182] One can only *address* the *khōra*, which is less a proper name than a 'title' for the *tout autre* that calls us to address it – pure address without

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176 *Ibid*, p. 173. *Khōra* is "'something' that is or is not, that would be present or absent, intelligible, sensible, or both at once, active or passive, Good (*epekeina tēs ousias*) or Evil, God or man, living or nonliving." See *Timaeus* 50a–d, where Plato also describes the third kind as always to be referred to in the same way (as just *khōra*), since it conditions all experience without ever giving itself in any way, intellectual or sensible. Since it never gives itself, it is not a "receptacle" for being.

177 See below, pp. 81ff.

178 Italics mine. HAS, p. 173. *Khōra* is "not even the *ça*, the *es* of the giving [*le donner*] before all subjectivity. It does not give rise [*lieu*] as one would give something, whatever it might be; it does not create or produce anything, not even an event insofar as the event takes place. It gives no order and makes no promise. It is radically a historical, because nothing happens through it and nothing happens to it

179 *Ibid*, p. 174.

180 *Ibid*, p. 175.

181 For Derrida's critique of Heidegger's and Marion's attempts to write Being and God under erasure, see below, pp. 46ff.

182 HAS, p. 173–174. "*Proserō*: I address myself...to someone, and sometimes: I adore the divinity; *prosrēma* is the speech addressed to someone; *prosrēsis* is the situation that calls." *Timaeus* 50c: "the same account [of the *khōra*] must be given. It must be *called always by the same name*; for from its own proper quality it never departs at all for while it is always receiving all things, nowhere and in no wise does it assume any shape similar to any of the things that enter into it." (Italics mine.)

discourse. It is akin to *pure* prayer. *Khōra* is an "unheard-of trace", the promise of the other that obliges all discourse and thought.[183]

2.3.2. Second Paradigm: The Christian

Since the *khōra* is not discourse, it is therefore not a matter of negative theology.[184] "[O]ne cannot invent it", Derrida says.[185] It is wholly other to whatever is conceived in terms of presence and absence.[186] It is not a theological experience, for "it is not a prayer, a celebration, or praise. It does not speak to You [*Thou*]."[187] *Khōra* is not negative theology.

In contrast, the negative theology thinks in terms of naming – a naming beyond pure addressing.[188] Christian apophatic discourse is grounded in the moment of history, event, and influence; that is, in what has *taken place*. In negative theology, 'God' is an experience. Therefore, Pseudo-Dionysius *affirms* and celebrates God as "the Good, the intelligible Light, even the Good 'above all light'". For Derrida, this "nonbeing" is superabundant life, an excess of life, an experience of life in light of this excess.[189] This ontological necessity is assured of when Pseudo-Dionysius speaks of *erōs*, an erotics that inspires being and leads it back to God.[190]

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183 HAS, p. 174.

184 HAS, p. 174.

185 *Ibid*, p. 174.

186 *Ibid*, pp. 174–175.

187 *Ibid*, p. 175.

188 *Ibid*, p. 175. Christian negative theology "is a thinking of an essential 'having-taken-place', of a revelation, of an order and a promise, of an anthropo-theologization that – despite the extreme rigor of the negative hyperboyle – seems to take command once again, closer still to the *agathon* than to the *khōra*." In other words, negative theology is closer to the hyper-theology of Pseudo-Dionysius than Plato.

189 Pseudo-Dionysius, *DN* ch. 4, 697A; cited in HAS, p. 175. The quotation from Pseudo-Dionysius continues, "one might even say that nonbeing itself longs for the Good which is above all being. Repelling being, it struggles to find rest in the Good which transcends all being, in the sense of a denial of all things."

190 HAS, pp. 175-176.

2.3.2.1.   Mystical Tradition and the Promise

Therefore, Derrida refers to Christian apophatics as "the negativity without negativity".[191]   It is a logic of the 'without' – for example, "God *without* being" – where the "without" that negates a predicate actually 'reveals' the predicate in a higher form – hence, "God *without* being is *more than* being".[192]   The Christian paradigm is an affirmation through negation, a hyperbolism employing negation in order to establish a hyperessence.   Besides Pseudo-Dionysius, Eckhart's mystical theology is another figure of the Christian paradigm of negative theology.

A multiplicity of 'voices' of negative theology are employed in Eckhart's works. It is therefore sometimes unclear if Eckhart speaks with his voice or is citing others.[193] But Derrida observes closely that Eckhart quotes a "pagan master", who establishes a rule or law of apophatic procedure, namely, that "one must go beyond the veil or the clothing" of language and names, and grasp God bare.[194]   In other words, one must go beyond the veil that to unveil God, which suggests for Derrida a hyper-movement from the veil of being to the unveiling of that which is beyond being.   It is a hyperbolic gesture that, moreover, Eckhart cites from a "pagan master".   Eckhart neither contradicts nor agrees explicitly with this "pagan master" but, instead, reverts to speaking *via* "a negatively without negativity."

He reverts to the "saintly masters, who knew by a much higher light."   In a

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191 *Ibid*, p. 178.

192 *Ibid*, p. 179.   "A predicate can always conceal another predicate", hence producing not a negation but a "demultiplication of voices and discourses, of disappropriation and reappropriation of utterances..."   HAS, p. 178.

193 HAS, p. 179–180.   From 1323, Eckhart was most likely a lecturer at the *Studium Generale*.   At the time, there were Franciscan-led campaigns against him, resulting in an inquisitional proceeding that began in 1326.   A syllabus of errors was attributed to him and Eckhart submitted a reply to the Papal Court in Avignon.   The papal bull *In agro dominico*, issued by Pope John XXII (March 27, 1329) condemned 17 articles from this syllabus as heretical, 11 more as suspect of heresy.   Eckhart did not live to hear the verdict of condemnation.   He died before April 30, 1328. Burkhard Mojsisch and Orrin F. Summerell, 'Meister Eckhart', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, online <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/meister-eckhart/> (accessed online 24 March, 2014), §1, 'Life of Meister Eckhart'.

194 HAS, p. 180.   Meister Eckhart, 'Sermon Sixty-seven, "Quasi Stella Maututina"', in *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, p. 344: "*A pagan master says* the soul that loves God takes hold of Him under the garment of Goodness.   Intellect draws this garment of goodness off God and takes Him bare, where He is stripped of goodness and being and of all names."

sermon, Eckhart speaks of what it means to be "an ad-verb and work one with God", praying that "we may be forever an ad-verb to this Word."[195]   Eckhart's sermon is a discourse in the form of a *prayer*.   But Derrida questions if it is a prayer since It does not directly address itself to God.[196]   Rather, it is *turned toward* the reader.   This makes sense to Derrida: God (the Word) does not require "[t]his supplement of adverbiality" but the reader does; it is for the sake of the reader that Eckhart speaks of negative theology.[197]   Eckhart's sermons supplement "[our] inability to read the authentic 'book' that we are, as creatures, and the adverbiality we should be as a result."[198]   For Derrida, if Eckhart was really praying – if he was purely addressing God, he would not have given a sermon nor even supplemented his sermon with a prayer.   Eckhart's discourse would have been silenced.   On the contrary, Eckhart is obliged to speak of negative theology for a pedagogical and *affirmative* purpose. Eckhart's sermon (his prayer) is not prayer *itself*, for its purpose is to remind his hearer and reader of the *desire* for God within ourselves; *we* are the by-word of the Word.   In his negation of what God *is not*, Eckhart ends up not only affirming what *we* are but, moreover, what God *is* – the Word (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).   This is a negativity without negativity.   On the other hand, no other supplement (no discourse of prayers, sermons, or theology) would have been necessary if only our hearts were already *turned* to God in *pure* address.   Because negative theology moves beyond pure negation toward affirmation, *supplement*, negative theology is a hyper-theology.

Likewise, Pseudo-Dionysius' *Mystical Theology* begins in prayer that already determines God with a hyper-affirmation: "Trinity!!   Higher than any being, any divinity, any goodness!"[199]   But after praying, he "presents his prayer" to Timothy.[200] There is an *apostrophe*, a turn, which Derrida observes is not a turning away from God.

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195 HAS, p. 181.   "The truest thing that one can say of God is 'Word' and 'Truth.' God called Himself a Word. St. John said, " In the beginning was the Word" (John 1.1), meaning that beside the Word, man was a 'by-word.'   But the man who would come to that of which I have been speaking – and this is the whole burden of my discourse – he should be like the morning star: forever present to God and by Him, at an equal distance, and raised above all earthly things, a 'by-word' beside the Word." Eckhart, 'Sermon Sixty-Seven', trans. McGinn, pp. 344–345.

196 HAS, p. 181.

197 *Ibid*, p. 181.

198 *Ibid*, p. 181.

199 *MT* ch. 1, 998a.

200 HAS, p. 182.

Rather, it *supplements* the prayer that Pseudo-Dionysius addresses to God in the beginning of *Mystical Theology*.[201]   In the same way, the prayer of Pseudo-Dionysius is a hyper-affirmation of more primal and originary source that conditions prayer *itself* – Pseudo-Dionysius' pure address turned toward 'God' *prior* to all prayer *as* discourse, prior to all supplements.   But this pure prayer Pseudo-Dionysius performs is never present in the prayer he *says* before he presents his *Mystical Theology*.   For Derrida, in pure prayer as address, 'God' is the wholly other and, therefore, always pure *promise*. It is this 'God', the *other* who is *promise*, which conditions every discourse of prayer. In other words, every discourse – including mystical theology, is a supplement to the *promise*.[202]

However, like Eckhart, Pseudo-Dionysius reverts to "a negativity without negativity".   In Christian apophatics the promise is not *pure* promise for Pseudo-Dionysius bonds revelation – which for Derrida is like promise, impossible – to a place, Jerusalem.[203]   In *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, Pseudo-Dionysius ties the promise to a place (Jerusalem) and, therefore, an experience (baptism).[204]   This 'situation' of the promise is an event, an experience of fulfilment – that is, history.[205]   Mystical theology affirms the fulfilment of the promise in the "experience" of revelation.   The promise is no longer the promise *as such* for there is already a prescription of what is "the good and right apophasis", "at once a revelation and a teaching of the Holy Scripture."[206] The promise takes the form of a determinate experience of revelation whereby God, though incommunicable, "can manifest *itself*" even though "separated by its

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201 *Ibid*, p. 182.

202 HAS, p. 182.   "[T]he prayer, the quotation of the prayer, and the apostrophe, from one you to the other, are all weaving the *same* text", *and* ultimately reaches to us, the reader – "[n]ot to us such as we are, at present, but such as we should be, in our souls, if we read this text as it should be read, rightly, in the proper direction, correctly: according to its prayer and its promise."   Also, HAS, pp. 311–312n17.

203 *Ibid*, p. 183.   It is "[u]nlike what seemed to happen in the 'experience' of the place called *khōra* since the apophasis puts itself in motion, it *initiates itself*, in the sense of initiative and initiation, from the event of a revelation that is also a promise...[this apophasis in Dionysius' negative theology] belongs to a history; or rather, it opens a history and an anthropo-theological dimension... This place is itself assigned by the event of the promise and the revelation of scripture."

204 *Ibid* p. 183; *EH*, trans. by McGinn, 512C.   "Do not depart from *Jerusalem* but wait for *the promise* of the Father which you heard from me...you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

205 HAS, p. 183.   It is a "place of waiting...for the *fulfilment of the promise*. Then it will take place fully. *It will be fully a place*."

206 *Ibid*, p. 183.

superessentiality."[207] This "secret manifestation" is, as Derrida would say, neither a secret nor the promise.

Eckhart apparently is aware of this. "God is nameless" and, therefore, the best way to speak of God is to be silent, "[o]therwise you lie and sin."[208] Silence and prayer (pure address) for Eckhart becomes a "duty of love". [209] As Eckhart demonstrates, even the Christian paradigm of apophasis exhorts speech about God "so as to order one not to speak, to say what God is not and that he *is* a non-God."[210] Eckhart demonstrates that, although mystical theology is not absolutely apophatic, nevertheless, the trace of negativity is inscribed there. The Christian paradigm does not cease being Greek.[211]

2.3.3. Third Paradigm: The Metaphysical (Neither Greek nor Christian)

Derrida says the metaphysical paradigm is "neither Greek nor Christian."[212] Yet, he adds: "...Heidegger's thought might resemble the most questioning legacy, both the boldest and most liberated *repetition of the traditions* I have just evoked."[213] The metaphysical paradigm, represented by Heidegger's project to liberate thinking from ontotheology, is at the same time a "repetition" of the Greek and Christian traditions.   In explicating Heidegger's thinking, Derrida shows that even the metaphysical paradigm struggles to free itself from ontotheology.

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207 *Ibid*, p. 183.

208 HAS, p. 185; *MEP* 3:441–442; 207.   See Eckhart, 'Sermon Ninety-Six': "So be silent and do not chatter about God, because by chattering about Him you are lying and so committing a sin."   Trans. Wlash and McGinn, p. 463.

209 HAS, pp. 185-186; *MEP* 3:448; 208.   Eckhart, 'Sermon Ninety-Six':   "Therefore your soul should be de-spirited of all spirit, she should be spiritless, for if you love God as He is God, as He is spirit, as He is person and as He is image - all that must go! …... You should love Him as He is: a non-God, a non-spirit, a non-person, a non-image; rather, as He is a sheer pure limpid One, detached from all duality. And in that One may we eternally sink from nothingness to nothingness. So help us God. Amen."   Trans. Walsh and McGinn, p. 465.

210 HAS, p. 186.   *MEP* 3:448; 208.   One prays in silence, "implores the aid of God in a prayer: 'You should love him as he is *a non-God*, a nonspirit, a nonperson, a nonimage, but as he is a pure, unmixed, bright 'One,' separated from all duality; and in that One we should eternally sink down, out of 'something' into 'nothing.' *May God help us to that.   Amen.*"

211 HAS, p. 186.

212 *Ibid*, p. 186.

