

**INFLECTIONS OF THE EVENT: THE DEATH OF THE OTHER AS
EVENT**

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This project brings into focus the nature of an event in continental philosophy as it relates to the phenomenon of the death of another person. In this, I offer a description of what is philosophically happening when another person dies for those who survive this person with particular focus on the ontological, ethical, and theological implications of such a death. I maintain that the best such phenomenological description comes through engaging the death of the other in terms of the technical usage of the event in continental philosophy. In short, I argue that the death of the other is an event because such a death is not only the loss of the person but also the loss of the meaning of the world to and with this person. So the death of the other is a death of the world. To argue this, I trace the discussion about the nature of an event from Martin Heidegger's account of the event through the French reception of this aspect of Heidegger's philosophy in the works of Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion. Moreover, through unfolding these complex accounts on the nature of an event, I develop the relationality that attends this event of the death of the other by focusing on the disclosivity of such death. The death of the other as an event shows us not only the ontological insight that being itself is relational but also that this event impacts our ethical life. When an other dies, we have a responsibility to mourn and remember the other. Through this ontology and ethical impetus of the death of the other, I maintain that we broach an important distinction between modalities of otherness based on the relational involvement that we have with people in our lives. Such a relational, existential difference within alterity spans from the

others with whom we have little relation to the others whose relation structures our understanding of the world. By using this existential difference, my account of the death of the other includes the death of not only humans but also animals and even God.

DEDICATION

To Jen, Avery, Sutton, and Jude. For those others who have died and whose world we now bear: Kyle, Malibu, and Scott.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A book I have, a friend gave,
Whose pencil, here and there,
Had notched the place that pleased him,—
At rest his fingers are.

Now, when I read, I read not,
For interrupting tears
Obliterate the etchings
Too costly for repairs.

—Emily Dickinson, “Death sets a thing significant”

The thesis that I defend in this dissertation is the following: when another person dies, this death of the other is an event because such death is a radical transformation of the world and things in it for those who survive this other. The world is what it is, has the being that it has, or has the meaning that it has, to speak in phenomenological terms, on account of the relations that we have with others in it. So when one such other dies, what is lost is not only the person but also what the world has meant to and with that person. I describe this death of the other in terms of an event because an event is a disruption of the world to the extent that the world prior to the event and the world engendered by the event are dramatically if not radically different. Consequently, the death of the other is an event because when the other dies the world too dies with him or her, that is, the meaningfulness of the world that has been constituted through a relationship with this person has been lost. I focus primarily throughout this project on the deaths of those others who are deeply important to us. But the scope of my description aims also to

account for the deaths of others who are not intimately interwoven with our lives. My claim, then, is that we can learn about and find some of the abiding structures of the death of *any* other by looking first at the deaths of those others who are deeply important to us. The deaths of these others with whom we have deep existential and relational connection give us insight into what is happening when any other dies, even if all deaths do not touch us equally. In describing the death of the other as an event in this way, this project is inherently phenomenological, and it employs the term of event from out of the phenomenological tradition in philosophy. In particular, my project follows the use of this term as found in the works of Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-Luc Marion.

As we shall see, in drawing on the use of *the event* by these philosophers, I am not confusing or conflating the two ways that this term is used. On the one hand, the event can refer to, in a sense, a macro-cosmic, large-scale event. Heidegger uses the event (*das Ereignis*) in this macro-cosmic sense when he talks about the history of being and the ontological difference.¹ Moreover, Derrida's *différance* can be read in relation to this macro-cosmic use of the event but in such a way as not to confuse *différance* with the event. For Derrida also has an abiding concern with events such as the gift, hospitality, and even death that can be considered on a more micro-cosmic level. Such events are, we shall see, impossible phenomena for Derrida.² So, on the other hand, the

¹ See chapter three and part of chapter four for this use in Heidegger's philosophy.

² My reading of *différance* and the events of the gift and hospitality in Derrida's philosophy are given in chapter five.

event can be used to refer to particular phenomena, in this macro-cosmic sense, or even to the phenomenality of all phenomena. This latter use of the event is the use, as I shall show, that Marion follows in his development of phenomenology. In this, Marion draws largely upon Heidegger's own micro-cosmic use of the event in describing the thinghood and worldhood of a being in terms of the event essentially occurring in and along this being.³ In both the macro-cosmic and micro-cosmic uses of the term event, each philosopher focuses on the way any event is disruptive of meaning. The difference between the two uses for these philosophers concerns the measure or scope of the disruption.

By explaining in detail these two different uses of the event in Heidegger, Derrida, and Marion, I am able not only to provide an explication of this difficult aspect of these philosophers' thinking but also to show how the death of the other is one such event. Accordingly, this is a text on death and survival, on the survival of the tremendous event of the death of an other. As such, I offer a phenomenological description of what is happening for those who *live on* after the death of the other. This description, like any phenomenology, aims to capture the abiding and prevailing structures of what happens to those who survive the death of the other. The death of an other is one of the most ubiquitous experiences in life. As a result, the examples from which we can draw are almost innumerable, and, therefore, including all of them would be impossible.

³ See the latter half of chapter four for Heidegger's understanding of thinghood and worldhood. Also, see chapter six for Marion's understanding of the event as the phenomenality of all phenomena.

Consequently, only a few examples will be used throughout the project in order to show how an account of the death of the other *as an event* is an adequate description.

In an effort to introduce this phenomenological description of the death of the other, I offer below a schematic outline of my project along three fronts. First, I offer the contours of my project in terms of the three themes that preoccupy me throughout this project, namely the event, the death of the other, and the death of God. Second, I deepen this outline through a consideration of why I focus on Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-Luc Marion as the three philosophers or sources for this project. Lastly, I offer a summary of each chapter by tracing the development of the contours of the text through each chapter.

1.1 Contours: Event, Death, and God

Continental philosophy has recently taken a turn toward exploring the theme of the event. This turn has become integral to continental philosophy's attempt to develop ontologies outside of traditional substance metaphysics, which many believe emphasizes the mastery of the human subject over the objects that stand over against it. For the philosophers of the event, substance metaphysics (and other metaphysical approaches) has proven inept to engage with the most important aspects of life and being which can be gathered under the heading of *degrees or modes of givenness*. These philosophers of the event are most concerned with whatever exceeds the conceptual and linguistic horizons of subjectivity by either an excess of givenness or a givenness of recess, and their turn to the event is an effort to explore ontologies engendered by their focus on

these degrees of givenness. Gert-Jan van der Heiden goes so far as to say, “It is impossible to understand contemporary [continental] thought without taking this concept of the event into account.”⁴ This turn begins with Martin Heidegger’s work from the mid 1930’s where he focuses on *das Ereignis* (the event) in conjunction with his *Seinsfrage*, namely with his desire to experience the truth of being. But Heidegger’s turn to *Ereignis* marks only the first prolonged engagement with this theme in the history of 20th and 21st century continental philosophy. Other thinkers after him, for example Gilles Deleuze, Alain Badiou, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jean-Luc Marion, Françoise Dastur, and Claude Romano, have also taken up this theme. What has developed from these philosophers is a rich conversation about the aspects and philosophical, ethical, and political importance of the event. In a recent collection of essays, Michael Marder and Santiago Zabala nicely summarize what is at stake in this turn to the event. They, along with the other essays in their volume, engage the event in terms of “Being’s own shakiness.”⁵ With this, they are concerned with the event’s relation to ontology insofar as the event marks not only the transformations of being throughout the history of philosophy but also the active nature of being itself as *being shaken*. For them, the event has two

models First, the quivering of Being ... is the very vitality of Being ... whose residue settles down to constitute ontology *proper* Second, the jolts of Being are the arrhythmic and unrepeatable shocks that shake up ontology without

⁴ Gert-Jan van der Heiden, *Ontology After Ontotheology: Plurality, Event, and Contingency in Contemporary Philosophy* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2014), 7.

⁵ Santiago Zabala and Michael Marder, *Being Shaken: Ontology and the Event*, eds. Michael Marder and Santiago Zabala (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 7.

allowing the debris to settle; they are the singular traumas, both individual and collective, that cast the Event in terms of the irruption of the unexpected and the unpredictable into the normalized, neutralized, and forcibly pacified status quo.⁶

With these two models, Marder and Zabala have captured two important aspects about the event. First, this turn is, primarily with Heidegger, an attempt to rethink the history of philosophy as a history of the residual gifts of the event where these gifts are the destiny or sendings of being itself, as Heidegger says, or ontology proper, following Marder and Zabala. Such “quivering of Being” marks the traces of ontologies in philosophy’s history, and these traces are engendered precisely by the “jolts of being,” the second aspect of the event. These latter jolts are the transformative moments that unsettle the settled ontology by bringing the “unexpected and unpredictable into the normalized.”⁷ To illustrate one such jolt they mention death, namely the effect of “the realization of one’s impending mortality” on “one’s approach to the world, to oneself, and to others.”⁸ This indexing of the event with *one’s* death recurs throughout the essays in their volume, particularly each time the *traumatic, transformative* aspect of the event is explored. For example, in his essay, “Traumatic Ontology,” Richard Polt identifies the event with “ultraevents” in which the meaning of the real undergoes transformation. Whereas *being* or the real means “to exceed meaning,”⁹ says Polt, this real undergoes various transformations on account of *traumas* that engender a new interpretation of

⁶ Zabala and Marder, *Being Shaken*, 9.

⁷ Zabala and Marder, *Being Shaken*, 9.

⁸ Zabala and Marder, *Being Shaken*, 9.

⁹ Richard Polt, “Traumatic Ontology,” in *Being Shaken: Ontology and the Event*, eds. Michael Marder and Santiago Zabala (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 19.

being's excessiveness. The two ultraevents that Polt offers as examples are "my birth and my death."¹⁰ With this, Marder and Zabala's volume expands upon Heidegger's account of being-toward-death. The disclosivity of *my own* death, that is how it transforms my relation to the world, myself, and others, serves as a central site of exposure to the event.

Yet why this emphasis on *my own* death? Granted that Heidegger regards only *my own* death as disclosive of my being and my possibilities-to-be as I work out my being through my various projects. Moreover, says Heidegger, when the other dies, "the loss of being as such . . . does not become accessible. We do not experience the dying of others in any genuine sense; we are at best always just 'near by'" (BT 230). In other words, Heidegger maintains that the death of the other is non-disclosive of our being and of our possibilities-to-be. Nevertheless, *pace* Heidegger, we do in an important sense experience the death of the other whereas we never experience our own death. As Epicurus has told us, when I am present, death is not, and when death is present, I am not. However, when our neighbor, colleague, friend, family member, or pet dies, we certainly experience the presence of his or her absence. As Françoise Dastur says, "Only the death of the other is experienced."¹¹ So what about the disclosivity and significance of this death of the other? Does the death of another person, or perhaps another being in general, disclose anything about the event? Can the death of the other be an additional site of exposure to the event that is as important as, if not more important than, *one's*

¹⁰ Polt, "Traumatic Ontology," 25.

¹¹ Françoise Dastur, *Death: An Essay on Finitude*, trans. John Llewelyn (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone, 1996), 7.

own death? Though these questions are not unexplored by philosopher's of the event, for Derrida and Nancy have engaged the relation between the death of the other and the event most closely, this relation between the death of the other and the event requires further study.

The aim of my project is precisely to engage the event under the modality or through the inflection of the death of the other. I focus on thinking the death of the other as a figure of the event in an attempt to think the significance of what is happening when the other dies *for those who survive this death*. I have no interest in exploring "where," if anywhere, the other goes when she dies. I am only interested in what the death of the other means for the ones who are still alive and who have survived the death of this person. With this, my theme is as much the death of the other as it is survival. Jacques Derrida, in his last interview before dying, reminds us that survival is a matter of continuing to live, to living "after death," or "living on, continuing to live."¹² The question of the death of the other and its significance is a question for only those who live on after, in the wake of, this event that touches them. The death of the other concerns the survivor as much as the one and the world that has been lost. And when the question of the death of the other is approached in this way, we must say that St. Paul's words, "Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55, NRSV), does not phenomenologically fit this event. For we can easily point to death's victory and sting as we weep for the other who has been lost. With this, the image of

¹² Jacques Derrida, *Learning to Live Finally: The Last Interview*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2007), 26.

Jesus weeping over Lazarus's death is the more fitting phenomenological description of the death of the other. Consequently, I am less interested in theological questions of afterlife, which kept St. Paul awake at night, and more interested in philosophical and theological questions of *this* life here and now, the only one we know, in the wake of the death of the other. So this engagement with the death of the other as an engagement from a survivor's standpoint requires exploring what is philosophically or phenomenologically happening in such death. In other words, I am interested in unfurling the eventuality of the death of the other. In this, I argue that the death of the other is a figure of the event because such death always comes as a surprise—an irruption of the unexpected in the status quo—that marks not only the death of the individual but also a death of the world. Granted that death may be imminent or announced by a doctor who determines how much time a person has to live. Yet, more times than not, this *time left* is never a *certain* or exact time. Moreover, even when the time is up, so to speak, and the other does die, no one is really ever ready for the aftermath of the person's absence. They may have prepared themselves for it, but they are nevertheless ready not to be ready for what happens when the other dies and the world along with her.

This relation of death, event, and world is central to everything that follows. In this, we are beginning to see the interaction of the first two contours of my project, namely death and the event. But what about God, the third contour of my project? From a phenomenological perspective, as I argue in chapter seven, the death of God can attend

any death of the other and, in fact, becomes one iteration of the death of the other as well. On the other hand, from an hermeneutical perspective, we find an important, preliminary articulation of the relation among death, the event, and God with Friedrich Nietzsche's announcement that the death of God is a "tremendous event [*Ereignisse*]." ¹³

Nietzsche's announcement is important because in it he articulates the relation of the death of God, that is the death of the other, and the event in terms of a transformation of the world. When Nietzsche's madman descends upon the town telling those in the marketplace, "I seek God! I seek God!" he is met by a sardonic crowd unaware of what has happened in their midst. God has been killed, and they are God's murders, the madman tells them. Yet his words fall on deaf ears. The madman tells us, "I come too early ... my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, wandering." ¹⁴

Whereas the madman is concerned with diagnosing the crowd's inability to see that they are God's murderers, Nietzsche's preoccupation in his 1886 addition to the *Gay Science* "lies instead with the determination of an adequate practical response to the death of God." ¹⁵ Rather than this event wandering still for Nietzsche in 1886, he supposes that his readers are already aware of the changes occurring in European culture that the announcement of God's death portends. For beyond an atheistic reading of the death of God, Nietzsche's declaration "is understood to report an escalating crisis of confidence

¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 120.

¹⁴ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 120.

¹⁵ Dan Conway, "Life After the Death of God: Thus Spoke Nietzsche," in *The History of Continental Philosophy* Vol. 2 *Nineteenth-Century Philosophy: Revolutionary Responses to the Existing Order*, eds. Alan D. Schrift and Daniel Conway (Durham: Acumen, 2010), 123.

that permeates (and weakens) *all* spheres of endeavor that fall under the umbrella of late modern European culture.”¹⁶ Writing in 1886, Nietzsche says, “The greatest recent event [*Ereigniss*]—that ‘God is dead’ ... is already starting to cast its first shadow over Europe.”¹⁷ By turning to the way Nietzsche describes the “cheerfulness” of this event in 1886, we begin to see why Nietzsche’s announcement is an important beginning point for exploring the relation between the event and the death of the other. For here, Nietzsche “explore[s] the *meaning* of this event.”¹⁸

To those for whom the death of God has already begun to matter, says Nietzsche, a “sun seems to have set; some old deep trust turned into doubt: ... our *world* must appear more autumnal, more mistrustful, stranger, ‘older.’”¹⁹ With this, the cheerfulness of the “new dawn”²⁰ that the death of God announces entails a new relation to a new *world*. No longer is the world for Nietzsche’s readers a world with a transcendent being as the progenitor of all values and truth. The God of metaphysics, of onto-theology, a God whose conception can be traced back as far as Parmenides’ reflections on what-is as constant, stable, and unchangeable, is no longer behind the scenes, so to speak, assuring those who believe in Him—this God is most always a male—of their redemption, value, and truth. Instead, a new horizon is opened. “The horizon seems clear again,” writes Nietzsche, suggesting that this death of God and the new relation to a new, ‘older’ world

¹⁶ Conway, “Life After the Death of God,” 105 emphasis his.

¹⁷ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 199.

¹⁸ Conway, “Life After the Death of God,” 126 emphasis his.

¹⁹ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 199, emphasis mine.

²⁰ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 199.

that it announces is a chance for new possibilities. *What concerns Nietzsche, and myself for that matter, most is our response to the end that the death of God announces,*²¹ *that is, to the way we move forward in light of the death of the other, here the death of God, which is concomitantly a death of the world.* For Nietzsche, these possibilities concern primarily a rethinking of morality where “Christianity as morality must now perish.”²² For him, though belief in God may continue in the world post-death of God, this “belief in the Christian God can no longer be counted on to play a central role in sustaining the ongoing development of European culture.”²³ Rather than following Nietzsche’s pathway toward a rethinking of morality, I follow a different path. I am more interested in the role that belief in God and experience of the divine might play in the new dawn after the death of God.²⁴ In this space, such belief in and experience of the divine must be post-onto-theological. This means not only that God is no longer *a* being or *the* being of all beings but also that faith in God is characterized, as Søren Kierkegaard’s Johannes

²¹ I am, once again, following Conway’s interpretation in “Life After the Death of God,” 123-125 and 130.

²² Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and RJ Hollindale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 161. In this passage, he also names this perishing of Christianity as morality an event.

²³ Conway, “Life After the Death of God,” 127.

²⁴ In this regard, I follow Christina M. Gschwandtner’s account of continental philosophy of religion as a kind of apologetics tempered by postmodernism. She writes, “‘Apologetics’ is used here to characterize the ways in which contemporary [continental] philosophy articulates the coherence and value of religious experience and belief in God. Quite a few contemporary thinkers have begun anew to examine the question of whether it is possible to have an experience of the divine and what such an experience might look like” (*Postmodern Apologetics: Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), xvii). In her text she examines prominent phenomenologists and hermeneutic philosophers in 20th and 21st century continental philosophy in order to show, *not* that they are interested in proving God’s existence, but that their interest in belief in and experience with the divine “is about showing that such experiences can be examined and described phenomenologically in meaningful fashion” (*Postmodern Apologetics*, 14). With this, I understand continental philosophy of religion to be an exploration of the various ways that the experience of the divine can be phenomenologically examined in the wake of the death of God. This would mean, then, that all continental philosophy of religion is a thinking of the possibilities of God after the death of God.

de Silentio emphasizes, by fear and trembling. We are responsible for thinking through the aftermath of the death of God, Nietzsche tells us in 1886. The way I want to think through this aftermath is through rethinking God and our relation to the world in light of this rethinking of God. This pathway requires an examination of the significance of the death of God as a tremendous *event*. For this, we must think through not only the philosophical aspects of the event but also their relation to the death of the other. Following Jacques Derrida's problematization of distinguishing between degrees of alterity—"every other (one) is every (bit) other" or "every other (one) is God" says Derrida (GD 87)—God, humans, and animals can equally be considered *other*, wholly other. This means that the death of God marks only one modality of the death of the other but not the only modality. Beyond this, Derrida's problematization means that the death of God becomes metonymy for the death of the other, any other who is wholly other. This death of the other remains to be thought as a tremendous *event*. My project takes as its task precisely this thinking.

Thus, the contours of my project follow the theme of the event and its relation to the death of the other, through which some theological implications about our experience of the divine can be glimpsed. Within these contours, I ask two integrally related questions: what is philosophically happening when the other dies? and insofar as God can be one such other, what remains of God after the event of God's death? In asking these questions and seeking answers to them, I am concerned with the death of the other and its theological implications in light of the death of God as an instance of such death.

The starting point for possible answers to these questions lies in, first, thinking the *event*. What is the event? Can the event *itself* be thought? Is the event an ending, like the death of something, or is it as much an ending as it is an opening to something new, something inexhaustibly significant, something unexpected, something surprising? In order to probe the depths of these questions, I turn to three philosophers: Heidegger, Derrida, and Marion.

1.2. Sources: Heidegger, Derrida, and Marion

Nietzsche's description of the tremendous event of God's death in terms of the world becoming more autumnal, stranger, and older is an illuminative anticipation of the way in which the event comes to be understood by Heidegger, Derrida, and Marion. For each, an event has this world changing or world disruptive nature. So Heidegger, Marion, and Derrida can each be read as developing this important insight from Nietzsche. In particular, each of these philosophers after Nietzsche are concerned to show *how* it is the case that an event is disruptive in this way. Through each of these figures' unique modulation or folding, that is, inflection, of the event, their writings constitute a debate around the aspects and significances of the event. By focusing only on these three philosophical articulations, I am able to trace the development of how the event has been thought in continental philosophy. Heidegger has set the stage for all subsequent continental European thinking of the event when in the mid 1930's through the end of his career he unfolds the significance of the event along three contours: the history of being, the ontological difference, and the worlding of the world. Derrida and

Marion each critically appropriate different contours of Heidegger's thinking of the event in order to distance themselves from Heidegger as well as from each other.

Whereas Derrida critically appropriates mainly Heidegger's thinking of the event in terms of the history of being and ontological difference, Marion's critical appropriation primarily concerns the ontological difference and the worlding of the world. Moreover, what binds each of their inflections of the event together are two characteristics: their common developments of post-Kantian philosophy and their emphasis on facticity.

As post-Kantians, they are all concerned with ontology and subjectivity *after*—where after means both with and against—Kant. Among the many things at stake in Kant's Copernican turn, what is important for this project is that ontology becomes focused on the *meaning* of things, and subjectivity undergoes a shift insofar as the human being does not solely control the meaning of things.²⁵ In other words, for these philosophers of the event, the human being is no longer constituting subject. Regarding this shift in ontology and subjectivity, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is an important starting point for these philosophies of the event. Taking mathematics and natural science, namely physics, as his model, Kant announces his critique as a Copernican revolution through which he aims to establish philosophy as a rigorous science.

Mathematics and physics have secured themselves on the path of rigorous science by recognizing that "reason has insight only into what it itself produces according to its own design; that it must take the lead with principles for its judgments according to constant

²⁵ We never can seem to escape the dialectic of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* where he shows that any shift, movement, or sublation in being entails a shift in subjectivity.

laws and compel nature to answer its questions.”²⁶ Copernicus accomplished this, says Kant, when failing to explain the movement of the “celestial motions” with the assumption that everything revolves around the observer on earth, he “tried to see if he might not have greater success if he made the observer revolve and left the stars at rest.”²⁷ Copernicus recognized that he had to conform nature to his own reasoning in order to compel nature to answer his questions. Kant’s own Copernican revolution mirrors this move. In previous modern philosophies, God, the Good, or the One functions as the transcendent center of all intelligible and intellectual life accessible only by the person going outside of herself. Kant displaces this transcendent center with the human being. With this move, he indicates that human subjectivity no longer has to go outside of itself towards the realm of “really real reality,” as Plato says (*Phaedrus* 247c7), because human subjectivity always already possesses the forms to which it makes nature conform. In this way, the meaning of nature, that is its being as a phenomenon, is constituted by human subjectivity. Kant’s Copernican revolution creates a shift where the concern with being becomes a concern with meaning. With this focus on meaning-giving by human subjectivity, what-a-thing-is becomes what-a-thing-means.

Kant carries this shift in ontology forward when he shows that our two faculties of cognition, intuition and understanding, constitute appearances as objects of experience, that is as phenomena, through the conceptual determination of the manifold

²⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Bxiii.

²⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxvi.

of intuition (i.e. the spatially and temporally determined manifold of appearances) and through the schematism of the *a priori* concepts of the understanding (e.g the twelve categories). This is the heart of Kantian objective, representational thinking by which human subjectivity conforms nature to its mind, thereby constituting the meaning of nature. Through this, Kant delimits the realm of truth for human beings to an “island.”²⁸ This is a land where only what is given to us through sensible intuition, which we subsume under space, time, and the categories, counts as something knowable by us. That is, only phenomena whose meaning we ourselves constitute with the conditions of space, time, and the categories can be known by us. Any noumenon, such as God, the immortal soul, or freedom, is only an idea of our mind. We never are sensibly given any such object as God, the soul, and freedom says Kant. With this, Kant not only marks the shift in ontology toward meaning that Heidegger, Derrida, and Marion follow. He also establishes the parameters that Heidegger, Derrida, and Marion seek to twist free from (*Verwindung*), deconstruct, or saturate.

Undoubtedly, many important developments in the history of philosophy happen between Kant and Heidegger, one of which is the founding of phenomenology by Edmund Husserl in 1900-1901 with his *Logical Investigations*. Yet, even Husserl’s important, indispensable developments in phenomenology remain within the Kantian project. For, as Marion has convincingly shown, Husserl’s “broadening” of intuition beyond sensible intuition to the non-sensual, categorial intuition of essences is a

²⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A235/B295.

phenomenological “breakthrough” that completes Kantian metaphysics. This breakthrough demands that even concepts or ideas be present to human subjectivity as *objects*. Marion writes about Husserl’s categorial intuition, “Beings find their ‘legitimate source’ only in allowing themselves to be reduced to intuition, and therefore made present, with neither remainder nor withdrawal ... in appearing as phenomena” (RG 18; cf. 30, 51-56). Though Heidegger, Derrida, and Marion would have been unable to develop, deconstruct, and push phenomenology without Husserl, the ways in which they each develop, deconstruct, and push it is in response to the completion of the Kantian project that they find in Husserl. For with Husserl, not only does human subjectivity constitute its world as an objective world full of objects, but even consciousness itself is objectified as so many noemata or objects of the phenomenological gaze.²⁹

What concerns these philosophers of the event in their appropriations of the philosophical developments of Kant, and Husserl, then, is the question of what remains of metaphysics, particularly ontology, after Kant. For Heidegger, this involves the *Seinsfrage*. For Derrida, this means calling into question all such ontology as more metaphysics of presence. He is concerned with the meaning of things, but this meaning is a play of different meanings whose end is always deferred. Marion too is concerned with the meaning of things, but he, in a way that closely follows Heidegger’s later philosophy, describes this meaning in terms of the excessive meaning of things. With

²⁹ Heidegger, Marion, and Derrida all acknowledge, in different ways, that Nietzsche’s philosophy plays an important role in the history of Western metaphysics. Whereas Nietzsche culminates the history of Western metaphysics by inverting it, Husserl culminates it by broadening its project to the realm of consciousness.

this, they each follow the shift in ontology engendered by Kant's project while at the same time questioning the premiere status afforded by Kant to human subjectivity.³⁰

With regard to this decentering of subjectivity, we come to the second characteristic that binds these three figures together, namely their emphasis on facticity.

In each of their accounts of the event, Heidegger, Derrida, and Marion rethink the subject in light of the subject's factual experience that *prior to* the subject constitutes, in part, who the subject *is*. In other words, human being finds that things in his/her world already have meaning upon his/her arrival due to the bequest of history, heritage, and tradition. With this, factual experience or facticity is supposed to capture the richness of our belonging to a world, where world does not mean *the earth on which we live*, but the meaningful context in which we find ourselves. The German *die Umwelt* captures this sense of world nicely because it denotes the world (*Welt*) surrounding (*Um-*) us. Thus, living on the earth, we find ourselves in many worlds in which things and people have meaning. These worlds open various possibilities to us, but also close other possibilities to us. In this way, facticity constitutes, in part, who the subject *is* by imposing limitations on him or her. And this experience of limitation motivates these philosophers of the event. They are attuned to the limitations imposed on and by the human being through facticity, and this experience of limit engenders their interest in what exceeds—either as excessive givenness or as givenness of recess—the intentionality of the subject or what

³⁰ Kant himself begins to call into question this premier status when he turns to his practical philosophy and, most notably, his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. However, even in these aspects of his critical philosophy, human subjectivity remains of utmost importance.

exceeds our attempts to give things meaning. And they are interested in this excess of things because this excess indicates something that first and foremost constitutes the human being rather than the human being constituting it. In other words, facticity's limitations engender their interest in what exceeds human subjectivity. They explore this interest in excess through their accounts of the event. The event, in most general terms, then, marks what always exceeds our language and knowledge.

Thus, the philosophers of the event retain the Kantian focus of meaning-giving or the constitution of the world in our experience with it. However, they introduce a new timbre to this focus with their interest in excess. In fact, they all are suspicious of the Kantian position of representational, objective thinking. Heidegger states the concern with this way of thinking nicely: "Such representation knows nothing immediately perceptual. What can be immediately seen when we look at things, the image they offer to immediate sensible intuition, falls away" (PLT 124). Though Derrida and Marion formulate their concern in a different way, they each share Heidegger's overall suspicion. When subjectivity is taken to be the sole constitutor of the meaning of the world, we miss a more proper, authentic, or originary way of relating to the world and the things in it. This relation is one in which we find the world and things in it as always already meaningful and always more meaningful. Thus, we are no longer the sole constitutor of the meaning of things, which means, in turn, that human being is no longer the constituting subject but a factually thrown being. Instead of the subject being the sole constituter of the meaning of her world, the subject now finds herself limited by her

prior facticity. Evermore effected by what is *prior*, human subjectivity is presented with the limits of its own constitutive efforts.

This raises a question about the ontological status of facticity as *prior to the subject*. Facticity can be said to follow one of two models: a model of transcendence or of immanence. On the one hand, the human subject can be seen to be constituted by a figure of radical transcendence that is prior to the subject. Here the paradigm example would be the traditional, Christian God of onto-theology. On the other hand, what is prior to the subject may be a figure of immanence, such as history or tradition. However, this dichotomy between these two models is a false one for at least two reasons. First, following the interpretation of Nietzsche's death of God proposed above, the God of onto-theology and the world conceived in relation to this God is no more. Both the meaning of God and the world have been problematized with Nietzsche's announcement. Thus, any model of factual transcendence must be thought post-onto-theologically. This opens the possibility of following a different account of factual transcendence that is not one of radical or infinite transcendence. Instead, facticity can be considered as a kind of finite transcendence or a transcendence bound to and at work

through immanence.³¹ And this is one reason why they have been important in the development of continental philosophy of religion. They recognize that in religious traditions, experience with the divine forms an integral aspect of the meaning of the world for that tradition.

With this other model of facticity as finite transcendence, we come to the second reason why the dichotomy above is false. We need not an either/or between these models of facticity but a both/and because even if we focus only on the figures of immanence as prior to subjectivity, we find that religious experience plays an important role for us historically situated beings. A focus on our own immanence brings us to a figure of transcendence in religious experience that is a modality of immanence. In other words, the experience of the divine is an important figure of immanence itself because religious traditions form one of the many ways in which human beings have their being-in-the-world insofar as religious traditions constitute, in large measure, the meaning of the world for those belonging to them. Even if we focus solely on our immanent existence,

³¹ Gregory Fried develops an account of this kind of transcendence under the name “situated transcendence,” which he uses “to articulate the belonging-together of our embeddedness in a world of inherited meaning and our need to confront that given world with principles that draw us outside it so that both the world and the principles may continue to refine one another” (“What Gives? Heidegger and Dreyfus on the Event of Community” in *Being Shaken: Ontology and the Event*, eds. Michael Marder and Santiago Zabala (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 149). James K.A. Smith and Joeri Schrijvers develop accounts of such finite transcendence in more religious terminology. Smith, with the incarnation of Christ as his “metaphor,” develops an “incarnational” phenomenology in which transcendent phenomena can appear “within the immanent, without sacrificing transcendence” (*Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 10). Similarly, Schrijvers develops “an incarnational approach to transcendence—incarnational, since it encounters transcendence only through and in immanence, not despite or next to immanence” (*Ontotheological Turnings: The Decentering of the Modern Subject in Recent French Phenomenology* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2011), 15 emphasis his). With this, Smith and Schrijvers accounts of transcendence follow closely Hegel’s account of Spirit’s transcendence in *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: The Lectures of 1827*, One-Volume edition, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

we continually are confronted by communities concerned with worship, love, and devotion to God. People in these communities all aim to connect to and measure their lives, their own immanent experiences, with this experience of the divine. In this way, their experience with the divine as part of some religious tradition is one of the primary and important ways that they relate to others and through which the world and things in it have meaning for them. In this sense, religious traditions can form an aspect of being-in-the-world. The experience of the divine is itself a modality of the immanence of those who belong to these traditions.

Alasdair MacIntyre and Hans-Georg Gadamer help elucidate this finite transcendence of facticity with their accounts of the importance of traditions. MacIntyre has shown that our *rationality* is always constituted by and constitutive of the traditions to which we belong. Such a tradition, for him, is an argument with a particular, historical beginning, most likely an object of authority like a text, in which agreements are made over beliefs, belief-presupposing practices, and textual interpretations. These agreements are determined by external conflicts with critics of the tradition as well as by internal, interpretive conflicts among the people within the tradition.³² Thus, when we engage our world, we are always doing so under the auspices of the tradition(s) to which we belong. Gadamer makes a similar point in his hermeneutical philosophy. He insists that we

³² Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 12, 345; Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 116.

approach texts and experiences through the prejudices or pre-judgments³³ afforded us by our various traditions. A tradition, for Gadamer, is a situation or an horizon representing “a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.”³⁴ Our past constitutes one such horizon “out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition.”³⁵ The power of a tradition comes from the prejudices that we inherit from it and through which the tradition limits our possibility of vision. We always already stand in one tradition or another for Gadamer, and this constitutes, in part, our finitude for him. For both MacIntyre and Gadamer, we are, above all, constituted by our traditions, and it is through these traditions that we approach and understand the various contexts (*Umwelten*) in which we find ourselves. Following this hermeneutical perspective in MacIntyre and from Gadamer, I maintain that experience with the divine is an important figure of facticity insofar as such experience is one of the ways in which the world comes to have more meaning for particular traditions. Coming from a religious *tradition* indicates that the experience of a figure of transcendence forms an integral aspect of immanence, that is, of the meaning of the world, *for that tradition*. In this way, a figure of transcendence remains bound to a particular tradition, that is, this figure is found in and through immanence.

³³ Gadamer maintains that prejudices are “judgments rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined” (*Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004), 273). Hence, my calling them pre-judgments above.

³⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 301.

³⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 303.

This figure of facticity as one of finite transcendence is the facticity taken up by Heidegger, Derrida, and Marion in their writings on the event. With this, their writings provide an opening for rethinking the experience of the divine insofar as their inflections of the event provoke a rethinking of God after the death of God. As post-Kantians interested in the excess of facticity and who have an eye toward the role of a finitely transcendent facticity, Heidegger, Derrida, and Marion provide us with their inflections of the event. With the resources for thinking the event provided by these figures, I aim to read both with and against them in an effort to expand the discussion of the event to include the death of the other as a figure of the event. With this, we also are provided the resources for exploring God after the death of God, that is, for exploring the possibility of a post-onto-theological God in light of the event. I read both with and against these figures because what remains under-developed in their inflections of the event is the existential and phenomenological import of the death of the other as a figure of the event. I maintain that the death of the other—whether this other be God, the human, or the non-human animal—is the site for thinking the event because it is one of the most existentially potent figures of the event that exposes us to the nature or the being of things as an eventful being-with in which we participate. The death of the other discloses being itself as an event in which we participate and find ourselves, and it discloses this because when the other dies, the meaning of the world to and with this other dies along with her. Consequently, the death of the other as an event places us precariously at a juncture between the loss of a world and a potent possibility of a new world. This is the

heart of the tremendous event of the death of God, of the death of the other. Here, with the death of the other, I present my inflection of the event in the face of which God can be rethought through the event.

1.3. Chapter Summaries

In order to unfold this significance of the event, I begin with a short phenomenological interlude that offers some examples of the death of the other that help to orient the rest of the project. Then, I turn to Heidegger's opening for thinking the event and follow Derrida's and Marion's engagements with Heidegger's account of the event. In and along this path of thinking, I develop a robust account of the event with which I can consider the death of the other as a tremendous event.

Accordingly, in chapters three and four, I focus on Heidegger's opening of this conversation with his *focused* turn in the mid-thirties through the end of his career to *das Ereignis* (the event) and the theme of the *es gibt* (it gives) as he attempts to twist free from the history of metaphysics.³⁶ For Heidegger, Nietzsche's announcement that God is dead serves as an indication of the fulfillment of the history of metaphysics. On his view, metaphysics and its representational thinking has brought about its own demise by murdering God. This ontologically means that the forgetfulness of the truth of being has reached its culmination. In an attempt to regain and experience the truth of being for the first time, Heidegger turns to *das Ereignis*. With this, his thinking of the event unfolds

³⁶ I emphasize that in the mid-thirties Heidegger makes a *focused* turn because, as is shown in chapter three and explored further in chapter four, even in 1919, in one of his first seminars, Heidegger is interested in *das Ereignis*, but this interest only becomes central during the mid-thirties and thereafter.

along three contours: the history of being, the ontological difference, and the thinghood and worldhood of beings. With regard to the history of being, the turn to the event marks a new beginning for philosophy. In the history of philosophy as metaphysics, the guiding question has been “what are beings?” says Heidegger (CP 141). The aim, in turn, has been to answer this question by seeking the essence of being always in relation to other beings. In contrast, the question for Heidegger’s “other beginning” for philosophy in his turn to *Ereignis* is guided not by inquiring into the nature of *beings* but with experiencing “the truth of beyng” by asking “about the beyng of truth” (E 196). By turning to the event, Heidegger seeks to gain access to being itself and its essential occurrence by thinking the *giving* of the event. Rather than thinking the various meanings or beingness of beings in the epochal sendings of being itself that constitute the history of being, Heidegger focuses on the *giving*—on the essential occurrence of being itself as the event—concealed in each gift of meaning or beingness. With this, the event is the *es gibt* (it gives) or giving of beingness and time to one another as the epochal sendings of being itself. In this giving of the event, the being of the human being as well as the being of other beings are implicated. With regard to the ontological difference, the event is the difference or the belonging together of meaning and the human being. He writes, “The event appropriates human being and being to their essential togetherness” (ID 38 translation modified). With this, the human being is the clearing, the there (*Da*), or the shepherd of being who receives and marks the giving of

being itself—the event—that is at work in beings letting them have meaning.³⁷ In short, as the shepherd of being, human being must not only let beings come to meaning in their relation to the event but also have an eye for the essential occurrence of the event appearing concealed in these beings. With this, human being no longer relates to *objects* or things whose meaning is objectivity. Rather, human being relates to *things*, that is, to beings whose ground of meaning is the essential occurrence of the event. No longer do we have subjectivity relating to beings constituted as objects. Rather, we have beings whose essence as *things* is their eventuality, that is, the essential occurrence of the event appearing in them as the worlding of the world.

Consequently, for Heidegger, the event provides an opportunity to rethink the history of philosophy, ourselves, and the essence of beings as things in terms of the event. With this, Heidegger's relation with Nietzsche provides an opening for further inflections of the event. Heidegger refuses to name the death of God as an event even though Nietzsche repeatedly names it this. Nevertheless, in Heidegger's own understanding of this announcement of God's death, we find concealed precisely what Heidegger understands to be at stake in thinking the event: with the event, beings in their being, that is, in their meaning, undergo a transformation. Moreover, with the event *appearing* as the worlding of the world, we can now describe Nietzsche's claim that the world appears stranger and older post-death of God in terms of the event. With this, we

³⁷ At this point, as is shown in chapter three, being itself takes on the characteristic of the *es gibt* of the event. cf. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Perennial Library, 1971), 129fn: "Being, however, in respect of its essential origin, can be thought of in terms of appropriation [*Ereignis*] (M.H.)."

have two lines of questioning that are developed and deepened in the remaining chapters. First, now that we can see how the death of the other can be described as a figure of the event, how can we extend this further? Second, following Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, metaphysics as onto-theology has brought about its own demise by murdering God. Heidegger, in turn, announces the need to overcome or murder onto-theology by thinking the event. So if metaphysics has murdered God, does the turn to the event resurrect a different God? Does a different God remain after the event of the death of the onto-theological God?

In chapter five, I take up Derrida's account of the event as gift. Though Derrida's reading of Heidegger may be problematic at times, for Derrida, Heidegger's history of being and the *es gibt* of the event continues to privilege *presence* even despite the clearing-concealing dynamic of the event. After all, the event as clearing opens a space where beings come to meaning in their presence. Such a gift of meaning as a gift of presence is problematic for Derrida. Thus, in an effort to discuss the event without this gift of *present* meaning, Derrida's engagement with the event explores the structure of the event's appearance as well as its ethico-political dimension.³⁸ With this, the event for Derrida, in contrast to Heidegger, "resists historicization" (GGP). In fact, some of

³⁸ In describing the structure of the event's appearance, Derrida aligns himself with Kant's distinction between knowing and thinking. Derrida says, "The gift, I would claim, I would argue, as such cannot be known; as soon as you know it, you destroy it The gift as such cannot be known, but it can be thought of. We can think what we cannot know ... [T]here is something in excess of knowledge" (GGP 60; cf. 71). Yet in expounding on the ethico-political dimensions of the event, Derrida highlights the practical side of Kant's distinction insofar as what we can think but cannot know constitutes the practical sphere in Kant's philosophy, that is "the distinction between knowing and doing, or the distinction between knowing and an event" (GGP 60; cf. 76-77).

Derrida's early engagements with Heidegger are his attempt to explain the dynamics of *différance* as the dynamics of the event but without Heidegger's penchant for gifts of present meaning. Accordingly, he makes a shift in the temporality of the event insofar as the gift is always to-come because it appears as an impossible appearing. The giver and givee cannot know that they are giving and receiving a gift. The event as gift must come unexpectedly and as unforeseeable, that is as a surprise that we could not see coming on any horizon. To experience it is to experience the impossible. For Derrida says, "This experience of the impossible conditions the eventuality of the event [*conditionne l'événementialité de l'événement*] What happens, as event, can only happen there where it is impossible" (DE 96).

In this account of the event as gift, Derrida does not bring us to the point of the death of *God* as event. He does, however, address his concern about what the death of the *other*, in general, means for us. With this, he motivates the question: what then do we do when the event breaks in as a gift of the death of the other? Such a gift that is, on the one hand, an ordinary part of life, and yet something for which we never seem to be prepared. We must, says Derrida, be prepared not to be prepared for the coming of the other, even when, especially when, the other comes in death. As such, this gift of death from the other does arrive, but we can only begin to experience it *après coup*, or better, *après l'événement*. We could say, then, that the death of God marks our time as a time of waiting, of advent, for what is to-come. Here we must hope for the impossible that is to-come and await the God to-come, that is, await the coming of the event for which we are

never prepared but nevertheless remain responsible. Yet this leaves us with further questions. Can the event come? Can we experience the event as impossible? If so, what would this experience be like or entail? Marion's account of the event provides answers to these questions that move us in a lateral direction from, but not beyond, Derrida.

