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Manolopolous - When Marion's Theology Seeks Certainty - JCRT 4.1
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2. To be sure, when Jean-Luc Marion is being a theologian, he is one of the most brilliant theologians of our time. He is a thinker of the first order. Radical insight, rigor, and originality define his thinking. *However*, a disturbing thread runs throughout his writing—and it is this thread that needs to be highlighted and criticized, for it risks unraveling Marion's good work. This thread may be described as a *severe* or *excessive* dogmatism—a faith seeking certainty. I utilize predicates like “severe” and “excessive” to differentiate this kind of confidence from the possibility of a more moderate or modest conviction—a faith that recognizes itself as such. In other words, severe dogmatism severs itself from faith and reifies into certainty, thereby erasing the mark of humility required by theology today. After all, philosophical theology today should be self-conscious about its subject-matter, remembering that it is dealing with risk and possibility. Marion's work suffers from a lack of the undecidability which should characterize theology *as theology*: as a highly poetical and speculative discursive practice. I focus on two texts in which this excessive dogmatism is apparent: Marion's Preface to the English translation of *God Without Being* and the essay “In the Name” (which appears in the book *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*).
3. Before we turn to these texts, we begin by articulating the necessity of undecidability in theology. This articulation is informed by two thinkers, John D. Caputo and Robyn Horner, who not only concede but explicitly and vigorously dare to affirm the role that radical risk plays—or should play—in faith and theology. In the case of the former thinker, this affirmation is perhaps most poignantly expressed in *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*. Caputo outlines the significance of undecidability: it is “the element, the space in which faith makes its leap, the horizon in terms of which faith understands its limits, understands that it is faith” (*Prayers and Tears* 63). Undecidability is a condition of possibility for faith and decision. Caputo assures us: “undecidability does not mean the apathy of indecision but the passion of faith” (*Prayers and Tears* 338; cf. 26). Uncertainty is the context within which religious and theological (and any other kind of) decision takes place. Faith is “a decision made in the midst of undecidability” (*Prayers and Tears* 59). Could *faith* be anything else?
4. There is no question here of choosing or privileging either undecidability or decision, even if “undecidability precedes, follows, and permeates the decision” (*Prayers and Tears* 225). Caputo is here insisting on decision's—shall we say?—“other,” and not denying the significance of decision. To be sure, it is not a question of deciding between the one (decision) and the other (undecidability).
5. Caputo ties in the elements of undecidability and decision according to the logic of an aporetic and apophatic “faith without faith” marked by “atheism” and division: “Faith is a certain loyalty to itself which presupposes its own lack of identity, its own divided, undecidable, un-essence” (*Prayers and Tears* 64). Undecidability is not against faith—far from it: “A faith without faith is a decision inscribed in undecidability where undecidability is structurally ingredient in faith, not the opposite of faith but the element of faith” (*Prayers and Tears* 63).

And this kind of “faithless” thinking permeates Caputo’s admirably and openly self-conscious reflection and quasi-programmatic confession: “If they understand themselves well, if they learn to speak of themselves and faith and theology of God well . . . then they understand that they cannot . . . close the circle, finally and effectively to assure their own destination, truth, and validity” (*Prayers and Tears* 59). Dogmatism would play no part in this kind of faith.

