

The Vanity of Authenticity
Forthcoming in *Sophia*

Qu'une chose aussi visible qu'est la vanité du monde soit si peu connue que ce soit une chose étrange et surprenante de dire que c'est une sottise de chercher les grandeurs, cela est admirable.
—Pascal

Among the many indelible contributions of Jean-Luc Marion's oeuvre, perhaps most noteworthy above all has been its revitalization and reconfiguration of phenomenology.¹ If the "question of the subject"—to borrow the Ricœur phrase—is still pressing even today, this is precisely because the question of self implicates another question of longstanding phenomenological significance, that of the reduction. Marion directly notes the connection himself in *De surcroît*, where he observes, in regard to this methodological entwinement between self and the reduction, that how one chooses to formulate the reduction thereby determines the one who in turn puts it to work: "La réduction réduit donc toujours d'abord celui qui l'opère—et c'est à ce retour sur soi que se mesure la validité phénoménologique de chaque essai de réduction."²

If the last century's most notable phenomenological figures placed selfhood and philosophical method in reciprocal exchange (the introduction to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, particularly sections 2 and 3, is among the most famous instances of such a strategy), it is little wonder that Marion does the same. In *Réduction et donation* we find phenomenology's previous attempts to do subjectivity justice, but which met with failure, characterized as the consequence of an antecedent allegiance to one dubious methodological commitment or other: just as Husserl ultimately conceals the "things themselves" regarding ourselves due to his obsession with a science of consciousness and the *I*, so Heidegger conceals our essence with his obsession with Being and *Dasein*. The misdirection, in both instances, is the result of the reduction at work. Marion's own

formulation of the reduction, in its turn, aims to accomplish what Husserl's and Heidegger's own reductions failed to do, by opening the field of appearing so that nothing either hinders or distorts them. The phenomenon of self, of what or who we are, is not characterized adequately by such reductions—it will be our task to show in what respect they fail to do so. And as Marion will remind us, because of their shared inability to do so we must revisit the “question of the subject” anew. Phenomenology, consequently, must undergo a methodological adjustment.

How does Marion propose to revise the relation between the self and the reduction? And how, we shall have to ask, is the experience of vanity, a phenomenon first immortalized in Pascal's *Pensées* and reappropriated by Marion, crucial to ferrying phenomenology beyond a science of consciousness (Husserl) or the questioning of the meaning of Being (Heidegger)? There are many ways one might present (and thus exploit) the immense breakthrough Marion's work represents. There are two reasons motivating an approach that sees the phenomenon of vanity as crucial. First, to locate Marion's iteration of the reduction within the horizon of its response to vanity, *le réduction érotique*, is to place the reduction's conceptual development in the historical context of Husserl's and Heidegger's own positions. It is to raise seriously the question of what exactly phenomenology *is*. Just as importantly for us, however, is a second consideration related to the first: the blow of vanity reveals that authentic resoluteness, as understood by Heidegger and his readers, does not reach the most intimate mode of our existence. There is a dimension to self-experience more primordial than the care-structure of authentic *Dasein*. It will be a matter of moving from Being to love, and hence from the horizon of the world to a living relationship with God. Phenomenology is not first or above all a reflective inquiry into the problem of Being; more deeply, for those who have already made the crossing from being-in-the-world to being-before-God know, it can coax others to step into the order of love. Phenomenology does not just show; in showing, it also guides.

This is what Marion's analyses of the reduction and vanity do, but we shall have to clarify how so explicitly for ourselves. At the beginning thus of what will prove to be a lengthy study, for now a sketch suffices: authenticity, which succumbs to the shock of vanity, silences the claim that objects and the the world make, leaving *Dasein* unable to respond resolutely to the call of conscience. To be radically uninterested in the desire to know objects or to pursue happiness through them is, in this way, to confront that being-towards-death is not the fundamental attitude we can adopt toward existence, ourselves, and others. While authenticity operates within an ontological horizon presupposing our capacity to comprehend beings in their Being, vanity does otherwise, annulling the claim of the world thereby displacing even the ontological difference itself, such that something deeper than Being becomes at stake for us as selves. As Marion shows, we see that *love*—ultimately biblical love of God and neighbor—marks us as the ones we are.

Phenomenology's resulting transformation is twofold, encompassing both its method and matter. The methodological shift in the reduction alters how we see ourselves. Refining the reduction is an odyssey, not only in terms of philosophical approach, but also self-explication. On the one hand, we traverse a course that alters how we come to understand ourselves first beginning with the *ego* (Husserl), to *Dasein* (Heidegger), and ultimately to *l'adonné*, having undergone in turn a reformation in the figures of subjectivity. Our self-experience no longer is what it was once—rather, it comes to be what we now recognize it always to have been, though we previously had not noticed, because we were alienated from that knowledge. Reconciled back to God through acceding to the call of love (Marion will not hesitate to identify it with the call of the Father), we come to finally know who we are. That change in self-understanding is correlated (and indeed ushered in by) with a corresponding methodological shift. Here, the change consists in how the reduction itself is formulated: from the transcendental reduction (Husserl), next to the ontological reduction triggered

by *Angst* (Heidegger), and finally to the erotic reduction triggered by vanity. The face of phenomenology is radically recast. From a “rigorous science” of consciousness (curiosity concerning the intentional constitution of objects), to the *Seinsfrage* (an anxious preoccupation with the meaning of Being), the journey culminates with the “fold of givenness,” a field of phenomenality designating what, following Pascal, we might call the “order of love.”

Traditionally, the phenomenological tradition understood the self in light of intentionality. Self-understanding is always said solely to be a matter of our engagement with the world. For Husserl, “What are the structures without which intentionality would be impossible?” is the question. For Heidegger, there is of course according to him a related but still more profound one: “What is the meaning of Dasein’s being, and hence in turn Being as such?” However, criticisms of historic phenomenology—as represented here by Jean-Luc Marion’s critical appraisal of Husserl’s and Heidegger’s own reductions—contends that this way of seeing ourselves as exclusively beings-in-the-world is wrongheaded. For vanity, which neutralizes the claim of the world (and with it the desire to know objects and beings), renders the questions to which historical phenomenology aimed to respond trivial. When vanity strikes, neither question matters to *me*. In response to vanity’s question—as Marion puts it, “A quoi bon?”—neither has a response, for our desire to deal with objects and entities dissolves in the experience of a yearning for an assurance the world itself cannot provide. As a result (and this will be the third stage of our analysis), the blow of vanity mutes any existential significance regarding the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity. The call to resoluteness becomes a matter of total indifference to us. The dark hour of vanity neutralizes even the call that ordinarily summons us to an authentic existence. Radically uninterested in the world, even to the point that carrying out the philosophical questioning proper to transcendental and

ontological phenomenology ceases to matter, vanity strikes to the heart of the idea that authenticity is our highest calling. Authenticity, in fact, succumbs to the shock of vanity.

If even the authentic life is an empty one, what are we to do? Because *Dasein* has no answer, vanity will redeploy, in a different direction, the same question that had originally motivated Heidegger's existential analytic: who am I? The fact that an ontological characterization of ourselves cannot answer who we are (or what we ought to do) suggests that, if the problem of self-knowledge is to be finally resolved, doing so will require something besides exegetical work over the concept of authenticity; phenomenology should shift its attention to the horizons opened by the erotic reduction. The problem of self must be reassigned from the horizon of Being to love.

It may seem fitting to turn immediately to Marion's many texts for answers.³ However, the true power of Marion's phenomenological reform is brought into fullest relief when the erotic reduction is highlighted as the implicit criticism of Heideggerian authenticity that it is. To show how so, it is necessary to appreciate vanity's significance by making that implication explicit, which will be the aim here. For it is of considerable consequence to note, as the subsequent analysis will, that comparatively little has heretofore been said regarding vanity's consequences for the Heideggerian conception of authenticity. In setting out to remedy that neglected question, it bears stating the chief implication now: the analysis of vanity recommends that authenticity no longer be treated, without any further ado, as it still almost without exception is by the Heidegger literature, as the most fundamental response we can take to reality. To the contrary, existence is not decided by posing the question of the meaning of who we are in terms of Being (and hence the ontological difference); we work out that existence most basically, to the extent that we do so successfully, by and in love.

Vanity, in short, opens up a horizon of phenomenality that neither Husserl nor Heidegger glimpsed—the “third order” of charity. Not only, then, does it not profit phenomenology to recycle *Sein und Zeit*'s claims unquestioningly as if they were not already subject to decisive objections, but historic phenomenology's central understanding of human existence as something exclusively determined by an openness to the world comes under challenge. Is it really the case that the most intimate tenor of self-experience is characterized by being-in-the-world? If authenticity is untenable, as Marion's analyses of vanity and the reduction suggest, the further takeaway comes into view. For what, we must also ask, is the point in rehashing and ever refining the Heideggerian philosophy's notion of authenticity, when authenticity is not in fact the primordial phenomenon it was claimed to be? No such strictly phenomenological reason exists, unless we have decided instead to do history of philosophy. Exegesis can be a worthy focus. But solely that is not phenomenology.

Bookkeeping preliminaries out of the way, let us turn squarely to the reduction. Marion's credo, formulated for the first time in *Reduction and Givenness*, “as much reduction, as much givenness” enjoins us to recognize that each iteration of the reduction—first Husserl's, next Heidegger's, and finally his own—unveils a correspondingly interior dimension of ourselves. Why does the reduction unfold in the tripartite procession it does, and in what does its resultingly increasing amplification of the self's interiority consist? We have already touched on the answer, but it deserves to be highlighted once again: there is a reciprocity between the mode of reduction, on the one hand, and the way we understand subjectivity, on the other. Depending upon which of the reductions one prefers to deploy, subjectivity takes one of two personages. Initially, when reduced transcendently (Husserl), I am revealed to be the indeclinable source of intentional meaning (*Sinn*); according to the logic governing this correlation between reduction and transcendental consciousness, the fact that the world's entities show up, *to or for* a

consciousness, is due to the “pure” consciousness said to underwrite and certify their appearance. The transcendental reduction plumbs, and so illumines, the enabling conditions (or structures, if one is uncomfortable with any misleading Neo-Kantian associations the language of conditions might invite) of how experience is *of* something *as* something.⁴ No longer do we experience ourselves as the quotidian “man in the street.” Instead, we encounter ourselves—in the mode of phenomenological reflection—as transcendental *egos*, as those who through the powers of intentionality stand open to a world of constituted sense. Husserl’s reduction therefore brings to light the intentional correlation between the act of consciousness and its object. And with that, so too the structural layers of sense-constitution (active synthesis, passive synthesis, motivational horizons, etc.) governing that correlation come to light. It is to thematize transcendental subjectivity’s constitution of the lifeworld. Husserl himself comments on how the reduction secures the field of investigation in §39 of *Ideen I*:

All the essential characteristics of experience and consciousness which we have reached are for us necessary steps towards the attainment of the end of which is unceasingly drawing on us, the discover, namely, of the essence of that “*pure*” consciousness which is to fix the limits of the phenomenological field.⁵

However, because Husserl poses the problem of intentionality in order to excavate the structures without which a meaningful experience of the world would be impossible, his transcendental reduction, which initiates such an inquiry into the sources of meaning, while valid within its own rights, nevertheless fails to provide a complete accounting of the question that originally inspired its inquiry to begin with. Its account of the sources of intentionality remains incomplete. It illuminates the phenomenon only in part, not in full. But why?

Husserl's reduction to transcendental subjectivity meets with failure, and for at least one decisive reason. We owe the pivotal objection to Heidegger himself, who tirelessly refined it in his lecture courses at Marburg and Freiburg of the 1920s. Husserl's thematization of transcendental consciousness does not raise the question—or at least not properly—of the *being* of consciousness. And, so Heidegger contends, our mode of being is precisely what explains how we are able to encounter objects. Consciousness, as it is understood by Husserl, is for Heidegger in a crucial respect a surface phenomenon. Because consciousness—and here it matters little whether we prefer to consider it in its empirical, transcendental, or even psychoanalytic modes—is insufficient for encountering entities *as* entities, the correlation between the world and the consciousness to which it is given presupposes some further feature. This additional condition (or again structure) would explain where transcendental consciousness alone does not, why and how we are open to the world of meaningful beings as we are. Such a condition, when identified, would complete an account of how intentionality is possible.⁶ And not only that. For Heidegger, the stakes are still broader. As he emphasizes, to pose the question concerning the meaning of our being is a preparatory step for formulating the question of Being in general. To tackle Husserl's own problem of intentionality, rightly, is thus to do the spadework necessary for turning to fundamental ontology's inquiry into Being.

To recover this missing link regarding the sources of intentionality, the reduction is once again essential, and it is here where Heidegger comes in. If the correlation between intentional act and object cannot alone explain what allows entities to disclose themselves to us, consciousness remains a merely necessary, albeit insufficient, condition for intentional meaning. Something else already operative (but as yet thematized) must be at work if we are to encounter the sense in the world. Transcendental subjectivity alone is insufficient to explain how our experience of the world is

as it is, for underlying the correlation between an intentional act and the object is a further transcendence of our being exceeding the ken of transcendental consciousness.⁷

But what transcendence? Here the indispensability of a second reduction, this time ontological, comes to the fore. It will be revealed in the fundamental attunement of anxiety—for anxiety attunes us to our being in a way that at once grounds and elicits the decision to question that very being philosophically. Only an anxious being philosophizes. As Heidegger thus explains toward the outset of *Being and Time*, operative beneath the transcendence of our intentional acts lies a transcendence always already at play: “being-in-the-world” (*In-der-Welt-sein*). When I imagine, remember, judge, wish, will, or act, I always do so in virtue of already being open to, and so immersed within, the world. An equilateral triangle, a letter from a friend, a Dutch *natures mortes* hanging in the museum, or a rainy Sunday morning, these are all real things. They disclose themselves as the respective kinds of entities they are owing to my occupying the necessary stance toward them. In order for them to fall within the domain of my powers of consciousness such that they are given in a way allowing me to do with them as I please, I must first deploy the appropriate intentional act. If, however, I am to exercise the requisite intentional act that enables thinking about a triangle while performing a calculation, or appreciating a Kandinsky at the National Gallery, or ruminating over the matters recounted in my friend’s note, or lingering over the thoughts brought to my mind by the morning rain, the world already must have taken possession of me (as Jean-Yves Lacoste would say). Things can only take possession of me if I know how to comport myself toward the entities appearing within the world that the transcendence of intentionality opens, but I am able to exercise one of its comportments only insofar as my being is such that, in it, that very being is itself at issue. To be sensitive to the different ontological kinds of beings, and what in turn distinguishes them as what they are (a circle and an opera are both things but very different), is to

already be entwined with the question of my own being's status. I am an ontological being in my being. To deploy an intentional act, then, I must, in short, be one whose very mode of being is being-in-the-world. To traffic among entities, I must be open to the world. I must be able to comprehend beings in terms of their Being—a capacity implying that I am able to wrestle with the question of what it means to be who I myself am. To encounter entities within the world, I must, thus, be *Dasein*.

Heidegger's ontological reduction, following on Husserl's own reduction, consequently opens the horizon of being-in-the-world to thematic philosophical apprehension. As those who read *Being and Time* will know, Heidegger does not simply identify the role that being-in-the-world contributes without which intentionality would remain impossible. More importantly, the text also explores the status of that mode of existence. Being-in-the-world fundamentally is anxiety, it says.⁸ He writes, "That in the face of which one has anxiety is Being-in-the-world as such"; "That which anxiety is anxious about is Being-in-the-world itself"; "Thus the entire phenomenon of anxiety shows Dasein as factually existing Being-in-the world."⁹ We know anxiety, says Heidegger, because it is the fundamental attunement of our existence. Marion himself highlights Heidegger's observation when, in a section of *Reduction and Givenness* expressly dedicated to analyzing the question of anxiety's role in the philosophy of *Dasein*, he comments, "through the ontic determination of anxiety, *Dasein* reaches its ontological determination; its transcendence with regard to being is accomplished only through radical ontic indetermination (the nothing); only thus can it be determined in its Being."¹⁰ Through *Angst* we occupy the role of someone whose mode of being is concerned with not only the question of our own individual being, but also the meaning of Being in general. Only anxious beings such as ourselves can be burdened by the *Seinsfrage*.

