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A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE INFINITE:  
HORIZON, FAITH, LOVE

The essential relation of the infinite to the finite, suggested already in the word itself, has troubled philosophical thinking at least since Descartes. To speak of the finite and the infinite is already to speak of horizon: the horizon of understanding, the horizon as limitation, the horizon as opening towards and beyond the finite objects of perception and knowledge. From Descartes to Levinas the infinite is the moment of the divine which both implies and problematizes all horizons. The infinite in this sense makes inescapable the question of the possibility of revelation, the horizon in which revelation is or is not possible.

In respect to certain religious traditions, particularly within Christianity, the relation of finite to infinite is understood in terms of the ‘fall’ and fallenness generally. The corruption of sin in this view is evident in the use of reason: reason both opens the finite creature to the infinite and in its corrupt state discloses that creature’s incapacity to reach the infinite. In such a view the relation of finite and infinite is only possible by a downward movement of grace, which overcomes the effects of the fall, and which is manifest as and to faith. There is here a tendency to bifurcation in the human relation to the world, a splitting between that which is seen in its finitude and the infinite which is glimpsed beyond the limits of human capacity.

Theology and philosophy intersect here precisely on the question of capacity for truth and the limits of reason. If reason is limited, then there is of necessity place for faith, as Kant already claimed. But crucially the question raised here is the nature of such faith, whether such faith is constitutive of worldly perception or a rupture of all worldly experience. It is not by accident that Husserl speaks of ‘conversion’ when referring to the radical turning from the natural to the philosophical attitude. That turning is a transformation in the way of seeing, in perception itself, which is as much a philosophical as a religious and theological motif. A transformation of seeing is a seeing of the finite as finite, the limited as having limits which are those of natural sight itself. The philosophical, indeed the phenomenological, issue is the account of experience which can justify the claim to validly understand the relation to the infinite and the terms for that relation.

*I. Horizon: Husserl*

'Horizon' is a key term in Husserl's phenomenology. In the context of the present concerns, what is crucial is the manner in which horizon is, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, another type of being, a being of porosity.<sup>1</sup> Horizon is neither finite nor infinite, but rather is constitutive of finitude both spatially and temporally understood. An object appears aspectively and in doing so its appearance is horizontal. Husserl calls this the inner horizon of the thing. For any act of perception, that which appears and is present to consciousness indicates an absence, namely the thing in those aspects transcending my consciousness of it. The limit of perceptual consciousness indicates that which is limiting, the horizon of the object which both constitutes the object in its appearance and the infinity of possible, but not actual, appearances of the object. The inner horizon also indicates an outer horizon, the relatedness of the thing to a wider spatio-temporal area of objects in relation to which that thing is.

Husserl's account of horizons deepens in the shift from static phenomenology, where horizon is something like the context in which things appear and the appearing of the thing to potential perceivers, to genetic phenomenology where a more dynamic account of horizon is evident. This shift mirrors the deepening of his account of world and belief in world. As he states in *Experience and Judgment*, "an actual world always precedes cognitive activity as its universal ground and this means [...] a ground of universal *passive belief* in being which is presupposed by every particular cognitive operation."<sup>2</sup> Crucial here is the anteriority of horizon which conditions such passive belief. This passive belief or passive *doxa* is a belief in the world which is pre-propositional and pre-thematic. It characterizes the prepredicative experience of the world which is one of belief also in the sense of trust. Horizon is present to consciousness as having the character of trustworthiness, that is, of a general familiarity of existents known in their general -- but not specific and particular -- being.<sup>3</sup> The lifeworld as Husserl describes it especially in the *Crisis*, has this character of horizontal familiarity and doxic belief. While our perceptual and practical acts are directed towards particular, finite, objects in the world, these acts presuppose a pre-givenness of the world as the horizon of possible experience.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, this pre-givenness opens up a futural horizon, which Husserl understands in terms of prescription of pre-sketching (*Vorzeichnung*) of the object. The thing appears as that which it may be, as that towards which certain actions and not others are possible. But this pre-sketching is precarious and open to surprise, even reversal.

The passive belief, the primary faith (*Urdoxa*) in the world is one which is pre-thematic, is directed not at the finite objects

<sup>1</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty: *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. A. Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1968), 149.

<sup>2</sup> Husserl: *Experience and Judgment*, trans. S. Churchill (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1973), 31 [my emphasis].

<sup>3</sup> See *ibid*, 37.