213 Italics mine.   *Ibid*, p. 186–187.

For Derrida, Heidegger's *What is Metaphysics*? (1968), is a work on the "experience of the nothing".[214]   So it is not a negation or denial of Being but "reveals" the wholly other who, nevertheless, *transcends* the structures of being.[215]   Heidegger travels the path of the Platonic *epekeina tēs ousias*, from which he tries to distance himself.   This distancing begins in, *What Is Metaphysics?*   There, Heidegger charges Plato with "falling short" of thinking the "place" of the wholly other, the *tout autre*.[216]   Instead, Plato reverts to thinking Being in terms of the horizon (place) of being.   But in an earlier work, *What Is Called Thinking* (1961), Heidegger observes that Plato's *khōra* does approach the wholly other place of Being, as against the place of beings.[217]   So Heidegger is also undecided as to whether Plato escapes ontotheology. From Derrida's explanation of *khōra*, however, Plato has already indicated the impossibility of such a prospect.

For Derrida, what causes Heidegger to misinterpret Plato is his haste to overcome ontotheology simply by distinguishing the thinking of philosophy and theology – or ontotheology (or, *theiology*) and theology: The former speaks of the source of ground as being *par excellence* or *causa sui*; the latter is a "science of faith"

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214 HAS, p. 187.   It is "a treatise on negativity.   It grounds negative discourse and negation in the experience of the nothing that itself nihilates (*das Nichts selbstnichtet*)."   Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?', in *Basic Writings*, trans. by D. F. Krell, rev edn (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), pp. 193–110.

215 HAS, p. 187.

216 *Ibid*, p. 187.   See Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans R. Manheim (New Have, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1969; repr Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1961): Commenting on Plato's *Timaeus* 50e, Heidegger writes, "The Greeks had no word for 'space.'   This is no accident: for they experienced the spatial on the basis not of extension but of place (*topos*); they experienced it as *chōra*, which signifies neither place nor space but that which is occupied by what stands there" (p. 54); furthermore, "[t]he reference to the passage in *Timaeus* is intended not only to clarify the link between the *paremphainon* and the *on*, between also appearing and being as permanence, but at the same time to suggest that the transformation of the barely apprehended essence of place (*topos*) and of *chōra* into a 'space' defined by extension was initiated by the Platonic philosophy, i.e. in the interpretation of being as idea."   (p. 55)   See also Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), p. 71.

217 HAS, p. 187.   Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, trans. by F. D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 227:   "An interpretation [of 'Being'] decisive for Western thought is that given by Plato.   He says that between beings and Being there prevails the χωρισμός; ἡ χόρα is the *locus*, the site, the place.   Plato means to say: beings and Being are in different places. ...[W]hen Plato gives thought to the different location of beings and Being, he is asking for the totally different place of Being, as against the place of beings."

that draws on the experience of revelation (*Offenbarung*).[218] Ontotheology is the conflation of Being as *causa sui* with the God of revelation.[219]

From this arises Heidegger's distinction between the "manifestation or the possibility of Being's revealing itself (*Offenbarkeit*) and revelation (*Offenbarung*) of the God of theology."[220] Philosophy presumably addresses the possibility of manifestion, while theology addresses revelation itself. But here, Derrida finds Heidegger's distinction problematic, for the relation between *offenbarkeit* and *offenbarung* is not as clear-cut as it seems. Indeed, Heidegger underscores the *manifestation* (of Being) and *revelation* (of God) with the term, *Ereignis*, or event.[221] Being is an *event* that *gives*, *is given*, hence, is *gift*. However, the question arises as to whether Being is *given* (revelation) because Being's character is *to give itself* (reveal-ability); or, if it is *givenness* (reveal-ability) that is conditioned by Being's being given (revelation).[222] This is the kind of "undecidability" that Derrida speaks of as an aporia that Heidegger's *destruktion* itself is unable to overcome.[223] For Derrida, as soon as one speaks of the event of Being as opposed to the horizon of beings, revelation and reveal-ability are not so easily distinguished.

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218 HAS, p. 188.   See Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans Manheim, 6; 7. Derrida explains that Heidegger treats this distinction with a clearer terminological equivalence in Heidegger's *Hegel's Concept of Experience*; see trans. by Emad and Maly, Harper, 1970, 135. Furthermore, in *Being and Time,* Heidegger defines theology as a more 'primordial interpretation' of man's Being in his relation to God, beginning with the 'meaning of faith'. See *Being and Time*.

219 See above, pp. 4ff.

220 HAS, p. 188.

221 On this link between Heidegger, God and *Ereignis*, see Jean Greisch's 'The Poverty of Heidegger's 'Last God' ', in *French Interpretations of Heidegger: An Exceptional Reception*, ed. by D. Pettigrew and F. Raffoul (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2008), pp. 245–264.

222 See HAS, pp. 189 and 313n24.   Derrida mentions a seminar at Yale in 1970 in which he treats of the question of thinking of the gift – 'Donner le temps', in relation to Heidegger's thinking of Being – the *es gibt Sein* (*Zeit*), in Heidegger's *On Time and Being*, trans. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972).   There, Heiedgger says, "We do not say: Being is, time is, but rather: there is Being and there is time.   For the moment we have only changed the idiom with this expression. Instead of saying 'it is,' we say 'there is,' 'It gives.'   In order to get beyond the idiom and back to the matter, we must show how this 'there is' can be experienced and seen. The appropriate way to get there is to explain what is given in the 'It gives,' what 'Being' means, which-It gives; what 'time' means, which -It gives. Accordingly, we try to look ahead to the It which-gives Being and time. Thus looking ahead, we become foresighted in still another sense. We try to bring the It and its giving into view, and capitalize the 'It'."   (pp. 4–5)   See Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 20–21.

223 See below, p. 83f.

So, for Derrida, it is not a question of which is prior – the Being that gives (*offenbarung*) or the *givenness* of Being (*offenbarkeit*).[224] However, for Heidegger, Being and the givenness of Being are not reconcilable. When speaking of Being, we are at the same time speaking of the "concealment" of Being as being: "Being is not" and, yet, it gives, is present.[225] Being is not revealed but *gives itself* to what it reveals. This is why Heidegger avoids (negates) the term 'Being' and "writes the word Being under erasure."[226] He wants to write Being without allowing the word to occur. However, Derrida questions the possibility of not letting Being occur.[227]

For Derrida, Heidegger's *avoidance* resembles the apophatic thelogy. In engaging a *negativity* – an avoidance of Being, Heidegger distances himself from negative theology, including that of Pseudo-Dionysisus and Eckhart, where God 'appears' as hyperousious.[228] Yet, Heidegger continues to cite Pseudo-Dionysius and Eckhart, demonstrating that Heidegger's negativity always maintains a point of contact with theology. So, for instance, Heidegger cites Eckhart on the thinking of the thing (*dinc*), where Heidegger agrees with Eckhart on the nonbeing of God.[229] This and other examples demonstrate that thought about Being occurs precisely where thought

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224 Italics mine. HAS, p. 313n24.

225 "Being, by which all beings as such are marked, Being means presencing. Thought with regard to what presences, presencing shows itself as letting-presence. But now we must try to think this letting-presence explicitly insofar as presencing is admitted. Letting shows its character in bringing into unconcealment. To let presence means: to unconceal, to bring to openness. In unconcealing prevails a giving, the giving that gives presencing, that is, Being, in letting- presence." *On Time and Being*, p. 5. Furthermore, "As a gift, Being is not expelled from giving. Being, presencing is transmuted. As allowing-to-presence, it belongs to unconcealing; as the gift of unconcealing it is retained in the giving. Being is not. There is, It gives Being as the unconcealing; as the gift of unconcealing it is retained in the giving. Being *is* not. There is, It gives Being as the unconcealing of presencing." (p. 6)

226 HAS, 313n25. See what Heidegger says in comparing Eckhart and Kant: "...love is of such a nature that it changes man into the things he loves... Kant talks about things in the same way as Mesiter Eckhart and means by this term something that is. But for Kant, that which is becomes the object of representing that which runs its course in the self-consciousness of the human ego." "The Thing", in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Colophon, 1975; repr New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), p. 174.

227 See Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. by G. Bennington and R. Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

228 HAS, p. 313n25.

229 See Heidegger, 'The Thing', in *Poetry Language and Thought*, trans by Hofstadter (New York: Harper Colophon, 1975; repr New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), p. 174. Referring to Eckhart, Heidegger says: "In what its language [i.e., that of things] does not say, there – says Eckhart, old master of reading and life – God is truly God." 'The Pathway', trans O'Meara and Sheehan, in *Heidegger: the Man and the Thinker*, p. 70. Both cited in HAS, p. 313n25.

about 'God' appears. Heidegger's desire to write Being "under erasure" resembles mystical theology's desire to speak about God *without* naming God – that is, to also write God under erasure.[230] For Derrida, the metaphysical paradigm of negation is not so far removed from Christian apophatics and, therefore, the Greek paradigm.

Indeed, what Heiddeger *avoids* is not the speaking of Being but the *using* or mention of the word, "Being".[231] Yet, Derrida asks if this is possible at all, for by mere mention of the word "Being", *Being takes place*, is situated; the reader that reads the word begins to *think* Being into presence. This is true even if one writes being under erasure, in the form of a crossing-out (~~Being~~).[232] Heidegger wants to avoid the word 'Being'. However, it still remains legible enough for the word to be read, deciphered, although it should not be "uttered".[233] So, for Heidegger, while Being should not be understood (or *heard* or *thought*) as in any sense a being, it nevertheless cannot be avoided. But this is especially true when Heidegger diverts attention from Being to *what* Being brings together, or *gathers* – what takes place as the fourfold (*Geviert*), "the four regions *(Gegenden)*: earth and sky, mortals and divinities."[234] In exposing this gathering, Being (under erasure) *is no longer* a negation but an *event* that takes place: 'Being' shows the fourfold – "it *gathers*" in a "*place* (Ort)", namely, the very crossing out (crossing through) of the *Durchkreuzung*.[235] Heidegger's avoidance of Being translates into an *affirmation* of Being *as* taking place, the event and experience of the fourfold.

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230 See also Derrida's discussion of Heidegger's interpretation of *Gemüt* (roughly translated as "soul") in Derrida's *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. by G. Bennington and R. Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 78ff.

231 HAS, p. 189.

232 *Ibid*, p. 189. In *The Question of Being* (*Zur Seins frage*, 1952), Heidegger writes 'Being' under erasure, "in the form of a crossing out (*kreuz weise Durch streichung*)." This work by Heidegger was one in a series of replies to his friend, Ernst Jünger (1895–1998), who corresponded with Heidegger on the question of nihilism..

233 HAS, pp. 189–190. "...Heidegger also warns us against the simply *negative* use of this *Durchstreichung*. The essential function of this erasure is not to *avoid*. No doubt, Being is no being, and it can be reduced to its turns, turnings, historical tropes (*Zuwendungen*); one must therefore avoid representing it (*vorzustellen*) as something, an object that stands *face-to-face* (*gegenüber*) with man and then comes toward him. To avoid this objectifying representation (*vorzustellen*), the word 'Being' will thus be written under erasure. The word henceforth cannot be heard, but it can be read in a certain way."

234 *Ibid*, p. 190. For Marion's discussion of the relation between the fourfold, giving and the gift, see *God Without Being*, pp. 102–104.

235 HAS, p. 190.

Derrida observes an analogous gesture in Marion's crossing out the name, 'God', "crossing G̶o̶d̶ with the cross that reveals him only in the disappearance of his death and resurrection."[236]   Like Heidegger, Marion writes God under erasure, to remove God from the horizon of Being.[237]   Nevertheless, just as with Heidegger's writing Being under erasure, Marion unsuccessfully removes God from the horizon of thought, presence.   There is still a 'topos' of Being that, in the case of Marion, is the *topos* of the cross of the crucified Christ.   Therefore, Marion writes God under erasure only to emphasize a higher form of revelation, presence on the cross:

> These interrogations could be gathered into a topical question, modest in appearance: does the name of the G̶o̶d̶ who is crossed because he is crucified, belong to the domain of Being?   We are not at all speaking of 'God' in general, or thought on the basis of the divine, hence also of the Fourfold.   We are speaking of the G̶o̶d̶ who is crossed by a cross because he reveals himself by placement on a cross, the G̶o̶d̶ revealed by, in, and as the Christ; in other words, the G̶o̶d̶ of rigorously *Christian* theology.[238]

In writing 'God' under erasure, in avoiding 'God', Marion already thinks of 'Being'.   This is especially true since 'God' takes place, is inscribed in experience and presence, on (and *behind*) the cross.   There is a "gathering" in Marion's writing God under erasure.   Similarly, Heidegger himself acknowledges a gathering that takes *place* in this *Ort*, where the crossing out, erasure, takes place.   Nevertheless, what Heidegger intends to say is still valid: One could read 'Being' (and 'God') under erasure but thinking will have to *think* the place of the *nothing*.[239]   "What is the locale of the nothing?" asks Heidegger; he replies: *"the nothing should also be written, and that means thought.   Like Being, it would also have to be written and read under erasure."*[240]   In other words, one cannot avoid speaking and thinking about Being or

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236 HAS, pp. 313–314n26.   See Marion, *God Without Being*, pp. 105–107.   For Derrida, "[t]his is another thinking of the gift and of the trace, a 'theology' that wants to be 'rigorously *Christian*' by opposing itself at times to the most kindred thinking, that of Heidegger in particular."   HAS, pp. 314n26.

237 *Ibid*, pp. 314n26.   "[T]o remove the thinking of the gift, or rather of the *trace* of the gift – since it is also and still a matter of thinking of the *trace* – from the Heideggerian fourfold."

238 *Ibid*, p. 314n26.   *God Without Being*, pp.71 –72.   Marion

239 HAS, p. 190.

240 Italics mine.   HAS, p. 190.   See 'On the Question of Being," in *Pathmarks*, ed. by W. McNeill

about God. Once again, the metaphysical paradigm of negativity, like the Greek and Christian, turns out to be an affirmation of the horizon of being.

2.4. Faith, Ontotheology, and Prayer

In *Identity and Difference*, Heidegger writes that metaphysics is *not* theology.[241] But as shown above, Derrida observes that Heidegger does say we should remain silent as far as Being is concerned: "…the point is, rather, not to allow the word Being to occur, on the subject of God."[242] And, above all, it should not occur *as* 'God'. Heidegger would always avoid thinking God's essence on the basis of Being:[243]

> Being and God are not identical and I would never attempt to think the essence of God by means of Being… If I were yet to write a theology [then] the word *Being* would not occur in it. *Faith does not need the thought of Being*. When faith has recourse to this thought, it is no longer faith. …One could not be more reserved than I before every attempt to employ Being to think theologically in what way God is God. …Being can never be thought as the ground and essence of God ….[N]evertheless the experience of God and of his manifestedness, to the extent that the latter can indeed meet me, flashes in the dimension of Being, which in no way signifies that Being might be regarded as a possible predicate for God.[244]

For Derrida, the *denial* or avoidance of theology in Heidegger's response is

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 310.