For Heidegger, anxiety arranges everything so that all modes of inquiry are set under fundamental ontology's footstool. Not only does fundamental ontology withstand the onslaught of anxiety; it is in the face of anxiety's uncanniness that we find ourselves poised to explicitly question our distinctive mode of being in philosophical reflection. For Heidegger, philosophizing over the question of the meaning of being is our highest possibility as *Dasein*. To have a pre-ontological understanding of the meaning of being indicates that questioning the meaning of that very being is the consummation of our being. We take up, thematically, what is always already there as our ownmost, albeit usually latent, possibility. Philosophy as fundamental ontology is itself the conscientious formalization of *Dasein's* distinctively pre-philosophical mode of being. As Heidegger remarks, "the question of Being is nothing other than the radicalization of an essential tendency-of-Being which belongs to Dasein itself—the pre-ontological understanding of Being."¹¹ To philosophize, for Heidegger, is the ownmost way we may put ourselves into question.

Some of Heidegger's readers disagree. Fundamental ontology, they hold, is neither the primary nor privileged possibility of an authentic life. But such a view is subject to objection. If philosophically interrogating our own mode of being were not in an important sense the fundamental expression of that mode of being, then why bother, as Heidegger himself did, writing *Being and Time*? His own labors—and no less ours as readers—could have been better spent were it the case that an authentic existence does not call specifically for fundamental ontology. Why, in short, bother attempting to awaken the problem of Being *as a problem* if we can rest content with leaving that question philosophically dormant? The entire presupposition at work in *Being and Time* is that posing the question of the meaning of Being is an essential expression of what it is to be authentic—were things otherwise, there would be no essential imperative for trying to formulate the question, as a matter of explicit philosophical questioning, for we would be just as well were the

question to be left unposed. Thus, the intensive questioning that is constitutive of Heidegger's philosophical self-questioning is not just one way for working out the meaning of our existence. To raise the question of what it is to be *Dasein* with an eye to raising the question of the meaning of Being is the deliberate enactment of our most fundamental condition of being-questionable (*Fraglichsein*).¹²

Were we never to put ourselves into question in such a way, the corollary question of Being's meaning would not arise. As Heidegger comments, "The analytic of *Dasein*, which is proceeding towards the phenomenon of care, is to prepare the way for the problematic of fundamental ontology—the question of the meaning of Being in general."¹³ Anxiety links the two, for only through anxiety does fundamental ontology rise into view as a possibility for us. As Heidegger himself observes, if we are to situate ourselves so as to carry out the requisite questioning, we must first confront the dimension of our being explaining how, in that being, we are the kinds of beings whose being-questionable calls for fundamental ontology's distinctive manner of questioning. That ontological dimension of subjectivity, our "being-questionable," comes into view when, and only when, we are assailed by anxiety. As Heidegger will never tire of saying (at least through the 1930s), anxiety is an ontologically privileged attunement for, silencing the claim of everyday routines of daily life, it brings the possibility of fundamental ontology into salience. Marion himself in this respect echoes Heidegger here. For him too, highlighting anxiety's ontological accomplishment proves crucial to his own attempt to remove the question of self from within the horizon of Being: "L'angoisse opère ainsi une réduction phénoménologique en reconduisant l'étant en totalité vers l'être."¹⁴ Not only does the possibility of ontological questioning retain its appeal even in anxiety's attack, but as Heidegger notes, it rises into most prominence, and with greatest ferventness, precisely in it.

Anxiety produces a breakdown that forces us to make sense of ourselves and the fact that things no longer make sense as they used to. It is then that we discover what it means to be the kind of being that we are, that we are the kind of being who can (and even perhaps should) explicitly confront the meaning of our being through doing fundamental ontology. For Heidegger much of everyday life is banal, trivial, or superficial (the stuff of what he calls “idle talk”), but anxiety reveals fundamental ontology as the privileged exception. More than wonder (Aristotle) or doubt (Descartes), anxiety is the distinctively philosophical mood.

And yet, although *Being and Time* analyzes our condition as *Dasein* by assuming that we are all familiar with anxiety and hence the horizon of the meaning of Being, does it not miss the most intimate tenor of our existence? The mode of being-in-the-world overlooks the depths of self revealed in and through the experience of vanity. The significance of Marion’s own phenomenological reduction, the third in our review, consists in showing *Dasein* cannot survive the shock vanity delivers to being-in-the-world, for that mode of existence, which is driven by the metaphysical desire to know objects and beings with certainty, is what vanity disables. When vanity arrives, we no longer care to know objects or entities, whether in the mode of our everyday practically engaged comportment or by philosophical reflection. We desire something besides the certainty of science.

Marion’s portrayal of the human condition accordingly differs radically from Heidegger’s. It is a difference highlighted in the respective phenomena they bring to the fore. In contrast to anxiety, which remains Heidegger’s, vanity, says Marion, is more primordial, for it knows no bounds. It exempts nothing by disqualifying everything. Nothing escapes its reaches because, without exception, it annuls the force of every worldly claim, including even the solicitation to do

fundamental ontology itself. A radical disinterest cuts to the heart of the world and beings. Thus, in reply to vanity's question—as Marion puts it, “A quoi bon?”—the one who, as *Dasein*, must put the *Seinsfrage* to work is left immobilized.¹⁵

What accounts for this universal disqualification of entities and the world? Why are they revealed in a mode of indifference, as no longer mattering as they once had? Closer comparison with ontological anxiety reveals why. Whereas anxiety supplies, at least tacitly, the motivation to reinhabit the world of everydayness by questioning that milieu through reflection on the meaning of Being, vanity pulls the rug from under every question's feet. Anxiety renders our ordinary commitments temporarily uncanny, whereas vanity silences them. When the latter strikes, I am radically uninterested in beings and the horizon of the meaning of Being. No worldly possibility's claim, including the metaphysical desire to know characterizing fundamental ontology, survives vanity's cold gaze. I no longer am the kind of being for whom the question of my being matters in a way calling for philosophically questioning the meaning of Being. When it comes to the *Seinsfrage*, I could not in fact care less. Says Marion: “La vanité disqualifie donc toute certitude, qu'elle porte sur le monde ou sur moi-même [...] Rien ne résiste à la vanité, toute certitude, toute résistance.”¹⁶

Hence, vanity disrupts the internal logic of the existential analytic, as its main goal, an understanding of the meaning of Being, becomes a matter of complete indifference to me. When the call of fundamental ontology is silenced as pointless, the existential analytic's nihilistic presuppositions come into view. Far from the existential analytic demonstrating that the question of the meaning of Being is the question most our own, it turns out there is no use in embarking on any such line of questioning, the *Seinsfrage* included.¹⁷ If *Dasein* is the being who questions, then vanity, which suddenly highlights the futility of that existence, reveals the emptiness of *Dasein's* questioning.

In vanity, I am no longer *Dasein*. Henceforth, the question of the self is now reopened entirely anew. The recognition of fundamental ontology's uselessness in the face of vanity highlights the need for a reduction aside from Heidegger's mode of phenomenology rooted in anxiety. This need is what Marion's erotic reduction attempts to meet.

First, it is necessary to recount the contours of the existential analytic, since Marion's alternative account of the self will subvert that terrain. According to the phenomenality opened in care, whether it realizes so or not, nothing in fact really matters, neither the meaning of my own individual existence nor the related possibility of engaging in fundamental ontology that attends it. At least three experiential facts verify this conclusion were anyone to dispute it. First fact: the roles of our daily routines do not ultimately define us at our core. They orient, guide, and to a large extent vouchsafe my identity, to be sure, but only to a degree, never to the point of seamless identification. Something about ourselves always escapes the domain of practical identity. The projects, tasks, and obligations of being-in-the-world can exert the exigency over us they do because of our antecedent resolve to *try* to take them up. But their exigency is only as forceful as our commitment to them.

Thus, when it comes to life's everyday possibilities, it follows that I am, as Sartre would remind us, what I am in the mode of my *not* being them. For regardless of whatever role I press into, something about myself is essentially unchanged—the dimension of transcendental *trying* that all my worldly possibilities presuppose but none explains.¹⁸ It was Sartre who did well to note that it is in the context of practical identity that we initially orient ourselves, thereby deriving a sense of what it means to be what we are. As *Being and Nothingness* comments, “in the quasi-generality of every day acts, I am engaged, I have ventured, and I discover my possibilities by realizing them and in the very act of realizing them as exigencies, urgencies, instrumentalities.”¹⁹ And yet, he is quick

also to note that while these self-compartments provide us with some understanding, they also involve an inescapable form of alienation. The non-coincidence is structural, and thus there is no peace in it, just as the sea of forlorn faces on the commuter rail and in the office cubes testify so clearly. To the extent that I am something owing to what I do within the milieu of practical identity, I am, Sartre observes, what I am in the mode of *playing* at being it.

The famous account of the Parisian café waiter he uses to illustrate the point will be recalled: “Let us consider this waiter in the café [...] All his behaviour seems to us a game [...] He is playing, he is amusing himself. But what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it: he is playing *at being* a waiter in a café [...] [He is] a waiter in the mode of *being what [he is] not*.”²⁰ Sartre, of course, was not the first to realize that pressing into the obligations associated with the roles of daily life places us in the paradoxical condition of failing to be what we are. Kierkegaard’s own memorable appraisal of the illusory spectacle of the world and the collective self-deception that sustains it is in that regard worth noting: “Consider for a moment the world which lies before you in all its variegated multiplicity; it is like looking at a play, only the plot is vastly more complicated. Every individual in this innumerable throng is by his differences a particular something; he exhibits a definiteness but essentially he is something other than this—but this we do not get to see here in life. Here we see only what role the individual plays and how he does it. It is like a play.”²¹ If for atheistic existentialism our existence is a play because we can be nothing without playing at being it, this will always remain so, since, according to the perspective that sees our condition as one lacking any absolute essence, “The *for-itself* is the being which determines itself to exist inasmuch as it cannot coincide with itself.”²² The very structure of self-manifestation is itself said to ensure alienation. Unlike with Kierkegaard, for Sartre there only exists the world we know in the everyday roles and possibilities handed down to us by tradition. Hence, we are doomed to a fractured existence, a

masquerade ball in which, behind the masks we wear while we play at doing whatever it is that we do on the world's stage, there lies a gaping nothingness.

To view ourselves exclusively in the mirror of world, hence, is to conclude that we can never truly be ourselves. When I act, I am in the first instance given to myself in the exteriority of the role I take up, but it is precisely in my pressing into that very role that I fail to coincide with who I am. Thus, when my trying to be something is exercised in the mode of a worldly practical identity, instrumentality, or possibility, I accordingly accomplish the opposite of what I intended to accomplish by it: I cease to be myself. Marion himself addresses this paradox of non-coincidence, when, in a remark toward the beginning of *In the Self's Place*, he notes that my doings in the world, restricted as they are to mere practical exigencies, *obey a principle of non-identity*: “The supposed *ego* manifests itself by demonstrating the contradiction in it of its equality to itself. From the beginning *A is not A*; I am not *myself*.”²³ Confined to the ek-stasis of the world, I am never myself.

From whence the second fact announces itself. The lack of absolute value is said to originate in us, in a nothingness. The non-identity between that for-the-sake-which we do what we do, on the one hand, and ourselves, on the other hand, only accentuates the tacit nihilism by deepening the depths of its source. In response to the question concerning whether there is any absolute fact of the matter regarding what I am or what I should do, the answer, from the strictly ontological perspective, is “no.” For the existence fundamentally subject to anxiety, I am a *nullity*—without any nature, I am nothing but pure projection. Anxiety reveals so. In it, we not only are plucked from the shallows of everyday practical identity or simply temporarily deprived of my public personas. The stakes are more thoroughgoing. Deprived of the personas we rely on to manage how others perceive us, anxiety strips away our masks, revealing that there is no substance beneath them, but only

emptiness at work in being-in-the-world. The realm of practical identity has always been, we now see, a show.

Another equally unsettling realization is right in tow. To see my public personas are empty is to say that, as a worldly self, I have been a chameleon, for underneath the milieu of practical identity I am in truth nothing but an abyssal anxiety anyway, a sheer nothingness that plays at being what it is not. Lacking any identity but the thin sheen of a public role, I am an imposter. Sartre's formulation of the point is unforgettable: "We can be nothing without playing at being it."²⁴ Hence, when anxiety overtakes us, there is for that time nothing to play at, for, momentarily overcome by the unacanniness of everything, we are stifled into inaction.

Accordingly, Heidegger's strictly ontological account of our being entails a third and additional fact, even if few of his readers recognize the horror of it: there is no principled answer to the question of who one is (or should be), because we are really anyway nothing at all. As Heidegger declares in *Being and Time*, "*Care itself, in its very essence, is permeated with nullity through and through.*"²⁵ It might be said, as many of Heidegger's readers do, that his philosophy does not lead to nihilism since the sense of "nullity" at work in the care-structure is a technical term of art distinct from the nothingness of café existentialism. But even if one interprets the notion of care in a more Kantian way (maintaining that *Dasein* is distinct from its roles in the way that the "I think" must be distinct from the *Triebfeder* that confront it) the result still is existentially ruinous. The Heideggerian conception of freedom, when taken in this more Kantian than Sartrean sense, leads to the same nihilism. Because care's nullity is grounded in the ek-static transcendence of *Dasein's* temporality, the transcendence of being-in-the-world necessitates a non-coincidence between me and myself. The transcendence of *Dasein* entails nihilism, consequently, for it prohibits us from ever bringing

ourselves into an equilibrium with ourselves—there is always a duplicity, a shadow, or what Dostoevsky called a “double.”

If no matter what I do nothing will bring satisfaction to the one who lives in the mode of being-in-the-world, this is because that existence is fraught with a restlessness rising to the level of necessity. Rooted in the structural fabric of self-experience’s non-coincidence, it is Michel Henry who has most decisively articulated why such an existence rightly deserves to be abandoned. *Dasein*’s way of being is the way of death, since, as Henry has noted, the self of care is a transcendental illusion. As he characteristically notes in *I am the Truth*, to be consigned to living as *Dasein* is project ourselves into a future that is in principle unreal, since even when we realize ourselves in a possibility, the self that is there to greet us is just as virtual as the very self who projected itself in the first place. This is why, even down to the latests periods of his philosophy, when Heidegger attempts to think “Beyng” starting independently of all beings, those who think with him end up alienated from themselves. When the self is exteriorized, as is the case in Heidegger’s thought, there is no home for us, but only restlessness. A perceptive remark from Iain Thomson, which deserves to be quoted here in full, expresses it well.

If one can endure our existential anxiety instead of seeking to deny and tranquilize it (by adopting such common strategies as “hurrying” and “keeping busy”), then it becomes possible, *Being and Time* suggests, for us to trace this baseline anxiety back to its source in our basic “uncanniness” (or *Unheimlichkeit*), the fundamental existential *homelessness* that follows from the fact that there is no life project any of us can ever finally be at home in, because there is ultimately nothing about the ontological structure of the self that could tell us what specifically we should do with our lives.²⁶

There are disagreements over what exactly Heidegger meant by uncanniness. It is an exegetical task to determine that. But it is not enough for us here to confine ourselves to the task of deciding what Heidegger himself precisely meant by it—instead, it is necessary to see whether what he says is true.

And to do so does not require the level of precision commentators aim to provide, for it is sufficient to note that, no matter how exactly the notion is understood, Heidegger repeatedly characterizes our condition in terms of uncanniness, and in a way that means *Dasein* is subject to a fundamental restlessness. The statements to that effect are as unequivocal as they are frequent. To wit, “[Anxiety is a state] of not being at home, uncanniness. Uncanniness is the genuine threat that existence is subject to.”²⁷ What matters here is not the interpretation of anxiety (for those subtle differences make no difference), but instead what they all hold in common: *the call of Being—and hence the world itself as a whole—is immune to disqualification.*

This is the key presupposition of views that characterize our mode of existence as being-in-the-world. But is it the case that the call of Being cannot be disqualified? When vanity strikes, I realize what my involvement in the world had repressed. The activities of practical identity rest on a set of underlying commitments which themselves can become, as they now are, indifferent to me. Seeing that the world is a place to play out a performance whose roles are underwritten by commitments that no longer move me, I experience the inanity of continuing to exist in the mode of being-in-the-world. Divested of all desire to *try*, I no longer wish to *play*. The experience of vanity therefore accomplishes the disqualification of Being, disqualifying the call of the world’s average everydayness, unveiling a mode of inwardness Heidegger’s existential analytic simply ignores.