<sup>4</sup> See E. Husserl: *Crisis of the European Sciences*, trans. D. Carr (Evanston Ill. Northwestern University Press 1970), 148-149.

of thematic consciousness but rather to a horizon which is open before and beyond it. The horizon is the dynamic movement of continual crossing out of each apparent limit, throwing forth the thing as both meaningful for me and inexhaustible to me. The temporality of the horizon is most obvious as futural: the aspects I am yet to see, but more fundamentally the horizon is temporal as anterior to the self: the horizon is that in which I find myself – as the one within this aspect of the thing and in this particular relation to the thing, i.e. to the world in which the thing is. The horizon is not infinite in the sense of a transfinite endlessness but rather has the sense of openness<sup>5</sup> or as Merleau-Ponty puts it: “*Offenheit* not *Unendlichkeit*, the infinity of the *Lebenswelt* not infinity of idealization.”<sup>6</sup>

The infinity of idealization is an epistemic ideal and often we find it informing Husserl’s account of horizons, when, for example, he argues that there is a possible correlation between consciousness and horizon where world becomes a total horizon of things. As Anthony Steinbock argues, this is a falsification of the initial insight into the horizontality of experience as precisely that aspect of experience which escapes all thematicity.<sup>7</sup> The phenomenological point here is to think the doxic relation to horizon as such and in so doing to think horizon in both the inner and outer senses as the dark movement of coming to appearance of the thing, which as the coming to appearance of the thing in its manifold aspects withdraws from appearance and is invisible, unapparent. The horizon has neither the being of consciousness nor of things, nor is the horizon determinable. The object appearing appears as horizontal; each aspect indicates another and this indication is an unending one. The thing appearing differs fundamentally from the horizon of its appearance. The thing is given in intuition, but its horizon is not, rather the latter is indicated as that which is beyond what is given. The thing is an object of intentional consciousness, but as such an object it indicates an excess in every perception which no synthetic act of consciousness (nor any passive synthesis in association) can overcome. Yet, as transcending the given, the horizon constitutes it: to be an object of perception is precisely to be that which opens up an infinity of possible horizons of its appearance.

Experience is finite in recognizing its past and its future as hazy, obscure horizons which can be transcended either by a revitalization of past retentions or the realization or disappointment of expectations and anticipations. This

<sup>5</sup> See E. Husserl: *Ideas pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to Phenomenological Philosophy, Book II*, trans. R. Rojcewicz,, R. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), 313.

<sup>6</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty: *The Visible and the Invisible*, 169. On this theme see A. Steinbock, *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 109 and E. Dahl: *Phenomenology and the Holy: Religious Experience after Husserl* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 71, stressing the “infinite openness” of horizon as lifeworld.

<sup>7</sup> See A. Steinbock: *Home and Beyond*, 106.

recognition is of the infinite in a double sense. Firstly it is a recognition of the opening, the temporal and spatial opening in which things appear to us, a recognition of that opening beyond capturing in one mastering and masterly view, and secondly that the past and future and other viewpoints stretch beyond our past and future and our spatial positionality in ways which are constitutive of our finite view.

To think the pre-givenness of the world and its post-givenness, or its always to be given, is to think the infinite. The universal horizon of the “one world” is not a final boundary but is precisely the impossibility of boundaries: a boundary is always within, but the ultimate within is not itself bounded, it rather is the primal withdrawal which gives itself in its own withdrawal.<sup>8</sup> The turning towards that withdrawal in the reduction is a turning towards the how of things in their appearance. That withdrawal appears precisely as that which escapes all conceptuality, but which is constitutive of all possible sense. It is this withdrawal which is known in the primal belief, the perceptual faith not in the world as the taken for granted, but in the world as the horizon which goes beyond all intuition, and which is known in a fundamental sense which goes beyond all doubt.

Such an infinity is itself constitutive of the object of experience and indeed of the self which experiences. The thing experienced gives itself and is hidden. The thing is in this sense heterogeneous, irreducible, and gives itself to a self, in the sense of one who can experience it and itself. In both cases the inner and outer horizons allow the thing and the experiencer to be as those in whose relation meaning is first possible.

## *II. Transcendence, Reason and Faith: Marion*

It is instructive that one of the principle representatives of the so-called ‘theological turn’ in French phenomenology, Jean-Luc Marion, gives a very different account of horizon in his critique of Husserl and Heidegger. Marion assumes horizon to be limiting in the sense of imposing a framework on the phenomenon, a pre-judgment of the phenomenon in terms of consciousness and being. This grounds his account of the saturated phenomenon and of transcendence. It is certainly the case that Husserl does speak in these terms when he talks of the inner horizon of the object as a “determinable indeterminateness.” On such an account horizon can be understood as the invisible in the form of the pre-visible.<sup>9</sup> But it is to miss the dynamic sense of Husserl’s account to refer to this as “a visual prison [...] a panorama without exterior”.<sup>10</sup> The horizon gives to be seen and does so in a manner which is limiting precisely through showing up the inadequacy of

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<sup>8</sup> K. Held: “Heimwelt, Fremdwelt, die eine Welt” in *Perspektiven und Probleme der Husserlschen Phänomenologie. Band 24/25* (Freiburg: Alber, 1991), 305-337.