241 HAS, p. 314n29. See Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. by J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969), pp. 54–55. "Someone who has experienced theology in his own roots, both the theology of the Christian faith and that of philosophy, would today rather remain silent about God when he is speaking in the realm of thinking. For the onto-theological character of metaphysics has become questionable for thinking, not because of any kind of atheism, but from the experience of a thinking which has discerned in onto-theology the still unthought unity of the essential nature of metaphysics."

242 HAS, p. 191. 'Being' "should not take place, happen, arrive (*vorkommen*) in his text." HAS, p. 190.

243 *Ibid*, p. 191. This is affirmed by Heidegger in a seminar at the University of Zurich, in answer to students of the university. The transcript was apparently initially privately circulated, and was later translated into French by F. Fédier and D. Saatdjian as *Séminarire de Zuirch,* in *Poésie*, 13 (Paris, 1980). It is the same passage referred to and translated in Marion's *God Without Being*, pp. 61–62; see also p. 211n16, where the passage is cited by Marion in German as originally transcribed from the lecture.

244 Cited in *God Without Being*, pp. 61–62.

indication that what Heidegger says is already being written as *a* theology.[245]   What Heidegger allows to happen in his lecture – which he says should not occur – is the appearing of Being and God in the same place.   Heidegger's "theology of Being" has already taken place.   And this is not surprising.   Heidegger himself conceives of revelation (*Offenbarung*) *as* the experience of Being: The possibility of revelation, manifestedness (*Offenbarkeit*) "flashes" in the very dimension of Being.   As Derrida explains, "*the dimension of Being* gives access to the advent, the experience, the encounter with this God who nevertheless is not."[246]

"Dimension" connotes an *event*, a happening, a *place*.   Earlier on, Heidegger says Plato's *khōra* falls short of thinking the place of the *wholly other*.   Heidegger, too, falls short in his thinking of Being.   Indeed, if Being is for Heidegger the dimension of opening thought to the source of all thinking, then it is also the "antechamber" that opens thought to God – which recalls Eckhart's dictum that we can only think about God *via* the thinking of being.[247]   So, for Derrida, it is not clear if Heidegger think the ground of being without, ultimately, thinking about God.   Speaking about God – even if to say how we must (should) avoid God-talk – already necessarily engages thought about being and, hence, metaphysics.   So Heidegger could no more write a theology without Being, then write a philosophy without God.   The moment theology speaks *as if* God is without 'Being', one engages in metaphysics; the moment philosophy speaks of Being *as if* it were without 'God', one does theology.   For Derrida, the separation of theology and philosophy is a "fiction or fable".   Onto-theology is still not overcome.

Still, Heidegger writes in *denial* of theology, which does not mean Heidegger never prays.   Interestingly, Derrida compares Heidegger's lecture remarks on metaphysics and theology to Pseudo-Dionysius' presentation of his *Mystical Theology* to Timothy: Both were texts of "pedagogical or psychagogical virtue...on an *agogic*

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245 HAS, p. 191.   So "he [Heidegger] knows that what he says is already being written [as *a* theology]."

246 *Ibid*, p. 191.

247 *Ibid*, p. 192.   "This dimension of opening, this place that gives place without being either essence or ground – is this step or passage, this entryway that gives access to God, not the 'antechamber' [forecourt of being] that Meister Eckhart speaks of?"   Eckhart, 'Sermon Sixty-Seven', trans. McGinn, p. 343:   "When we receive God in being, we receive Him in His forecourt, for being is the forecourt of His dwelling."

path", inciting thought about Being, about God. [248]   Of course, unlike Pseudo-Dionysius' text, Heidegger's contains no prayer. [249]   After all, Heidegger is not writing theology.   There is no reference to an *other* (a *Thou*), either God or the students or reader. [250]   All this is consistent with Heidegger's distinction between philosophy and theology: "Faith does not need the thought of being.   When faith has recourse to this thought, it is no longer faith." [251]

Yet, Derrida thinks there is in Heidegger "a sign of respect for prayer." [252] Pseudo-Dionysius quotes a prayer and addresses it to Timothy – all by way of predicative discourse.   But as explained earlier, it is a discourse the supplement Pseudo-Dionysius' *pure* address to God.   Derrida notes something similar in Heidegger: His use of predicative and propositional language is actually a form of apostrophe that *supplements* prayer, that is, Heidegger's posture of reverence for Being. As Derrida's deconstruction of the metaphysical paradigm shows, God is never far from Heidegger's thinking of Being.   As such, Heidegger's reverence for Being is never absolutely distinguished from God, from theology.   Heidegger's writings and lectures are supplements to his *pure* prayer addressed to Being.   Because of this, prayer *itself* – the posture of addressing Being or God, makes ontotheology (*theiology*) and theology possible. [253]   Conversely, ontotheology and theology are discourses that "mark" the trace of *pure prayer* to the wholly other (Being, God).   As Derrida's says at the end of his Jerusalem lecture, without the supplement of discourse, "there would be no prayer, no pure possibility of prayer". [254]   Prayer *itself* is the trace – the source and origin of discourse itself.

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248 HAS, p. 193.

249 *Ibid*, p. 193.   "The absence of prayer, or of apstrophe in general, also confirms the predominance of the theoretical, 'constative,' even propositional form..."   *Ibid*, p. 194.

250 *Ibid*, p. 194.

251 Cited in *God Without Being*, p. 61.   Heidegger, of course, does not say one does not continue to think in theology.   Rather, theology thinks but not in the way philosophy is tasked to do so. "Within thought, nothing could be accomplished that could prepare for or contribute to determining what happens in faith and grace.   If faith summoned me in this way, I would close down shop. – of course, within the dimension of faith, one still continues to think; but thinking as such no longer has a task."   Jean Greisch, *Heidegger et al question de Dieu*, p. 335, cited in HAS, p. 194.

252 HAS, p. 194.

253 *Ibid*, p. 195.

254 HAS, pp. 194–195.

3. How to Avoid Speaking (of Negative Theology): Saturated Phenomenon and Denomination

There are two editions of Marion's essay. The first is found among the collection of essays from the Villanova conference, *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*.[255]   It was later edited by Marion and republished in a collection of his writings, *In Excess* (2002), with a slightly different title: 'In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of It'.[256]   In the edited version, "Negative Theology" is omitted from the original subtitle, implying the essay is less about negative theology and more about how *not to* speak about the *name* of God.   It also omits Derrida's response to Marion's essay.   Furthermore, the changes and additions give Marion's essay a more *apophatic* emphasis; at the same time, they accentuate Marion's disagreement with Derrida's criticism of negative theology.[257]   Finally, Marion also omits 'Him' when referring to God, avoiding a masculine predicate for the divine.

3.1. Metaphysics of Presence and Negative theology

Derrida thinks negative theology is a hyper-theology of presence.   So Marion's issue here is whether negative theology should be understood the way Derrida "deconstructs" it.[258]

He begins by tracing Derrida's critique of negative theology to two of Derrida's earlier lectures: First, the Jerusalem lecture of 1987, 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denegations', and the Paris lecture in 1968, 'Différance'.[259]   In both lectures, Derrida argues that negative theology is affirms God as hyperessence.   However, it is the

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255 Ed. by Caputo and Scanlon (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 20–53.

256 *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, pp. 128–162. The bulk of the edited essay remained Jeffrey L. Kosky's translation. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud translated the additions and changes that Marion made to the original essay. Changes are found both in the main body as well as the footnotes.

257 See translator's note at the end of INE, p. 162. Also, see the translator's introduction to *In Excess*, pp. xix–xx.

258 IN, pp. 20–21.   "Is 'metaphysics' always identified as and by presence, or can it also include absence?"

259 IN, pp. 21–22 / INE, pp. 130–132.   See above, p. 2n4 and pp. 19ff.

lecture on *différance* that interests Marion, where Derrida denies *différance* is negative theology.[260]   Marion thinks Derrida's denial and critique has nothing to do with negative theology at all but "[with] deconstruction itself, its originality and its final preeminence."[261]   It is conclusion Marion arrive at early in his essay, which shifts the discussion from Heidegger's critique of ontotheology – the point at which Derrida's Jerusalem lecture ends – to deconstruction itself.[262]   For Marion, Heidegger never speaks of the "metaphysics of presence".   According to Marion, this phrase first occurs in Derrida's *Speech and Phenomena*, where Husserl's phenomenology is referred to as "a *metaphysics of presence* in the form of ideality." [263]   The link between 'metaphysics', 'presence', and 'phenomenology', is traced even further back to Derrida's dissertation (1953/4).[264]   Derrida situates phenomenology within ontology.[265]

However, Derrida's intention is not as simple as Marion puts it: In *The Problem of Genesis*, just as in *Speech and Phenomena*, rather than reduce phenomenology to ontology, Derrida demonstrates that phenomenology identified a paradox of *difference* between "presence" (a "dialectics" of experience) and "absence" (a nondialectic "primitivity"); however, phenomenology failed to worked on this paradox.[266]   So Derrida's "deconstruction" picks up where phenomenology refuses to

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260 See above, pp. 19ff.

261 IN, p. 22 / INE, p. 132.

262 IN, p.   21 / INE, p. 129.

263 Italics mine.   *Speech and Phenomena, and other essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* trans. by D. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 10.   However, Derrida refers to the 'metaphysics of presence' as part of his discussion of "language as the proper medium of play between presence and absence," the empirical and the transcendental.   For Derrida, Husserl's "metaphysics of presence", phenomenology, determines a margin or horizon that also immediately invokes the *other* that lies beyond presence, namely, absence.   In speaking of phenomenology – of what presents itself to intuition, Husserl is also necessarily alluding to absence.   It is this *difference* between presence and absence that gives rise to Husserl's phenomenology as a "philosophy of life."   Derrida's project of deconstruction explores this area of difference (*différance*), not just presence.

264 Published later as, *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Phenomenology The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. by M. Hobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).   This was originally written as a dissertation for his *diplôme d'études supérieures* in 1953 and 1954.

265 *Problem of Genesis*, p. 60:   "Phenomenology would no longer be quite mistress in her own house. Ontology would be already inside the fortress."   Cited in Marion, 'In the Name', p. 48n2 (IN) / p. 128n1 (INE).   Marion, himself a phenomenologist, conceives phenomenology differently. In the round-table discussion to the Villlanova conference, 'On the Gift', Marion states it is still phenomenologically possible to describe or grasp objects even if they do not appear within the horizon of experience, that is, when such objects are absent *as such*.

266 See Derrida's own introduction to the 1953/4 dissertation, *Problem of Genesis*, p. xxii, where he says

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go.   Phenomenology is more than a house of presence for Derrida; it is a house that bears traces of absence as well.

Marion's misinterpretations notwithstanding, he proceeds to ask: First, can 'metaphysics' be exclusively understood as 'presence', or as absence too?[267]   Second, is 'negative theology' a *metaphysical* discourse constituted by presence as well?   For Marion, it is clear Derrida answers yes to both questions.   Marion disagrees: He argues that 'negative theology' is a modern invention since the Fathers and Doctors of the Church never mention it.   So Marion refers to the Alexandrian and Cappadocian Fathers, Irenaeus, Augustine, Bernard, Bonaventure, and Thomas; as well as Dionysius, who mentions 'negative theology' only once.[268]   Given the absence of the formula in classical *theological* thought, Marion thinks it must be a modern invention – that is, an invention of metaphysical thought.   It is this metaphysical formula – negative theology *as* "metaphysics of presence" – that Marion posits in Derrida's works, especially in his lecture on 'Différance'.[269]   There, Derrida critiques negative theology as a metaphysics of presence, of hyperousiology.[270]

According to Marion, Derrida denies negative theology as an authentic mode of

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that, "the motivation and the final sense of the phenomenological enterprise" as it develops in Husserl's philosophy is understanding how the "dialectic of the nondialectic [primitive absence] with dialectic [presence]" conditions the genesis of the transcendental ego and, thus, experience itself.

267 IN, pp. 20–21 / INE, p. 128.

268 See *MT* ch. 3. 'Negative theology' is mentioned in the same breath as affirmative theologies. Even so, Marion thinks it likely to have come from a redactor.   IN, p. 21 / INE, p. 129. Curiously, while Marion is satisfied to retain the name Dionysius without the prefix, "Pseudo-", he refuses to accept the concept of 'negative theology' upon the authority of the redactor – who also presumably works within the tradition ascribed to Dionysius – that negative theology is a valid formula describing the apophatic project of theology.   It is not clear, then, if negative theology is an absolutely modern formula.

269 *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 134. 'Differance' was originally delivered before the Societe Francaise de Philosophie. It is reprinted in *Margins*, as well as *Speech and Phenomena*. On this denial by Derrida, see also 'Letter to a Japanese Friend'. Indeed, this preoccupation with metaphysics and negative theology was already present in Derrida's essay on Levinas, 'Violence and Metaphysics', in *Writing and Difference,* esp p.144: "At arms with the problems which were equally the problems of negative theology and of Bergsonism, [Levinas] does not give himself the right to speak, as they did, in a language resigned to its own failure. Negative theology was spoken in a speech that knew itself failed and finite, inferior to logos as God's understanding."