For Heidegger, self-experience occurs in a horizon whose phenomenality is that of the world’s. He asserts it often: “The movement of caring is characterized by the fact that factual life *goes about its dealings* with the world”; “life...offers itself to itself in a worldly way, i.e. in the form and in the ontological sense of its world”; or again: “life itself is experienced essentially as world.”²⁸ According to *Being and Time*, our highest “factual ideal” is decided by *transcendence*. Everything lying

open to us as possible is determined by what we can approach through projecting ourselves into the ek-stasis of the world. *Vanity reveals a remainder of the radical immanence of life itself that is not a matter of the world's transcendence, but because being-in-the-world remains alienated from this interiority, it cannot access that standard.* It is here, by attempting to consign all possibility to the world's truth, that the existential analytic errs. In defining man in terms of his openness to the world, man is deprived of any standard that absolutely defines him. We are lost.

Setting to the side the question of that standard's content, we must pose a preliminary question: how are we to access such a standard (whatever it proves to be) if the interiority in which it resides remains necessarily inaccessible to us so long as we exist in the mode of *Dasein*? As Marion explains, it is the experience of vanity that reveals an essential remainder to our existence, one that escapes the horizon of the world and all that appears within it—it opens an entirely different mode of phenomenality. By turning us from a focus that sees us in terms of the world, it neutralizes our concern with Being by displacing the ontological difference between entities and Being. This means resolution, as understood by Heidegger, no longer is the real measure of existence. Vanity belies the Heideggerian assertion, so frequently repeated, that resoluteness is the innermost secret of existence. When he characterizes resoluteness—“the choosing to choose a kind of *being-one's-Self* which, in accordance with its existential structure”—as my ownmost possibility, he presupposes that the very essence of our existence as selves is transcendence, that the meaning of that being must necessarily remain unsettled because it is necessarily plunged into a world without any absolute measure. This conception of self, however, far from identifying the fundamental tenor of our experience, ignores its profoundest interiority. It in fact only identifies a *virtual* self, a transcendental illusion deployed within the boundaries of a world projected by a care-structure that leaves us estranged from others, and alienated from ourselves.

If existence on the Heideggerian understanding is said not specifically to call for anything (save the mode of inquiry that faces up to this opened meaninglessness), this is because our inextricable predicament, *when circumscribed within the world of care*, is one of homelessness. Heidegger himself does not shy away from acknowledging, as we have seen: “From an existential-ontological point of view, the ‘not at home’ must be conceived as the more primordial phenomenon.”²⁹ This is where the ontological articulation of the human condition quits.

Has it not, however, stopped short? To observe that being-in-the-world is haunted by homelessness is correct, but it does not address that it may be possible to overturn that condition. In concluding that uncanniness is the final horizon of existence, the existential analytic never faces the vanity lurking beneath *Dasein's* anxiety. We therefore must move beyond the self of care, and it is here that we can turn to Marion for guidance in doing so. The first step is to raise a question that the existential analytic does not formulate, owing to a methodological decision that ensures it will remain blind to it: does not the fact that I am not at home *in* the world suggest, at least in the form of a formal indication, that my home may accordingly lie elsewhere? It is a phenomenological hypothesis that cannot be categorically ignored without first being tested.³⁰ To maintain otherwise, without further ado, would not only be an failure of logic, but an existential failure. From the fact that the ontological structure of selfhood does not supply a *telos* to existence, it does not follow that something else else may not either. Without further argument, then, the ontological position which maintains that I *necessarily* lack an end begs the question. In stipulating that there is no such end it assumes (without ever establishing) that the horizon of the world prescribes the outer limits of existence. But because the ontological interpretation of subjectivity ignores the possibility that there might be a final end or absolute measure that would allow us to frame the question differently, it fails to live up to its transcendental billing. Heidegger's view of ourselves as forlorn questioners destined

to never find a satisfying answer to whom we are presents as necessary what in fact lies open to immediate doubt. It is a form of transcendental myopia.

But supposing this ontological characterization of self were so, what are the consequences? What is involved in viewing ourselves as consigned to the horizon of the world? When seen this way, existence becomes a matter, to reappropriate an expression from Lyotard, of “just gaming.” It is possible to play at being this or that, or doing this or that, or trying this or that, or caring about this or that, but it is a ruse. The ordinariness of everyday life, including even the summum of that life typified in ontological inquiry, is a repressive strategy, a form of diversion, concealing a disquieting truth about myself from myself. For if an openness to the world is explained by our existence being at issue for us, and if the final end of that existence is death, everything is futile. There can be no completion. Condemned to the realm of worldly practical identity, our ontological comprehension of beings is little more than what throws us into the senselessness of an uncanny existence that lacks any absolute meaning. It is a masquerade because the sphere of practical endeavors resigns me to an inescapable alienating non-identity, as no worldly possibility ever allows me to equal myself. Regardless of whatever I choose to do, I am always *not* myself—so what’s the use?

An important consequence follows from the Heideggerian conception of subjectivity. By maintaining that we are non-coincident with ourselves, it follows, we have seen, that there is no resolution in the offing regarding what it means to be who I am, because I am in the final sense really nothing at all anyway. The only absolute truth is that there absolutely is no absolute truth concerning who I am, or what I am to do in the face of existence. For although an openness unto the world is explained in virtue of *Dasein’s being at issue for itself*, because one may only negotiate the enigma of what it means to be who one is within a purely worldly set of stakes, regardless of

whatever my understanding of Being provides, I lack any assurance insofar as my existence lacks any final promise. Some have always claimed to see this fundamental unsettledness of *Dasein's* existence positively, even to the point of characterizing it as exhilarating. In seeing ourselves as without essence, so the thought no doubt goes, there is limitless freedom. This exhilaration is reminiscent of what, in section 343 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche says regarding the “free spirits” who embrace the “death of God” said to usher in an “open sea” of possibility. No one is to tell them what to do, or what to be: “They are not sad or gloomy but rather like a new and scarcely describable kind of light, happiness, relief, exhilaration, encouragement, dawn. Indeed, we philosophers and ‘free spirits’ feel, when we hear the news that ‘the old god is dead,’ as if a new dawn shone on us; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonitions, expectation. At long last the horizon appears free to us again...”³¹ In the face of these extravagant claims, one might justifiably doubt the sincerity of the exuberance. But even were the euphoria not false, it is only so for a short time, since, no matter how genuine the experience is, it is an experience relegated to the time that leads to death. And even if one denies that the party ends in partition, there are still other grounds for doubting the honesty of those who claim to find joy in an existence without any measure except what they give to it. One may enjoy a season of intoxication, but the satisfaction eventually proves superficial, for sooner or later it must face up to the monstrous absurdity it has tried to affirm. Is it surprising that those who come to see themselves in this way, beginning in hedonism, end in depravity? And even for those who are able to retain a measure of dignity by not descending into total self-denigration, there is no enduring joy—as Heidegger states, the fundamental attunement of such a life is anxiety. Their shark eyes speak louder than their denials to the contrary ever could. And no wonder: in a world thought to be without either destiny or genuine purpose, all human striving, as Schopenhauer realized, is blind. Plunged into the hopelessness of an impersonal transcendence, and thus ejected toward nowhere, an existence as *Dasein* must follow a course leading to incompleteness. Our fate is a death

that shall annul all purpose and any possibility of personal fulfilment, and so our end—*insofar as I am Dasein*—is no destiny at all. For *Dasein*, existence is senseless, for the world has come from nowhere, is headed nowhere, and for no reason at all.

There always is an alternative hypothesis available to us, however, even if ontology will not recognize it. Far from demonstrating the inescapability of nihilism, does not the ontological understanding of self call into question its own conclusion that we lack a place? What if, instead, it demonstrates the reality (or at the least the *possibility*) of a place besides the exteriority of the world? Though certainly I am a being for whom that being is at stake, does not this experiential fact indicate, in the form of a possibility, the reality of a deeper truth about our condition, one that ontological inquiry elides? Marion invites us to test the hypothesis in *Reduction and Givenness*.

La mise en jeu de soi par soi qui caractérise le *Je* ne se consacre-t-elle qu'à être, qu'à l'être? Ou bien, n'y irait-il pas, dans le *Je* que certes je *suis*, aussi, voire d'abord, d'un autre enjeu que d'être? Ce qui se met en jeu dans, par et malgré le *Je*, s'épuise-t-il nécessairement, indiscutablement et exclusivement en termes de l'être? Dans le *Je*, y va-t-il d'abord de son être, ou, en deçà, d'une plus originelle mise en jeu?³²

The question Marion poses, in short, is whether there could be a third phenomenological reduction which, once deployed, attests that we do indeed have a bona fide place. We know that such a place is not within the world (for the world is a place of uncanniness and alienation), but is there a place beyond the world's system of objects and instrumentalities, in which, finally, I could rest?

The mere suggestion is enough to irritate (or sometimes enrage) those who hear it. They well may decide to rule it out of hand. For such an existence, one that remains fixated only on knowing objects and beings and gratifying itself in the pursuit of happiness—in short, one consigned to the “natural attitude”—the only answer will appear to be “no.” The one of the natural

attitude is the *ego* or *Dasein* of the world, someone who nourishes himself upon a naïveté designed to confirm his self-regarding interests. By refusing to acknowledge a vanity for which he knows he would have no rejoinder, the natural man puts the emptiness of his projects into his mind, diverting himself with the quotidian business of life. It is a way of life whose prevalence owes itself to the deeply self-serving strategy it obeys. Better to ignore vanity, it secretly concludes, than admit that its own form of life has no good reply to vanity, precisely because it too is a startling case of it.

Vanity, thus, does not just threaten the ordinary rhythm of daily life as *Dasein* experiences it. It disrupts the prospect of conducting what historical phenomenology itself takes for granted as a meaningful pastime—namely, ontological inquiry into ourselves in terms of our relation to the world. Vanity undercuts the respective questions to which the historical phenomenological approaches respond. For, in response to vanity’s own question—“A quoi bon?”—neither the transcendental *ego* nor the anxious *Dasein* has a reply. Hence, the transcendental reduction’s guiding question—“What enables and structures intentionality?”—and the ontological reduction’s own defining question—“What is the meaning of beings and Being?”—alike overlook vanity’s question. For in the end vanity’s own question—“What’s the use?”—disables the point of investigating the structures of intentionality, as with Husserl, or the meaning of Being, as with Heidegger. Ordinarily, I might take it that these questions are inherently worthy of concern, but when I’m of that opinion, I allow curiosity to kid myself. The posture associated with ontological questioning rests on a dubious commitment, which, when challenged as in the crucible of vanity, collapses. At stake in my being who I am is something that yearns for more than anything the deliverances a life of intellectual curiosity can offer. As Kierkegaard had noted against Hegel’s science, objective knowledge does not adequately face up to the problem of existence. Thus, transcendental phenomenology’s question concerning the conditions that make possible intentionality is

disqualified. It becomes a matter of indifference to me. It only concerns objects (or the desire to investigate them phenomenologically), and that is it.

The same indifference hovers over fundamental ontology. For what, in vanity, we ask, is the use of pondering the meaning of Being, when such questioning in the last analysis must conclude that nothing I do with my life really matters anyway? To subject ourselves to ontological self-interrogation feels just as empty as plunging headlong into the everyday dealings that typically busy us. Such an inquiry is a diversion by which *Dasein* attempts to repress the vanity of its worldly ways. Fundamental ontology is another way to keep us busy, and that is it. What Kierkegaard called objective knowledge does not nourish the human heart. Husserl's epistemic reduction which concerns objects (and the world horizon in which they appear and the transcendental consciousness that constitutes them), and Heidegger's ontological reduction (which unveils the question of the meaning of Being) do not concern me. For what do *I* have to do with either of those questions, or the field of experience they open? Nothing unconditionally, for the kind of certainty they purportedly supply (in the form of Husserl's apodictic knowledge of objects) or the mystery they ordinarily provoke (as in Heidegger's fundamental ontology) become matters of pure indifference to me. Even metaphysical certainty, which marks the ultimate aim at the heart of the desire to know objects, is not enough. Highlighting the distinction between metaphysical certainty and existential assurance, Marion states it this way:

Il faut donc en finir avec ce qui produit la certitude des objets du monde—la réduction épistémique, qui ne garde d'une chose que ce qui y reste répétable, permanent et comme à demeure sous le regard de l'esprit (je en tant qu'objet ou que sujet). Il faut écarter aussi la réduction ontologique, qui ne garde de la chose que son statut d'étant pour le reconduire à son être, voire, éventuellement, le pister jusqu'à y entrevoir l'être même (je en tant que *Dasein*, l'étant dans lequel il y va de l'être).³³

First transcendently (Husserl) and next ontologically (Heidegger), I am exiled to inhospitable terrain—either the metaphysical horizon of the scientific object or the practical milieu of beings, neither withstands the blow of vanity. What remains, notes Marion, is a mode phenomenality inextricably alien to me, for in either case, we are directed to “objets, qui se rapportent à moi comme n’étant précisément pas moi ni comme moi.”³⁴ Alienated from the objects that I am not, indifferent to a quest for scientific knowledge that promises a certainty that will never assure me, how is one to salvage, much less mobilize, meaning in the face of the seemingly inescapable and crushing vacuity of existence?

We know at least this much, that neither Husserl’s rigorous science of objects nor Heidegger’s questioning of the meaning of Being will suffice. Because both fail to open a horizon that assures me that life is truly worth living, the transcendental and ontological reductions direct us to does not matter to *me*. If wonder calls for transcendent phenomenology and anxiety for fundamental ontology, vanity silences them both.

Hence, a break with Husserl and Heidegger is necessary. There will be reservations. For example, might not it be conceded that Marion’s line of argument is decisive against Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology but not Heidegger’s fundamental ontology? It is here that the Heideggerian distinction between inauthenticity and authenticity might be invoked. The thought is understandable: while vanity reveals the emptiness of the inauthentic existence, is not there a point to living a resolute one? Does not being-in-the-world have the resources to explain the sense in which the most intimate mode of our self-acquaintance is, after all, beholden to the claim of authenticity?

And yet, to say so is to ignore a tacit rejoinder in the preceding analysis of vanity. Authentic resoluteness is as vapid as the very inauthentic existence it repudiates, for it simply repeats, at a deeper level of defiance, the same strategy of treating worldly average everydayness as somehow all-encompassing and absolutely binding on us. Resoluteness treats relativities as absolute. Must a phenomenological analysis of selfhood remain beholden to the framework of the existential analytic? Must things persist as they have for some time, or might not there be a shift in how we approach the question? The history of phenomenology itself here proves enlightening. From its inception it has prided itself on aspiring to be a *living* philosophy. There is no principled reason to think that this deserved to change, which is why, for us today, the “things themselves” do not call for further contributions to an authenticity literature that has already expanded beyond what any single one of us could ever hope to actually read. Phenomenology is at a crossroads, but it requires a willingness on our own part to confront the new questions that have been opened as a result of identifying (and moving beyond) the scope of the Heideggerian philosophy.³⁵

That work has already begun in France, where it has been known for quite some time that the time is ripe for a reappraisal of phenomenology. As Michel Henry noted in his 1989 review of *Reduction and Givenness*, Marion’s “fourth principle” of phenomenology “does not merely provide phenomenology with a simple enrichment of developments already included in its historic presuppositions. By assigning to phenomenology previously unnoticed objectives, and greater ambitions, it leads phenomenology down new paths.”³⁶ Is this not what Marion’s remodelling of the reduction achieves? Emphasizing contours of phenomenality previously unexplored, and thus in turn the self who inhabits them, the notion of authenticity must itself be critically reappraised in light of Marion’s reduction.

What is required, thus, is a systematic phenomenological criticism of the notion that authenticity is our highest possibility. Doing so does not require laying out, in exacting detail, every conceivable interpretation of authenticity in the literature—the most popular accounts will command our attention. The main focus of our attention will lie elsewhere, to the unanswered questions that open up when we see that, regardless of however these various interpretation understand authenticity, Heidegger's position is crucially false. Against Heidegger, the self is not solely—or even primarily—an *ontological* issue.