<sup>9</sup> J.-L. Marion: *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. J. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 186.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 187.

every immanent experience. Marion in effect understands the horizon as a limiting condition, as that which is already in place prior to all givenness. But he neglects to ask about the being of horizon itself. Instead he seeks to surpass the horizon,<sup>11</sup> without recognizing that it is precisely in the movement of surpassing that horizon appears or rather that horizon appears as that in the object which calls for surpassing. "The finitude of the horizon and of the 'I' is indicated by the finitude of intuition itself,"<sup>12</sup> according to Marion, but the finitude of the intuition is a function not in the first instance of the I, but of the object: intuition is finite only because the object transcends the finitude of its appearing and does so because of the horizons which constitute it as a phenomenal object. The problem here is not with Marion's attempt to think the saturated phenomenon - that a phenomenon can exceed the categories and principles of the understanding is perhaps a basic insight of genetic (if not static) phenomenology. But the claim that the saturated phenomenon saturates its horizon is rooted in a misconstrual of horizon and a failure to see that the horizon itself is the agent of saturation. The saturated phenomenon cannot be foreseen and amazes, according to Marion.<sup>13</sup> But there is no reason to think that the horizon does not amaze, indeed, the thing intuited is at once the thing which surprises me by disclosing in itself a new and unthought of horizon of possibility. The phenomenon does not amaze in its brute actuality but rather in the possibilities which it radiates. Such possibilities are the infinitude of its horizons. The "invisible glory" which Marion describes<sup>14</sup> is only non-horizontal if one presupposes that the horizon is itself bearable, that the subject is equal to the horizon. But the opposite is the case. The horizon is precisely that which the subject cannot bear, that which is neither the object of its intention nor which reaches fulfillment in its intuition. For the horizon to appear is precisely for the subject to find itself bathed in the light of the world beyond and before its interests. Marion rightly understands finitude as experienced and proved by excess rather than the shortage of the given. But this excess is to be found in the horizons of thing which flow upon us, indicating not a final limit or boundary but the infinite possible appearances of the thing in relation to the finitude of our perspectives.

In his roundtable debate with Derrida, Caputo and Kearney published in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, Marion recalls saying to Levinas that "a real phenomenology would give up the concept of horizon." Despite Levinas' protestation that this would not be phenomenology at all, Marion describes his

<sup>11</sup> See J.-L. Marion: "The Saturated Phenomenon" in *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. C. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 25.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid*, 35.

<sup>14</sup> J.-L. Marion: *God without Being*, Hors-Texte trans. T. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2012<sup>2</sup>), 22, 94.

attempt as a phenomenology without horizons.<sup>15</sup> Such a phenomenology is one which is liberating from all anteriority. He speaks of “freeing oneself from the delimiting anteriority proper to every horizon.”<sup>16</sup> Clearly this liberation is a liberation for revelation, for a self-revelation for which no place can be prepared.<sup>17</sup> But more fundamentally as we have seen, the horizon is anterior in the temporal sense of being the always already constituting movement of phenomena as meaningful.

The consequence of Marion’s attempt to transcend horizon can be seen in his account of transcendence. Transcendence in Husserl’s and Heidegger’s phenomenology remains “immanent to the horizon of being. And [...] will never reach beyond Being.”<sup>18</sup> This is rooted in a Scotian understanding of Being as indifferent to infinity and finitude. Yet, God is beyond Being, is pure transcendence, which means, he “transcends all delimitation and therefore all definitions supplied by my finite mind.”<sup>19</sup> What this means is that God cannot be experienced or thought, is beyond all intuition and conceptualization, such that

God’s infinity can only contradict our finite knowing of the phenomenon [...] If incomprehensibility attests to the impossibility of phenomenalizing the infinite, it [...] postulates, on a negative mode, a positive experience of the infinite [...] the epistemic impossibility of the phenomenon of God [...] in itself experienced as a counter-experience of God.<sup>20</sup>

The counter-experience of God ruptures the realm of experience itself. In this Marion is returning again to the fundamental move of his thought, namely the distinction within perception, within the gaze, between icon and idol, between a gaze which fixes and a gaze which recognizes its own incapacity to grasp its ‘object’.<sup>21</sup> The realm of the possible is idolatrous in the sense that it pre-figures the object in terms of its own possibilities of perception, its own anterior horizon. The icon undermines the possible, exposing the self to the utterly transcendent: God as impossible. What this means is that the question of God cannot be settled in rational terms, indeed it leads reason beyond itself. Echoing Pascal, Marion states: “The question of God survives the impossibility of

<sup>15</sup> J. Caputo and M. Scanlon (eds.): *God, the Gift and Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 66.