In chapter six, I engage Marion's inflection of the event. Marion agrees with Derrida that Heidegger's project ultimately fails or is, at least, incomplete, but he believes this for different reasons than Derrida. On Marion's reading, Heidegger's insistence on the *Seinsfrage* prevents Heidegger from probing the depths of the givenness of the event. For Marion, then, Heidegger remains part of the metaphysics of presence because such a metaphysics "does not cease to restrain the present and to hold back its givenness" (RG 37).³⁹ For Marion, then, the pathway for thinking the event develops not along the question of the meaning of being, but along the concern for givenness or "being given," which "says the given as given" because verbal being disappears in the "enactment" of givenness (BG 2). So givenness overcomes the concern for being. Thus, Marion describes the event not as the new beginning for our relation to being (*pace* Heidegger) nor as the ineluctable to-come of the impossible gift (*pace* Derrida), but as the fullness or effulgence of givenness. Even though Marion remains deeply critical of Heidegger's sole focus on the *Seinsfrage* and how this inhibits him

³⁹ More particularly, Marion summarizes his critiques of Heidegger in this way, "It remains that Heidegger no doubt did not accomplish what he nevertheless attempted ... to attain through and for phenomenology. This is so, first, because whatever the case may be *Dasein* still remains haunted by the *I*; next it is so because the 'phenomenon of Being,' even in the ... form of the ontological difference, never shows itself; and finally it is so because the 'phenomenology of the unapparent' henceforth called for never gets beyond either its programmatic status or its contradictory formulation" (RG 2).

from engaging givenness, Marion's project remains deeply Heideggerian, even in ways that go unacknowledged by him. In particular, I show how Marion's phenomenology of givenness as a phenomenology of the event is an engagement with Heidegger's third contour of thinking the event: the event as the worlding of the world. In his critical appropriation of Heidegger, he focuses not on a givenness of recess, as Derrida emphasizes, but on the free play of presence. Such a free play is an excess of givenness that exceeds our ability to conceptualize it.⁴⁰ An experience of the event as givenness remains an experience of the impossible, as with Derrida, but the impossible for Marion means unconditioned possibility, that is, the free play of givenness without "any limits of the faculties" (BG 37). So Marion's phenomenology exposes us to an experience of the impossible as the free play of presence in the givenness of phenomena.

Insofar as givenness characterizes all phenomena in their eventuality, in this way, not all phenomena give themselves with the same degree of eventuality or givenness. Marion's category of phenomena called saturated phenomena exemplify most distinctly this event of givenness. In particular, the type of saturated phenomena called *events* exemplify this eventuality. In his description of these phenomena called events, Marion rounds out his account of the event by describing birth and death as events. Yet he maintains, in this, that birth is the event par excellence over death and even the death *of the other*. Despite his arguments in favor of birth as the event par excellence, his description of the death of the other is deficient because it fails to capture this

⁴⁰ With this move, Marion is self-avowedly close to Kant's aesthetics and closer to Heidegger than he lets on. I explore this further in chapter six.

phenomenon in its eventuality. Marion insists that death, even death of the other, gives itself but does not show itself.

Marion agrees that the death of God, as announced by Nietzsche, is indeed a time to think God anew “beyond the question of Being itself.”⁴¹ This is a time of thinking “the event that is called ~~G~~od” who is crossed-out because God does not belong to the domain of being and is revealed “by his placement on a cross ... revealed by, in, and as the Christ.”⁴² This would be a time of thinking God, then, in terms of the brilliance, amazement, and bedazzlement of the event of givenness. And yet this is less a time of thinking the death of God as a death of the other and more a time of thinking the manifestation of love from out of this release of God from the confines of metaphysics. As such, Marion’s account leaves us with some abiding questions: what do we do with the absence that overcomes us, when the other dies? Can we call this absence effulgent? With the death of the other we find ourselves in the mood of mourning or grief, which has no object because mourning is over something lost, namely the absence of the other, who is un-regainable. What is the relation of this absence and the structure of the event’s appearing? Moreover, what is the relation between the event and what the death of the other discloses? The death of the other is disclosive because when the other dies, our world and the things in it are shown to have meaning because of our relations with others. For when the other dies, the meaning of the world with and to that other dies with

⁴¹ Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 74.

⁴² Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 71.

him or her. These questions and aspects of the death of the other are taken into consideration as aspects of the event in the final chapter.

In chapter seven, I offer my inflection of the event based on the death of the other. Though Heidegger, Derrida, and Marion have provided multiple possibilities for approaching the event, only Derrida's account begins to develop the full scope of the relationality that attends the event. In this, Derrida implicitly maintains against Heidegger that the death of the other *is* disclosive. Moreover, though Derrida does not appear to have Marion in mind in his articulation of the death of the other, Derrida's account also shows that the death of the other not only gives itself but also shows itself in terms of the absence made present when the other dies. In this, the death of the other understood as an event is disclosive because what is happening in the death of the other is not only the presence of a death of the world, a loss of meaning in the world, but also an ontological disclosure. For when the other dies, we then existentially feel the importance and significance that the other had for us while living. Only when the other dies, is the other's significance "set," as Dickinson says. And this setting of significance in death shows that our world is what it is or has the meaning that it has because it is a world-with-others in which being is always already a being-with-others. The death of the other discloses this because when the other dies, the meaning of the world to and with this other dies along with her. The death of the other is not only the loss of the person, but also what the world has meant to that person as well as to those in relation with that person. The death of the other is, then, a death of the world (cf. SQ 140). And in this

disclosure, we come to learn a different aspect or inflection of the event. The event disrupts the status quo because the event always touches us or affects us as an event-with-others. Moreover, we come to see that the event has implications on our ethical life. For when the other dies, a responsibility to mourn the other, to carry the other and the world after both have been lost, accompanies the death that is underway.

As we can see, then, the death of the other is most philosophically important for Derrida over and against Heidegger and Marion. Of course, Heidegger and Marion do not demean the death of an other. But for them, the philosophical and phenomenological importance of such death of the other is trumped by either my own death (Heidegger) or my own birth (Marion). Yet even though I align myself, therefore, most closely with Derrida, his understanding of the death of the other is phenomenologically limited. He refuses to maintain a difference between any modality of otherness to the extent that every other is wholly other on his accounting. Yet when we engage a few different kinds of deaths of the other, which are based not on who or what dies but on the relational impact that each has on our with-world, we find that an existential difference helps us see that every other is wholly other but each other impacts our world in different ways. With this, I am not refuting Derrida's problematization of responsibility, particularly in *The Gift of Death*. In this text, Derrida's point is that we never get a free pass or we are never absolved from our absolute responsibility to any other. If every other is wholly other, then my responsibility to any other is absolutely binding. This aporia, which is constitutive of responsibility, is meant to be unsettling for us and not meant to be solved

according to Derrida. Rather than refuting this point, I am sharpening its phenomenological quill. I use the existential difference to show why it is the case that we feel this responsibility to others in different ways, namely in the context of mourning. This existential difference does not absolve us from our responsibility to mourn the death of any other who is wholly other. The fact that I have little to no relation to a person who has died does not mean that I am off the hook from mourning this loss. Whether I feel the loss in a significant way or not, my description of the death of the other through this existential difference is an exploration of why we do not feel this responsibility when every other dies. And yet we are still responsible to mourn the death of the other regardless of the difference he or she has made in our with-world. The aporetic nature of responsibility carries over to the nature of mourning. With this, we can maintain that each death of the other, be it God, humans, or animals, is each time a death of the world and, thereby, an inflection of the event. And for each, we are responsible to mourn the loss that irrupts into and disrupts the world.

CHAPTER II

PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERLUDE

As has been said, this is a text on death and survival, a long reflection on the philosophical significance of what is happening when the other dies for those who survive that person or who live on after the death of the other. The hope and aim of this text, then, is to capture as many experiences of the death of the other as possible by describing the crucial and abiding structures of what happens to those who survive the death of the other. So I must begin where any such phenomenological engagement begins: to the things themselves! Now the death of an other is ubiquitous in life because at some point, everyone experiences the death of the other in one modality or another. Thus, the examples that could be referenced to provide and bolster my phenomenological description of the death of the other are legion. I offer three examples here in this interlude that are not exhaustive of all experiences of the death of the other, but they allow me throughout the dissertation to limn the lines around the abiding structures of the death of the other. Thus, they provide the possibility for providing an adequate account of what happens when the other dies for those who survive this other.

On October 30, 2005, Kyle Lake was baptizing a young graduate student at Baylor University who had been attending University Baptist Church for over four years. As the band that morning finished one of their songs, the lights in the baptistery behind the drums were lit, and Karen and Kyle walked into the plastic tub full of water and, unbeknownst to anyone in the congregation, except God, two hundred fifty volts from

the shorted out heating pump underneath the baptistery. Kyle began to greet everybody and to introduce the significance of baptism, when, though he had been told not to do this before, he reached to position a microphone more in front of his face. Electricity is such a wonderful invention—thank you Thomas Edison—but unfortunately electricity is always trying to be grounded. So the two hundred fifty volts that were menacingly imbuing the water wanted to find its ground. When Kyle touched the microphone, which was on a microphone stand, which was standing on the stage, which was touching the ground, the electricity did its duty: it found its ground. Kyle was the piece that completed the circuit. After grabbing the microphone, Kyle had a few seconds to yell for help before he collapsed in the baptistery. I knew something was wrong. I think I was the first to stand in the sanctuary before everything else happened: my Dad stood up next to me; I told him Kyle was in trouble and he needed help; I walked out of the sanctuary into the lobby and met Ben, the community pastor; Ben called 911; I stood on a chair in the sanctuary and told everyone to calmly and quietly exit out of the back doors so that the EMT's could get to the front easily; I moved chairs; I checked on Jen, Kyle's wife but soon to be widow; I went to my Dad who was with a heart surgeon and another medical person doing CPR on Kyle and asked for a report; "We have not gotten a heart beat," he said; I saw Kyle take his last deep breath in that never came out; I went to my Mom; I cried; and I prayed, "God, please help Kyle. Please help Kyle. Please help Kyle." The death of the other amidst unanswered prayers and a religious ritual representing new life is a enough to crack or even obliterate a person's faith in a

providential being. As Albert Camus notes about his character Panileaux, a priest, something changes in a person when he experiences tragic death.¹

Todd is a police officer in a town near College Station, Texas. Four years ago, he and his eight year old son were driving in a car on a two lane country road when a driver in the opposite lane of oncoming traffic lost control of his car. A massive collision occurred between this car and Todd's car. Todd barely survived the accident with numerous broken bones. His son, however, died. I learned all of this while riding a bike next to Todd one beautiful, Fall Saturday morning. After expressing my sorrow and condolences, Todd responded with an insightful remark. "Thank you," he said, "It is really tough. But you know, you've got to wake up each day and move forward so that you don't *sink deeper*." I did not talk with him about what he meant by this phrase, "So that you don't sink deeper." But this phrase stuck with me. In conjunction with the event of October 30, 2005, this notion of sinking deeper in light of the death of the other is powerful. Despite the death of a loved one inflicting unbelievable amounts of grief and pain, why would we not want to "sink deeper" toward that moment of loss, death, and pain? Are we afraid of what we might learn if we sank deeper? This desire not to sink deeper, of course, has psychological connotations in the sense of not wanting to fall deeper into depression, grief, guilt, etc. This desire not to sink deeper is a defense mechanism so that we can move forward in our everyday lives. I think, however, we

¹ Albert Camus, *The Plague*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 220 where he writes, "But from the day on which he [Panileaux] saw a child die, something seemed to change in him."

need to pause for a moment and ask if moving forward in life amidst such death can take place simultaneously with taking the descent deeper toward the death of the other, toward what is *happening* in such a death. No doubt the loss of a loved one is painful and not something on which we naturally want to dwell. Such an experience is a profound confrontation with our own finitude. Yet if we can make this descent while continuing to choose to live, what might we learn through this death about reality and ourselves? I suspect most people do not want to dwell on these moments of death because what is stirring *in and along* the grief over the loss of the other is the fear, perhaps even anxiety, of what the death of the other might show us about reality or the being of things.

Tommy Givens is a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary. Tommy's father, Tom Givens, had been diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease in 2011. Just eighteen months after his diagnosis, Tom died in his home in March 2012. Tommy has described the impact that this event has had on him, especially when visiting his parents' house just after his father had died. Tom was still sitting in his wheel chair when Tommy entered the room. Here is how Tommy has described this experience, "Everything was the same, and yet his father was gone Even a Baptist pastor's kid, lifelong Christian, former missionary and seminary professor stood in his parents' living room where his father had just died—and wondered what to do next. 'We were groping for what might help us

navigate something very profound,' [Tommy] recalled, 'something that would shape us for the rest of our lives.'"²

Though other events of the death of the other appear below, these three instances, these three encounters with the thing of the death of the other itself, are programmatic for shaping the description of this event that follows.

² Joy Netanya Thompson, "To Live and Die Well," *Fuller: Story | Theology | Voice* Issue 2: Evangelical (2015), 23-24.

CHAPTER III

HEIDEGGER - *EREIGNIS* AND HISTORY OF BEING

Lived experience does not pass in front of me like a thing, but I appropriate [*er-eigne*] it to myself, and it appropriates [*er-eignet*] itself according to its essence
.... The experiences are events of appropriation [*Ereignisse*] insofar as they live out of one's 'own-ness,' and life lives only in this way.¹

One can name it an origin ... it is the event [*Ereignis*] of being as condition for the arrival of beings: being lets beings presence *Letting* is then the pure *giving*, which itself refers to the it [*das Es*] that gives, which is understood as *Ereignis* (FS 60 emphasis his).

The issue of the event (*das Ereignis*) has been a preoccupation of Heidegger's from 1919 through the end of his career. Though his reasons for focusing on the event undergoes a shift,² the event is, nevertheless, not merely a later concern for Heidegger. From Heidegger's first extant lecture course in the War Emergency Semester of 1919, entitled "The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview," we already see him displaying a focus on a phenomenological approach to our experiences, which is a focus that matures throughout his career as he more and more engages with the event. In his 1919 lecture course, he is searching even then for a particular language that takes up life in its singularity or, in other words, that engages the lived experiences of life as moments that have become one's own. He illustrates this by means of the sunrise. The sunrise, for

¹ Martin Heidegger, "The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview," in *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (New York: Continuum, 2008), 60.

² For a nice overview of this see Richard Polt, "Ereignis," in *A Companion to Heidegger*, eds. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 375-391.

the scientist, says Heidegger is merely a natural process (*Vorgang*) that passes by him or her and before which he or she is indifferent. Yet as attested to by the chorus in Sophocles' *Antigone*, the sunrise is appropriated as part of their surrounding world, environment, or meaningful context (*die Umwelt*). With this, the sunrise is seen as a reminder of the friendly, beautiful morning "after a successful defensive battle."³ The Theban chorus does not remain indifferent to the rising of the sun with a concern only for objectifying the sun as an object of the scientific gaze. Rather, they let the sun become their own in light of their context of meaning. Here in the poetry of Sophocles we see how the "signifying functions" of language can "express the characters of the event of appropriation [*Ereignischaraktere*]."⁴ Here language lives with life itself in the meaningful context of the chorus by allowing the sunrise to show itself from itself as a "beautiful glance" and reminder of a successful battle.⁵ So we see that even at Heidegger's earliest stage as a philosopher he is concerned with making a meaningful context our own, that is, with engaging these experiences as *events*.⁶

³ Heidegger, "The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview," 59.

⁴ Heidegger, "The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview," 89 translation modified.

⁵ Heidegger, "The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview," 59 quoting Sophocles' *Antigone*. This early focus on poetry and its relation to the event in 1919 is interesting in light of Heidegger's later admission that the poet exemplifies the naming power of language insofar as the poet is the one who allows beings to presence themselves as what they are in their relation to the event of being, that is lets them presence themselves as what they are in themselves. For this see, in particular, Martin Heidegger, "On the Way to Language" in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: HarperCollins, 1971) 127-131 and PLT 101, 106, 112, 115, 137-139, and 187-208

⁶ With this, Heidegger's early writing on the event resonates with some of Søren Kierkegaard's own writings on the truth of Christianity as "subjective truth," "truth of appropriation," or the truth of making something one's own (Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 1992)), especially Volume 1.189-251 and Volume 2.185.

Thirty years later, in his 1949 Bremen lectures, entitled *Insight Into That Which Is*, Heidegger continues to be concerned with how we relate to things in our world and the role that *das Ereignis* plays in our approach to these things.⁷ However, by 1949, Heidegger has expounded upon what he calls in 1919 the “character of the event of appropriation [*Ereignischarakter*].”⁸ In particular, by 1949 he has begun exploring this character of the event in terms of the history of being, the ontological difference, and the relations among the event, human being, things, and world. These three avenues that Heidegger uses to expound on the character of the event provide the contours for our understanding of the event in Heidegger. In this chapter, I focus on the first of these contours, and in chapter four, I focus on the others. In particular, this chapter focuses on three things that the relation between the event and the history of being allow us to see in Heidegger’s account of the event. First, we learn that Heidegger’s focus on the event in his middle and later periods is integral to his project of twisting free from the history of metaphysics. In this, he attempts to think and experience being itself from out of its own truth understood as clearing-concealing. Second, precisely in this twisting free from metaphysics, we learn of the primary character of the event: giving. The event as being itself is the giving operative in and along every juncture of the history of being. Yet, as we shall see, this giving is an excessive giving insofar as its happening resists any metaphysical, causal nexus or principle of sufficient reason that would explain its giving.

⁷ These lectures are the center point for chapter four below.

⁸ Heidegger, “The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview,” 60 translation modified from “the event-like essence of appropriation.”

Moreover, this giving of the event is excessive because its essential occurrence (*Wesung*) of giving remains concealed in the meaning of beings that it gives. Third, drawing on this meaning of the event, we begin to see what kind of relation the death of the other *might* have with it on a Heideggerian interpretation. We can glimpse this interpretation in Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche's madman, but there we see a limitation in Heidegger's interpretation that precludes him from taking seriously the death of God, the death of the other, as a figure of the event.

3.1. Twisting Free From Metaphysics

Heidegger's attempt to twist free from metaphysics, with its penchant always to determine being itself through a particular meaning of the being of beings, has been a constant focus throughout his work. Yet this focus has made an (in)famous "turn" during his middle period. In this turn, he may be understood to be reframing the question of the meaning of being from its formulation in *Being and Time*. This turn consists of rethinking the approach to being itself, namely a rethinking of this approach from one that goes through *a* being to one that seeks being itself in the history of metaphysics. With his reformulation of the question of being, Heidegger seeks the truth of being itself no longer as ἀλήθεια but as the clearing-concealing ground of ἀλήθεια.

3.1.1. Reframing the Question of Being—The Turn

Looking back over his philosophical career in 1973, Heidegger tells a group of students at his home in Zähringen that the only question that "has ever moved" him is "the question of being: what does 'being' mean" (FS 67)? Nevertheless, Heidegger's

framing of this question undergoes an important change from his formulation in *Being and Time* to the one at his “Seminar in Zähringen.” In *Being and Time*, Heidegger tells us that a proper formulation of the question involves knowing what the question asks about (*Gefragte*), what is interrogated in this asking (*Befragte*), and what is “ascertained” in the asking (*Erfragte*; BT 4). He recalls this formulation of the question in 1973 when he says, “[I]n the question concerning the meaning of being, what is interrogated [*Befragte*] is being, that is to say, the being of beings; that towards which I am inquiring [*Erfragte*] is the meaning of being” (FS 67 translation modified). The *Erfragte* remains the same in both formulations. The shift occurs with the other two aspects of the question.

With this shift in his reframing of the proper formulation of the question, we see a few differences that are instructive for interpreting Heidegger’s texts on the event. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger’s formulation of the question of the meaning of being is *Dasein*-centric in the sense that the “wager” in *Being and Time* is that it will launch us into the meaning of the being of *Dasein*, which, in turn will catapult us into the meaning of Being itself.⁹ Through *Dasein*’s concern for its own being, *Dasein* has an understanding of being as a determination of its own being (BT 11-12). The inquirer, *Dasein*, understands “something like being [*Sein*]” (BT 17) because *Dasein* is “always already in its being ... related to *what is sought*” in the question regarding the meaning of being (BT 13/15 emphasis his). With this, in *Being and Time*, he distinguishes between

⁹ John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 72; cf. 68.

das Gefragte and *das Befragte* in terms of what the question asks about and what is interrogated in this asking. Heidegger asks about being, and he interrogates *the* being Dasein. In 1973, however, we no longer see the distinction between what the question asks about (*das Gefragte*) and what is interrogated in the asking (*das Befragte*). Rather, we only have *das Befragte*. Moreover, what is interrogated is no longer *a* being but “being, that is to say, the being of beings [*das Sein des Seienden*]” (FS 67). Just before explaining this to the students at his home, Heidegger has told them that “metaphysics investigates the being of beings [*Sein des Seienden*]” (FS 65). In his close reading of Heidegger’s *Four Seminars*, Richard Capobianco shows that the expression *Sein des Seienden* means the “‘beingness of beings’ (*Seiendheit des Seienden*).”¹⁰ The most powerful evidence of this in the protocols of Heidegger’s seminars comes from the 1969 “Seminar in Le Thor.” There Heidegger explains that “*the* question of metaphysics” is “the question concerning the being of beings [*Sein des Seienden*], in other words: the question concerning the beinghood of beings [*Seiendheit des Seienden*]” (FS 46 emphasis his). Consequently, what is *now* interrogated in the question of the meaning of being is the history of metaphysics itself as a history of the beingness of beings. Yet the aim in interrogating this history of metaphysics is to arrive at what is to be ascertained, namely the meaning of being itself. Capobianco explains that Heidegger’s “question” was always concerned with thinking *through* the metaphysical question in order to ask about the meaning of Being that encompasses or enfolds the metaphysical meaning of the

¹⁰ Richard Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger* (Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 24; cf. 13-15 and 18-19

beingness of beings.”¹¹ Thus, in contrast to *Being and Time*, the wager for Heidegger’s later thought is no longer that through *a* being we will arrive at being itself. Rather, the wager has become that in and along the history of how the being(ness) of beings has been thought will we arrive at being itself. In and along the history of metaphysics Heidegger believes a space is opened or cleared for being as being—being itself—to be experienced. And this clearing for being itself is the clearing of the event, that is, being itself as the event. Thus, the event, being itself, being as being, the event as being, and being (*das Seyn*) are all terms that attempt to name the same thing. Namely, these terms all name the abiding *Sache* of Heidegger’s thought: the meaning of being itself. In this way, these terms are all homologous. In turn, the junctures in the history of being where beings come to have a particular meaning, a particular beingness, concern the being of beings (*Sein des Seienden*), the beingness of beings (*Seiendheit des Seienden*), and the meaning of beings.¹²

On account of this relation between being itself and the various junctures in the history of the being of beings, Heidegger formulates the *Sache* of his thought further as the “truth of being” where truth is understood as the unconcealment of a clearing. In other words, the “meaning of being” becomes for Heidegger the “truth of being” because he is seeking in and along the history of metaphysics a disclosure of being itself as *the giving* of meaning to things. In this way, the “truth of being ... emphasizes the openness of being itself” (FS 47) because as *the giving* of meaning to things that have meaning

¹¹ Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger*, 24 emphasis his.

¹² cf. Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger*, 22 and 34-51.

(i.e. beings), being itself is the opening or the clearing of a space for beings to mean what they mean.¹³ This focus on the truth of being as “the openness of being itself” is what signifies “the turn” in Heidegger’s thinking, says Heidegger (FS 47). What becomes central to this turn toward the truth of being and how it relates to the history of metaphysics is his exploration of the event. The “relations and contexts constituting the essential structure of the event” are “worked out,” says Heidegger (TB 43 translation modified), in his *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*. Nevertheless, his lecture, “Time and Being,” develops these structures in important ways. For these reasons, these texts become the focus of this chapter, beginning with the *Contributions*.

3.1.2. *Philosophy’s Beginnings and Truth as Clearing-Concealing*

One way that Heidegger delineates his focus on being itself through the notion of the truth of being arises with his distinction between philosophy’s “other beginning” and philosophy’s “first beginning” in the *Contributions*. With this, we see the most wide-reaching import of *das Ereignis* for Heidegger: the event marks a more originary beginning for philosophy, which he calls the “other beginning,” in contrast to its “first beginning.” Each beginning for philosophy is directed by a fundamental question that

¹³ Here I am following Thomas Sheehan in couching *Sein* in phenomenological terms of meaning. See Thomas Sheehan, “The Turn,” in *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts* ed. Bret W. Davis (Durham: Acumen, 2010), 82-101 and Thomas Sheehan, “Astonishing! Things Make Sense!,” *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 1 (2011): 1-25. Though I agree with Sheehan’s general couching of *Sein* in phenomenological terms, his account of *Ereignis* is too limited and too Kantian because he regards *Ereignis* as the “*a priori*” “meaning-giving source of the meaning of the meaningful” (“The Turn,” 86) or as “man’s *a priori* thrown-openness or appropriation whereby the dynamic realm of possible meaning is generated” (“Astonishing!,” 19). The problem is that these explanations of Heidegger’s *Ereignis* place Heidegger’s very attempt to twist free from metaphysics back into metaphysics. They are metaphysical explanations of what is non-metaphysical. As such, they fail to give an account of the excessiveness of the event (cf. Richard Polt, “Meaning, Excess, and Event,” *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 1 (2011): 26-53).

orients it. For the “first beginning,” which entails the history of Western metaphysics, the “guiding question” has been “what are beings?” or “the question of beingness [Seiendheit]” (CP 141, 135). With this, the aim has been to seek the essence of being itself always in relation to other beings. Being itself, then, is always determined as the being of some being. In phenomenological terms, this means that being itself is always understood as having a particular meaning, a particular beingness. As such, metaphysics takes a particular meaning of the being of beings, for example *objectivity*, and makes this beingness what is “apriori” (CP 137). Thus, in modern philosophy, most notably Kant, the being of all things comes to mean objectivity, that is, all beings become what stands over against the subject who determines the meaning of all things. Yet modern philosophy makes one further step on Heidegger’s view. Not only is the meaning of beings taken to be objectivity, but philosophy simultaneously thinks that it is thinking being itself. So it defines being itself as objectivity. On Heidegger’s view, this move by metaphysics is not only problematic for our own relation to things in the world but it also marks a failure of metaphysics to think being itself. When everything becomes an object awaiting the human subject to determine its own meaning, its own being, then everything becomes, in turn, a commodity or resource (*Bestand*) for our mastery and use until we are ready to dispose of and replace it.¹⁴ Moreover, Heidegger believes that in this first beginning of philosophy, metaphysics sought to experience being itself, but it

¹⁴ Heidegger even goes so far to say that in this transition from objects to commodities in modern technology, “[w]hatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve [*Bestand*] no longer stands over against us as object [E]ven the object disappears into the objectlessness of standing-reserve” (QCT 17 and 19; cf. BF 44).

has always focused on the beingness of beings, that is, on a particular meaning of *beings*, and not on being itself. In an effort to overcome this danger *and* failure of metaphysics, Heidegger formulates the “other beginning.”

Philosophy’s “other beginning” is guided not by inquiring into the nature of *beings* but with experiencing “the truth of beyng” by asking “about the beyng of truth” (CP 141; cf. E 119). Thus, on the largest scale of Heidegger’s thinking of the event, the event is connected with an attempt to think being itself out of its own truth without determining it with any particular meaning of being. Being written with a “y”—beyng—is supposed to draw our attention to this more originary thinking of being itself.

The relationship between beyng and truth becomes of utmost importance in this thinking of being itself. For the essence of truth entails the essence of beyng. Heidegger writes, “This truth of beyng is indeed nothing distinct from beyng but rather is the most proper essence [*Wesen*] of beyng” (CP 74). By identifying an *essence* of beyng with truth, Heidegger is not slipping back into the very metaphysics that he critiques nor identifying a particular meaning or *Seiendheit* of beyng. For this essence of beyng concerns how beyng appears or happens in a phenomenological sense. In this sense, beyng’s essence, as the German *Wesen* suggests, is something underway, on its way, or in process. In fact, this essence of truth or truth of beyng is “the movement . . . in the turning of the event” (CP 277). The essential truth of beyng or beyng as truth is, then,

also the essence or happening of beyng as the event.¹⁵ With this, we see a development in Heidegger's understanding of truth. He writes, "The truth of beyng is nothing less than the *essence of truth*, grasped and grounded as the clearing-concealing" (CP 148-149 emphasis his).¹⁶ This truth, named clearing-concealing, deepens Heidegger's understanding of truth. As such, truth means not only a tensive relation between the concealing and unconcealing of beings (i.e. ἀλήθεια) but, as the essence or ground of this relation, truth is the clearing for this a-lēthic structure in and along which beyng itself conceals itself. Beyng as truth is the opening of a space for meaning to happen, for beings to have meaning, while also concealing itself in this space of meaning.

James Bahoh agrees that this clearing-(self)concealing is "related to the a-lēthic formulation of truth," but he emphasizes that the clearing-(self)concealing essence of truth actually "articulates a *fundamental* transformation" of Heidegger's understanding of truth.¹⁷ The clearing-concealing nature of truth, says Bahoh, is the ground of the a-lēthic formulation and "a more originary essence of truth" insofar as the dynamics of clearing-concealing "originate the a-lēthic structures of unconcealment and concealment."¹⁸ Bahoh carefully reads the *Contributions* in order to tease out the aspects of, what he calls, this differential concept of truth. Beyond this careful reading, he

¹⁵ The beginning of the *Contributions* frames this text as one that is seeking to think "the essential occurrence of beyng ... in its most proper character as an event [*seinem eigensten Ereignischarakter*]" (CP 5). And, perhaps, a central thought of the text, if not *the* central thought, occurs with Heidegger's statement, "Beyng essentially occurs [*west*] as the event" (CP 25; cf. 201, 204).

¹⁶ cf. E 196 where Heidegger says that the "other beginning" is "the beginning 'of' being. It is the essential occurrence of being in its truth."

¹⁷ James Bahoh, "Heidegger's Differential Concept of Truth in *Beiträge*," *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 4 (2014), 49 emphasis mine.

¹⁸ Bahoh, "Differential Concept of Truth," 54 and 69fn39.

attempts to develop what Heidegger does not, namely an “account of the operations through which this primal difference generates the a-lēthic structures.”¹⁹ Though Bahoh’s work on the clearing-concealing essence of truth is important and should not be overlooked for our understanding of Heidegger’s notion of the event, we should not see this as a *fundamental* transformation of Heidegger’s understanding of truth. Nor should we attempt to articulate how this clearing-concealing account of truth originates the structures of ἀλήθεια. After all, as Bahoh admits, Heidegger provides “no overt assertion that the essence of truth is differential in nature.”²⁰ The absence of such an assertion suggests a different approach that we are to take toward this *deeper* formulation of truth.

On my reading, what we should learn from this more originary account of truth is that Heidegger is trying to think ἀλήθεια in a more Greek way than even the Greeks thought it. In this way, he is trying to dissociate the truth of being itself from any determination of it by a particular meaning of beings in the history of metaphysics. In other words, this originary essence of truth, the truth of beyng as event, is one of clearing and self-concealing out of itself, and such clearing-concealing can be glimpsed in and along the structures of unconcealment and concealment that are captured by ἀλήθεια. This is the meaning that Heidegger seems to suggest when he poses the question: “Whence and wherefore concealment and unconcealment” (CP 261)? He continues, “To

¹⁹ Bahoh, “Differential Concept of Truth,” 60.

²⁰ Bahoh, “Differential Concept of Truth,” 40.

pose this question, however, it is necessary at first to grasp ἀλήθεια in its essential extent as the openness of *beings*” (CP 261 emphasis mine).²¹ ἀλήθεια pertains primarily to the openness of beings and not to the essential occurrence of being as the truth of clearing-concealing. Consequently, when Heidegger says, “Truth as the clearing for concealment is thus an essentially different projection than is ἀλήθεια,” we must understand this to mean that ἀλήθεια pertains to the openness of beings through unconcealment and concealment. And yet a deeper clearing of this ἀλήθεια is being as the truth of clearing-concealing, that is being as the event. The questioning involved with ἀλήθεια is in terms of the beingness of beings, that is in terms of “beings as beings” (CP 277) and not being itself.

As such, ἀλήθεια belongs to the first beginning of philosophy and not to the other beginning. This is not to deny, however, that ἀλήθεια and truth as clearing-concealing are not integrally related. For just as we saw in the 1973 Zähringen seminar, so too here in the *Contributions*, the path to the truth of being is not an abandonment of the history of metaphysics but an examination of this history to find concealed in it the truth of being itself. Heidegger writes:

The originary appropriation of the first beginning (i.e., the appropriation of its history) means gaining a foothold in the other beginning. This is carried out in the transition from the *guiding question* [i.e. the question about beings] ... to the *basic question* [i.e. the question about the truth of being] This transition, grasped historically, is the overcoming ... of all ‘metaphysics’ (CP 135).

²¹ Bahoh skips over this part of the passage, which, I think, leads to his problematic understanding of what we are to do with this more originary account of truth in Heidegger (see “Differential Concept of Truth,” 53).

Such overcoming is described as “an overcoming of metaphysics out of its grounds” (CP 136). This means that the overcoming is not an abandonment but a deepening or intensification that goes beyond metaphysics to what lies at its ground and engenders it. Metaphorically expressed, the twisting free is the “twisting of the wreath, not of the screw. Twisting: wound into a ring, twisted up in the form of a ring” (E 115). The twisting free is not a penetration of something external to the history of metaphysics into this history. Rather, the twisting free happens internal to this history. In and along the history of metaphysics Heidegger seeks for the truth of being as the event. For example, Claudia Baracchi maintains that Heidegger focuses on Greek philosophy and the Greek notion of ἀλήθεια because he finds there something that was unthought by the Greeks, namely the giving or clearing of ἀλήθεια, and not what is cleared or given, a thinking of “the region more ancient than appearing and disappearing.” This requires, she says, hearing in the Greeks, *not* traversing them, the “other beginning” of the *Contributions*.²² This requires hearing in ἀλήθεια the more originary account of truth in its being, that is, being in its truth. What this requires, then, is not a focusing on the various meanings of beingness that have been provided in the history of metaphysics, but rather on what lies within and at work in these various meanings of beingness. What remains concealed in the history of metaphysics is being itself as the event. The history of metaphysics is a history of the concealment of being itself. However, in this history, says Heidegger,

²² Claudia Baracchi, “A Vibrant Silence: Heidegger and the End of Philosophy,” in *Being Shaken: Ontology and the Event*, eds. Michael Marder and Santiago Zabala (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014) 112 and 113.

“[T]hinking can pursue the history of being itself and consequently make a beginning with the next step along its path: the taking-into-view of being *as* being” (FS 43 emphasis his). This means not focusing on the particular meaning that is given and disclosed but on the *giving* itself of the meaning. This *giving* is the event of being.

3.2. The Event as Giving

In twisting free from metaphysics, the other beginning for philosophy focuses its attention on thinking the event as *the giving* of the being of beings to time and time to this being of beings. In this way, the event is the giving that clears a space for meaning to happen in which the giving of the event is itself concealed. Richard Polt, thus, maintains that being itself for Heidegger “is best interpreted as the *giving of being*, that is as the event in which beings as such and as a whole are enabled to make a difference to us.”²³ In this regard, Heidegger’s lecture “Time and Being” marks an important development in Heidegger’s understanding of the event because there he most clearly describes this event as giving. Moreover, in this lecture we learn about the event as a giving-excess, that is, a giving that exceeds what is given.

3.2.1. The Import of “Time and Being”

Polt develops his interpretation of being itself primarily through his focus on Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy* as well as Heidegger’s 1938/39 private monograph *Besinnung*. Most notably from *Besinnung* is the passage where Heidegger

²³ Richard Polt, *The Emergency of Being: On Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 29.

says, “The event lets [*läßt*] beings as such come forth.”²⁴ Beyond the texts that are Polt’s primary focus, this account of being as the event of giving is captured best by Heidegger in his 1962 lecture entitled “Time and Being.” This lecture can be difficult to interpret, as we shall soon see, because Heidegger does not distinguish between *Sein as Seyn* and *Sein* as the beingness of beings. In fact, *Seyn* does not even appear in the lecture. Despite this difficulty, this lecture has a number of advantages over the other texts focused on by Polt for exploring the event as giving. First, “Time and Being” is much later than *Besinnung* and the *Contributions*, which means that Heidegger has developed his thoughts further and deeper than he did in these private monographs. To illustrate, in his 1969 “Seminar in Le Thor,” Heidegger points toward the lecture “Time and Being” as significant for understanding the giving of the event as the letting of beings come forth. During this seminar, Heidegger names the event of being, as he did in *Besinnung*, “as condition for the arrival of beings: being lets [*läßt*] beings presence” (FS 59). He continues by saying that “the deepest meaning of being is *letting*” (FS 59 emphasis his) and that “‘Time and Being’ attempted to think this ‘letting’ still more originarily as ‘giving’” (FS 59). In Heidegger’s own estimation, then, the lecture “Time and Being” marks a distinctive development of his understanding of being itself as event, that is, as the giving of meaning to beings. Second, this lecture’s other advantage is that Heidegger has developed this notion of being itself as the event of giving specifically with reference to the history of metaphysics. Thus, this lecture provides us with a clearer

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Besinnung* Gesamtausgabe 66, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), 203.

articulation of the relationship between the first beginning and other beginning of philosophy than what is given in the *Contributions*.

3.2.2. *The Event as Giving-Excess*

The task is now to work through “Time and Being” in order to glean from this text the primary aspect of the event as the giving of the being of beings in different temporal junctures, that is at different moments in the history of metaphysics. In and along these junctures of the meaning of beings, we catch glimpse of or are brought into the clearing where being itself appears as the event of giving. In following Heidegger’s thinking along this path, we follow the “sole purpose” of his lecture: “to bring before our eyes Being itself [*Sein Selbst*] as the event of appropriation” (TB 21). This passage highlights the fundamental difficulty with Heidegger’s lecture. Capobianco writes with regard to this passage that Heidegger

offers no careful elucidation of how his conclusion is to be understood [H]e does not directly address the apparent tension in the lecture between two claims: on the one hand, he states throughout that *Ereignis* ‘gives’ *das Sein* (*Es gibt Sein*), but on the other hand, he concludes ... that the whole point of the lecture is precisely to bring into view ‘Being itself as *Ereignis*.’²⁵

In short, the difficulty is Heidegger’s unclear use of *Sein*. Thus, in reading through the text, we must make the distinctions for when *Sein* means the being of beings in the sense of their beingness (*Seiendheit*) and when *Sein* means being itself as the event. In making this distinction through our interpretation, we come to see that the event is the *es gibt* that gives the being of beings, their beingness, at different temporal junctures. These

²⁵ Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger*, 48.

temporal junctures are the epochs of being itself that constitute the history of metaphysics. Thus, in and along these junctures of metaphysics, Heidegger seeks to catch glimpse of the event as the giving of these junctures. With this, the event does not mark another epoch of this history. No “destinal epoch of the event” is possible because the “sending” of these epochs “is from the event” (FS 61 translation modified). In fact, following the protocol for Heidegger’s lecture, when we think the event, the history of being “is no longer what is to be thought explicitly” (TB 41). This history of being as a history of the ways that metaphysics has failed to think being itself comes to an end because being itself is now thought as the event. Thus, we read in the protocol, “Metaphysics is the oblivion of being [as the event], and that means the history of the concealment and withdrawal of that which gives being[ness]. The entry of thinking into the event is thus equivalent to the end of this withdrawal’s history” (TB 41 translation modified). We must interpret Heidegger’s statements that “being, by coming to view as the event, disappears as being” (TB 43 translation modified) and “if the emphasis is: to let presencing, there is no longer room for the very name of being” (FS 60) along these same lines. When being itself is understood as the event, being in the sense of the beingness of beings is no longer of concern. It disappears because the thinking of being itself as the event is no longer concerned with thinking beingness but with thinking being itself at work in the giving of beingness.²⁶

²⁶ cf. Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger*, 49.

In bringing to our attention being itself as the event, Heidegger tells us that he is attempting “to think being without regard to its being grounded [*Begründung*] in terms of beings” (TB 2). In other words, his lecture concerns thinking being itself without determining being itself in terms of any particular meaning of the being of beings, without determining it as beingness (*Seiendheit*). In order to do so, the *Sache* of the lecture is a thinking of the *holding* of beingness and time toward each other that “endures their relation” (TB 4). We could say that Heidegger thinks *that which* holds beingness and time together, but in determining this holding as a *that which*, we immediately hypostasize the holding. Making a thing or a being out of the *holding* is a move that Heidegger repeatedly resists in the lecture but recognizes as a constant move of our thinking (TB 17-19).

In order to bring this *Sache* into focus, we must experience *and* think—the two are indissociable in the lecture—what is taking place in the phrase *es gibt*. For the being of beings, which has been determined in metaphysics as presence, is not *a* being, and the space in which beings come to presence as having a particular meaning or beingness, a space that Heidegger designates as time-space (TB 14-15), is likewise not *a* being. Beingness and time are not beings. Thus, we cannot say, “Being *is*” or “Time *is*” because this saying represents them as particular beings. Rather, we must say, “*es gibt* being and *es gibt* time” (TB 5 translation modified). We approach the *Sache* of the lecture, the *holding* together of beingness and time, when we think this *es gibt*. More specifically, we must think the *es*, the *it*, in *it gives* in terms of “the kind of giving that belongs to it” (TB

19). In this way, giving characterizes the holding of beingness and time together, a giving that simultaneously brings beingness and time into their own meaning as well as brings them into relation. The kind of giving that belongs to *es gibt* is characterized as two-fold: sending and extending. Sending and extending are the dynamics of the event in this lecture. They must be thought together, but Heidegger, for the sake of some clarity, separates his account of them in this lecture.

He thinks the giving of the event in terms of sending with regard to the being of beings, that is with regard to what beings mean in their own being. Throughout the history of metaphysics, this being of beings has undergone many transformations or unconcealments. The being of beings, with Parmenides, is first thought as “*einai, eon*” (TB 8). After this, the unconcealment of the beingness of beings is thought as

the *hen*, the unifying unique One, as the *logos*, the gathering that preserves the All, as *idea, ousia, energeia, substantia, actualitas, perceptio, monad*, as objectivity, as the being posited of self-positing in the sense of the will of reason, of love, of the spirit, of power, as the will to will in the eternal recurrence of the same (TB 7).

This encapsulates the history of being, that is, the history of the unconcealment of the beingness of beings, for Heidegger. In and along this history “prevails” the event of being itself as a “giving” of “being, by which all beings as such are marked” (TB 5). Out of this unconcealing of beingness “speaks a giving, an it gives” (TB 5). In order to think this event, we must “relinquish being as the ground of beings in favor of the giving which prevails concealed in unconcealment” (TB 6). In and along, which is to say concealed in, the history of being is the giving, the event of being as giving.