Following Marion, we shall contend that love, not Being, is king. It, not Being, takes priority since it raises the question truly defining us. And the question comes in response to vanity: “Does anybody love me?”³⁷ For Marion, to ask whether anybody really loves me ushers us into the phenomenality of love. It does not end there. This original question commences what will, if we prove willing, eventuate a total transformation in the whole of our existence. There are two additional steps to that transformation. After asking ourselves whether anybody loves us, next comes the question: “Can I love first?” If I answer affirmatively by actively loving, this in turn leads to the last stage. I reach the realization that I have always already been loved—by God. The first question alone suffices to show Heideggerian authenticity does not capture the fundamental stakes of human existence. It is love, not Being, that makes us who we are—such is the lesson of Marion's work on the phenomenological reduction.

To substantiate Marion's insight, a summary of Heidegger's view of authentic *Dasein* is in order. By the moment in *Being and Time* that Heidegger introduces authenticity, he has shown that the un-concealment of entities in intentional experience is co-extensive with self-disclosure as *Dasein*, with the one who understands the meaning of its being through what it cares for and

pursues. As Heidegger notes regarding everydayness, such understanding is negotiated in direct entwinement with beings, but something possible only because entities already *matter* to us in some way. Thus, were beings for whatever reason to *quit mattering* to us, our corresponding ability to understand ourselves as we ordinarily do would be disabled. Were, then, there a condition in which *nothing any longer mattered*, such an experience would destroy our typical *self*-understanding.

It is a disabling conditioning approximating this that Heidegger identifies in anxiety. Because anxiety is the fundamental attunement of being-in-the-world, when it surfaces explicitly, as in the case of the existential breakdown of “world-collapse,” we are brought before the unvarnished truth at stake in the enigma of existence. Disengaged from the hold, sway, and exigency of *das Man*, anxiety strips us down to a world-hungry subjectivity, to something little more than a “project-less projecting.” It is here that resoluteness itself becomes possible. Typically, it is maintained that authenticity involves appropriating everyday social roles, practical identities, norms, customs, practices, and taboos in light of the radical individuation that a confrontation with one’s underlying anxiety affords. Authenticity involves seizing upon everyday possibilities in a way that, because they are no longer everyone’s, for they cease to be anyone’s, they are appropriated as *mine*.

The key difference between inauthenticity and authenticity, on such a view, is framed by *conformism*. Whether I succeed at living authentically is decided by whether I resist the temptation of conformism, that is, whether I instead inhabit the space of everydayness by transparently enacting my self-understanding in a way that exhibits its own style. As with Nietzsche, the existence Heidegger describes is an *aesthetic* phenomenon. Despite the many subtle distinctions they draw, and despite the many details they dispute, commentators all hold that to be who we are exhibits the same essential form, that one’s typical way of existing involves seizing possibilities in an “un-owned” way, a pattern of behavior which anxiety disrupts by revealing the conformist nature of doing so, which

for its own part in turn allows one to escape conformism by instead seizing upon them authentically. Authenticity, consequently, amounts to a resolve to inhabit the normative space of practical identity otherwise than the banality of conformism.

This widespread interpretation of authenticity is exegetically persuasive. To interpret correctly what Heidegger says, however, does not exempt what he means from phenomenological criticism—too often, the question of its philosophical truth never seriously arises. Frequently, the phenomenon is made the topic of exegesis, but whether it accords with the things themselves is not asked. As Marion’s analyses of vanity suggest, authenticity should not be treated as if it were above phenomenological criticism. And if it is a question that Marion’s own texts on vanity leave implicit, we shall formulate it here: does not vanity render the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity existentially moot? In counseling us to plunge headlong back into the world, does not the Heideggerian conception of authenticity ignore the inescapable futility that would attend doing so? In a word, have not the commentators, following Heidegger himself, missed the vanity of authenticity?

Very often, Heidegger’s closest readers admit it, counselling that we do so nevertheless. We encounter such advice time and again in representative passages as these: “It is incumbent upon us, as the kind of entity that we each are, to let the world make claims on us”; the incumbence is necessary, presumably, since for the existential analytic there is no phenomenality besides the world: “A life lived with this greater flexibility is inflected by authenticity, though still lived within the everyday. One must return authentically to the everyday, for there is nowhere else to live”; far than from anxiety revealing a possibility human existence transcending the banality of ordinariness, all one can do in resoluteness is return to everydayness, since “Dasein does not extricate itself from the shared, cultural background”; consequently, “the most stable self—the one that is most independent

or autonomous—is the self that is a consistent, stable, and coherent integration of thrownness and projection.”³⁸ This advice epitomized by a volume like *Heidegger, Authenticity, and the Self* is clear. Inasmuch as resoluteness determines how we are supposed to negotiate the enigma of an existence delimited by the world, it follows that the highest calling of such an existence (the call to authenticity) is inscribed within the everyday. The truth of self is thus said to be equivalent to the world’s truth—all appearing is reduced to the exteriority of visibility, as Henry’s criticism of ontological monism has made clear. Nothing essential about ourselves is said to exceed the horizon of the world in which our daily commitments transpire: I am being-in-the-world. As Heidegger himself emphasizes, “*authentic* existence is not something which floats above falling everydayness; existentially, it is only a modified way in which such everydayness is seized upon.”³⁹

And yet, there is an incoherence at the heart of resolute existence. If anxiety momentarily disorients us by awakening us from our conformist slumber, rendering in turn that everydayness uncanny, so vanity discloses a comparatively deeper malaise, one disqualifying the very point of choosing to live in anticipatory resoluteness itself. When vanity overwhelms us, resolutely pressing into our daily commitments loses any appeal. The prospects of living resolutely exert as little tug on us as do the pressures of conformism after one has experienced the lucidity of anxiety. Resoluteness itself becomes a dead option, for vanity wounds us in a way that wholly neutralizes the appeal of an everyday life geared toward gratifying my own egocentric desires. Detached from the hustle and bustle of the ordinary, I experience the anguish of feeling my craving for more than what average everydayness can offer unfulfilled. In a world painted gray, I yearn for more. I feel within the depths of my interiority the crushing epiphany that the world is not enough. The realization is not a life-denying ennui, but a life-affirming urge for something greater than the superficiality of daily life.

A phenomenological rule of manifestation concerning the a priori relationship between call and response explains how the world comes not to matter to us.⁴⁰ The world is manifest in the form of the call that accomplishes it, and thus, as Marion observes in chapter six of *Reduction and Givenness*, its claim is as subject to disqualification as any particular claims within it. Not only is the exigency of the commitments underlying our projects liable to annulment; the neutralization can be complete when, in vanity, the *world itself* is rendered indifferent to us. As he notes in the context of the phenomenon of boredom, which itself is a signpost for existence's vanity, this is precisely what occurs.

L'ennui suspend la revendication que l'être exerce sur le *Dasein*. Autrement dit, si le *Dasein* se définit comme *Dasein* par son ouverture à (et du fait de) l'être, donc parce qu'il « se dresse extatiquement dans la vérité de l'être, si l'ennui provoque la désertion du *Je* à l'encontre de tout ce qui est précisément parce qu'il le hait, il faut donc conclure d'abord que le *Je* peut se soustraire du destin de *Dasein*, ensuite qu'il peut suspendre toute revendication, donc aussi et surtout celle de l'être.⁴¹

A consequence of considerable weight here comes firmly into relief. In profound boredom—what Pascal called the “boredom of the depths”—I am delivered from the horizon of the world. My being ceases to be at issue for me in the way that it is in when I am immersed in the thick of practical identity. *Dasein* is the being for whom its own being is at issue, yet in boredom that *very being ceases to be at stake*. However, I am still there in boredom despite the fact that I am not there in the mode of *Dasein*. Consequently, I am irreducible to *Dasein*. And not only that, for here a dimension of interiority subtending the surface of *Dasein* announces itself. As Marion notes, to characterize subjectivity solely in terms of being-in-the-world's practical identity and sociality is to mischaracterize our depths (and hence of others too, and our relation to them). It is to insist, blindly, that the only place of human existence is the world of objects.

It becomes apparent how truly perverse the recommendation to plunge back into the world is. To suggest so is to encourage us to double-down on what we all know cannot bring true satisfaction, and which, as we now also see, would in effect entail plunging headlong into vanity's wheelhouse. It is incredible that anyone should maintain so. Yet that is precisely what we see time and again. Blinded by the desire to insulate the text from external phenomenological scrutiny, the cult of authenticity repeats what Heidegger says, without ever questioning whether what is said is true. It is a great irony that, in attempting to explicate a concept that itself champions individualism and denounces "idle talk" and conformism, the literature on the subject has in many ways come to embody the very mentality the central concept it aims to clarify wished to repudiate.

The routines of mass society only solicit us through affordances, a structure of solicitation whose claims depends on our own complicity. The question to ask here is plain: if vanity cuts the cord between me and the world, how is attempting to inhabit worldly practical identities authentically not useless?

As the call of the world can itself be disqualified, so the decision to choose to be resolute is one not worth resolving to make. The emptiness of everything worldly we feel in vanity owes to something we have been describing, but which the conformist interpretation of inauthentic existence conceals: since all of *Dasein's* abilities-to-be are confined to the exteriority of average everydayness, each is disabled in one fell swoop. Resoluteness is as pointless as any of the commitments it ordinarily takes up. Its exigency is only as robust as the exigency of the field of worldly possibilities that array themselves before us. In reply to vanity's question—"A quoi bon?"—such possibilities have no answer; they are matters of total disinterest. Vanity, which neutralizes our desire to traffick in beings (whether in practical manipulation or theoretical knowledge), accordingly severs the claim of the world with it, reducing even the call to resoluteness itself silent.⁴²

Thus, far from supplying us true assurance, resoluteness ignores the reality that the exigency of its own ideals—autonomy, responsibility, self-actualization, self-expression, etc.—like all worldly commitments are gutted by vanity. To choose resolutely to exist in the attitude of being-towards-death is no resolution at all. Such a choice is a form of resolution that resolves to ignore the myopia of its own resolution. In resoluteness, I resolve never to squarely face up to my own irresolution—in resigning myself to languish indefinitely in the realm of average everydayness, with my eyes fixed on the ends of the earth, I actually occupy a deeply compromised position. Such an existence’s futility is reflected in the existential analytic’s own inability to justify resoluteness in the face of vanity. In the final analysis, it cannot settle *why* being authentic matters, so it brackets the question. Resolute *Dasein* plays a game. Pretending that the world always exerts an exigency that it knows the experience of vanity would in fact annul, it resolves to live an authentic existence by concealing a malaise even more primordial than anxiety. For all the rhetoric about putting itself in question by questioning itself, resoluteness finally stops short of the most essential question: what’s the use in resolving to be resolute?

A full confrontation with anxiety exhorts us to inhabit the ordinary differently than we had before. Vanity delivers us from the ordinary altogether, impressing that our worldly routine is not enough. The authenticity literature has noted the problem, even if it is left unresolved. It comes to the problem in the following way. If in the anxiety of world-collapse we confront the irrecovable disparity between ourselves and practical identity, why should we plunge back into the world? Denis McManus spots the dilemma when, in the context of an essay explicating Heidegger’s account of authentic selfhood, he identifies what he names the *Motivational Problem*. He says of it this: “something must indeed move us if we are to ‘pass through’ anxiety/death; and perhaps this something includes ‘ontic cares’ and the needs of our time and generation”; yet the idea that

everyday claims are what motivates our return to action poses a dilemma for authenticity since, insofar as a resolute existence is said to be chosen in the face of a total collapse of practical identity, then, as he notes, “if we have these cares and find these needs pressing in anxiety/death, then the latter cannot be the ‘catastrophic collapse’ [it is sometimes described as] being.”⁴³ He thus continues, “Being moved by such cares and needs, our choices made in the face of anxiety may not be arbitrary. But if we are so moved, this undermines the vision of liberation through anxiety/death that views of this sort espouse and the accounts of ‘choosing choice,’ taking responsibility, etc. that this underpins.”⁴⁴ McManus notices that if this collapse in practical identity is incomplete, it is hard to see how gearing back into the world could be done in accordance with authenticity’s ethos of radical responsibility, liberty, and resolution. In that case, the everyday norms that guide me in inauthenticity remain as binding as ever. On the other hand, if the collapse is entire, then I have no motivation to do anything at all, in which case, granting that the milieu of everydayness fails to retain any of its usual vivacity, there in turn is no objective standard by which we may choose to do what we do. We are shipwrecked on the shores of voluntarism. It thus appears that we must pick our poison: either *Dasein* heeds the norms of everydayness unreflectively (and thus inauthentically), or else it attempts to escape the pitfalls of conformism, in which case it thereby does so by a kind of blind voluntarism unguided by reasonable standards. To take the everyday as one’s overriding standard stands at odds with authenticity’s ethos of liberation and individualism, yet to disregard those standards would entail decisionism. Hence, there is a major tension lying at the heart of resoluteness.

That is not to say that one may not attempt a way forward. Could it not be maintained that it is possible to gear back into the world once anxiety subsides? But if so, the question becomes how, in doing so, one is truly said to *be* ready for anxiety more than one was beforehand. What *is* such readiness? Some like McManus himself have suggested that the readiness involves the ability to be

prepared to give and ask for reasons. He observes, “To act on one’s own reasons—rather than those of others or the They—is to have chosen to choose oneself how to live, rather than letting the others—and their reasons—decide for one”; he is not alone in offering a view that sees authenticity to be a matter of being accountable for oneself in terms of one’s own reasons, for, as Steven Crowell proposes, “If I act authentically, I will transparently enact my responsibility for what being [something] means—that is, I will be ready for the anxious breakdown of what I nevertheless avow as what is best, of the ‘rule’ that I cannot state but which orients my behavior.”⁴⁵ But such accounts, by attempting to define the readiness of resoluteness as a sensitivity to reasons, does not elucidate what that sensitivity itself is.

But there is still a difficulty facing the account that presents resoluteness as a matter of giving and asking for reasons. It will be noted that such a perspective presupposes the earlier conformist interpretation of authenticity we have seen, that, in short, to turn away from inauthentic fallenness is (in part) to take responsibility for *my* reasons rather than resting content with those of *others*. This anti-conformist conception of authenticity, however, falls under the blow of vanity, for whatever significance is ordinarily said to distinguish conformism from non-conformism is only operative insofar as one is still enthralled by the everyday—but the grip of everydayness is exactly what we take leave of in vanity. Hence, any distinction between conformism and non-conformism becomes existentially moot. Does it matter, for example, whether I make the iconoclastic choice of bottling homemade ketchup rather than buying Heinz at the store? Does it matter, finally, whether I have ready reasons demonstrating how my reasons for doing so are mine, as though such a decision, and the ability to justify it, exemplifies an authentic sense of unique style? The case admittedly is a bit silly, but it touches on a legitimate concern. In the course of everyday modern life, how (much less why) should I be authentic?

The problem is only intensified when we note that, though the experience of anxiety is an “existential death” in which one still exists without being able to *be* anything (I am temporarily disabled from pressing into possibilities), with vanity the problem is even deeper: *is it even worth trying to be anything at all?* Take the café waiter’s contrasting responses to anxiety and vanity. When suffering an anxiety attack (in the Heideggerian sense), he is temporally unable to be a waiter by doing what waiters do. Yet, when the mood abates, he sees that he should go about his waiterly duties—the question of what it means to be a waiter may still arise, yet the underlying conviction that such a commitment is worth maintaining remains relatively stable. It is what that commitment entails, not whether the commitment itself matters, that is at stake. In responding authentically, he may in some way go about the business of being a waiter differently than he had before. Now, he inhabits the role with a sense of what Jonathan Lear calls irony—his style of existence exemplifies the awareness that, in taking up that role, what it means to *be* a waiter is itself something at stake to the point that it may become unclear what it would even mean to be a good waiter. The very meaning of the role is undecided. And although he cannot be a waiter when enduring the heights of anxiety, as soon as the brunt of the mood passes, he will be back in the thick of things, ready to give and ask for reasons and to enact transparently the fact that he is a waiter in the mode of not being one.