<sup>16</sup> Marion: “The Saturated Phenomenon”, 40.

<sup>17</sup> See J.-L. Marion: “The Possible and Revelation”, in *The Visible and the Revealed*, 12: “The very concept of the horizon because it fixes a priori a dimension, an abode, therefore a limit, disqualifies the possibility of a revelation.”

<sup>18</sup> J.L. Marion: “The Impossible for Man – God”, in J. Caputo and M. Scanlon (eds.): *Transcendence and Beyond: A Postmodern Inquiry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 18.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 22

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 23

<sup>21</sup> J.-L. Marion: *God without Being*, 22-24.

God. Reason itself requires [...] that we give up a rational account of this paradox: We must either explain it, or give up and give in to it.”<sup>22</sup> What is at stake here is made clear when he goes on to say: “God begins where the possible for *us* ends, where what human reason comprehends as *possible* for it comes to a halt.”<sup>23</sup>

Husserl’s intertwining of transcendence and immanence in a passive belief which opens towards the object, itself constituted as transcendent through the porous being of the horizon (both inner and outer), is displaced in the postulation of a radical gap between the finite and infinite, immanence and transcendence in Marion’s project. Central here is the question of revelation, but more specifically the *relation* to revelation. Marion’s radical rupture of divine and human is fundamentally fideistic. By fideism here I mean something very specific, namely the postulation of an unbridgeable gap between grace and nature, rooted in an understanding of the consequences of the fall as radically corrupting.<sup>24</sup> Fideism is skeptical because it is premised on a claim regarding the fundamental limits of reason and of experience on which reason is based. In such a view the ego is bifurcated between the constituting I of freedom and reason and the me as recipient of divine grace, in Marion’s terms the *interloqué*, the addressed and the *adonné*, the gifted.<sup>25</sup> While Marion may misconstrue Husserl’s account of horizon, the issue here is not simply one of misinterpretation. Husserl’s account of horizon, especially his understanding of the *Lebenswelt* as horizon is essentially related to an account of faith as passive *doxa* or *Urdoxa*: faith in the world. Merleau-Ponty explains such faith as follows:

[B]eneath affirmation and negation, beneath judgment [...] it is our experience, prior to every opinion, of inhabiting the world [...] of inhabiting the truth [...] faith, therefore, and not knowledge, since the world is here not separated from our hold on it.<sup>26</sup>

Marion’s account of the saturated phenomenon is premised on a different account of faith, faith in the eminent sense, faith as a leap. Such faith is not constitutive of perception, not even a transformed perception converted through the reduction, but rather the faith which obeys the logic of charity or love.

While Marion is mostly careful to separate the philosophical and the theological, the resonance of his account with a certain understanding of grace, one which is associated with

<sup>22</sup> J.-L. Marion: “The Impossible for Man – God”, 24.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 25

<sup>24</sup> Cf. C. S. Evans: *Faith beyond Reason* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press 1998), 13: “The heart of what is called ‘fideism’ [...] lies in the Christian claim about sin and the effects of sin on human reason.”

<sup>25</sup> Marion: Jean-Luc Marion, “L’Interlogue”, in Cadava et al (eds): *Who Comes After the Subject?* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 236-45 and *Being Given*, 248-271.

<sup>26</sup> Merleau-Ponty: *The Visible and the Invisible*, 28.

Augustine but mediated by a form of Jansenism, is unmistakable.<sup>27</sup> In such an account human incapacity, the incapacity of human nature, is overcome by a supernatural grace which is absolutely gratuitous, having no relation to that nature. While in *Being Given* Marion seeks to write without theological reference, the logic of his account expressed in the axiom that “all that gives itself shows itself” follows a logic of grace whereby the givenness depends on nothing in the receiver and on no being of the giver, but rather on a gratuitous loving gift. When Marion states, of the gift that “it depends on no due or duty [...] never appears owing or in debt [...] gives itself absolutely freely [...] comes (*advent*) unhoped-for and unexpectedly [...] can never be refused or declined [...] demands nothing, removes nothing”<sup>28</sup>, he is in effect translating the qualities of grace beyond the theological context. The question then becomes how such a relation to grace is to be understood. If we look to early modernity from which Marion again and again takes his point of critical orientation we find two extremes: that which emphasises the gratuitousness of grace at the expense of human capacity leading to different forms of fideism from Luther to Pascal and the Jansenists and that which emphasises human capacity and in turn seems (at least to their critics) to compromise the gratuitousness of grace.<sup>29</sup> The latter comprised of those who to varying degrees followed Pelagian, semi-Pelagian, Molinist or Stoic positions. Underlying both extremes, however, as Marion’s teacher Henri de Lubac points out, is the ‘modern’ theory of voluntarism which contains the premise that an end cannot be given freely unless the recipient of that end already had another end which was actually realizable. The supernatural becomes in that way radically distinct from the natural, the world becomes detached from God and potentially from the human being qua recipient of grace. Fallen humanity, in such a view, is left in a natural state, not called to a supernatural destiny. The supernatural beatitude amounts to a radically contingent rupture in the natural economy of things.<sup>30</sup>