6. Caputo also has a thing or two (or more) to say about the relation between undecidability, decision, faith, and *deconstruction*. (In the course of our discourse, deconstruction becomes a focal point.) Speaking on behalf of deconstruction—a practice whose pertinence increases as our discussion unfolds, Caputo explores a kind of double-movement when deconstruction broaches the question of undecidability: “Deconstruction is an exploration of as many ‘instants’ of undecidability as it has time (as it is given time) to study” and “it [deconstruction] always tends to say that the undecidability is permanent, that undecidability precedes, follows, and permeates the decision, that the undecidability is first, last, and always, but that decisions must be made and indecision broken” (*Prayers and Tears* 225). Deconstruction does not thereby deny or downplay decision, faith, and theology. On the contrary: “The effect of deconstruction is not to undo a specifically religious faith but to resituate it within the trace and thereby to let faith be faith, not knowledge or triumphalism. Deconstruction can have no brief against faith, because deconstruction is *itself* faith, miming and repeating the structure of faith in a faith without dogma” (*Prayers and Tears* 57). Caputo identifies a certain congruity between deconstruction and an apophatic faith: “Not only does deconstruction reinscribe the determinable faiths within undecidability, which is a very salutary reminder, but deconstruction’s undecidability goes hand in hand with a certain faith . . . and a certain passion of non-knowing [*Cinders* 75]” (*Prayers and Tears* 63-4). What theology may learn from deconstruction’s preoccupation with undecidability is a confirmation of what we have already noted: that the resistance to dogmatism does not involve the strategy of *favoring* the role of undecidability but insisting on its *recognition*.
7. Another text which bespeaks undecidability is Robyn Horner’s *Rethinking God as Gift*. This text is suitable for at least two interwoven reasons. First, it is a thoughtful study—convincingly sympathetic and critical—of Marion’s phenomenology and theology. Second, Horner’s book is a very recent and rigorous example of a work, which constantly underlines and affirms the exigency of uncertainty in theology. (As an indicator of the remarkable degree to which Horner works undecidability into her discourse—or lets undecidability do its work in her discourse, the words “undecidable” and “undecidability” appear over forty times in the text.) Horner speaks of undecidability as “an uncertainty that becomes the very condition of possibility for faith itself.” She contrasts this position as an alternative to “a dogmatic assertion of a faith position” (*Rethinking God as Gift* 78). Horner defines dogmatism as “the desire . . . to harden [“traditions of”] interpretations into static doctrines” (*Rethinking God as Gift* 242). Belief becomes severely dogmatic when a *process of stasis* is implemented—and, I would add, where alternatives are concomitantly marginalized, hereticized, or silenced. A reifying certainty disintegrates the element of risk integral to theology.
8. Horner locates where the traces of undecidability are inadequate in the body of Marion’s *God Without Being*. Briefly and for instance—for the main text lies outside our current study, when Marion identifies the giver, the *es gibt*, Horner observes: “there is no undecidability about this giving” (*Rethinking God as Gift* 112). Horner is here referring to the passage that contains the statement: “Doubtless we will name it God” (*God Without Being* 105; emphasis added). Horner asserts that the word “undecidable . . . is not a word that Marion uses with sufficient

regularity to overcome all our doubts" (*Rethinking God as Gift* 174). *Rethinking God as Gift* concludes with a discussion of "In the Name" (*Rethinking God as Gift* 243-6). Horner assesses Marion's argument relating to mystical theology as a "convincing one" but her evaluation comes with a proviso: that "he remains within the betting ring"—that is, the "betting ring" of undecidability (*Rethinking God as Gift* 246). Marion's thinking would retain its rigor (only) if it is marked by uncertainty.