With this, the dynamics of the event described in the *Contributions* as clearing-concealing are clarified. And Heidegger tries to capture these dynamics in the lecture by calling the giving of the event “sending [*Schicken*]” because in what is given, namely a gift, the giving itself “withdraws in favor of the gift” (TB 8). Thus, what is unconcealed as the beingness of beings (e.g. Plato’s *ousia*, Aristotle’s *energeia*, the Plotinian One, the *substantia* of the middle ages, Nietzsche’s will to will) is a *gift* from the event of *giving*. Heidegger writes, “Being—that which It gives—is what is sent” (TB 8). Each beingness in the history of being is a gift of the event of giving. Moreover, with each gift as a sending of the event, the event of giving itself is concealed in the gift. Heidegger says that with this “self-withdrawing” or “expropriation, the event ... preserves what is its own” (TB 23 translation modified), namely the event preserves its giving. Through expropriation or self-concealing, the event withdraws its giving “from boundless unconcealment” (TB 22). As such, the event always *exceeds* the gifts of beingness.

This account of the dynamics of the event grants us access to the primary aspect of the giving of the event as an *excessive* giving. And it does so in two ways. First, the event as giving is not a cause as part of a cause-effect chain throughout history. The event exceeds any such causal network. With this, the history of being as the sequence of the sendings of the event is without why.²⁷ In other words, the giving of the event operates outside of any metaphysically determined causal nexus because its giving does not operate under any principle of sufficient reason. So when asked, “Why is the

²⁷cf. John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 164.

sequence [of the history of being] precisely this sequence?” during his lecture, Heidegger responds, “[O]ne cannot speak of a ‘why.’ Only the ‘that’—*that* the history of being is in such a way—can be said” (TB 52 emphasis mine). Thus, he begins his lecture by saying that what he attempts to think in the lecture requires an abandonment of “any claim to immediate intelligibility” (TB 2) because of the excessiveness of the giving of the event. Understanding the event as a giving outside of any causal nexus protects us from an interpretation of being as the event that hypostasizes being as *a* being operating with reason and will. We see Heidegger avoiding onto-theology with this move.

Therefore, the event is excessive insofar as it exceeds any principle of sufficient reason that would explain why any particular meaning of beings is given. Second, not only is the giving of the event excessive because it operates outside of any principle of sufficient reason but also because the giving of the event is concealed in what is given. The event is not what is given but remains at work in giving what is given. The giving exceeds what is given from it insofar as in clearing a space for beings to presence themselves as what and who they are, being itself conceals itself behind the beingness that is given or cleared. As such, the giving-excess that is the event is an articulation of a finite transcendence or a transcendence at work in immanence.²⁸

²⁸ In the history of philosophy, Heidegger’s understanding of this transcendence of the event most closely parallels the relation between the One and Intellect in Plotinus’s philosophy. Moreover, Jean-Luc Marion’s understanding of the gift, which is the focus of chapter six, is close to Plotinus’s philosophy as well. On this relation in Plotinus see Eric D. Perl, “‘The Power of All Things:’ The One as Pure Giving in Plotinus,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71.3 (1997): 301-313.

Being itself as the event is the giving understood as the sending of the being of beings. Thus, the “history of being means destiny [*Geschick*] of being” (TB 9). This history of being is the gathered-sending (*Ge-schick*) from being itself. Heidegger goes further by naming this history of being the “epochs of the destiny of being” because “epochs” refers not to “a span of time” but the ἐποχή or holding back of the event of being in the gifts of beingness (TB 9). The history of metaphysics is a history, then, of being itself understood as the event holding itself back or concealing itself in the various ways beings have been cleared to have a particular meaning.

Yet also to the event as the giving-sending of the being of beings belongs the extending of time. As the extending of time, the event of being is the giving of the open space of meaning where beings come to have the meaning or being that they have. In this way, the giving of the event is the opening up and extending of time-space, which means that “time itself remains the gift of an ‘It gives’” (TB 17). Both time and beingness are “gifts of the event” (TB 23 translation modified). This sending and extending belong together as the giving of the event because “being proves to be destiny’s gift of presence ... granted by the giving of time” (TB 22). In other words, the gift of a particular meaning of beingness is possible from out of the event because the event concomitantly gives the open space of meaning (i.e. time-space) in which beings can have this beingness. Beings come to have the meaning that they have in the various epochs of the destiny of being because the event is the giving of beingness and time to one another as an *occurrence* of meaning. As such, the event does not mean “happening

[*Geschehnis*]” (TB 20) or “simply an occurrence” because this giving “makes any occurrence possible” (TB 19). Heidegger makes this distinction in the *Contributions* with what he calls the *jolt* of being itself. There he says that the “essential occurrence [*Wesung*]” of being arrives “like a jolt [*Stoß*]” that is “historically non-repeatable” (CP 191 and 382 translation modified). Moreover, the thinking of this essential occurrence “displaces us out into that history whose ‘events’ [*Ereignisse*] are nothing other than the jolts of the event of appropriation itself” (CP 365). As we have seen in the introduction, many philosophers have begun to interpret these jolts of the event as the “arrhythmic and unrepeatable shocks that shake up ontology.”²⁹ In this way, the event “*interrupts* something in our world or *interjects* something new in it.”³⁰ Though Heidegger does not use *Stoß* to describe the non-metaphysical happening of being in “Time and Being,” this turn of phrase is instructive for describing the giving of the event from this lecture. In each juncture of the history of being, beings come to mean something different, and this different meaning is a gift of the giving event. Thus, with each different meaning we find a jolt of being as the giving that, in turn, withdraws in what is given. To make the distinction then between the occurrence of a meaning of beings and the essential occurrence of the event, we could say that the event is the giving in and through what is happening. Or, in short, the event is what is happening *in* what is happening.³¹ This jolt

²⁹ Zabala and Marder, “Introduction,” 9.

³⁰ van der Heiden, *Ontology After Ontotheology*, 17 emphasis his.

³¹ cf. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logics of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia, 1990), 149 where he writes, “The event is not what occurs (an accident), it is rather inside what occurs, the purely expressed [I]t is what must be understood, willed, and represented in that which occurs.”

of the event would be a non-metaphysical happening in what is happening because, after all, the event as the giving of the meanings of beings is excessive, that is, without why.

As the sending of beingness, the extending of time-space, and the giving of each to the other, being itself as the event *appears concealed* in and along the gifts of the history of being. This is why Heidegger calls this domain the “domain of the inapparent” (FS 79) and his phenomenological approach to this domain where the event appears a “phenomenology of the inapparent” (FS 80). We might even call this an impossible appearance. In this sense, the event of being is the “condition for the arrival of beings: being lets beings presence” (FS 59). In letting beings presence or giving beings their beingness, the event as giving exceeds that which is given. The event is a giving-excess. Therefore, the event of being is the giving itself at work in the history of being yet exceeding this history in its very giving. With the event, thinking embarks on a path that lies at the ground of the history of metaphysics. Yet in exposing and thinking this ground, metaphysics itself comes to an end for Heidegger. No longer is the task of thinking to think the being of beings in various ways. The task now becomes thinking the event as the giving ground in and along this history of being.

3.3. Death of God as Event: Heidegger’s Failure

As indicated in the introduction, Heidegger regards Nietzsche’s announcement of the death of God as the culmination of this history of metaphysics. As we look back on Heidegger’s 1943 engagement with Nietzsche’s announcement in “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God is Dead’” in light of what we have learned thus far about the event for

Heidegger, we can see how Heidegger fails to think the death of God as a figure of the event appearing concealed at the fulfillment of the history of metaphysics in Nietzsche's metaphysics. Thus, while Heidegger develops the import of *das Ereignis*, he does not go far enough in applying his thinking of the event to the death of God or to the death of the other. With this, Nietzsche is a harbinger of an important connection between the event and the death of God. But we must push Nietzsche's insights further in pushing Heidegger's thinking of the event further as well.

Heidegger tells us in 1943 that his engagement with Nietzsche aims to "point the way toward the place from which" the essence of nihilism can be thought (QCT 53). According to Heidegger, this essence of nihilism can be found in Nietzsche's own metaphysics. Nietzsche's own philosophy is self-avowedly nihilistic, and Heidegger understands Nietzsche's announcement, "God is dead," to be a summarization of Nietzsche's own understanding of this movement of nihilism (QCT 57). On Heidegger's interpretation, this announcement by Nietzsche's madman declares the death of "the supersensory world" or "the realm of Ideas and ideals" of Platonism and Christianized Platonism, which is to say, for Nietzsche, of all philosophy in general (QCT 61). On this view, the realm of real reality, which stands over and above the sensory, unreal world that we all live in, "is without effective power. It bestows no life" (QCT 61). Though Heidegger spends the majority of his time in this text exposing Nietzsche's attempt to overturn Platonism and metaphysics as, nevertheless, still complicit to the history of metaphysics as a history of value-positings, I want to trace the concealed movement of

the event in his text that remains unnoticed by Heidegger himself. In and along Heidegger's text we find the event appearing concealed in the figure of death.

As we know, and as Heidegger knew as well, Nietzsche's summary of nihilism is named by him a tremendous *Ereignis* both in his 1882 section "The Madman" as well as his 1886 additions to the *Gay Science*. Heidegger, in fact, quotes both passages from Nietzsche where Nietzsche identifies this death as an *Ereignis* (QCT 60). Moreover, this death of God, the summary of nihilism, is "the 'inner logic' of Western history" for Nietzsche, says Heidegger (QCT 67). This means that the history of Western metaphysics is a history determined by the tremendous event (*Ereignis*) of the death of God. Understood in this way, the very dynamics of the clearing-concealing event *would* be glimpsed in the event of the death of God.

However, Heidegger writes, "Nietzsche understands nihilism as an ongoing historical event [*Vorgang*]. He interprets that event [*Vorgang*] as the devaluing of the highest values up to now" (QCT 66). Heidegger names the event of the death of God with *Vorgang* and not with *Ereignis*. Near the end of the essay, Heidegger returns to this renaming of the event of God's death. He maintains that the "ultimate blow against God" is the identification of God as the highest *being* of all beings or "the being that is of all beings most in being," an identification made by Christian theologians (QCT 105). This ultimate blow against God is the move of onto-theology, a move internal to theology, and not of Nietzsche's announcement. Nietzsche's announcement is, after all, a *report* of "an escalating crisis of confidence that permeates (and weakens) all spheres of endeavor that

fall under the umbrella of late modern European culture.”³² With this, Heidegger calls this ultimate blow reported on by Nietzsche “the event [*Geschehnis*] of the killing of God,” “the event [*Vorgang*] wherein beings [*Seiende*] as such ... do indeed become different in their being [*Sein*],” and the “event [(*Vorgang*) in which] man also becomes different” (QCT 107 translation modified). The essence of nihilism, summarized by Nietzsche as the event (*Ereignis*) of the death of God is now re-named by Heidegger as the event (*Vorgang*) or happening (*Geschehnis*) of the death of God. Heidegger does not draw attention to his shift of language for the death of God. This lack of attention to this shift raises a few questions. Why would he not call this an *Ereignis* as Nietzsche had but instead a *Vorgang* or a *Geschehnis*? What is at stake here in his shift in language? For we know, according to Heidegger’s understanding of language, that language grants us access to the being of things and brings things into their relation with their own being. So by not using *Ereignis* to name the death of God, Heidegger must be distancing this death of God from his understanding of the event in an important way. The name *happening* (*Vorgang*; *Geschehnis*) must grant us access to the being of this death of God in a way that is distinct from what its meaning would be as the *Ereignis* of the death of God. Thus, we must look back to these instances where he renames the death of God in order to find there the disclosure of this death’s being.

We must first, then, recall that for Heidegger, the event does not indicate any particular occurrence or happening because an occurrence points to a particular thing or

³² Conway, “Life After the Death of God,” 105.

being. Moreover, determining the meaning of the event as an occurrence would be an attempt to make the event another occurrence of the meaning of beings in the history of philosophy. Yet the event is not one such meaning in the history of philosophy but names being itself. As such, the event concerns what is concealed in and along every occurrence of the meaning of beings in the history of philosophy. So for Heidegger to name the death of God a *Vorgang* or a *Geschehnis* in this text suggests that this death of God is to be understood as belonging to a particular epoch of the destiny of being itself. The death of God would, then, be an indication of a particular occurrence of the meaning of beings in the history of metaphysics. In fact, for Heidegger, the death of God marks the *telos* of the first beginning of philosophy, that is of the history of metaphysics.

However, I maintain that when we reread Heidegger's descriptions of the death of God in this text, we see something entirely different. Namely, we see that in and along this *telos* of the first beginning is the other beginning happening or essentially occurring. To see this, we must look carefully at Heidegger's description of the death of God. He maintains that with the death of God, beings and human being become different in their being (QCT 107). With the death of God, the meaning of beings undergoes a transformation or another unconcealment. Moreover, the death of God is not a punctiliar occurrence because it is "an ongoing historical process" (QCT 66 translation modified) and the "'inner logic' of Western history" (QCT 67). The death of God is not an individual occurrence but an inner, governing process over history in which beings and human being become different in their being. However, nothing about Heidegger's

description suggests why this death of God would be limited to an *historical* process rather than being something at work in and along history. In fact, if the death of God is an “inner logic” as Heidegger says, then it is more than just an historical unfolding. It is at work in the unfolding of history. Granted that the death of God for Nietzsche attends late modern European culture, but might the giving of the event at work in the history of being appear concealed in this history under different names? Could the event itself, then, be named the death of God?

Despite his attempt to determine the being of the death of God as a happening or ongoing, historical process belonging to the history of being, the death of God as described by Heidegger sounds like a characterization of the event itself. As the clearing of a space for the meaning of beings to happen at a particular juncture in history, the event is the giving in which all beings become different in their being. And in this giving, thought typically attends to the gifts of the event, the particular meaning of beings that are cleared, and not to the giving itself. Even though Heidegger does not use the language of giving, we just read that with the death of God all beings become different in their being. On Heidegger’s interpretation, the meaning of beings that attends Nietzsche’s announcement is value. In the overturning and revaluation of all values with the death of God, value determines “all that is in its Being” (QCT 102). In fact, in Heidegger’s preoccupation in this essay with showing Nietzsche’s complicity with the history of metaphysics, Heidegger too only focuses on the epoch of the destiny of being to which Nietzsche belongs. With this, what remains unthought by Heidegger is the

meaning of being itself that is at work in and along this epoch. By failing to think being itself, Heidegger fails to see that the death of God, *even in his characterization of it*, is essentially occurring as the jolt of being, the jolt of the event. Heidegger is mindful of what beings come to mean in this final stage of the history of metaphysics, but he remains unmindful that death itself is the centerpiece of this presencing, giving, or letting of the meaning of beings as value. Death, now understood as a figure of the event, remains concealed in and along the space that it opens for beings to come to meaning as value. Heidegger names the death of God *Vorgang* and *Geschehnis* because he, despite his best efforts, fails to find the other beginning at the ground of the first beginning of philosophy in Nietzsche's metaphysics. Heidegger falls prey to metaphysics while death, the death of God, or the event clears a space for beings to come to meaning and withdraws itself in this clearing. In and along Heidegger's own thinking, death as a figure of the event happens in its truth as a clearing-concealing.

CHAPTER IV

HEIDEGGER - *EREIGNIS*, THE ONTOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE, AND THE WORLDING OF THE WORLD

The task is not to bring to cognition new representations of beings but rather to ground the *being* of the human being in the truth of being (CP 68 emphasis his).

Only at the point where such an uncovering [of a thing in its essence] happens does the true eventuate [*sich ereignet*] (QCT 6 translation modified).

In the previous chapter we explored the first and most broad contour of Heidegger's understanding of the event. We learned that Heidegger's engagement with the event in his middle and later writings constitutes his attempt to think being itself as it appears concealed in the history of the meanings of beings. This more originary beginning for philosophy with the event requires thinking the truth of being itself—the essential occurrence of the event—as the truth of clearing-concealing. The dynamics of this clearing-concealing are described by Heidegger in terms of the giving-excess of the event. The event essentially occurs outside of any metaphysical determination and principle of sufficient reason as the giving that clears a space for beings to come to meaning. Yet this constitutes only the first contour of Heidegger's engagement with the event. The other two contours through which Heidegger explores his understanding of the event are the focus of this chapter. With this, Heidegger *deepens* the first contour of

the event by engaging the relation of the event with beings and the human being. This engagement concerns the difference in the ontological difference along with the worlding of the world. Most importantly, these last two contours of Heidegger's understanding of the event concern a manifestation of the giving of the event as the worlding of the world. In chapter three, I have emphasized that the event appears *concealed*—an impossible appearance—in and along the meanings of beings. The essential occurrence of the event in the ontological difference deepens this account of the concealed appearance of the event insofar as the event appears concealed in and along *being*. Yet with the worlding of the world, we now have an appearance of the event itself. We could say, then, that when the world worlds, the impossible appearance *appears*.

In order to think the event as the worlding of the world, we must understand the role that human being as being-there¹ plays in this worlding. Human being, says Heidegger, is the *there* who receives and opens a space for the meaning of beings to become manifest. Yet in order to open this space and thus receive the giving of the event, being-there must likewise have a view of the essential occurrence of the event itself. Being-there thus marks an important transition. With being-there, we see Heidegger moving from the concealed appearing of the event to the flash or insight (*Einblick*) of the

¹ In referring to human being as being-there throughout this chapter, I am following Richard Polt's account of the significance of Dasein for the later Heidegger. Polt writes, "Whereas in *Being and Time* being-there [Dasein] seemed identical to the entity man, now being-there is not a given entity at all, but a possibility for man" (Polt, *The Emergence of Being*, 156). We could say that being-there marks human being's highest possibility.

event as a manifestation of the event itself in the worlding of the world. In this way, being-there is always already in relation with the truth of the event understood in terms of clearing-concealing. In this, being-there, in turn, lets the event essentially occur in the uncovering of *a* being in its own essence or happening, that is in its own *Wesen*. The event for Heidegger, then, is the worlding of the world that serves as the essential ground on which beings come to have meaning through being-there's reception of the event's giving-excess. With this, Heidegger deepens his account of the event as the giving in and along the history of metaphysics. Along these contours, the event is metaphysics's essential ground as the worlding of the world in which being-there plays an indispensable role.

In this chapter, I unfold this fuller account of the event for Heidegger in a circular manner. First, I look toward Heidegger's account of the event as the difference in the ontological difference. This provides another account of the relation between the first beginning and other beginning for philosophy by highlighting the event as the differentiation at work in the giving of meaning to beings. This also provides an inlet for Heidegger's understanding of being-there's pivotal role. Thus, second, I look toward Heidegger's understanding of the event's *need* of being-there. With this, we see that being-there's role is to receive the meaning of beings given from the event by letting that meaning manifest. This grounds being-there in the essential occurrence of the event as the truth of clearing-concealing, which, in turn, lets us return to the relation among the event, beingness, and beings. So, third, I turn to the worlding of the world where being-

there lets the event essentially occur in the uncovering of a being in its essence as a thing that gathers a world. Furthermore, I draw Heidegger's account of the event together by looking once more at the announcement of the death of God in an effort to expound upon how death could be seen once more from a Heideggerian perspective as a figure of the event.

4.1. Ontological Difference

When Heidegger turns to the ontological difference in his later thought, he focuses less on attempting to show that beingness is not a being and more on the *origin* of this difference. With this, he attempts to think the difference as difference in terms of the event. This second contour of the event deepens his first contour by further elucidating how the event clears a region for meaning to happen. Moreover, this second contour points toward being-there's important role as the site where meaning happens.

4.1.1. A Shift of Focus: The Origin of the Ontological Difference

Following the distinction between philosophy's first beginning and other beginning, Heidegger admits that his preoccupation from 1927-1936 with establishing the ontological difference as philosophy's central focus remains mired in the first beginning of philosophy. The ontological difference *attempts* to twist free from the first beginning by insisting that "being is not a being. This is the ontological difference" (FS 48). Nevertheless, Heidegger maintains that this ontological difference is "a necessary impasse" (FS 61). Richard Polt comments that the ontological difference "can alert us to the question of being as other than all ontic questions; yet it also tempts us to conceive of

being [itself] as a universal beingness.”² In other words, the ontological difference remains mired in the first beginning of philosophy because even by maintaining that the *meaning* or beingness of a being is not itself *a* being, the ontological difference still remains susceptible to determining being itself in terms of beingness. Thus, Heidegger’s focus in his later thought on the ontological difference is no longer on showing that beingness is not *a* being. Rather, he focuses on the *origin* of this difference between beingness and beings. The “question of beyng” in philosophy’s other beginning is driven to “the question of the *origin* of the ‘ontological difference’” (CP 366 emphasis his). This origin “can originate only in the essential occurrence of beyng,” that is, only in the clearing-concealing through which “beyng sets itself off in relief over and against beings” (CP 366).

4.1.2. *Event and the Difference as Difference*

We can see this shift of focus in Heidegger’s later thinking with regard to the ontological difference in his 1957 lecture “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics.” Turning to a later lecture where Heidegger engages his thinking on being itself in relation to a particular occurrence in the history of being allows us, once more, to see Heidegger tracing the other beginning of philosophy in and along its first beginning. In and along his engagement with Hegel in this lecture, we can glimpse the clearing-concealing dynamics of the event at play. Heidegger begins, instructively, by saying, “A conversation with a thinker can be concerned only with the matter [*Sache*] of

² Polt, *The Emergency of Being*, 193.

thinking” (ID 42). We have seen, in the previous chapter, that the *Sache* of thinking for Heidegger is the meaning of being itself. Heidegger engages this *Sache* in this lecture through thinking about difference *as* difference. He writes, “For us, formulated in a preliminary fashion, the matter of thinking is the difference *as* difference” (ID 47). In seeking to think difference itself in and along some of Hegel’s own thoughts about being as the absolute idea, Heidegger seeks to engage being itself. Thus, the matter of thinking for Heidegger in his engagement with Hegel is being itself, *the event*, as difference itself.

With this, he is seeking in Hegel’s thought “something that has not been thought, and from which what has been thought receives its essential space” (ID 48). This entails releasing thinking into the “essential past” (ID 48) of the traditional thinking in metaphysics, which Heidegger notes in his own copy of this lecture is a matter of engaging the event.³ Whereas we have focused on this criterion for engaging the history of Western metaphysics as a *twisting free* by delving deeper within, Heidegger describes the character of this engagement with Hegel in terms of “the step back.” He writes, “The step back points to the realm which until now has been skipped over, and from which the essence of truth becomes first of all worthy of thought” (ID 49). The step back, like his *twisting free*, is an attempt to embark on a new path that lies at the ground of metaphysics itself. The step back is an attempt to twist free from metaphysics by

³ Heidegger’s note in his copy reads, “(*An-Fang: Ereignis*),” which indicates that engaging this essential past is a matter of thinking the event as the inceptual (*anfängliche*) origin of the traditional thinking in metaphysics (Martin Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* Gesamtausgabe 11, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006), 58fn18). The event as *anfängliche* has been addressed in chapter three in terms of the event as the giving-excess.

engaging its ground. Heidegger makes this point in his lecture by saying, “The difference between beings and being is the area within which metaphysics, Western thinking in its entire nature, can be what it is. The step back thus moves out of metaphysics into the essential nature of metaphysics” (ID 51). The ontological difference, namely that beingness is not a being, is the realm of metaphysics. The step back is a move deep into this realm to find its essential nature. In making this step back into the ground of metaphysics, Heidegger thinks difference itself as the granting and holding together of beingness and beings. In other words, Heidegger is engaging the *and* that lies between beingness *and* beings in the ontological difference.⁴ The difference itself is the between of beingness and beings. The difference itself is the giving that lets beingness presence as beingness, and not a being, and beings to presence as beings. Moreover, the difference itself is the giving of beingness and beings to one another so that beings come to have a particular meaning. Heidegger gives the name “the Same, the differentiation” (ID 65) to this difference that grants and holds apart beingness and beings.

Moreover, he describes the dynamics of this differentiation as “the unconcealing-concealing perdurance [*Austrag*]” (ID 65 translation modified). These dynamics parallel those of truth as clearing-concealing. For Heidegger says, “Within this perdurance there prevails a clearing of what veils and closes itself off” (ID 65). The clearing-concealing of perdurance are the dynamics that allow beingness and beings to presence as themselves

⁴ cf. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 179.

and for beings to have a particular meaning. With this, we come to a major difficulty of this lecture. Heidegger does not name this clearing-concealing perdurance with *the event* even though they share the same dynamics and role. As we have seen in “Time and Being,” the event as giving-excess is the essential ground of the history of metaphysics. So too in “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” the constitution of metaphysics as onto-theology “has its essential origin in the perdurance that begins the history of metaphysics, governs all of its epochs, and yet remains everywhere concealed *as* perdurance, and thus forgotten in an oblivion” (ID 68). This description of the dynamics of difference itself matches the description of the dynamics of the event. Moreover, we have seen in the *Contributions* that Heidegger’s focus with the ontological difference shifts to the origin of this ontological difference as the essential occurrence of being, which we have also seen is the event as giving-excess. Here in this lecture, Heidegger finds this origin of the ontological difference in what he names perdurance. Why perdurance is not named the event in this lecture is unclear. Yet Heidegger suggests that we should read perdurance as the event in a cryptic passage from his lecture. He writes, “In fact, it may be that this discussion, which assigns the difference of being and beings to perdurance as the approach to their essence, even brings to light something persisting throughout [*etwas Durchgängiges*] being’s destiny from its beginning [*Anfang*] to its completion” (ID 67 translation modified). This reference to a “something persisting throughout” seems even more to be a cryptic reference to the event on account of Heidegger’s own copy of this lecture. In his copy, where he has written about the

dynamics of perdurance in which “prevails [*waltet*] a clearing of what veils and closes itself off” (ID 65), Heidegger comments, “The prevailing of perdurance: event.”⁵ We can connect this comment with the cryptic passage above. Accordingly, what his discussion about perdurance has brought to light is that what is persisting throughout being’s destiny from its inceptual beginning to its completion is the event, that is, the prevailing of perdurance as the holding together and apart of beingness and beings.

We know from “Time and Being” that the giving of the event pervades every epoch of the destiny of being itself. Moreover, we have seen here that beings come to have the particular meaning they have in each epoch because of the dynamics of perdurance. With this, the giving-excess of the event and the dynamics of perdurance in which prevails the event are indissociable. Heidegger does not identify perdurance and the event in the sense of making them equal as an identity of $A=A$. Rather, he allows their dynamics to *belong together* much in the same way that the road up and the road down are the same for Heraclitus (F38). In this relation, following Heidegger’s own suggestion, we can name perdurance the concealed, shining forth of the event or the concealed appearing of the event.⁶ When beings come to have a particular meaning, the dynamics at work that let this occurrence of meaning to happen are the dynamics of clearing-concealing, which is the perdurance, or the concealed appearing of the event.

⁵ Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, 71fn93 my translation. The German reads, “*das Walten des Austrags: Ereignis.*”

⁶ I am drawing from Heidegger’s note in *Identität und Differenz* that reads, “*Aus-trag: Vorschein (verbergender) des Ereignisses*” (76fn125).

But what is *needed* for this perdurance, for the difference as difference, to endure and hold apart beingness and beings? Who is found at the site of this occurrence of meaning? Who is needed and who is found at this site is being-there: the *there* who receives the giving of the event and, thereby, makes known the meaning of beings. As Polt says, “Since things must be displayed *to* someone, without Dasein there is no possibility of display, and thus no essence (or meaning or being) in the phenomenological sense.”⁷ For this reason, we must turn to being-there who can be the *there* for this occurrence of meaning from the event to be displayed, that is, who can be the shepherd of being *needed* by the event. With this, being-there is grounded in the truth of the event as clearing-concealing.

4.2. The Shepherd of Being

With the turn to being-there as the shepherd of being, Heidegger extends the second contour of the event by clarifying the role of being-there for the essential

⁷ Polt, “Meaning, Excess, and Event,” 29-30. On account of this importance of being-there for meaning to happen, Thomas Sheehan names the *Sache* of Heidegger’s thought “the astonishing fact that with human existence sense irrupts into an otherwise meaningless universe” in order to maintain that “Heidegger never got beyond human being, and never intended to. Nor did he need to” (Sheehan, “Astonishing!” 1 and 4). Sheehan recognizes that saying this “may be a *scandalum piis auribus*,” but he insists that this be the *Sache* and focus of Heidegger’s thought in an effort to avoid lapsing into a metaphysics where being and the event ‘happen’ in some realm apart from the human being (“Astonishing!” 3-4). Sheehan is correct to want to avoid such a specious metaphysics when interpreting Heidegger. Yet in his attempt to avoid this kind of metaphysics, as mentioned in chapter three, he reduces Heidegger’s thinking of the event to a kind of transcendental philosophy focused on *a priori* structures. In depicting Heidegger’s thinking of the event as transcendental philosophy, he not only seems to misunderstand the twisting free of Heidegger’s later thought but also seems to fail to appreciate that the event understood as the giving-excess that grants meaning to beings also implies that the meaning of beings exceeds the meaning giving capacities of the human subject. This excess of beings on account of their relation to the event is addressed in section three of this chapter. So while we must avoid making Heidegger complicit to any specious metaphysics where the event essentially happens in a transcendent realm, we must also avoid Sheehan’s mistake. To do so we must see that being-there plays an indispensable role in the meaning-making of things, but this role is far from the role of any species of subjectivity one of whose *a priori* structures is the event, which Sheehan proposes (“Astonishing!,” 3).

occurrence of the event. The event and being-there need one another for meaning to happen. Heidegger's essays "The Principle of Identity" and "Letter on 'Humanism'" indicate why the event and being-there are reciprocally needed for the occurrence of meaning. The event appropriates beingness and being-there to one another, thereby making being-there the site where meaning happens in the between of the ontological difference. Moreover, the event *throws* being-there into the essential occurrence of the event understood as clearing-concealing so that being-there not only guards the concealed appearance of the event in *beings* but also lets the essence of these beings manifest from out of the event.

4.2.1. Reciprocal Need Among the Event and Being-there

Heidegger develops his understanding of being-there, who is grounded in the truth of clearing-concealing, over the course of his later thinking. In doing so, he presents an account of being-there as reciprocally related to the event. The event cannot essentially occur without the human being, but the human being cannot come into its own without the essential occurrence of the event. In this reciprocal relation, not only is the meaning of other beings implicated in the giving of the event but also the meaning of the human being.⁸ In "Time and Being," human being stands in the unconcealment of the beingness of beings "in such a way that he [or she] receives as a gift" the unconcealment of beingness from the giving event (TB 12). And human being receives this gift of the

⁸ In the rest of the chapter, I at times use the phrase *meaning of the human being* or *being of the human being* to refer to being-there because often times Heidegger talks about "human being" in his works as a cipher for being-there. In those texts, *human being* is suggestive of the highest possibility of the human being as being-there.

event precisely by “perceiving what appears” in this sending of beingness (TB 12). Beingness appears as ἐνέργεια, for example, because Aristotle has perceived what appears in terms of ἐνέργεια. Without the human being as the one who receives the gift of the event, not only would beingness “remain concealed in the absence of this gift, ... but human being would remain excluded from the scope of: It gives Being. Human being would not be human being” (TB 12). Without the human being, the gift of the event would not be received and the meaning of beings would not become manifest. Yet without the giving of the event, human being would not be human being as the there who receives the giving of the event. The event and human being *need* one another reciprocally.

Yet in order to understand the fullest scope and significance of this contour of the event, we have to follow Heidegger’s grounding of being-there in this truth of the event further. To this end, two of Heidegger’s texts are most instructive: “The Principle of Identity” and “Letter on ‘Humanism.’” These essays are particularly important on account of Heidegger’s own estimation of them for understanding not only the meaning of being-there but also the way being-there marks an important transition in Heidegger’s thinking of the event. Near the end of his 1969 “Seminar in Le Thor,” Heidegger references the significance of “Letter on ‘Humanism.’” He says that being itself *needs* (*brauchen*) being-there “in the sense that one has need of that which one ‘uses.’” With this, being-there “belongs to ... the openness (and currently in the forgetfulness) of being” because being-there is “the there of its manifestation” (FS 63). Then he says, “For

this reason the letter to Jean Beaufret [“Letter on ‘Humanism’”] speaks of man as the shepherd of being” (FS 63). Furthermore, in both his 1963 “Time and Being” lecture and this 1969 seminar, Heidegger indicates that the essay “The Principle of Identity” is the “most appropriate text” for clarifying “the question of the event” (FS 60; cf. TB 36).

Yet we find an ambiguity even here in Heidegger’s estimation of these essays. Is being-there the *there* of the manifestation of being *itself*, or is being-there the *there* of the manifestation of beingness? The quotations from Heidegger and their context in his 1969 lecture are ambiguous as to how we are to read them in this regard. As we turn to the two essays, “The Principle of Identity” and “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” we discover that this ambiguity abides, especially in the latter. And yet this ambiguity suggests that being-there is the *there* in both senses: for the manifestation of being itself *and* for the manifestation of beingness. In fact, as we shall see, in being the *there* for beings to have meaning, being-there must always already have an eye for the manifestation of being itself in and along the meaning of beings. Being-there must not only shepherd the beingness of beings, but must also shepherd the appearance of the impossible in and along the meaning of beings. We begin, first, with “The Principle of Identity” because it clarifies *how* being-there is grounded in the clearing-concealing occurrence of the event.

4.2.2. “*The Principle of Identity*”

As we have seen in “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” so too we see in its companion piece, “The Principle of Identity,” that Heidegger seeks to gain access to the event, to the other beginning, in and along the first beginning of

philosophy. So he focuses on two moments in the first beginning of philosophy. First, he takes his guiding point from Parmenides' statement, τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἔστιν τε καὶ εἶναι, which he translates as "For the same perceiving (thinking) as well as being" (ID 27). In particular, he focuses on τὸ αὐτό, *das Selbe*, or the same in this fragment in order to think identity's essential origin in terms of belong together. Identity for him does not indicate equality or unity in the sense of A=A. Rather, the essence of identity indicates the belonging together of differences. With this, he finds in the essence of technology an indication of this belonging together of being and the human being. Technology, whose essence is the framework (*Gestell*), becomes the primary path in and along which he seeks to gain access to the event. He brings these two paths together when he writes:

Within the framework [*Ge-stell*] there prevails a strange ownership and a strange appropriation. We must experience simply this owning in which man and being are delivered over to each other, that is, we must enter into what we call the event [T]he word event is now ... taken into the service of a thinking that attempts to keep in memory that dark word of Parmenides: τὸ αὐτό" (ID 36 translation modified).⁹

In and along both Parmenides' philosophical fragment and the essence of technology, Heidegger seeks to experience the event as the appropriation of human being and being to one another.

⁹ The translation after the first ellipsis comes from BF 117. Mitchell's translation of "The Principle of Identity" from Heidegger's Gesamtausgabe 79 *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge* includes a translation of a few sentences that Joan Stambaugh does not translate in her translation of "The Principle of Identity." In fact, the sentence after the first ellipsis is present only in GA 79 on page 125 and not in Gesamtausgabe 11 *Identität und Differenz*, which Stambaugh has used for her translation. The corresponding page number in GA 11 is page 45.

With this, the question arises over the meaning of *Sein* in this text. Does *Sein* indicate being itself or beingness? *Sein* must mean beingness in this essay. In language that portends his lecture “Time and Being,” he maintains that with the event, being and human being are “mutually appropriated, extended as a gift, one to the other” (ID 33). More clearly he writes, “The event appropriates human being and being to their essential togetherness” (ID 38 translation modified). In the giving-excess of the event, not only is beingness a gift sent from the event, but in this giving human being and beingness are given as gifts to one another. This implies a number of things.¹⁰ Without this appropriation to beingness through the event, human being would have no being because beings would not matter to us. The giving of the event lets beings come to meaning and thereby matter to us. And they matter to us precisely in our letting their meaning manifest. As we have seen in “Time and Being,” human being would not be human being without the giving of the event that opens a space for beings to have meaning. The being of human being rests in its receiving the gifts of the event. Yet beingness, in turn, would not manifest itself without being-there. Things have meaning and the giving of the event appears concealed in and along these gifts of meaning on account of being-there. In this way, not only does being-there make beingness its own, but beingness makes us its own. Human being and beingness are bound in an identity, that is, they belong together amidst their differences, because the event, “the essential origin of identity, ... joins the two” (ID 40). Therefore, being-there is the site where the event’s perdurance of

¹⁰ Here I am drawing from Polt’s work on the event in the *Contributions*. See *The Emergency of Being*, 51, 52, and 72-73.

beingness and beings occurs because the event appropriates beingness and being-there together.

4.2.3. "Letter on 'Humanism'"

Heidegger's "Letter on 'Humanism'" extends this significance of the belonging together of beingness and being-there by calling being-there the shepherd of being. The "Letter" is one of Heidegger's richest and most complex essays. For this reason, a reading of the essay in its entirety is impossible here. Accordingly, I focus on the passages where Heidegger discusses the being of the human being in its relation to being itself and beingness. In 1949, Heidegger notes in his own copy of the "Letter" that what he is thinking in this letter is "based on the course taken by a path that was begun in 1936 [with the *Contributions*], in the 'moment' of an attempt to say the truth of being in a simple manner. The letter continues to speak in the language of metaphysics, and does so knowingly. The other language remains in the background" (LH 239). With this comment in mind, my aim is, then, not only to highlight the being of the human being in its relation to being itself and beingness, but to do so by drawing out the "other language" at work in the background of this text. The significance of this text in this regard revolves around Heidegger's attempt to think the truth of being itself as ek-sisting, that is, as clearing-concealing, and the way the being of the human being is grounded in this through her own active essence of ek-sistence by which she lets other beings *be* in the light of being. From the clearing-concealing of the event comes the being of the human being as the clearing of other beings. Yet in clearing other beings in

light of their relation to being itself, being-there is shown to be not only the shepherd of beingness but also the shepherd of being itself. With this, the “Letter” accentuates the ambiguity of being-there as the shepherd of being. As this shepherd, being-there is grounded in the event’s essential occurrence.

Heidegger approaches this active essence (*Wesen*) of the human being in his “Letter” by means of an account of the active essence of being itself. In this regard, one passage is particularly important for the entirety of the “Letter.” This passage marks not only a high point but a fulcrum in his attempt to “attain to the dimension of the truth of being in order to ponder it ... and how it claims the human being” (LH 251). He writes:

The human being is ... ‘thrown’ by being itself into the truth of being, so that ek-sisting in this fashion he might guard the truth of being, in order that beings might appear in the light of being as the beings they are The advent of beings lies in the destiny of being. But for humans it is ever a question of finding what is fitting in their essence that corresponds to such destiny; for in accord with this destiny the human being as ek-sisting has to guard the truth of being. The human being is the shepherd of being (LH 252).

This passage is dense. So it must be taken in segments in order to unpack its importance.

Considering that Heidegger is attempting to relate human being to the truth of being itself, we must first elucidate how he understands being itself here. He names the truth of being in a number of ways. Being itself is “the clearing itself” or “the *Da*, the clearing as the truth of being itself” (LH 252 and 256). With these statements, Heidegger is concerned to elucidate the way in which being itself is the giving that opens a space for beings to have a particular meaning. As he says, “[T]he clearing first affords a view by which what is present comes into touch with the human being” (LH 253). What is

present—beings—touch the human being on account of being itself as the giving of meaning. For this reason, being itself is “the open region itself” where beings have meaning. Yet Heidegger goes further in the “Letter” to describe this giving of being itself as “the *self*-giving into the open” (LH 255 emphasis added). In giving meaning to beings as the event, being itself is giving itself into this space of meaning, that is, into the beings who have meaning. This self-giving is the concealed appearing of the event in and along the open region. As such, as we have seen, being itself is the giving-excess concealing itself in what is given from it. Beings come to meaning because being itself is the self-giving that opens a space for beings to have meaning in and along which the event preserves its own giving. The event appears concealed in beings who have meaning. Consequently, Heidegger describes being itself as ek-static. Being itself “gathers ... and embraces ek-sistence in its ... ecstatic essence” (LH 253). As the giving of the beingness of beings in and along which it conceals itself, being itself is always standing (ἵστανται; *sistere*) outside (ἐκ) itself in and along the beings. The giving of the event is characterized here as the standing-out of the event in the beings.

Heidegger relates this ek-sistence of being itself to the being of the human being through language reminiscent of the *Contributions*. He says that being itself is the “throw” (*Entwurf*) of the human being into its own ek-static essence as being-there. Being itself throws the human being into the truth of being insofar as the meaning of beings and the concealed appearing of being itself matter to the human being. No longer is being-there the thrown throw of *Being and Time* where being-there makes a

momentous, resolute decision for its own being in light of its future possibilities-to-be and from out of its own facticity and tradition. Now, being-there is claimed by being because being itself projects, throws, or appropriates being-there as the site where beings come to have meaning and where the truth of being is itself sheltered and guarded.¹¹ With this, being itself understood as the throw that throws human being lets (*lassen*) the being of human being “essentially unfold in its provenance” (LH 241).

We could say, then, that the event is the clearing of being-there and being-there the clearing of beingness and the truth of being. And this seems to be Heidegger’s point in saying that the active essence of human being is ek-sistence. The ek-sistence of being itself is the throw that throws the human being as the there, *Da*, the clearing of beingness and of the truth of being. With this, the human being is the *there* who receives and marks the arrival of beingness as the gathered sendings (*Geschicken*) of the event. And in receiving these gathered sendings, being-there also guards the truth of being itself as the event, the giving-excess concealed in beings. In this way, the ek-sistence of being-there in the “Letter” involves two indissociable elements. First, being-there ek-sists by guarding the truth of being. For this reason, we read in the central passage above that the “human being is ... ‘thrown’ by being itself into the truth of being, *so that* ek-sisting in this fashion he might guard the truth of being” (LH 252 emphasis mine). In this sense, we can understand being-there to be the shepherd of being *itself* who guards the truth of

¹¹ In 1969, Heidegger says his understanding of projection or the throw in *Being and Time* was too susceptible to the interpretation that projection is “a human performance,” which is how Sartre understands it as a structure of subjectivity (FS 40-41). For this reason, he reframes the throw in light of the truth of being itself.

being itself understood as clearing-concealing. With this, being-there ek-sists by letting the giving of the event appear concealed in the beings who have come to meaning. In other words, being-there is the *there* for the truth of being by not allowing its essential occurrence to become objectified and interpreted as another meaning of beingness. Polt's comment on the relation of being-there and being in the *Contributions* is apropos also here. Polt writes, "[M]an as being-there must establish the deepest clearing so that being may find its proper concealment."¹² Being-there must not only see the giving of the event as the opening of a space for meaning to happen but also see the concealed appearing of the event in this giving. In seeing this truth of being itself, being-there can receive the giving of the event and clear a space for beings to come to meaning in light of their relation to this giving event.