Despite his critique of modernity, the traces of this account remain in Marion’s work, as do certain Jansenist motifs whereby the human is understood in its position as recipient, as to one who is, in his being, given. This becomes expressed above all in the severing of love and being—a thesis from beginning to end in Marion’s work—which by placing the human beyond the horizon of being gives access to revelation as self-giving without limit.

<sup>27</sup> See the author’s “Givenness, Grace and Marion’s Augustinianism”, R. Bath et al. (eds.): *Breached Horizons. The Philosophy of Jean-Luc Marion* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), pp. 65-78.

<sup>28</sup> J.-L. Marion: “The Reason of the Gift”, E. G. Cassidy and I. Leask (eds.): *Givenness and God* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 133.

<sup>29</sup> For an excellent discussion of this debate see L. Kolakowski, *God Owes us Nothing: A Brief Remark on Pascal’s Religion and on the Spirit of Jansenism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>30</sup> See H. de Lubac: *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*, trans. by L. Sheppard (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2000), 147-183.

### III. The Heart, Love and the Infinite: Pascal

If a logic of grace underlies Marion's phenomenology of the gift, this logic is one which has its roots in a certain Augustinianism.<sup>31</sup> Here, however, I will not go further on that road, but rather discuss another French philosopher highly influenced by Augustine and who in turn influences Marion, Blaise Pascal. In particular, I am seeking through a reading of Pascal to find a way back from the utter transcendence in which Marion leaves us, towards a horizontal transcendence, which can nonetheless account for the more theologically laden issues of grace. The latter issue is not simply a theological one, but concerns the very basis of philosophical reason itself inasmuch as it concerns the limits of reason and the possibility of truth and happiness despite those limits. Faith marks the limit of reason, but faith as we have seen is ambiguous between a fundamental trust in the world, the passive *doxa* of a being in relation to an infinite always mediated by the porous being of the horizon, and faith in that which saturates all horizons, ultimately an utterly transcendent God. Are we speaking here of different dimensions, of perceptual faith and faith in an eminent sense, faith as a type of decision, indeed a leap? To leave matters there is in effect to accept the fideist position, while perhaps denying specific fideist claims. Although Pascal may sometimes be classed in a fideist tradition, his thought precisely in its proximity to fideism gives a way of approaching these questions.

At the centre of Pascal's philosophical reflections is what he terms the paradox of the fallen condition:

[I]f man had never been corrupted, he would enjoy in his innocent state both truth and happiness with confidence. And if man had never been other than corrupted, he would have no notion of either truth or beatitude. ... We are incapable both of total ignorance and certain knowledge, so obvious is it that we were once in a state of perfection from which we have unhappily fallen.<sup>32</sup>

The nature of philosophy itself can be understood in terms of this paradox. Philosophy falls, for Pascal, within two basic tendencies, i.e., Stoic and Pyrrhonian, and these tendencies

<sup>31</sup> Marion has turned quite directly to Augustine in recent years in his book *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012) and as Caputo says it "was almost inevitable that Jean-Luc Marion would write a book about Augustine. Cf. J. Caputo: "Review of Jean-Luc Marion: In the Self's Place: The Approach of St. Augustine", *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 13/01/2013. I will not deal here directly with that book, which however does further confirm the centrality of Augustine and the latter's theology of grace to Marion's philosophical and theological project.

<sup>32</sup> B. Pascal: *Pensées and other writings* trans. by H. Levi; ed. by Anthony Levi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 42

directly relate to the paradox of the fallen condition: "The one [Stoics] seeing traces of its [humanity's] initial greatness and ignorant of his corruption ... the other [Pyrrhonians] experiencing the wretchedness of the present age unaware of the dignity of his inception."<sup>33</sup> The paradox of this state is inescapable: philosophical error arises from either ignoring the fallen state or denying any glimpse of truth and beatitude. The question then becomes what in the human being allows him to negotiate this state in-between. It cannot be reason, because reason is susceptible to constant illusion and fails to give that which it aims at, namely certainty. It is rather that which both shows reason its own limits and yet gives that which reason promises, but fails to achieve. That faculty is what Pascal terms the heart.