9. These powerful insights and assessments by Caputo and Horner will bear upon the texts we shall read. Remembering that uncertainty is *not* in favor of apathy, indecision, and faithlessness, but rather a *condition of possibility* of *pathos*, decision, and faith, Marion's texts shall be read with the following questions ringing in our ears: is Marion's work inhabited by an undecidability which marks faith with a certain kind of "atheism" and "division"? Does Marion's thinking at least traverse the polarities of certainty and uncertainty? Is Marion's writing informed by an undecidability which de-grades dogmatism and triumphalism? Does Marion's theology understand itself well enough that it does not "close the circle"? Or does Marion, from time to time, step outside the "betting ring" of undecidability and onto solid ground?
10. The first text to be analyzed is Marion's Preface to the 1991 edition of *God Without Being*. The context needs to be outlined, since it *may* provide a *partial* justification for what Marion states. *God Without Being* is obviously a controversial book. Perhaps a first and fundamental "accusation" is the superficial charge of "atheism": after all, Marion argues for a God "without being." So, in the Preface to the English translation, Marion attempts to assuage the doubts and anxieties of those readers who may misunderstand him as someone who refuses God's "being." Keeping this kind of context in mind, I quote Marion's rejoinder: "The whole book [*God Without Being*] suffered from the inevitable and assumed equivocation of its title: was it insinuating that the God 'without being' is not, nor does not exist? Let me repeat now [1991] the answer I gave then [1982]: *no, definitely not. God is, exists, and that is the least of things*" (*God Without Being*, pp. xix-xx; emphasis added).
11. Is not Marion assuring us that he knows that God "is"? Marion is convinced that God "exists." His answer is categorical, definitive. He is certain, sure. For Marion, God's "thatness" is not a question. Now, surely the question of God's "existence"—rather than being "the least of things"—must *remain a question* as well as an assumption. If completely honest, philosophical theology would *traverse* the polarities of doubting-God's-existence and assuming-God's-existence. Refiguring Marion's claim, this means that the issue of God's "being" is *both* "the least of things" *and* "the greatest of things." Otherwise, privileging either one or the other of these oppositions risks validating the extremes of atheism and fideism. Marion's statement is decidedly one-sided. Where is the trace of undecidability in Marion's decision? Recalling Caputo's comment on the way that faith is divided, Marion has chosen to remain fixed on one side. The atheism in/of faith is erased, transfiguring faith into something other-than-faith. Without an element of doubt, philosophical theology risks becoming emphatically dogmatic. If God's existence "is the least of things," where, then, is the place of *faith* in theology? Where is the *risk* of faith in theology? Where is theology's *negativity*? In the context of such certainty, how can we take seriously God's radical hiddenness and mystery? One could echo Caputo's question: "Who has been authorized to speak for the *tout autre*? Who has the status and standing to decide its undecidability?" (*Prayers and Tears* 115)
12. Two "defenses" may be proffered. First, we should, of course, remember the volatile reception Marion is responding to. But the element of undecidability needs to be iterated and reiterated

in theological works to ensure their rigor *as theological works*—even in the face of unjustified presumptions of atheism. Otherwise, we return to the excessive violence of dogmatism. A second defense is the possibility that Marion’s emphatic response may be a rare occurrence in his work. This possibility is undermined in view of the fact that Marion’s certainty exudes a certain *constancy*. Marion states unequivocally: “Let me repeat now [1991] the answer I gave then [1982].” Marion has not wavered over time when it comes to his certitude over God’s existence. On the contrary and according to Marion’s own words, his assuredness is worth repeating; it repeats itself. (The repetitive nature of Marion’s certainty therefore lends credibility to its description as a “thread.” I utilize the nuanced term “thread” in the introduction.) And, of course, this certitude returns with a vengeance in the 1997 presentation of “In the Name.”

13. “In the Name” is, characteristically, an exemplary theological work. (Particularly convincing is the exposition of the Dionysian “third way.”) But what is disturbing is Marion’s treatment of unitarian and trinitarian theologies and theologians, the way his stance contaminates the undecidability required by philosophical theology today when it comes to the question of the “nature” of God, and the alliance Marion postulates between orthodoxy and deconstruction.
14. I begin with a rudimentary structural analysis. The essay is framed by anti-Arian references. The discourse opens with a quote from Basil of Caesarea’s *Against Eunomius*. (Eunomius was an eminent Arian.) The text ends with a discussion between Marion and Jacques Derrida over the unitarian controversy. And a criticism of Arian thinkers runs through pages 35 to 37: this occurs at the half way point of the text. (The text begins on page 20 of *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*; the text—which includes the discussion with Derrida and notes relating to the essay—ends on page 53.) One can already begin to see, from a superficial structural examination, that Marion’s essay is determined by its confrontation with unitarianism: it opens, closes, and is divided by references to the Arian question. Obviously, the text is not exclusively committed to the question of mystical theology and “de-nomination” but is (also) transfixed by what would be the most divisive Denomination in Christianity’s ecclesial history: trinitarianism versus unitarianism. (It almost goes without saying that Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and most forms of Protestantism agree that the deity is a Trinity.)
15. Marion’s ability to identify a relation between unitarianism and a metaphysics of presence is not the problem—or at least the question we are dealing with here. On the contrary, Marion’s argument is convincing. Moreover, it could even be proposed that Marion is not explicitly suggesting in this essay that unitarianism is a wrong way to think divinity *per se*, but that Arianism fails *insofar as* unitarians like Acacius “made unreserved use of the lexicon of the ‘metaphysics of presence’” and that Eunomius “uncritically submitted God to a metaphysical conceptuality” (“In the Name” 35). The citations offered by Marion reinforce his analysis. But Marion’s reading seems to go beyond a measured critique and subsequent rejection of what is metaphysical in early Arian theology and signals a broad and vindictive swipe at unitarianism—the “adversary”—as well as a concomitant approval of orthodox theology and its alignment with deconstruction. (Marion argues that the Arian is the “adversary” of both orthodox theology and deconstruction [“In the Name” 36]). And the ways in which Marion’s criticisms and approvals are carried out disclose the severity of the dogmatism which motivates it.
16. Marion’s conclusions seem very one-sided, without risk, without hesitation. Having referred to the “quasi-deconstructionist” Basil—whose quote, we remember, headlines Marion’s es-

