

Marion on the Salience of the Irreducible Human and the Broadening of Reason to Phenomenological Ethical Inquiry

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Abstract: While Marion disavows talking about ethics and does not explicitly articulate or directly engage with ethical issues, I argue that his views of human reason and the irreducibility of the human person is salient to phenomenological ethical inquiry. An analysis and explication of Marion's thoughts on the human person and reason support the view that his phenomenological thoughts have ethical implications as they broaden the scope of ethical inquiry to characterize ethical life more comprehensively. Thus, his views on the irreducible human person and reason are enriching, helpful, and relevant in ethical philosophizing and practice. The first part of this paper broadly discusses the context of Marion's phenomenological project and its relation to ethics. The second part analyzes Marion's thoughts on the human person as a phenomenon of event and his attempt to broaden our understanding of human reason through fundamental phenomenological concepts like the types of phenomena, the saturated phenomenon, and his phenomenology of love or charity. The third part examines the implications of his views on a phenomenological ethical inquiry by demonstrating how they enrich our ethical or moral capacity to deal with ethical concerns, issues, and problems.

Keywords: Marion, human person, saturated phenomenon, charity

The Seeming In/Visibility of Ethical Thought in Jean-Luc Marion

Just because something is invisible to the "eye" does not mean it cannot be seen. What is invisible to the eye will be visible when one widens the horizons for something to emerge. Just like a painting that shows everything yet slowly and gradually, the same is true of human thought concealed in written text. Such is the case of Jean-Luc Marion when asking

whether he has ethical ideas to offer us. One of the criticisms against Marion is “his lack of interest in ethics and politics,”¹ not just because it is not his primary concern, perhaps, but according to Christina Gschwandtner, “in fact, he thinks that ethics in the traditional sense is no longer possible today.”² That is why it is difficult, if not implausible, to establish a systematic and comprehensive ethical account of Marion’s thoughts. One of his commentators, Gerald McKenny, noticed that “there is an apparent evasion of the ethical in Marion’s work—evident not only in the fact that he has never written a book on ethics but more significantly in the fact that he seems determined to avoid speaking of ethics even where his inquiries seem to demand it.”³ But this does not mean that there is no way to identify an ethical aspect to Marion’s phenomenological views. For instance, Marion’s discourse on love implies a discussion on ethics. In fact, according to McKenny, Marion’s account of charity or love contains a veritable ethical resource for ethical reflection and philosophizing. He understood Marion’s phenomenological meditation on love as “a condition of the possibility of justice and that love completes justice,” which overcomes “the split between love and justice that is characteristic of much of modern ethics,” and that love conserves ethics against nihilism.⁴ McKenny asserts that this view “sets [Marion] against much of modern moral philosophy.”⁵ In other words, we may say that Marion’s phenomenological account of love serves as a locus of ethical relation as well.⁶

A similar view about the ethical aspect of Marion’s phenomenology is that of Amy Antoninka who argues that “Marion’s phenomenology can be viewed as a counter-ethics”⁷ against the prevailing brands of ethical systems like Kantian ethics. Antoninka believes that Marion’s “critique of Kantian ethics, and his critique of Levinas, suggest that he opposes modern metaphysical ethics.”⁸ It means that Marion “is not against all ethics, but against ethics that make humans into objects, obligations, universals, and

¹ Christina M. Gschwandtner, “Jean-Luc Marion,” in *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, ed. by Hugh LaFollette (Malden: Blackwell, 2013), 3157.

² *Ibid.*, 3155.

³ Gerald McKenny, “(Re)placing Ethics: Jean-Luc Marion and the Horizon of Modern Morality,” in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. by Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 340.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 353.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 347.

⁶ Geoffrey Dierckxsens, “Loving Unintentionally: Charity and the Bad Conscience in the Works of Levinas and Marion,” in *Bijdragen International Journal in Philosophy and Religion*, 73:1 (2012), 5.

⁷ Amy Antoninka, “Without Measure: Marion’s Apophatic-Virtue Phenomenology of Iconic Love” (PhD Dissertation: Baylor University, USA, 2009), 22.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

abstractions.”⁹ She also claims that Marion’s phenomenological account of iconic love opens a possibility for developing ethics through his account of the saturated phenomenon of the icon and love which Antoninka calls an “apophatic-virtue ethic.”¹⁰ Thus, she asserts that “Marion has room for a descriptive account of ethics and that ignoring ethics undermines his overall project.”¹¹

Another important context where one can perhaps establish Marion’s view of ethics is his phenomenological analysis of phenomenality and its relation to the concrete other.¹² Cheongho Lee explains, “At the center of Marion’s ethical views, there stands the reality of the infinity of ethical relations with the other. Ethics is initiated, actualized when the other appears to us as [a] phenomenon.”¹³ What makes Marion’s account of love or charity as already implying a command or ethical responsibility, Geoffrey Dierckxsens argues, is his insistence that such an ethical relation is only possible when the other is “a particular or concrete other who surely is unique or has his or her own singular experiences; it is only in being face-to-face with a concrete unique other than the ethical injunction can be expressed,”¹⁴ which is not the case in Levinas. According to this view, Marion’s ethics assumes that a view of the concrete (human) other presupposes an ethical dimension. It only needs to be seen from the viewpoint of the (saturated) phenomenon to infer a clear view of what ethical ideas one can discern from Marion’s thoughts. Hence, it is possible to say that Marion’s phenomenological thoughts conceal some ethical insights that we can learn from. Kevin Hart, for instance, believes that Marion’s possible phenomenological ethics can be described as “a discourse on values, on how we should live,” and intimates that “there is an opportunity to debate ‘intuitionist ethics’...and Marion in France.”¹⁵ But his suggestion requires an investigation into the connection between Marion and “intuitionist ethics.” He also connects love to Marion’s response to moral problems but quickly clarifies that this does not tell the whole story of ethics. As Hart writes, “It may be ‘first ethics’ (in the sense of

⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹² *Ibid.*, 73.

¹³ Lee Cheongho, “From Phenomenology to Ethics: Intentionality and the Other in Marion’s Saturated Phenomenon,” in *Journal of Ethics*, 1:116 (2017), <<http://doi.org/10.15801/je.1.116.201711.63>>, 73–74.