Pascal challenges the Cartesian assumption that reason has a capacity for truth which is constant and satisfying. Refusing Descartes' claim to mastery of reason over the senses, Pascal claims that "reason and the senses mutually mislead one another."<sup>34</sup> The senses mislead reason with false appearances, but reason through the passions of the soul gives the senses false impressions in turn. This for Pascal is indicative of an incapacity in the human soul to negotiate its own ontological fixity: "some wanted to renounce passions and become gods, others wanted to renounce reason and to become brute beasts [...] neither course succeeded."<sup>35</sup> Reason alone does not sense this state, nor do the passions. Locked as they are in a war of mutual deception, the human being finds himself on one side or other of this contradiction. To see the contradiction as such is to see that which offends, indeed humiliates, reason, and yet in turn gives reason its due place. Such sight requires a faculty, a capacity, to see beyond both the objects of the intellect and those of sense. For Pascal the faculty which can do this is structured like the will, but its object is not presented to it by the intellect, but rather by desire. This faculty is that of the heart. The heart longs to know, while recognizing that it does not; it longs to know, however, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the object to which it is directed. The heart shares the structure of the paradox of falleness and uncovers in this paradox the order of love.

For Pascal the heart is at once that which transcends reason and is the source of certainty. Reason cannot escape scepticism because rational arguments do not satisfy it but rather lead it to find more doubts. The heart, however, recognizes reality immediately; the heart does not doubt. Crucial to this is Pascal's claim that first principles are felt rather than proved. Taking up Descartes' process of doubt he claims that ultimately I cannot prove that I am not dreaming, nor that I exist, nor that space and time are. The will to prove begins in doubt and can never fundamentally overturn doubt, it rather continues to provoke new sceptical questions. However, the philosophical task is not to find faith beyond the

<sup>33</sup> B. Pascal: "Conversation between M. Pascal and M. Sacy" in *Pensées and other writings*, 189.

<sup>34</sup> B. Pascal: *Pensées*, 20

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 9.

sceptical limits reason sets itself, but rather to understand in scepticism a mode of self-understanding of reason as fallen. Faith is not in the impossible, but in the immediate, in that which is not mediated by reasons. Hence, Pascal can understand the heart as both the organ of knowledge that, for example, I am not dreaming, and the organ of reception of God. The heart is the organ both of certainty and of love. The phenomenological question is whether the inner relation here can be shown.

The heart is an organ of reception rather than of projection. The certainty of the heart lies in the manner in which it is impressed upon, the manner in which the self's own existence, the structure of its world, and its ultimate destiny are impressed upon it. In a word, the heart is the organ of passivity, but has the *capacity* to be acted upon. The heart is certain of the existence of the self and of other selves not through a dogmatically held belief, but rather through an inescapable feeling of been drawn towards that which is outside itself, that which transcends it and transcends its own self-transcendence. Fundamental for Pascal is this being drawn towards, and this he links with the aspectival manner in which things appear to us. Things do not appear to us indifferently, but rather that aspect which is most pleasing to us in a thing attracts us to it.<sup>36</sup> The will is orientated towards that which attracts us and as such it directs the mind to one aspect over another, in terms of preference. The will does not await the intellect nor is it in any straightforward sense in a posterior relation to sense: the will directs the intellect and the senses towards the object, but does so in a manner which is pre-structured by desire. The heart is nothing other than this faculty of desiring will. Through the heart the self is directed towards the world and has an immediate sense of the reality of the world and its place within it. But at the same time the heart is a perspectival knowing, a knowing which is always locatable. Furthermore, the heart is a desiring knowing, a longing to know. It knows immediately, but most things require mediation and are closed to the heart. This lack is made up by reason, but reason remains at the level of the mediate and can never reach the same immediacy of the heart.

Pascal offers us a phenomenology of desire as fundamental to both knowledge and happiness, truth and goodness. The heart strives for happiness but cannot achieve it. An open heart is trusting, but such natural trust cannot reach the supernatural in which alone it can find ultimate truth and happiness. In other words, philosophy has a goal which it cannot achieve. In terms of knowledge more generally, philosophy begins with the felt certainty of that which the heart teaches it. "The heart has its reasons which reason itself does not know."<sup>37</sup> Far from the heart being foreign to reason, that which is known on trust through the heart forms the first principles from which reason begins. It is only reason which does not understand itself, which in other words does not recognize that "there is nothing so consistent with reason than

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid*, 113-114.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 158.

the denial of reason"<sup>38</sup>, that attempts to ground itself in first principles which cannot be rationally doubted. In this sense both dogmatism and Pyrrhonism equally fail to understand the nature of reason. Once this is understood then it is a matter of reason to know when to doubt, affirm and submit. Not knowing when to do each reveals a lack of understanding of the force of reason.<sup>39</sup> The force of reason is its own natural force, which acts to uncover that which is doubtful, to affirm that which can be clearly seen, and to submit to that which the heart knows and which transcends the limits of its own force.