Thus, second, being-there guards this truth of being itself "*in order that* beings might appear in the light of being as the beings they are" (LH 252 emphasis mine). Again, Polt's commentary is relevant: "[I]n order to ... enable both being and being-there to emerge, we must open up a site within which beings can be appreciated as indicating the happening of being."¹³ With this, we see Heidegger's phenomenological emphasis on letting beings appear in their relation to the giving of being itself. The event holds apart and holds together meaning and beings so that beings have a particular meaning. Yet this clearing of the event would not become manifest without being-there,

¹² Polt, *The Emergence of Being*, 159. For the context of Polt's comment see §217 of the *Contributions*, in particular where Heidegger says, "The self-concealing of being in the clearing of the 'there' This concealment requires the deepest clearing. Being 'needs' Da-sein" (CP 271).

¹³ Polt, *The Emergence of Being*, 159.

in turn, letting beings come to meaning by letting them “essentially unfold in [their] provenance,” that is, in their relation to being itself (LH 241). The event opens a space for beings to come to meaning, but no manifestation of meaning would occur without being-there letting these beings manifest their essence from out of the event.¹⁴ When human being unfolds the essence of beings in this way, the truth of the event as clearing-concealing itself essentially occurs in these beings. So being-there is the shepherd of the clearing-concealing event insofar as being-there is the shepherd of beingness. To be the shepherd of being in this two-fold sense requires that being-there phenomenologically see in two ways. Being-there must see *that* beings matter to us on account of the event whose giving is concealed in the holding apart and together of beingness and beings. Being-there must see *that* the truth of the event is clearing-(self)concealing. Furthermore, being-there must see *the giving itself* in and long these beings in order to guard this truth of being. Being-there must see the insight or flash of the event—in short, the worlding of the world—as the ground on which beings can have meaning at all. When being-there can *see* in these two ways, then the being of the human being is grounded in the truth of the event, and being-there can, in turn, unfold the essence of

¹⁴ For this reason, I think Capobianco is wrong to maintain that “it is entirely reasonable to maintain that the early Heidegger [in §28 of *Being and Time*] understood the opening/enabling/giving of beings—the ‘lighting’—in terms of Dasein as *thrown-projection*. But surely this is not Heidegger’s later view as well. In his 1947 ‘Letter on Humanism,’ he returned to this matter of *Lichtung* and emphasized that the primary and proper locus of the enabling/giving is Dasein as *thrown-projection*” (Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger*, 115). Capobianco’s point is that being-there is not the clearing itself for the later Heidegger because being itself is this clearing, but he fails to see that even in the “Letter” being-there continues to be the clearing so that the space of meaning cleared for being becomes manifest. Capobianco does concede, however, that Dasein remains the clearing of *beings* in other works, namely in “On the Question Concerning the Determination of the Matter for Thinking.”

beings *as* things with worlds, that is, *as* the essential occurrence of the event. As things, beings indicate the happening of the event.

4.3. Things and Worlds

Here we come to the third contour of Heidegger's account of the event.

Moreover, here, with the event as the worlding of the world, we glimpse a manifestation of the event. The impossible appearance appears. The impossible appears on account of the phenomenological seeing of being-there when being-there stands in the clearing of the event and thereby lets beings appear in their essence as the essential occurrence of the event. With this, Heidegger achieves what Andrew Mitchell calls "his most phenomenological thought" because with the worlding of the world Heidegger is most concerned with "sheer phenomenality."¹⁵ With this concern for the sheer phenomenality of things, Heidegger aims for a phenomenological seeing of beings as what shows themselves from themselves as themselves. In other words, he aims to see beings in their essence *as* things in and along which the event is essentially unfolding as a world. No longer is Heidegger concerned with a particular *meaning* of beings but with sheer phenomenality defining their essence. The essence of beings for Heidegger is not a particular meaning (e.g. οὐσία, ἐνέργεια, value, etc). Rather, their essence is described as thinghood and worldhood. And insofar as the thinging of a thing and the worlding of

¹⁵ Andrew Mitchell, "The Fourfold," in *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts*, ed. Bret W. Davis (Durham: Acumen, 2010), 209 and 212. Though I draw heavily from Mitchell's understanding of the fourfold to explain the significance of the worlding of the world, the only shortcoming of Mitchell's account is that he does not relate the fourfold and the worlding of the world to the event. This is unfortunate because Heidegger maintains that "the truth of being" essentially occurs "as the mirror-play of the fourfold," that is, as the worlding of the world (BF 70).

its world is the essential occurrence of the event itself, then the essence of beings is the event itself clearing and self-concealing in them. With this, Heidegger's focus on beings undergoes a shift. He is, now, less concerned with emphasizing that beings always already have *meaning* in the various contexts (*Umwelten*) in which we find them. His focus becomes, rather, on how beings *as things* always already have eventiality on account of the happening of the event in and along each being. Thinghood and worldhood do not indicate another sending of beingness from the event. Rather, the thinghood and worldhood of beings is the essential occurrence of the event itself, which is irreducible to any beingness. Beings have eventiality before we show up on the scene for the later Heidegger because in and along these beings is the happening of the event as the worlding of the world. Thus, before beings have any meaning or beingness, they have eventiality. Heidegger explores this eventiality of beings with his notion of the fourfold.

4.3.1. Sheer Phenomenality of Beings as Things

As mentioned at the beginning of chapter three, this concern with a phenomenological seeing of beings has been an abiding focus for Heidegger. In his early 1919 lecture, "The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview," he relates this seeing to the worlding of the world. He states, "[T]he meaningful is primary and immediately given to me without any mental detours across thing-oriented apprehension. Living in an environment, it signifies to me everywhere and always, *everything has the*

character of world. It is everywhere the case that ‘it worlds.’”¹⁶ In Heidegger’s beginnings as a philosopher he is already attempting to see beings as they present themselves to him in meaningful contexts. For in these contexts, we are struck by the fact that beings have meaning upon our arrival. We do not have to make beings mean anything because when we show up, they already have meaning as they show themselves to us. As Heidegger says, when we walk into the lecture hall, we already meet the brown object in front of the room *as* the lectern. The lectern is the lectern before we show up. It already has meaning.

By the time Heidegger returns to this worlding of the world in his later lecture course *Insight Into That Which Is*, his focus on beings remains phenomenological in the sense of letting “what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself” (BT 32). Nevertheless, his focus is otherwise than on meaning because beings as *things* stand on their own, independent of beingness or meaning. He writes in his 1949 lecture course, “The human can represent ... only that which has first lit itself up from itself and shown itself to him in the light that it brings with it” (BF 9). Any representation of beings as having a particular meaning is derivative because each is dependent on a relation to beings as the *things* they show themselves to be. These beings are no longer the objects of the transcendental ego or representational thinking of subjectivity. Rather, these beings are things or “the self-standing [*Selbstand*] of

¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, “The Idea of Philosophy,” 58 emphasis mine.

something independent” (BF 5).¹⁷ Before a being is represented as, for example, an *object* by the transcendental ego, the being stands independent of this representation as a thing. Consequently, instead of discussing this topic in terms of our making beings our own in our various surrounding contexts of meaning, as he does in 1919, he now discusses them in terms of their relation to the essential occurrence of the event. In particular, he emphasizes that the essence of these beings is the event essentially occurring in them. By calling beings *things*, Heidegger emphasizes that their essence is the event as the worlding of the world. Before meaning (*Seiendheit*), the happening of the event.

Thus, the later Heidegger’s focus on things and their relation to the event must be spoken about not in terms of the *meaning* of things that precede us. Rather, we must talk about the *eventuality* of things as the ground of their meaning. A being is self-standing in its essence as a thing on account of the essential occurrence of the event as this essence. And this essential occurrence of the event happens as the worlding of the world through the fourfold.

4.3.2. The Worlding of the World Through the Fourfold

With this thinking of things and the worlding of the world, Heidegger provides us with his account of the way the giving of the event essentially unfolds in beings in our daily life. The role of being-there has been shown to be the guarding of the truth of being or the essential occurrence of the event. Moreover, we have seen that this occurrence of

¹⁷ In “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger similarly says that “the thingly element of the thing” is “its independent and self-contained character” (PLT 24).

the event is a dynamic clearing-concealing that opens a space for meaning to happen, that is for beings to have a particular beingness. This clearing-concealing of the event cannot manifest itself without the assistance of being-there as the site in the clearing of the event where the meanings of beings manifest themselves. For being-there to be this site, being-there must not only see *that* beings have meaning on account of the giving of the event, a giving concealed in the meaning given from it, but also *how* the event appears as the essential ground of these beings. For this reason, Heidegger explores the guarding and sheltering of this truth of the event with the worlding of the world. With this, the event does not essentially occur in a transcendent manner apart from the beings whose beingness is given from the event. Rather, we see the giving of the event essentially occurring immanent to beings without being equatable to these beings. The giving event, in this sense, exceeds the sites where it essentially unfolds. The giving is not equatable with the gifts being given from it. Yet the event essentially unfolds in these gifts, in these beings who have come to meaning, through the worlds being disclosed in them as things. And the role of the thinker, of being-there, is to let these beings unfold in their essence as *things* so that they indicate this happening of the event. Thus, Heidegger still maintains with the worlding of the world that being itself “needs [human being] in order to essence as beyng” (BF 65). The event’s need of the human being for guarding

its essential unfolding as the worlding of the world arises in the context of what Heidegger calls the fourfold (*das Geviert*).¹⁸

The event essentially occurs as the worlding of the world through the fourfold of “earth and sky, divinities and mortals” (BF 16). The fourfold is Heidegger’s way to describe the relationality of *a thing* insofar as this thing is determined through the essential occurrence of the event. In other words, the fourfold describes the relationality that attends the insight of the event as the thinghood and worldhood of a being. Each of the folds in the fourfold that are gathered together in the worlding of the world grant a thing “a place within a particular cluster of relations,” which means that the thing “is a node for such relations.”¹⁹ A world worlds, then, through things that are clusters of relations. When a thing things, this thinging is a being showing itself from itself as a self-standing *thing*. Moreover, a being shows itself from itself in this way through its relational nexus of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals. In particular, when a thing things, earth, sky, divinities, and mortals are each gathered individually to their own through their expropriation as a “separate particularity,” that is, through their appropriation to one another (BF 17). This appropriative-expropriative dynamic is what Heidegger calls “mirroring,” “the appropriating mirror-play,” “the round dance of appropriation,” or simply “the world” (BF 17-18). The worlding of a world essentially occurs through the

¹⁸ In “The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” Heidegger notes in his own copy that the fourfold is intimately related to the clearing that prevails (*waltet*) in the unconcealing-concealing perdurance. He comments that this clearing that prevails is the “prevailing of the world: event of the fourfold [*das Walten von Welt: Ereignis des Ge-Vierts*]” (*Identität und Differenz*, 71fn93).

¹⁹ Mitchell, “The Fourfold,” 210.

thinging of things in the fourfold. Each thing, then, brings with it an entire world teeming not with meaning but with eventuality, with the happening of the event. For this worlding of the world with each thing is the essential occurrence of the event. Heidegger writes, “We [have] thought the truth of beyng in the worlding of world as the mirror-play of the fourfold of sky and earth, mortals and divinities” (BF 70). This “insight” or “the flashing entry of the truth of beyng” into “that which is is the event itself” (BF 70 translation modified).²⁰

With this, each of the folds of the fourfold indicates a different aspect of this manifestation or insight of the event in the things around us. Each fold inflects the impossible appearance’s appearance differently insofar as each uniquely inflects the *Selbständigkeit* of things and the worlding of the world. In other words, each of the folds of the fourfold indicates an aspect of the eventuality of things in their sheer phenomenality.

To begin with, earth and sky each uniquely indicate the excess of things. We have seen that the event is a giving-excess because its giving not only operates outside of any metaphysical network of causes and effects but also because the giving is not equatable to the gift being given from it. Earth and sky show how this excessiveness of the event

²⁰ For this reason, Sheehan is wrong to say, “World is not a sum total of things—a ‘what’—but rather is human being itself as appropriated to sustaining the clearing” (“Astonishing!,” 10). Though, as we shall see, human being plays an important role in this essential occurring of the event as the worlding of the world, the world is not reducible to human being. Will McNeill is more correct to describe the ontology of the world as “not beings, nor the sum-total of beings reckoned together, nor a present-at-hand kosmos available for theoretical contemplation. World is Dasein-like, it has the same kind of being as Dasein itself, and constitutes the horizon within which beings first appear, as beings within a world” (“From Phenomenology to Letting Be: On the Way to Gelassenheit,” 15 (paper presented at the Collegium Phenomenological in Città di Castello, Umbria, Italy, 18 July 2013). Accessible online at https://www.academia.edu/4407677/From_Phenomenology_to_Letting_Be).

relates to its essential occurrence as the essence of beings. Earth or the earthiness of things is a reminder that the meaning of a being is never wholly determinable by us because before meaning, eventiality. The fold of earth reminds us that things stand on their own before our arrival. This is why Heidegger names the earth as “the building bearer, what nourishingly fructifies” (BF 16). Moreover, in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger writes, “In the things that arise, earth is present as what shelters [*das Bergende*]” (PLT 41 translation modified). Things are nourished by earth as the sheltering agent insofar as the meaning of the earth itself resists objectification. If we scientifically study the earth to determine its whatness, says Heidegger, “it is gone. It shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained. Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate into it. It causes every merely calculating importunity upon it to turn into a destruction” (PLT 45-46). The earth shelters and conceals the essence of beings *as* things from conceptual determination. Yet this earth is the ground on which all beings come to have meaning. The earth as this “unmastered and uninterpreted basis of experience, the non-sense that sustains yet resists our understanding”²¹ bears and nourishes things with itself. As such, beings as things abide as unmastered and uninterpreted. With earth, the worlding of the world or the essential occurrence of the event always indicates *that* beings *as* things are excessive insofar as the proper relation to them is not through conceptual determination and objectification, but through taking

²¹ Polt, *The Emergence of Being*, 201; cf. Richard Polt, “Meaning, Excess, and Event,” 38 where he says, “[E]arth is resistance to definition, resistance to discovery, resistance to sense and essence. It conceals itself at the same time as it sustains the world of sense that tries, yet inevitably fails, to interpret it.”

them in their “uncontained, qualitative appearing.”²² With this, the meaning of a being is never wholly determinable by us because as an earthy thing it is also always already related to sky.

The relation of earthy things to sky deepens this account of the excess of beings by indicating that as things they always already stand in relation to something otherwise than the human being as the measure of their essence. Mitchell comments, “The sky is the space of the earth’s emergence, the space wherein things appear and through which they shine.”²³ All phenomenality requires the medium of sky for its manifestation. And this medium is familiar to us as “the path of the sun, the course of the moon, the gleam of the stars, the season of the year, the light and twilight of day, the dark and bright of the night, the vapor and inclemency of the weather” (BF 16). Yet the sky also is “blue depths of the ether” (BF 16). The sky points to a familiar medium in which all things appear but also to an unfamiliar ether around all of this manifestation. As such, the measure of a being not only comes from the sheltering excessiveness of earth but also from a presence whose presence is precisely absent. Only when we turn to the fold of divinities do we have an indication of this present absence in and around beings.

The fold of divinities indicates that being itself is this measure of the essence of beings as things. Whereas earth and sky indicate *that* beings are excessive, divinities indicate *how* beings are excessive. The unknown element of the medium of sky in and through which things appear is the event of being essentially unfolding as the essence of

²² Mitchell, “The Fourfold,” 212.

²³ Mitchell, “The Fourfold,” 213.

the being. A space of meaning is opened by the event for beings to come to meaning, and this event appears concealed in and along the beings that come to meaning. In this sense, Heidegger says that the divinities are “the *hinting* [*winkenden*] messengers of godhood” (BF 16 emphasis added). Hinting (*winkenden*), says Mitchell, is for Heidegger “a way for what is absent nonetheless to announce itself Such an existence is a showing of concealment.”²⁴ Thus, beings *as* things resist any conceptual determination by representative thinking on account of the hinting or concealed appearance of the event in and along the being. When discussing Hölderlin’s poetry, Heidegger says, “Man . . . has always measured himself with and against something heavenly” (PLT 218). He describes this heavenly measure as the mysterious “manifestness” of “the god who remains unknown” and who appears “as the one who remains unknown” by way of the “sky’s manifestness” (PLT 221). I take this reference to the unknown god to be, not a reference to the God of Christianity,²⁵ but to transcendence in general. We have seen that being itself as the event is transcendent as excessive, but nevertheless immanent to what it exceeds. Thus, the sky as the unknown realm of dark ether indicates that beings as things have a relation to something unknown that exceeds them but is nevertheless immanent to them. The divinities indicate that this unknown realm is the relation that beings have in their essence *as things* to the event—the clearing of a space for meaning that appears concealed in and along the being. The essential unfolding of the event is this unknown something concealed in and along these beings on account of which they, as

²⁴ Mitchell, “The Fourfold,” 214.

²⁵ cf. Acts 17:23.

things, have eventiality or a ground for their meaning to occur. The measure of a being's essence is its relation to the event unfolding in the being as a thing.

And yet this essential occurrence of the event needs mortals, the final fold of the fourfold. Heidegger asks, "When and how do the things come as things?" and he answers that they do not "come without the vigilance of mortals" (BF 19). The event appearing concealed in and along a being is the essence of a being as a thing. But the *insight* of this essence, of the event, requires us mortals. Heidegger explains this through our mortality. Mortals are called mortals because only "they are able to die" (BF 17). But death here does not mean the coming to the end of life. Rather, death means the unique relation that human being has to being itself. Death, says Heidegger, "is the shrine of the nothing," and as such, death "harbors in itself what essences of being [D]eath is the refuge of being" (BF 17).²⁶ The fold of mortals in the thinging of the thing suggests that only mortals stand in relation to the insight of the event. Only being-there can see how the event manifests itself as the worlding of the world. Thereby, only mortals can be vigilant of the event's truth as clearing a space where meaning can happen, that is, clearing the essence of beings as *thinghood*, which serves as the essential ground for their meaning. Moreover, only mortals can be vigilant about the event's truth as concealing itself as this essence of beings in and along the beingness of these things. Only mortals have the vigilance to let that which is show itself from itself in its relational nexus of earth and sky, divinities and mortals. Only mortals can glimpse the

²⁶ cf. Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 290 where he writes, "[T]he Nothing thus understood as Being itself."

insight of the event into that which is as the the worlding of the world. In this way, mortals clear a space for beings to show themselves as the things they are in their sheer phenomenality: before meaning, full of eventuality. Mortals clear a space in this sheer phenomenality for the true to eventuate, that is for the event to happen.

4.4. The Death of the Other as a Heideggerian Event

This concludes the examination of Heidegger's understanding of the event. We have seen that the event is explored in three ways by Heidegger: in relation to the history of philosophy, in relation to the ontological difference and being-there, and in relation to the essence of beings as things that world worlds. Along each contour of the Heideggerian event, we have seen Heidegger emphasize not only that the event is a dynamic of giving but also that the dynamics of this giving concern a deeper account of truth as clearing-(self)concealing. Whether as a more originary beginning for philosophy, as the origin of the ontological difference, or as the essence of beings, the event essentially occurs as clearing-(self)concealing. Through this dynamism, the event essentially unfolds in terms of opening a space for meaning to happen in and along which it conceals its own giving. As we moved from the most broad contour of the event to its most phenomenological contour, Heidegger comes back each time to this clearing of the event. The event clears a time-space where meaning happens on account of the gifts of beingness given from the event. In and along this clearing where beings come to meaning, the giving of the event remains concealed. This clearing is deepened in terms of the ontological difference to show that the event, as the holding together and holding

apart of meaning and beings, *needs* being-there as the site between meaning and beings where beings can manifest their meaning in the light of the event. The event gives itself into this region of meaning, into beings, where the event's essential occurrence remains concealed. Lastly, Heidegger once more deepens the dynamics of the event with his phenomenological account of beings whose essence flashes before being-there as the event itself. The essential occurrence of the event remains concealed in beings, but being-there glimpses a manifestation of this essential occurrence as beings show from themselves their essence as thinghood and worldhood. With this, the event remains the essential ground of the history of metaphysics because as the essence of beings, beings have eventuality before they are represented as having a particular meaning or beingness.

Here at the moment when the event flashes before us as the worlding of the world, as the essence of beings *as* things, Heidegger's understanding of the event becomes a fertile ground for further developments of the event. In particular, with the worlding of the world, Heidegger provides an opening where the event can be *inflected*²⁷ variously. Heidegger does not address this explicitly, but the examples that he uses for *things* that world worlds suggests that he has seen the possibilities of different inflections of the event. I am thinking primarily of his examples of the jug and Vincent Van Gogh's painting "Pair of Shoes." As things, the essence of each of these is the event in terms of

²⁷ The word "inflection" is a rich word in the English language. It can mean a modulation of pitch in music, a change in the form of a word to express a particular function, and even a bending, especially an inward bending (i.e. a folding). On account of this richness, I have chosen *inflection* as the primary expression for the relation between the different accounts of the event in my project. Heidegger, Derrida, Marion, and myself are all concerned with the transformative dynamic that is the event, but we each offer different yet related modulations, changes in forms, or foldings of this transformative dynamic.

the worlding of the world essentially occurring in them. We would think, then, that the world would world the same for each of them. Yet when we look at the way each of these examples world the world, we find that they each world *a* world. Each thinging of a thing is a different inflection of the event insofar as a different world worlds in each of them. To see this, we must listen to Heidegger's descriptions. He describes the eventuality or thinghood of the jug in terms of its pouring of water or of wine. He then writes:

In the water of the gift [of the pour] there abides the spring. In the spring abides the stone and all the dark slumber of the earth, which receives the rain and dew of the sky. In the water of the spring there abides the marriage of sky and earth. They abide in the wine that the fruit of the vine provides In the gift of water, in the gift of wine, there abides in each case the sky and earth The gift of the pour is a libation for the mortals. It quenches their thirst But the gift of the jug is also at times given for consecration It [then] appeases the celebration of the festival on high In the gift of the pour, the mortals and divinities each abide differently (BF 10-11).

The insight of the event as the essence of the jug *worlds* not only a bucolic world but a world of festivals where humans quench their thirst and dedicate their lives for divine purpose. Yet the world of the peasant shoes is quite a different insight of the event:

From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lies the dampness and richness of the soil This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, and trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death (PLT 33).

Here in the peasant shoes the world worlds differently. The world remains bucolic, but even this is inflected differently. No longer is the bucolic world a festive one but a bucolic world of tiresome work driven by ontic-anxiety over withstanding want and the addition of another member to the family, and by ontological-anxiety over the reminder that I too am mortal and no one dies my death for me.

Thus, each time a thing things the world worlds differently, the world is inflected differently, or *a* world—perhaps, a different perspective on *the one* world we share—worlds. As such, with each thinging of a thing, we get a different inflection of the essential occurrence of the event. Each thing brings with it an entire world teeming with eventuality insofar as the relational nexus of a thing creates shifts, alterations, and transformations in the meaning of other beings in connection with it. We can see this with a wedding ring. A wedding ring is never just a ring or a piece of metal shaped cylindrically. Rather, a wedding ring *is* the day of the marriage and all that this involves as well as the celebrations, marital trials and joys, and all else that is contained in the relation between spouse and spouse. Thus, the wedding ring, as thing, transforms the meaning of the other beings bound to it because the ring *worlds* the world differently. And what might happen when the wedding ring is no longer a thing, not because we objectify it as merely a piece of metal shaped cylindrically, but because of the dissolution of the marriage or the death of a spouse? Can the wedding ring *world* its world when its world is now the world of yesterday, that is, when its world is lost, gone, or even dead? Does such a transformation of the worlding of the world indicate another

insight of the event? With this, we come once again to the possibility that the death of the other is a figure of the event or an inflection of the event through a different worlding of the world. Moreover, we are reminded of Nietzsche's words in the introduction that with the *event* of the death of God "our *world* must appear more autumnal, more mistrustful, stranger, 'older.'"²⁸ As we have seen at the end of chapter three, Heidegger is reticent to call this death of God an event. However, if we take Nietzsche's lead—and even Heidegger's description of it—by calling it an *event*, then from a Heideggerian perspective this death as a figure of the *event* would open the possibility of extending Heidegger's understanding of the event as the worlding of the world beyond the bounds of his own writings.

Extending Heidegger's understanding here would mean seeing the death of the other, even the death of God, as an insight of the event insofar as the world worlds differently after the other has died. In the case of God's death, this would mean attempting to rethink the meaning of God from out of the eventuality of God's death. In either case, this would mean that the death of the other entails both an expropriation of a world—the world before the other died—and the appropriation of a new world—the world after the death. Moreover, this would mean that the meaning of beings in the world has undergone a transformation on account of the jolt of the event of the death of the other. As we turn next to the work of Jacques Derrida, who challenges Heidegger's

²⁸ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 199 emphasis mine.

understanding of the event in various ways, we will see that Derrida extends his account of the event along these lines.

CHAPTER V

DERRIDA - FROM *EREIGNIS* TO *DIFFÉRANCE* AND THE GIFT

To come to recognize, not within but on the horizon of the Heideggerian paths, and yet in them, that the meaning [*sens*] of being is not a transcendental or trans-epochal signified ... but already ... a determined signifying *trace* (OG 23 translation modified and emphasis mine).

The gift, like the event, as event, must remain unforeseeable It must let itself be structured by the aleatory; it must appear chancy ... apprehended as the intentional correlate of a perception that is absolutely surprised by the encounter (GT 122).

We have seen that Heidegger's turn to the event takes place along three contours: the history of being, the ontological difference, and the worlding of the world with things. In the next two chapters, I take up, first, Derrida's engagement with Heidegger's understanding of the event and, in the following chapter, Marion's engagement. With this, Marion's engagement with Heidegger concerns primarily the event as the worlding of the world not as things but as given phenomena whose self, Marion says, is the event. Marion is concerned to find the event in the things themselves. Derrida's engagement with Heidegger, however, concerns primarily Heidegger's understanding of the sendings

or *gifts* of beingness from the event.¹ Derrida engages this fold of Heidegger's event precisely along the theme set by Heidegger—the gift and giving—as well along the themes of the messianic and hospitality.

We have seen that Heidegger calls the event the giving of the gifts of beingness in and along the gathering of beings in their meaning, that is, in their presence as beings with a particular meaning. The *es gibt* is found in and along a gift (*Schicken*) of meaning or presence. The aim, we could say, then, is the gathering of beings in their presence or meaning. Thus, the giving of the event allows for the otherness of a being to come to presence in its fullness. We have seen that this giving of the event is a giving-excess without why, which means that the event remains concealed or expropriated from this gathering of the meaning of a being. Nevertheless, we can emphasize that the aim, goal,

¹ This schematic may seem overly simplistic especially in light of Michael Marder's recent work on Derrida and the event. Marder provokes his readers with the thought that for Derrida "[t]he thing is eventful, the event happens in the thing itself" (*The Event of the Thing: Derrida's Post-deconstructive Realism* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2009), xi). Marder pursues this provocation to argue, as I have in my introduction, that the event for Derrida, in part, concerns a way of working beyond the dominance of Kantian subjectivity over objectivity. The event is part of Derrida's attempts to "resituate," that is, deconstruct, the *subject* and its *object* (Jacques Derrida, "Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction and the Other," in *Debates in Continental Philosophy: Conversations with Contemporary Thinkers*, ed. Richard Kearney (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 156). Marder maintains that the thing and the event dethrone "the 'primacy' of consciousness" with its "claims ... on the actual, present, real being," which as *thing* emerges not in opposition to "the subject" but "signifies non-oppositional otherness and non-identity" (xii). This brings Heidegger's thing and Derrida's thing close to one another insofar as both cannot be brought under the hegemony of the conscious subject. Marder's important work notwithstanding, the ground for this relation of these figures on the subject of things lies with Derrida's engagement with the *es gibt* of the Heideggerian event.

or *telos*, even, of this giving is precisely the *presence*, the *appropriation*, of meaning.² With his other beginning for philosophy as the overcoming and destruction of metaphysics, Heidegger hopes, among other things, to engage this *originary* beginning that grants and gathers the presence of the meaning of beings. With the hopes of in his present moment to think the possibilities of philosophy anew, Heidegger resorts to a re-thinking of the past to find the originary beginning for these possibilities of philosophy.

In contrast, Derrida is concerned with the gift as an inflection of the event in order to show that the gathered presence of a being in its meaning is allusive, perhaps illusive even, because always marked by difference and deferral, that is *différance*. The event, as the gift, does not mark the full presence of the meaning of a being. Rather, the event marks how this otherness is always caught in a dance of different traces so that its presence remains deferred. When this event as recess, otherness, or the gift comes, it must do so, insists Derrida, in “the same.” This irruption is one of transcendental violence: that which is other must, in order to enter language and show itself to us, enter the order of the same, the order of the *ego*. Yet even by entering the same, the other *as* other must remain other. The other must recede from the same because the presence of

² Though I agree with John D. Caputo’s Derridean critique of Heidegger’s eschatology, we must take this critique further. Caputo is right to critique the vein in Heidegger’s thinking that the ancient Greeks have a privileged place in the history of being because they are the closest to the “burst of lightning,” which is the meaning of being, and that the aim is “the *eschaton* ... the transition to a new beginning, a new flash of lightning,” which is just the return of the beginning (*Radical Hermeneutics*, 162 and 163). This critique leads to Caputo’s demythologized Heidegger that follows much the same route as I have followed in chapter three. I aim to take Caputo’s critique further in this chapter because what his critique does not cover is the aim of the Heideggerian *es gibt*: the presence of a being in its meaning. Caputo rightly critiques Heidegger’s nostalgia for the flash of being. I want to draw out of Caputo’s work the further critique of the *aim* of this flash of being, the presence of meaning, and its importance for Derrida’s account of the event.

the other is always deferred. Presence is thus deferred in and as recess, an excess of absence, or a givenness of recess. Thus, for Derrida, the temporality of the event is not one of originary beginning or searching for something originary because even the originary is marked by *différance*, by a play of traces. The event does not gather meaning as present and presence. The event disrupts and fractures meaning so as to keep things open, contingent, and expectant of the new. With this, the event's temporality is the messianic to-come. Derrida's hope is not to re-think now the originary past for a future possibility. His hope is, rather, that the event will have come or that the event is to-come. And it is this coming of the event as the coming of the other and the gift for which we must *now* prepare. We must welcome the coming of the other, that is, offer the event hospitality especially when it comes, as it must, unexpectedly.

Thus, whereas Heidegger's concern with the event is with an originary beginning that makes present the alterity of the other in meaning—the gift arrives as presence—Derrida's concern with the event is with the coming of the gift, the event, or the other whose meaning is always fractured and, thereby, to-come, but for which we must prepare and welcome. To get from Heidegger's event to Derrida's, we must first bring Heidegger and Derrida together to show a decisive moment where Derrida reads both with and against Heidegger in order to offer his own inflection of the event. Once we have made this transition from *Ereignis* to *différance*, we can now see how Derrida inflects the gift and the giving of the event differently in light of a different temporality that includes an important ethical impetus. With this, I argue that the event for Derrida is

not only the dynamics of *différance* but also the gift itself whose temporality of to-come prepares us for the event.

5.1. With and Against Heidegger: *Différance*, Event, and the Temporality of the To-Come

Derrida tells us that he has been intrigued by the theme of the event (*l'événement*) throughout his writings. Just before his death, he says that a “privileged attention to the event” has become “more and more insistent” throughout his writings, particularly in those about hospitality, the gift, forgiveness, the secret, and testimony.³ Moreover, in a 2001 conference in Canada dedicated to the theme of the event, he explores this theme further in his writings. But before we can get there, before we can approach this end, we must begin elsewhere so that we can make a transition from Heidegger to Derrida. At the beginning of his corpus with *Of Grammatology* and “*Différance*,” or rather in and along these texts, is where we must begin. For now that we have the ears to hear the event in Heidegger’s work, we can hear the work of the event in and along these early texts. With this, we see Derrida already reading both with and against Heidegger to approach his own understanding of the event. And this new understanding trades on a different temporality, a different temporal emphasis, namely the temporality of the messianic, apocalyptic⁴ to-come. Here the lines between

³ Interview with Jérôme-Alexandre Nielsberg, “Jacques Derrida—Penseur de l'événement Jacques Derrida,” *L'Humanité* 28 January 2004. Available online at <http://www.humanite.fr/node/299140>.

⁴ Apocalyptic because who or what is to come as well as to whom it is to come is unidentifiable (see Jacques Derrida, “On A Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy,” in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida*, ed. Peter Fenves (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 166-167).

Heidegger's *Ereignis* and Derrida's *différance* become porous as the dynamics of *différance* can be described as the event. The difference and deferral of *différance* are the dynamics of the Derridean event.

5.1.1. From Ereignis to Différance

One way to read and understand Derrida's "neographism" (MP 3) of *différance* is to read it in light of his understanding of Heidegger's *Ereignis*. With this, we find Derrida crafting his own understanding of the event with and against Heidegger. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida seems primarily to want to distance himself from the Heideggerian event. Heidegger's *Ereignis*, the "meaning [*sens*] of being" as he says in *Of Grammatology*, is another effect of the play of *différance* and not a "transcendental or trans-epochal signified" (OG 23). In this text, Derrida does not regard the Heideggerian event to be an originary, groundless ground that either stays the flux of meaning as a transcendental signified or traverses each sending of meaning. Instead, the Heideggerian event is an effect or trace of *différance*. To put this in a metaphysical and non-Derridean way, the Heideggerian event has a deeper ground that Derrida designates with *différance*. Derrida says that *différance*, then, "would be more 'originary'" (OG 23). His scare quotes in this text signify his reticent use of this language because he recognizes that the language of "originary" is the metaphysical language that he wants to avoid (OG 23; cf. MP 9-10, 22). In this way, Heidegger's event becomes another trace or effect of *différance*.

Only one year later, Derrida complicates this reading of Heidegger's *Ereignis* and its relation with *différance*. In 1968, Derrida does more than situate Heidegger's *Ereignis* as a trace. He resituates *Ereignis* insofar as it becomes a kind of model for the dynamics of *différance*. Yet the major difference between the two lies in their effect. For Heidegger, the event gathers a being in its present meaning. For Derrida, this present meaning is never gathered but always deferred through different attempts at meaning.

The place where we find this resituating of Heidegger's event is the 1968 lecture "Différance." In order to see how the event becomes such a model for *différance*, we must not just follow how Derrida himself distances his work from the Heideggerian event. We must also push Derrida's text further in order to show how the Heideggerian event is resonant in the text. His text offers its own leads for this resonance even if Derrida does not quite follow these leads. He puts us on this path of thinking at the end of his lecture where he footnotes "the necessity of a future itinerary" (MP 26n26) that would follow Heidegger's event along the history of being and the ontological difference toward Derrida's *différance*. Here the resonance that Derrida offers concerns a shared attempt to distance thinking from the history of metaphysics. Much like Heidegger does with the event, Derrida aims in this lecture to distance his neographism from the history of metaphysics. He tells us that *différance* "is not" and "is not a present being" (MP 21). Much like Heidegger's event, *différance* is not a being that exists. We are not dealing in onto-theology. Moreover, we have seen that Heidegger maintains that the event has no metaphysical essence even if its essential occurrence (*Wesung*) is clearing-concealing.

Similarly, Derrida insists that *différance* has no “proper essence” (MP 26) even if its dynamics—its essential occurrence perhaps—are difference and deferral. At this point in his lecture, Derrida provides a lengthy note in which he seeks to distance this understanding of *différance* from Heidegger. Without a proper essence, *différance* is “not a species of the genus ontological difference,” “of the genus *Ereignis*,” or of “Being” (MP 26n26). Here he does not want to align his own neographism directly with that of any of Heidegger’s philosophical touchstones. His concern with any proximity to Heidegger concerns the latter’s language of the proper: ap-propriation, ex-propriation, and property. In particular, Derrida has in mind Heidegger’s statement in “Time and Being” that “being [i.e. beingness] proves to be destiny’s gift of *presence* The gift of presence is the *property* of the event [*des Ereignens*]” (TB 22 translation modified and emphasis mine). Derrida distances himself from this passage because for him *différance* is other than “position (appropriation)” and “negation (expropriation)” (MP 26n26). For both of these terms in Heidegger’s thinking are bound up with a gift of *presence*. *Différance*, however, marks the fracturing of the present. The present for Derrida is constituted by traces so that every present, every now point, is interminably split into further “traces of retentions and protentions” (MP 13). So the constitution of the present is one of traces. This means that the present is always constituted by “a ‘past’ that has

never been present” and a future never in the form of the present (MP 21).⁵ The present, then, is never present but fractured or dis-jointed beyond repair. Thus, *différance* cannot be thought “on the basis of the present, or of the presence of the present” (MP 21).

Derrida is right, then, to distance his own thought of *différance* from the proper, appropriation, and presence. Nevertheless, this distance leaves unexplored the proximity of *différance* to Heidegger’s *Ereignis*. *Différance* may not be a species of *Ereignis* or being itself, but it certainly takes *Ereignis* as a kind of model. Derrida leaves this proximity of his own thinking to Heidegger unexplored because he seems to be wary of drawing too close to the gift of presence with which Heidegger is in cahoots. But his own explanation of *différance* can be shown to be close to *Ereignis* once we have, as we do, the ears to hear the Heideggerian event in Derrida’s lecture. With this, we can hear how the dynamics of *différance* are or how the production of *différance* is evential.⁶ Throughout his lecture we can hear these resonances with the event or follow the other leads that Derrida offers us. In particular, we can draw out this proximity of *différance* to the event by rereading three passages in light of the aspects of the Heideggerian event. Through this reading we will see that *différance* is evential in three ways.

⁵ cf. VP 58 where Derrida shows how Husserl’s phenomenology of internal time consciousness deconstructs itself by allowing retention to invade the now point of internal consciousness. Derrida writes, “[T]he trace in the most universal sense, is a possibility that not only must inhabit the pure actuality of the now, but also must constitute it by means of the very movement of the *différance* that the possibility inserts into the pure actuality of the now. Such a trace is ... more ‘originary’ than the phenomenological originality itself.”

⁶ cf. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 169 where he writes, “[F]or Derrida, *Ereignis* occupies a place in Heidegger which is occupied in Derrida’s own work by writing in the sense of arche-writing” (cf. 173). And arche-writing is, says Derrida, inscribed by *différance* (see MP 12).

First, another resonance of *différance* with the event concerns the way both Derrida and Heidegger provide a kind of organizing principle for the history of metaphysics even if both principles retain a distance from this history. We have seen that Heidegger turns to the event in order to think a new beginning for philosophy in and along the other beginning. Similarly, Derrida maintains that *différance* “organizes ... the network which reassembles and traverses our ‘era’ as the delimitation of the ontology of presence,” that is, “the ontology of beings and beingness [*l’étant ou de l’étantité*]” (MP 21). *Différance* “organizes” our era, whose defining characteristic is the delimiting of the ontology of presence, by producing in various contexts (e.g. semiology, speech act theory, psychoanalysis, metaphysics, literature, religion, etc.) a play of differences or a play of traces that, as we have seen, calls into question our everyday understanding of presence.⁷ This fracturing of the present is a moment of spacing or of “temporization” that is “without origin” (MP 13). Such spacing of *différance* is likened to a “bottomless chessboard” (MP 22). This bottomlessness and lack of origin means two things for *différance*. First, this organizing movement of *différance*, like Heidegger’s event, has no explanatory power on which it rests and depends. It is a ground without ground. Second, the movement of *différance*, also like Heidegger’s event, is without why. After all, the organizing of *différance* arises from its production of traces. And traces are meant to free

⁷ In a forthcoming work, entitled “Violence and Hyperbole: From ‘Cogito and the History of Madness’ to the *Death Penalty Seminar*,” Michael Naas maintains that these various productions of a play of differences in Derrida’s work are Derrida’s attempts to offer a kind of history of historicity or an account of the origin or history. Each moment in this history where Derrida unleashes a play of differences is what Naas calls a “hyperbolic moment.” Drawing from Naas, then, we could say that the work of *différance* is this history of historicity where each moment of a play of differences is also an event or an eventual moment.

us from cause-effect thinking because each trace is like “an effect without a cause” (MP 12). *Différance* organizes the delimitation of the ontology of presence by means of traces. And traces give no answer to why.

Second, within this similarity of being an organizing principle, we find a further resonance of *différance* with the event. The organizing of *différance* follows the essential occurrence of Heidegger’s event as clearing-concealing. Early in his lecture, Derrida describes the organizing of *différance* as the “*opening* of the space in which ontotheology—philosophy—produces its system and its history” (MP 6 emphasis mine). *Différance* is a clearing that allows for philosophy to be what it is but without being reduced to this system that it opens. *Différance* is this movement of opening that inscribes philosophy but it exceeds it “without return” (MP 6). *Différance* clears while also concealing itself in and along its matrix of differences. And yet when *différance* clears, opens, or organizes, its promise is not presence but a field of traces: a field of never present pasts and a future always to come. With every trace or difference by which a present meaning is deferred, we find the dynamics of *différance* at play. With this play of traces we find the event essentially occurring as a kind of clearing that conceals.⁸ This play of traces is the dynamic of *différance*, and such a dynamic is closely akin to Heidegger’s event.

Moreover, these dynamics of *différance*, like Heidegger’s event, work in and along the ontology of presence. For he says that this clearing or opening of *différance*

⁸ For this reason, Marder is correct to say that an event for Derrida is “the difference inherent in every iteration, replacement, and reversal” (*The Event of the Thing*, 153n61).

“traverses our ‘era’” (MP 21). He draws out this point more explicitly when he later says, “The annunciating and reserved trace of this movement can always be disclosed in metaphysical discourse, and especially in the contemporary discourse which states, through ... [Nietzsche, Freud, and Levinas], the closure of ontology. And especially through the Heideggerian text” (MP 23). Not only does *différance* clear a space for philosophy to develop its system. *Différance* also can be found in and along this history of philosophy as an interrogation of this history and its ontology of presence. In particular, *différance*, much like Heidegger’s thinking of the event, interrogates “the determination of Being [*l’être*] as presence or as beingness [*l’étantité*]” (MP 21). *Différance* is an interrogation, a reassembling, or a soliciting (Lt. *sollicitare*) that, as such, shakes or makes tremble “as a whole” (MP 21) this metaphysical thinking of being (*l’être*) as beingness (*l’étantité*). Here Derrida’s French is important for drawing together his thought and Heidegger’s. Heidegger’s other beginning for philosophy with the event wants to think being itself not as *a* being nor as beingness or meaning (*Seiendheit*). We know from Derrida’s earlier text, “Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas,” that Derrida translates Heidegger’s *Seiendheit* with *l’étantité*.⁹ Thus, Derrida’s deconstruction of metaphysics with *différance* seeks a similar path of thinking as Heidegger’s destruction and twisting free of metaphysics with *Ereignis*. Both seek to keep open the tradition and to show that in and along this tradition is the very opening that organizes it but to which this opening cannot be reduced. A distance must

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *L’Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), 200n1.

be maintained between *différance* and the history that it opens because “*différance* instigates the subversion of every [such] kingdom” (MP 22). With this, Derrida’s *différance*, like Heidegger’s event, is the most ultimate interpretive or descriptive framework through which the history of metaphysics as a metaphysics of presence not only made possible but also deconstructed.