270 IN, pp.   21-22 / INE, p. 130.   "[Negative theology] is always occupied with letting a superessential reality go beyond finite categories of essence and existence, that is, of presence, and always hastens to remind us that, if we deny the predicate of existence to God, it is in order to recognize him as a superior, inconceivable, and ineffable mode of Being."

deconstruction.[271]   More than that, Marion detects in Derrida the desire to distance deconstruction from the quasi-deconstruction of negative theology.[272]   Negative theology is for Derrida the only possible "serious rival" and, so, Derrida's critique of negative theology shields deconstruction against negative theology.   Moreover, while most critics interpret negative theology as a form of atheism, Derrida's intention is more serious:[273]   It is "to stigmatize 'negative theology's' persistence in making affirmations about God...and thereby to point out its failure to think God outside of presence and to free itself from the metaphysics of presence."[274]

Therefore, for Derrida, theology remains *ontotheological*.   In disagreement, Marion asks:

> [C]an Christian theology as a theology evoked by a Revelation remove itself in principle, if not in actual accomplishment, from the metaphysics of presence – or is it, in the final analysis, reducible to this metaphysics? Which amounts to asking: *Is Christian theology subject to deconstruction, or not*?[275]

Here, Marion's question recalls another: What has Athens have to do with Jerusalem?[276]   As Marion frames his critique against Derrida, is become clear that

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271 IN, p. 22 / INE, pp. 131–132.   The first moment Marion detects in Derrida is "an explicit denegation" wherein negative theology denies it says anything positive about God; the second is "an implicit denegation" wherein negative theology, in not speaking about God, in fact speaks about God and thus posits God into the horizon of presence again. On these two moments, Marion is quite right. However, it is with this third moment that Marion identifies in Derrida where a problem emerges with his interpretation of Derrida and his thinking on negative theology.

272 IN, p. 22 / INE, pp. 131–132.   "For Derrida, it is not, as it is in his other readings of decisive moments in the history of metaphysics, a matter of deconstructing figures of presence that confess or lay claim to being as such; rather, it is a matter of deconstructing a project which is already an explicit denegation of presence, thus of deconstructing a quasi-deconstruction."

273 IN, pp.   22–23 / INE, p. 132.   However, see *Sauf le nom*, in *On the Name*, ed. by Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995) p. 36, where Derrida implies that, if apophatic or negative theology inclines toward atheism, it is because it testifies to an intense desire of God, a desire that is never fulfilled.   In this sense, apophaticism testifies to a most radical notion of faith.

274 IN, pp. 23 and 33 / INE, pp. 132 and 148.   In INE (p. 148), Marion's language is not as strong: "stigmatizing" is replaced with "marking".

275 Italics mine.   IN, p.   23 / INE, p. 134.

276 For a proper understanding of the context of Tertullian's original question, see Allen and Springstead, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, p. x and p. 253n1.   Allen and Springstead suggest that the early Fathers had a positive outlook on what is known as philosophical theology today but Tertullian, and the Fathers with him, "rejected [the standards of philosophy and the philosophers] as the only standards and indeed as the proper standards to assess Christianity."   Allen and Springstead base their interpretation on Robert Ayers' own study of the attitudes of the Fathers to philosophy. See

Marion aims to liberate Revelation and, therefore, theology from deconstruction.

3.2. De-nomination

Derrida speaks of negative theology in terms of 'denials' or 'denegation'. Marion employs 'de-nomination':

> It is no longer a question of naming, nor by contrast of not naming, but of de-nominating God...but with something close to a negation, and consequently also to undo from all nomination, *to release and deliver God from it, thwarting it*. In its ambiguity, de-nomination bears the two-fold function of saying (affirming negatively) and undoing this saying of the name. It concerns a form of speech that no longer says something about something (or a name of someone) but which denies all relevance to predication, rejects the nominative function of names, and suspends the rule of truth's two values.[277]

This is the 'Third Way', similar to that laid out by Pseudo-Dionysius in his *The Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology*.   In the words of Pseudo-Dionysius:

> [W]e know him from the arrangement of everything, because everything is, in sense, projected out from him, and this order possesses certain images and semblances of his divine paradigms [affirmation - Marion]. We therefore approach that which is beyond all [beings - Marion] as far as our capacities allow us and we pass by way of the denial and the transcendence of all things [negation - Marion] and by way of the cause of all things [third way - Marion].[278]

Robert Ayers, *Logic, Language and Reason In the Church Fathers: A Study of Tertullian, Augustine and Aquinas* (Hildesheim: Georg Olm Verlag, 1979), esp pp. 24-34, for Tertullian's attitude to philosophy.   In this regard, Pelikan makes another acute observation.   The tension with Greek philosophy coincides with theology adopting Latin as its medium of communication.   See Jaroslav Pelikan, *What Has Athens To Do With Jerusalem?* Timaeus *and* Genesis *in Counterpoint* (Ann Arbour: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 2.   See also Pelikan's observation that Lucretius' *via negativa* was one of the first "counterpoints" between Greco-Roman philosophy and traditional Roman religion (pp. 3–8).

277 Italics mine.   INE, p. 139. The same passage in IN, pp. 26–27, contains "or of denominating Him", instead of "but of denominating God."   It also omits "to release and deliver God from it, thwarting it" – which better alludes to what Marion is trying to say about de-nomination as a way of 'liberating' God from human categories – as if God needed liberation.   As for Marion's mention of "the rule of truth's two values", it is a reference to Aristotle's theory of apophantic speech.   See the above discussion on Derrida's interpretation of prayer and praise.

278 Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, 7.3, 869D–872a. Marion himself is translating the original Greek in his essay.   See IN, p. 24 / INE, p. 135.

Furthermore, in *The Mystical Theology*, Pseudo-Dionysius has this to say:[279]

> What has actually to be said about the Cause of everything is this. Since it is the Cause of all beings, we should posit and ascribe to it all the affirmations we make in regard to beings, and, more appropriately, we should negate all these affirmations, since it surpasses all being. Now we should not conclude that the negations are simply the opposites of the affirmations, but rather that the cause of all is considerably prior to this, beyond privations, beyond every denial, beyond every assertion.[280]

Marion recruits other authorities, namely, Thomas[281] and Nicholas of Cusa. The latter speaks of affirmation and negation as paths to "learned ignorance", a "darkness" of incomprehensibility by which we "approach the maximum, triune God of infinite goodness…who is forever blessed above all things."[282]   Marion explains this as follows:

> This infinity does not revert to affirmation after passing through negation, but lays bare and circumscribes the divine truth as the experience of incomprehension [so that] '...in the shadows of our ignorance [negation] shines incomprehensibly the truth defined more precisely [eminence].'[283]

So, Pseudo-Dionysius, Thomas, and Nicholas, speak of God as a knowing beyond affirmation and negation – the way of incomprehension.   This is the way of eminence, which Marion calls "denomination."   And, as is clear from the above quotation, Marion's critique of Derrida will consist of a theological defence of negative theology as a proper, if not more proper, discourse about God than deconstruction.

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279 *MT* 1.2, 1000b. See also *MT* 5, 1048b.

280 See IN, p. 24 / INE, p. 135. Luibheid and Rorem in a footnote to this passage acknowledge Dionysius' terminology here as a direct contradiction to Aristotle's own (*On Interpretation* 17a 31-33), which states negations to be opposites of affirmations. *Complete Works*, p. 136n6. Marion concurs. See IN, p. 26 / INE, pp. 137 – 138.

281 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1a.13.2 & 3, which discusses whether (i) language about God is apophantic and, (ii) language about God is metaphorical.

282 Nicholas of Cusa, *De Docta Ignorantia*, trans. by John Hopkins, 2nd edn   (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1985; repr 1990), 1.26.

283 IN, p. 25 / INE, p. 136. Derrida's critique can be applied here, namely, that apophaticism as practiced in theology tends to (i) emphasize incomprehension as a form of 'experience' and is, therefore, unable to escape immanence, and (ii) apophatic theology inclines to a hyper-affirmation of the divine, "eminence".

Deconstruction denies the "third way": [284]   It interprets negative theology as unsuccessfully 'overcoming' affirmation and, instead, establishes a *hyper*-affirmation of an eminent being, hence, constituting a hyper-theology.   But Marion argues that, in theology, the "third way" overcomes both affirmation and negation – which implies an overcoming of knowledge, both its positive and negative forms.   Because of this, denomination is an unknowing of what was previously known by affirmation and negation.   The third way "means to overcome their [affirmation / negation] duel, just as it means to overcome that between the two truth values wherein metaphysics plays itself out."[285]

However, denomination is *grounded* in God as the 'cause' (αἰτία) of all things. Marion translates 'cause' into the French, *réquisit*, which Marion further translates as demand (αἰτιατά), to demand (αἰτέω).[286]   The 'cause' spoken of here is not the cause in the metaphysical sense.   It is "what all those who demand demand when they *aim* at Him [the One] [287] from whom they come and to whom they return." [288] Denomination reveals an intimate relationship with the 'cause' *toward which* and *from which* all things owe their existence.   However, denomination does not give the *name* 'cause' to God.[289]   Rather, "[w]ith αἰτία, speech does not say anymore than it denies – it acts by transporting itself in the *direction* of Him whom it denominates." Denomination conditions pure address, what Derrida has called prayer.

3.2.1. Hyper-theology: What It is (Not)

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284 IN, p. 25 / INE, p. 136.   According to Marion, Derrida, "[i]n sticking with a straight forward opposition between affirmation and negation", denies the third way.   "The hermeneutics of suspicion always runs the risk of arbitrariness and therefore should intervene only in the last instance, when no other interpretation appears possible any longer."

285 IN, p. 26 / INE, p. 138.

286 INE, p. 135.   Also, *Idol and Distance*, §14, 'The Request of the Requisite', pp. 151–162.   See Jones, *Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 21–24, who argues that Marion performs a somewhat "quixotic translation" of a Dionysian concept borrowed from Neoplatonism.

287 INE, p. 139.

288 Italics mine.   IN, p.   27 / INE, p. 139.

289 IN, p. 27 / INE, p. 139.   See Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, 5.8, 824b.   *"*He is all things since he is the Cause of all things. The sources and the goals of all things are in him and are anticipated in him. But he is also superior to them all because he precedes them and is transcendentally above them. *Therefore every attribute may be predicated of him and yet he is not any one thing."*   (Italics mine.)

The prefix *hyper-* (ὑπέρ) is a point of contention between Derrida and Marion. For Derrida, negative theology engages a *hyperessentiality* and operates within the horizon of metaphysics.[290] Marion adamantly disagrees: When negative theology speaks of God as ὑπερούσιος, "this is to deny that God is a being of any kind, even the highest or original being."[291] This 'beyond' is the same employed by St. Paul, echoed in Pseudo-Dionysius, which refers to the 'beyond' of 'logos', being, existence, understanding and knowledge.[292] It is not a matter of knowing the "superessential essence" but *praising* it.[293] Likewise, John Scotus Eriugena states hyperessentiality functions to go beyond the language of essences.[294] Denomination does not say what God is but what God *is not*, "for he declares he is not essence, but more than essence."[295] Yet, if God is "*more than* essence," then God is *affirmed* as hyperousious. Derrida detects this hyper-affirmation of that which is not *just* essence but *more than*. God is the most eminent being, beyond and *more than* being. For Derrida, the language of essences is not negated, even if denied.

Marion is adamant that Eriugena is right: To affirm God as *beyond* being is to negate essence; it is also to negate the denial of essence. For to affirm that God is beyond *all* affirmation ('yes') and negation ('no' or 'not'); God is "void" of essence.[296] This echoes Heidegger's notion in, *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, of "the beyond of

290 Cf. John N. Jones, 'Sculpting God: The Logic of Dionysian Negative Theology', *The Harvard Theological Review* 89:4 (October, 1996), pp. 369 and 369n60. For Jones, "negations proper [in Dionysius' negative theology] are so stripped of conceptuality that they do not risk delimiting God."

291 Travor Hart, *Trespass of the Sign* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), p. 202. Also cited in IN, p. 27 / INE, p. 140.

292 Cf. Eph 3.18–19. *DN*, 1.1, 558B; *MT* 2, 1025B.

293 Italics mine. See *DN* 5.1, 816B. Also, see above, pp. 27ff. In *DN* 5, 816A, Dionysius says: "We must go on now to *the name of being* which is rightly applied by theology to *him who truly is*." (Italics mine.) When Marion goes on to discuss prayer and praise, he omits this very crucial remark found at the start of *DN* 5.

294 IN, p. 28: "For one who asserts [God] to be superessential clearly denies he is essential." In INE, p. 141, this passage is preceded by: "For when one declares [God] *is superessential*, one allows nothing else to be understood than a negation of essence." See Eiugena, *De Divisionae Naturae,* 1.14; cited in *Medieval Philosophy From St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa*, ed. by John Wippel and Allan Wolter (New York: The Free Press, 1969), pp. 130–131.

295 IN, p. 28 / INE, p. 141.

296 IN, pp. 50–51n29 / INE, p. 141n28. Here, Marion cites Francis Bertin, who explains that the "super" (*suoer*) in *superessentiality* and "*more than*" "in no way imply a way of eminence which surreptitiously re-introduces affirmations at the heart of the negations... one does not suggest that God is an Essence situated at the apex of the hierarchy of essences, but rather that God is essentially void."

the Yes and No born of the thought of negative theology."[297]   Heidegger's calls the 'beyond' the "enactmental not" (not-enactment).   It never *takes place*, always escaping determination in history and experience.[298]   It is impossible to objectify, name, or "enact" in any way.   For Heidegger, it "is not a refusal of enactment, not a setting-oneself-outside of the enactment" in history.   Yet, it is known only through what has been enacted in history, in experience.[299]   The Heideggerian 'beyond' – *transcendence* – negates presence but, yet, it is affirmed *through* experience.

Heidegger identifies this problem of "beyond" as that of negative theology as well.   However, he adds: "The problem of [the 'beyond' in] negative theology appears, in a pale form, in medieval mysticism."[300]   Mystical theology, as it has developed in medieval history, dimly reflects the Heideggerian 'beyond'.   The former remains intent on 'referring' or naming the beyond; the latter sees it as "void", a non-identifiable reference.   Indeed, it is impossible to 'refer' to the beyond, unless one names it.   For Marion, the "hyper-" is also "void".   However, he also says that denomination is now a matter of "*referring* to Him who is no longer touched by nomination"[301]   One can pray to the God of mystical theology – the God of denomination, but not to the Heideggerian "void".   Mystical theology is grounded on prayer and praise as a reference, a naming of the Referent.

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297 "The thoughts of negative theology grew from similar motifs of the 'beyond yes and no.' "   See Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. by M. Fritsch and J. A. Gosetti-Ferencei (Bllomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004; repr 2010), p. 77.   Marion cites and does his own translation from the original German text.   See INE, p. 141n28.