Faith does not come through reason. But reason can be shown its own limits with respect not simply to natural knowledge, but also with respect to the ultimate questions concerning human happiness. The work of persuasion is initially a negative one for Pascal, it works to show that none of those attempts to reach happiness by means of reason, indeed by means of human activity, have been or can be successful. They fail because they are faced with the mystery of the human predicament. In the face of that mystery, the teaching of Christianity becomes persuasive as both offending to reason and as reasonable. Philosophy aiming towards happiness begins through an encounter with that ultimate contradiction of the reasonable which offends reason. It is not for Pascal a case of 'believe because it is absurd', but rather believe the reasonable although it goes against reason.

The intuitions of the heart and the thinking of reason remain distinct for Pascal: one is felt the other is thought. But the reality which is felt and thought is the same: it is a symptom of the fall that they are separate for human beings. Both natural knowledge and supernatural faith begin with the heart as the feeling of immediacy, whether of first principles or of god.

#### *IV. Beauty, Love and the Infinite*

The infinite is traced in the finite for Pascal, but only the heart can know it. The infinite is known only in its immediacy. The lack of immediacy, the distance between heart and intellect, is for Pascal a symptom of human fallenness. The heart does not so much see what saturates all horizons, as it sees the finite in terms of that which always transcends it. The thing appears aspectively, but does so through its attractiveness to me. Following a certain Augustinianism Pascal tends to think such attractiveness in terms of a vain pleasure (most clearly manifest in his polemic against diversion<sup>40</sup>), which grace can turn towards god. In both respects, nevertheless, Pascal speaks of affectivity. It is such affectivity of which – in less bifurcating terms – von Balthasar speaks when he states "we will not know the beauty of revelation until we have loved the beauty of the world."<sup>41</sup> If that is so, then the Pascalian polemic

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 44-49.

<sup>41</sup> H. U. von Balthasar: *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. 4 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 14.

against diversion needs to be modified: diversion too begins in attractiveness, in desire, and for something to be for me is for it to be also that which draws me beyond myself and potentially at least towards that which traces the infinite in the limits of my own positionality with respect to it. If the heart relates to things in terms of their attractiveness to it, we find in a surprising source a return to a type of Pascalian phenomenology of desire, namely in Husserl, specifically in his account of passive synthesis. According to Husserl, I am attracted to a thing through an 'allure' (*Reiz*) which radiates from it, acting upon the ego and leading her to turn her attention towards it and the horizons constituting its call to me.<sup>42</sup> The reasons of the heart to speak with Pascal, are to be found in this dynamic and affective relation of allure and attention. As Pascal's distinction between reason and heart cannot be unambiguously understood as a distinction between reason and feeling, similarly, the allure of the object is its attractiveness, an attractiveness which can 'awaken' the attention of the ego. I yield to this pull of the object and a "propensity (*Neigung*)' lies in the enticement itself'.<sup>43</sup> So understood, allure is essential to affection which Husserl defines as the "allure given to consciousness, the peculiar pull that an object given to consciousness exercises on the ego".<sup>44</sup> This movement of allure operates on the axis of pleasure and displeasure: a melody hardly noticed commands my attention with a "phrase that especially arouses sensible pleasure or even displeasure."<sup>45</sup> This is what Husserl terms 'motivational causality', causality which functions not on the level of natural, physical stimulus / response, but rather on the level of a meaning perceived in the object which draws the ego in on the level of desire and feeling.

The ego is itself constituted in its conscious awareness by the beauty - the attractive pull - of the objects of its consciousness.<sup>46</sup> Such a being drawn in is at once an act, an act of turning, of response, of attention. This act can be one of resistance (as in the case of displeasure or of conflicting desires). But what is being lived or resisted is a feeling in the sense of a living in the object.<sup>47</sup> Such a living-in is a living with the pre-given, living with the pre-given not as a theme, but as the sense of my own prior immersion in the world, my own being already on the way to the world. The ego in its being-towards the world is a being towards things as 'selves'.<sup>48</sup> As itself the thing both gives itself to appearance and remains hidden in the depths of its own horizontal being. The ego in its being-towards lives in relation to that which makes a claim on it. Derrida understands this claim in terms of respect,

<sup>42</sup> E. Husserl: *Analyses concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, trans. A. Steinbock (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), 43.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 148.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 155.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. E. Husserl: *Ideas II*, 196-7 on the beauty of the violin.