When vanity strikes our waiter, things for him are otherwise. His commitment to being a waiter is not now enigmatic. Instead, he is grieved by the overwhelming realization that there is no use in even trying to be one. Unlike the trial of anxiety which reconfigures the milieu of everydayness to the point of its becoming momentarily unfamiliar, vanity does more. We are not led, as some of the authentic are, to adopt an ironic posture toward what we had formerly treated as ordinary. To inhabit the rhythms of the everyday ironically is only possible insofar as one still feels moved to do so—the factual claims of the world must in some way still matter sufficiently to stir us

to take them up in that way. We are still within the ken of being-in-the-world. When the factual claims of the world cease to claim me, as in vanity, even the possibility of taking an ironic distance toward them loses appeal. Irony is radically disinteresting for it, too, is a game no longer worth playing. Authentically enacting our being-in-the-world ceases to matter, for the factual claims of average everydayness feel empty. Where, then, the waiter in anxiety momentarily cannot press into his task, in vanity, his malaise reaches deeper: *he sees that there is no point to anything about his being-in-the-world*. Anxiety induces the uncanny realization that I am never identical to the roles of my everyday routine. Thereafter, the very meaning of that role is radically undecided. Vanity, however, plunges me into the despairing realization that none of these roles truly matter, because they cannot satisfy me, given who I am. In anxiety I realize that being who I am is to be more than what I do (the principle of non-coincidence); in vanity, I realize the futility initially accompanying the realization that being who I am is to be faced with a world of empty possibilities precisely given what I am. In anxiety I am fascinated by the enigma of the world which draws me in; in vanity the world is dead to me, and, having taken leave of it, nothing in it can coax me back.

Resoluteness therefore seems unjustified. Still, a conceivable solution possibly lies open. Is it not possible to reject the framework arguably undergirding the objection? Could we not say that Heidegger never truly endorses a form of decisionism? Were some guiding standards for resoluteness to be identified, that would dispel the idea that it is a kind of arbitrary voluntarism, as well as the associated problem that arises from that conception of resolute choice. This is precisely the move made by Matthew Burch in his largely overlooked but excellent essay on the question, “Death and Deliberation: Overcoming the Decisionism Critique of Heidegger’s Practical Philosophy.” Resolute self-choice (the act of choosing oneself) is not an “unfettered act of will,” but rather a decision originating from “deep deliberation.” Burch notes three distinct (yet subtly related) claims regarding

the prevailing decisionist reading of Heidegger. First among them is what he names the “hyperbole claim,” the idea that we can in fact undergo a collapse in our practical identity. He contends that such a collapse, which is reminiscent of what Marion means by vanity, actually is impossible, and that it is wrong to attribute the idea to Heidegger that this is what happens in anxiety. The experience of anxiety, says Burch, does not entirely obliterate our worldly self. For though anxiety “temporarily disables my capacity to make commitments,” it does not “eradicate the worldly self.”⁴⁶ No such annihilation of the self takes place. What Heidegger describes regarding death and anxiety in Division II of *Being and Time* is not an experience wherein all factual claims are completely eradicated. In such an experience, I do not stand as someone devoid of any factual content whatsoever. Denying that “existential death” involves the kind of total breakdown in meaning many commentators suggest it does, Burch’s move, if right, would forestall the next claim typically thought to saddle Heidegger’s position.

That second claim, what he calls the “bootstraps objection,” contends that *Being and Time*’s conception of resolute self-choice is a mere decision for decision’s sake. But, so that objection continues, such choice is made impossible in anxiety because there is no longer any motivation to make *any* choice—this in effect is a repeat of the problem already identified by McManus. As Burch admits, it will not suffice to say that the problem dissolves insofar as anxiety passes on its own. Such a response, he says, is not only “facile,” but also overlooks the fact that, according to Heidegger himself, resolute self-choice is something we exercise as an *active* response to anxiety. If this apparent dilemma cannot be dissolved, it leads naturally to an additional one.

Were anxiety to entail a complete breakdown in practical identity (a claim Burch just denied), then there is no deliberative criteria by which we can practically decide what to do. If all practical

reasons are relative to a given practical identity, but the latter has ceased to claim us, there are no standards to guide a decision regarding how to respond to anxiety, for anxiety has already disabled those very reasons. Hence, so the objection concludes, the resolute self-choice exercised in anxiety must be a matter of sheer will. The breakdown of practical identity precipitates voluntarism.

Having rejected the idea that the breakdown in practical identity is ever complete, Burch from there moves on to address the second mentioned worry according to which resolute self-choice is standardless. Because the breakdown in practical identity characterizing anxiety is not total, we are not annihilated. Hence, there are still factual claims made on us even in anxiety. Burch in fact notes three specific kinds of potential motivation that direct our way out of anxiety: the “desire for hedonic repetition,” our “pretheoretical grasp of [ourselves] and the world,” and the desire for “eudaimonistic satisfaction.”⁴⁷ For Burch, while the uncanniness of anxiety disrupts worldly claims, it paradoxically “motivates *Dasein* to eventually overcome this dissatisfaction by returning to the world.”⁴⁸ When anxiety returns us back to the familiar context of the world, resolute *Dasein* can deliberate deeply over the shape it wishes its future to take. It does so in part by reflecting on whether those current commitments are still worth preserving—and if they are, how to go about pursuing them. Far from proposing a form of self-determination that turns on nothing but an arbitrary act of will, for Burch, Heidegger’s picture of resolute choice is quite different. Authentic *Dasein* weighs the factual claims laid out before it in terms of a hierarchical systems of hedonic, idiosyncratic, and eudaimonistic standards which, when taken in concert, affords a form of life that is uniquely one’s own. Thus, on closer scrutiny, it turns out that resoluteness is a mode of self-ownership *requiring* (rather than eschewing) deliberation.

We can bracket the question of whether Burch's reconstruction of Heidegger gets things right—it very well may, for as a matter of exegesis, there is much to recommend the rationalist reading over the decisionistic alternatives that it challenges. And yet, even this particular interpretation of resoluteness, however, it may at first seem, remains open to the same objection we originally raised. The mistake it commits, we might think, is made right out the gate. Is not Burch mistaken when he insists, at the very beginning of his analysis, that a complete breakdown in practical identity is impossible? For is not such an experience what distinctively characterizes the experience of vanity? By denying the possibility of a collapse of our practical identity, has Burch not thereby denied the reality of vanity? Far from it. To conclude so would be to distort the phenomena: neither Burch's conception of anxiety nor what we mean by vanity involves the kind of annihilation of the self presupposed by the decisionist view of authentic resoluteness. But what then, if anything, distinguishes the trial of anxiety from that of vanity, and what, in turn, distinguishes the mode of response by which we are called to reply to them?

In vanity, the very system of hedonic, idiosyncratic, and eudaimonic values to which Burch's account makes continual appeal in his account of anxiety is neutralized. This is not to say that such claims leave no trace, as though we were rendered devoid of all memory, character, or habit. We are still there. But the fact that we are still there is what precisely makes the trial so painful. For though the mundane factual claims of the world are still intelligible (vanity is not a psychosis), they have come radically to lack their previous force (or appeal). They no longer grip us, because we know when we do take them up again, they will no longer satisfy us as they had before. Vanity is the loss of innocence, of the sense that what had previously enthralled us in the world can ever truly satisfy us. We have crossed a threshold from whence there is no return. Permanently, things are radically changed. For, from the perspective of the one who finds himself in the dark hour of vanity, it is not

overstating things to say that the mode of authentic existence, which still turns on the pursuit of pleasure and happiness, is one encapsulated in the words Isaiah quoted to criticize: “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (Isaiah 22:13). Thus, while it is right to emphasize with Burch that the world’s factual claims continue to be present in anxiety, that does not directly address the fact that, in the dark hour of vanity, even gold is dim.

Authenticity’s project of bringing ourselves into equilibrium with the world, thus, itself becomes radically uninteresting to us in vanity. The world’s claims are still experienced as possibilities (they do not become unintelligible), but they lose their promise and luster—we are stretched so thin in vanity that a life relegated to such pursuits seems crushing. Now, unlike before, we feel at the heart of our being a need for something more. There is no more an unfettered desire for “higher” pleasures than there is for gratifying the most basic lusts. I am radically uninterested in the entire nexus of worldly enticements and their familiar satisfactions. There is no use in referring to them as resources for attempting to deliberate over the future—when delivered over to vanity, any such future is what seems so pointless. It is a future without promise. Carrying on before no longer strikes us as desirable. Even a life of the mind seems hollow, for the metaphysical desire to know beings scientifically is unappealing. In experiencing the fact that there is something about my being that yearns for more than what any system of hedonic or eudaimonic ends may provide, I find myself dissatisfied with the worldly possibilities that previously diverted me from facing that realization—none, I now know, proves satisfying (a fact Weezer’s profane but accurate anthem “Tired of Sex” notes). Even the idea of the pursuit of happiness is demoralizing. Hence the question—“What’s the use?”

The deep deliberation associated with resolute self-determination therefore remains a superficiality to the extent that, in directing our attention back to a milieu of factual claims which themselves only hold out the promise of worldly satisfaction without any absolute satisfaction, such a milieu presents me with nothing but more restlessness when, as here, I am overwhelmed with a desire for more than what any such hedonistic or even eudaemonic contentment gives. In fact, what makes the distress of vanity so overwhelming is a realization explaining its underlying despairing tenor: the very idea of relegating myself to the pursuit of such contentment is itself radically uninteresting. Worldly satisfactions become shallow, and thus themselves a source of dissatisfaction. In the last analysis, the initial panic that engulfs us in vanity is due precisely to the fact that, in assailing us, life seems to offer only the pursuit of empty contentment, but that, which is what no longer will content us, leads to the dizzying awareness that existence itself, which promises only the discontentment of a life relegated to the quixotic search for vain contentment, is now dim. Completely beleaguered, it is no exaggeration to say that, in such a state, one feels as though it would have been better never to have been born at all.

To circle back, we may note that Burch's presentation of authentic resoluteness is ingenuous. By denying the possibility that a practical identity may never wholly collapse, the related question as to how someone could propel himself out of such an identity crisis need not arise. As he summarizes the objections that come against Heidegger because of that bad interpretation, "According to DC, Heidegger's account of self-choice commits him to the following problematic claims: 1) the *hyperbole claim*—the claim that an agent can undergo a complete collapse of his practical identity; 2) the *bootstraps claim*—the notion that an agent could wrench himself out of such a total identity crisis by a sheer act of the will; and 3) the *voluntarism claim*—the conviction that this act of will is an act of self-choice that is unconstrained by any formal or material criteria (or *reasons*)."⁴⁹ And yet, this defense of

rational deliberation is unsuccessful without some essential qualifiers. Thus, while a collapse in practical identity is impossible, the experience of vanity nevertheless renders the old factual claims of our mundane existence radically uninteresting. While the already familiar claims of average everydayness may suffice to coax *Dasein* back to the world in the face of anxiety, that is not the case in vanity. New claims will be needed, for the mundane is precisely what ceases to claim us in vanity. Anxiety presents us with the possibility of taking up the everyday anew. Vanity demonstrates that we need new possibilities altogether.

To discern what those new claims may consist in—or, more specifically, the new order of phenomenality to which they belong—it will do first to return to McManus’s point concerning the problem of motivation, while keeping Burch’s intervention on behalf of Heidegger in mind. For whereas Burch aimed to sidestep the “bootstraps objection” by denying the possibility of a total breakdown in practical identity (without for that denying the reality of vanity), McManus also acknowledges the validity of a collapse in meaning, though he does not address its potential ramifications for Heidegger’s image of the authentic life. The problem remains as apparent as it is irresolvable: if in vanity the ordinary factual claims of the world fail to claim us, what is to explain why—or indeed *how*—we can return to everydayness authentically? As he asks, “Finally, let us turn to the second objection, that nothing may ‘speak to us’. That, one might indeed suggest, is ‘the modern condition,’ the malaise of modern humanity to which existentialism gives striking expression and, in particular, in its explorations of anxiety.”⁵⁰ This essentially is just another way of indicating what Marion’s *The Erotic Phenomenon* identifies as vanity. While McManus and Burch are two Heidegger commentators who observe the phenomenon’s potential implications for authenticity, in the last analysis, McManus too, much like Burch, draws back by directing his attention elsewhere: “It is not my concern to deny the possibility of such an experience—which

might well be compared with ‘world collapse’—or to deny its broader cultural and philosophical significance: it may well be a focal concern of some philosophers we label “existentialists.”⁵¹ As he continues, “such an experience cannot play the role that anxiety (or death) plays in Heidegger. In particular, it is an experience in the face of which one can do nothing; and, therefore, it cannot be the experience for which the authentic are ‘ready’ and the inauthentic are not.”⁵² The reason it cannot, he explains, is that even for the authentic “some possibilities do speak,” whereas for those to whom *no* possibilities speak because *nothing* matters, they simply, he says, “have problems of their own.”⁵³ To spare authenticity from the blow of vanity, the only strategy has been to dissolve the problem by in effect denying that there really is one. Whether with Burch, who does not deny the reality of vanity but does not consider its implications in the course of his exegetical defense of Heidegger’s position, or else with McManus, who admits the phenomenon’s existence but then downplays its existential significance, authentic self-choice is said to be the pinnacle of what it means to be who we are, yet that conclusion is reached without its ever genuinely facing—much less overcoming—the challenge vanity presents to it.

McManus’s inchoate assessment of the phenomenon he names “anxiety” (but more approximates what Marion means by vanity), invites three remarks. First remark: although an underlying sense that nothing matters is characteristic of our modern malaise, it is by no means limited to recent times. The experience of vanity is an experiential consequence of being-in-the-world as such. If it really were indeed a phenomenon resulting from historical contingency and thus something confined exclusively to today (as McManus contends), we should not find unmistakable traces of it in other historical periods. But we do. The Holy Bible discusses it—and no matter how much one might dispute the divine authority the Scripture claim for themselves, one cannot deny that, considered strictly from a historical perspective, the biblical texts are ancient, and thus

certainly not in any relevant respect modern. Among the many places in which vanity is referenced, perhaps the most famous instance is that of Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes. The text reads, “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity” (Ecclesiastes 1:2). Solomon’s observation that we are not at home in the world is not a neurotic leitmotif of overly dramatic teenagers or French existentialists. And though modern mass society in many ways possibly exacerbates that condition, it in no way accounts for it. Vanity, or at least something very similar to it, has been a celebrated topic of literary, artistic, musical, religious, and even philosophical significance for centuries.⁵⁴ It is immortalized in the philosophies of Pascal, Schopenhauer, Leopardi, Novalis, and Kierkegaard, in the symphonies of Mahler, on the canvasses of Steenwijck, and in the engravings of Dürer. Vanity is not a cultural pathology afflicting those only of modernity. It is an unavoidable experience in life—a fact the history of western civilization, reaching back to the ancients, bears overwhelming witness.

From this, a second remark follows: rather than validating the existential analytic’s contention that our highest calling is to authenticity, the phenomenon of vanity shows that an authentic existence is not the most intimate tenor of existence. When, for instance, McManus observes that vanity cannot be the experience for which the authentic are ready and the inauthentic are not, this does entail, as he suggests, that we should therefore ignore vanity. The fact that the existential analytic’s framework cannot accommodate it is not reason to reject the phenomenon, but to abandon the framework. In phenomenology, phenomena must have the last word.

Others have therefore drawn the wrong conclusion when, following McManus, they choose to jettison vanity to preserve Heidegger’s analytic. The mistake is explicit in an essay of Stephan Käufer, who, echoing the same point made carefully by Burch, writes, “It is difficult to imagine actual cases of total world collapse, in which nothing at all matters to a person, and if we do image

such a case, it is difficult to imagine how an authentic person could regain her footing. To look for such claims in *Being and Time* misses the point of the argument.”⁵⁵ But the difficulty of envisaging any actual case of total breakdown is not so impossible. As those who have experienced the blow vanity know, they have no need to *imagine* it, for they have *undergone* it. To recognize that *Dasein* is unable to bring to bear reasons in response to vanity is not, as Käufer suggests, to miss the point of the argument; it is to trace the argument to its conclusion, and to identify the aporia at the heart of Heidegger’s analytic. That the existential analytic’s account of selfhood cannot accommodate the experience of vanity is not a reason to ignore the phenomenon—rather, it is the occasion to adjust our prior presuppositions in light of what in fact appears. Because the existential analytic claims to uncover the most fundamental structure of self-experience, yet it ignores the experience of vanity, such an account fails on its stated terms of capturing what is most fundamental about us.