say—Marion concludes: “Consequently, if *one* of them plays the role of a metaphysician of presence, it can *only* be the Arian, Acacius, or Eunomius. . . . Here deconstruction and [orthodox or at least Capodocian] theology can be in agreement, for the sake of contesting the same adversary—not the orthodox theologian, but the Arian, the *sole* metaphysician of presence” (“In the Name” 36; emphases added). Although Marion should be commended for qualifying these pronouncements with the qualifiers “if” and “here,” the qualifiers are nevertheless followed by very self-assured language: “*one* of them plays the role of a metaphysician of presence” and that “it can *only* be the Arian,” “the *sole* metaphysician of presence.” The “one” and “only” Arian plays the “sole” role of a metaphysician of presence. I turn to the content of this conclusion below, and merely register its *tone* here. It seems to be a strikingly sweeping claim. Any hedging of this bet (the “if” and the “here”) is erased by its language of totalization. Any sign of a gamble disappears in a language of certitude: the gamble becomes a safe bet. Furthermore, this lexicon of certainty (“one,” “only,” “sole”) is amplified by the employment of a vocabulary of violence. Note the excessively hyperbolic form of Marion’s critique: the Arian is an “adversary” whose “affirmations *nail* God to the wall of presence”—and not only that: this crucifixion is undertaken “with *all metaphysical violence*” (“In the Name” 36; emphases added). To be sure, the *content* of this remark is justified, but its *expression* is disturbing. Is it not possible to account for this vindictive rhetoric on account of a fervent dogmatism which fuels it?

17. Turning to the content of Marion’s critique, several questions arise. But before they are presented, it should be noted that it would be unfair to assume that Marion could have addressed every possible issue. However, the following questions are presented to emphasize that, although the content of the thesis is convincing, it nevertheless remains one-sided. If Marion broached the question in a less dogmatic fashion, the following questions would not undermine Marion’s argument and would even lose their relevance. First, do the writings of trinitarians like Basil and the other Capodocian “Fathers” escape the logocentrism which marks much of Western thought? If Basil is a “quasi-deconstructionist,” does this preclude the possibility that Basil may also be a “quasi-onto-theologian,” slipping, from time to time, into a metaphysics of presence? While acknowledging the probability that “orthodox theology was in fact a powerful endeavor to deconstruct the naïve metaphysics of presence used by Arianism,” does this entail that orthodox theology escapes a metaphysics of presence—naïve or otherwise? (“In the Name” 47). Conversely, should we assume that Acacius and Eunomius are strictly or exclusively metaphysicians of presence, constantly “nailing God to the wall of presence”? Do they—and they alone—secure their thought in excessive dogmatism?
18. Kevin Hart recognizes the danger of a bifurcation between “metaphysical” and “non-metaphysical” theologies: “There are theologies which claim, implicitly or explicitly, to be wholly non-metaphysical, but which nonetheless find themselves entangled in metaphysics. And there are other theologies, perhaps the majority, which may appear thoroughly metaphysical but which are questioned from within by non-metaphysical elements” (*Trespass of the Sign* 97). If Kevin Hart’s observation on this question (or line of questioning) can be trusted, we would have to acknowledge the possibility (or probability) that the metaphysics of presence marks the work of *all* these thinkers and, conversely, that we should at least leave open the possibility that post-metaphysical elements mark even the ostensibly onto-theological writings of the Arians.
19. Moving beyond the question of metaphysical and post-metaphysical elements of either side, does undecidability factor decisively in the writings of either the Capodocians or the Arians