¹⁴ Dierckxsens, “Loving Unintentionally,” 18.

¹⁵ Kevin Hart, “How Marion Gives Himself,” in *Breached Horizons: The Philosophy of Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. by Rachel Bath, Antonio Calcagno, Kathryn Lawson, and Steve G. Lofts (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 22.

'first philosophy'), but it may not be a decent guide to [living] how to live concretely with other people."¹⁶

These accounts attest that it is possible to venture into this aspect of Marion's phenomenology. Through explicating his concepts of the human person as a phenomenon and the broadening of human reason (no longer limited to the principle of sufficient reason, but also includes insufficient reason or negative certainties), this essay hopes to show, enrich, and support the claims of those above on the potential ethical ideas embedded in Marion's thoughts and demonstrate that such ideas provide an alternative perspective to an understanding of ethics, phenomenological in character, and its style of inquiry.

The Irreducible Human as an Evental Phenomenon and the Broadening of Human Reason

Understanding Marion's view of the human person as an evental phenomenon and the broadening of reason requires a comprehensive discussion which unfortunately cannot be done in this paper. Instead, a general overview may help determine the essential characteristics of phenomena, as Marion understood it.

The Phenomenality of Object and Subject Phenomena

In Marion's *Negative Certainties*, he classifies two distinct forms of phenomenality of phenomena: objective phenomenon and subjective phenomenon.¹⁷ He defines the objective phenomenon as "that which remains of the thing once it has been subjected to the requirements of certainty."¹⁸ Marion returns to the old view of the object (*ob-jectum*) as determined or defined "within the classical scheme of adequation."¹⁹ This means that for Marion, our understanding of an object is typically framed by something that adequately corresponds to our mental representation and is radicalized by Descartes and Kant. Such a radical act sees the object as something within the bounds of the knowable, while those "which cannot become an object"²⁰ are placed outside the knowable terrain.

What distinguishes one from the other is that the objective type is descriptive, evident, factual, and knowable. This phenomenon has four basic

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Jean-Luc Marion, *Negative Certainties*, trans. by Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), §25, 156.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, §25, 163.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, §25, 159.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

features: quantifiable, foreseeable, causal, and possible. A phenomenon is quantifiable when one can fully grasp, predict and determine with certainty the totality of its characteristics “without any remainder.”²¹ For Marion, quantification indicates dimensions that have definite parameters which “determine all the characteristics of its essence (or of its ‘concept’), in principle without any remainder; as a result, it can be predicted, since its totality consists only in the sum of its parts and its characteristic quantifications.”²² The second feature is foreseeability. Since it is quantifiable, one foresees or determines its ends. By “the permanence of its characteristics,”²³ it is easy to foresee what it will become. The third feature is causality. For Marion, any knowledge of an object entails a causal explanation. For every objective phenomenal occurrence, there is a corresponding causal effect. Marion explains that an object phenomenon, “its passage to actuality results from a cause, to which it is by principle tied as an effect, able in its turn to take up the function of cause with regard to another object.”²⁴ The last feature is the object’s possibility which presupposes its actuality. Marion says, “an object is actual only because it is possible, it is possible only by not contradicting itself, and it does not contradict itself in its definition because it always remains comprehensible for a finite rationality (ours).”²⁵ We know the possibility of being a bachelor, 1 + 4, and failing all courses in a semester. These possibilities are comprehensible because they are self-evident or axiomatic, which can be “repeated and reproduced, precisely because said essence can produce the object at will as an effect.”²⁶ They are in themselves teleologically determined. One knows the bush from a tree and a fish from a reptile. Marion asserts that:

The object allows itself to be known exactly because its definition consists precisely in allowing itself to be known exactly—the remainder, which cannot be led back to exactitude and to its permanence, is sent away to the indeterminate domain of ‘subjectivity.’²⁷

These categorical features distinguish the object from the subject phenomenon. However, Marion describes the object’s phenomenality as something impoverished. While the object is assured by its “chief privilege,”

²¹ *Ibid.*, §25, 156.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, §25, 159.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, §25, 156–157.

i.e., its mode of certainty, its “phenomenal impoverishment lies in the fact that it must in this way satisfy the conditions of possibility, which of course guarantee its appearing.”²⁸ For this to be possible, the object submits itself to the regulations set by “the standards of reason.” In short, the object is judged by the a priori norms.²⁹ Marion thinks that the object phenomena satisfy the Cartesian and Kantian demands of the method, which requires “clarity and distinction of evident knowledge,” which “produce more certain, proven, and recordable knowledge.”³⁰

The subject-type or non-objective phenomenon is different. It is mainly characterized by “its contingency, its mutability, its reluctance to be qualified—in a word, its incomprehensibility.”³¹ Given this, as such cannot be objectified, quantified, foreseen (its essence), repeatable, reproduced, or unified. Marion describes its phenomenality as “an event,” “enigmatic,” “surprising,” “an actuality without cause, autonomous, spontaneous,” and “at the margins of knowledge and quasi-irrational.”³² In contrast to the objective type that is transparent, comprehensible, controllable, reproducible, foreseeable, and finite, the non-objective type “does not remain, does not persist, does not perdure, but comes about and passes; thus, it always imposes itself.”³³ These characteristics indicate non-metaphysical attributes. The non-objective phenomenon imposes into the recipient its qualities or attributes. In contrast, the constituting agent imposes the essential properties of the objective phenomenon, thereby securing the object’s distinction, clarity, and certainty. In the case of the non-objective phenomenon, we become passive recipients and witnesses of a phenomenon’s sudden arrival.

Hence, the distinctive characteristics of non-objective phenomena assume that they are irreducible to plain objective type. Contrary to Kant’s view, some phenomena are outside the governing conditions of possible experience as determined by intuition and concept.³⁴ Some of these phenomena, “that which cannot become an object falls outside the sphere of the knowable,”³⁵ according to Marion, “happen as events.”³⁶ One of these events is the human person. Hence, the human person as the “subjective type” phenomenon possesses such attributes identified by Marion. The

²⁸ *Ibid.*, §25, 159.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, §25, 163.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, §25, 157.