This leads to the third and final remark. The remark is decisive against the recurring suggestion that resoluteness resolves the enigma of what it means to be a being whose being is at issue for it. Confronting the fact that the quotidian things of life lack an absolute purchase on us is not, as the authenticity literature says, a problem reserved just for some of us. It matters to everyone in virtue of being human, and to anyone who has not lost touch with that humanity. Not only do we need to make sense of our lives by pressing into average everydayness. More, our existence is oriented by a yearning whose existential fulfilment none of these everyday possibilities will satisfy. Nothing in the world can satisfy the need for an assurance that my life really matters, which is why we ache so long as we remain persuaded that there is nothing more to existence but that. The world provides no consolation in the face of the question “What’s the use?” The profound sense of yearning for a peace the world does not give us, then, is not a pathological state, but an attestation that I cannot find the assurance for which I yearn in the world—ever, and in principle.

When the vivacity of the world's factual claims are dissolved to the point that they no longer hold any promise of satisfying me as I used to think they could, vanity accordingly renders authenticity itself similarly useless. If authenticity involves a transformed attitude to normative space, this heightened sensitivity to reasons marked by an awareness of our finitude—the authentic *Dasein* possesses a heightened understanding of the normative terrain. But of what terrain? Inevitably, the milieu of the authentic *Dasein* is consigned to the phenomenality of being-in-the-world, to a terrain of action whose possibilities ultimately rest upon the projects that we give to ourselves by willfully pressing into them. But in vanity, this entire system of ends and projects, which depends on our freedom to hand ourselves over to the everyday, is rendered radically uninteresting to me. I no longer am content with the order of everydayness—I desire something that no possibility originating from the exercise of my freedom with an eye to the world can ever satisfy. Heideggerian *Angst*, thus, is a surface phenomenon compared with vanity, which is why it cannot perform the methodological work assigned to it by the existential analytic of accomplishing the transition to fundamental ontology. Vanity neutralizes even the *Seinsfrage*. The ontological difference is displaced, for I no longer care about the difference between beings and Being. At the heart of resolute being-towards-death, thus, lies pure incoherence: it exhorts me to seize upon everyday possibilities without acknowledging that, because the world supplies me no true assurance, trying to do so is most disappointed. The exhortation to seek rest in my commitments to worldly practical identities is advice which, aiming to elide this uselessness by downplaying its importance, treats the decision to be resolute as though pressing on into the world (whether stubbornly or blithely) were commendable and courageous, or even an experiential *fait accompli*. The tone of self-assurance in the authenticity literature, which recommends a resolute worldly life in an apparent spirit of security and acceptance, on closer inspection belies itself. Unable to confront the threat of vanity, what we discover is false bravado: in methodologically insulating itself against the blow of vanity by refusing

to question the horizon of being-in-the-world, it essentially flees the phenomenon of vanity, just as it notes the inauthentic do anxiety. It therefore is not without justification that we observe that those who settle for authentic resoluteness exhibit an “inauthenticity of the second-order.” Unwilling to face up to vanity, they remain locked into the shadows of being-in-the-world. It is an existence whose own mode of suppression is in a way expectable. Because it knows that it is powerless to overcome vanity unless it is willing to undergo the radical transformation doing so would entail, it burries it. In the face of what it knows would shatter its perspective, it loses courage in the face of the things themselves.

No doubt this is why we see some deploy the strategy they do, in the moments when vanity becomes the topic of uncomfortable discussion. In such cases, it is always possible to plead total ignorance of its trial, or else admit a vague acquaintance with it only to then downplay the significance of the admission. It will be necessary in a moment to explain why those who suppress the phenomenon of vanity feel compelled to do so, but here for now, it will suffice to emphasize the fact that though some may claim to be ignorant of such a phenomenon, that in no way is reason to think it does not exist—on the contrary, Marion’s account of vanity suggests that those who remain consigned to a form of existence determined by being-in-the-world will not see it, or admit that they have. That some allege not to know vanity is not therefore totally consistent with the erotic reduction; it is precisely what that account predicts. For unless someone proves willing to open himself to the blow of vanity by surrendering autonomous outlook, he will remain oblivious to the order of love. Everything will remain transcendently consigned to a realm of facticity determined by his own egocentric desires and pursuits—to the horizon of the world.

It therefore is necessary to ask what, then, we are to say in response to the one who simply denies any experiential knowledge of vanity. How is to be said? Those who disavow any knowledge of the experience of it are quick to insist that, were someone sufficiently to describe the contours of the phenomenon for them, they would take it seriously. But if one is prepared to dispute the universality of vanity by disavowing any personal familiarity with it, what hope can an argument or description be? To ask for a description of the experience in such a case is to ask for something unnecessary, since the issue concerns what can only be known properly in a first-personal way. How can someone clarify, by way of description, what everyone who is honest will admit to already knowing intimately for himself? And, even were a denial of knowing the experience of vanity sincere, no description could compensate for what only an encounter with the thing itself could. It is disingenuous to claim that one will be convinced of vanity's existence if provided a phenomenological description of it. To say so suggests, misleadingly, that one is willing to see the phenomenon if one can be shown it. But in shifting the burden onto somebody else to sketch the phenomenon, as though one otherwise cannot even begin to know what is at issue, only underscores that the situation is contrary to how the skeptic frames it: one stands in supposed need of being shown the phenomenon by somebody else because one is personally unwilling oneself to confront it. There would be no need for any description to vouchsafe the reality of the phenomenon, if the one asking for such an account would open himself to the trial. Thus, to demand such an account in the name of phenomenological reason is a gesture of bad faith. To ask for descriptive testimony of vanity's reality from someone else is like the misanthrope who declares that he will be persuaded that it is possible to love others if only someone would first show him with an argument that doing so is possible—the problem is not, as the misanthrope alleges, that he lacks an argument for seeing what he would otherwise be able to see were it supplied. The problem, rather, is that he has decided to ask for such an argument, precisely because he does not want to see. The problem with vanity here is no

different. It is not that the one who denies the validity of vanity fails to see what others have not yet adequately given him to see; it is that he is demanding others legitimize that which needs no such defense. Hence, to request that someone else explicate the possibility of vanity through phenomenological description is not to show that, until that happens, the phenomenon hangs in doubt. The one who makes such a demand of others merely announces, consciously or not, that one has no sincere intention of facing it, which is precisely why one has had to resort to seeking refuge in demanding arguments where no argument should be necessary. Ultimately, then, the one who does so is already lying (for one knows quite well of what one feigns to know nothing about), or else one does not know, but only because one does not want to know (for one suppresses the truth of vanity in the way the inauthentic do anxiety). What can be said when trying to reason with someone who is willing to use this ploy? There is not much one can say to someone who had done so, for, the issue is that such a person has a dishonest heart. At bottom, as Marion himself says, the cause is willful ignorance or a hypocritical humility:

Who, without panic, would resign himself to the limitation of being a thinking *ego*, restricted to its alleged transcendental neutrality, when the dark hour comes, no longer of doubt about certainty, but instead of vanity without assurance? Not I, not anyone—except if we hypocritically claim unconsciousness of the trial—could act as if it made no difference if someone loves me or not, as if this difference did not make more difference than every other, and did not render them all indifferent. Who can hold seriously that the possibility of finding oneself loved or hated does not concern him at all? One has only to try it: the moment he walks this line, the greatest philosopher in the world yields to dizziness. And besides, where is the coherence in humbly claiming oneself unselfish in front of the erotic reduction, while at the same time taking pride without hesitation or fear in exercising the imperial function of a transcendental *ego*?⁵⁶

Our review of the phenomenological reduction began with a criticism of Husserl and Heidegger. Authentic resoluteness, we saw, rises into salience in anxiety, in an experience which for Heidegger motivates our recognizing fundamental ontology as the highest implicit possibility of our being. Yet

the blow of vanity neutralizes the significance of these fields of inquiry by having revealed the uselessness of asking the questions that typically direct us to those fields—the transcendental reduction (which leads to the field of transcendental subjectivity), the ontological reduction (which leads to the explicit formulation of the ontological difference and hence the *Seinsfrage*), and the possibility of resoluteness (which returns us to the everyday authentically) all prove empty. To the question of self—“Who am I?” and in turn “What’s the use?”—fundamental ontology and transcendental phenomenology have no satisfying answer, for they lack any inviolable measure to which they can appeal. Turning us back on an autarkic self (as the *ego* or *Dasein*), we collapse under the weight of vanity. And hence, the entire phenomenological field of the world—the domain of the object, the being, and even Being itself—becomes one of indifference to us. Our long review of resoluteness invites a pressing question: if resoluteness is no antidote to the vanity of worldly existence, because it proves to be an unwitting instance of it, what is?⁵⁷ It is here that we may once again turn to Marion for the beginning of an answer.

To experience the blow of vanity is to feel, perhaps for the first time, the futility of deploying our powers of intentional transcendence within the world, unless the point of doing so can somehow be validated from elsewhere. It is here that Marion explains how, initial appearances notwithstanding, vanity perhaps needn’t have the final word on existence. When vanity has rendered everything apparently useless, what does one ask? I don’t ask myself whether I’ll get a work promotion (that thinking only ends in emptiness anyway, as anyone who has experienced the infamous “midlife crisis” knows), I don’t ask whether the idea of a Set of all Sets is truly incoherent (reflection on metaphysical puzzles turns on a curiosity that now seems childish), I don’t escape to the physics lab to play with lasers (the desire to know reality scientifically is no less a matter of the same curiosity), I don’t ask whether the French Defense is the best rejoinder to the Scotch Game

(the amusement of games is no shelter against vanity), I don't ask whether a carbon tax is really the best solution to meet the supposed ravages of global warming (political propaganda preys on the misplaced fear of a herd mentality that no longer applies when I am radically individualized in the dark hour of vanity), nor do I ask where I should dine tonight for dinner—it no longer suffices to say, as I had previously, that I shall simply eat and drink tonight, for tomorrow I die. In vanity, I acknowledge my need for more than bread alone.

What do I ask? One likely already knows, for we have all asked it at some point in our lives, even though we might blush to admit it. It is a question defining Marion's third reduction, a reduction accomplished in an erotic acceptance. Vanity opens the Pascalian order of charity. When in the clutches of the dark hour, I ask: "Does anybody love me?"⁵⁸ As if from some mysterious depths I had known not, or maybe just suppressed, one asks, "Does anybody love me"? My one and my all hinges on the answer. For everything would be worth it, or conversely nothing at all, depending on the answer to this one crucial question. Everything else is immaterial, for what's the use of the world, and the relations I have with people in it, and the countless ways in which we all busy ourselves, if nobody should love me? The idea of an existence without a spouse, or a single friend, or any kin—to live a life without the least companionship, or at least the possibility of such love, who could endure it? I can scarcely imagine such an existence—more than a scenario that we simply shudder to imagine, it is in fact literally unthinkable, for it rises to the level of what Husserl would call a material contradiction. A life without the possibility of love would literally not *be* a life. Should no one love me, everything is dead to me, for in a very real sense, to exist unloved (and without any hope of ever being loved) would mean that I ceased to exist—someone who is entirely unloved would be, like Ralph Ellison's invisible man, a nonentity.

Hence, the *Seinsfrage*, which does not face up to vanity, fails to recognize the paramount need of love. Enscribing itself within the bounds of the ontological difference, the one who lives as *Dasein* refuses to make the crossing from Being to love—no doubt this is why many who defend Heidegger’s vision of authenticity, whatever the costs, are themselves the ones who deny any familiarity with vanity. The overlap is not happenstance. Those who behave this way are closed in on themselves, preoccupied with their own projects and interests, their own pleasures and desires. They are little in love. But the possibility is always just waiting right around the corner. When the erotic reduction is mobilized, I see that the assurance objects and beings cannot provide is now in fact reachable. *I access that assurance—and in turn purpose—in love.* Though beings and the practical possibilities underlying them lie within the horizon of the world, and for that reason alone are, taken in themselves, tantamount to death (they are always passing away), love, in contrast, in opening a transcendence above and beyond the world’s collection of *egos*, and hence the selfishness and cruel hypocrisy that inevitably results, gives life.

Marion’s phenomenology has reminded us of it. As he writes in the Third Meditation of *The Erotic Phenomenon* shortly after formulating the erotic reduction: “L’amour ressuscite.”⁵⁹ This proposition, he notes, is as little a matter of speculation as it is exaggeration, because the human experience confirms it. In redeploying the phenomenological reduction in its erotic acceptance, the reduction not only meets vanity on its own battlefield; it vanquishes it. It is above all set apart from its predecessors precisely to the extent that it confronts the experience of vanity where these others had not. But if one is still inclined, against the overwhelming weight of human experience and phenomenological analysis, to for whatever reason still deny the credibility of the erotic reduction, an indirect approach may demonstrate the error in that way of seeing. For consider again the phenomenon of love. To admit the impossibility of doubting love’s transcendental primacy, it

suffices to ask ourselves the following, and to be honest: could we live in the knowledge that right now this second nobody loves us, and that no one ever possibly will? Such a possibility, notes Marion, would be equivalent to a “transcendental castration,” since to give up on the possibility of love “would bring me down to the rank of an artificial intelligence, a mechanical calculator or a demon, in short, very likely lower than an animal.”⁶⁰ A loveless life is inconceivable; it would drive anyone to madness or suicide. As Marion accordingly concludes, it is the erotic reduction, and it alone, that meets vanity on its own battlefield. Only it can heal the wound of vanity, for vanity, which reduce anything else to a state of utter indifference, is powerless to do so to love: “in my being I only resist the assault of vanity under the protection of this love, or at least its possibility.”⁶¹ The actuality—or at least the refreshing presence of its constant and enduring possibility—is rooted in an interiority, a safe harbor where, sheltered from the world, we in love may always withstand the gails of vanity that come against us unlike those who, resigned to a state of resoluteness, inevitably lose themselves in the futile search for a satisfaction they never find. By untethering me from the instrumentality of the world’s banality and its alienating objects, in love, I no longer plunge headlong into the futile. For *Dasein*, in contrast, things are tragically different. Knowing that the blow of vanity would devastate the illusion of its false quest for happiness, the one who struggles to live an authentic existence in the mode of being-in-the-world plunges farther into the darkness of denial—they are never as content as they would have others believe. For vanity would leave the *ego* and *Dasein* destitute. But not the *lover*.

What are the consequences for the one who, having heretofore lived an authentic existence, acknowledges the experience of vanity? Immediately, a natural objection arises. If such an experience does not involve the total annihilation of the self, for the world’s factual claims are still experienced as intelligible (if only undesirable), does not the one thrust into vanity end up subject to

decisionism? If we are to respond to the trial of vanity, will not that involve us being claimed in some way by factual threads of meaning that favor going one way rather than another? For if not, on what basis can we decide how to respond to it? In short, does the dilemma that plagued the Heideggerian account of resolute decision not also resurface with vanity?

An answer emerges, when we re-inhabit the situation of vanity. The one who knows vanity does not desire to respond to the mundane claims of the world. Being-in-the-world no longer is at stake for the one in the dark hour. In the moment of conviction, one needs, in desperation, more than what even an authentic relation to the claims of everydayness offer. Only a *new domain of reason*, a new order of phenomenality and its attendant claims, will satisfy the one who cannot go on in the familiar mode of *Dasein*. Here, one's possibility of living as the lover comes into view. My reasons as the lover are not reducible to the pre-existing factual claims that were always already available to me in the mode of being-in-the-world. Love, instead, exerts its claim on me from beyond that milieu of everydayness, and only precisely to the extent that I am willing to yield myself to it by seeking it. The seeking starts with Marion's question ("Does anybody love me?") and ultimately ends by opening up the order of charity. In commencing my career as a lover, there are thus reasons, and not simply blind choice, but love's reason only becomes accessible to me when I respond by first enduring the blow of vanity—I must let go of my egoism, and undergo the humiliation of experiencing, rather than fleeing, the vacuity of everydayness. In doing so, I do not simply take up the everyday in a different fashion as in authenticity; rather than existing in the mode of being-in-the-world, there is an entire shift in the phenomenality of experience itself. The order of love emerges, which completely revolutionizes my own self-experience and likewise how I experience others, too. Everydayness is not the only place in which we can let things claim us; the order of charity lies open to the one who will enter it.