<sup>47</sup> See E. Husserl: *Ideas II*, 10.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. M. Heidegger's definition of phenomenon as "what shows itself in itself", M. Heidegger: *Being and Time*, trans. J. Stambaugh (New York: SUNY Press, 1996), 25.

intentionality as a form of respect.<sup>49</sup> But, once we think the thing in its attractiveness, and as drawing the ego further into the openness of its own being, then the claim is a claim to beauty, which is a claim to be loved, one which primarily addresses – calls as Chrétien says in this discussion of beauty<sup>50</sup> -- the heart. This claim calls forth desire as an obligation: it calls forth as that which is to be loved. Such a calling commands love, commands a love which begins not with me but with it, a love which seeks to find itself transformed in the other which calls.

The self as drawn beyond itself is drawn beyond the limits which it finds in itself. Such a self experiences itself as drawn beyond its own natural self, its needs, its imaginative and conceptual capacities, but in so being drawn it finds in itself a propensity and tendency which responds to a call which both escapes its capacity and yet is not foreign to it. Augustine expresses this paradoxical situation when he states: "God bids us to do what we cannot, that we may know what we ought to seek from him."<sup>51</sup> Love so understood is desire for the other as the other limits me and is infinite: 'the demand for self-denial and self-sacrifice is made infinite', as Kierkegaard says.<sup>52</sup> In two respects then love is infinite: with respect to an other there is no end to her limit and secondly there is no limit to which the other commands my love. The making receptive of the heart is an infinite task which undermines every limit placed upon it. Love is experienced as coming not from me but from the beloved, experienced not as my doing but as that which the other has placed in me, not as the other in me in the sense of an 'autism of love' (against which Marion warns<sup>53</sup>), but as an infection – an acting of the other in me (*in facere*). Love in this sense has the dynamic of grace. That dynamic is a paradoxical one of bringing the self to that state for which it has a deep seated and fundamental desire, but for which it has not the capacity to effect.

#### *V. Conclusion*

"What is this juice and all this joy? / A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning / In Eden garden."<sup>54</sup> The sight which sees the 'being in the beginning' is one which for Hopkins is attentive to what he terms 'inscape', the manner in which the thing expresses itself in its own nature and its own creaturehood. This insight is one which breaks with the

<sup>49</sup> J. Derrida: "Violence and Metaphysics" in *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 121.

<sup>50</sup> J.-L. Chrétien: *The Call and the Response*, trans. A. Davenport (New York: Fordham University Press 2004), 10: "The call of the beautiful is a call that recalls itself to us by recalling us to ourselves. To wound us in the heart brings its utterance to life."

<sup>51</sup> Augustine: *On Grace and Free Will*, ch. 16

<sup>52</sup> S. Kierkegaard: *Work of Love*, trans. by H. and E. Hong (London: Harper Collins, 1962), 118.

<sup>53</sup> See J.-L. Marion, "The Intentionality of Love" in *Prolegomena to Charity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 75.

<sup>54</sup> Hopkins, Gerard Manley: "Spring" in Gardner and MacKenzie (eds): *The Poems of Gerald Manley Hopkins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 67

ordinary, is possible only through grace, but which sees the thing in its own relation to the infinite. The Scotian point here is that the infinite does not differ in being from the finite, but rather only in its lack of limitation. Marion's deep reflections on love are against beauty, which appears only in respect of a defective love, an 'autistic' love. This is rooted in his reduction of all relations of love from any ontological anchorage in line with a certain quasi-Jansenistic understanding of the logic of grace. Similarly, he resists any attempt to describe that faculty in the self which will love. In describing the heart Pascal departed from his Jansenist themes and explored the capacity for being moved in the self, the capacity to be infected by an other. Such infection understood in terms of a phenomenology of desire allows us to think the transcendence of the object in its horizontal being, whereby the self which loves is drawn into the thing through the porous being of the horizon which allows the immanence of the thing to indicate its own transcendence. That transcendence is in the turning towards the thing, in the dialectic of allure and attention, in which the finite comes to find the source of its own free being, its own free turning, in the being of that which in its horizontal being reflects the source of the self's being in the horizons of its own being. The heart though teaches a faith which finds in the world reasons that go beyond the ego's capacity to reason, things which are beyond the ego's capacity to constitute but to which its constituting action always comes later, after the thing has emerged from the forgetfulness of its horizon offering in itself another horizon of being. Faith in this sense is not sceptical but is rather driven by a desire to be in the presence of things in themselves, in their own selves, motivated by a love not for an impossible transcendence, but for that transcendent possibility radiating from the least of things, a possibility of revelation, where the thing in its appearance saturates categories and expectations through the porous being of its horizons.