³¹ *Ibid.*, §25, 156.

³² *Ibid.*, §25, 159.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ For the discussion on the conditions for the possible cognition of an object, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A93/B125, 224.

³⁵ Marion, *Negative Certainties*, §25, 156.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, §27, 178.

irreducibility and incomprehensibility of the human person as a subject-type phenomenon are based on the idea that the human person is a non-objectifiable being that requires infinite understanding. Our encounter with the individual in the world, either perceptual or not, as a concrete other produces intuition so rich and overwhelming that one cannot entirely totalize and reduce the other into something like a natural empirical object. Maurice Merleau-Ponty says, “the perceived world is not a sum of objects,”³⁷ some are non-objects. Marion’s distinction between the object and subject types of phenomena is closely linked with his account of the saturated phenomenon. A saturated phenomenon reveals a phenomenon’s dimension that remains unknown to us and delivers us a “negative certainty.” In short, what we are truly certain about is that we are uncertain of our knowledge of whatever appears to us subjectively. Such epistemic limitation, according to Gschwandtner, “functions as a broadening of knowledge in the sense of a negative certainty about their inherent unknowability.”³⁸

Marion’s analysis of two modes of phenomenality is based on the principles of givenness he developed. How he approached and described the non-object phenomenon shows the operation of the saturated phenomenon. Such a phenomenon, as Marion claims, is essentially characterized as an event that is an archetype of a saturated phenomenon. Unlike the object-type phenomenon, which is understood in the Cartesian and Kantian epistemic frameworks, Marion grounds his epistemic description of the subject-type phenomenon in the context of excess or saturated phenomena.

The Saturated Phenomenon

Among Marion’s most distinctive contributions to contemporary phenomenology is the concept of saturated phenomenon. It both attracts admiration and scorn from other phenomenological thinkers in France,³⁹

³⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences,” in *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed. by James M. Edie (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 12.

³⁸ Christina M. Gschwandtner, “Marion and Negative Certainty: Epistemological Dimensions of the Phenomenology of Givenness,” in *Philosophy Today*, 56:3 (2012), 365.

³⁹ Among his eminent critics is Dominique Janicaud who accuses Marion of “methodological displacement” because of the saturated phenomenon, which dismisses the limiting function of the horizon. See Dominique Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” trans. by Bernard G. Prusak, in *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”: The French Debate*, Dominique Janicaud, Jean-François Courtine, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, and Paul Ricoeur (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000). However, Marion explains that the phenomenon is also “endowed with a certain ipseity or selfhood: it gives itself, it is not limited or delimited either by a phenomenological horizon nor by the limits of an I. It is, as it were, self-constituting.” Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a*

which, according to Marion's student Emmanuel Falque, is "just for the sake of making a splash."⁴⁰

To be sure, Marion does not claim that the saturated phenomenon was his invention. In fact, the concept, according to him, is present in Kant, Husserl, and Heidegger, only that it received less attention from them, underdeveloped, and thus partly unarticulated. Marion explains, "formally...it [saturated phenomenon] does not mark a revolution, but merely a development of one of the possibilities that are by right already inscribed within the commonly accepted definition of the phenomenon."⁴¹ Marion asserts that the saturated phenomenon challenges the limits of the mental categories we usually use when constituting something like an object or a thing. Central to it is the primacy of intuition over the epistemological and metaphysical constitution of a thing or an object. For Marion, contra Kant, "intuition is king."⁴² It is because any concept is a product of the given intuition; without intuition, no concept with content is possible. As Marion explains, "intuition without concept, although still blind, nevertheless already gives matter to an object. The concept without intuition, although not blind, nevertheless no longer sees anything since nothing has yet been given to it to be seen."⁴³ Intuition's kingly character, henceforth, is brought about by its power to provide an epistemic role to the whole "object of possible experience." In general, our human experience is only possible when there is intuition. It is given before being constituted. Similarly, we can think of a phenomenon that comprises our experience as given because, without it, no concept is formed and, as such, "is given only through intuition."⁴⁴

A saturated phenomenon, therefore, is an event by which the intuition we receive inundates our capacity to intend a particular experience, making intention inoperable. With this, it questions the subject's capacity to capture the phenomenon as an object fully experienced. Essentially, the saturated phenomenon accounts for a particular experience without using the subject's constituting power. In this case, a reversal takes place. The human person is constituted and a plain receiver of bedazzling intuitions, making

Phenomenology of Givenness, trans. by Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), §22, 219.

⁴⁰ Emmanuel Falque, *The Loving Struggle: Phenomenological and Theological Debates*, trans. by Bradley B. Onishi and Lucas McCracken (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 98.

⁴¹ Jean-Luc Marion, "The Banality of Saturation," in *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. by Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 119.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 28–29.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

the person a mere witness of a phenomenon. The saturated phenomenon, therefore, appears to rub the subject of “epistemic integrity”⁴⁵ and full control.

The Human Person as Subject Phenomenon

Going back, Marion’s approach to the phenomenon of the human person is framed based on his views of the phenomenality of phenomena and the saturated phenomenon, among others. Relating such views to his claim of the human person as an eventual phenomenon leads us to suppose that the human person is undefinable and non-objectifiable in the sense that the human person must be thought of as a subject irreducible to any object of knowledge and as an enigma to himself. In the opening paragraph of his first essay in *Negative Certainties*, Marion says, “I am not always exactly insofar as I think, since I do not think exclusively that I am, nor clearly what I am, nor, for that matter, based on where I am.”⁴⁶ The indefinability of the human person is based upon the notion of the excess of intuition that saturates the person, paralyzing the person’s capacity to fully constitute one’s whatness and who-ness. The human person as a phenomenon cannot be constituted as an object of my knowledge since it gives excessively that I become helpless to constitute what I essentially am. The revelation of the human in the unfolding of a series of events does not secure the adequation nor the materiality and comprehensibility of the self’s identity. Marion, speaking about some phenomena as events, explains that:

If we do not comprehend them, we must not conclude that they do not occur or appear, and even less that we do not know them, but only that they comprehend us because they exceed the condition of an object enveloped by a gaze. Not all phenomena are reduced to objects; certain phenomena happen as events.⁴⁷

In this case, the human person as a phenomenon falls within the event category, which is irreducible, unquantifiable, unpredictable, and infinite. For Marion to strengthen his claims of the infinity and indefinability of the human person, he returns to St. Augustine, who, contrary to the standard view according to Marion, is the source of the proto-phenomenological account of the self’s unknowability.