If at first the order of love must remain insensible (and will remain so to anyone who remains locked into the horizon projected by care), this is because, with the veil still over our hearts, we remain lost in the power of darkness. Vanity, which leaves us unable to bear that condition anymore, brings us to the moment of decision: will I press into this mysterious territory of the *elsewhere*, or, whether due to cowardice or stubbornness or distrust, will I retreat back to the familiar world? The choice comes to one of either turning back to the familiar (but ultimately unsatisfying) factual claims of the world, or instead pressing into the order of love, and its region of new claims. How I respond to that call is something that each of us must decide for himself. Phenomenology can describe the moment of conviction (and even perhaps the contours of phenomenality that shape it), and it can even do something, as here, to try to produce it, but inevitably such analyses, however faithful they may be to what they aim to show, cannot decide how others will respond to it for themselves. Love does not coerce, for then it would not be love. Phenomenology, then, here *indicates* (in a sense not completely unlike Heidegger's notion of a "formal indication") a place opened up by the erotic reduction, but it cannot of itself induce anyone to enter into it. To take up that mode of existence (or else to refuse it) remains our own prerogative. Phenomenology as a philosophical method can *reflect* upon life, but its work of explication does not relieve us of the responsibility of deciding how we shall live it.

But even if the life of love that emerges from vanity's trial is not without its reasons, another objection must be heard. Is concluding that love represents the absolute standard of human existence simply to appeal to personal experience, and nothing else? Is love, in short, the highest reason, or is such a statement a matter of personal preference? To put the doubt in somewhat more technically precise language, have we not abandoned the phenomenological perspective for a purely empirical one? Or still again, is the claim that we essentially are defined by love (and hence God)

rather than Being (and hence nothing) far from self-evident? Against the idea that love alone provides the absolute standard of our lives, might not one suggest, for example, that work, artistic creation, or dedication on behalf of an important cause (social, humanitarian, ecological, etc.) makes a life worth living? Does the initial erotic possibility (of being loved by somebody) really alone open the sole set of stakes that makes existence genuinely meaningful?

The objection however turns back on itself and for many reasons. To begin with, what else could we appeal to but ourselves when, as here, the question concerns what characterizes the deepest dimension of self-experience? When the issue thus concerns our nearest mode of existence, what could serve as the initial (if not final) tribunal but our own lives? It is one thing to note that not everyone will necessarily interpret their own experience as we do ours, yet it is another thing to claim, as the preceding objection does, that there is some inherent methodological infelicity at work in appealing to the structure and rhythm of our own lives. In response to such an objection, it is worth emphasizing: what else but our own experience (and that of others too) could be more relevant? This first consideration illustrates why a second piece of the objection is also unpersuasive. Contrary to its suggestion, there in fact is no slippage into an empirical rather than a phenomenological perspective. For regardless of how one chooses exactly to understand that distinction (and what that distinction signifies is far from evident), the fact is that, in analyzing the phenomenality of love and the mode of self-experience correlated with it, we are bringing into view a claim that concerns something necessary and essential, a truth regarding the nature of human existence as such.

As for the tertiary claim that there are things that make life absolutely worth living apart from love, it turns out, as we shall see shortly, that such endeavors derive their value from the always nascent possibility of love within them. And here it is relevant to note that the erotic reduction

never insists it is the mere possibility of *romantic* love that trumps everything else; rather, the question “Does anybody love me?” is the initial, but not final, question that initiates us into the order of love. In the end, love calls us to take the initiative—“Can I love first?” Far from the focus remaining on whether somebody else loves us (or not), the question instead transforms into one of whether we can love first. And love is not just a potential romantic love interest, but rather everyone as our neighbor—and from there, it is a very short distance to experiencing the love of God energizing and sustaining this order of love. To emphasize that love is the true measure of human existence is not to endorse narcissism or promote egocentrism. On the contrary, the erotic reduction alone proves capable of dispelling such ethical solipsism, because it alone shatters the transcendental illusion of the *ego* and *Dasein*, which in the end reduce everything to a system of ends whose goal always refers back: to ourselves.

There remains a further question to address. For, if Marion chooses to characterize the natural attitude of *Dasein* as one determined by beings and objects, is that not to overlook the fact that, for authentic agents too, engagement with the world involves love and relations with loved ones, and hence more than beings and objects? This, to be sure, is true, yet it accentuates the difference between the natural attitude and the order of love it attempts to abolish. In the former, it is not the case that we traffic just in inanimate objects and lifeless beings. The shared world is also a world with others. More, there is a highly structured system of rites and rituals highlighting our ongoing commerce with others: baby shower and birthday parties, weddings, reunions, holidays, and funerals. To insist with Marion that the natural attitude consists of objects and beings is not to deny that we have relations with others or that we try to love others; it is to note that, at bottom, these relationships always in the natural attitude remain beholden to transcendental egoism. Things—friendships and even a marriage (as reality of divorce attests)—are undertaken, however subtly, with

an eye primarily to oneself. Others are not experienced as others in and for themselves, for, until the erotic reduction transforms me from an *I* to a *me*, those I love show up in my image. As Kierkegaard's meditations in *Works of Love* note, at the root of such love is self-love.

With the arrival of the erotic reduction our true measure emerges. Who I am, I see at last, is not essentially to be a cogitator (Descartes), *homo faber* (Marx), unconscious *Triebe* (Freud), will-to-power (Nietzsche), nor a being for whom that being is at stake (Heidegger). My quintessence is not best captured by the familiar adage "I think, therefore I am," nor, as our preceding critique of authenticity has made plain, will the motto "I am a being in whom that very being is at issue" completely do. As Marion rightly insists, what holds most of me is rather this: I *love*, therefore I am. Love is the first and final court of appeal for meaning, since it decides whether my existence is anything but futile. The world discloses itself through a comprehension of beings in terms of their Being—but the milieu of intelligibility, in which we try to make sense of ourselves in terms of the projects that take them up, always already presupposes a more essential one. Making sense of ourselves with entities is a possibility put at play solely because the otherworldly horizon of love stages and directs the whole production.

It is thus without the slightest trace of hyperbole that we say it would be inhuman for someone to deny the existence of a phenomenality beyond the world, for as anyone who has occupied the role of lover knows, one establishes the existence of such a place simply by one's own occupying it. Though Husserl's transcendental approach determines the initial stakes of self-investigation, and though Heidegger's ontological program of questioning deigns to complete them, neither finalizes them. I do not reside strictly within world's exteriority, as both the ontological and transcendental reductions misguidedly suggest. For as Marion has established, the erotic reduction

completes and thus supplants the stakes at issue in being a subject. In response to vanity, love deploys a reduction that accomplishes nothing short of a perfect reversal of our ordinary place: for love, and not the world, proves to have final purchase on us. Marion's third reduction therefore reveals an extraordinary result. To be me is to be *not of this world*. As the blow of vanity reveals, the world turns *Dasein* inside out. But not *me*.

A final consideration remains to be addressed. If in a crucial respect we are not of this world, where does the order of love unfold? At the intersection between the method of phenomenology and the matter of theology, Marion's analysis of the relationship between vanity and the erotic reduction ushers in an audacious yet compelling answer, one not without historical parallel: just as the "inward life" championed by Kierkegaard was meant to annul vanity's worldly sway, so too does Marion's own portrayal of the "saturated," erotic one. On love's inwardness, Marion says this:

L'assurance m'arrive toujours, non plus d'un ailleurs ontique qui me conserverait dans mon évanescence, mais d'un ailleurs plus intime à moi que moi-même: l'ailleurs qui m'advient dans le geste même où je me départis de ce que j'ai (mon don) et de ce que je suis, pour ne m'assurer que de ce que je fais en vérité à cet instant-l'amour.⁶²

By painting, as masterfully it does, a portrait of what this life of love—that is, the inward life—would involve, enact, and exact from anyone who wishes to embark upon it, Marion's phenomenology operates according to a measure of success and failure reminiscent of one Kierkegaard likewise heeded when evaluating whether a work of his own had met the measure that occasioned the decision to write it. This measure is not one that merely stirred the creative impulse to write; more importantly, it nourished Kierkegaard's own efforts to answer a calling to the religious life. The measure, in short, is one that can take, among many others, the form of authorial gadfly.

What measure exactly? We read it stated in the Epistle of James: “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:20). In light of what Marion’s writings on vanity and the erotic reduction give to understand, we might do well to consider a question by way of conclusion: is not this measure articulated in James, the very one that stirred Kierkegaard to his own life’s vocation, the same defining measure of Marion’s authorship, too? I think that it is.

Marion’s phenomenology, after all, especially in its treatment of vanity and love, establishes that there is indeed a horizon above and beyond the world and that it is there, and there alone, that we properly belong. The theme is of course Scriptural. Three emblematic passages from the Gospel according to John will suffice to draw the connection. The first, John 8:23, presents Christ as redeemer, a status uniquely His in part due to the otherworldly nature of His origin and the kingdom over which He presides: “And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world” (John 8:23). Next, Christ appears as prototype, or exemplar, because He invites those who are willing to follow His lead by acceding to a higher measure and place than that of the world: “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:19). And finally, a word of confirmation that those who follow Christ’s example do so by means of the second birth that left Nicodemus so befuddled: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16). The implication is at once exhilarating and uplifting: because Marion argues that love asserts its primacy only when vanity has first disqualified the call of the world, is he thus not suggesting that our place resides, not in the world, but with Christ?

This is precisely the implication that Michel Henry's own phenomenology of life has made explicit. If we are not of the world, he says, "The reason behind it is given quite precisely, in the form of an absolute justification: the nonworldly condition of Christ—the fact that, co-engendered in the self-engendering of absolute phenomenological Life that is alien to the world, the Arch-Son is himself alien to his world and its temporality."⁶³ For Henry, any examination of our place must begin with a recognition of Christ's own incarnate condition. It is worth emphasizing that Christ was made flesh (*σάρξ*), which is *not* at all necessarily synonymous with saying that he was made a body (*σῶμα*). A question inevitably crosses the mind of anyone who has read the biblical accounts of Jesus' ministry, which, taken in concert, accentuate the pertinence of the phenomenological distinction between the body of (mere) entities and the flesh of the living: how are we to understand the fact that Jesus, in speaking to the multitudes, was recognized by some to be the Messiah, while others in the crowd flatly rejected His claim to be the Son of God? How, in short, were some able to perceive that Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter and the reputed son of Mary and Joseph, was in fact the Christ? What kind of "optics" is at work in the eyes of faith, which, when not at work, explains the blindness of those who were then (and are still today) do not see? Henry's answer to the question commands our assent. That some were able to see that Jesus was the Christ, while others were not, has nothing to do with perceiving a fact or state of affairs that was made visible in the world—in the world, Christ appears as just another visible body, no different, in that respect, from Peter or Pilate or any other man, for the reality of His eternal filiation with the Father as the eternal Word unfolds in the invisibility of a Kingdom which, as Jesus himself remarks explicitly on at least one occasion (Luke 17:21), lies *within* us; it is hence in the interiority of life's affective pathos, in the truth of life, not in the truth of the world's exterior visibility, from whence Christ has descended and to whence He beckons all men everywhere to return. According to Christ's own declarations, the words of eternal life testify to an *unworldly* mode of phenomenality, one therefore discernible to

those, and only those, who are no longer themselves dispersed into the visibility of the world's ek-stasis, having softened their hearts and thereby having heard the call to repentance, have turned back to the invisibility of life wherein the living God has always already engendered them.

That Christ (and his followers) is not of the world is not to say something incompatible with the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation, which declares that God was made man in the flesh. In saying so, we are laying the only basis upon which it becomes possible to comprehend what this event actually signifies, and why in turn so many who, seeing Jesus in person, were nevertheless incapable of perceiving in him anything distinguishable from anyone else who was similarly visible as a body in the world. They could not, or better, they *chose* not, to discern the truth that He was the “Holy One of God” (Mark 1:23) come in the flesh.

Nevertheless, there will be an objection and not without reason. Is it permissible to invoke the Incarnation in what here is supposed to be a strictly *phenomenological* context? Have we not clearly transgressed the line separating philosophy from theology? It will be noted that, even as the critic acknowledges, Marion is very fastidious about maintaining a distinction between phenomenological claims about love from theological claims about personal faith in Christ. For Marion, the phenomenon of Revelation (the person of Christ) exemplifies a paradox of the second degree and par excellence, but it remains a formal possibility, not an actuality. Marion says of Christ—who is the phenomenon of Revelation, the “paradox of paradoxes” or the “second order of saturation”—in *Étant donné*: “Pourtant, le phénomène de révélation reste une simple possibilité [...] La phénoménologie ne saurait décider si une révélation peut ou doit jamais se donner, mais elle (et elle seule) peut fixer que, en ce cas, un tel phénomène de révélation devrait prendre la figure du paradoxe des paradoxes.”⁶⁴ Though he insists that phenomenology can describe the “second order of

saturation” at work in Revelation’s mode of givenness, it must do so without settling whether Revelation in fact is fact.

If the present analysis has to now invited the impression that, regarding the question of the relation between phenomenology and theology, it has nothing to add beyond what Marion himself already has, here there can be no doubting that the intention reaches beyond Marion’s. For it bears asking: is it possible to treat, as Marion does, Revelation as a formal possibility without distorting the very phenomenon such an analysis hopes to describe? Does bracketing the question of the phenomenon’s existence, when as here the phenomenon is the Revelation of God in Jesus Christ, not potentially distort what we are trying to describe? Is anything we would describe as a mere formal possibility truly God? Or put another way: can we reduce God? Others like Jean-Yves Lacoste have denied that we can do so. As he emphasizes in *La Phénoménalité de Dieu: neuf études*, phenomenology cannot rigorously describe God’s mode of appearing while treating God as strictly possible, he claims. God, in a sense, is irreducible.⁶⁵ This arguably calls squarely into question Marion’s view, which separates phenomenology and theology on the assumption that phenomenology can handle Revelation as a possibility without thereby distorting it. But it also brings with it a challenge to those who, motivated by personal atheism or agnosticism, insist on upholding a facile distinction between phenomenology and theology. To them, we can ask: if really there is such a distinction, how is it to be drawn, and on what conceptual and methodological grounds? To invoke it in name and then to wield it as a weapon designed to chill any discussion about God—that is not difficult. But it is not so easy, as it pretends, to justify doing so as a supposedly neutral decision owing purely to phenomenological rigor. It is personal ideology masquerading as philosophical impartiality, a self-portrayal whose methodological sincerity deserves to be questioned, first, because it persists in framing itself as a paragon of neutrality without ever justifying that opinion of itself

with the least argument, and second, because the authority it enjoys appears to be due, not so much to any actual phenomenological account it offers in defense of itself, but rather to the fact that it has been handed down institutionally in the university as orthodoxy for decades now. Whatever is said to separate phenomenology and theology appears, in the end, to be more a sociological and institutional matter than anything philosophically principled.

Nevertheless, doubt may persist. It can be formulated as an objection that runs as follows: has not the preceding account of vanity abandoned all generality and instead slipped into what, reminiscent of Nietzsche's meditations, is unintentional autobiography? It perhaps is worthwhile to note that the Heideggerian approach often resorts to a heroic tone said to come with embracing our finitude—but there are reasons to reject the idea that this attitude is grounded in any strictly philosophical *logos*. It is less the result of phenomenological *Evidenz* and more the result of an emotional preference, intellectual temperament, and spiritual style—one prefers to see things that way, and so one does. It will be argued: is not the same here with the lover, with the one who aims to overcome vanity? Has the one who enters into the order of charity discovered a new objective terrain of existence—a realm available to everyone strictly in virtue of who they are—or has such a person merely taken a Quixotic stance on existence that, while psychologically appealing and consoling to him, is rightly seen to be as arbitrary to those who are disinclined to adopt it as he is fervent to embrace it? Is not this the evacuation of philosophy for something else?