Third, as this opening of the history of metaphysics from which it is distanced, *différance* and the Heideggerian event have a final resonance through an engagement with the ontological difference. Both thinker’s central thoughts are concerned with investigating or interrogating the ontological difference. Heidegger situates *Ereignis* within the ontological difference as the differentiation that holds together and holds apart beingness and beings. Derrida similarly situates *différance* as the differencing that produces beingness in its play of traces. For this reason, Derrida asks himself, “Can *différance* ... settle down into the division of the ontico-ontological difference, such as it is thought ... ‘through’ ... Heidegger’s uncircumventable meditation?” (MP 22). In his response to his own question, he once again draws himself close to Heidegger while also distancing himself from him. On the one hand, Derrida admits that this movement of *différance* just described “is certainly but the historical and epochal unfolding of Being [*l’être*] or of the ontological difference” (MP 22). With this, the dynamics of *différance* are the same as the Heideggerian event insofar as both mark the unfolding of being itself through the various gifts of meaning or traces. So the play of *différance* is evential. But then Derrida’s text gives us pause when we read, “And yet” (MP 22). This marked

contrast suggests that Derrida is about to read not just with Heidegger as he just has but also against him. Derrida continues that even this thought of *différance* as the unfolding of being itself is an “intrametaphysical [effect] of *différance*” (MP 22). In other words, one effect produced by *différance* in and along the history of metaphysics is this thought that the dynamics of *différance* are the unfolding of being in the history of metaphysics. But this thought brings Derrida too close to Heidegger because if *différance* just is the Heideggerian event, then *différance* gives gifts of presence. Rather than following this train of intrametaphysical thinking, then, Derrida maintains that the focus of our thought has to move from the emphasis on this history of being itself whose gifts are gifts of presence to the “unheard-of thought . . . that the history of Being . . . is but an epoch of the *diapherein*” (MP 8), that is, a bracketing or forgetting (*epoché*) of the play of differences.¹⁰ With this thought, we would then have to rethink the history of being not as the gifts of the event but as the effects or play of traces as a motif of *différance*.

With this, Derrida returns to the thought from *Of Grammatology* with which we began, but now he develops it further. He continues in “Différance” by saying that if this history of being is an effect of *différance* itself, “then *différance*, in a certain and very strange way, (is) ‘older’ than the ontological difference or than the *truth of Being*” (MP 22 emphasis mine). Here Derrida’s distancing himself from Heidegger depends on the meaning of this phrase “the truth of being.” The phrase could mean one of two things

¹⁰ At the beginning of his lecture, Derrida says that *différance* brings together two senses of the Latin *differre*—to differ and to defer—but the Greek *diapherein* “does not include [*comporte*] one of the two motifs of the Latin *differ*, to wit, the action of putting off until later [e.g. to defer]” (MP 8 translation modified). Presumably, then, *diapherein* includes only the motif captured by the verb to differ.

here. First, this phrase could mean that the truth of being is the meaning of being experienced by the ancient Greeks but that has been missed by every philosopher in the history of philosophy save Heidegger. This truth would be some *gnosis* to which only Heidegger is privy. This mis-reading of Heidegger is what I have sought to challenge in my chapters on Heidegger. In those chapters I have shown that Heidegger uses this phrase, *the truth of being*, to indicate his engagement of being itself as the event. As the event, being itself does not have a particular meaning or beginners because the event is the giving of such beingness. And this reasoned is precisely the one that Derrida follows in “Différance.” For he admits that for Heidegger, “Being has never had a ‘meaning,’ has never been thought or said as such, except by dissimulating itself in beings” (MP 22; cf OG 23). Derrida has been carefully reading his “Time and Being” and *Identity and Difference*. Thus, “the truth of Being” in Derrida’s essay is a circumlocution for *Ereignis*. As such, Derrida distances himself once again from Heidegger because of the aim of *Ereignis*: the giving of meaning or beingness as gifts of *presence*. With this distancing, *différance* is “originary,” using this word with a good dose of reticence, because the trace or the sign is not secondary or provisional. The trace is an originary supplement. We have traces all the way down, so to speak, which means at the ground of this bottomless chessboard of *différance* we have traces or signs upon signs. In and along this chessboard, *différance* is inscribed so that the gifts given are never gifts of presence, more precisely presents of presents, but gifts of traces.

Fourteen years after his lecture “Différance,” Derrida returns to this reflection on the gifts of *différance* as traces. But now, in 1982, he uses cinders or ash as the exemplary image for the trace. The cinder, as “the best paradigm for the trace,”¹¹ is what remains of meaning in the play of *différance*. We no longer have meaning in its presence for Derrida. Rather, we always already have the remains of such meaning. We have its cinders or ashes as “what remains without remaining from the holocaust, from the all-burning.”¹² In a post-Shoah world, what remains are ashes of present meaning. For this reason, Derrida says that what is given in the play of *différance* is not beingness or time per se, as in Heidegger, but rather ashes or cinders. No longer do we have *es gibt Sein* and *es gibt Zeit* where the *es* is the event giving beingness and time to one another. We now have “*es gibt ashes*.”¹³ What *différance* gives are gifts of traces or cinders that serve as reminders of what remains without presence remaining. In his concern for *différance* and the trace to be more originary than Heidegger’s event, Derrida retains from Heidegger a concern for the essential occurrence of being itself in relation to beings and meaning. But with this concern, he focuses on the giving as a giving of traces or the ashes of the present meaning that Heidegger hopes *Ereignis* would gather for beings. *Différance* may be more “originary” than any giving of present meanings and may not be a species of the Heideggerian event or beingness. And yet, the dynamics of this

¹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Cinders*, trans. Ned Lukacher (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 25.

¹² Derrida, *Cinders*, 25.

¹³ Derrida, *Cinders*, 55.

différance are evential. The play of *différance* marks there where the event happens for Derrida but without gifts of presence.

So whereas Heidegger's event clears a space for beings to come to a present meaning, Derrida's *différance* clears a space where beings never quite attain meaning in the present. Rather, their meaning is fractured through a play of traces or a play of past meanings never present and future meanings always to come. Heidegger's *Ereignis* as a giving-excess is a movement of clearing-concealing whose emphasis falls more on this clearing as a space in which beings come to meaning, especially by the naming of the poet. In contrast, Derrida's *différance* trades on the concealing of the event. If the event names the essential occurrence of *différance*, then the emphasis falls on concealment, withdraw, or a givenness of recess. And Derrida's emphasis lies precisely in this recess of *différance* because even when *différance* opens a space of meaning, *present* meaning is always held in abeyance.¹⁴

5.1.2. Temporality of the Dynamics of Différance: The To-Come

Now that we can hear the event essentially occurring in and along Derrida's *différance*, we must continue to read with Derrida both with and against Heidegger. Here the motif now concerns the *temporality* of the production of *différance*. Derrida agrees

¹⁴ For this reason, I disagree with Françoise Dastur who maintains that Derrida has not "sufficiently taken into account the *aletheic* dimension of Being in the 'second' Heidegger" ("Heidegger and Derrida: On Play and Difference," *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 3.1/2 (1995): 15). Moreover, my exposition points out what Dastur misses in her reading of "Différance." She admits that she does "not see clearly to what extent Derrida could have gone further than Heidegger" in thinking the relation between play and difference (Ibid, 17). What she misses is that Derrida goes further because the aim of Heidegger's thinking of the event, even in its essential occurrence of clearing-concealing, continues to be a gift of present meaning, a gift of presence. This aim is precisely what Derrida calls into question and interrogates. Through this, he goes further than Heidegger.

that the question of temporality, a question opened so deftly by Heidegger's work, remains important. Yet, as we have already seen, Derrida's concern with this question is not in any nostalgia for the past. After all, the past is a past that is never present on account of the play of traces produced by *différance*. The past, then, is always to come. We await even the return of the past. And yet even in our vigilance for this return, this is a past that "never will be, whose future to come will never be a production or a reproduction in the form of presence" (MP 21). The future that is to come remains marked always with further traces so that this future is always to come, never in the form of presence. Thus, the abiding modality of temporality is this to-come. As such, the temporality of *différance* as the temporality of the event is one of "messianic hope" denuded from "all biblical forms" and "determinable figures" (SM 211). Who or what is to come is unknown and unknowable. Nevertheless, the modality of waiting, awaiting, and hoping remains the *open* structure of the dynamics of *différance*. This structure is a structure where time is out of joint. Where the present is fractured into a past that is never present but always to come and into a future never in the form of presence but always to come. *Différance* opens us to this to-come because in its play of traces by which meaning and presence are deferred, we confront this to-come. Or, rather, the to-come confronts us and interrogates us in *différance*.

Through this play of differences and deferral of presence, *différance* does its dirty work of subverting "every kingdom" that seeks to stay this play of differences (MP 22). These dynamics of *différance*, as eventual, are the spacing out and the opening up of

things to contingency as well as the breaking into the status quo of that which is new and different. In this way, *différance* surprises us. And such a “surprise” that breaks into the status quo and exposes us to contingency, to that which lies outside any principle of reason, is “an event, the sudden coming of the new, of that which cannot be anticipated or repeated” (GT 146). In the dynamics of *différance*—in its eventual play of traces that open a space for meaning to happen in and along which *différance* lives and moves and has its being—we are opened to the event that is to come to which we must respond, “Come.” *Différance* is always saying *yes, yes, Come* to this to-come. Such a response “precedes and calls the event.”¹⁵ This *Come* to which we are opened by *différance* is “that starting from which there is any event, the coming, the to-come of the event.”¹⁶ The temporality of *différance*, of its dynamics, is this to-come. This is the temporality of Derrida’s event. And in this dynamic, *différance* deals out or *gives*, not gifts of presence, but gifts of traces. It gives ashes. And this giving “as expenditure without reserve, as the irreparable loss of presence ... interrupts every economy” (MP 19). Such giving gives traces of a meaning always to come for which we must say, “Come.” So as we turn further to this relation of the event and gift, we can expect to find a preparation for the event to break in with the gift as well as for the gift to be the event itself.

5.2. Event and Gift

Now that we have seen what is at stake in the movement from the Heideggerian to the Derridean event, we can now approach Derrida’s *explicit* engagement with the

¹⁵ Derrida, “Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy,” 164.

¹⁶ Derrida, “Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy,” 164.

event in his writings. In order to do this, we must follow some of the main aspects of the event for Derrida. The event is an impossible appearance that happens in secret by exceeding any and all horizons of expectation and confines of knowing or knowledge. Yet the event's appearance is always announced in terms of symptoms that befall us. Once we understand this impossibility, secrecy, and symptomatology of the event, we can follow these aspects of the event in one of the paradigms of the event for Derrida—the gift. With the gift, Derrida gives us a distinctive inflection of the event as an im-possible, instantaneous appearance that disrupts yet sustains any economy of exchange.

5.2.1. Aspects of the Derridean Event

At the aforementioned 2001 conference on the theme of the event, Derrida, in a piece entitled “A Certain Impossible Possibility of Speaking the Event,”¹⁷ covers numerous aspects of the event: surprise, exposure, unanticipatable (*inanticipable*), unforeseeable, without horizon, unpredictable, unplanned, not decided upon, unexpected, singular, impossible, and secretive. We can gather many of these themes under three major aspects: the event's impossibility, secrecy, and symptomatology. The impossibility of the event acts as the condition from which the other aspects flow. For Derrida says, “This experience of the impossible conditions the eventuality of the event [*conditionne l'événementialité de l'événement*] What happens, as event, can only happen there where it is impossible” (DE 96). His concern here is not with playing

¹⁷ This lecture by Derrida has been translated into English (“A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event,” *Critical Inquiry* 33 (2007): 441-461). However, due to a number of infelicities that I found in this translation, the following translations from the French text are my own.

impossibility off over against possibility. Derrida's deconstructive thinking always seeks to avoid dealing in games of dualism. Rather, with such dualisms as impossibility and possibility, he seeks to show how both sides depend on one another in order to be what they are: how possibility is conditioned by impossibility and impossibility by possibility. With this, he seeks to break out of the dualism into something more productive, rather than reproductive, for thinking. Thus, he goes so far as to say that "the experience of the event ... disturbs the distinction between the possible and the impossible, the opposition between the possible and the impossible" (DE 100-101). By saying that the impossible conditions the eventuality of the event, he does not mean that the event logically cannot occur. Rather, he means that the event is possible there where it is impossible. The condition of its possibility is at the same time its impossibility. Thus, he writes, "It is necessary to speak here of the im-possible event. An im-possible that is not only impossible, that is not only the opposite of the possible, that is also the condition or the chance of the possible. An im-possible that is the experience itself of the possible" (DE 101). By this Derrida is making the point that the event is not a logical impossibility. The condition of the event's possibility is found only in its *phenomenological* impossibility, that is, there where the occurrence of the event, the breaking in of the event into the status quo, does not accord with our experience, which is to say, with our horizons of expectation. The event is impossible because unanticipatable and without horizon. We cannot see the event coming on any horizon. It suddenly breaks in and surprises us.

He explains this im-possibility further with regard to his hauntology and spectrality. He says that this im-possible structure of the experience of the event is at the same time a “spectral structure” (DE 99). When the event breaks in and surprises us, “it is necessary that this will have been impossible ... this impossibility continues to haunt the possibility It may have occurred, but it remains impossible” (DE 98-99). Even when the event surprises us, it remains in this arrival surprising, without horizon, and, thereby, unexplainable. The condition for the event’s possibility to surprise us is its impossibility—that it phenomenologically does not accord with our experience—and this impossibility continues to haunt the event’s possibility. For this reason, Derrida refuses to say that the event *is* or that it *is not*. Rather, he says, “What I said of the possible-impossible is the ‘may-be’ [*peut-être*]” (DE 106). This may-be is a “category ... between the possible and the impossible” (DE 106). The event belongs not to the reign of being and non-being but between possibility and impossibility. The event may-be. Or, rather, the event is *perhaps*.

The event is possible there where it finds its limit, its impossibility. With this, Derrida points us to the second major aspect of the event—the secret. The secret, he says, “belongs to the structure of the event” (DE 105). This does not mean that the event is hidden or clandestine. Rather, the event is secret in that it “does not appear” (DE 105). And by this Derrida does not seek to preclude the arrival and possibility of the event. The event may-be, remember, which means *not* that its arrival or happening is absolutely impossible. The may-be means that the event always already remains a

phenomenological impossibility even in its arrival. The effect of such a non-appearance is that it removes the event from any principle of sufficient reason or knowing. This non-appearance of the event removes it from the realm of knowledge and theoretical speech. As such, the event remains “unexplainable by a system of efficient causes” (GT 123). He writes, “There where the event resists information, placement in [*la mise en*] theoretical utterance, informing, knowing, the secret is part of it” (DE 105). The event must not belong to the categories of theoretical knowledge or even to that of philosophy. The secret here is a “way to let the other be, to respect alterity.”¹⁸ For Derrida says that if we can define the event with “one possible definition” it would be that “an event must be exceptional, without rule” (DE 106). The event obeys no rules or principles unless those principles are “principles of disorder, that is, principles without principles” (GT 123). The event must be the other, alterity, that resists the hegemony of consciousness and subjectivity. The event as other can happen in the realm of the same, the realm of phenomenology. But when it happens there, it does not appear. It irrupts into the same *as* the other. Thus, the event is irreducible to our phenomenological horizons that it interrupts and keeps open. It appears without appearing. It shows up. But it shows up as the correlate of an intention that cannot confine it. It surprises us. As such, the event is a secret.

Thirdly, connected closely to this idea of the secrecy of the event is its symptomatology. Derrida uses this term not in any clinical or psychoanalytic sense.

¹⁸ Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, 180. Caputo makes this comment with regard to *Given Time* and *On The Name* and not “Speaking the Event.”

Rather, he says that “this notion of symptom” comes from what he thinks about “verticality” (DE 105). The arrival of the event that may-be is an arrival that “falls on me” (DE 97). He insists “on the verticality of this matter because the surprise can only come from on high” (DE 97). Without this verticality of the event, we could see the event coming on the horizon. We could expect the event. But the event is precisely that which surprises us, that which is an exception, that which is without law. He continues, “This [event] falls on me because I cannot see it coming” (DE 97). Once again this does not preclude the event from happening or arriving. The event may-be. Rather, this symptomatology of the event as something that falls on us from on high means that “I cannot speak the event in a theoretical mode, that I cannot pre-dict [*pré-dire*] it either” (DE 97). The event is symptomatological because it surprises us and is unpredictable. We cannot see it coming in or on any horizon. So when the event does happen and arrive, it does so exceptionally and singularly each time. Each time unique is the arrival of the event. As such, no structure can capture its coming so that we can prepare for it. Rather, its arrival “can only give rise [*donner lieu à*] to symptoms” that befall us (DE 106). The event manifests itself only in symptoms: without horizon, surprising, unexpected, aleatory, etc. So if, *perhaps*, it comes, it happens as a singular surprise, as “always exceptional” and “without rule” (DE 106). In this way, the event as other enters the same, the event enters phenomenality, with a kind of “transcendental

violence.”¹⁹ The event arrives in such a way that we can say something about the symptoms that have befallen us with its arrival. Yet at the same time, the event arrives without arriving. The event still remains other and, thereby, secret and im-possible.

In each case, each time the event arrives, the event’s impossibility, secrecy, and symptoms provide the conditions for its possibility, appearing, and even repetition. The event finds its possibility only in its limit situation where it is impossible. With this, Derrida’s understanding of the gift is a paradigm for the event. For he says, “There is not an event more eventful than a gift that breaks up the exchange, the course of history, the circle of economy” (DE 93). The gift “should be an event” because in breaking up the circle of economy, it “has to arrive as a surprise” (DE 92). The gift is an event—the gift event.

5.2.2. *The Gift Event*

In order to understand how the gift for Derrida is this paradigm of the event, we must understand its impossibility, secrecy, and symptomatology. In this, we must remember that the event, here inflected as the gift, can arrive but its arrival must appear im-possible. This means that Derrida has “never concluded that there is no gift” (GGP 59). In fact, as we shall see, the economy of exchange, the exchange of presents (*cadeaux* or *présents*) in the present, depends on the gift (*don*) as that which disrupts and

¹⁹ Here I am drawing on Derrida’s account of transcendental violence in his essay “Violence and Metaphysics.” Using Husserl, he critiques Levinas by saying, “[I]t is impossible to encounter the alter ego ... impossible to respect it in experience and in language, if this other, in its alterity, does not appear for an ego (in general)” (WD 123). Alterity, the other, must appear in the same, in phenomenality, for us to have any relation with or recognition of this other. Yet such an appearance of the other in the same “in which the other appears as other, and lends itself to language ... is perhaps to give oneself over to violence ... an original, transcendental violence, previous to every ethical choice” (WD 125).

sustains this economy of exchange. Rather than implying that the gift is absolutely impossible, this im-possibility of the gift means that “the gift does not exist and appear *as such*” (GGP 59 emphasis mine). The gift as such does not appear insofar as the presence “of the giver, of the receiver, of the given thing, of the present thing, and of the intention” remains excluded (GGP 65). The gift event appears there where it is impossible, that is, there where the giver knows not of her giving, the receiver knows not of the given gift that she receives. For any such identification of the gift *as such* destroys the gift by reintroducing it “into the circle of an exchange” (GGP 59). Thus, the gift “may be [*peut être*], if there is any” only there where it is *a-logos, a-nomos, a-topos* (GT 35). Without reason, law, and place, the gift may-be there where it is “the extraordinary, the unusual, the strange, the extravagant, the absurd, the mad” (GT 35). And this madness of the im-possible gift comes into relief in terms of an economy of exchange.

The economy of exchange is what occurs with our everyday understanding of gifts. In such an economy, presents (*cadeaux* or *présents*) are exchanged but not the gift (*don*). In this economy of exchange, one person has the intention of giving something to another person who consciously receives it as a present. In other words, “A gives B to C” (GT 11). Even though Derrida maintains that the gift overflows this economy of exchange, the gift nevertheless depends on this economy. These are “the conditions for the possibility of the gift” because “for there to be gift, gift event, some ‘one’ has to give some ‘thing’ to someone other, without which ‘giving’ would be meaningless” (GT 12 and 11). The gift involves a giver, a givee, and the given. Without these three, we could

not speak about giving and the gift. In other words, these three constitute the same that the event as other disrupts. And yet these three conditions of the possibility of the gift event “designate simultaneously the conditions of the impossibility of the gift” (GT 12). These three conditions are the gifts impossibility as well because the gift as event must surprise us, exceed any horizon of expectation, resist the confines of static, conceptual construction, and exhibit singularity. Consequently, the gift cannot enter the economy of exchange between giver, givee, and the given because this economy reduces any surprise to an expectation that arrives on a determined, expected horizon. The gift, then, “must not circulate, it must not be exchanged If the figure of the circle is essential to economics, the gift must remain *aneconomic*” (GT 7).

In the economy of exchange where presents are given one to another, we have a circular cycle of giving, receiving, and returning. The giver puts the givee in a place of debt on account of the given present. So the givee is obligated to give something in return. A “Thank you very much,” perhaps, which effectively completes the circle of exchange. Of course, a further thank you gift from the initial givee might be given, which would then complete the circle while simultaneously effecting the circle once more. Economy always “implies the idea of exchange, or circulation, of return” (GT 6). With this, the kind of generosity that is operative is a calculated generosity. Here the giving of presents is a kind of profitable giving. I give presents in order to receive something in return. Derrida does not have qualms, per se, with this economy. After all, he says, “[G]ive economy its chance” (GT 30). We must still “give consciously and

conscientiously” (GT 63). Yet even while we *give* economy this chance to do what it does, we must also know how the gift disrupts it because for the event to be possible, for the gift to be possible as the irruption of the new and the other in the same, this economy must be interrupted. So rather than a calculated generosity, the gift event requires “excessive generosity,” that is, a giving that gives not for profit but without return (GT 82). The gift is a “dissemination without return” (GT 100). The gift as gift is given without any need for something given back.

Moreover, these two kinds of generosity operate according to two different temporalities. The economy of exchange that is the quasi-transcendental of the gift must be overcome because this economy always works with presents that present presents. A present is always presently given *now*. Derrida’s image for this is “time as [a] circle” (GT 9). But we have seen that the dynamics of *différance* as evential operate in a temporality that fractures any such notion of a present now, thereby opening us to the event in its temporality of the to-come. This would mean that the event breaks into and out of this circularity of time and economy of exchange. The gift event must do this because “wherever time as circle ... is predominant, the gift is impossible” (GT 9). Rather than the present as a now being the temporality of the gift, Derrida says that the gift happens “at the instant” (GT 9). This instant is an interruption of the temporally present economy of exchange. As such an interruption, “this instant of breaking and entering [*effraction*] (of the temporal circle) must no longer be part of time” (GT 9 translation modified). This instant is “paradoxical” because it breaks into and out of time

all the while retaining a relation with time (GT 9).²⁰ The instant opens time for something new to happen, but as such an opening, it remains irreducible to any past, present, or future modality. It exceeds time all the while relating to time. This instant that breaks into the temporality of the economy of exchange is what happens when the event that may-be to come arrives, when the temporality of the event breaks and enters into time. Temporality finds itself fractured at the instant of the arrival of the gift.

In order for the gift *instantly* to do this, the gift must operate in secret as impossible. This means here that the giving and receiving of the gift must operate outside the order of knowledge and being known. For this reason Derrida insists that the gift is possible there where the giver does not give with any intentions of giving and the givee does not receive with any recognition that she has received a gift. He writes, “At the limit, the gift as gift ought not appear as gift: either to the donee or to the donor. It cannot be gift as gift except by not being present as gift” (GT 14). For if the gift appears *as such*, we have seen, this phenomenalization annuls the gift. The gift operates in the order of secrecy insofar as the parties involved cannot know that a gift has been given. If this gift enters the order of knowing, then it enters the circle of exchange and can no longer interrupt this circle. This secret operation of the gift that removes it from the realm of consciousness and subjectivity allows for the gift to surprise, to break in at the *instant*, and to interrupt the economy of exchange. In order for the gift to surprise, break

²⁰ An important itinerary for the event’s temporality runs from Plato’s understanding of “the sudden” in *Parmenides*, to Aristotle’s notion of movement in his *Physics*, to Kierkegaard’s understanding of repetition and the decision of faith, up through the work of Heidegger, Derrida, and the recent French philosopher Claude Romano.

in at the instant, and operate secretly, the gift must, then, “keep its phenomenality” (GT 14). When the gift appears as a gift in the present, it is annulled as a gift and becomes a present that enters the economy of exchange. The givee is placed in a position of debt. And the gift is annulled in this “ritual circle of the debt” (GT 23). So the gift cannot appear or phenomenalyze *as* gift. Phenomenality takes all our gifts making them presents. So we must give our gifts to the instant, to whom we would like to give all of them.²¹ At the instant, the gift, in short, must appear without appearing.

So Derrida insists that we must give our gifts to the instant where giving without return or excessive generosity operates in secret. Such giving prepares for the event to come. Beyond this, however, the economy of exchange actually depends on this madness of excessive giving. Derrida writes:

[T]he overrunning of the circle by the gift, if there is any, does not lead to a simple, ineffable exteriority that would be transcendent and without relation. It is this exteriority that sets the circle going, it is this exteriority that puts the economy in motion. It is this exteriority that engages in the circle and makes it turn (GT 30).

When the gift in an *instant* interrupts the circle of exchange of presents in the present, it is not only breaking out of the circle but also getting the circle moving. The gift is an exteriority that disrupts and engenders the economy of exchange. It is transcendence at work in immanence. Giving an example of this is quite difficult, if possible at all, because in order to give an example we have to expose the gift as gift to phenomenality.

²¹ This is a rewriting of the epigraph of *Given Time* that is so important to Derrida’s understanding of the gift: “The King takes all my time; I give the rest to Saint-Cyr, to whom I would like to give all” (GT 1).

We have to annul the gift in talking about it as an example. In fact, Derrida does not give us any kind of example as to how the gift gets the circle going. This difficulty notwithstanding, let's take a romantic relationship as our example. If a romantic relationship operates solely in terms of an economy of exchange—I give you this with an expectation of receiving something back—nothing new and surprising can happen. Granted that the presents given may continually become more and more extravagant, the relationship, nevertheless, becomes in this game of tit-for-tat routinized. In the end, such a relationship loses its passion. Often times one partner can even become angry and bitter if the other partner does not reciprocate in an expected way. What is needed for the relationship to thrive and be filled with passion is for a gift to break in so that they can break out of this dull desire for one another. The economy of the relationship needs to be loosened up enough “to let something new happen, to let the gift be given.”²² And at this instant when newness and other possibilities break in to the relationship, this is simultaneously a breaking out of the old pattern of the relationship.

Note, however, that this irruption of the gift need not only be something good for the relationship. This gift that breaks the relationship out of its static circularity could be either a promise of passion and desire anew or a threat to the entire relationship itself. The gift could become *ein Gift*; the gift could become poison (GT 12). Either way, the irruption of the gift as other in the sameness of the relationship opens a new circle of exchange. For example, if the gift is a promise that fills the relation with passion and

²² Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, 171. Note, however, that Caputo is not discussing love in this context but contractual relationships.

desire, the desire becomes for more of *this* desire, for more of the same. And in this desire for *the same*, another circle of exchange is created. The breaking in of the gift event, breaks out of the circle of exchange but not so as to be an “ineffable exteriority that would be transcendent and without relation” (GT 30). Rather, the gift event breaks out in order *to put into play* another economy, another circle.

With this, the gift operates not according to the operation of knowing and knowledge but in the order of *doing*. The gift belongs to an order of doing but without knowing what we are doing, that is, without “knowing who gives the gift, who receives the gift, and so on” (GGP 60). We *must* keep the economy of exchange open, trembling, a little uncertain, or a little off-center. We must keep the circle loose in order “to create an opening for the *tout autre*,”²³ that is, for the coming of the wholly other, of the event, of the gift event, “of an alterity that cannot be anticipated” (SM 81). And the gift event is precisely that which keeps the circle open to this to-come of the event. We must keep economy open and exposed to the flux of the play of *différance*, that is to the dynamics of *différance*. We must expose economy to the gift event. Yet this gift event is precisely that which keeps economy open and in flux. What is needed, then, for us *to do* the event is an openness to the event or to the gift event that is to come and promised to come at the instant. What is needed, then, is a kind of hospitality to this coming of the gift event. After all, Derrida says that “hospitality without reserve,” impossible hospitality, is “the condition of the event” (SM 82).

²³ Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, 172.

5.3. Preparing for the Event: Impossible Hospitality

We have seen that the temporality of the event, as the dynamics of *différance*, is the to-come to which Derrida's philosophy says, "Come." This call of "Come" to the to-come that/who is not identified and unidentifiable (i.e without horizon) is a call for the event to come, to arrive, or to happen at the instant. Deconstruction says *yes, yes, come* to the other that/who is to come. Deconstruction says come to the event. And this call of come to the event is a response of hospitality. Hospitality is even "a name or an example of deconstruction [D]econstruction is hospitality to the other, to the other than oneself, ... to an other who is beyond any 'its other'" (AR 364). It is this call of come to the event, to the coming of the other, that is Derrida's thematic for hospitality. Here we find an interesting ethical and political development in Derrida's understanding of the event. For the eventual dynamics of *différance* are not the gathering of beings in their presence as with Heidegger but rather the opening and spacing effected by the solicitation of differences and deferral. One of the implications of this differencing and deferral is the opening up of "the here-now in all of its urgency and absolute singularity The call of what is coming calls for action now."²⁴ We must prepare for the event. We must offer hospitality to the event, *come what may*. For as we have seen, the event as the gift that breaks in and disrupts the status quo can do so either as promise or as poison. So the call of come to the event that may-be requires hospitality to that which is without horizon and comes as a surprise. This means that we must be ready "to host and

²⁴ Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, 124.

shelter” or to prepare “for the coming of the hôte” (AR 360), but also “to be ready to not be ready ... to be surprised” (AR 361). In other words, we must be doubly prepared. We must give hospitality a chance by extending hospitality to our expected, invited guests. And yet we must recognize that hospitality extends beyond such conditions. Hospitality remains hospitality even when we are not ready or when being hospitable becomes impossible or without conditions. Our hospitality must not merely be conditional but also impossible or absolute.

So, first, to prepare for the coming of the event means that we adhere to the conditions of hospitality. This means that we welcome that which we expect to come. Derrida puts this kind of conditional hospitality in familial terms. He says that from the beginning of such conditional hospitality, “the right to hospitality commits a household, a line of descent, a family, a familial or ethnic group [to] receiving a familial or ethnic group” (OH 23). With conditional hospitality, the foreigner is welcomed insofar as she belongs to a family or has a recognizable family name. The family name conditions the hospitality extended to her because here hospitality is extended to the expected. Only the foreigner as family or citizen is welcomed because we expect such a visitation. In fact, we invite this visitation. Moreover, with such conditions placed on hospitality, the understood rule or norm of this hospitality is that the host (*hôte*) is head of the household who has welcomed the stranger (Lt. *hostis*) as guest (*hôte*). These conditions, as is the wont of conditions in general, are limitations. They limit the expanse of our hospitality insofar as they limit to whom we can extend hospitality. Conditional hospitality shares

with the economy of exchange, then, a limitation on the entrance of the other into the same. Such hospitality limits who/what can come. If you are non-familial, a non-foreigner, or a non-citizen, the rules of conditional hospitality dictate that you will not be welcomed. So when the other who has no familial name or citizenship comes knocking on the door asking to come inside, we will not have been ready for this surprise. We will not have been ready for this visitation without invitation, for this event to come.

Being ready not to be ready, then, is precisely the kind of hospitality that welcomes this coming of the event. This hospitality extended not to the expected foreigner but to the “absolute other” requires a “break with hospitality in the ordinary sense, with conditional hospitality” (OH 25). This absolute hospitality, as its name suggests, strips away any conditions on hospitality. It is a call of *Come* to the other, to any other, come what may. Absolute hospitality “requires that I open up my home and I give not only to the foreigner ... but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and ... that I let them come, that I let them arrive ... without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names” (OH 25). As such, absolute hospitality breaks with any “debt and economy” (OH 83), much like the gift. I welcome not just those to whom I owe a warm meal or a cold glass of water, in hopes that I will receive the same in return on my own journeys. I welcome those who can never reciprocate or those whom I am forbidden to welcome. Moreover, I welcome this other not simply as my *guest*. Without conditions on who I welcome, I could just as easily be welcoming my enemy. The stranger (*hostis*) as guest (*hôte*) could just as easily be my enemy (*hostis*) to

whom I am hostage. In this case, the guest (*hôte*) has become host (*hôte*) who holds me hostage. Hospitality becomes “hostipitality” because welcoming this stranger means I could be welcoming a guest or an enemy. My hospitality could just as easily lead to hostility. I welcome the other who comes. Come what may. These are the demands without *constricting* principles that guide absolute hospitality. Absolute hospitality is a demand without demand, as a result, because without any principles of order it demands “to let oneself be swept by the coming of the wholly other, the absolutely unforeseeable [*inanticipable*] stranger, the uninvited visitor, the unexpected visitation beyond welcoming apparatuses” (AR 361).

Absolute hospitality is the way we prepare for the gift event to interrupt the economy of exchange. It is the way we prepare for the coming of the gift to-come at the instant of its arrival. It requires nothing of us except to be ready not to be ready. To be ready to be surprised by “such an irruption that I would not even be prepared to receive it” (DE 96). Such an irruption, therefore, “exasperates [*exède*] me” (DE 96). To be prepared not to be ready, then, is to welcome the event to come there where we cannot welcome it. There where welcoming the event is impossible. To welcome the event means that we are not prepared for the event to-come. Saying *yes, yes, come* to the event means to be prepared not to be prepared for its instantaneous irruption into the same.

Such readiness means welcoming even the other when he is dead. Absolute hospitality means to “say yes to who or what turns up, before any determination ... whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal, or

divine creature, a living or *dead* thing, male or female” (OH 77 emphasis mine). For Derrida, death is such a powerful other or event to-come to whom we must extend hospitality that he says, “[I]t is to death that hospitality destines itself—death thus also bearing the figure of visitation without invitation” (AR 360). In a sense, then, the death of the other is the absolute visitation without invitation, or, perhaps, the absolute event. What, then, do we do when the event to-come breaks in as a gift of death, a gift of the death of the other? For the death of the other visits us without our inviting it. No matter the time frame, the medical diagnosis, or the amount of time left given by the doctor, we are never ready for the other to die. The death of the other always surprises us “each time singularly, each time irreplaceably, each time infinitely” (SQ 140). It comes without invitation. It is here, perhaps, that we find hospitality most impossible and therefore most absolute. Hospitality demands that we welcome—*yes, yes, come*—the coming of the other, the coming of the event when we are not ready for it. When we do not want it to come. There where the other dies we find an inflection of the event that is most difficult to welcome. For when it comes, “*die Welt is fort.*”²⁵ The world is gone, lost, or dead when the other dies. With this death of the world that accompanies a death of the other, the world itself is no longer the same. The world worlds differently in the death of the other. Which is to say that the event irrupts at the instant the other dies thereby *giving* a world whose meaning has irredeemably changed but for which we are, nonetheless responsible. The death of the other as the event is most unwelcome. But as other, we

²⁵ Paul Celan, *Atemwende* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967) quoted in SQ 140.

must respond, nevertheless, with *Come*. The world is gone with the death of the other. And in this absence, “*ich muß dich tragen*.”²⁶ I am responsible for carrying the other, to mourn the other, along with the world that has been lost with him. So our call of *Come*, *come what may* is the response to which we are exposed by the eventual dynamics of *différance*. And this call for the gift to instantaneously disrupt our status quo includes a responsibility to carry the other. Even when, especially when, this event happens as a gift of the death of the other, we are responsible.

²⁶ Celan, *Atemwende* quoted in SQ 140.

CHAPTER VI

MARION - THE EVENT AND/AS GIVENNESS

At no moment does the given phenomenon
wash its hands of *givenness* so as to close
itself off in a subsistence shorn of all beginning,
of temporal alteration, of *the mark of its event*
(BG 120 emphasis mine).

Eventuality characterizes all phenomena
because all phenomena, to one degree or another,
appear as they happen [*adviennent*].¹

We have seen that Derrida engages Heidegger's turn to the event especially along two of the three contours offered by Heidegger, namely the history of being and the ontological difference. Moreover, we have seen that Derrida is critical of the appropriative side of Heidegger's account of the event because Derrida finds in this a vestige of metaphysical thinking focused on presence. With Marion, we have a different yet equally as critical appropriation of Heidegger. Whereas Derrida may be said to focus on the first two contours of Heidegger's account of the event, Marion engages primarily the third contour: the event as the worlding of the world in and along things.

Furthermore, whereas Derrida is critical of Heidegger's reliance on presence, Marion argues that Heidegger does not allow for enough presence in his account of the event.

According to Marion, Heidegger's turn to the event constrains the phenomenon under the condition of *being*. Heidegger is right, says Marion, to turn toward the gift and

¹ Jean-Luc Marion, "Phenomenon and Event," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 26.1 (2005): 158 translation modified. cf. Jean-Luc Marion, *Certitude négatives* (Paris: Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle, 2010), 307, "Eventuality fixes the degree of saturation, and saturation varies according to eventuality" (my translation).

givenness in his philosophy. But Heidegger's concern with the *Seinsfrage* and naming of givenness with *Ereignis* limits the scope, freedom, and effulgence of givenness. Such limitation of givenness in its presence is problematic because "givenness broadens presence in that it frees it from any limits of the faculties And only such a liberating broadening will be able to claim to surpass the 'metaphysics of presence,' which, in fact, does not cease to *restrain* the present and to *hold back* its givenness" (RG 37 emphasis his). Marion's aim with the event, then, is to free presence from any limits so as to let it play even against the limits of our faculties.

In order to free this presence of givenness, Marion develops his account of the event through a critical appropriation of Heidegger's idea of the event as the worlding of the world in and along things. He maintains that Heidegger's phenomenology of the unapparent remains undeveloped and paradoxical in Heidegger's writings.² I interpret Marion's account of the event as an attempt to develop such a phenomenology of the unapparent. And though Marion does not use Heidegger's language of worlding and things, he develops his notion of givenness along the theme of the event because both givenness and the event concern "the arising of a world, the world" (BG 170) through

² As we shall see, Marion's interpretation of Heidegger's *Ereignis* is often times not as careful as it should be. Nevertheless, Marion sees himself as taking his own starting point from Heidegger but developing this point further than Heidegger does.

given phenomena.³ With this, we must understand that Marion develops his account of the event first and foremost by indexing it to givenness.⁴ All phenomena, insofar as they give themselves, are events for Marion because the event marks the self of these phenomena that are given. All phenomena have eventiality first and foremost. From out of this first critical appropriation of Heidegger, Marion maintains that some phenomena exemplify this givenness or eventiality in the mode of *an* event. In order for events, now understood as particular given phenomena, to exemplify eventiality, they must be received by or given to someone capable of letting their givenness manifest itself as an event. Such a subject is named *l'adonné*. With *l'adonné*, Marion critically reworks Heidegger's Dasein in light of the event as givenness.⁵ This chapter follows these three developments of Marion's understanding of the event before offering a critical reading of his preference for birth over death, *even the death of the other*, as the event par excellence.

³ Shane Mackinlay regards this passage from *Being Given* to be "a significant modification of Heidegger's account, in which the world is increasingly presented as a feature of Dasein's own self-projection" (*Interpreting Excess: Jean-Luc Marion, Saturated Phenomena, and Hermeneutics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 91). Mackinlay's interpretation can be challenged in two ways: (1) by reading Heidegger's use of "world" in *Being and Time* as more than the self-projection of Dasein because the world is also the site of facticity in which Dasein is thrown but also (2) by reading Marion's understanding of the event as an opening of the world in light of the wording of the world that is important for Heidegger's account of the event. This chapter takes up the second way of challenging Mackinlay on this point.

⁴ Both Mackinlay and Christina Gschwandtner miss this point in their explications of Marion's understanding of the event insofar as their explications begin with Book 3 of Marion's *Being Given* without addressing Marion's indexing of givenness to the event in Book I of *Being Given* (see Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess*, 79; and Gschwandtner, *Degrees of Givenness: On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 27). Though Gschwandtner does not develop this important homology between the event and givenness, she does recognize it in her book (see *Degrees of Givenness*, 23).

⁵ Gert-Jan van der Heiden similarly maintains, "Varying on Heidegger's conception of Dasein, Marion reshapes Heidegger's fundamental ontology in terms of the primacy of the gift, and Dasein becomes the *adonné*, the one to whom is given" (*Ontology After Onthotheology*, 135).

6.1. The World of Given Phenomena: The Evential Self of Phenomena

Marion develops his account of the event in his effort to salvage phenomenology from extinction. In particular, he maintains that the “horizon of being” (RG 2)⁶ in Heidegger is problematic for the future of phenomenology. He admits that Heidegger does engage givenness with the *es gibt* and, with this, seeks to develop a phenomenology that renders the unapparent phenomenal. Yet Marion regards Heidegger’s attempts in this regard to be ultimately a refusal “to think givenness as such” (BG 38) because his attempts remain bound to a horizon of being and not to givenness. So Marion aims to develop an account of phenomenology that depends not “on the question of being” (RG 3) but on a thinking of givenness and the event. From out of this critique of Heidegger, we have access to the heart of Marion’s phenomenology with his thinking of the event, which, nevertheless, remains deeply Heideggerian.

For though Marion does not use Heidegger’s language of the worlding of the world, he develops an account of the event that bears on this idea from Heidegger. The event concerns “the arising of a world, the world” (BG 170) not through things, as in Heidegger, but through *given* phenomena. Marion too is concerned to find the event in and along the things themselves, though his language for this endeavor is slightly different than Heidegger’s. Marion’s terminology for this idea of the worlding of the world is framed through givenness. Drawing on Heidegger, Marion maintains that if a

⁶ Thomas Carlson, the translator of *Reduction and Givenness*, capitalizes “Being” in his translation when Marion’s original French does not capitalize it. I have left the English translations uncapitalized to follow more closely with the French.

phenomenon is what shows itself from itself as itself, a phenomenon can only show itself if it first *gives itself*. This giving of the phenomenon, the very giving of *itself*, is the givenness, the arising, the upsurge, and even the birth of the phenomenon. And this giving of itself before it shows itself characterizes every phenomenon in its eventuality. In this way, the event for Marion is first the givenness of a phenomenon, which means every phenomenon is an event in terms of its givenness. And through this givenness or eventuality of a phenomenon, a world is opened.

6.1.1. Critique of Heidegger's Ereignis

In order to bring into relief the relation of these two thinkers in terms of their accounts of the event, I follow a trajectory from Marion's criticism of Heidegger's "phenomenology of the unapparent" (RG 2) to his criticism of Heidegger's naming of the *es* of *es gibt* with *Ereignis*. For this shows us not only Marion's (at times problematic) reading of Heidegger but also how he sees himself developing a phenomenology of givenness as a phenomenology of the event from out of these critiques.