⁴⁵ Kristof Oltvai, “Another Name for Liberty: Revelation, ‘Objectivity,’ and Intellectual Freedom in Barth and Marion,” in *Open Theology*, 5 (2019), 434.

⁴⁶ Marion, *Negative Certainties*, §2, 8.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, §27, 178.

In Marion's phenomenological reading of St. Augustine's, *The Confessions*, he refers to a famous line from Book X: "For in your sight I have become a riddle to myself, and that is my infirmity."⁴⁸ For Marion, this realization is revealed by the *cogito*, which Augustine believes allows one to become a question to oneself (*mihi quaestio mihi factum sum*).⁴⁹ In other words, our knowledge of ourselves is opaque. My mere thinking of myself does not reveal my closeness to myself instead, it shows my distance from myself. Marion explains that the *cogito*

teaches me that in thinking, I am put at a distance from myself and become other than *I myself*, that in thinking, I do not enter into possession of any *myself* that could exactly and truly say itself saying *I*, that the more I think myself (and the more I am by thinking), the more unknowing I become of who I am and alienated from myself.⁵⁰

Here, Marion finds Augustine's statement strongly opposes Cartesian *cogito*, which promises certitude. While Cartesian *cogito* assures and certifies one's knowledge of oneself (hence, as an object), the Augustinian *cogito* alienates and "exiles me outside of myself."⁵¹ Against Descartes's claim of self-discovery, Augustine's *cogito* denotes an excess of the given phenomenon to the point that he "does not know his essence and can never say (himself), rigorously, *myself*."⁵² As John Rist puts it, "as soon as we begin to think about ourselves, we diminish that 'whole' about which we are thinking."⁵³ The statement, "this *I* that I am cannot nor should not, by definition, be known as an object; thus, *I* do not coincide with the *me* that I know, and I do not know the *I* that I am,"⁵⁴ captures the distance I had from myself and its unknowability.

⁴⁸ St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans., John K. Ryan (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 10.30.50.262.

⁴⁹ Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans. by Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), § 10, 64.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, §10, 63.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ John Rist, "What Will I Be Like Tomorrow? Augustine versus Hume," in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 74: 1 (Winter 2000), <<https://doi.org/10.5840/acpq200074117>>, 95.

⁵⁴ Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies in Saturated Phenomena*, trans. by Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 11.

A Broadening of Reason as a Response to a Nihilistic Event of Our Time

Reflecting on the current preoccupations of contemporary French phenomenologists, one of which is the status of reason,⁵⁵ Marion, among others, tries to address this concern in his phenomenological works.

In *Negative Certainties*, he reminds us of our desire or obsession with knowledge, i.e., “to know with certainty...even if nihilism often makes us almost give up on the ambition of attaining a genuine science.”⁵⁶ That is why for Marion, we are Cartesians “whether we want to be or not, and whether we know it or not.”⁵⁷ But, against this Cartesian current, Marion intends to broaden the scope of reason by opening some spaces for a “plurivocal rationality that is not reducible to the mind’s capacity to measure objects,”⁵⁸ which runs contrary to the “modern univocal method of knowing.”⁵⁹ The said method is of Cartesian descent, rooted in Descartes’s principle of *mathesis universalis* and order and measure which is sustained and prevalent in the exact sciences. But also in Descartes, we find him telling us that there are things that one wants to know that “wholly exceeds the grasp of the human mind,”⁶⁰ but still can be demonstrated negatively such that it reveals that one’s intellectual capacity is limited to a certain extent. But this does not mean, for Marion, that such realization renders us ignorant. Instead, being certain of uncertainty is a species of knowledge equally the same with epistemic certitude because knowledge admits “a matter of degrees.”⁶¹ Marion calls this type of knowledge “without object” or, in other words, “without certainty.”⁶² From the general view of knowledge, Marion proceeds by giving an account of reason essential to knowledge formation and acquisition. The broadening of reason in Marion’s thought is the acceptance and inclusion of what he calls the “rationality of charity” which for him is “more powerful, but also more secret and paradoxical,”⁶³ than the speculative (metaphysical) reason and calculating (scientific) reason (scientific).

⁵⁵ Tarek R. Dika and W. Chris Hackett, *Quiet Powers of the Possible: Interviews in Contemporary French Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 1.

⁵⁶ Marion, *Negative Certainties*, §1, 3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Taylor Knight, “The Intimate and the Impossible: Analogy without Similitude in Jean-Luc Marion” (PhD Dissertation: University of Oxford, UK, 2016), ii.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, ii.

⁶⁰ Rene Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, vol. 1*, trans. by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), ATX 400, 32.

⁶¹ Marion, *Negative Certainties*, § 1, 9.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Marion, Jean-Luc Marion, *Believing in Order to See: On the Rationality of Revelation and the Irrationality of Some Believers*, trans. by Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 18.

His account of reason is hinged in the context of his critique and overcoming of metaphysics and the event of nihilism. Metaphysics and nihilism are two primary reasons for him to pierce through the fortress of reason as secured by metaphysics. By metaphysics, Marion understands it as “the system of philosophy from Suarez to Kant as a single science bearing at one and the same time on the universal common being and on being (or beings) par excellence.”⁶⁴ Lately, Marion expounds his definition of metaphysics, saying that it is “first, that Being amounts to beings insofar as beings are present. To be present is to persist, to be self-identical (principle of identity), to be in time, that is, to be is to be as long as you can: the *conatus essendi* as preservation *in suo esse*.”⁶⁵ Along with metaphysics is nihilism which for Marion brought “a long and rich crisis”⁶⁶ to a metaphysical ordination of reason. Such an unfortunate fate is seen in Nietzsche’s attempt to deconstruct the “foundations of rationality,” and its “possibility in general of any primordial grounding.”⁶⁷ Nietzsche, according to Marion, puts into question the “two fundamental principles of rationality,” i.e., the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason. With this, he turned the ground of rationality sterile and superfluous, leading to the “crisis of grounding.”⁶⁸ The same principles become a central polemic for Marion in his critique of metaphysics. These, among others, such as a “need for certainty, ontology, causality, and perfect presence,”⁶⁹ are Marion’s target of his critique of metaphysics.