298 "Enactment" is a Heideggerian innovation in phenomenology: "[T]he enactment-sense is the mode of comportment by which a relational-sense and a content-sense are seized within a historical and concrete horizon of sense – thereby unfolding the phenomenon itself as a lived unity of sense always susceptible of a transformation or re-appropriation. This enactment-sense, i.e., the intrinsic possibility for any phenomenon to undergo a transformation of its content-sense and relational-sense, constitutes the greatest Heideggerian innovation in terms of phenomenological description."   Sophie-Jan Arrien, 'Faith's Knowledge: Heidegger's Reading of St. Paul', in *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 3 (2013), p. 32.

299 For Derrida, this will be a dialectic between the "non-dialectic" (beyond) and "dialectic" (the enacted).

300 *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, p. 78. Here, 'negative theology' and the 'beyond' appear in the context of Paul's Second *Letter* to the Thessalonians, where Heidegger interprets the 'not' in terms of an existential mode of living that is neither a question of privation or negation but *letting-be*.

301 Italics mine.   IN, p. 28.   Hence, it is "a matter no longer of saying the *referent*, but of *pragmatically referring the speaker to the inaccessible Referent*."   (Italics mine.)   INE, p. 142.

3.2.2. Prayer and Praise

Derrida differentiates between *pure* prayer and prayer *as* praise.[302] Praise affirms a referent, a presence, and identifies and names what is prayed to. Again, Marion disagrees. "Proper" names can name the essence of things but never the individual *itself*, which is referred to only indirectly by naming its "accidents".[303] Metaphysically, names define "essences", such definitions being only 'accidental' to the individual *itself*.[304] So things *themselves* can be referred to by name but they are *never* their name. In other words, the presence of the individual *exceeds* the names given to the individual's essence.[305] Unlike essences, which are definable, "presence" exceeds the *logos* of definitions and names. Prayer and praise refer to the Presence *void* of essence, definition, and name. For the more a presence is named, the more anonymous it appears. The individual is not its essence.[306] And this is most true of God.

Mystical theology praises and names not God's essence but *presence*. Yet, names have an important function: A prayer without names and naming is "[a]n anonymous prayer [that] would make no more sense than does the claim to attain the proper by an (im)proper name."[307] But prayer names in order to redirect our attention to a presence.[308] Such "elevation" through prayer, which does not name, *aims* at union with God who is Unity.[309] Yet, as seen above, this union is an obstacle for Derrida.[310]

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302 See above, p.   29.

303 IN, p. 29 / INE, p. 143.

304 Aristotle states that "there is an essence of just those things whose *logos* is a definition".   Cited in S. Marc Cohen, 'Aristotle's Metaphysics', § 7, 'Substance and Essence', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), ed. by E. N. Zalta, online http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/ (accessed, 27 March, 2014).

305 Italics mine.   IN, p. 29 / INE, p. 143:   Therefore, "the individual [itself] does not coincide with its essence or *its presence exceeds its essence*...[and] an individual's presence remains anonymous in direct proportion to the degree to which its name becomes more present."

306 This is where Marion departs from Aristotle, for whom the primary essence or substance (that which is spoken in respect of itself, the individual itself) *coincides* with the essence.   This is definable, nameable.   See Cohen, 'Aristotle's Metaphysics', § 7, 'Substance and Essence'.

307 But has not Marion argued that all proper names are, technically, 'improper'?

308 IN, p. 30 / INE, p. 144.   And, so, prayer is an "elevating ourselves toward him by sustained attention."   Similarly, for Pseudo-Dionysius, "it is fitting to raise ourselves toward it [the Trinity] first by our prayer to it *as* the principle of goodness."   *DN* 3.1, 680B.

309 "Consequently theology [Scripture] praises the thearchy, as αἰτία of all things, with the name *unity*." Italics mine.   *DN* 13.3, 980b; cited in IN, p. 51n31 / INE, p. 144n31.

This elevation of being *with* God inscribes God within being and, thereby, brings God to presence.   Such union anticipates what Marion alludes to in Heidegger, namely, "the *interpretive comprehension* of what is aimed at *on the basis of and to the measure of the intonation of the one who intends*".[311]   Mystical union inscribes God within presence, comprehension, and discourse, since "the intonation of the one who intends" brings God into the act of "interpretive comprehension".   This is the heart of Derrida's critique of mystical theology.

3.2.3. The Good Without Being , Otherwise Than Being

It is self-evident to Marion that Pseudo-Dionysius employs being to God and creatures equivocally.   Moreover, God is, first and foremost, not a metaphysical cause of creation – not *Being* – but the Good (ἀγάθων).[312]   All being and non-being participate in the Good that surpasses (ὑπέρ) both beings and non-beings.[313]   It is *above* being and non-being, presence and absence.   So even if "the Good" is the most revered of names, it is "without essential impact."[314]   It is not only without being; it is *otherwise* than being.   In this way, Marion argues that the Good is the *tout autre*, the wholly other, other than being.

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310 See above, p. 21.

311 Italics mine.   IN, p. 30 / INE, p. 144.   Marion is here commenting on Heidegger's explication of the phenomenological, "as" – a pragmatic structure of understanding based on interpretations of what things can possibly mean for the subject.   See *Being and Time*, §32.   This is a crucial reference on Marion's part for, with this, he establishes the way of denomination as an "interpretive" act of "comprehension" that is dependent on how the subject understands existence, hence, effectively putting into question Marion's notion of phenomenon that exceeds the subject.   Cf. also *Being and Time*, §34, where Heidegger discusses 'being-there', discourse and language, as the disclosure of existence.

312 IN, p. 31 / INE, p. 145.   Cf. *DN* 4.3, 697A; 4.7, 704B; 4.10, 705D.

313 *DN* 5.1, 816B.

314 IN, p. 32 / INE, p. 147.   Marion's language is ambiguous (see IN, p. 32): "Goodness transcends Being on principle, but it itself does not attain the essence and *hovers, so to speak, between the derived names and the un-namable*. Thinking God without Being and only without Being does not, however, end up thinking goodness otherwise than Being – goodness remains undetermined and, in any case, without essential impact." (Italics mine.) Does he mean that the Good *is* inscribed in the horizon of Being, after all – even if not absolutely?   This passage is slightly revised in INE (p. 147): 'Being' is changed to 'being', which raises another question, namely, is the Good (and God) now thinkable in terms of Being, but not being?   *DN* 13.1, 977B: "...let us proceed now to the most enduring [name] of them all"; "...the name that is most revered" (*DN* 13.3, 981A).   But, see also *DN* 13.3, 981A.   "...we cannot even call [the unity of the Godhead] by the name of goodness."

Marion suggests this is makes mystical theology a *pragmatic* discourse where the presence of the *tout autre* forms the response of the one who prays.[315]   The Good, the wholly other, does not *appear* in the horizon of being.   Yet, the Good (*tout autre*) elicits *my* response to it, first and foremost, as a response by "hearing" what is for me an "intended" non-object, that is, absent to my intentions.   It is no longer 'learning' about the Good (the Other) but, rather, 'hearing' and 'listening' to it – *obeying* it.[316]   As wholly other, the Good is unknown and, therefore, *absent*.   This much Derrida will agree.

3.3. Privilege of Unknowing (Marion's apophatic theology)[317]

Marion's apophaticism is a "theology of absence".[318]   He does not have a problem with the metaphysics of presence *per se* but, rather, what it tends toward, namely, conceptual idolatry.[319]   Idolatry violates the God who is *unknown* and remains *the unknowable*:   No thought can think ('gaze') the essence of God and live.[320]   For Marion, the "metaphysics of presence" – and deconstruction -- constitutes idolatry in bringing God under its gaze. The only way that remains to know God is through *unknowing*.   Mystical theology assumes the responsibility of vanquishing idolatry of any sort.   Pseudo-Dionysius himself teaches, "God is known by knowledge and also by unknowing.... [I]t is the most divine knowledge of God that one knows through

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315 "It is a matter of being exposed in one's *intending a non-object*, exposed to the point of *receiving from this non-object determinations* that are so radical and new that they *speak* to me and shape me far more than they teach and inform me."   Italics mine.   IN, p. 32 / INE, p. 148.   Here, several questions: What does an "intention" toward a non-object phenomenologically appear as, if it appears at all?   And, since non-objects are non-determined – do not appear *as such*, what sort of determinations can one receive from non-objects?

316   See also below, p. 66.

317   For Derrida's notion of "unknowing", see the above discussion on the Secret, p. 34.   Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, §8, "The Secret", pp. 101–112.

318 IN, p. 33 / INE, p. 149.   Theology has nothing to gain "by being integrated in presence in its most clearly metaphysical sense" since it has "the means, the intention, and also every reason not to yield [banally][318] to the metaphysics of presence."

319   This is "the same [idolatry] as that of the gaze: imagining oneself to have attained God and to be capable of maintaining him under our gaze like a thing of the world.   And the Revelation of God consists first of all in *cleaning the slate* of this illusion and its blasphemy."   Italics mine.   IN, p. 34 / INE, p. 150.   For a fuller account of Marion's notion of the 'gaze', see *God Without Being*, pp. 7–24.   Marion distinguishes two types of 'gaze', the first being 'idolic', the second, 'iconic'.   In the first, the subject gazes at the object in order to represent it to itself.   In the second, the subject who gazes at the object is gazed at in return and, consequently, the object forms the subjectivity of the knower.

320 Cf. John 1.18:   "No one has seen God...".   Also, Ex 33.23:   "nobody can see my face."

unknowing."[321] So, it is necessary that theology speaks of God by affirmation, which must then be negated.[322] Again, Marion cites support from the Church Fathers and Doctors:[323] They affirm that "theology does not consist in naming God properly, but in knowing him precisely as what cannot be known properly – what must not be known, if one wants to know it as such."[324] For Marion, God is the "*known unknowability*" as such, which "disqualifies" all attempts at presence.[325] One may ask, as Derrida does, if this disqualification is ever absolute.

Marion cites a historical incident that illustrates the theology of absence and denomination: The heresy called "Arianism".[326] The Church Fathers know God through unknowing; the Arians understand God through the "primacy of presence."[327] As Marion explains, the Arian position is two-fold: First, the *essence* of Christ (the Son) is defined as being "begotten", while God is *essentially* "unbegotten"; second, as Eunomius argued, that the substance or essence of God is "signified by his name", that is, "the unbegotten".[328] For the Arians, the name of God and Christ coincide with their respective persons. They "include God within presence" by *giving* Him a name. To Gregory of Nyssa, this amounted to knowing God "as God knows himself".[329] Contrary to the Arians, the Fathers employed denomination to counter conceptual idolatry. In the end, denomination won the day and shaped *orthodoxy*, which for Marion is born out of the passion "liberate" God from metaphysics and presence.

Therefore, to know God is to know *without* comprehension.[330] As Marion

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321 *DN* 7.3, 872a (trans. Kosky, in IN, p. 34 / INE, pp. 150–151.) Here, Derrida will not take issue with the doctrine of knowing through unknowing, but rather with a subsequent teaching about another mode of reaching God, namely, a "union [that takes place] far beyond the mind."

322 IN, p. 34 / INE, p. 150.

323 Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, the Alexandrians, Origen, Philo, Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, John of Damascus, Augustine, Bernard, Thomas.

324 IN, p. 35 / INE, p. 152.

325 Italics mine.   INE, p. 152.

326 The fourth century Christological heresy, which denied the full divinity of Christ. Named after Arius of Alexandria (d. 336).

327 See IN, pp. 35–36 / INE, pp. 152–154.

328 Eunomius (d. 393) was the Arian bishop of Cyzicus, Mysia.

329 Gregory, *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*, 2.1g; cited in IN, p. 36 / INE, pp. 153–154.

330 IN, pp. 36–37 / INE, pp. 154–155.

explains, 'knowing by not knowing' is not equivalent to "ignorance" – the absence of any knowledge whatsoever, nor is it the inability to know.   These constitute the "failure of knowing".   But neither is it "knowing with the intention of knowing more".   Rather, it is a knowledge accessed by a "radical apophasis", reminiscent of Anselm's ontological argument: 'Knowing without knowing' means the intuition of a presence that exceeds comprehension, that is, conceiving "an other still greater than the one we comprehend", namely, the "Incomprehensible". [331]   In this "known unknowability", Marion states that "*Incomprehensibility therefore belongs to the formal definition of God...*"   In sayin this, however, is Marion's "formal definition of God" as "Incomprehensibility" contrary to the *telos* of mystical theology, denomination?

    Marion does not think so.   He further explains knowing by unknowing in two movements: First, *affirmation* – inscribing God as an object of knowledge within the horizon of metaphysics and being, which is the pre-requisite for the second movement, namely, *negation* – a denial of affirmation that will "clear the way for the higher possibility of an *infinite conception, beyond the comprehensible"*.[332]   As support, Marion cites Descartes' response to the objections raised against Descartes' 'Fifth Meditation':   We know of God's "necessary existence" both by intuition as well as inference from our knowledge of created things.[333]   The existence of God is self-evident for Descartes, who acknowledges that his position differs from Thomas Aquinas.   For Thomas, knowledge of created things does not make God's existence self-evident *to us* since, as Descartes explains of Thomas, "we do not know whether his essence is immutable and true, or merely invented by us".[334]   For Thomas, God's existence is self-evident to God Himself since "God is His own existence", but it is not self-evident to us.[335]

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331 Italics mine.   IN, p. 36 / INE, p. 154.   See also Marion, 'Is the Ontological Argument Ontological? The Argument According to Anselm and Its Metaphysical Interpretation According to Kant', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 30:2 (April, 1992) pp. 201–218.

332 Italics mine.   IN, p. 36 / INE, p. 154.

333 René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, ed. by J. Cottingham, rev. edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; repr 1999) pp. 99–102.   Also, L. Nolan's introduction to his article, "Descartes' Ontological Argument", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011 Edition), ed. by E. N. Zalta, online http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/descartes-ontological/ (accessed, 29 March 2014).

334 *Meditations*, 'Objections and Replies', p. 100.

