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Kevin Hart, ed., *Jean-Luc Marion: The Essential Writings*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013. 564 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$45.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9-78082325-106-3.

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Jean-Luc Marion, one of France's leading philosophers, has produced a multi-stranded body of works consisting of two philosophical trilogies, one on Cartesian philosophy (*Descartes' Gray Ontology*; *Descartes' Blank Theology*; and *On Descartes' Metaphysical Prism*) and one on phenomenology (*Reduction and Givenness*; *Being Given*; and *In Excess*), as well as what might be called a theological trilogy (consisting of *The Idol and Distance*; *God Without Being*; and *Prolegomena to Charity*). Of course, such categorization is schematic and it fails to take into account a number of Marion's other works (such as his most original work, *The Erotic Phenomenon*). Through this incomplete catalogue one might indeed be able to discern an overarching idea that unifies Marion's work. Marion's phenomenology discusses the revelation of phenomena, while his theological essays are concerned with the phenomenon of revelation. The revelation of phenomena invokes the *possibility* of a phenomenon to appear. The phenomenon of revelation, on the other hand, refers to the historical and thus *actual* phenomenon of Christian and Christic revelation. It immediately becomes evident that the latter needs and presupposes the former; the Christian revelation, to the extent that it is a revelation, is actualized only through the possibility offered by phenomenality and it is, therefore, a revelation to the second degree.

Furthermore, in the first formulation of his own "broadening" of the phenomenological reduction, Marion discovers a horizon more essential than (and thus anterior to) transcendental consciousness and being.[1] What constitutes phenomena and, by extension, what constitutes us, as the recipients of these phenomena, is neither the intending character of the consciousness paired with the phenomenon's intuition (Husserl), nor is it the opening of the Dasein to the nothingness of Being disclosed by anxiety and boredom (Heidegger), but rather the claim addressed to me by "the pure form of the call." Receptivity (of the call) is thus constitutive of a subject without subjectivity, for it is neither a being nor a consciousness. Marion's early critique of conceptual and metaphysical idolization (cf., *God Without Being* and *The Idol and Distance*) finds its complementary gesture in the critique of subjectivity, for the subject is the idol of (one)self.

Given the breadth and the complexity of Marion's work, it can be a daunting task for the reader who comes as a novice to his thought to get an adequate grasp of all this. Thus, the need for a collection of some of his most representative texts becomes apparent. It is this need that the present book seeks to satisfy.

Anthologies follow the economic logic of sacrifice: they give up a good in exchange for another. Thus in exchange for the handiness of a compact collection of texts they sacrifice the completeness of vision that their author had intended in placing them as integral parts to a whole from which they are now extracted. Thus, anthologies are utilitarian, but fragmentary. Their unity, if any, is oftentimes superficial, bestowed by a common theme (e.g., an anthology on aesthetics), or a single author (e.g., an anthology of Husserl's writings). In *Jean-Luc Marion: The Essential Writings* the reader will find an

exception to this rule. Yes, all the texts collected here are by a single author, but unlike other such collections, the selection of texts offers a unity of vision of its own. That is, even though they have been taken from a series of books by Marion—and indeed, given the nature of Marion’s work as briefly described above, from quite disparate kinds of works—nevertheless, they form their own narrative. Neither arbitrary nor predictable, the felicitous selection is indebted to the editor’s thorough and thoughtful familiarity with Marion’s works. The new story that the selection of these texts presents here could be called, not without some exaggeration, Marion’s latest book—an *opus hors-série*. Was it not, after all, the practice of such famed composers like Handel to put together new works by rearranging parts of older compositions? What I am trying to say is that reading these texts in precisely this order and in this arrangement sheds new light on them even for the reader who was acquainted with them in their original version. My only criticism is that the source of each text is not clearly indicated, and thus in order to find from where each chapter of the present anthology is taken the reader has to search for the corresponding annotation on the back of the volume. Perhaps this too was intended by the editor as a device that would let the texts stand on their own.

Nevertheless, and in order to facilitate the reader’s navigation through this thick forest of texts, I would like to present in a summary a description of the collection at hand. It is divided into five major parts, each corresponding to one of the main areas to which Marion’s work has made decisive contributions. Thus part two takes the reader through Marion’s work in phenomenology; part three represents Marion’s contributions to the history of Cartesian scholarship; part four is comprised of a selection of works that exemplify Marion’s preoccupation with theological questions; and part five provides the reader with a selection of Marion’s development of a philosophy of love. The shortest section of the anthology, part one, sets forward some of the background influences and key themes that permeate Marion’s work. Thus, as it might be expected, part one borrows texts from the early works, *The Idol and Distance* and *God Without Being*; part two from the phenomenological trilogy mentioned above, with the addition of texts from *The Visible and the Revealed*; part three includes texts from each of Marion’s major monographs on Descartes, as well as from *Cartesian Questions* and *On the Ego and God*; part four brings together some of Marion’s contributions that were published in two edited volumes, namely *Mystics: Presence and Aporia* and *Transcendence and Beyond*, as well as from Marion’s own *The Crossing of the Visible* and *The Visible and the Revealed*. Finally, part five offers some examples of Marion’s latest publications, namely *The Erotic Phenomenon*, *In the Self’s Place*, and *The Reason of the Gift* (the last one being Marion’s James W. Richard Lectures delivered at the University of Virginia in 2009).

Unlike other anthologies, this one is furnished with substantial introductions by the editor. Here again one could appreciate that Kevin Hart is not merely the redactor of the presented material. Rather, he draws from his own strengths and expertise as a philosopher and an experienced partner in the dialogue with contemporary philosophers and theologians in order to craft what this collection really is, namely, a proposed *course* of study through Marion’s works. Thus, his introductions offer an indispensable guide to the reader. The volume’s main introduction deserves some special consideration: this thirty-eight-page-long essay could stand on its own as one of the most helpful expositions of twentieth-century continental philosophy. It is, at once, a delightfully lucid introduction to phenomenology in general (no small feat by itself), as well as the best available introduction to Marion’s work, situating the French thinker in connection to other famous contemporaries and compatriots, such as Michel Henry, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida.

In short, the present volume will be of valuable assistance not only to the students of Marion’s work, but to any reader interested in the intellectual developments of contemporary continental philosophy. Indeed, it can serve as an introduction, in the best sense of the word, to this school of thought in general, by following the evolution of thought of one of its best representatives in particular. Undoubtedly, it will prove instrumental for classroom instruction, but no less beneficial to the educated reader.

NOTES

[1] Jean-Luc Marion, *Reduction and Givenness*, trans. by Thomas A. Carlson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), p. 4 and ff.

[2] Marion, *Reduction and Givenness*, p. 197.

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