Therefore, the broadening of the scope of reason makes it possible when metaphysical restrictions are lifted, allowing for a reception of other forms of knowledge and knowing undetermined by and beyond the control of metaphysical principles. He finds in phenomenology a promising deliverance of the broadening of reason since it is through phenomenology that one can truly resist or overcome metaphysics, at least from Marion’s viewpoint. He claims that phenomenology does not do and go beyond metaphysics. He notes that when a philosophical inquiry does not involve *a priori* conditions or determinations such as the principles of sufficient reason,

⁶⁴ Jean-Luc Marion, “Metaphysics and Phenomenology: A Relief for Theology,” in *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. by Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 51. Steven DeLay describes Marion’s use of the term “metaphysics” as an “art for the history of philosophy, insofar as that history constricts all appearing to the mode of the object or being.” Steven DeLay, *Phenomenology in France: A Philosophical and Theological Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 95, n. 1.

⁶⁵ Dika and Hackett, *Quiet Powers of the Possible*, 51.

⁶⁶ Marion, *Believing in Order to See*, 15.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Christina M. Gschwandtner, *Reading Jean-Luc Marion: Exceeding Metaphysics* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 72.

identity, and teleology, such inquiry does not deal with metaphysics. Phenomenology, in this case, is excepted. He states, "Phenomenology goes beyond metaphysics insofar as it gives up the transcendental project in order to allow the development of empiricism that is finally radical – finally radical because it no longer limits itself to sensible intuition but admits all originally donating intuition."⁷⁰ He finds support from Claude Romano, who affirms the relevance of broadening reason in phenomenological inquiry, saying, "What phenomenology brought as its main contribution to contemporary philosophy is a renewed image of Reason."⁷¹ He means that contemporary phenomenology advances "a new concept of reason: a big-hearted reason that rehabilitates sensibility, perception, affectivity as being structured by essential necessities and bringing, therefore, their own contribution to rationality, as being necessary to its existence."⁷² Phenomenology, thus, offers a way out from the impasse of metaphysics.

Furthermore, Marion's critique against the metaphysical view of reason is based on its assumed imperial function to command the limits of the appearance of a phenomenon. The limitation is set by the metaphysical principles which condition every possible experience. For instance, the possibility of knowing the being or the existence or essence of something is conditioned by the law of identity, non-contradiction, and sufficient reason. Such possibility of experience is determined by what Marion calls the "conditions posited for every phenomenon."⁷³ It means that no experience is made possible without the guiding principles of metaphysics, which secure the grounds for the possibility of experience. It is clear in Kant that metaphysics is essential in delivering scientific knowledge. The reason why Kant wanted to rehabilitate metaphysics as a science is to certify that any experience we claim to know is not just scientific but made possible because of the conditions set up by metaphysics as their foundation. So, Marion tries to liberate reason from the metaphysical shackles that oppress and suppress reason's other potent capacities. The liberation of reason from metaphysical restrictions requires the operation of the saturated phenomenon as a methodological tool because it serves as a paradigm "that can move us beyond metaphysics."⁷⁴

Equally important to Marion's project of broadening the sphere of reason is the overcoming of nihilism, which can be done by overcoming

⁷⁰ Jean-Luc Marion, "Metaphysics and Phenomenology: A Relief for Theology," trans. by Thomas A. Carlson, in *Critical Inquiry*, 20:4 (Summer 1994), 582.

⁷¹ Claude Romano, "From Event to Selfhood: An Intellectual Journey," in *Gadamer Lecture Series* (10 February 2020), 4–5.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷³ Marion, *Being Given*, 181.

⁷⁴ Gschwandtner, *Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, 59.

metaphysics, as Marion argued. He describes nihilism, *pace* Nietzsche and Heidegger, as an event of devaluation of the highest or greatest values. Nihilism's rationality is ideological, and some features are expressed in such forms as "rationality without radical grounding, thus with neither reference nor pretension to truth," "instrumentalization," "plurality," "competition," and "totalitarian hegemony."⁷⁵ These nihilistic ideological expressions marginalize transcendental values such as truth, the good, and the beautiful. Thus, amid this crisis, reason must pass through it. Marion believes this crisis will last longer than expected, so we must bear with it. But he also suspects that "maybe nihilism still belongs to reason, or at least to its metaphysical era,"⁷⁶ thus, "a fact of reason itself,"⁷⁷ which any attempt to condemn or overcome it "by an even greater affirmative power,"⁷⁸ without cutting off its root from the ground, is a mistake because it would just deepen the ideological grounding and would further cement the "logic of nihilism all the more strictly."⁷⁹ Rather, Marion suggests, we must endure and resist it until we come to a point where metaphysics has been overcome.⁸⁰ The point, therefore, is that we cannot overcome nihilism without first unrooting its cause which, for Marion, is metaphysics. To overcome nihilism, one must be ready to dislodge and deprive metaphysics of its power over reason. In this case, Marion temporarily recommends a model of rationality, which he thinks resists nihilism. He calls it "communicational rationality."⁸¹ A rationality with a "zero degree"⁸² status. This sort of rationality counters nihilistic rationality. Marion explains that:

this model of rationality develops its zero degree because it presupposes no unhypothetical grounding (empirical or a priori), nor any self-showing truth (as in phenomenology); in short, there are no preliminaries. Indeed, this is why it can be exercised even in the situation of nihilism. Its formal poverty coincides with its privilege.⁸³

⁷⁵ Marion, *Believing in Order to See*, 15–16.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Gschwandtner, *Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, 28.