335 *ST*, Ia.2.ad: "I say that this proposition, "God exists," *of itself* is self-evident, for the predicate is the

Marion apparently agrees with Descartes that the existence of God is self-evident. After all, for Marion, God is by "formal definition" that than which nothing greater can be conceived, the "Incomprehensible".[336] He even dictates the way to infinite conception: *knowledge [of God] holds only if comprehension ceases*."[337] The "privilege of unknowing" for Marion is a certitude, namely, that knowledge of God consists of self-evident knowledge of the One, of which nothing *greater* can be conceived. We know this eminent by *leaving* comprehension and turning to the incomprehensible. So there is knowledge of God. God *is* the "Incomprehensible".[338]

3.3.1. A Theology of Absence

Knowledge as comprehension reduces God to "presence", while a theology of "absence" *knows* God as "Incomprehensible", beyond comprehension. So God (*tout autre*) remains inconceivable, unknown, *absent*. For Marion, this is not a nihilistic absence but is analogous to the Heideggerian Nothing – as opposed to existents that are knowable, comprehensible. Therefore, Marion's "theology of absence" refers God *beyond* presence. In this theology of absence, "the name is given as having no name, as not giving the essence, and *having nothing but this absence to make manifest"*.[339] "Absence" becomes a characteristic of the manifestation of God, *vis-à-vis* Revelation.

A theology of absence responds to revelation by *obedience* derived from *hearing*. This is an implicit point in Marion's essay. He cites St. Paul – "not only in

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same as the subject; because God is His own existence as will be hereafter shown (Q. 3, A. 4). Now because we do not know the essence of God, the proposition is not self-evident to us; but needs to be, demonstrated by things that are more known to us, though less known in their nature – namely, by effects."

336 IN, p. 37 / INE, p. 154.

337 Italics mine. IN, p. 37 / INE, p. 155. For a critique of Marion's 'dogmatic' train of thinking, see Mark Manolopoulos, 'When Marion's Theology Seeks Certainty', in *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 4.1 (2002). Online, <http://www.jcrt.org/archives/04.1/markmanolopoulos.shtml>, accessed, 29 May, 2013.

338 IN, p. 37 / INE, p. 155: "[K]nowledge cannot rise up to itself except by transgressing itself until it becomes an unknowing, or rather until it becomes a knowledge that is capable of acknowledging the incomprehensible, and thereby respects the operative, pragmatic, and endlessly repeatable de-nomination of God as *that than which nothing greater [better] can be thought"*.

339 Italics mine. IN, p. 37 / INE, p. 155.

my presence but also in my *absence*" (Phil 2.12) – to illustrate how "absence" is the *modus operandi* of theology.   Yet, from the context that this quote is extracted, Paul is acknowledging the "obedience" of the Christians at Phillipi to what they have heard from Paul.   They "hear" and obey, rather than hear and "think", before obeying. Marion leaves out this crucial element: "Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always *obeyed* me...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."[340]   In light of this, Marion's "theology of absence" is oriented to a *telos* that does not consist in *thinking* the nature of God but, rather, *hearing* and *obeying* for the "working out" – the Heideggerian "enactment" – of one's salvation.   The theology of absence consists of an existentialist turn described by Marion as a "pragmatic" theology of absence.[341]

This means that ontotheology, "the Greek horizon" of theology, is overcome.[342]   Marion is sure that essence and presence are "missing" from such a theology of absence.   However, is that-which-is-absent (and has no name) not traceable in what is "heard" and "obeyed" – which are *modes* of experience, of being?   Essence and presence are not entirely missing, considering that one must "work out" one's salvation through obedience.   So, granted that a theology of absence begins with hearing what has no name and is incomprehensible, this 'beyond' is still experienced in light of an "enactment" within the horizon of presence.   This existential "enactmental sense", as Heidegger calls it, precludes the possibility of escaping ontotheology – even for a pragmatic theology of absence.[343]

It is easy to slip back into presence.   This may be why Marion sees the need "*to shield God from presence*".[344]   This leads to another aspect of Marion's theology of absence: God, the Incomprehensible name, is also defined by "weakness...as well as strength."[345]   In kataphatic theology, God is affirmed as perfection – omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient.   But with the theology of absence, Marion alludes to

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340 Phil 2.12.

341 INE, p. 155.

342 IN, p. 37 / INE, p. 155.

343 For a discussion on Heidegger's notion of "enactment", see above, p. 71.

344 IN, p. 37 / INE, p. 156.

345 *Ibid.*

"kenotic" theology, which refers to an event in the economy of salvation that manifests the weakness of God, or *kenōsis*: Christ, who "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross."[346] Marion implies a negation here, where Christ – "who though was in the form of God" (Phil 2.6) – emptied himself of his divinity, assuming humanity. But Marion does not make the slightest mention of kenosis. He simply remarks in passing that the theology of absence *saves* God from presence. God's "weakness" is implicit to Marion's theology of absence.[347]

God's weakness is demonstrated in the Name that does not name. With Gregory of Nyssa, Marion shows how *absence* is also the *modus operandi* of baptism.[348] Gregory refers to Matthew 28.19, which speaks of the significance of the unnameable name in the context of baptism.[349] For Gregory, since no name can signify God, the Name of God is beyond comprehension. It "designates what is not named and says what is not named".[350] In baptism, the baptized does not learn to name God but, rather, *receives* a name from the unnameable name.[351] This leads to Marion's understanding of the significance of the liturgy, where it is a matter of speaking *to* God and not *about* God.[352] It is to do what Marion calls, "*theo*-logy".

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346 Phil 2.7-8. This precedes the passage about hearing the message of salvation (Phil 2.12).

347 On this note, see John Caputo, *The Weakness of God: The Theology of the Event* (Bloomington & Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006). One reason Marion may have refrained from elucidating this aspect was to avoid a lengthy discussion on Christology. Yet, this is improbable since two of Marion's key scriptural citations come from the same portion of Paul's Letter to the Philippians (2.9–12). He left out the kenotic attribute of God, merely referring to it as "weakness".

348 "[T]he Word [Jesus Christ], in saying this name, did not add to the tradition of faith what it is (how could he have found a name for a thing above all names?). But he gave our understanding the power to set about piously to find, according to its capacity, *a name which indicates the supereminent nature and which is equally fitting to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*. . . . And this, it seems to me, is what the Word decreed by this *form-ula* [sc., say "the name" without saying which one] —in order to convince us that the name of the divine essence is unsayable and incomprehensible." Basil, *Against Eunomius*, 2, §§14-15; cited in IN, pp. 37–38 / INE, p. 156.

349 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

350 IN, p. 38 / INE, p. 157.

351 IN, p. 38 / INE, p. 157. For a discussion on Marion's debt to Gregory of Nyssa's theory of language, see Jones, *Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 14–43.

352 INE, p. 157. In the liturgy "it is never a matter of speaking *of* God, but always of speaking *to* God in the words of the Word."

Mystical theology (the Third Way) "has as its goal...to make us receive our own [name] from the unsayable Name." Denomination saves God's Name and, in doing so, determines a pragmatic relationship between God and us. We do not name God but God names us; we are inscribed in God, whose presence shapes us. Instead of theo-*logy* (theology with an emphasis on *logos*, thinking), Marion insists on *theo*-logy, "speaking *to* God in the words of the Word."[353] This pragmatic relationship is realized in the "liturgical function of all *theo*-logical discourse."[354]

Thus, Marion connects denomination, mystical theology, pragmatics, and liturgy. While the theologian's task is to "silence the Name and...let it give us one... the metaphysican is obsessed with reducing the Name to presence, and so defeating the Name."[355] Theology *is not* metaphysics; neither is it Derrida's deconstruction.

3.3.2. The Saturated Phenomenon[356]

One can be forgiven for thinking that Marion is doing theology here. The contrary is true: Marion claims he is addressing the "formal possibility" of a theology of absence, that is, how the *Name* and *absence* to can be objects of phenomenology, and how it is phenomenally possible for us to enter into the Name.[357] Marion is doing *phenomenology*. As a phenomenologist, Marion inquires into the *possibility* of a phenomenology of absence, not its *actuality*.[358] True to the phenomenological method,

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353 INE, p. 157.

354 IN, p. 38 / INE, p. 157.

355 IN, p. 39 / INE, p. 158.

356 IN, p. 39–41 / INE, pp. 158–162. See also above, pp. 11ff.; and below, pp. 72ff. In the revised essay [INE], this section is titled, "The Saturated Phenomenon *Par Excellence*" – an allusion to Marion's *fifth* type of "saturated phenomenon", namely, Revelation. Of the five types ('event', 'painting', 'flesh', 'the face', and 'revelation'), Revelation is the "paradox [i.e. saturated phenomenon] par excellence", since it is saturated in the same way as each of the other four possible types of sautrated phenomena as well. See Shane Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess: Jean-Luc Marion, Saturated Phenomenon, and Hermeneutics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), p. 11.

357 On the importance of the Possible for Marion, see above, pp. 14ff.

358 "Phenomenology is to make decisions only about the type of phenomenality which would render this phenomenon [of absence] thinkable." IN, p. 39 / INE, p.158. See also his 'Metaphysics and Phenomenology: A Relief for Theology,' trans. by T. A. Carlson, *Critical Inquiry 20.4* (Summer, 1994), p. 590. "Of itself, phenomenology can identify the saturated phenomenon of the being-given par excellence only as a possibility – not only a possibility as opposed to actuality but above all a possibility of donation itself." Also, *Being Given* (p. 234) where he speaks of Revelation as a "*possible* figure of phenomenology as such" (Italics mine).

Marion is non-dogmatic in his consideration of a phenomenology of absence, the *possibility* of which appears where God speaks to us, giving us a name, where we are inscribed in the horizon of God. This is the possibility of "Revelation" itself, and Marion wants to know "how should the phenomenon [Revelation] be described, such that we do justice to its possibility?"[359]

Husserl explained that all phenomenon is defined in terms of *what appears* (fulfilment, intuition, noema), and the *appearing* (significance, intention, noesis). Marion considers three possible scenarios that arise in the interaction of these pairs:[360] (i) Intuition and intention are adequate to each other, where *the appearing* intention is fulfilled (partially or fully) by the receiving intuition and gives rise to objective and adequate knowledge ("kataphasis"); (ii) intention *exceeds* intuition, which is unable to fulfil or realize intention and, hence, no objective knowledge arises since there is a *lack* of what appears ("apophasis");[361] (iii) intuition *exceeds* intention, which can never be adequate to the giving intuition since intention is unable to capture adequately what is given by intuition ("mystical theology"). In (iii), one can have an intuition of an object without intending it, conceptualizing it. Because intention is inadequate or falls short of what appears in intuition, this possibility gives rise to incomprehension. This excess intuition over intention is the 'Saturated Phenomenon'. For Marion, it conditions the possibility of revelation as a phenomenon.[362]

Marion's saturated phenomenon moves beyond Husserl's phenomenology, positing a different relation between what appears (noema) and the appearing (noesis). For Marion, the 'content' of phenomena (intention) falls short of the 'object' intuited; so one can intuit an object without comprehending it. But this contradicts

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359 IN, p. 39 / INE, p. 158. On criticisms facing Marion's attempt of include *all* phenomena in phenomenology, including revelation, see Jones, *Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 4–5 and, especially, pp. 90–91. Also, 'On the Gift', p. 70. Marion expresses his frustration with criticisms against his phenomenology as being tainted with theological intentions. He insists that his project attempts to arrive at phenomena that lie beyond theological concepts and, indeed, any intellectual comprehension whatsoever. He says, "I think the difficulty for phenomenology now is to become more fair to some phenomena [including the divine] which cannot be described either as object or as being."

360 Husserl and Kant only take notice of the first two possibilities.

361 Marion relegates 'atheism' and deconstruction to this second possibility. IN, p. 40 / INE, p. 159.

362 See also *Being Given*, pp. 189–199. For Marion's elucidation of the possibility of Revelation as the gift *par* excellence, see *Being Given*, §§21–22, pp. 199–221.

Kant and Husserl, both of whom claim that an object can be intuited *only* by knowing and intending the object. What appears in the appearing is determined by the knower. However, Marion suggests that it is possible that certain phenomena *exceed* the knowing intention.[363] These appear as "surplus" intuition that intention is unable to organize. "*What is given disqualifies every concept.*"[364] Marion calls this the "undoing of the concept and intentionality", which is also the aim of denomination. No concept of God can adequately *name* God, who *exceeds* thought and language. Nevertheless, "God remains incomprehensible, not imperceptible" – in other words, God can still be *intuited* without being understood.[365] Indeed, one can ask if God can be "given intuitively", for this means that there is the possibility of an immediate perception of God without any accompanying concepts [366] Marion acknowledges the *possibility* of phenomena that escape experience altogether, God being one of these.[367] Again, he insists he is considering the *possibility* of such a phenomenon, not its actuality. However, in order to entertain any possibility well, perhaps possibilities must be "hypostasized" as *actual* possible experiences.[368] Indeed, Marion does this when he proposes that:

> Access to the divine phenomenality is not forbidden to man; in contrast, it is precisely when he becomes entirely open to it that man finds himself forbidden from it – frozen, submerged, he is by himself forbidden from advancing and likewise from resting. ... [I]t could also be that the excess of intuition is marked – strangely enough – by our obsession with evoking, discussing, and even denying that of which we all admit that we have no concept. For how could the question of God dwell within us so deeply – as much in our endeavoring to close it as in our daring to open it – if, having no concept that could help us reach it, an intuition did not

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363 *Being Given*, pp. 196–199.

364 Italics mine.   IN, p. 40 / INE, p. 159.   See also Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess*, pp. 1–2.

365 IN, p. 40 / INE, p. 160.

366 IN, pp. 40–41 / INE, pp. 161–162.

367 "It is by no means self-evident that every phenomenon must be submitted to the conditions for the possibility of experiencing objects and cannot sometimes contradict them. It could even be the case that this is a requirement proper to the phenomenality of God — *supposing one admits its formal possibility, and what right does one have to exclude it*?" (Italics mine.)   Marion considers this objection (i.e. can God be intuitively give?) to be undeserving of a response "since it [the objection] no longer concerns the formal possibility of a phenomenon corresponding to the third way but is already concerned with its actuality."   IN, p. 41 / INE, p. 161.