On Marion's reading, Heidegger broaches his phenomenology of the unapparent in his effort to mobilize a kind of phenomenological reduction, what Marion describes as the existential or ontological reduction (RG 197, 204). For Marion, the reduction and phenomenological method "lets manifest itself what has the right to do so" (BG 10). And phenomenology is required where phenomena "remain dissimulated or still invisible" (IE 110). This means, in particular, that "phenomenology earns its legitimacy

by finally making visible phenomena that, without it, would remain inaccessible” (BG 68). The phenomenological task, then, is to let what is invisible or non-manifest be visible or manifest from out of itself—to let the phenomenon show itself from itself. To this end, all phenomenology is “almost trivially” a phenomenology of the unapparent (IE 111). He, admittedly, draws this understanding of phenomenology from Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. In Heidegger’s famous account of what phenomenology and a phenomenon is, Heidegger writes:

What is it that phenomenology is to ‘let be seen’? What is it that is to be called ‘phenomenon’ in a distinctive sense? ... Manifestly, it is something that does *not* show itself initially and for the most part, something that is *concealed* in contrast to what initially and for the most part does show itself. But, at the same time, it is something that essentially belongs to what initially and for the most part shows itself (BT 33 emphasis his; quoted in RG 58).

The first characteristic of a phenomenon and what phenomenology lets be seen is precisely what is concealed or unseen (RG 58). And the particular phenomenon that concerns Heidegger most in this regard is *Sein*. He writes, “But what remains concealed in an exceptional sense ... is not this or that being but rather ... the *being* of beings” (BT 33 emphasis his). I have argued in chapters three and four that this concern for *being* persists in Heidegger’s turn to *Ereignis* in his later philosophy. Marion agrees with this in that he identifies Heidegger’s 1927 articulation of the phenomenon with his phrase the “phenomenology of the unapparent” (RG 60) from the 1973 Seminar in Zähringen. We have seen in chapter three above that this phenomenology concerns the dynamics of Heidegger’s event as clearing-concealing insofar as the event clears a space for beings to

have meaning *in which* the event itself conceals itself. Such a phenomenology, says Marion, requires rendering “phenomenal that which, invisible as such, could not in any way become visible in the mode of a present being” (RG 61). Being is not and never can be a being. Consequently, if phenomenology lets what is invisible become visible, lets the unapparent being (*Sein*) manifest itself from out of itself, then this “invisible as such” will not manifest itself as a present being. Marion sees Heidegger articulating this kind of phenomenology through his turn to *Ereignis*. But Marion argues that Heidegger’s formulation of this phenomenology of the unapparent never gets beyond this articulation.⁷

Marion says that Heidegger offers a kind of last ditch effort in articulating this phenomenology of the unapparent by turning to the *Anspruch des Seins*, the call of being, that issues forth from *Ereignis*. Following the additions that Heidegger offers in his Postscript to his lecture “What is Metaphysics?,” Marion notes that in the 1943 postscript, “Dasein ... suffers the insistent summons of a phenomenon that it has not yet seen or known” (RG 185). Dasein finds itself claimed by a phenomenon beyond itself that remains invisible amidst its insistence. And this insistence is the call of being that “befalls” Dasein “through the *Ereignis* itself, namely, the last name of being, or even the name of what, for Heidegger, comes after being” (RG 185-186). I maintain that this understanding of *Ereignis* is, on the one hand, problematic as a reading of Heidegger,

⁷ Marion also regards Heidegger’s existential analytic as an attempt to develop such a phenomenology of the unapparent. For Marion’s argument on how this attempt fails because it does not develop a phenomenology of being (*Sein*) see RG 77-107.

but, on the other hand, pivotal for Marion's development of his phenomenology of givenness. As a problematic reading of Heidegger, I have argued in chapters three and four that Heidegger's use of *Ereignis* is homologous with *being itself* but not with being as a translation of *Seiendheit*. With this, I have aligned *Seiendheit* with beingness and the gifts given by the giving-excess of the event. So if Marion means in calling *Ereignis* "the last name of being" that *Ereignis* indicates Heidegger's most direct exposure of being itself as this giving-excess, then Marion's interpretation is accurate. However, Marion's interpretation of *Ereignis* does not follow this trajectory. Instead, he understands *Ereignis* to be just another meaning for being (i.e. *Seiendheit*) in contest with the other meanings for being in the history of philosophy. We can see this in two ways in Marion's interpretation.

First, in his *Reduction and Givenness*, Marion misses the important distinction between being itself and beingness when Heidegger discusses the event. Marion distinguishes between the call *of being* or being's call and a pure form of the call. What remains more originary for Marion is the calling itself or this pure form of the call. He writes, "[I]t is not a matter of being but of the claim that it exerts and thanks to which it befalls man" (RG 186). He explains this originariness of the call further by indicating that it has taken on various determinate forms: the call of being in Heidegger, the call of God the Father in Christ, the call of the face of the other in Levinas, and the call of God

in Deuteronomy 6:4 (RG 196-197).⁸ Thus, the call *of being* is a particular determination, meaning, or beingness of the more originary pure form of the call. In the end, Marion says, “Before being has claimed, the call as pure call claims The claim of being itself can call only in putting on this pure form—which Heidegger, however, persists in silencing” (RG 197-198). And this pure form of the call is the call that “gives itself” (RG 197). In other words, what is the originary call of being out of the event *for Heidegger* is just a particular meaning or determination of a more originary, pure call *for Marion*. And this pure form of the call, says Marion, concerns *givenness*.

Heidegger silences this pure form of the call, according to Marion, by naming the *es* of the *es gibt* with *Ereignis*. This brings us to the second reason why Marion’s interpretation of *Ereignis* is problematic. In *Being Given*, Marion not only still appears to conflate being itself and beingness but also does not see the homology among being itself, givenness, and *Ereignis* in Heidegger. We see this especially in §3 of *Being Given* where he summarizes some of his analysis of Heidegger from *Reduction and Givenness*. Marion argues, in part, in this section that Heidegger’s use of givenness to think being (*l’être*) is covered over by Heidegger’s turn to *Ereignis*. Heidegger aims with his *Seinsfrage* to “think the phenomenality of being, therefore being according to

⁸ This neutralization of the primacy of the call of being occurs in Marion’s exposition through the “counterexistential” (RG 188) of boredom in *Reduction and Givenness* (see RG 188-198). Marion summarizes this neutralization through the proliferation of the many forms of the call when he writes, “If boredom liberates the *there* from the call of being, it sets it free only in order better to expose it to the wind of every other possible call” (RG 196).

givenness,” but he “recoils before the originariness of givenness” (BG 33).⁹ Marion locates this thinking of and recoiling before givenness in the lecture “Time and Being.” Heidegger is right, says Marion, to think givenness in this essay in terms of the *es gibt*. And what secures Heidegger’s thinking of givenness in this text for Marion is the anonymity and enigma of the *es* in the *es gibt*. He says that we must not name this *es* “so that no proper name might lower the givenness that puts it into operation to the rank of a causation or effectuation by this or that being The enigma of the anonymous ‘it’ is the only thing to safeguard givenness” (BG 36-37). Yet when Heidegger “baptiz[es] the ‘it’ with the name *Ereignis*,” he substitutes this anonymity and, thereby, givenness with *Ereignis* (BG 37). So Marion dissociates the important homology among being itself (*Sein*), the giving of the *es gibt*, and *Ereignis*. In fact, Marion views the relation among givenness and *Ereignis* as one of opposition. For example, Marion’s concern with givenness is over whether or not givenness might “arise from itself and from nothing else—not even from being or the *Ereignis*.”¹⁰ Moreover, he says that Heidegger thinks givenness “only as a brief transition between being [*l’être*] and *Ereignis*” (BG 37). And yet he repeats this interpretation but substitutes *l’étantité* for *l’être* when he claims that “by assigning beingness [*l’étantité*] to the *Ereignis*, [Heidegger] abandons [givenness]” (BG 38). This substitution of *l’étantité* for *l’être* is strange because even

⁹ Jeffrey Kosky, the translator of *Being Given*, also frequently capitalizes “Being” in his translation when Marion’s French is not capitalized. Throughout my quotations of the english translation, I change Kosky’s translation by following Marion’s non-capitalization of *être*.

¹⁰Jean-Luc Marion, *The Reason of the Gift*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 34. This text is a translation of Marion’s 2008 Richard Lectures at the University of Virginia.

though §3 of *Being Given* is entitled “L’Objectité et L’Étantité”/“Objectness and Beingness” (RG 27), the critiques of Heidegger focus on, as just shown, the conflict between being (*l’être*) and givenness. And this passage just cited is the only instance of *l’etantité* in this section. This suggests that Marion conflates being itself and beingness in his reading of Heidegger. So not only does Marion want to separate being itself, givenness, and *Ereignis* as different foci of Heidegger’s thinking but also conflates being itself and beingness.

As I have shown in chapters three and four, understanding this distinction between being and beingness is pivotal for understanding Heidegger’s account of the event in which being itself is thought as a giving-excess by turning to the theme of *Ereignis*. Where I have found a complex or dynamic unity of terms for Heidegger’s thinking of the event, Marion finds a disjunctive changing of ideas. We can see, then, that Marion interprets *Ereignis* by *mis*interpreting it in the way that I warn against in chapters three and four. Marion seems to think that Heidegger has a “hermeneutical secret”¹¹—a secret name or *meaning* of being—that all in the history of philosophy have missed save himself. I have argued in chapters three and four, however, that Heidegger is not interested in picking a new meaning of being but in picking “out the rule which organizes the various entries in the contest” for the meaning of being.¹² Consequently, if we align the reading of Heidegger given in chapters three and four above, particularly chapter four, with an account of Marion’s phenomenology of givenness, we can see how

¹¹ Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 174.

¹² Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 174.

Marion's phenomenology remains deeply Heideggerian and is even, perhaps, a reworking of Heidegger's phenomenology of the unapparent.

6.1.2. *Phenomenology of Givenness as a Phenomenology of the Event*

Despite Marion's problematic reading of *Ereignis* in Heidegger's philosophy, this reading proves to be pivotal for the development of his own phenomenology of givenness. In fact, we have glimpsed the beginning of this development with Marion's account of the pure form of the call. Being, for Marion, gives way to the call itself, that is, the pure form of the call. Being, then, is no longer the central focus but the call that gives itself or that exposes us to givenness itself. In fact, the entirety of *Reduction and Givenness* builds to this phenomenological reduction to the call and to givenness itself. Marion's motto for this text, then, becomes his famous line "so much reduction, so much givenness" (RG 203). He argues that both Husserl's transcendental reduction and Heidegger's ontological reduction are reductions of givenness. Yet the mode of givenness or the horizon of Husserl's reduction is "objectivity" in regional ontologies while Heidegger's is "being itself" (RG 204). These horizons effectively limit *how* givenness gives itself. Givenness can only give itself as either an object of consciousness or as that which has to be. Marion's third reduction, the reduction of the "pure form of the call" gives "the gift itself" in the mode of "the absolutely unconditioned call" (RG 204).

This exposure to givenness itself in the pure form of the call is simultaneously an exposure to the event. For Marion says that this call "intervenes as such, without or

before any other ‘message’ than *to surprise* the one who hears it, to grab even the one who *does not expect it*” (RG 197 emphasis mine). And this surprise of the unexpected call comes from “an absolutely foreign place and *event*,” which precludes “any pretension of a subject to constitute, reconstitute, or decide on what surprises it” (RG 201 emphasis mine). The call that gives itself, thereby exposing givenness, arises from an event. Givenness arises from an event. This is the insight with which Marion ends *Reduction and Givenness*. His attempts to go beyond Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology in this text by offering a phenomenological reduction to givenness that is operative in and along the reductions mobilized by Husserl and Heidegger, leave us with the pure form of the call as an exposure of givenness in an event. His motto—“so much reduction, so much givenness” (RG 203)—indicates that the further *back* we go in the reduction, the more givenness to which we expose ourselves. And when the reduction goes back to this pure form of the call, we have an exposure to givenness itself. No longer filtered through objectivity, being, beingness, or even *Ereignis*, as interpreted by Marion, we are exposed to givenness arising from an event. When Marion furthers this project of thinking givenness through phenomenology in *Being Given*, we see an important development in his thinking. No longer does givenness appear *from* an event. Givenness gives itself *as* an event.

When Marion introduces his project in *Being Given*, he indicates how he expands upon the phenomenological developments and shortcomings of Husserl and, in particular, Heidegger. As he points out in a short meditation on the title *État Donné!*

Being Given, the “being” of this title is to be read as an auxiliary verb. The French *étant* is the present participle of the verb to be (*être*). With this, no longer is the abiding question the question of being (*être*) because “‘being’ [*étant*] is preparation for ‘given’ ... ‘being’ posits the fact of the ‘given’ and is entirely de-positated therein” (BG 2). Being is, in this way, always underway in a particular given that is “organized in terms of givenness” (BG 2).¹³ Thus, in “one and the same move, the given earns its givenness, and being [*l’être*] (verbal being [*étant verbal*]) disappears in its enactment therein” (BG 2). So the concern is no longer with the being of beings, but with their givenness as givens. He is concerned with givenness *in and along* particular givens. In other words, his concern remains ontological only insofar as the focus is on *being given*, that is, on the unfolding of givenness *in and along* a particular given.

Here we can already see some formal similarities with Heidegger. Much in the same way that Heidegger is concerned with the happening of the event in and along particular things, as the worlding of the world, Marion is concerned with givenness in and along a given.¹⁴ Marion writes, “Givenness can appear only indirectly, in the fold of the given It therefore should be read starting from and on the surface of a given” (BG 39). We might even go so far as to say that Marion’s phenomenology of givenness,

¹³ cf. “Being [*être*] should henceforth be thought according to the determinations of the incident,” that is, according to the very arising of givenness (BG 156).

¹⁴ In an innovative reading of Heidegger’s essays “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics” and “Time and Being,” Marion puts his point this way, “The question thus does not consist in reverting from the given to the giver, but in letting appear even in the gift ultimately given ... the advancing *process of its coming-over* [*Überkommnis*] At issue would be the suspending of the gift given, so that it would allow the *process of its givenness* ... to appear in its own mode” (Marion, *The Reason of the Gift*, 82 emphasis mine).

insofar as givenness appears *indirectly* in and along a given, is a phenomenology of the *unapparent*. Moreover, this unapparent appearance of givenness in and along a given “remains withdrawn, held in reserve, in the background, dissimulated by its given; it thus never appears as such, therefore especially not as a being, a substance, or a subject” (BG 60). The similarities with Heidegger are quite apparent. For Heidegger, a being appears with a particular beingness or meaning, but this coming to meaning is cleared by the eventuality of the being. And this eventuality remains withdrawn or ex-appropriated; its insight is an appearance of the impossible with the worlding of the world. Here in this relation among givenness and a given we find Marion’s *first* development of his understanding of the event.¹⁵ This development deepens the formal similarity between Heidegger’s phenomenology of the unapparent and Marion’s phenomenology of givenness. In particular, Marion develops his account of the event with, first, a concern for the things themselves, and, second, through a homology of givenness, phenomenality, and the event.

First, by turning to givenness in and along a given, Marion sees himself as developing phenomenology further without losing its abiding concern for the things themselves, that is for phenomena. With this, he follows both Husserl and Heidegger’s definitions of a phenomenon. If Heidegger’s definition of a phenomenon is correct, which Marion thinks that it is, then the *self* of a phenomenon as what shows itself can only do so insofar as it first gives itself. Marion’s “one and only theme” is this idea that

¹⁵ This is the point that both Mackinlay and Gschwandtner miss in their accounts of Marion’s understanding of the event.

what “shows itself first gives itself” (BG 5).¹⁶ He insists on this distinction between the giving and showing of the phenomenon because only by focusing on the giving do we engage the thing itself from out of itself. In other words, only through givenness can the phenomenon be encountered on the phenomenon’s terms and not on the terms of the subject gazing at it. His focus is not on the way in which we perceive an appearance or phenomenon but on the very apparition of this appearance. He wants to let “appearances appear in such a way that they accomplish their own apparition, so as to be received exactly as they give themselves” (BG 7). In other words, the phenomenon’s showing of itself rests on the very apparition of the phenomenon that is more originary than its showing. With this, Marion utilizes Husserl’s definition of the phenomenon.¹⁷ He notes that when Husserl defines the phenomenon, he distinguishes between the appearing and that which appears. Marion writes, quoting Husserl, “‘The word phenomenon is ambiguous in virtue of the essential correlation between appearing [*Erscheinen*] and that which appears [*Ercheinenden*],’ a correlation that opens onto ‘two absolute givennesses, the givenness of the appearing and the givenness of the object’” (BG 68-69).¹⁸ For Marion, Husserl’s important insight in this passage is that givenness wholly determines

¹⁶ This distinction between giving and showing is, as we shall see at the end of section two of this chapter, an important one to maintain when reading Marion. For now the focus is on the giving, but in section three, the focus will expand to the showing. In short, givenness happens without any “subject,” but showing requires the “subject.”

¹⁷ Marion also uses Husserl’s definition of the phenomenon because on Marion’s reading, Heidegger does not think the *self* of the phenomenon in terms of givenness but Husserl does broach this topic. Yet Marion wants to take Husserl’s account further.

¹⁸ cf. Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. Lee Hardy (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 67: “The phenomenon . . . requires a distinction within immanence between the *appearance* and *that which appears*. Thus, we have two forms of absolute givenness, the givenness of the appearing and the givenness of the object” (emphasis his).

the phenomenon. With this, the “fold of givenness” for Marion concerns both the appearing and that which appears (BG 69). Or the fold of givenness, following the French *donation*, includes both the act of giving and “the gift made” (BG 62), that is givenness itself and the given. This means that a given and its givenness are, then, “certainly not identified, but” a given “without givenness cannot be thought or appear” (BG 64). Moreover, givenness is not an added “ambiguous background” of the given; rather, givenness “marks the happening that offers [the given] to itself” (BG 64). In this way, following Husserl and Heidegger, Marion’s phenomenological concern with givenness concerns the phenomena themselves.

Furthermore, this concern with givenness as the happening of phenomena encapsulates Marion’s primary concern with the event. With this, we see that Marion develops his account of the event through a homology among givenness, phenomenality, and the event. We have already seen the first aspect of this homology: the indirect appearance of givenness “in the fold of the given” or the unapparent givenness in and along “a given” (BG 39). This engagement with the fold of givenness is also an engagement with the phenomenality of phenomena, with the way in which they appear, because the “decision about givenness is equivalent to a decision about the phenomenality of phenomena” (BG 19).

In order to unfold this homology further, Marion turns to the phenomenality of the painting in order to show that the givenness or phenomenality of a phenomenon is determined in its *eventiality*. Though he focuses on the painting, he regards his

description of its phenomenality, givenness, or eventuality to be a general description of all phenomena. He writes, “The painting (*and, in and through it, every other phenomenon in different degrees*) is reduced to its ultimate phenomenality,” which is to say, as we shall soon see, every phenomenon reduces to its eventuality (BG 51-52 emphasis mine).¹⁹ The phenomenality of the painting is not reducible to its “subsistence” (e.g. *Vorhandenheit*) nor to its manipulability (e.g. *Zuhandenheit*) because the painting does not have its givenness or does not give itself through subsisting or manipulation (BG 40-45). The painting in its phenomenality or its givenness cannot be reduced to its existence, thingliness, beingness, or to its being a being (BG 45-47). Rather, its phenomenality or givenness is its being exposed or exhibited. The painting, “like every phenomenon” (BG 49), does not give itself as an object nor as a being. Rather, the painting “accomplishes an act—it comes forward into visibility” (BG 49). Its phenomenality is this “event [*l’événement*] of its apparition in person” (BG 47).²⁰ The phenomenality of the painting shows that givenness, phenomenality, and the event are homologous for Marion. And this homology runs throughout many of his texts: every phenomenon has a “hidden eventuality [*évenementialité*]”²¹ or an “originally evential [*évenementiel*] character ... insofar as first it gives itself before showing itself” (IE 52 translation modified). Moreover, the “original phenomenality” of any phenomenon is

¹⁹ As Gschwandtner argues, Marion may broach this topic of degrees of givenness in his work, but he does not develop it enough, at least he does not make developing this notion one of his main concerns.

²⁰ cf. IE 48 where Marion equates the self-giving of phenomena with the event: “the event where they give themselves.”

²¹ Jean-Luc Marion, *Givenness and Hermeneutics*, trans. Jean-Pierre LaFouge (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2012), 63 translation modified.

“governed completely by eventiality” (IE 36 translation modified). And he describes this eventiality as the happening of the given, “its upsurge” (BG 47), insofar as it is the imposition of the given’s visibility. Such a “deployment of the visible” is, once again, “the emergence of the event.”²² So the event is the apparition of the given’s unapparent givenness. And this apparition requires not “seeing what [the given] is, but of seeing it coming up into visibility” (BG 48). The phenomenality, givenness, or event of the given is this upsurge or arising into visibility: “the event of the visible happening” (BG 49). Thus, every phenomenon is an event because each is given, reduced to givenness, or determined by its givenness. This upsurge of the given is its eventiality as its “advance of givenness” (BG 52).²³

Considering that Marion’s one theme is that what shows *itself* first gives *itself*, when he engages this upsurge of the phenomenon in and as an event, he maintains that he is engaging the self of the phenomenon. This means that he is engaging what is most originary about the phenomenon or what excludes any “role of subjectivity in phenomenality.”²⁴ And this self as “the event of what shows itself” is “marked in its determination as event” (BG 159; cf. IE 30-31). As such, the givenness “inscribed” *in and along* each given as its “coming forward” or “arising” means that a given “already bear[s] the mark of the event” (BG 64, 65). This eventiality is the determination of any

²² Marion, “Phenomenon and Event,” 151-152.

²³ cf. Marion’s aligning of eventiality and givenness in the following passage, “To really dispense with givenness, one would have to demonstrate . . . that a subsisting phenomenon can appear without bearing any mark of its eventiality [*évenementialité*], therefore without any given character that would fold it back into givenness” (BG 65-66 translation modified).

²⁴ Mackinlay, *Interpreting Excess*, 18.

phenomenon reduced to givenness. And this particular characteristic “gathers together” the other characteristics of a phenomenon determined in its givenness (BG 162).

6.1.3. Eventuality Determines All Given Phenomena

To begin with, Marion maintains that the determinations or characteristics of givenness are five-fold: anamorphosis, unpredictable landing, *fait accompli*, incident, and event. Marion says that the event includes the other four characteristics, but he does not directly show how this is the case. In what follows, I trace the presence of the other four characteristics in a given phenomenon’s eventuality. In other words, I show how the phenomenon as event arises from itself (anamorphosis) first as an incident and establishes itself as a fact imposed on me (*fait accompli*) all the while arriving unpredictably. This approach allows us to see most fully how each phenomena is an event.

As we have seen, givenness and eventuality are used homologously by Marion to indicate the given phenomenon’s rising into visibility. The first characteristic of a given phenomenon, anamorphosis, further describes this arising of the phenomenon in its eventuality. He defines anamorphosis by focusing on the elsewhere and contingency of a given phenomenon. First, the given phenomenon arises from an “elsewhere” because its arising occurs freely and autonomously without us (BG 122-123). The giving of the phenomenon occurs without any subject or without any a priori conditions limiting it. Moreover, this anamorphosis means that the “phenomenon crosses the distance [of the elsewhere] that leads it (ana-) to assume form (-morphosis)” (BG 131). The given

phenomena rises into visibility or assumes form on its own accord. Second, anamorphosis is defined by contingency. Here Marion draws upon both the Latin (*contingint*) and German (*zufällig*) for contingency to define it as a matter of *touching*. Before meaning the opposite of necessity, contingency “says what touches me, what reaches me and therefore arrives to me (according to the Latin) or (according to the German) what ‘falls like that,’ therefore ‘falls upon me from above’” (BG 125). Thus, he summarizes anamorphosis by saying, “To appear by touching me defines anamorphosis” (BG 130-131). Through anamorphosis, given phenomena touch me or affect me “as an event that modifies my field (of vision, of knowledge, of life, it matters little here)” (BG 125). As such, this anamorphosis is an event that disrupts the status quo. In this way, the eventuality of any given phenomenon arises from itself to visibility and affects me. Such is the anamorphosis of the event in and along every given phenomenon.

Marion deepens this account of the arising or eventuality of phenomena with the characteristics of unpredictable landing, incidence, and *fait accompli*. In particular, he mobilizes these three characteristics to expound on the four main qualities of the event: the event is without reason or cause, the event is unrepeatable or absolutely unique, the event is excessive, and the event opens impossible possibilities. In order to show how he does this, I offer a summary of these three final characteristics before showing how Marion mobilizes each for unpacking these qualities of the event.

When the arising of a given phenomenon touches me, it always does so in a way that surprises me. Each phenomenon, then, arrives unpredictably as a surprise. This unpredictable landing of the phenomenon is the “singular, irreplaceable, unrepeatably moment that temporalizes [the phenomenon’s] arising” (BG 139). Such a surprising arrival individuates each given phenomenon in its very happening. So the touching or arising of the given phenomenon is a surprising arrival. And this arising that arrives unexpectedly has two moments. The “first moment” of the phenomenon’s arising is its incidence (BG 151).²⁵ The incident of the given phenomenon is when it “crashes,” “explodes,” or “fall[s] on” us (BG 151). The anamorphosis modifies my field of vision, knowledge, and life, or simply disrupts the status quo, as an incident that “exceeds all antecedents” and is “unforeseeable” (BG 158). The “second moment” of the phenomenon’s arising is its *fait accompli* (BG 151). When the arising of the phenomenon arrives, always unpredictably, its arrival is a fact or belongs to the facticity of the phenomenon. In this way, every phenomenon imposes its “finalities on me” (BG 150). For example, drawing on Heidegger’s analysis of tools in *Being and Time*, he concludes, “The tool imposes itself as a *fait accompli* because it imposes its possibilities on me as my own” (BG 147). And this “arising in fact” annuls any search for a cause (BG 140). As a *fait accompli*, the arising is without cause because as an arrival that has

²⁵ “Incident” is how Marion translates Aristotle’s συμβεβηκος, which is traditionally translated as “accident,” in conjunction with the German *Zufälligkeit* (BG 152 and 355n49). He translates Aristotle’s Greek this way to avoid the traditional, metaphysical understanding of an accident’s dependence on a substance. Disregarding this metaphysical understanding, we could alternatively call this characteristic of a given phenomenon its “accidentality.”

already happened, its causes are unimportant and not integral to its own arising as a given phenomenon. Causal inquiry is *after the fact* and not part of the fact's phenomenality.

Now that we have limned the lines of these characteristics of a given phenomenon, we can see how Marion employs them to fill out his understanding of the event in and along every given phenomenon. First, as an unpredictable arrival in its incidence and *fait accompli*, the event is without reason or cause. Marion explicitly keys this character of the event to its incidence. As an incident, the event cannot be made, produced, or provoked because it lacks a "definite reason" (BG 160). For an incident suspends both the "principle of contradiction" and the principle of sufficient reason (BG 160). The incident suspends the principle of contradiction because when it irrupts into the status quo, it disrupts the expectations of the status quo. For example, I expect to experience the death of a loved one at some point because death is one of the most certain and ordinary things in life. However, when the other dies, she will have died in a way that is unexpected. My intention or expectation is at the same time and in the same place fulfilled and not fulfilled, thereby suspending the principle of contradiction.²⁶ In this disruption of the expectations of the status quo, the event in its incidence also operates without the principle of sufficient reason. This means that the event is without cause or happens on account of innumerable causes none of which can be identified as *the* sufficient cause. Like the blooming of Silesius's rose, so too is the event without why

²⁶ Marion does not use this example, but it more clearly explains Marion's suspension of the principle of contradiction than the examples he offers (see BG 153).

(BG 170). Marion argues this point in a number of ways. As an unpredictable arrival, the event is “aleatory” insofar as it “breaks with all continuous flux” (BG 134, 139).

Phenomenologically, the event arrives unexpectedly in its facticity as an effect. This “effect, as event” is phenomenologically privileged because the effect alone arises (BG 165). The “phenomenality” of the event “begins with the effect” (BG 164). Yet the search for a cause belongs to metaphysical reflection on this effect. For this reason, we can see that the event as a *fait accompli* in its unpredictable arrival is without cause because causal inquiry is *after the fact*, after the effect, and not part of the arising and arrival of the event itself. Phenomenologically, then, the event “precedes” its cause(s) to such an extent that the search for a cause becomes an “effect of the effect” (BG 165). The cause comes as a supposition after the effect in an effort to *understand* the event. Yet Marion insists that attempts to understand the event through causal thinking are misguided. The event overcomes the measure of the understanding (see BG 167), which, following Kant, causally structures reality such that an uncaused event cannot be known or understood.

Second, having been emancipated in this way from causality and rational-causal thinking, the event is unrepeatable or “absolutely unique” (BG 170). Each arrival of the event is unpredictable, therefore, a singular surprise. He writes, “Each event, absolutely individualized, arrives only once (*hapax*) and once and for all (*ephapax*), without sufficient antecedents, without remainder, without return” (BG 171). Third, in this absolutely unique, surprising arrival, the given phenomenon in its eventuality can, and

likely does, have causes and antecedents. Yet the arising and arrival of the event exceeds any such antecedents and precedents to the extent that our response to the event is often “‘I’ve never seen [heard of, imagined, fathomed, etc.] such a thing’” (BG 172). Fourth, in exceeding “the preceding situation, [the event] redefines a partially or entirely different situation” (BG 172). This means two things for Marion. The event is, on the one hand, possibilizing. The arrival of the event disrupts the expectations of the status quo while also reconfiguring its expectations. Though we cannot “foresee [the event’s] incident or its unpredictable landing,” once the event is accomplished (as *fait accompli*), “everything is articulated and organized necessarily” around it (BG 169). The event, in this way, “provokes ... the arising of a world, the world” (BG 170) by opening new possibilities in and around the given phenomenon. Such possibilizing of the event is, on the other hand, an impossibility. In happening without cause or reason, the event’s “essence ... is, from a metaphysical point of view, impossible” (BG 172). The event “imposes itself as the very effectivity of that which our thought, until that moment, took to be impossible.”²⁷ What is impossible according to metaphysics is for a given phenomenon, for “what shows *itself* insofar as it gives *itself*,” its “very possibility” (BG 173). A metaphysical impossibility is a phenomenological possibility. On account of their givenness or eventiality, phenomena “befall me,” “impose themselves on me,” and “open a new situation for those who receive them” (BG 63). In this way, with the happening of the event as a given phenomenon, the world worlds differently each time.

²⁷ Marion, “Phenomenon and Event,” 153.

Are there particular phenomena that expose us to this possibilizing, eventual character of all phenomena? Indeed. Marion calls them *events*. Eventuality can appear in the mode of an event as a type of saturated phenomenon.

6.2. Eventuality in an Event: Events as Saturated Phenomena

While Marion maintains that the givenness of each phenomenon marks its eventuality, he also maintains that certain phenomena exemplify this eventuality more than others because they most fully give themselves without any limitations. These phenomena are *saturated phenomena*. And one such category of privileged phenomena is named *events*. Events are privileged among the other categories of saturated phenomena (e.g. idol, flesh, and icon) because events most fully give their givenness or eventuality. With events, eventuality gives itself in the mode of an event. And in order for their eventuality to be seen as it is given, or in accord with its givenness, Marion follows Heidegger's lead by rethinking the subject in its comportment to the event.

6.2.1. Types of Phenomena

As Marion remains faithful to the things themselves, to given phenomena, he deepens his phenomenology of givenness further by showing that the event of givenness *in and along* each phenomenon arises according to degrees or different modalities. All phenomena may show themselves insofar as they give themselves, a giving that is their eventuality, but "all does not give itself in the same way" (BG 178). Marion elaborates three different such degrees or modalities: poor phenomena, common phenomena, and saturated phenomena. These three degrees of givenness or eventuality are distinguishable

by the amount and intensity of intuition with which each phenomenon gives itself. With this, Marion critically develops both a Kantian and an Husserlian insight: the relation of intuition and givenness. Though Marion believes that Kant and Husserl begin their philosophies correctly with intuition, he critiques their subsequent philosophical moves. For example, Marion says that Kant correctly implies that “intuition without concept is as blind as the concept without intuition is empty; but blindness counts more here than vacuity: *even blind, intuition still gives*, while the concept, even if it alone can make the given seen, remains as such perfectly empty [without intuition]” (BG 193 emphasis mine). Yet Kant limits intuition in two ways according to Marion. First, intuition gives without a concept, but intuition requires the concept to justify it, that is, to make what is given seen. Second, Kant limits the scope of this intuition by making it only a sensible, finite intuition. In doing so, Kant precludes the possibility of “intellectual or indefinite intuition” from having any phenomenality (BG 194). So the givenness that can give must always be limited, sensible, and finite. Husserl goes further than Kant, says Marion, because he allows for intuition to justify itself and to determine its own possibility. Husserl’s principle of all principles is “a principle of sufficient *intuition*” (BG 184 emphasis mine). Yet such intuition still “obeys a logic of penury” (BG 175) because *all* intuition admits of boundaries: the horizon and the constituting I. So even Husserl, on Marion’s reading, submits every kind of intuition to finitude.²⁸ Unlike Kant and Husserl,

²⁸ Alternatively, Husserl’s account of adumbrative knowing and the *alter ego* in the fifth meditation of his *Cartesian Meditations* could offer a different account. In this account, intuition would not be finite but possibly infinite or indefinite. Derrida has engaged Husserl’s fifth meditation to argue this point (see WD 123-124 and 131-132)

he seeks not to determine *all* intuitional givenness through constraining concepts of the understanding or intentional horizons. He seeks not to limit *each and every* intuitional givenness but to let each be according to its degree of givenness.²⁹ And not all phenomena give themselves equally. Some have more intuitional givenness or some give themselves more than others.

Poor phenomena and common phenomena are the phenomena whose givenness can be captured by Kant's or Husserl's understandings of intuitional givenness. Poor phenomena are precisely those phenomena that do not need much more for their givenness than their concept. These are the phenomena of mathematics and logic. Such phenomena poor in intuition "claim only a formal intuition in mathematics or a categorical intuition in logic, in other words, a 'vision of essences' and idealities" (BG 222). They have "no accomplished phenomenality" (BG 222).

Common phenomena or common-law phenomena are the *objects* of physics, the natural sciences, and especially technology, says Marion. These *objects* demand "restricting the intuitive given to what confirms the concept [G]ivenness is cut to the size of objectification" (BG 223). With each, the subject's signification, intention, or concept always holds sway over the fulfillment, intuition, or product because a "deficit of intuition [in the object] secure's the concept's mastery" (BG 223). This means that

²⁹ Marion does not always make the force of his criticisms of Kant and Husserl clear. I have attempted to provide some clarity to them here by emphasizing that Kant and Husserl are not *altogether wrong* in their accounts of the phenomenon. Rather, where they misstep is in assuming that *all* phenomena must obey the bounds they establish for them. We shall see that Marion, at least implicitly, thinks that Kant and Husserl can be useful when approaching some phenomena, namely what he calls poor and common phenomena. In Marion's attempts to develop phenomenology further, he often seems to forget that Kant and Husserl still are phenomenologically helpful and useful.

there is always more meaning in the signification, intention, or concept than in its corresponding fulfillment, intuition, or product. Thus, the latter confirm the former “without any surprise, unpredictable landing, or incident ever arising” (BG 224).³⁰

In contrast to both the poor phenomena and common phenomena, saturated phenomena give themselves excessively or in a modality of excessive givenness. The givenness, phenomenality, or eventuality of saturated phenomena arises from an intuition that “subverts, therefore precedes, every intention, which it exceeds and decenters” (BG 225). These phenomena are phenomena that are “absolutely unconditioned” or without horizon (BG 189) and “absolutely irreducible” or without a constituting, intentional *ego* (BG 189). These phenomena play “at the limits of phenomenality” (BG 189) because their intuition is no longer lacking in relation to the intention or signification. Their intuition no longer needs an intentional gaze and even saturates such a gaze. The saturated phenomenon, saturated with intuition, is saturating because it gives more than can be received (cf. BG 362n37). Marion develops this important mode of givenness and category of phenomena through Kant’s categories of the understanding. With this, Marion inverts the function, power, and scope of these categories from Kant’s First Critique in order to describe the characteristics of this excessive modality of givenness.³¹

³⁰ Here Marion introduces a problem to his own phenomenology. He maintains that all phenomena, even objects, are determined in their givenness *as events* and, thereby, accord with the characteristics that the event gathers (e.g. surprise, unpredictable landing, and incident). Yet here he seems to deny that common law phenomena, objects in general, have no unpredictable landing, incident, etc.

³¹ In particular, he inverts how Kant uses the categories in the Axioms of Intuition, Anticipations of Perception, Analogies of Experience, and Postulates of Empirical Thinking. Marion admits that the characteristics of saturated phenomena that arises through this inversion are prefigured by Kant’s own aesthetic ideas in the Third Critique.

With this, whereas a phenomenon for Kant must be finitely and intuitionally given *and* conceptually determined according to quantity, quality, relation, and modality, the intuitional givenness of saturated phenomena gives in excess of these conceptual determinations. So each saturated phenomenon has four characteristics for Marion: invisible, unbearable, absolute, and irregardable.

First, saturated phenomena are “invisible” or “cannot be aimed at” according to the category of quantity. In Kant’s Axioms of Intuition, he shows that our mind uses the category of quantity to determine the extensive magnitude of all phenomena. Our mind conceptually organizes all phenomena through finite parts so that we can successively schematize finite part by finite part a particular object of experience. Yet the excess of intuitional givenness in a saturated phenomenon cannot “be divided nor adequately put together again by virtue of a finite magnitude homogenous with finite parts” (BG 200). The extensive magnitude of a saturated phenomenon does not consist of finite parts. Hence, its quantity cannot “be measured in terms of its parts” (BG 200). A saturated phenomenon’s modality of givenness gives more than our mind can aim at successively.

Second, saturated phenomena are unbearable according to their quality. This concerns the *intensive* magnitude or intensity of a saturated phenomenon’s intuitional givenness. In Kant’s Anticipations of Perception, the intensive quality of intuition is what allows our mind to anticipate what is found a priori in our cognition of phenomena. Intuition gives itself in a predetermined intensity that our mind can bear, handle, or

constitute. Yet Kant, says Marion, only looks to poor phenomena in assessing this intensive quality. A saturated phenomenon, however, has

an intensive magnitude without measure, or common measure such that ... the intensity of the real intuition passes beyond all the conceptual anticipations of perception. Before this excess, not only can perception no longer anticipate what it will receive from intuition; it also can no longer bear its most elevated degrees. For intuition, supposedly 'blind' in the realm of poor or common phenomena, turns, in a radical phenomenology, to be *blinding* (BG 203 emphasis mine).

A saturated phenomenon's modality of givenness gives itself with an intensity that we cannot bear.

Third, saturated phenomena are absolute or evade any analogy of experience.

Kant's analogies are used to *a priori* unify and connect experiences in terms of substances and their accidents, causes and their effects, and commonality among substances. However, as absolute, saturated phenomena disrupt experience by not being assigned to either a substance with accidents, a cause with effects, or even "an interactive *commercium* where it is relativized" (BG 207). A saturated phenomena is, as such, a "pure event" (BG 207). Such a phenomenon is "absolute" because it has no analogy with an object of experience (BG 209) and "unconditioned" because it is without any horizon. This does not mean without horizon *tout court*, which would mean "forbid[ing] any and all manifestation" (BG 209). Rather, Marion means three things about the relation between the intuitional givenness of a saturated phenomenon and the horizon of expectation of the subject. First, the intuitional givenness of the phenomenon saturates *in* a horizon but also *against* it simultaneously. With this, the phenomenon

“receives an intuition that exceeds the form set by the concept and signification that aim at and foresee it” (BG 209). So each horizon is bedazzled by the phenomenon. Second, the intuitional givenness of the phenomenon is “beyond all horizontal delimitation” insofar as the phenomenon’s givenness requires an infinite number of horizons in order to be received (BG 210). Third, even with this multiplicity of horizons, the bedazzlement of each individual horizon redoubles by spilling from each horizon over onto the multiplicity of horizons. Consequently, the givenness of the saturated phenomenon saturates *in* and *against* an infinite multiplicity of horizons. In this way, a saturated phenomenon’s modality of givenness gives itself absolutely or without horizon.

Fourth, saturated phenomena are irregardable in terms of their modality. A saturated phenomenon can be seen because of its excess of intuition (i.e. it can be received on its own terms), but it cannot be gazed at, guarded by an *ego*, or, which is the same thing, transformed into an object. Modalities for Kant concern the fundamental relation of phenomena and their agreement with the “transcendental I” (BG 212), which determines their possibility to be and to be known. A saturated phenomenon “annuls all effort at constitution,” does not “‘agree with’ or ‘correspond to’ the power of knowing of the I” (BG 213). Therefore, a saturated phenomenon “cannot be looked at, regarded” (BG 214). As irregardable, the *ego* or “eye without gaze” sees “the superabundance of intuitive givenness” but not clearly or precisely (BG 215). So the *ego* experiences the saturated phenomenon, but experiences it as a counter-experience because the *ego* cannot constitute it. Moreover, this “counter-experience of a

nonobject” (BG 215) is an experience of *eventiality* because this is an experience of an “arising” or a “coming forward [that] exceeds what comes forward” (BG 216). Such a counter-experience is an experience of the givenness or eventiality in and along the given phenomenon. It is an experience of the self of the phenomenon that gives itself as an event of givenness.

Marion offers a number of types of saturated phenomena—the idol as the painting, flesh as *my* flesh, and the icon as the gaze or face of the other (*autrui*)³²—but one such type exemplifies the degree of givenness of saturated phenomena. This type is the event as historical event or the happening (*advenant*) phenomenon.

6.2.2. Events

We can see that as an absolute and irregardable phenomenon, Marion characterizes all saturated phenomena as pure events whose very arising or eventiality is itself experienced in a counter-experience. For this reason, Marion favors the type of saturated phenomenon called events over the other types of saturated phenomena. He writes:

Which phenomena keep within them the trace of their givenness, to the point that their mode of phenomenalization will not only open such an access to their original *self* but render it incontestable? I propose the hypothesis that it is a question of phenomena of the type of the event (IE 31 emphasis his).

³² We could include the phenomenon of revelation/Revelation that Marion discusses in §24 of *Being Given* as a phenomenon with the maximum of saturation. The possibility of such a phenomenon is called in phenomenology “revelation,” but the actuality of such a phenomenon is called by theology “Revelation” (BG367n90). With this fifth type of saturated phenomenon, Marion seeks to blur the lines between philosophy and theology. This is “a fifth type of saturation” (BG 235) that saturates simultaneously in terms of all of the other four saturated phenomena. Thus, revelation/Revelation is *an event* but it also can be considered as an idol, flesh, and icon. For this reason, I have not included it.