There is reason to deny the charge. A *logos* is at work. This is best seen by considering how Marion's reflections on vanity consciously emulate the Cartesian logic they displace. In Descartes's own *Meditations*, the reader is asked to meditate along with the author. To wrestle with the questions that follow—"What can I know?" and "What am I?"—is not then to indulge the author in a

rhetorical conceit. It is essential to the mode of questioning the text enacts. If one will not meditate with Descartes, one will never be in a right position to see what he sees (or claims to see). And the same principle applies here. Unless one is willing to enter into the logic of Marion's analysis by oneself enduring the blow of vanity, the claim of love will never hit the mark, and the one who dismisses the erotic reduction's statements will seem them as baseless. To claim that a phenomenological analysis of love's response to vanity is to abandon philosophy for something else in fact proves too much: if that were so, we would be forced to conclude that Descartes's First Meditation, which opens the very work said to exemplify the advent of modern philosophy, is not a philosophical exercise at all. Surely that cannot be right. Thus, if thinking with Descartes requires wrestling philosophically with oneself, so too does pondering the question of vanity along with Marion. Far from marking philosophy's abandonment, Marion's reformulation of the Cartesian arc of questioning—from "What can I know with certainty?" to "What will assure me?"—is fundamentally to grapple with what it means to be someone capable of posing such questions. To seek after love by meditating on the new order of reasons and possibility it opens, is not to leave phenomenological analysis behind. Rather, it is to occupy the ground to which that effort inexorably leads.

Still, a lingering doubt persists. The blow of vanity concerns our relation to the fleetingness of this world and its things. How, then, are we to interact with them without dissipating ourselves in the flux of time, and yet, at the same time, not coming to loathe what is good about them, to the extent that their goodness no doubt is objective? The experience of vanity calls us back to a life of discernment and proportionality, one that, resting transparently in the power that establishes it, as Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death* says, appropriates finite goods with an eye to the fact that they should never be treated as absolutes in themselves—to do otherwise precisely is the blindness of the

theoretical gaze, which, driven by the desire to know, ends in a futile existence consumed by the need to know objects and beings, but with nothing else, and hence really nothing at all. The life of the mind can be a hollow life which is why, no matter what Nietzsche said, the idea of a “gay science” harbors within itself a contradiction, making the very notion something of a misnomer. In rising above being-in-the-world through love, we are indicating a transformation in the fabric of experience, one which, by assigning things their proper place, ensures finite goods no longer loom larger than they should. But nor are they or that seen to be totally empty. No longer viewed as entities on hand simply to gratify my intellectual or practical interests, but instead as creatures made by God, they solicit my attention, but never to the point of idolatrous excess. We rest only in God, not things.

All this is to say that, if we are to possess finite things in a way truly befitting them, and if we are to act in accordance with the fact that, as finite, they are not deserving of our worship, and yet, being objectively good, neither are they deserving of our scorn, we must take them up in a sincere spirit of joy and gratitude, but also with a humble admission that they are not to become the ultimate focus of our exertions and perseverance. This is the gaze deployed by the erotic reduction—an existence no longer closed off to the order of charity. There is room for distinctions and gradations. Some pursuits have more objective value than others (it is better to seek a cure for cancer than to be a gambler), but that is so to the extent that, in taking them up, they are conducive to our expanding in love. In a striking way, vanity reminds us of this truth, that no finite temporal thing or project—no matter how great its apparent independent worth—is deserving of our attention to the determinant of the God who sustains us, and who has brought them into being as possibilities along with and for us. In vanity, we recognize that, in serving created things with an eye only to them and hence ourselves, we had been depriving them of their true significance by ignoring

the fact that the meaning they do possess is a reflection of their place in a divinely ordained and ordered creation.

In ignoring God, the things of creation become worldly idols, bringing vanity in tow. This is why we may conclude with Kierkegaard that there must be a “letting-go.” To experience the joy of life’s goodness (rather than resigning ourselves to a life of selfish resoluteness), we must relinquish things in an act of submission (Kierkegaard calls it “infinite resignation”), a movement of our inner spirit whose importance is impossible to overstate, since, it is the act of self-emptying by which I gain “my eternal consciousness.” It is in this deliberate act of choosing to take leave of finite things, and hence no longer to live simply with an eye to how they can satisfy my own selfish goals and desires, that it becomes possible to experience them in light of a brighter radiance, just as God created them to be enjoyed. Here, I at last open myself—in no longer hiding from God—to the possibility of a kind of genuinely loving relationship with others in which, having escaped the worldly nexus opened by care, I can perceive and enjoy true meaning in life, while being responsive to the meaning of the lives of others, too. In dying to the transcendental egoism of an authentic existence, I come to experience all things made new through in an enduring exuberance in which finite things (and their objective value) are no longer experienced as being dependent solely on my own needs with regard to them, but instead as something inherent to them precisely insofar as they mirror the invisible substance of Christ—in emerging from the dark of hour of vanity, not only does the light of day shine again. Now the trees clap.

If all things look repulsive when vanity strikes, it was only because I saw them through my own screen. The darkness that has set down upon things is emblematic of the darkened eye that sees them as so: “The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be sound, your whole body

shall be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Mathew 6:22-23). When the eye is disassociated from God, the self that has ejected itself from the light of life subjects everything before it to a carnal gaze, to little more than a projection of its own selfish passions and possibilities. It is an existence bound to lead to misery for it is a mode of being that John Lippitt rightly calls the “competitive and comparative ego.”⁶⁶ Is it any wonder why vanity should inevitably shatter the illusion that things, when reduced to instruments of the ego’s own satisfaction, matter? How long can it be before, knowing and possessing things only in terms of my own needs and desires, they cease to matter?

All things, including even the trial of vanity, can produce something good so long as the one who undergoes it is willing to be transformed by it. The one who undergoes vanity has alienated himself from the truth of things. Realizing this fact that things have become empty is what allows us the chance to come back to ourselves—and then, if we are willing to complete the journey from *ego* to lover, God. For, reduced to seeing everything as nothing but idols of his own desire, they eventually lose their appeal to the *ego*. In responding to the blow of vanity with love, then, the one who does so, in freeing himself from the shackles of his former egocentric and hedonic blindness, thus stands poised to accomplish the final movement. It is one of faith: “The paradox of faith is that there is an interiority that is incommensurable with exteriority, an interiority that is not identical, please note, with the first but is a new interiority.”⁶⁷ And if, as Kierkegaard notes, “faith begins precisely where thought stops,”⁶⁸ is this not because faith, as that which unfolds within the immediacy of life’s pathos, phenomenizes itself in a secret invisibility concealed from the world? Such interiority is the pathos of life to which Henry repeatedly returns, the unworldly self-giveness in which I experience myself as engendered by the power of God, placing me in possession of my

own power to in turn act—for His glory. Thus, in returning to the inwardness of life by way of resignation in the face of vanity's stinging reminder that the objective value of finite things nevertheless presupposes a power absolutely other and beyond them, the things of the world can finally be appreciated and enjoyed for what they are, as gifts of God demanding that I treat them with a reverence that excludes all covetousness. We are here tracing, in phenomenological outline, the way by which one is transcendently born again, converted from a life whose operating principle had, in coveting finite things, eventually only negated itself. Now we embark instead on a life rejuvenated and restored, one operating peacefully in the power of God that establishes it, one acting by a purity of heart to will just one thing—whatever God would will us to do. No longer either intoxicated with the things of this life (as with the *ego* or *Dasein*) nor revolted by them (as the one who, in the dark hour, confronts his lost condition), we as the lover are healthy—sober in grace.

In returning our attention to Marion, we can now say one thing more. In shifting our attention to the order of love, his erotic reduction challenges the usual facile partitions between phenomenology and theology. For although the erotic reduction does not determine how one will necessarily respond to it—it is always just as possible to ignore or suppress as to surrender to it—is not the inwardness it reveals nothing less than the love of God? In establishing that the *only* claim that truly claims me is love's claim, the erotic reduction invites each of us to confront the possibility that the claim of love is itself equivalent to the call of the Father. And when as here it is a question of knowing the truth of love for ourselves, it is accordingly one of answering its claim with a response befitting its call. Marion's work thus cannot answer that call for us—only we ourselves can. But if what his phenomenology says of love is true, that love is indeed the self's place, no wonder it ultimately evokes precisely the saturated implication it does: for those who would answer the claim of love truly, it is the Word of God, not the call of the world, that shepherds them home.

Summoning us to face up to the depths of who we are, the erotic reduction reminds us that phenomenology must make the theological turn. Vanity disqualifies anything less.

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Notes

1 For informative commentaries on Marion's work vis-à-vis classical phenomenology, see Christina M. Gschwandtner's *Reading Jean-Luc Marion* (2007) and *Degrees of Givenness: Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion* (2014), as well as "Jean-Luc Marion: the Phenomenology of Givenness" in *Contemporary French Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2018).

2 Marion, *In Excess*, 47

3 Marion discusses vanity elsewhere, most notably in *The Idol and the Distance*. However, I shall confine the discussion of his view of vanity to *Le Phénomène érotique* as it is there, more than anywhere else, that he addresses vanity's import for the phenomenological reduction.

4 There is a colossal literature on Husserl's treatment of the problem of intentionality. For some of the highlights, see Crowell (2001 and 2013), Drummond (1990), Sokolowski (1970 and 1999), Welton (2002), and Zahavi (1999, 2003, and 2005).

5 Husserl, *Ideas I*, 113. It will be noted that, in some ways, to speak of *the* reduction in Husserl is somewhat misleading. Throughout his career, Husserl will develop different "ways" to the reduction—the ontological, the Cartesian, and so forth. And there are different kinds of reduction—the eidetic, etc. But the point is that, for us, Husserl's thinking is always geared toward unveiling a mode of sense (*Sinn*) that in Marion's estimation fails to recover a mode of givenness beyond that which is confined to intuition.

6 See Crowell (2001 and 2013), Golob (2014), Haugeland (2013), and McManus (2015).

7 For Heidegger's perhaps most lengthy and lucid discussions of how his own discovery of being-in-the-world was due essentially to a radicalization of the question of intentionality which Husserl's transcendental phenomenology had already opened, albeit only partially, see his 1925 *History of the Concept of Time* and 1927 *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. As he says there in 1925 with regard to the relation between his own question of Being and Husserl's question of intentionality, the two essentially make one: "The task of bringing to light the Dasein's existential constitution leads first of all to the twofold task, intrinsically one, of *interpreting more radically the phenomenon of intentionality and transcendence*" (1982, 162.) Heidegger's *Seinsfrage*, therefore, is not the abandonment of the ambitions of Husserl's transcendental philosophy, but instead its corrective consummation. It may nevertheless be objected that this way of characterizing intentionality begs the question against Husserl (or the analytic theorist): Is not being open to the world—in the sense of being-in-the-world—not something *prior* to intentionality, but *is* intentionality? For present purposes, it does not affect the

point we will highlight. Regardless of how views the nature of intentionality, the blow of vanity renders us radically indifferent to what it discloses.

8 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 230. All references to *Being and Time* are to the standard Macquarrie and Robinson translation.

9 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 187 and 193, respectively

10 Marion, 101

11 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 35

12 For the sake of argument, however, I am happy to concede that Heidegger thought explicitly posing the problem of Being *as a problem* is merely one way of appropriating possibilities, that fundamental ontology is not one's truest "ownmost" authentic possibility. Even when this is granted, vanity annuls authenticity all the same. Irrespectively of whether or not one privileges fundamental ontology as something special above other worldly possibilities, it is still obliterated in the dark hour of vanity.

13 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 183

14 Marion, *Réduction et donation*, 114

15 The "Who" here, of course, is *Dasein*, the being which *Being and Time* characterizes as the being uniquely capable of posing the question of the meaning of Being in general. For Heidegger, *Dasein* is the being in whom that being is at issue—in short, *Dasein* is the being who, even prior to explicit philosophical reflection, is already working out the question of the meaning of its own being—and the meaning of Being itself in general. Philosophy, when done in the form of fundamental ontology, is therefore itself the explicit formalization of *Dasein's* own prephilosophical mode of being. As Heidegger himself writes: "the question of Being is nothing other than the radicalization of an essential tendency-of-Being which belongs to *Dasein* itself—the pre-ontological understanding of Being" (SZ 35).

16 Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditations*, 37-8

17 I will introduce what Marion has shown that one question consists in to come, but for now, the issue before us is simply vanity's mercilessness.

18 Here "trying" denotes what Heidegger means when he writes of *Dasein* in *Sein und Zeit* that *Dasein* is the being for whom, in that being, that very being is at issue or at stake. For the clearest analysis I know of what this trying consists in, see Steven Crowell's discussion of it in *Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger* (2013).

19 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 60

20 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 82-3

21 Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 95

22 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 102

23 Marion, *In the Self's Place*, 65

24 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 123

25 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 331

26 Thomson, "Death and Demise in Being and Time," 270. For rival understandings of this ontological structure of *Dasein*, see Guignon (2015); Blattner (2015); McManus (2015); Wrathall (2015); and Crowell (2015).

27 Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, 21

28 Coyne, *Heidegger's Confessions: the Remains of Saint Augustine*, 96, 88 and 76 respectively

29 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 189

30 This is a venerable hypothesis investigated by the patristics, then Pascal, and on to Kierkegaard (among others).

31 Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 280

32 Marion, *Réduction et donation*, 161

- 33 Marion, *Le phénomène érotique*, 40
- 34 Marion, *Le phénomène érotique*, 13
- 35 I do not mean to suggest that Marion is the only voice contributing to this undertaking. In this regard, one might immediately call to mind the work of Claude Romano, Emmanuel Falque, Jean-Yves Lacoste, and Jean-Louis Chrétien, who have all (in their own ways) done well to critically engage, and in important respects move beyond, some of the central assumptions of the Heideggerian philosophy.
- 36 Henry, “The Four Principles of Phenomenology,” 20
- 37 Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 20
- 38 Withy, “Owned Emotions: Affective Excellence in Heidegger on Aristotle,” 33; Blattner, “Essential guilt and transcendental conscience,” 131; Dandelet and Dreyfus, “Reordering the Beginning Chapters of Division Two of *Being and Time*,” 189; and Wrathall, “Autonomy, Authenticity, and the Self,” 213 in McManus (ed.) *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Self: Themes from Division Two of Being and Time*.
- 39 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 179
- 40 For a wonderful meditation regarding the phenomenological law that governs the reciprocity between the two, see Jean-Louis Chrétien’s fittingly titled *L’appel et la réponse* (1992).
- 41 Marion, *Réduction et donation* 289
- 42 Marion, *Réduction et donation*, 192
- 43 McManus, “Anxiety, choice and Responsibility in Heidegger’s Account of Authenticity,” 166-7
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 McManus, “Anxiety, choice and Responsibility in Heidegger’s Account of Authenticity,” 178 and Crowell, “Responsibility, Autonomy, Affectivity: a Heideggerian Approach,” 238
- 46 Burch, “Death and Deliberation: Overcoming the Decisionism Critique of Heidegger’s Practical Philosophy,” 220
- 47 Burch, “Death and Deliberation: Overcoming the Decisionism Critique of Heidegger’s Practical Philosophy,” 222
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Burch, “Death and Deliberation: Overcoming the Decisionism Critique of Heidegger’s Practical Philosophy,” 212
- 50 McManus, “Anxiety, choice and Responsibility in Heidegger’s Account of Authenticity,” 181
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is a seventeenth-century encyclopaedia of sorts, at once theological, philosophical, literary, anthropological, biological, and physiological, dedicated to a discussion of the melancholy of vanity. Its author was rumored to have hung himself due to depression. In any case, the text is, in every relevant respect, a very *pre-modern* work. We are therefore within our rights to conclude that vanity is hardly a new human experience. I owe thanks to Wayne Martin for having drawn my attention to Burton’s curious book, as well as the lore behind it.
- 55 Käufer, “Jaspers, limit-situations, and the methodological function of anxiety,” 208-9
- 56 Marion, *The Erotic Reduction*, 26
- 57 The claim here would be twofold. First, as Pascal and Kierkegaard have reminded us, the only form of life that overcomes the vanity of a strictly worldly existence is the life that takes love as its measure. Second and correlatively, such a life proves to be one lived *coram Deo*.
- 58 Marion, *The Erotic Reduction*, 39-40
- 59 Marion, *Le phénomène érotique*, 118

- 60 Marion, *The Erotic Reduction*, 20
 61 Marion, *The Erotic Reduction*, 21
 62 Marion, *Le phénomène érotique*, 122
 63 Henry, *I am the Truth*, 76
 64 Marion, *Étant donné*, 327
 65 For the most direct example of such an approach, see that work's essay, "Dieu connaissable comme amiable."
 66 Lippitt, "Kierkegaard's virtues? Humility and gratitude as the grounds of contentment, patience and hope in Kierkegaard's moral psychology," 147
 67 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 69
 68 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 53

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