368 Here one recalls Eckhart, for whom God "cannot be hypostasized [as an experience] and set over against the world as a transcendent being."   See above, p. 5.

fascinate us?[369]

Marion's saturated phenomenon suggests the possibility that God 'appears' as an intuition, not intention. God can be thought but not known. Beyond intention and concept, God is presence that precedes knowledge. Nevertheless, Marion also speaks of God as an *experience* as well – a *situation*: All concepts of God must be negated "so that we might…*dwell in it*."[370] The intuition of God already inscribes God in experience, albeit the experience of God *as* intuition. Otherwise, how would such a God "fascinate us"? So the saturated phenomenon continues to be, as Derrida would say, a discourse about God in the horizon of being. It does not escape ontology.

Therefore, despite Marion's insistence – that his phenomenology makes it possible for God to appear to intuition without actually appearing as a concept, Marion denies the God of metaphysics only to affirm the God of phenomenology. Indeed, one wonders if Marion is doing phenomenology as a service to theology. In his essay, he closes with Basil of Caesarea, who exclaims against the Arians (the "metaphysicians of presence") that it is a "dreadful thing" to give a name to him whom God has named above all names.[371] As far as Marion is concerned, theology has the final say.[372] Nevertheless, as Heidegger might say, the experience of "'dread' precedes, and prepares for, the genuine meditation on 'Being'."[373]

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369 IN, p. 41 / INE, p. 161. This echoes John Calvin's *sensus divinitatis*, of which he says in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is present even in the minds of idolators, the impious, as well as the religious. *Faith and Reason*, ed. by Paul Helm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 143–145.

370 Italics mine. IN, p. 42 / INE, p. 162.

371 See Basil, *Contra Eunomius*, 2.8; cited in IN, p. 42 / INE, p. 162. Also, *Against Eunomius*, trans. by Mark Delcogliano and Andrew Radde- Gallwitz (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), p. 140.

372 Following Basil, who says: "whoever keeps before his eyes the tribunal of Christ and sees how dangerous it is to subtract from or add anything to what the Spirit handed down should not endeavor to innovate on his own, but acquiesce to what the saints announced beforehand." *Against Eunomius*, 2.8, p. 140.

373 See Werner Brock Dr. Phil's 'Introduction' to Heidegger, *Existence and Being* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1949), p. 226.

4. Conclusion: Phenomenology, the Gift, and Revelation

Having considered the respective positions of Derrida (section 1) and Marion (section 2), the present discussion concludes with an analysis of the round-table discussion on the question of *the Gift*.   This is an essential component of the discussion between Derrida and Marion, for it reveals the crux of their discussion on negative theology, namely, the possibility of a phenomenology of Revelation.   In their discussion, Derrida and Marion enact the inherent tension that Heidegger identifies in the project to overcome ontotheology, namely, the tension between philosophy and theology.

4.1. Phenomenology of 'Lack' or 'Excess'?

Marion's mystical theology is a culmination of a three-step process: Kataphasis, apophasis, and hyperbolism, which is beyond the kataphatic and the apophatic.[374]   Mystical theology – the "Third Way", coincides with the hyperbolical, which is also the saturated phenomenon.   Two unique elements appear in Marion's saturated phenomenon: First, it gives rise to *presence* as well as *absence*; second, it does this *as* a phenomenon of excess or surplus, where *what appears* (noema) exceeds *the appearing* (noesis).   Mystical theology and the saturated phenomenon intuit the presence of God as beyond what appears conceptually.

Immediately, two problems arise regarding Marion's theology of absence in light of the Saturated Phenomenon.   First, whether a surplus phenomenon can *appear* at all given that it exceeds the intention that allows it to appear distinctively (*as such*).   Second, granting the possibility of the non-appearing of an excess *phenomenon*, is this "excess" a hyper-phenomenon that ideally (that is, possibly but not actually) anticipates the presence of what remains unknown?   Is this, as Derrida would say, a hyperessence beyond phenomenal appearing?   So far, Marion's arguments have implied that, although the saturated phenomenon is a problem for phenomenology (philosophy), it is the condition that makes mystical theology radically apophatic.   The challenge facing

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374 'Thinking at the Limits', p. 19.

Marion is, therefore, philosophical. How is the saturated phenomenon an object of phenomenological study if its appearance is non-apparent? Is this a phenomenon of 'lack' or 'excess'?

4.2. The Gift[375]

For Derrida and Marion, the Gift must be thought, even if it cannot be *explained* or *known*. A gift that is known or understood is no longer a gift.[376] A Gift – to remain a Gift *itself* – exceeds knowing and, therefore, presence and appearance; it is non-apparent. Nevertheless, it can still be thought about. Despite these agreements, however, Derrida and Marion differ on whether the Gift can be *described* phenomenologically. Derrida insists this is impossible, unless one stops doing phenomenology. However, Marion argues otherwise: The Gift appears – is a phenomenon (presence), even if it is never an appearing (concept).

For Derrida, the Gift that exceeds comprehension is indescribable since it is unknown. It falls outside phenomenology as a descriptive science. Even the gift given through revelation is given within an "economy" of being. Therefore, the Gift *itself* – *pure* Gift, is impossible. The very act of *acknowledging* a gift – as given by someone, to someone, for some reason – constitutes *the appearing* of the gift *as such*. It is *given*; it is *received*; it is acknowledged; and, therefore, it is circumscribed in the economy of exchange. The Gift *itself*, however, is always *other* than the economy of exchange. Nevertheless, the impossibility of the Gift does not annul its existence. Rather, it demonstrates that the Gift never coincides with the *givenness* that enters into the economy of exchange. The Gift exists but it can only be experienced, thought of, "through the experience of the impossibility [of the gift]."[377] For Derrida, the

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375 This round-table discussion was moderated by Richard Kearney. It was the final session of the conference. Caputo and Scanlon, eds., *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, p. 19n21. For the discussion itself, see 'On the Gift', in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, pp. 54–78. Referred to as 'OTG' here. Importantly, see Marion, 'Sketch of the Phenomenological Concept of the Gift', trans. J. Conley and Danielle Poe, in *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. by C. M. Gschwandtner, et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 80 – 100.

376 Caputo, 'Apostles of the Impossible: On God and the Gift in Derrida and Marion', in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, pp. 200–210.

377 Caputo, OTG, 60.

experience of this impossibility conditions the desire for the gift, a desire enacted in the repetition of giving. The Gift never *is* given. If it were, there would be no need for gifts. Likewise, the Name of God is impossible, never given. It is the experience of this Impossible Name that arouses a desire to know the name of God, making possible the repetition and supplements of prayer, praise, and theology. Yet, the Name – like the Gift, never appears so as to be an appearing as such.

Likewise, for Marion, the Gift ceases to be *itself* when it is reduced to the "lived experience" of the giver (*donor*), the experience of the recipient, or the content given (object).[378] Phenomenology can perform this three-fold reduction of the Gift by inquiring about them. However, this *constitutes* the gift within an economy, an experience of the gift appearing *as such* with an intention of giving.[379] But Marion introduces a fourth possibility: The Gift being given by an anonymous donor. Here, the recipient receives the gift without knowing the giver or the intention for giving; what is received is *pure* gift, gratuity of the gift without intention.[380] As such, "*the gift intrinsically gives itself from its self-giving.*"[381] Even if content of the gift is known, it remains as *being given* without intention. The Gift *itself* coincides with *givenness* and, therefore, appears but lacks the significance to be an appearing of any sort (*as such*). So it is not necessary for that which appears to always be an appearing in some form or other.[382] The Gift *is* present without *being* present *as such*. It is not confined to being. So, as Derrida himself observes, "[Marion] wants to free the gift and givenness from being, in a way."[383] However, Derrida is also adamant that Marion's description of the phenomenology of the Gift is, in fact, its destruction.[384] For the Gift that appears at all is already inscribed in experience, being, by virtue of its *givennes*.

In reply, Marion makes two qualifications. First, the Gift that appears *to me* is

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[378] Caputo, 'Apostles of the Impossible', p. 201–202.

379 See OTG, p. 64.

[380] Caputo, 'Apostles of the Impossible', p. 202.

[381] Marion, 'Sketch of the Phenomenological Concept of the Gift', p. 100.

382 OTG,, p. 57.

383 *Ibid*,, p. 59.

384 *Ibid*, p. 66: Derrida: "...what you [Marion] are describing under the authority of the phenomenological as such, is precisely the process of the destruction of the gift."

not the same as the appearing of the gift *as such* – that is, a specific mode or intention of giving.   Second, the phenomenological concept of the Gift is possible so long as it is a description of the Gift *itself* that appears to *me* (my intuition) and not the gift *as such* that is an appearing as a specific intention or significance.[385]   The phenomenology of the Gift Marion describes *is not* a phenomenology of the gift *as such*.   Derrida objects to this as being "the first heresy in phenomenology", for phenomenology is a descriptive science of whatever is appearing *as such.*   Phenomenology inquires into the 'horizon' of experience wherein what is *given* is not just what appears but, rather, what is given *as such*.   To do otherwise is to acknowledge the possibility of description of what lies *with-out* the horizon of determinate experience, of the *as such*.   For Derrida, this is what Marion suggests, namely, giving up the concept of horizon in phenomenology, which for Derrida is tantamount to being no longer a phenomenologist.[386]   For Derrida, Marion is not being faithful to phenomenology.

If Derrida is right, then Marion's saturated phenomenon is disqualified as a proper study for phenomenological description.   After all, it exceeds the scope of phenomenology, which attempts description of determinate experiences within the horizon of the subject.   A phenomenon that appears *to me* but does not attain a specific intention *for me* is not a phenomenon *I* can describe.   Indeed, it can still be thought but it is not a study for phenomenology.

4.3. The Event, *Khōra*[387]

In light of these problems, Derrida finds it insufficient and self-contradictory to think of God in terms of the Gift.[388]   He prefers the Heideggerian Event, *Ereignis*.[389]

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385 OTG, p. 66. Marion: "I do not recognize the as such as mine.   What I have said, precisely in that horizon, is that the question of the claim to the as such has no right to be made."

386 *Ibid*, p. 66. Marion: "I said to Levinas some years ago that in fact the last step for a real phenomenology would be to give up the concept of horizon. Levinas answered me immediately: Without horizon there is no phenomenology. And I boldly assume he was wrong." Derrida subsequently acknowledges that he himself advocates the suspension of horizons and, therefore, unlike Marion, does not consider himself a phenomenologist any longer, although he adds, "I am very true to phenomenology."

387 See above, pp. 12ff. and pp. 42ff.

388 OTG, p. 67.   "[A]t some point I am ready to give up the word".

389 Derrida does, however, has stated that *khōra* is not the Heideggerian Event.   See above, p. 44.

As Heidegger himself describes it, the Event does not take place but conditions ("grounds") the possibility of events, what *takes place*. Since it conditions the appearing of beings, the Event itself is *other* than being, other than appearing. [390] Being *other*, the Event "exceeds" being, thus implying a 'surplus' to existence that recalls the above discussion on Marion's saturated phenomenon.[391] Yet, unlike the saturated phenomenon, the Event is not an excess of what appears; it does not take place and, therefore, *is not*. Still, it conditions all appearing, grounding the impossible in the horizon of experience and making possible the occurrence of 'revelation' in history.[392] The Event precedes and conditions revelation.[393] At the same time it gives itself in revelation, the Event withdraws, is self-concealed. It does not appear though it makes possible all appearing. For Derrida, the Heideggerian Event most resembles Plato's *khōra*.

Like "deconstruction" and *différance*, *khōra* and *Eriegnis* designate something that is never present, never appears. Yet, it is what conditions the possibility of appearing and presence. If there is an "excess" here, it is not the excess or surplus of Marion's saturated phenomenon.[394] Indeed, Marion interprets the Heideggerian Event as an indeterminate appearance that has no specific mode of appearing *as such*. It is for Marion a "phenomenon". Hence, the Event is an "excess" that appears but has not obtained an appearing as such-and-such an object or thing. This is the saturated phenomenon. But this is not how Heidegger himself and Derrida understand it. The Event is not a phenomenon; it does not appear. If it appears, it is always an appearing of such-and-such an object or thing that annuls the Event; the object or thing that

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[390] Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trans. by R. Rojcewicz and D. Vallega-Neu (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012), p. 197. "Beyng essentially occurs as the *event of grounding the 'there'* or, in short, as the *event.*"

[391] "This event is itself a sort of excess, an excess unlike the existence of beings. *Ereignis* is not itself an entity, but it is not being as meaning either. It is the meaning-less or self-concealing *giving* of being as meaning." R. Polt, 'Meaning, Excess, Event', *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual*, 1 (2011), p. 27.

[392] OTG, p. 67. Derrida: "That is why religion is interesting to me. I do not say anything against it, but I try to go back to a place or a taking place where the event as a process of reappropriation of an impossible gift becomes possible." Derrida refers to this originary taking-place or event as *khōra* – not as described or interpreted by Plato but as understood by Derrida *against* Plato. OTG, p. 73.

[393] Heidegger, *Contributions*, p. 23. "The event is the 'between' in regard to both the passing by of the god and the history of mankind."

[394] Marion performs a "hermeneutics" of saturated phenomenon in light of *Ereignis*. See "The Event or the Happening Appearance", in *In Excess*, pp. 30–53.

appears is an appearing that *conceals* the Event.   The Event *withdraws* at the very moment of the appearing of being.   Therefore, "excess" here is not a surplus phenomenon.   It is the void or Nothing that is absence, a lack, in the horizon of being. Heidegger and Derrida would never call it a phenomenon in the way it figures in Marion's saturated phenomenon.   For Derrida, the Event always designates a lack or absence of what appears, while for Marion it designates a presence, namely, the *self* of what appears as *itself*, which exceeds the appearing *as such*.[395]   Most importantly, Derrida's *khōra* is indescribable and unknowable, while Marion's saturated phenomenon attests to what appears as a proper study for phenomenology.   *Khōra* never *is* and, therefore, escapes any possibility of phenomenological description.[396]

This is why Derrida and Marion achieve very different insights in their critique of negative theology.[397]   In speaking of *ereignis*, *différance*, the Gift, and *khōra*, Derrida is not doing phenomenology any longer but is moving toward the limit of phenomenology, from what is *possible* for phenomenology to what is *impossible*. However, the "impossible" cannot be defined, identified, or conceptualized, since like *khōra* it is not present or experienced.   It is not given nor givenness; it is never a Gift *as such*.   Derrida refers to the "impossible" as a "desire" for the *pure* gift, *pure* hospitality, *pure* justice, and "God", the wholly other of what is possible for experience. The impossible can never be reduced to the economy or horizon of the possible, of

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395 Marion, "The Event", p. 31.