⁸¹ Marion, *Believing in Order to See*, 20.

⁸² Marion explains, "because truth no longer precedes reason in order to regulate it (by an adequation of the understanding with truth, in whatever sense one might understand it), but inversely so that reason, reinforced through debates and arguments, precedes and produces truth." Marion, *Believing in Order to See*, 20.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

His articulation of this model is based on the Habermasian context of rationality that is communicative. Such a model shows resistance against a nihilistic rationality. Marion thinks that the crisis of reason in the time of nihilism “comes from afar and will probably last a long time.”⁸⁴

However, Marion, while acknowledging the opportunities and the practical worthiness result of the model offers,⁸⁵ also finds it insufficient as “it allows for yet another new ideological drift,”⁸⁶ which is again symptomatic of nihilism and “the renunciation of any normative ambition, which is essential for a communicational model of rationality.”⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the model, for Marion, may still offer a temporary praxiological refuge against nihilism. I will not go further in detail as it requires a comprehensive discussion. I want to point out that Marion finds such a model of rationality a valuable form of reason that can defy the strong current of nihilism.

Therefore, drawing from these two primary sources of impediment to the broadening of reason, the implications of such limitations can now be discerned clearly. The first is reducing human experience to reifiable phenomena, which can lead to what Marion considers “the devaluation of all values and to succumbing to ideology.”⁸⁸ He refers to the human face and the flesh as irreducible phenomena that we try to reduce to plain positive scientific knowledge and ideology. When their irreducible natures are discounted, it can lead to nihilism because, essentially, they belong to non-objective phenomena when no amount of speculative and scientific determinations can fully account for them.

Given the obvious totalizing function of speculative and scientific reason, Marion introduced charity or love as a form of reason, so great that it can rescue knowledge of non-objective phenomenon from eternal concealment and irrelevance. As Marion asserts, “only this love can give access to the great reason.”⁸⁹

Like Heidegger and Levinas, who complained that Western philosophy forgets the question of Being, and ethics (or Other), respectively,

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸⁵ A sort of noteworthy result of this model of rationality, according to Marion, is as follows: (a) “it straightaway abandons any ideologization of rationality because it publicly unfolds its argumentative procedures, and thus experiences at the same time their limits and validities”; (b) and consequently, [it] condemns as a nonargumentative violence the tactic of suspicion and of intimidation, which always asks before any argument of the adversary and in order not to listen to him or her: ‘From where do you speak?’—which amounts to telling him or her to be silent.” Marion, *Believing in Order to See*, 21.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

for Marion, it is “the forgetting of the erotics of wisdom.”⁹⁰ The forgetfulness or blindness of philosophy towards love is attributed to the metaphysical determination of the philosophical inquiry, which excludes love as its subject matter and relegates the phenomenon to mere passion. Metaphysics denies any rationality or analytic characteristic of love and subordinates the understanding of love to “the questions of being and of knowledge.”⁹¹ In other words, philosophy as metaphysics sees multiplicity rather than unity in love, “philosophy simultaneously refused love’s unity, its rationality, and its primacy (and to begin with, its primacy over being).”⁹² That is why Marion asserts both at the beginning and the end of the book *Erotic Phenomenon* that “love is only told in *one way*;⁹³ that *eros* and *agape* “are not a matter of two loves but of two names selected among an infinity of others to think and to say the one love.”⁹⁴ It means that any form of love directed to various people (or even God, “God loves in the same way as we do,”⁹⁵) in different levels of relationships remains univocal. He also asserts that “*love without being*” is the proper horizon of the erotic phenomenon free from metaphysical restrictions. With this methodological move, Marion wants to show that the phenomenon of love and its unity can still be secured within the field of philosophical view even without metaphysics as its beacon of light.

Love forms a different figure of reason, a “greater rationality,” which Marion calls an “*erotic* rationality.”⁹⁶ This form of rationality is thought to precede and exceed metaphysical rationality. The point is that when we revisit the meaning of the very definition of philosophy, it is there that love reveals its own logic, which precedes knowing or understanding. When we say the love of wisdom, it implies that what conditions one for knowing something or acquiring knowledge of things is achieved through love. In other words, one must first love in order to know. This view of love sets Marion apart from others,⁹⁷ aside from the fact that for him, love is a phenomenon rather than an order of feeling, emotion, or intention as commonly understood. Love as knowledge finds its reason in the unfolding of the experience of love where love gives knowledge, that love “enables us

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹¹ Claude Romano, “Love in Its Concept,” in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. by Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 319.

⁹² Jean-Luc Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. by Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁷ Robyn Horner, “The Weight of Love,” in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. by Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 236.

to know,” and “enables us to recognize love [itself], and we only know by choosing to love.”⁹⁸

That said, the operation of love or charity destabilizes the foundation of the metaphysical fortress that secures the ground of reason. What love or charity aims to accomplish, in Marion’s mind, is to reclaim its position and certify its legitimacy as a species of reason which opens promising epistemic horizons that delivers knowledge the speculative and scientific reason failed to furnish. Marion explains that love’s reason is “a forceful, original, simple reason that sees and says what common reason misses and does not see—it would already have saved, if not humans, at least their reason.”⁹⁹ Its reason then unfolds its own logic. Marion recapitulates his phenomenological reflection of love from *Erotic Phenomenon* to his other work *Believing in Order to See*, where he identifies four laws of love’s reason: certainty, possibility, self-knowledge, and alterity. There is certainty in love such that love “always loves without condition, never on condition, in particular not on the condition of reciprocity.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, love promises and guarantees that the lover is certain of the love being shared with the beloved even if the beloved does not return it. As Marion notes, “Love does not require a return on its investment in order to love... a love one refuses or scorns, in short a love that is not returned, remains no less a gift given.”¹⁰¹ With this comes possibility as a law of love’s reason. Possibility impedes the impossible from happening. Marion explains that in love, “nothing is impossible...especially the ability to love without regard of persons...because love requires only itself in order to love.”¹⁰² It reminds us of the Gospel of Luke 6:27–35 when Christ commands his disciples and listeners to love one’s enemy—a gesture of unconditional love. Even the most unlovable being must be loved when one truly loves for the sake of love. This logic of love’s reason also secures our self-knowledge, not on the ground of thought but on love. One knows who and what one is by loving unconditionally. Here, Marion thinks we can escape the “illusion of thought” and “the suspicion of nihilism” grounded on the *cogito* or the *I* that thinks of itself by, with, and through itself. Lastly, Marion speaks of alterity as another element of the logic of love’s reason. It explains how love alone promises knowledge of the other as another and not as a mere representation of the other. “What it loves will appear to it to the exact extent to which, by loving it, it will aim at it, and, by aiming at it, it will move itself into it,”¹⁰³ Marion explains. These laws of love’s reason properly