In other words, the event type of saturated phenomena grant us the most access to their self, which is to say to givenness or eventiality. Events as saturated phenomena give themselves most discretely in terms of their eventiality.

To see why Marion thinks this, we must look at his examples for what falls under this type of saturated phenomenon. He turns to world-historical events, personal pleasure from food or friendship, and even a lecture hall as examples of events.³³ In all of these examples, he focuses on the fact that an event as a happening phenomenon is temporalized in terms of the past, present, and future in which its very arising or eventiality is without cause, unrepeatable, excessive, and possibilizing. To illustrate this point, I organize Marion's accounts of each example around the three ecstasies of temporality. In terms of the past, an event arises, imposes itself, or touches us as a surprise. For example, in speaking about a lecture hall on the night of a particular lecture, he says, "[T]his hall imposes itself on us as preexisting us, being without us, although being there for us, which therefore rises into our sight like an unexpected fact [fait accompli], unforeseeable, coming from an uncontrollable past" (IE 32). This account of the lecture hall is generalizable to the other examples of events. For each event according to its eventiality is unforeseeable much like wars or battles are "discovered once the fact of their effect has been accomplished" (IE 36). Even the pleasure from eating a piece of food invades our senses without any suggestion as to its cause (BG 169). And friendship often breaks in upon us unexpectedly with the most

³³ For the former two examples see BG 167-179, 207, and 228-229 along with IE 36-38. For the latter example see IE 31-34.

unexpected and unlikely of people (IE 37). Events as saturated phenomena give this eventuality to be seen.

According to the present, an event is unrepeatable. On the night of a lecture, Marion says, “[W]e are no longer dealing with the lecture hall as such, in general, such that it would subsist, in its indifferent emptiness, between such and such an occasion It is a question of *this* hall, *this* evening, filled for *this* occasion, to hear *these* particular speakers, on *such* a theme” (IE 32 emphasis mine). Each event happens in the present in accord with its eventuality as a ““this time, once and for all”” (IE 33). Moreover, once this unrepeatable, “irrevocable fact is accomplished,” everything is “articulated and organized necessarily around this event” (BG 169). The happening of such a saturated phenomenon opens (and closes) possibilities in the world, thereby, opening a world to us or becoming “epoch making in time” (BG 228). With this, a particular event “prompts not only the memory of an individual . . . nor just the work in which this past would again become a living present . . . but precisely the total world of history” (BG 170). In giving its eventuality to be seen in the present, an event gathers a world of meaning in its absolutely unique happening.

According to the future, no amount of causal explanation can explain the happening of an event.³⁴ This does not mean, however, that an event is without any

³⁴ In his 1992 formulation of these characteristics in “The Saturated Phenomenon,” Marion places unrepeatability and incomprehensibility with different temporal ecstasies: “[A]n event or a phenomenon that is neither foreseeable (on the basis of the past), nor exhaustively comprehensible (on the basis of the present), nor reproducible (on the basis of the future); in short, absolute, unique, occurring” (*The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner et. al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 39).

causes. Rather, as an absolute phenomenon, the happening of an event has a multiplicity of causes. For example, “the information—here concerning what triggered the First World War—is overabundant” (BG 167). An event can accept many causes. But this overabundance “forbids assigning it a [distinctive] cause, and even forbids understanding it through a combination of causes” (BG 168). An event phenomenon “cannot be accorded a unique cause or an exhaustive explanation, but demand[s] an indefinite number of them” (IE 36). Moreover, insofar as the search for causes is *after* the arising of the event in an attempt to understand it, this multiplicity of causes “result[s] from an arising with which they are incommensurable” (BG 168). An event phenomenon exceeds any assigning of causes because its eventuality gives more than any measure of the understanding can explain. In this way, an event “saturates the category of quantity” (BG 228). With this, our *attempts* to understand an event, to make sense of it, to learn something from it, or simply to relate to it leads to a “plurality of horizons” in an “endless hermeneutic in time” or a “teleology without end” (BG 229; cf. IE 33). Thus, the happening or occurrence of this singular, unrepeatable event that surprises us strikes us as an impossibility “with regard to the system of anteriorly indexed causes” (IE 37).

With this mention of the endless hermeneutic of an event, Marion broaches an important aspect of his understanding of the event. Namely, just as Heidegger’s turn to the event has required a different articulation of Dasein, so too does Marion’s engagement with the event require a rethinking of the subject and subjectivity. We have seen that all phenomena in their arising give themselves according to their eventuality,

and this eventuality or givenness comes in degrees. The saturated phenomena of events give themselves most distinctly of all the saturated phenomena according to their eventuality, but in order for this eventuality of events *to be seen*, the subject must comport itself to them in the right way. The arising of the given phenomenon from itself, that is, out of its eventuality, also includes being “given to be seen by...” (BG 69 ellipsis his). In other words, the subject must perform its hermeneutic in such a way that the subject seeks not to constrain the givenness or eventuality of the events but to let them *show* this eventuality. With this, the subject must *receive* the event. Such is the task of Marion’s subject *l’addonné*.³⁵

6.2.3. *Receiving the Eventuality of Events: L’addonné*³⁶

I have shown in chapters three and four that when Heidegger rethinks the ontological difference in terms of the event, he says that human being in its highest possibility, that is, *Da-sein*, has an indispensable role as the shepherd of being. I have argued that we must interpret this phrase in two ways when we read it in light of Heidegger’s thinking of the event. First, being-there is the shepherd of *beingness* in that being-there is the being who can see *that* meaning is given from the event and who attempts to name beings in light of this relation to the event. Second, being-there is the shepherd of *being itself* in that being-there sees *how* the event appears concealed in

³⁵ The task of *l’addonné* is not exclusively related to the saturated phenomena of events. Rather, *l’addonné* must receive any given phenomenon, but I am only focusing on the reception of an event by *l’addonné*.

³⁶ We can translate this French term variously: the one given to or the devoted one. Kosky translates this phrase in *Being Given* as “the gifted.” I leave it untranslated though because of the richness of the term.

beings with a particular meaning. In this second sense, being-there is the being who can see the insight of the event as the worlding of the world through *things*. Such worlding of the world is the event's clearing of a space where each particular being can have meaning. This clearing that happens for each being is not the being's meaning but its eventuality: the very happening of the event in the being. So before meaning, a thing has eventuality as the clearing of a space where the thing can, as being, have a particular meaning. In this way, being-there is the *there* between this eventuality of the thing and its meaning as a being. Being-there is the *there* who sees this insight of the event.

Similarly, for Marion, *l'adonné* is placed "between the given and phenomenality" or "between the given—which never ceases to be imposed on it and to impose itself on it—and phenomenalization" (IE 49). In other words, *l'adonné* is placed between the eventuality of events and their showing of this eventuality. Being-there lies between eventuality and meaning, and *l'adonné* lies between eventuality and its manifestation. Marion even describes this manifestation of the event according to its givenness or eventuality as an assigning of *meaning* to the given phenomenon.³⁷ So we can see that Marion follows Heidegger closely in rethinking the essence of the human being or the subject in relation to the event. With this, *l'adonné* is Marion's attempt to free the subject from any constitution of, which is to say, constraining of, the givenness of phenomena. *L'adonné* is the subject without subjectivity.³⁸ So while every phenomenon, insofar as it

³⁷ Marion, *Givenness and Hermeneutics*, 43.

³⁸ Marion is deeply critical of Heidegger's understanding of Dasein. He sees Dasein as still dependent on a transcendental, constituting ego that delimits and restrains the givenness of phenomena (see RG 2, 77-108).

gives itself, that is, in terms of its givenness, is an event, the saturated phenomena of events can *show* or *manifest* this eventuality only when *l'adonné* receives them. In conjunction with *l'adonné*, the event as givenness gives itself freely and without any limitations. But in order for this eventuality to *show* itself in and along *an* event phenomenon, *l'adonné* remains the *there* (*Da*) where such eventuality can show itself. We have givenness without *l'adonné*. But without *l'adonné*, we have no *manifestation* of this givenness.

With this manifestation of the eventuality of events through *l'adonné*, Marion develops the hermeneutical side of his phenomenology.³⁹ Marion's favored images for the hermeneutical function of *l'adonné* are the prism and electricity. Much like a prism "stops white light, until then invisible, and breaks it up into a spectrum of elementary colors, colors that are finally visible," *l'adonné* phenomenizes the eventuality of the event. The invisible—unapparent—happening of the event as givenness shows itself on account of *l'adonné* who breaks its invisibility into visibility. Moreover, *l'adonné* acts as a conductor that *resists* the imposition of eventuality thereby giving rise to its visibility.

³⁹ This hermeneutical aspect of his phenomenology raises more questions than Marion has been able to address adequately. His most recent attempt can be found in the short text *Givenness and Hermeneutics*. Yet even there, he leaves unanswered a few important questions for his hermeneutic theory. Though I cannot go into detail with these issues, I list the questions here that he leaves unanswered. In addition, both Mackinlay in *Interpreting Excess* and Gschwandtner in *Degrees of Givenness* criticize Marion's hermeneutics. The abiding questions from Marion's hermeneutics of givenness are the following: (1) He maintains, "The phenomenon is shown to the extent [that] the hermeneutic actor gives to the given the most appropriate meaning of *that* given itself" (*Givenness and Hermeneutics*, 43 emphasis his). So each given has an appropriate meaning that the actor must assign the given in its phenomenization. Yet how does the actor determine what is the "appropriate meaning" to assign? (2) Presumably, this appropriate meaning comes from the given itself, but if that is so, what *interpretation* does the actor enact? For the idea of interpretation suggests that more than one meaning would be appropriate. Marion seems to suggest, however, that only one meaning is fitting.

As a circuit restricts the movement of electricity allowing for some of the energy to be “dissipated in heat or light,” *l’adonné* too resists an event’s eventiality and “transforms an unseen movement into phenomenized light and heat” (IE 51). *L’adonné* receives the givenness of the event phenomenon and lets this givenness show itself by submitting to it “without interfering or causing a disturbance” (BG 264). In this way, *l’adonné* is a subject without subjectivity: a subject who receives eventiality without limiting its givenness or who receives this eventiality only on the conditions set by eventiality.⁴⁰

Now two historical events repeatedly confront *l’adonné* whose degree of eventiality distinguishes them from other events: namely, birth and death. With these two events, we not only confront Marion’s engagement with the event and death but also an engagement that challenges the approach to this thematic that we have taken in previous chapters. For Marion maintains that death and birth both give themselves as events, but *only birth* is the “properly evential [*événementiel*] phenomenon” (IE 41).

6.3. Birth and Death

Both birth and death are what Marion calls “eidetic phenomena” (IE 39) because both cannot be confused as objects or constituted as objects by a transcendental consciousness. They give themselves from out of themselves but never show themselves as objects. They give themselves always as event phenomena determined by eventiality. In Marion’s phenomenology of givenness, we have seen that he is most concerned with describing each phenomenon as a *given* phenomenon. This means that each phenomenon

⁴⁰ The same questions from the previous footnote apply here as well.

reduces to its own modality of eventiality. Or each phenomenon is considered from out of its *birth* as a phenomenon. Thus, we can see why Marion might favor birth as the event par excellence over death. For birth “more than an event among others, more than the event par excellence, even more than the first of all the events that affect me, ... implements the eventiality that supports and sets off every phenomenon as an event that happens.”⁴¹ Birth exposes us, then, to the eventiality of all phenomena. Yet Marion also favors birth over death as an event because *l’adonné* can bring to visibility, even if indirectly, only the givenness of *its own* birth. Nevertheless, Marion wants the scope of his phenomenology to cover both personal death and the death of the other. So death too remains determined by eventiality or givenness. And yet he maintains that this givenness of death never shows itself even when *l’adonné* receives it. Thus, birth is the event par excellence. Yet we can see that Marion’s argument for birth as the event par excellence over death comes only through an inadequate description of death as an event.

6.3.1. *Birth*

Marion is explicitly concerned only with personal birth or my own birth. He understands birth to be given as an event insofar as it is without cause, unrepeatable, excessive, and possibilizing. Undoubtedly, my biological birth is a this time, once and for all. And we could point to the cause of any one person’s birth, namely the sexual act. Yet Marion’s point is that birth as an event exceeds any such determination of a cause because my birth, though “always past,” is “never surpassed” (IE 42). I *continually* aim

⁴¹ Marion, *Certitudes négatives*, 298.

at it “intentionally” by “wanting to know who and from where I am, undertaking research into my identity” (IE 42). Our life is “solely occupied ... with reconstituting [our birth], attributing to it a meaning and responding to its silent appeal” (IE 42). So my birth overcomes my attempts to understand and come to terms with it because it exceeds all such attempts. And it exceeds all such attempts precisely because it opens possibilities to me. Marion explains that my birth “renders possible an indefinite, indescribable, and unforeseeable series of original impressions to come In this way, birth opens the course of life to innumerable temporal intuitions, for which I will seek without end ... meanings, concepts, and noeses” (IE 43-44). The intuitional givenness of my own birth as I repeatedly return to it exceeds my intentional engagements with it. Thus, my origin remains “originally inaccessible ... because the first phenomenon already saturates all intention with intuitions” (IE 44). In this way, my birth opens many possibilities to me as I continually re-confront this event.⁴² My birth gives more than I can measure with my understanding. Moreover, quite simply, my birth happens, accomplishes itself, imposes itself on me as a fact “without and before me ... without my knowing or foreseeing anything” (BG 289). So I repeatedly come back to my birth in order to come to know myself more and more.

And yet this search is interminable because “I cannot ... see this irrefutable phenomena directly” (IE 42). My birth gives itself as an event but never shows itself

⁴² For this reason, Mackinlay is wrong to say, “Marion makes no acknowledgement that my being born is the opening of a world in which I play myself out as an event of projecting toward meaning-filled possibilities” (*Interpreting Excess*, 113).

directly. We never see our own birth there in its incidence because our birth is simultaneously our own incidence. My birth “happens as an event *par excellence* ... from the fact that it gives me to myself” (IE 43). We must rely on eyewitnesses, birth certificates, photographs, and video in order for this event to show itself *indirectly*. The event of birth gives itself but only shows itself indirectly. Death too gives itself as event, according to Marion, but it never successfully shows itself *at all*.

6.3.2. *Death*

With death, both personal death as well as the death of the other, we confront the wide scope of Marion’s phenomenology of givenness. First, considering personal death, Marion establishes in *Being Given* that such death is bound to givenness. What even seems to be ruled by non-givenness reduces to givenness (see BG 55). So death is not a non-givenness but a mode of givenness insofar as its givenness is as a pure possibility. Following Heidegger’s description of being-toward-death in *Being and Time*, death gives itself as the “possibility of impossibility” (BG 56).⁴³ As such a possibility, personal death “fixes the event of an ultimate impossibility” (BG 57), namely, an ultimate impossibility that we could describe, following Heidegger, as the absence of any projection toward future possibilities (i.e. *Existenz*). Marion calls this ultimate impossibility “the experience of finitude as an unsurpassable existential determination” (BG 58). My death as a pure possibility of this impossibility is given

⁴³ Quoting BT 251 where Heidegger *actually* calls death “the possibility of *the* impossibility of existence [*Existenz*] in general,” which delimits death to a particular impossibility, namely that of *Existenz*, and not impossibility in general, as Marion’s misquotation suggests.

insofar as it gives me to myself as “the possibility par excellence” (BG 57) of projecting toward future possibilities. I am exposed to my own intentional projections on account of the givenness of death.

So death as reducible to this givenness of pure possibility does indeed give itself. When Marion returns to this event of personal death in *In Excess*, he is no longer concerned with showing that death is a modality of givenness. Rather, now he aims to determine whether or not experiences of death can *show themselves* from out of their eventuality. Can the reception of death by *l'adonné* allow for death's eventuality to show itself? Marion admits that death is something that happens. As such a happening, death does phenomenalyze itself. Yet, in happening, he asks, “[W]hat does it show of itself” (IE 39)? In other words, can its eventuality be shown? Marion answers that the event of death remains deficient insofar as its eventuality cannot be shown through its reception by *l'adonné*. For he maintains, in Epicurean fashion, that “[I]f death passes in me ... as I die with it, I can never see the event in it” (IE 40). For what is given in death “we do not know” until we have received “the gift of death” (IE 40), which suggests that we do not know what happens in death until we die. We remain ignorant, in this way, of what happens in death. And this ignorance marks the excess of the event of my death over my intentionality. Thus, “the event of my death ... remains inaccessible to me by the excess in it ... of its pure givenness over phenomenality” (BG 40). Beyond the concern over our being-toward-death, which exposes us to death as pure possibility, this concern with what shows itself in the givenness of death falls short. For the event of my death is “too

pure to show itself and therefore also to give itself as perfect event” (IE 40). What about the death of the other?

When Marion addresses this question, we see that he maintains, again, that the death of the other “appears in that it happens” (IE 39). The death of the other does show itself insofar as it happens before us. And yet “the passage ... from the state of being alive to the state of being a cadaver” does not show itself (IE 39). The death of the other is reducible (in a non-phenomenological sense) to “the instant of a passage The death of the other person only shows itself in a flash and only gives itself in being withdrawn—withdrawing from us the living other” (IE 40). This instant in which the death of the other happens, thus, remains inaccessible because it exceeds us. We do not know of it. What we know is that our loved one had been living and is now dead. But the instant that marks the passage of this movement—“a queer thing” says Plato⁴⁴—is unknown. So death according to Marion, whether as our own death or as the death of the other, gives itself as an event, but remains too inaccessible to show itself if even indirectly through memories, hearsay, and photos.

Now this analysis of the death of the other as an event should give us pause. His reasons for preferring birth over death as the event par excellence finds its focal point in the lack of manifestation of death’s eventuality. Such a description of *the death of the other*, at least, is phenomenologically deficient. It misses the thing itself. For why would the death of the other be reducible to an instant that remains inaccessible to us? After all,

⁴⁴ Plato, *Parmenides*, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 156e.

certainly when the other dies his or her absence is given to us or made present to us especially when we return to those places that mean the most to us on account of the moments we have shared there with the one who is now dead. For example, when a loved one dies and you visit what used to be your (plural) favorite restaurant now that he or she is dead, everything seems off, uncomfortable, or strange. “It just doesn’t feel the same without him/her,” we might say or think. The food, though it is the same chef, ingredients, dish, and recipe, may even taste different. This alteration arises on account of the absence of the other that is made present at the restaurant. Moreover, how often do we hear of a person or family moving houses after a husband, wife, partner, or child dies? The absence of the other is so present that it can become deafening in the house, making the house almost uninhabitable. So a move to a new house is taken. Though he does not speak of the death of the other by name, Marion makes this same point in *God Without Being*. When what we love is lacking,

[t]he one who loves sees the world only through the absence of what he loves, and this absence ... flows back on the entire world ... [T]he world has not disappeared; it remains present ... but this disappearance [of the loved one] nevertheless strikes the appearance of the world with vanity.⁴⁵

So we could even say, as we did with Heidegger, that with the death of the other the world worlds differently. *This* description of the death of the other shows that this event is not readily reducible to an inaccessible instant of passage between life and death. The death of the other includes the aftermath, the shock, and the grieving of the loss of the

⁴⁵ Marion, *God Without Being*, 136.

person and the loss of what the world meant to and with that person, which is to say the grieving of a death of the world. After all, this loss of the world with the other is happening in the very instant that the funeral is being prepared and happening or tours of new houses are being given. This is not to say that we ever gain access to that instant of passage that occurs between life and cadaver. But this instant of passage is no more inaccessible than the instant of passage that occurs at *our own* birth or even the birth of the other. For all three events are accessible only through memory, hearsay, certificates, and technological archives. And all three events are happenings to which we return repeatedly in an effort to glean something from them. And in this reception of the death of the other, *pace* Marion, we can certainly say that death gives itself *and* shows itself.

CHAPTER VII

THE DEATH OF THE OTHER

[K]nowing in advance the nonknowledge into which the *imminent* but *unpredictable* coming of *an event, the death of my mother*, Sultana Esther Georgette Safar Derrida, would come to sculpt the writing.¹

Death alone can take the measure of the immeasurable, of the play. That is not to say that death has mastery over the play but just the opposite, that in the experience of mortality you understand that nobody has mastery over the play, that the play is immeasurable, unfathomable, that we are caught up in the extraordinarily complex texture of textuality which we cannot unravel.²

The death of the other as an event can be treated in a Heideggerian fashion by following his idea that in and along each thing is the insight of the event understood as the worlding of the world. This, in fact, has been a programmatic idea for how we have approached the death of the other throughout this project. Moreover, Heidegger has shown that with each thing, the world worlds differently each time. Following the proximity between Heidegger's and Marion's approaches to the event, as established in chapter six, we can also treat the death of the other in terms of givenness. Despite Marion's critique that the death of the other can give itself but never show itself, we can use Marion's framework to say that the death of the other does, in fact, give and show itself through the recess or loss of meaning that attends the death of the other. Through

¹ Jacques Derrida, "Circumfession," 39 in *Jacques Derrida*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1993), 206-207 emphasis mine.

² Caputo, *Radial Hermeneutics*, 201.

the way in which the absence of the loved one takes over the entire world, filling the world with absence, we can reiterate that the world worlds differently on account of the presence of this absence in the world when the other dies. However, though the death of the other can be treated in these two ways along Heidegger's and Marion's approaches to the event, Derrida is the one who acutely opens up the death of the other as an event. For Derrida shows that, *pace* Heidegger, the death of the other *is* disclosive. So when Heidegger maintains that with the death of the other "the loss of being [*Seinsverlust*] as such ... does not become accessible" and the "dying of others" is not experienced "in a genuine sense" (BT 230), Derrida maintains the exact opposite. We do experience the death of others in a genuine sense because each death is a death of the world. Though Derrida would agree with Heidegger that no one can die my death for me and that I cannot die the other's death for him or her, the death of the other remains a profound experience due to the loss of possibilities-to-be that attend the other's death and concomitant death of the world. So the death of the other is disclosive, then, first because the world worlds differently on account of the loss, absence, or recess of meaning in the world that attends the death of the other. In this loss of meaning with the death of the other, we do gain access to the loss of being as such. In fact, in this loss of meaning, the death of the other shows that being itself is, as Jean-Luc Nancy stresses, being-with.³ All of reality has meaning or being on account of the relations that we have with others. The reality in and along all things and beings is what it is on account of our

³ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford, CA: Stanford, 2000).

being-with others. In this, the death of the other is disclosive, furthermore, on account of the injunction, insistence, or call it places on the ethical life of those who survive the death of the other. An ethical injunction accompanies the loss of being that is experienced as the loss of meaning in the world when the other dies. And this ethical injunction is a call for mourning the other and the world that has been lost with him or her. Through this injunction to mourn, the death of the other opens possibilities-to-be for the survivor that have two distinctive qualities. On the one hand, a distinctive character of this act of mourning is its mixture of both mourning and melancholy. This is an act of mourning that I characterize as *workless* mourning. With this, our responsibility to mourn the death of the other is always also *irresponsible* insofar as our mourning remains indefinite and always melancholic. Second, this act of ir-responsible mourning also means that in choosing responsibility to mourn one other, I also choose not to mourn other others. My obligation to one other is the same to any other modality of alterity because, following Derrida, every other is wholly other. My responsible mourning remains irresponsible and, thus, ir-responsible.

And yet even though Derrida has engaged the death of the other as an event in this way, his approach remains problematic. We have seen that Derrida problematizes the meaning of *the other* when he says that *tout autre est tout autre*. This has allowed us to read Nietzsche's announcement about the death of God as an announcement about *one* modality of the death of the other. But if each death of the other is a different worlding of the world insofar as each death is a death of the world, then Derrida's

problematization of the modalities of the other seems phenomenologically problematic. For if every other is wholly other, how do we account for the fact that one death of the other leaves me unaffected while another death of the other *solicits* me entirely? With this, each modality of alterity seems to bring with it a difference in terms of the different degree of eventiality that breaks into my status quo when the other dies. This degree of eventiality depends on what I characterize as its *existential difference*, that is, the difference that each modality of alterity makes for our experience on account of our relations with each modality. Each modality of alterity—be it God, humans, or animals—has a different degree of eventiality that accompanies it when the other dies. Such a difference is one of degree and not of kind because, following Derrida, if ever other is wholly other, the only way to differentiate one other from another would be through a difference of degree. With this, the criteria for this difference concerns different intensive qualities of relationality. So this difference concerns not who or what the being *is* but the role or intensive quality he or she plays in a person’s being-with or with-world.

7.1. The Disclosivity of Death: A Death of the World and Being-With

We have seen in chapter five that the theme of the event becomes more and more insistent throughout Derrida’s writings. Moreover, we have seen that what interests him with the event “is its singularity,” namely that an event in its “happening [*l’arrivant*]” is “unique ... and unpredictable, that is to say without horizon.”⁴ This singularity and unpredictability constitutes the connection for Derrida between the event and death. He

⁴ Nielsberg, “Derrida. Penseur de l’événement.”

writes, “Death is, consequently, the event *par excellence*: unpredictable even when anticipated, it happens and does not happen because when it happens, unpredictably, it no longer happens to a person.”⁵ And we have seen that this aspect of unpredictability has been important with all three of the thinkers of the event that we have covered. Yet such unpredictability seems like a problem for the death of the other, especially when we consider the instances of death where the other plans her death on a particular date—as Brittany Maynard did on November 1, 2014—or when a doctor declares that a patient has a limited number of months left to live. Certainly we can say that sudden deaths surprise us because we did not see them coming, literally, and we could not have imagined them happening and especially in the way that they happened. But the more planned, predicted, or *imminent* deaths of the other seem problematic. Despite this important difference between different ways that the other dies, I maintain that all deaths of the other, even if *imminent*, are *unpredictable* events. After all, the focus with the death of the other is as much about the happening of this event as it is about *living on* after this death, that is, *surviving* the other. In order to see how *all* deaths of the other are surprising, unpredictable, and without horizon, that is, how they are all *events*, we have to understand the phenomenological and ontological disclosivity of the death of the other.

⁵ Nielsberg, “Derrida. Penseur de l’événement.” cf. Françoise Dastur, “Phenomenology of the Event: Waiting and Surprise,” *Hypatia* 15, 4 (2000): 183: “One could say that death is the event *par excellence*, except that it is never present, it never presently happens.”

In order to illumine these aspects of the death of the other's disclovisity, I engage not only Derrida's account of the death of the other as a death of the world but also I adapt some insights from Maurice Blanchot's idea of *the disaster*. Together Derrida and Blanchot help us see the givenness that attends the death of the other as a givenness of recess, loss, or absence. And this recess concerns precisely the world in which we live with one another, where we have our being-with.

7.1.1. Derrida on *The Death of the Other as a Death of the World*

In turning to Derrida's account of the death of the other as an event, we engage some of the deepest and most existentially significant insights that Derrida has to offer. To begin with, we see that Derrida's account of death resonates with one of the claims from the Epicurean tradition: when I am present death is not, but when death is present, I am not. We never experience our own death. Our own death is an impossible phenomenon in this sense. Yet Derrida does not leave us with "this event as an 'unexperienced experience'"⁶ because he also finds another person's death to be philosophically and existentially important.⁷ My own death may be an unexperienced experience. But the death of the other exposes us directly to this experience. This means,

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford, 2000), 65.

⁷ In recognizing the philosophical significance of the death of the other, Derrida is developing a thought that Emmanuel Levinas emphasizes in his philosophy. For example, in *Existence and Existents*, Levinas maintains against Heidegger that anxiety's "object" should not be one's own death but existence itself because only in this way does anxiety point us toward the other. As long as you focus on your own death, says Levinas, you never confront your responsibility for the other. In *God, Death, and Time*, Levinas also explores this idea. For example he writes, "The other concerns me as a neighbor. In every death is shown the nearness of the neighbor, and the responsibility of the survivor It is for the death of the other that I am responsible to the point of including myself in his death" (*God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford, CA: Stanford, 2000), 17 and 43). Derrida takes these ideas from Levinas and develops an account of them in relation with the event.

to follow the aspects of the Derridean event from chapter five, that the death of the other is a phenomenologically impossible appearance because it happens in secret by exceeding any and all horizons of expectation. The death of the other suddenly breaks in and surprises us because the death of the other is more than just a loss of the person. The world too dies when the other dies. Derrida unravels this phenomenology of the death of the other in his meditation on Paul Celan's poem, "Rams," at the one year commemoration of the death of Hans Georg Gadamer.

In this essay on Celan, we find that Derrida is not interested in the moment in which the other passes from life to death, a moment, as we have seen in chapter six, that is an instant of change and inaccessible. Rather than focusing on this instant of the death of the other, Derrida is more interested in the absence that is made present for those who have survived this death of the other. In other words, he is interested in the world after it worlds anew, that is, *apres l'événement*. For Derrida, Celan's poem grants us access to this absence made present when the other dies. In this way, his poem attests to the impossible appearing of the death of the other.⁸ In particular, Derrida reads Celan's poem

⁸ In general, Derrida maintains that poetry grants us access to events on account of the nature of poetry as *shibboleth*. In the Jewish-Christian tradition, *shibboleth* recalls the story from their shared scriptures where the Gileadites use this word, *shibboleth*, as a password for distinguishing between their own people and those of their enemy, the Ephraimites. The Gileadites could pronounce the "sh-" in *shibboleth*, while the Ephraimites could say only "sibboleth." For the Ephraimites, the significance of *shibboleth* has nothing to do with the definitional, constative content of the word, but only with how it is performed. The significance of *shibboleth* lies solely in its sound. The sound of the "sh-" in *shibboleth* becomes the safe keeping of the Gileadites and the certain death of forty-two thousand Ephraimites (see Judges 12). For Derrida, the poem is "nothing but *shibboleth*" (SQ 33). The poem is a "performativity" (SQ 47) that grants access to the event, not through any informative kind of saying, but by showing "that there is something not shown, that there is ciphered singularity: irreducible to any concept, to any knowledge" (SQ 33). We have access to the event in the poem on account of the poem's own performance: it shows us that the event is an impossible, secretive appearing. The poem presents *that* there is an event, it presents the event, points to it, but explains nothing about it outside of this presentation.

to show in at least two ways that the death of the other is, in fact, disclosive. First, by granting access to the loss of being, the absence, when the other dies, Celan's poem shows that when the other dies we see not only the death of the world but also its origin, the source of its birth, in our relations with others. Second, this loss of being is a call to responsibility, for those who survive, to mourn the death of the other. Derrida develops this disclosivity of the death of the other through his interpretation of the last line of Celan's poem:

Die Welt ist fort, ich muß dich tragen. The world is gone, I must carry you.⁹

Derrida focuses on the last line of this poem because, following Gadamer, he says, the last line is what "carries the meaning of the whole poem" (SQ 144). With his reading of this last line, Derrida offers an implicit rejoinder to Heidegger's account of death in *Being and Time*.¹⁰ Part of Heidegger's project in *Being and Time* involves letting the meaning of the being of Dasein disclose itself. The majority of his text thus focuses on unfurling the insight that the "'essence' [*Wesen*]" of this being lies in its to be," that is, "in its existence [*Existenz*]" (BT 41). This *Wesen* of Dasein is determined by Dasein in the projects it has for itself, that is through its possibilities-to-be. Dasein's *own* death marks its foremost possibility-to-be. Consequently, Heidegger says that being-toward-death is a projecting of oneself upon this "ownmost potentiality of being," which "means to be able to understand oneself in the being [*Sein*] of the being [*Seinenden*]" thus

⁹ Celan, *Atemwende* quoted in SQ 141.

¹⁰ cf. Dennis Schmidt, "Of Birth, Death, and Unfinished Conversations," in *Gadamer's Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation*, ed. Andrzej Wiercinski (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 110-111.

revealed: to exist” (BT 252). Anxiety is our fundamental mood that expresses this being-toward-death. As he says, “In anxiety, Dasein finds itself faced with the nothingness of the possible impossibility of its existence Being-toward-death is essentially anxiety” (BT 254). Through our anxiety over our *own* death, my own *Wesen* as *Existenz* is revealed as something that I must determine. Through anxiety, I am singularized as the individual I am and for whom I am responsible. Dennis Schmidt comments, “It is not the *cogito sum* that opens up my being to me [for Heidegger], but the *sum moribundus* which opens me up to my ‘I am.’”¹¹ The ethical impetus of anxiety is “that I alone am answerable for myself.”¹² For these reasons, Heidegger says that the death of the other is non-disclosive. The death of the other, experienced in the mood of mourning, does not reveal the being of Dasein as *Existenz*. With the death of the other, death is revealed “as a loss [*Verlust*], but as a loss experienced by those remaining behind. However, in suffering this loss, *the loss of being* [*Seinsverlust*] *as such* . . . does not become accessible. We do not experience the dying of others in a genuine sense; we are at best always just ‘near by’” (BT 230 emphasis mine). The loss experienced with the death of the other does not, for Heidegger, reveal anything to us about death and our possibilities-to-be. Instead, anxiety over our own death remains the existential key for learning anything from our own mortality.

¹¹ Schmidt, “Birth, Death, and Unfinished Conversations,” 110; cf. Dennis Schmidt, “What We Owe the Dead,” in *Heidegger and the Greeks Interpretive Essays*, eds. Drew A. Hyland and John Panteleimon Manoussakis (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 115. cf. Martin Heidegger, *The History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 317 where he says, “The *moribundus* first gives the *sum* its sense.”

¹² Schmidt, “What We Owe the Dead,” 118.

Derrida offers his account of the death of the other in implicit contrast to this analysis of death. Whereas Heidegger finds the death of the other to be non-disclosive of our possibilities-to-be and the loss of being in the death of the other to be inaccessible, Derrida finds that Celan's poem, in particular the last line "The world is gone, I must carry you," provides access to this loss, which, in turn, opens us to our possibilities-to-be. This line carries the meaning of the poem in two phrases. The first phrase, "The world is gone," discloses the loss of being when the other dies. The second phrase, "I must carry you," grants us access to our possibilities-to-be opened up by the loss incurred with the death of the other. The focus in this section is on the first phrase, while the next section focuses on the last phrase.

With his reflections on this first phrase, "The world is gone," Derrida explores the way that the death of the other discloses to us the death and origin of *the* world. In this way, Derrida believes, Celan's poem grants us access to the loss of being that happens in the event of the death of the other. And this loss of being exposes us not only to the way in which all deaths as events *surprise* us but also to the ontological insight that accompanies such events.

He begins his reflection on this first phrase with an attempt to bear witness to his "melancholy" over Gadamer's death. The root of his melancholy is the hermeneutical and existential fact that all dialogue, relations, and life are marked by "a sad and invasive certainty," namely, the "fatal and inflexible law: one of two friends will always see the other die" (SQ 139). Interruption, that is, "the interruption of rapport," is, on the one

hand, the hermeneutic pre-condition of understanding for Derrida in contrast to Gadamer.¹³ On the other hand, all of life is marked by the “ultimate interruption” and “ineffaceable incision” of this inflexible law (SQ 139). And when this ineffaceable interruption happens, when the other dies, “each time singularly,” this death “is nothing less than an end of *the* world” (SQ 140 emphasis his). The world is *fort*, gone, lost, departed, far off, annihilated, and dead (see SQ 149, 160). This event of the death of the other is *an* end of *the* world. A singular end of the one and only world. Derrida continues, “Death puts an end neither to someone in the world nor to one world among others. Death marks each time, each time in defiance of arithmetic, the absolute end of the one and only world, of that which each opens as a one and only world” (SQ 140). In the phenomenological tradition that we have traced from Heidegger through Marion, a *world* has come to mean the meaningful context in which we find ourselves with others and with things. Thus, one person can have many different worlds: a world at his work, a world with his family, a world with his friends, etc. When he dies, not only would his presence as a lived body be lost, but also his worlds that he has constituted in these various contexts. This would mean that the death of the other is concomitantly the death of many *worlds*. However, Derrida insists that each death of the other marks a death of

¹³ Jacques Derrida, “Three Questions to Hans Georg Gadamer,” in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, eds. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (New York: SUNY Press, 1989), 53.

the world.¹⁴ The world has many ends. It is lost (*fort*) many times and each time singularly.

This is a difficult thought. As Schmidt comments, “To say that *a* world dies when someone dies is clear and easy to grasp. To say that *the* world dies, that the whole world is over, is less clear.”¹⁵ Yet by looking at Derrida’s explanation in relation to Leibniz, we can begin to understand the significance of this point. On the one hand, Derrida says that the death of the other marks “the absolute end of the one and only world ... *which each* opens as *a* one and only world” (SQ 140 emphasis mine). Each person opens *the* world as *a* world, as his or her world. Through the various worlds or meaningful contexts in which the other finds herself, she enlarges the meaningful relations of *the* world. Each person makes of the one world, to which we all belong, what he or she wants based on the ways each chooses to live his or her life. By making each of these meaningful contexts, each person contributes to the meaningful whole of the one world. In this way, each of us opens the one world as a world. So when the other dies, the death of her worlds marks, on account of their relation to the one world, *a* death of *the* world. Leibniz makes a similar point with monadic points of view and their relation to the one universe:

Just as the same city viewed from different directions appears entirely different and, as it were, multiplied perspectively, in just the same way it happens that, because of the infinite multitude of simple substances, there are, as it were, just

¹⁴ Dastur similarly maintains that in mourning the death of a loved one, what is mourned is “the radical loss of the totality of possibilities which we call *a* world” (“Phenomenology of the Event,” 185 emphasis mine). The important difference between Dastur and Derrida lies in Derrida’s insistence that the death of the other is each time singularly a death of *the* world. This importance is discussed below.

¹⁵ Schmidt, “Birth, Death, and Unfinished Conversations,” 112 emphasis his.

as many different universes, which are, nevertheless, only perspectives on a single one, corresponding to the different points of view of each monad.¹⁶

This parallel with Leibniz does not mean that the other for Derrida is a Leibnizian monad. For we shall soon see that the other for Derrida is anything but windowless. Nonetheless, the relation between a point of view and the universe in Leibniz is instructive in helping us see Derrida's point. We could say, then, that every person for Derrida opens the one and only world through his or her perspective on this world, and each unique perspective contributes to the being of the one world. This would mean that the death of the other is not only the end of *a* world of the other but also an end of *the* one world of which the person has a unique perspective and to which she has provided access. In this way, the death of the other marks each time singularly *a* death of *the* world.

Thus, we see that Celan's poem provides Derrida the occasion to explore the loss of being that happens in the event of the death of the other. The death of the other is disclosive here because it shows the absence that is made present when the other dies. Not only is the other no longer present, but her worlds and *the* world remain absent, no longer here. A person's absence can be so loud or deafening after he or she has died because what *gives* itself in and along his or her death is the recess of meaning that the person has added to the world during his or her life. In addition to the absence of the person, what is present or given in and along this absence is what the world had meant to

¹⁶ G.W. Leibniz, *The Principles of Philosophy, or, The Monadology* §57, in *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Essays*, trans. Daniel Garber and Roger Ariew (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991).

and with the other. On account of this absence that is made present with the death of the other, the death of the other extends beyond the instantaneous moment when the other passes from life to cadaver. The death of the other includes, perhaps we could just say *is*, the experience of the loss of world, the loss of meaning in the world, and, as we shall see, the loss of being in the world.

And yet simultaneously that this death discloses an end of the world, it also discloses the origin of the world. With this, the ontological insight that attends the death of the other begins to come into relief. Derrida writes, “This poem says the world, the origin and the history of the world ... how the world was conceived, how it is born and straightaway is no longer” (SQ 162). In granting access to the absence made present in the other’s death, we also are granted access to the conception of the world. Not only does the death of the other disclose to us the significance of this other to and with us but also why every other is significant to us. It shows that the world is always a with-world. In other words, the death of the other shows us that the world has meaning only on account of our relations with others. Heidegger, of course, maintains that Dasein is always Dasein-with or being-with and that the world is, consequently, always a with-world where we explore our possibilities-to-be with others. However, as indicated by Schmidt, the ethical impetus in Heidegger’s project focuses on the singularity of *my* individual responsibility. Thus, Heidegger fails, in large part, to develop the significance of the world as a with-world. By taking up Heidegger’s with-world through the death of the other, Derrida begins to develop this significance. And with this, Derrida shows his

proximity to Jean-Luc Nancy.¹⁷ Nancy seeks, in part, to reexamine Heidegger's existential analytic through the notion of being-with in order to explore a different fundamental ontology that unfolds from being-with. To this end, Nancy writes, "[I]t needs to be made absolutely clear that Dasein ... is not even an isolated and unique 'one,' but is instead always the one, each one, with one another."¹⁸ This has ontological ramifications for Nancy. For the "minimal ontological premise" becomes: "Being cannot *be* anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the *with* and as the *with* of this singularly plural coexistence."¹⁹ Only through our relations with others does being have meaning or is being meaning for Nancy. Being is always and only being-with. And this *with* also "is the measure of an origin-of-the-world *as such*."²⁰ Derrida takes Nancy's developments of being-with in order to show that the death of the other discloses this ontology to us. The death of the other discloses not only the death of *the* world but also its origin. The world *is* only on account of our relations with the other or with others. We are always *with* others, and our world is always a with-world. When the world is gone with the death of the other, the world's death and origin are simultaneously shown to us. So as I relate to my neighbor or as I relate to my wife, we, together, add meaning to our shared world, to our with-world, that was not there before. Only, or at least preeminently when, my neighbor moves or dies or my wife leaves me or dies do I encounter this

¹⁷ cf. Ana Luszczynska, "Nancy and Derrida: On Ethics and the Same (Infinitely Different) Constitutive Events of Being" *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 35, 7 (2009), 801-821. In particular she maintains that the "most central similarities [with Derrida and Nancy] involve the shared notions of a radically prior being-with that is constitutive of being" (802; cf. 815).

¹⁸ Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 26.

¹⁹ Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 27 and 3 emphasis his.

²⁰ Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 83.

shared meaning of things. With this loss or death of the other, the origin of *the* world through intersubjective constitution becomes manifest. In the loss of what the world has meant to this or that other as well as what the world has meant to us collectively, we come to see this origin of the world as a with-world. The death of the other discloses that the world is co-created or co-constituted. For example, a spouse is, ideally, one of our most important partners in constituting a with-world.²¹ Things in the with-world of spouses have a deeper significance because of what they mean to the husband *and* wife together. Consequently, when a spouse dies, you not only lose the spouse but what the world, *your*²² world, means because of him or her. So in the death of the other we grieve not only the loss of a physical presence, but the infinite depth of meaning that the other has given our world. This is why when a spouse dies the bereaved spouse so often seeks a new house and, perhaps, even a new partner or spouse. The loud silence that accompanies a house after a spouse dies is virtually unbearable because the space continually points to the absence or loss of world that is ever more present now. The house is not only a reminder of what it meant to the one-now-dead but also a reminder that it no longer means the same thing. The loud silence in a house after the death of the other and the loss of world bespeaks this presence of absence. And in this grieving of not only the loss of the other but also the world with him or her, we come to see the nature

²¹ As we shall see in the final section below, this is not meant to neglect the import of both our pets and our children in constituting the meaning of our worlds.