396 "Among Derrida's points is that Plato was being most serious of all, he was doing the hardest philosophy, when he was thinking the *khōra*: in his not knowing how to name or identify what is proper to the *khōra*, Plato had to confront the structural necessity of this 'not knowing' in the 'being' of every 'identity'."   Niall Lucy, *A Derrida Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 68–69.

397 "In negative theology the difficulty is not that we lack intuitions concerning God (we are overwhelmed by them), but that we lack concepts fitting God. What we share in common, Derrida and myself, is that the concepts have to be criticized even in theology, as they are deconstructed in deconstruction. *But it is for opposite reasons.* In theology...we receive an amount of experiences through prayer, liturgy, life in the community, fraternity, etc. The difficulty lies in that we have an utmost experience without the words, the significations, and the concepts able to utter it, to explain it, and to articulate it. ..... there was an excess of intuition over the concept or the signification.   So, we have deconstruction in that sense, that the most fundamental concepts of theology before Christ – Son of God, Messiah, Isaiah, Elijah, the prophet, and so on – all these concepts which nevertheless remain meaningful for us in theology now, were rejected as meaningless, not because they were criticized as such, but because they were devaluated by the excess of intuition. ....I do not want to claim that deconstruction is opposed to all this, but I assume that *deconstruction cannot say it deconstructs because of an excess of the gift*."   (Italics mine.)   OTG,, pp.68–70.

phenomenology.   It remains *pure* desire, promise.[398]

What Derrida says about phenomenology, the Gift, and the impossible, has repercussions for his understanding of revelation.   Just as the Gift, the Event, and *khōra*, are 'impossible' to locate in the structure of experience, so is revelation: It is an *undecidable* for Derrida, since he hesitates between two hypotheses about the possibility of revelation.   One can say the *khōra* or event precedes revelation.   But doing so implies that *khōra* somehow causally determines revelation, which is ontotheology. Alternatively, one 'thinks' retrospectively of the *khōra* or event as revealed *through* revelation – the experiential structure of religion.   However, doing so implies that revelation can somehow make *khōra* appear.[399]   This also amounts to ontotheology. Therefore, Derrida is undecided either way.   The best he can say is that revelation is an impossibility.

4.4. Revelation

For Derrida, there is no event one can refer to as 'revelation', unless the source of its possibility is known.   Nevertheless, the *possibility* of the event called "revelation" is always already inscribed in thinking about an appearing, that is, what *is* called a "revealing".   These phenomenal objects that are describable *as* revealed constitute "revelation".   But Derrida is also aware that, to think about what makes revelation possible (the Event or *khōra* or the God), reason first accepts the appearing of something as 'revelation'.   This is already to conceive or comprehend revelation *as such*, as something that takes place, which is not its *possibility* (the Event or *khōra* or the God).   This possibility – Heidegger's *offenbarkeit* (*revealability*) – does not take place.   Like *khōra* and *Ereignis*, it does not appear with revelation *as such*, even

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398 "Desire is not perhaps the best word. I mean this quest in which we want to give, even when we realize, when we agree, if we agree, that the gift, that giving, is impossible, that it is a process of reappropriation and self-destruction.   Nevertheless, we do not give up the dream of the pure gift, in the same way that we do not give up the idea of pure hospitality. Even if we know it is impossible and that it can be perverse... If we try to draw a politics of hospitality from the dream of unconditional hospitality, not only will that be impossible but it will have perverse consequences. So despite this perversion, despite this impossibility, we go on dreaming or thinking of pure hospitality, of pure gift, having given up the idea of the subject, of a subject-giver and a subject-receiver, and of thing given, object given. We continue to desire, to dream, through the impossible."   OTG, p. 72.

399 OTG, p. 73.   For a description of 'undecidability' as used by Derrida, see Lucy, *A Derrida Dictionary*, pp. 147–151.

though it conditions the experience of it. So Derrida is alluding to the impossibility of locating revelation *itself* (*offenbarkeit*) in the structure of experience and, therefore, phenomenology. What is revealed *as such* (Heidegger's *offenbarung*) – the appearing of a determinable thing or object – is not that which allows the possibility of revelation to occur. So, there is revelation (*offenbarung*) but, at the same time, revelation (*offenbarkeit*) is *impossible*.[400] What is revealed *as such* takes place in experience and, therefore, annuls *pure* revelation of the other *as* other.

On the other hand, Marion is certain that the revealability is known through revelation, what is revealed. His analysis of Heidegger's distinction between revelation and revealability recalls the Transcendental subject of Kant and Fitchte. For them, the subject is the agent or horizon of what is known (the Possible, or the horizon or limits of possibility).[401] The subject decides which experiences are possible for knowledge. As a consequence, whatever has been labelled as "revelation" tends to be dismissed by the modern mind as "impossible" – at the least, only partial – phenomena, which puts into question the very possibility of revelation itself. For Marion, all this implies that something else: The subject already comprehends *a priori* whether revelation is a possible phenomenon, which presupposes that reason already knows which phenomena should be considered revealed, and which are not. The possibility of revelation occurs *within* the limits of reason.

However, Marion thinks that, with Heidegger's distinction between revelation and revealability, a reversal of thinking occurs: The possibility of revelation (*offenbarkeit*) becomes the horizon within which what is *known* to be revealed *as such* (*offenbarung*) takes place. This demonstrates an "excess" of revealability – a saturated phenomenon – not controlled by the knowing subject. Instead, what the subject thinks is impossible is now contextualized within what Heidegger conceives as *possible*, namely, the revealed (*offenbarkeit*, *khōra*, *ereignis*, God) that takes place in the

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400OTG, p. 73. Derrida: "Heidegger said, this is his position, that there would be no revelation or *Offenbarung* without the prior structure of *Offenbarkeit*, without the possibility of revelation and the possibility of manifestation. That is Heidegger's position. I am not sure. Perhaps it is through *Offenbarung* that *Offenbarkeit* becomes thinkable, historically. That is why I am constantly really hesitating. That is part of – what can I call this here? – let us say, my cross."

401 *Ibid,*, p. 74.

revealing *as such* to the subject.[402]

In other words, for Marion, revelation as saturated phenomenon figures in the experience of the subject and is, therefore, phenomenologically viable. Revelation is possible – even if the subject fails to recognize that what is appearing is a revelation *as such*, and even if it is impossible for the subject concerned. The possibility of revelation (*offenbarkeit*) exceeds the subject's experience of what is or is not revelation (*offenbarung*). As Marion insists, after Heidegger, "the impossible now is no longer what cannot be thought, but whose fact has to be thought. So the question is, how is it possible to remain rational and to have a discourse dealing with the impossible?"[403] In other words, Marion thinks revelation *is* possible. More than this, its possibility consists in "discoursing" about the impossible, namely, that which is revealed in the revealing – *khōra*, *ereignis*, God. Therefore, like the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius, God's *taking place* (revealability) in discourse coincides with revelation. The task now is no longer to decide if revelation is possible. Rather, it is to ask how one should discourse about the God that is revealed in revelation.

Hence the problem Derrida has with Marion's phenomenology of the saturated phenomenon multiplies. While Marion is convinced that our thinking about God though revelation is possible, Derrida thinks it is not. We can *think* God but we cannot know the impossible in light of the possible. A discourse with the revealed in revelation – that is, knowledge of *offenbarkeit* through *offenbarung*, is impossible. Since we cannot know the impossible, we cannot speak of it, let alone speak *to* it. One can only do this, says Derrida, if one is not doing phenomenology. So, the question arises: Is Marion doing phenomenology or – in light of his phenomenology of the saturated phenomenon – is Marion doing what Dominique Janicaud has accused him of doing, namely, ushering theology into phenomenology through the back door?[404] It

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402 OTG, pp. 74–75. Despite this compliment, Marion insists that Heidegger's "idolatry" consists in the latter inscribing revelation *within* the horizon of Being. See T. Carlson, 'Marion, Jean-Luc', in *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*, p. 238.

403 *Ibid*, p. 74.

404 Caputo refers to this as what Dominique Janicaud regards as Marion's theological hijacking of phenomenology, a move beyond the limits of phenomenology…" See Caputo, 'Introduction: Apology for the Impossible', p. 7. It is "what Janicaud regards as an illicit importation of the transcendent into phenomenology, a smuggling of the invisible into the visible." Caputo, 'Apostles

may be neither. Rather, Marion would insist that he is proposing a "counter-experience" of what revelation is. It is not, as modern phenomenology would suggest, the subject determining phenomena on the basis on knowing. Rather, it would be acknowledging events we 'see' (*intuit*) but cannot understand or name. Marion calls such phenomena events of "weak intelligibility".[405] Accordingly, such counter-experience is a different mode of 'knowing'. It will be a knowing without knowing, or an unknowing knowing, such as the Augustinian mode of 'incomprehensibly comprehending the incomprehensible' (*incomprehensibiliter comprehendere incomprehensibile*). Comprehension of the incomprehensible escapes all objectification. Nevertheless, as Marion's explication of mystical theology makes clear, the incomprehensible *itself* is a presence that is knowable by experience, namely, in the experience of union.

Therefore, an irony concerns the notion of absence that Marion espouses in his "theology of absence". The saturated phenomenon invokes a God who is intuitively *present* even though absent to intention. Marion employs a phenomenology of the invisible to introduce a God that is intuited but unknown, the God of mystical theology. Derrida, however, insists on a divine that is impossible for thought and speech. Indeed, the desire for the presence of the divine makes possible thinking and speaking about God; it conditions the possibility of speaking in terms of revelation as well.[406] But the divine never appears in the appearing *as* a determinate presence. To insist that this can phenomenally occur – as Marion does – is to insinuate that the divine *itself* is possibly revealed in revelation itself. It is to say that revelation brings the *other* unto the complete presence of the knower, that is, *vis-à-vis* the horizon of being. Such is ontotheology.

Yet, if this can possibly happen, then God is no longer the *tout autre* glimpsed

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of the Impossible', p. 208. Also, see *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*, ed. by D. Janicaud, trans. by B. G. Prusak (New York: Fordham Unviersity Press, 2002).

405 *Ibid*, p. 75. Marion: "This counter-experience is, in fact, the correct and consistent kind of experience appropriate to every decisive evidence in our life-death, birth, love, poverty, illness, joy, pleasure, and so on. One may argue that the ability to posit this hypothesis presupposes a 'comprehension of what is impossible' and, hence, technically falls into the possible and knowable for experience."

406 See Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' At the Limits of Reason Alone', trans. by S. Weber, in *Acts of Religion*, pp. 42–101.

through a glass darkly but an event grasped through the revealing of a revelation – an event with which human discourse can happen. This is what Derrida, in his critique of Marion, suggests the saturated phenomenon accomplishes: Not content to leave the wholly Other as the Impossible of revelation, as pure absence, the saturated phenomenon pre-emptively includes the wholly Other as the Possible of revelation, as pure presence. It is ontotheology in the guise of a phenomenology of the invisible.

4.5. Enacting the Overcoming of Ontotheology

Derrida and Marion find negative theology impossible for very different reasons. For Derrida, negative theology is a denial or negation of knowledge about God that translates into a hyper-theology affirming God as *hyperousious*. When that happens, negative theology no longer remains apophatic. Derrida's deconstruction of the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius and Eckhart also reveals the aporia of hyperessentialism inherent in what Derrida calls the Christian paradigm of the *via negativa*. In this paradigm, negative theology no longer remains possible. Despite Marion's insistence that mystical theology a discourse on hyperessentialism and metaphysics of presence, Derrida thinks that theology is always a discourse in which God is, above all, an experience. Theology is unable to escape ontology as far as Derrida is concerned. Mystical theology is a discourse of *presence*, especially since it promises union with God, a *teleological* fulfilment of presence that is more ontological than apophatic.

For Marion, negative theology mediates between affirmative theology and a hyperbolic and pragmatic discourse of knowing, namely, mystical theology. This third way is the knowledge of God by *unknowing* or "denomination", whereby discourse about God goes beyond affirmation and negation. As such, negative theology gives way to mystical theology, which is also a "theology of *absence*", a higher apophasis that overcomes both affirmation and negation. Due to this overcoming of negativity, negative theology is no longer possible once mystical discourse establishes a pragmatic mode of encounter with the divine. Negative theology always operates in the horizon of knowledge, of being, albeit as *negation of being*. Mystical theology transcends this horizon, accessing a presence that exceeds knowing. Marion calls this the saturated

phenomenon, which argues for the possibility of intuiting the presence of the divine despite being unable to conceptualize it. In light of this phenomenon, negative theology becomes impossible, thus giving way to mystical theology.

Using the saturated phenomenon, Marion also argues for the possibility of a phenomenology of revelation: In the "saturated phenomenon" revelation becomes a valid phenomenological study. Phenomenology must now take into account phenomena of intuition that *exceeds* intentions. This is a phenomenology of a different kind of presence, where the "absence" of intention gives way to the fullness of intuition. In the saturated phenomenon, intuition precedes knowledge – being gives way to presence. As such, Marion's phenomenology welcomes *all* phenomena, a move that Derrida finds problematic. As their discussion on "the Gift" demonstrates, Marion's phenomenology makes room for revelation as an appearing whereby the divine *itself* gives itself. Derrida questions if this is still phenomenology that welcomes the other as *tout autre*, absence. If the divine gives itself in the appearing of revelation, it no longer remains other.

Derrida, therefore, agrees with Marion that negative theology is impossible, although for different reasons. More importantly, the discussion on negative theology accentuates Derrida's disagreement with Marion's on a more urgent issue, namely, the conflation of theological revelation and phenomenology. For Derrida, divine revelation – where the divine *itself* gives itself in the revealing, is an impossibility. This is true to the extent that one is doing phenomenology, not theology. But as far as Marion is concerned, theological revelation is a valid study for phenomenological description. So, while Derrida insists that no discourse can safely overcome ontotheology, Marion thinks that this overcoming can be achieved by employing a phenomenology of the invisible – which Derrida conceives inscribing God into the horizon of what appears, namely, being. Therefore, ontotheology repeats itself. Ultimately, the debate between Derrida and Marion can be characterized as a *re-enactment* of the overcoming of ontotheology, and the inherent tension between philosophy and theology.

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