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁹⁹ Marion, *Believing in Order to See*, 10.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

account for some non-objective phenomena with a degree of rigor like the other forms of reason. However, what distinguishes love's reason from other forms is its capacity to properly account (logos) rationally those phenomena marked as outside the realm of metaphysical reason.

The Salience of the Human Person as a Phenomenon and the Broadening of Reason to Phenomenological Ethics

Speaking of ethical concerns or problems implies understanding one's lived experience. Since experience is phenomenological, its dimensions, what appears and how it appears, are essential aspects of phenomenological descriptions. John Bengtsson comments, "The interest of phenomenology is directed towards the investigation of lived experience and its content."¹⁰⁴ A moral experience is no exception. The remarks of Mark Sanders and J. Jeremy Wisneski on the essentiality of phenomenology to moral philosophizing are telling here:

Any attempt to grapple with an ethical issue, or to construct an ethical theory, will need to make contact with such experience [experience of value] – whether to draw from it, to vindicate it, or to have some court of appeal in which differences of value might be adjudicated. It is the ineliminability of experience to thinking through, let alone resolving, moral issues that makes phenomenology essential to moral theorizing and problem solving.¹⁰⁵

In other words, reflecting on and taking experience seriously is inescapable if we want to engage in ethical or moral inquiry responsibly. When we speak of phenomenological ethics, we usually do not mean providing some action-guiding rules or principles for moral or ethical assessment or prescriptive recommendations to moral dilemmas or pressing moral issues like abortion, capital punishment, or wealth distribution. Rather, such an approach to ethics intends to enrich moral philosophy with valuable descriptions of moral experiences useful in developing a more nuanced, robust, and comprehensive ethical or moral vision. In other words, since

¹⁰⁴ John Bengtsson, "Phenomenological Ethics, A Historical Outline," in *Phenomenology World-Wide: Foundations—Expanding Dynamics—Life-Engagements (A Guide for Research and Study)*, ed. by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Springer, 2002), 521.

¹⁰⁵ Mark Sanders and J. Jeremy Wisnewski, "Introduction," in *Ethics and Phenomenology*, ed. by Mark Sanders and J. Jeremy Wisnewski (New York: Lexington Books, 2012), 1.

phenomenology is understood as a descriptive inquiry, many believe it offers metaethical resources. It does not provide normative claims for moral or ethical action. But somehow provide descriptions as materials for considerations in developing normative ethical or moral frameworks. Perhaps, we can claim that the distinction between description and prescription must be reconsidered because, as a product of a metaphysical dualism (fact versus value) is no longer tenable, as shown in the works of John Searle and Hilary Putnam.¹⁰⁶ In short, while phenomenology directly provides fecund descriptive accounts of moral or ethical concepts such as responsibility, freedom, value, moral sense, good, volition, and moral knowledge, which, in principle, are clearly metaethical concerns, it does not mean that these concepts do not play a valuable role in shaping the character or force of normative ethics. For one to say, like Levinas, that “you shall not kill” or one is responsible for the other, it does not simply describe an action of responsibility but of commanding the person to act (normative character) fulfilling such moral responsibility. In other words, what I want to argue is that there is a relation between the metaethical, or descriptive ethics and normative ethics and such relationship has to do with guiding the other in forming normative policies to regulate one’s ethical or moral actions. It does not mean that the ethical thoughts we derived from Marion directly provides a normative framework for moral or ethical assessment. Rather, a broader understanding of moral experience, human person, and reason can facilitate a more comprehensive view when making or formulating normative guidelines for ethical actions. In the case of the human person, what this study shows is the inadequate account of understanding the human person as seen in the way the dominant normative ethical frameworks understood the human person. For instance, the human person as a rational being as the basis for moral principles is insufficient foundation of a normative moral theory as such theory valorizes or glorifies the human person as the primary consideration for moral assessment. Thus, this form of normative theory remains human-centered and its application to other non-human beings renders insufficient.¹⁰⁷

The ethical dimension in the works of phenomenologists like Jean-Luc Marion avoid articulating a phenomenological reflection on ethics or making explicit moral avowals. But a closer examination of their texts helps

¹⁰⁶ See John Searle, “How to Derive ‘Ought’ From ‘Is’,” in *The Philosophical Review*, 73:1 (January 1964), <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2183201>>.

¹⁰⁷ Some moral thinkers have developed non-human-centered normative frameworks, such as Paul Taylor’s theory of biocentrism and Aldo Leopold’s “land ethic.” See Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

us discern the ethical thoughts and moral resources found in them. In the case of Marion, the concepts discussed above show how those salient concepts have ethical aspects or dimensions quite useful in deepening our understanding of ethics, the nature of its inquiry, and moral reasoning.

Marion contends that our experience of ourselves, others, and anything in-between shows the irreducibility of the human person to object or being. It means that the category of the human person belongs to a different kind, a non-metaphysical category—a non-objective phenomenon or event. With this, such an experience gives us a resource for a broader understanding of the profundity of human life. In the context of ethical or moral experience, examining the context of moral codes, ethical principles, and norms abstracted based on objective and pure logical or conceptual analysis without integrating elements informed and produced by non-objective experience shows a lack of a concrete force to deal with moral issues and problems comprehensively. Take the case of mainstream ethical frameworks like utilitarianism and deontology, which usually serve as moral frameworks for making moral decisions. While these frameworks set up rules for action, these rules exclude some salient considerations, such as the human being as maker of moral contexts or situations and the use of reason outside the panopticon of metaphysics. By “maker of moral contexts,” I mean that a human agent contributes to forming a moral context or situation but is not exclusively or solely generated or directed by them. Any moral situation or context also involves other agents and forces that help shape a moral case. Following the phenomenological lexicon of Marion, a moral situation is a phenomenon that may render the moral agent as one among the actors in a moral stage that is sometimes helpless and a mere witness when a moral phenomenon gives too much of itself. In this case, the moral agent decides without certainty—not due to mere epistemic ignorance but because of an overwhelming intuition presented to them; a bit of moral luck may ensue.