²² The limits of the English language are most apparent here. If I were speaking Ancient Greek or German this “your” would be ὑμῶν or *euere* in order to emphasize the plural your. Texans have the unruly neologism y’all’s.

or reality of all things as co-constituted in a with-world. We come to see in the event of the death of the other that our being and the being of all things is a matter of being-with.

By focusing on Derrida's reflections on Celan's phrase, "The world is gone," we have not only seen that the death of the other as an event is disclosive but also how this death is disclosive. In particular, the death of the other as an event grants us access to the loss of being understood as a loss of the world that happens when the other dies.

Moreover, this loss of the world shows us that, in fact, the world is what it is on account of our being-with others. In the death of the other and loss of world with the other, we catch sight of an ontology where the world is a with-world and being is a matter of being-with. We may be prepared for the other to die. Her death may be imminent. The doctor may have prepared us: "She only has three months left to live." But we can only be prepared not to be prepared for the loss of the world that attends her death. Because the death of the other extends to this loss of the world, the death of the other as an event happens unexpectedly as a surprise and without horizon. Maurice Blanchot gives us further insight into this phenomenality of the death of the other as event.

7.1.2. Blanchot: Death Ruins Everything, Leaving Everything Intact

The irruption or the breaking in of the death of the other in our everyday life is an interruption that, as Blanchot says, "ruins everything, all the while leaving everything intact."²³ This quotation is an adaptation of the first line of Maurice Blanchot's *The Writing of the Disaster*. He writes, "*The disaster ruins everything, all the while leaving*

²³ Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 1.

everything intact.” Though Blanchot is not talking about the event by name and not necessarily relating this to the death of the other, in this one sentence his text offers a phenomenologically fitting description of this event of the death of the other that complements the description provided by Derrida.²⁴ And this sentence offers its description in three parts: with ruination, with the temporality of “all the while,” and with a strange, almost tragic, sense of restitution. The death of the other ruins everything, all the while leaving everything intact. The event ruins everything, all the while leaving everything intact. This sentence even seems to say more than what a language can say because how can everything *instantaneously* or *simultaneously* be ruined and yet intact? And this ruination and restitution are held together by nothing more than a comma, an instant. With this, we can take out the *stated* temporality of this event, the “all the while,” and really begin to see the strangeness and paradoxicality of the event, and in particular of the death of the other: death ruins everything, leaving everything intact. How can this be?

In an effort to understand this strangeness of the event of the death of the other, I want to take Blanchot’s sentence as it gives itself to us in three parts: ruination, the instant, and restitution. When the death of the other happens, occurs, breaks in, interrupts, or disrupts, it marks a shift in the world, in particular a death of the world.

²⁴ By “the disaster,” John D. Caputo comments, “Blanchot means an erosion and hollowing out of the conscious subject, the master of the living present, the knight who confront’s death’s ominous possibility head on (or flees from it like a slave). Against this active, conscious subject . . . Blanchot thinks in terms of a radical passivity that he calls ‘dying’ (*le mourir*)” (*Prayers and Tears*, 77-78). So we can see that the disaster is related to death but more specifically to *my own* death.

The pre-event world and the post-event world are radically different insofar as the meaning of the world, the world itself, has been lost. As a result, for example, when a loved one dies and you visit your favorite restaurant together now that he or she is dead, everything seems off, uncomfortable, or strange. “It just doesn’t feel the same without him/her,” you might say or think. The food, as mentioned in chapter six, may even taste different despite the chef, ingredients, dish, and recipe being the same. Moreover, when a husband, wife, partner, or child dies, those who survive this person usually move houses because the presence of the other’s absence is suffocating now that the survivor of the other must carry on life in the house that he or she helped establish as *your* home, as *y’all’s* home. For the loss or ruination that is experienced is the loss of what the world had meant to that person and what the world had meant to you, or to a group, on account of your relation with the now deceased. The being-with of the restaurant, the food, the house, etc. includes the now dead other. So when we revisit those places where he or she used to be or that meant this or that to us on account of that person, we experience this absence or this loss of meaning. In this way, the event of the death of the other ruins everything because with this death, a death of the world too has happened. The world means differently, *worlds* differently, in the aftermath, in the event, of death.

And yet everything is left intact with this event of the death of the other. Despite the fact that you have just lost a loved one, a friend, a beloved pet, a mentor, or whoever, the sun continues to rise, the weather continues to change. When life seems like it should stop on account of the loss that has happened, life continues despite the death that has

just ruined your world. Moreover, you now have myriad questions and problems to deal with: when will the funeral be? whose the next of kin that we need to call? what do we do with the body? cremation? burial? what kind of music at the funeral? who will speak at the memorial? what do I do about his car? how will our department recover from this? who grades his students' papers? am I ok? should I see a therapist? the world continues intact but am I intact? will I recover?

In fact, the possibility that Blanchot's text recognizes, but only implicitly, with the event, especially as the death of the other, is that your intact-ness or your wholeness after the event may precisely be un-intact, incomplete, or fractured. When we get to the second clause of the sentence—"leaving everything intact"—we encounter this idea. This clause itself is not *intact* so to speak because it lacks a subject. We could rewrite Blanchot's sentence, saying, Death ruins everything, all the while *death* leaves everything intact. And of course, this is how we understand the text even without the repetition of "death" in the second clause. We understand the subject to be death that is leaving everything intact, but without the presence of this subject in the clause, we get the sense that death may leave everything intact but only in some incomplete way. For you might be irrevocably ruined, driven mad, driven to your own end because of the death of the other. This is always a possibility. After all, one of the things for which we can never be ready is the aftermath of the death of the other. We can never be ready for how we will respond to this death of the world. In this way, the death of the other in its very ruination may come as a surprise or as something we did not see coming. "She was

too young to die.” “We all knew he wasn’t in good health, but I still cannot believe he is gone.” “It just doesn’t make sense.” Or simply, “Why?” Beyond this surprise of the event in its very happening, the way in which everything is left intact may even surprise us. Your alarm goes off one morning months after she is gone and your first thought is, “Another day? Do I really have to get up? Why am I still like this?” This is why the restitution after the event of the death of the other may be a tragic one. And it may not be. Both are always live options here because, after all, we are dealing with an irruption of contingency.

Yet we seem to have skipped the instantaneous temporality of the event. The “all the while.” I said that we would take the adapted sentence from Blanchot as it gives itself to us in three parts: ruination, the instant, and restitution. Yet we seem to have skipped its temporality. However, in taking it the way that we have, the instantaneous temporality of the event has been with us all along. With this, the phenomenality of this instant is one of surprise. The rupture or loss of the world surprises us. The restitution or continuation of the world surprises us. Moreover, the rupture surprises in the instant that the restitution surprises us, and the restitution surprises the instant the rupture surprises us. The death of the world with the other is taking place in the very instant that you plan the funeral, look for a new house, distribute his students’ papers to be graded, visit y’all’s favorite restaurant for the first time post-event, etc. Certainly the death of the other is recorded as having taken place at a particular, temporal moment or now point: “The estimated time of death was...” “She was pronounced dead at...” Time of death is

codified on the death certificate. But the phenomenon of the death of the other as a whole is both inside time in this way while also outside of time. It is outside of time in the way that the rupture and restitution bleed into one another, overlap one another, or instantly take place with one another. To see this textually we can rewrite Blanchot's sentence one last time:

All the while, death ruins everything leaving everything intact.

The death of the other is never just the loss of the person. The death of the other includes, principally so, the loss, ruination, and death of the world accompanied by the continuation of life around us amidst our grief. In this continuation of life around and even despite of the death of the other, the world may be lost but I now survive the other. And in this survival, I am responsible for the other who has died and for the world that has died with her. I must carry the other.

7.2. The Disclosivity of Death: Ir-Responsibility

In the previous section, we have seen that Derrida's interest in Celan's poem and Blanchot's insight about the disaster allow us to see the kind of loss of being that occurs when the other dies. However, Derrida's interest in Celan's poem extends beyond this more ontological interest. In particular, the origin of the world as a with-world to which we are exposed when the other dies has ethical implications for Derrida. He follows these ethical implications by reflecting on the last phrase of Celan's poem, namely where Celan says, "I must carry you." Derrida maintains that this last phrase shows how the death of the other itself carries a call to an originary responsibility for remembering the

other. In this, Derrida extends his account of death's disclosivity by presenting the call to responsibility that arises out of the realization that the with-world itself is lost with the other. As we have seen, Derrida rethinks the world as a with-world out of the loss that occurs when the other dies. And in this loss resounds a call that discloses possibilities-to-be for us. The death of the other does disclose our *Existenz*, to borrow Heidegger's terminology. For Derrida, the *sum moribundus* does not open me to my *I am* because "[b]efore I am, I carry. Before being me, I carry the other" (SQ 162).²⁵ And yet even in this call to responsibility, we cannot avoid the irresponsibility entangled in our efforts to live ethically responsible lives in mourning the death of the other and loss of the world. In this way, the absence made present with the death of the other engenders a responsibility to mourn. But in taking up this responsibility, we run a risk inherent to responsibility, namely irresponsibility.

7.2.1. Responsibility to Mourn: Workless Mourning

When the other dies we have a responsibility to carry the other in a *workless* act of mourning. Much in the same way that surrealist literature, particularly that of Blanchot, shows that literature in general is workless insofar as "it is impossible for language to fulfill its ambition to bring the world into immediate, full presence,"²⁶ Derrida can be read as maintaining that mourning too is workless. The work of mourning remains infinite and interminable. It can never be brought into full presence. Mourning is

²⁵ cf. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 40 where he says, "The 'self,' of the 'self' in general, takes place *with* before taking place as itself and/or as the other" (emphasis mine).

²⁶ Theodore D. George, "The Worklessness of Literature: Blanchot, Hegel, and the Ambiguity of the Poetic Word," *Philosophy Today SPEP Supplement* (2006): 46.

impossible to bring to an end. With this emphasis on mourning, we see Derrida challenging Heidegger once again for saying that anxiety is the fundamental mood through which we have access to and consciousness of death. If the world is always a with-world and my responsibility to carry the other precedes and constitutes my own self, then our originary relation to death or our fundamental mood that attunes us toward death is through mourning, not anxiety.²⁷

In order to show this importance of mourning, Derrida reads this last line of Celan's poem in two ways. First, he reads this line as Celan has written it: "The world is gone, I must carry you." As Derrida says, "When the world is no more ... when the world is no longer near, when it is no longer right *here (da)*, ... but gone far away (*fort*), perhaps infinitely inaccessible, then I must carry you, you alone, you alone in me or on me alone" (SQ 158 emphasis his). In the background of these words, we can hear the echo, once again, of Heidegger and Derrida's distancing himself from Heidegger. For Heidegger, the world and things have lost their nearness too. On account of technology's framing through the airplane, radio, film, and television, "the hasty setting aside of all distances brings no nearness" (BF 3). Such loss of nearness occasions Heidegger to say that we must rethink our relation to things and the world in terms of their place in "the round dance of the event [*Reigen des Ereignens*]" (BF 18 translation modified) or in the

²⁷ cf. Schmidt, "Birth, Death, and Unfinished Conversations," 111; Saitya Brata Das, "(Dis)Figures of Death: Taking the Side of Derrida, Taking the Side of Death," *Derrida Today* 3 (2010): 4-5 and 20.

“drift” of being itself (PLT 101).²⁸ In contrast to Heidegger, Derrida maintains that the loss of the world’s nearness when the other dies brings with it a call of responsibility to carry the other. The loss of nearness of the world is not an occasion for a re-thinking of things in relation to the originary truth of being but an occasion for responsibility to the other. Derrida turns to mourning to explore this responsibility of carrying the other. Michael Naas explains that mourning for Derrida “has to do with incorporating not just the deceased, but their gaze, a gaze that makes us responsible before the deceased and that can be responded to only as a kind of absolute imperative.”²⁹ The event of the death of the other contains an imperative—I *must* carry you—because I am the one who survives the other and the world without the other, the “world after the end of the world” (SQ 140). I am responsible to mourn this loss and, thereby, to carry the other. In surviving the other, I am responsible for remembering the other so that the world-with-him is not forgotten. I must retain the memory of the world-with-him, of what the world had meant to and with him, even though this world has died with him. One year before his own death, Derrida, in his final seminar at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales, returns to this reflection on carrying the other after the world has been lost to emphasize that “what I must do, with you and carrying you, is make it that there be precisely a world, just a world ... or to do things so as to make *as if* there were just a

²⁸ cf. PLT 110 where he writes, “The formless formations of technological production interpose themselves before the Open of the pure drift. Things that once grew now wither quickly away. They can no longer pierce through the objectification to show their own” (translation modified).

²⁹ Michael Naas, “History’s Remains: Of Memory, Mourning, and the Event,” *Research in Phenomenology* 33 (2003): 79.

world, and to make the world come to the world, to make as if ... I made the world come into the world.”³⁰ My responsibility in mourning the death of the other is to reconstitute the world, to fill the world with meaning, by remembering the other who has died and the world that has been lost with her. Yet Derrida insists, with and against Freud, that in carrying the other in this work of mourning, “a certain melancholy must still protest against normal mourning” (SQ 160).

The *work* of mourning, Freud explains, consists of two steps. First is the recognition that “the loved object no longer exists,” which is a recognition that “the world ... has become poor and empty.”³¹ This is the moment of grief where the absence of the loved object is made present, which indicates an emptiness and, as we have seen, a death of the world. Second, Freud says that a demand is made to withdraw “all libido ... from its attachments to that object.”³² This second step of the *work* of mourning requires focused attention on each of our individual “memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object.”³³ Through the retelling of stories about the loved object and going over the ways in which that object had been significant, the detachment is accomplished. Derrida comments, “According to Freud, mourning consists in carrying the other in the self I must carry the other and his world, the world in me: introjection, interiorization of remembrance (*Erinnerung*), and idealization” (SQ 160).

³⁰ Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign* Volume II, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 268 emphasis his.

³¹ Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* Volume XIV (1914-1916), trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1986), 244 and 246.

³² Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, 244.

³³ Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, 245.

Through this interiorization of remembrance, the *work* of mourning is accomplished and “the ego becomes free and uninhibited again.”³⁴ Melancholy, in contrast, is an abnormal form of mourning on Freud’s account for at least one reason. In melancholy, we experience the loss and emptiness as in normal mourning. However, instead of the world becoming poor and empty as in mourning, in melancholia *the ego itself becomes poor and empty*. Freud explains, “The patient represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable.”³⁵ With this, the work of mourning remains incomplete and pathological because the object of love is not interiorized by the ego, and the ego remains inhibited by the loss.

This failure to introject the other in me is precisely why Derrida says that carrying the other in me in an act of mourning must be accompanied by a certain melancholy. Yet instead of maintaining that such melancholy is pathological, Derrida insists that melancholy is an ethical requirement because of the alterity of the other. The norm of mourning with its interiorization of the other is “nothing other than the good conscience of amnesia. It allows us to forget that to keep the other within the self, *as oneself*, is already to *forget* the other” (SQ 160 emphasis his). The forgetting of normal mourning is two-fold. First, in normal mourning we forget the other insofar as we forget that before I am, I must carry the other. Normal mourning forgets that the bond or relation with others precedes my individuality and that responsibility is first and

³⁴ Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, 245.

³⁵ Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, 246.

foremost to these others. Normal mourning on Freud's account means that we forget that before *I am*, I am responsible to the other who I must carry.

Second, normal mourning forgets the structure of alterity that makes the other *other*. Derrida explains this further with Edmund Husserl's account of the *alter ego*. Husserl maintains that the presence of an *alter ego* to me occurs only through analogy and appresentation. Yet the *alter ego* never becomes part of my own transcendental ego.³⁶ We are privy to the subjective processes or appearances of the *alter ego* only by analogy and appresentation of our own processes and never through phenomenological presence. The other always remains transcendent. Consequently, Derrida says that the responsibility to carry the other when the other dies is "a question of carrying without appropriating to oneself" (SQ 161). The call of responsibility when the other dies is a call to carry the other as other, that is, as always transcendent. This is a carrying of "the infinite inappropriability of the other ... its absolute transcendence in the very inside of me" (SQ 161). Even in our mourning the other, the other remains singular and, thereby, inappropriable. Thus, the *work* of mourning must include melancholy insofar as the ego fails to interiorize and appropriate the other. The other always remains other even when mourning his death and the death of the world with him. The work of mourning always remains, then, *workless*, infinite, and impossible. Naas puts this point nicely:

It is this gaze [of the other] that makes all mourning ... at once necessary and impossible, necessary insofar as the work of mourning involves incorporating the

³⁶ see Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorian Cairns (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer, 1999), 91-117.

friend, coming to terms with his or her death within ourselves, and impossible insofar as the singularity of the friend, that which must be incorporated, that gaze that first calls us to be responsible, always exceeds our subjectivity and our capacity to make the other—here, the deceased other—our own.³⁷

So when the world is gone and I must carry you, you remain always other in your singularity even in my mournful carrying of you. I must carry you, but I will always fail to carry you because you are always other and, thereby, inappropriable. I cannot make you my own even when you will have died. In this regard, the possibility-to-be disclosed with the death of the other is the possibility of the impossible because mourning must always be mixed with melancholy. Melancholy is “therefore necessary” (SQ 160).

7.2.2. The Risk of Responsibility: Irresponsibility

But then Derrida re-reads this last phrase of Celan’s poem by rewriting it: “If I must carry you, then the world is gone” (SQ 158). Responsibility to the other, which always precedes the *cogito sum* and the *sum moribundus*, means that I assume all responsibility in carrying the other. When I carry, I assume all of the risk of responsibility. No “world can any longer support us, serve as mediation, as ground, as earth, as foundation, as alibi” (SQ 158). In this sense, says Derrida, I am “without world (*weltlos*)” (SQ 140). To assume the responsibility of carrying the other when the world is lost in and along her death means that I run the risk of forgetting her in her alterity, of mourning too well. Even beyond this risk, however, I run another risk that is inherent to responsibility. All responsibility on Derrida’s account involves choosing to carry one

³⁷ Naas, “History’s Remains,” 79; cf. 93.

other, which is always a choice over and against our responsibility to carry different others. And we make this choice without any external justification. To carry one other means also to sacrifice another other. As Derrida reminds us in his reading of Søren Kierkegaard's reading of the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22), "every other (one) is every (bit) other; everyone else is completely or wholly other" (GD 69). Consequently, the "I must carry you" in Derrida's second reading of this final sentence from Celan's poem means that I have an absolute responsibility to any modality of otherness. Each modality of otherness has the same structure as Abraham's absolute responsibility to God. Abraham's honoring his absolute responsibility to his wholly other God means that he must sacrifice his son Isaac to whom he is absolutely responsible. Likewise, writes Derrida, "I can respond to the one (or to the One), that is to say to the other, only by sacrificing to that one the other" (GD 71). In choosing to mourn the death of *this* other and *the* world with her, even doing so with the desired dose of melancholy, I simultaneously deal gifts of death to all those deceased others to whom I have an absolute responsibility to carry. If I must carry you, then I run the risk inherent to responsibility: to choose to carry is also to choose to sacrifice. If I must carry you, I must

do so without ground or alibi for my responsibility outside of my own choosing to carry you over anyone else.³⁸

Derrida has sought to engage the verdict of Celan's poem by reflecting on the injunction to carry in its last line, an injunction that allows Derrida to rethink the absence (*fort*) in and along the death of the other. With this, we now see that Derrida's reading of Celan grants access to the event of the death of the other insofar as the absence made present in this event discloses a call to responsibility. And in our response to this imperative, we carry the other as other, thereby committing ourselves to the danger of ethics. Even when mourning with melancholy, our choice to carry this other is concomitantly our choice to deal death to other others. Freud is right. We remain guilty in melancholy, but this, reminds Derrida, is the nature of responsibility. He writes, "No one in the world is innocent, not even the world itself" (SQ 157). The ethical impetus or call to responsibility when the event of the death of the other happens is risky business, but necessary nonetheless. And it remains necessary even if never complete, that is, even if our ethical possibility-to-be remains workless.

³⁸ With this, we see Derrida's account of the call of responsibility in the death of the other as another instance of what François Raffoul calls the "ethicality of ethics" (*The Origins of Responsibility* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 1). Raffoul maintains that Derrida is one figure in philosophy who is concerned with the ethicality of ethics because Derrida seeks an account of responsibility that is outside of a metaphysics of the subject and outside of a system of rules that require application to a context or field of study. For Derrida, "the primordial sense of responsibility" is found in "the appropriation of the inappropriable, as inappropriable" (Ibid, 290). The ethicality of ethics is found in this aporetic origin. In Derrida's engagement with Celan, we have seen this aporetic origin along the lines of the lack of rules or grounds for our responsibility to the other as well as in the melancholic mourning of the inappropriable other.

7.3. Existential Difference in the Death of the Other

If every other is wholly other or if every other is every bit other as any other, as Derrida insists, then regardless of the modality of alterity that is lost in death, the other and the world with him or her seems to be lost in the same way. However, each death of the other, though all are singular, does not touch us in the same way. How can we distinguish these losses if each other is wholly other and no other is more other than any other? Moreover, if we do not maintain any kind of difference between these modalities of alterity, then the character of each death of the other as a this time once and for all becomes questionable. By what criteria could we insist on the singularity of each death if each other is wholly other? Certainly we could say that each is distinguished by their date or temporality. But then would we say that in mass executions, like those that took place in the concentration, labor, and death camps during the Shoah, each death of the other is no longer singular? Does each death in this case lose its signature? This does not seem fitting phenomenologically. Though Derrida is right to problematize the modalities of alterity insofar as it helps show how responsibility deconstructs itself and gives a hearing for our responsibility to animals, we still must maintain some kind of a distinction amongst the various modalities so that our description of each death as singular, as a singular event, as each time *a* death of *the* world fits this phenomenon. And the basis of this distinction or difference among modalities of alterity lies less in the *type* of being that dies and more in the impact, role, or relation that this being plays in our with-world. Depending on how we are-with a particular other determines the difference

in the degree of alterity. This difference is an existential difference. In order to see where such a difference cuts at the joints, I offer a description of three modalities of the death of the other: the others with whom we have little relation, the others who are central to our own world, and the others who structure how we see the world and our place in it.

7.3.1. The Others of Marginal Relation

Every other is wholly other, but some others have little relation, if any relation at all, with us. This kind of relation with these others affects how their death and the loss of meaning in the world that attends their death impacts us. In other words, their death while an event, has little to no effect on the meaning or being of our own particular world or our own perspective on the world. Moreover, this type of death of the other can include many different kinds of beings. With the growth of technology and the internet, this modality of alterity is growing by the second. For example, when a bomb goes off in France, London, or Iraq or a person is or group of people are beheaded by a terrorist group in the Middle East, these events certainly *touch us*, befall us, and shock us, but the intensity of their eventuality *may be* of such a slight degree that these events have little if any impact on us. Certainly we may feel awful for what has happened, post a picture on Instagram or Facebook in honor of those lost, or perhaps offer a one hundred forty character reflection on the event, thereby giving our voice to another trending topic on Twitter. And yet by lunch or the next day, we have forgotten the lives who have been lost. Forgotten them until we see another post on Facebook, another tweet, or another report on a news station. Or, perhaps, we learn, most likely from Facebook, of an

acquaintance whose beloved pet of fourteen years has just died. We offer our condolences, perhaps reflect on a similar loss in our own lives, before we scroll down the screen to watch a meaningless yet amusing video. Or maybe, even, someone reads or learns about Nietzsche's announcement in the *Gay Science* that "God is dead" without beating an eyelash. He or she thinks, "Well that is not anything new! I've known that for years!" In these instances, such deaths of others affect us or touch us as events but their contingency leaves our worlds marginally affected. Meaning has been lost, a death or many deaths of the world take place in these events, but this loss, absence, or recess of meaning is not present in our world. In large part, consequently, the world does not world much differently after these events. Who or what the others are who have died does not determine their degree of impact on our world. Rather, our relation with them determines their eventuality or to what degree their death worlds our world differently.

7.3.2. The Others of Our World

Every other is wholly other, but some others play an integral or central role in constituting the meaning of our world as a with-world. The way the death of such others touches us affects us deeply. In fact, this is the type of the death of the other that has been our primary focus throughout this project. From section two in this chapter, we have seen the impact that the death of such an other can have on us, in particular with the death of a spouse. As one of the primary co-constitutors of meaning in our world, the death of a spouse is felt deeply. Yet this kind of death of the other is not exclusive to the spousal relationship. The death of a child can touch us in the same way. For, after all,

with the birth of a child a world is filled with an excessive amount of new meaning. In this way, the birth of the other is also an event that worlds the world differently. Yet in the loss of such an other we find that “death sets a thing significant,” that is, as we have seen, the death of such an important aspect of our with-world allows us to see the impact or import of the other. For with the death of the other the world *of* the other and *with* the other is gone as well. So while the birth of a child marks an excess of new meaning to our world, the death of a child marks a recess or absence of meaning in our world. Moreover, for some, the death of a pet touches them in the same way as a death of the child. In fact, many people regard their pets as children. With this, the arrival of a new pet fills the world with an equally immeasurable amount of meaning as does the arrival of a child. So when this other dies, the loss of the world is as viscerally present. Consequently, some others differ from other others not because of the kind of being they are but because of the integral role that they play in co-constituting the meaning or being of our world. We have our being-with them in a significant manner. Thus, their loss is felt deeply as a death of the world.

7.3.3. The Others Who Structure Our World

Every other is wholly other, but some others play such a central role in the meaning of our with-world that they actually structure the entire world itself. With this, the relational or existential impact that these others have is to such a high degree that all truth and reality seem to engender from and depend on them. Though the traditional theological relationship between God and God’s creation is the most obvious of these

relations, it need not be limited to just this relationship. For the parent-child relationship often, if not always, plays an equally important role in the shaping and structuring of the child's world. The parent dictates for much of a child's life the criteria for what is true and false, good and bad, and real and unreal. In other words, the parent or parents of a child determine in large part the epistemological, ethical, and ontological structures of the child's world. We need not rehash the stages of child development to recall that at some point in a child's life he or she has the opportunity to restructure the meaning of his or world by going against or changing the structure provided by his or her parents. This is always only an opportunity, however, because some children never really choose these structures for themselves. So as adults they continue the same patterns, habits, and worldview as their parent or parents. Moreover, even when a child does choose to restructure his or her world differently than his or her parents, the child can never avoid the entire structure provided by the parents. In part, this structure is an essential aspect of the child's factual thrownness that will continue with him or her throughout life.

Consequently, whether the world of the child remains structured by his or her parents or is restructured, when the death of a parent, of such an other, occurs, this can touch the one who survives this other in a powerful way. Indeed, this is most readily seen when a child loses a parent when the child is young. Such a death of the other at the child's young age often leads to hours and even years spent in counseling and therapy working through the grieving process that recurs throughout the child's development. This shows, once again, that the death of the other is never just an instantaneous moment but extends

beyond the loss of the person on account of the death of the world that attends the loss of the other. One reason the child repeats the grieving process at each major developmental stage in her life is that she has to each time reconstitute the meaning of the world in light of the death of the other and world that had occurred when she was younger. With this, the child is repeatedly learning how to carry the world after a death of the world. She is repeatedly trying to navigate her responsibility to carry the other in his or her death. In this, we find the phenomenological reason for the repetition of the child's grieving.

And yet, as mentioned, the theological relationship between God and creation is the most obvious relationship in which the other plays this role of structuring a person's world. And, thus, we broach once again the question that has been haunting this project from its inception, namely the question of God after the death of God. If, as we have seen, the God of onto-theology has died, what then are we to make of God after God's death, that is, after *this* death of the other? In offering an answer to this question, we come to see some further folds for what carrying the world after a death of the world means. We may, first of all, however, wonder about the phenomenological evidence of this death of the other. On the one hand, we could say that this death of the other is evidenced textually in, for example, the Christian scriptures with the death of Jesus on the cross. With this, we are reminded of Marion's point that in the death of Jesus on the cross, particularly when Jesus cries out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me" (Matthew 27:46 NRSV), no "death of God" goes as far as the desertion of Christ by the

Father on Good Friday.”³⁹ And we could take this further by saying that insofar as Jesus is God incarnate, we have a literal death of God on the cross as testified by the New Testament. Yet beyond this hermeneutical evidence of the death of God, I maintain that any death of the other, in any of the modalities of alterity covered so far, the death of God becomes a live question. At their core, questions of theodicy are concerned with the death of God. So when seeing a news report about a massacre of innocent people in Iraq or experiencing the death of a pet, child, spouse, friend, or acquaintance, the question of the death of God becomes live and important. For in answering the question of theodicy—why would an all loving, all powerful, and all knowing God allow bad things to happen?—we have to wrestle with whether we are going to affirm the God we believed in before the death of the other, abandon God all together, or re-think God from out of our experience with this death of the other. In other words, with each event of the death of the other, the death of God follows phenomenologically with it. As Richard Kearney puts it, “After the terrors of Verdun, after the traumas of the Holocaust, Hiroshima, and the gulags, to speak of God is an insult unless we speak in a new way.”⁴⁰ To speak in a new way after such deaths of the other is to return *possibly* to God after God.

With this, we can see that the death of the other need not lead to a re-thinking of God, to the question of God after the death of God. We could, after all, abandon the question of God altogether. Or we could just re-affirm those beliefs about God that we

³⁹ Marion, *The Idol and Distance*, xxxv.

⁴⁰ Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God after God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), xxvi.

have held before the death of the other. Yet faith need not be so blind in reaffirming past beliefs. In fact, a more robust faith—a faith fraught with the fear and trembling that Kierkegaard highlights so well under the pseudonym of Johannes de Silentio—is a faith open to the coming of the other, to the coming of what it cannot see coming, even to the coming of the event understood as the death of God. Such a faith is open to seeing the death of God that attends the death of another other as a death of the idol god to which it has adhered. For Marion, Nietzsche’s pronouncement of the death of God is precisely an announcement of the death of a *god*, of an idol to which we have adhered. And so after the death of this idol god, after onto-theology, we open ourselves to experiencing God stripped of idolistic conceptions.⁴¹ Yet what exactly remains of God after the death of God is difficult to prescribe. Perhaps, in any case, a few generalities can be described for carrying the world after this death of the world occurs, after the entire structuring principle of the world has been lost.

Undoubtedly, God after the death of God would be a thinking of God beyond metaphysical confines. With this, we could argue that God is no longer bound to the categories set by onto-theology. Kearney writes, along these lines, that contemporary philosophy of religion “strives to overcome the metaphysical God of pure act and ask the question: what kind of divinity comes after metaphysics.”⁴² For Kearney, this means thinking God as possibility or as a God deeply involved in human affairs whose

⁴¹ Marion, *Idol and Distance*, 1-78.

⁴² Richard Kearney, *The God Who May Be* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 2.

existence depends on us. God may be “only if we enable this to happen.”⁴³ John D. Caputo develops a similar concern by insisting that this God after God is the voice of a call or an insistence whose existence depends on us. He writes, “God insists and [leaves] the existing to us, where the question of ‘existing’ is a matter of human responsibility.”⁴⁴ Moreover, Giorgio Agamben too calls for a rethinking of God no longer as pure act but as pure potentiality. He characterizes God after the death of God as “being able to *not* not-be.”⁴⁵ Gert-Jan van der Heiden comments that with this phrase, Agamben does not attempt to reinstitute God within pure actuality and existence. Rather, writes van der Heiden, “[T]his formulation expresses the excluded third or the remnant of to be and to not-be. For Agamben, this excluded third is pure potentiality itself, that is, the potential to be and the potential not to be.”⁴⁶

Beyond this breaking of God out of the confines set by metaphysical, onto-theological thinking, other work remains. Rethinking God after the death of God means reinvestigating the characteristics, or names, of God and the pressure they impose on our ethical life. We may, for example, need to rethink God’s omnipotence if God is no longer thought as pure act but as an insistence whose existence depends on us. If God is pure potentiality, we need a new conception of omnipotence that defines God not as all powerful but, perhaps, as perpetually able to be otherwise. God is everywhere (omni-)

⁴³ Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, 2.

⁴⁴ John D. Caputo, *The Insistence of God: A Theology of Perhaps* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 15.

⁴⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1993), 32.

⁴⁶ van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology*, 313-314n32.

able to be and not to be (-potent) depending on whether we heed God's call to responsibility. Thus, borrowing Derrida's language, God may-be (*peut-être*) or God is perhaps, which points not to the strength of an almighty, providential God but to the weakness of God whose existence depends on us.⁴⁷ With this, as Caputo maintains, the attributes of God would not be "attributes of full blown presence" but "weaker spectral counterparts" to such attributes.⁴⁸ In his list,

existence would be weakened into insistence; Spirit into specter; the eternal into the momentary; omnipotence into the weak force of a call; necessity into the perhaps; infinity into the infinitival; divine providence into the risk of an unforeseeable future; perfection into the promise of the world; the all-good into the hope that it works; God's glory into the audacity to not exist; divine transcendence into a way to name the varying intensities which charge the plane of immanence with the anarchic energy of the to-come.⁴⁹

To which we could add a thinking of God's omniscience according to a knowledge of possibilities to-come in hopes that one possibility will have worked. Of course, much more descriptive work would need to be done in order to offer more robust accounts of these attributes of God after the death of God. But with this, we can see the general directions for the thinking of God after God, that is, of thinking God anew after the event of the death of the other. In this, carrying the other and the world after the death of the other includes not only an ontological impetus but also epistemological and ethical impetuses. In short, for those for whom experience of the divine remains live after the

⁴⁷ This is the thrust of Caputo's argument in *The Insistence of God*.

⁴⁸ John D. Caputo, "Proclaiming the Year of Jubilee: Thoughts on a Spectral Life," in *Its Spooks: Living in Response to an Unheard Call*, ed. Erin Nichole Schendzielos (Rapid City, SD: Shelter50 Publishing Collective, 2015), 38.

⁴⁹ Caputo, "Proclaiming the Year of Jubilee," 38.

death of the other, this entails a restructuring of their world. Living on after the death of God, then, would be a matter of finding their own heading after they have lost their bearings. Consequently, regardless of whether or not God remains part of a person's with-world, when the death of the other concerns an other whose existential impact involves the fundamental structure of a person's world, the world must be carried insofar as the world itself must be restructured.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We have been interested in tracing three primary questions throughout this project. First, what is philosophically happening when the other dies for those who survive this other? Second, if a description of this death of the other is adequately offered with an account of the death of the other as an event, what exactly is an event and why does this description fit the death of the other? Third, insofar as God is one modality of alterity whose death can attend each instance of the death of the other, what remains of God after the event of God's death? The aim in addressing all of these questions has been to descend toward the moment of the death of the other, the moment of this tremendous event, in order not only to confront our own finitude in it but also to confront the nature of being and reality that is disclosed in this particular event.

We began addressing these questions and this aim by developing the language around which continental philosophy has discussed events. In this, I began by distinguishing three contours of Heidegger's articulation of the nature of the event. He is not only attempting in his turn to the event to confront the nature of being directly, that is apart from a metaphysical consideration of being always in relation to a being, but also to explore the phenomenological footing that the event has in the world. The *Wesen* or *Wesung* of being, understood as the event, is understood by Heidegger as a dynamic unfolding of clearing and concealing, the dynamics of which I have sought to capture by calling this a giving-excess. The being event unfolds itself by giving gifts of meaning or

beingness to beings in and along which the giving of this event conceals itself. And this dynamic of clearing-concealing operates in and along each particular being as each being's thinghood, worldhood, or eventuality. Thus, Heidegger's concern for the event unfolds not only on a grand historical scale as a new beginning for philosophy but also on a more phenomenological scale insofar as the clearing-concealing of the event is underway in and along each thing.

I have brought this ontology and phenomenology of the event from Heidegger to bear on the death of the other in two ways. First, through a deconstructive reading of Heidegger's essay "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead,'" I have shown how the death of the other, here the death of God, could be considered as an event from Heidegger's perspective. For in his analysis of Nietzsche's account of the death of God, Heidegger points out that this death marks a transformation of beings in their being, which is another way of saying that the world worlds differently after the event of God's death. So, second, I turned to Heidegger's engagement with the insight of the event in and along beings as the worlding of the world. In this, I have shown that each thing worlds the world differently or discloses the world differently, which has allowed me to point out phenomenologically that each thing worlds differently, moreover, depending on whether those who are associated with each thing are living or dead. The wedding ring presences the relationship that attends this thing, but when one spouse is dead, the presence of the world that attends the ring is now only the presence of something absent, that is, the presence of a world that is lost, gone, or dead.

In turning to Derrida, I have engaged a critical appropriation of Heidegger's understanding of the event in order not only to distance my analysis a bit from Heidegger but also to bring a different understanding of the event to bear more directly on the death of the other. So I have shown that even though Derrida distances himself from a remaining penchant for presence in Heidegger's philosophy, Derrida's account of the event remains deeply Heideggerian. The dynamics of Derrida's understanding of events gathers around the difference and deferral of *différance*. The Derridean event still gives, but it gives not present meaning but a trail of traces of meaning that attends each being. As such, the event and the event's gifts of meaning are always to-come. And as to-come, events open up possibilities that disrupt and disturb the status quo, much like gifts as events disrupt and disturb economies of exchange. As such, an event for Derrida always breaks into our horizons of expectation as something that does not cohere with these horizons. Consequently, an event is always something for which we must be hospitable but also for which our hospitality is one of only being ready not to be ready. For an event always surprises us in appearing as a phenomenological impossibility. And we have seen Derrida bring this to bear on the death of the other. For the readiness and openness to the event that is to-come implies a readiness for the coming of the other *come what may*, which means that we must be ready to welcome the other even when he or she is dead. Such readiness and impossible welcoming of this gift of the death of the other is something for which we are responsible.

Though Derrida's concern with the event obviously has phenomenological elements to it, in turning to Marion, we have engaged an account of the event that is rooted in a new approach to phenomenology as a whole. As such, the event is central to Marion's development of phenomenology because his concern to develop a phenomenology of *givenness* is concomitantly an attempt to develop a phenomenology of the event. And such a phenomenology has close ties with Heidegger's interest in the event as the worlding of the world insofar as the phenomenality or arising of each phenomenon as given is determined according to degrees of eventuality. With this, I have turned to Marion's account of birth and death as two important phenomena that exemplify the determination of phenomena from out of their own eventuality, that is, from out of how these phenomena give themselves. In this, Marion favors birth over death—both personal death and the death of the other—because whereas both birth and death give themselves as saturated phenomena, only birth shows itself to us if only indirectly through eyewitness accounts, birth certificates, photographs, and videos. Yet both personal death and the death of the other never show themselves, not even indirectly, says Marion. This account of death, especially of the death of the other, is woefully inadequate from a phenomenological standpoint. Its inadequacy has become most apparent in turning to the death of the other in the previous chapter on the death of the other.

In my engagement with the death of the other, we have taken Derrida as our guide because, of the three philosophers, he takes the death of the other most seriously

by engaging this phenomenon itself and developing the relationality that attends the death of the other. For Derrida shows that the death of the other, *pace* Heidegger and Marion, is disclosive. The death of the other is disclosive because each death of the other is also a death of the world, of what the world has meant to and with this other, through which the world post-death-of-the-other worlds differently. The world means differently when the other dies. And in this different worlding of the world, the death of the other discloses an ontological reality: our being and being itself is a matter of being-with. For when the other dies only then, or at least especially then, does the possibility open for us to recognize that things have the meaning that they have on account of our relationships with others.

Derrida extends this ontological insight that attends the death of the other by showing that the death of the other discloses possibilities-to-be for our ethical life. For when the other dies, we have a *responsibility* to mourn the other in an act of workless mourning. This is an act of responsibility that finds itself always already bound up with irresponsibility. If every other is wholly other, as Derrida maintains, then a choice to mourn one other is a choice to neglect another other. And yet in this important insight about the responsibility disclosed through the event of the death of the other, Derrida misses an important existential difference that differentiates modalities of alterity. According to this existential difference, every other is wholly other but each other touches us differently based on the relation we have with each in our various with-worlds. In this difference, we have been able to trace the degrees of impact that the death

of different others have on us. If the other is one with whom we have little relationship, intimate relationship, or structural, indispensable relationship, each touches us differently based on this relational, existential difference. And I have shown how the death of God can attend each death of the other. In this, the tremendous event of the death of the other can include the tremendous event of the death of God. And here I have broached the topic of God after the death of God. Insofar as God remains a structural, indispensable part of the world for the survivor of the death of the other, God after the death of God would no longer be bound by onto-theological thinking. With this, the traditional accounts of God's attributes and names would need to be rethought.

So if this is what the death of the other can disclose to us, why then is all of this not readily recognized and acknowledged by all who experience the death of an other? Why, then, is this truth that is disclosed about being through the death of the other not universally attested? From a psychological standpoint, we all deny death,¹ or, as Kierkegaard says, we lack the earnestness to see that we too shall die.² From a theological standpoint, the fear and trembling at the heart of faith is fear-filling, and the death of the other, especially when the death occurs at the most illogical moment (e.g. during a baptism or at a young age), brings this fear and trembling to the fore. For the death of the other can challenge our deepest theological beliefs. For most of us, when an experience challenges these dogmas or deeply-rooted belief systems, we do not want to

¹ see Ernst Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1973).

² Søren Kierkegaard, *Three Discourses on Imaginary Occasions*, ed. and trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton: 1993), 73.

dwell on it. We do not want to *sink deeper*. For when we do pay attention to them, when we have the courage to be vigilant about the death of the other, life becomes messier and harder to control. Life becomes messier and difficult because death shows us the reality of things as always already relational and utterly affected by the shocks and disruptions of contingency. But we do not like the difficult. However, life is never clean, neat, and easy because being itself, as we have seen, is an event of being-with on account of our relation to things, animals, the world, one another, *and*, this means, with death.

For these reasons, we must be vigilant over the death of the other. The latent truth in the death of the other does not become manifest, does not show itself to us, unless we are vigilant about what the death of the other can teach us. Such vigilance requires courage to face the facts of death and to sink deeper in order to see what the death of the other can teach us about the life we live now. Vigilance always treads through darkness—think of a soldier keeping the night watch or mourners keeping vigil—but the hope of vigilance is the light of another day, another day in which we remember the world that has been lost with the other and that we now bear. Vigilance requires sinking into the muck and mire of the darkness, keeping awake in this darkness, and hoping not for a fresh start but for another start in light of what the vigil has taught us. If we can remain awake, when our vigil comes to an end, if this end comes, we can see being for what it is: a relational interplay between others, ourselves, our worlds, and, consequently, death. Vigilance over the death of the other discloses reality to us as an event as well as our participation with and responsibility to one another in this event.

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