Surely, some moral issues or cases are so banal that a moral agent or an ethical person making a moral assessment can easily resolve or navigate a situation without difficulty. But some moral scenarios or cases are too complex that keenness to a situation, mastery of moral rules or principles, and sharpness of reasoning is insufficient for moral deliberation. In such cases, a broader view of the moral agent (the human person in particular, which does not mean offering a normative guideline) and the use of reason may help augment the comprehensibility of the overall moral situations. An analogy could better explain the point. A Rubik’s cube on the table can be seen wholly without perceiving all its sides. We infer the unseen profiles with certitude by intention, knowing that those profiles are of the cube, not something else. Some profiles are immediately perceived as we perceive a cube, but these are according to perspective. It means one sees those profiles

from a particular location, angle, distance, and conditions. Hence, a perception of a cube is perspectival, depending on where the person is sitting, the angle seen, the condition of the room, and the distance from the cube. However, it does not mean that the cube appears partially. Rather, the cube appears in its entirety to the perceiver. Similarly, in moral experience, we encounter the same process. We experience a particular moral phenomenon, analyze it, and make a moral decision or judgment. This is a common process when dealing with moral experiences or situations. With this, moral philosophers develop various frameworks for navigating the moral deliberation process. However, some dominant frameworks fail to notice a few important considerations in moral deliberation. For instance, utilitarianism, despite its simplicity and intuitiveness, still lacks a more nuanced view of the moral agent, the nature of happiness as its basis of moral valuation, and the paradoxical character of its basic principle (the greatest happiness for a greater number) to be more comprehensive and less reductive. The human agency should be seen in a new light, given the reassessment of the status of the human subject by the Western contemporary European philosophical tradition, which led to the overthrowing of the human subject from its imperial throne as the sole arbiter of knowledge and the reference point of all various conditions. In other words, further understanding and grasping the nuances of those moral or ethical concepts is a descriptive activity.

In Marion, this is seen in how his anti-Kantian standpoint displaced the subject to prove that ethical frameworks are not solely determined by and formulated for the human subject but rather can be seen in the light of ethical phenomenality, i.e., the subject as a witness of a phenomenon. In this decentering or re-positioning, Marion hopes to challenge rationality informed by metaphysical determinations (such as the principles of sufficient reason and identity) as the guiding lights of an ethical framework, which are too formal and empty with content (a criticism against Kantian ethics).¹⁰⁸ His rejection of metaphysics and his critique of nihilism imply overcoming moribund ethics from the tyranny of metaphysics. His articulations of concepts such as the human person as a phenomenon of event, love and its reason, the human flesh, other, and the face, among others, reveal how moral discourse is possible without any recourse to the metaphysical grounding of such. We may also say that Marion offers a kind of ethical insight that reinforces an enriching manner of ethical inquiry that includes not just

¹⁰⁸ Such a criticism against Kant remains within the level of descriptive ethics since Marion challenges the foundation of the metaphysics of morals of Kant which is a metaethical inquiry into morality. See Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

human interests and concerns but the interests of non-human living beings. In other words, the broadening of moral reasoning and ethical inquiry should no longer be centered on human interest but on the interests of all living organisms, as these living organisms are also part of our moral experience. An example of this is an ethical inquiry into the environment. The dominant normative ethical frameworks like deontology and utilitarianism need to be revisited or learn from the phenomenological approach to ethics to address the ethical or moral concerns on the environment. I do not mean that ethical thoughts derived from Marion's phenomenological reflection on some salient concepts can be developed or formed as a normative framework. Rather, those ethical ideas may guide us in developing a normative framework that fully accommodates moral considerations for non-human beings. While philosophers tend to force, extend, or re-engineer the moral frameworks of utilitarianism, deontological ethics, and virtues ethics to environmental moral issues, they still need to be improved (what to improve is its foundation, which is the reexamination of the metaethical concepts where the framework is founded). The point is that when confronted with a given phenomenon, if such a phenomenon lets itself be revealed without any condition, the ethical frameworks we use fail to account so many intuitions.

Conclusion

The discussion above on Marion's phenomenological concepts—such as the human person and reason, as understood within the framework of his main phenomenological tools, such as the saturated phenomenon, its archetypes, such as love or charity, and the two forms of phenomenality—reveal how his thoughts may be of use to further examine, if not challenge, the foundational orientation of meta-ethical and normative ethical frameworks. We have learned from Marion's critique of metaphysics and nihilism that ethical perspectives and theories are all designed and grounded on metaphysical principles. Thus, they can hardly widen the scope of their inquiry and some other considerations through practical reason. What Marion's account of the irreducibility of the human person and the broadening of human reason show is that ethical inquiry and reasoning are limited because they are framed based on the view that the human person is a mere objective phenomenon and that we can fully understand who and what a person is. Contrary to this is the idea of Marion that the human person is a subjective or non-objective phenomenon that we cannot fully comprehend.

Moreover, in the postmodern age, the person is no longer a "crowning king" who is the source or the reference point of all values. Instead, the human person is among other significant and equally valuable

agents, factors, or actors in different spheres of action, such as moral or ethical. In other words, ethical frameworks should no longer assume that human concerns or interests are central or greater than those of others. These others are not necessarily human others. It could be non-human living beings, structures, or institutions. In short, moral decision-makers should reconsider operating their reasoning within the bounds of human-centered ethics. We should understand, against dogmatic claims to moral judgments, the tentativeness of moral judgments because although moral phenomenon always appears and gives itself fully, it does not guarantee that it is entirely received as well.

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