in relation to the “whatness” of God—in this case framed in terms of a Unity or Trinity? For, at least from a biblical perspective, the theologian cannot conclusively decide whether the God of the Hebraic and Christian Scriptures is unitarian or trinitarian. We refer, once more, to Kevin Hart: “The Bible presents the theologian with conflicting or inadequate evidence for even the most central doctrines of Christianity” (“Introduction to the 2000 Edition” xxiv). We tentatively hazard a guess—take a punt—and surmise that the element of risk would not have been sufficiently emphasized *by either side*. Part of this gamble rests on the perception that both sides seem to rest on one or the other side of the divide. And so we ask: has Marion himself moved beyond the dogmatism of the Arians and Capodocians—or at least provided a space for other possibilities for thinking God? Has Marion, in the name of rigor, *at least adopted* the position—posed *as if*—the question of unitarianism-versus-trinitarianism has been suspended, left open?

20. The exchange between Marion and Derrida at the end of the text also needs to be analyzed for its style and content, for it raises further issues relating to the question of dogmatism and deconstruction. Having concluded that “orthodox theology was in fact a powerful endeavor to deconstruct the naïve metaphysics of presence used by Arianism”—an observation which seems to hold—Marion goes on to say: “In that situation, I would say, the part of deconstruction was played by the orthodox theologians.” One could suggest that the phrase “I would say” indicates a kind of hesitancy on the part of Marion—and this is a good thing. (This hesitancy—which returns with Marion’s final words (see below)—should be kept in mind as we proceed.) Derrida responds by saying: “That is not surprising.” Marion’s riposte—which completes the essay and discussion—is: “I was surprised” (“In the Name” 47).
21. As a point of interest rather than direct relevance, Marion’s “surprise” reaction to the notion that deconstruction is purportedly on the side of the trinitarian theology of the Capodocians may be tentatively accounted for in the following way. I would submit that many of us have come to understand deconstruction as a way of hearing what has been marginalized and silenced—in other words, often the voices of “heretics.” (And it is precisely this word—“heretics”—that Marion utilizes in the essay to refer to Eunomius and Acacius. [“In the Name” 47]) Perhaps Marion is surprised because we usually figure deconstruction on the side of the oppressed. And since the oppressed in this particular case have been the Arians—suppressed as heretical and heterodox—it becomes possible to *assume* that Arianism would play the part of deconstruction. Of course, such an assumption is unwarranted insofar as Arianism is marked by a metaphysics of presence—as Marion convincingly demonstrates in his essay. But the identification of the oppressed with deconstruction perhaps explains Marion’s “surprise.”
22. Going by the transcript, this exchange comes off as more of an “interrogation” rather than an effort to seek Derrida’s opinion on the matter. An “interrogation” not so much in terms of the part played by Marion, but by the sense that Derrida’s answer seems unusually hasty or forced. Why hasty or forced? It seems surprising—even *strange* or *unusual*—that Derrida would respond to the broad claim that “the part of deconstruction was played by the orthodox theologians” with “That is not surprising” for a number of reasons.
23. First, Derrida is almost always hesitant to embark on discourses about theology in general, for his expertise lies in the fields of philosophy and literature. This hesitancy is demonstrated by Derrida in other texts, including the dialogue between himself and Marion over the gift which appears in the same collection of discussions and essays (*God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*).

Derrida states unequivocally: “I am interested in Christian theology, of course, although I am totally incompetent” (“On the Gift” 78). Taking seriously this admission of modesty and qualification, it seems unusual for Derrida to reply to the idea that deconstruction was on the side of orthodox theology with “I am not surprised.” (In Derrida’s “defense,” perhaps he took for granted the audience’s awareness that he (Derrida) is unfamiliar—or at least not an expert—on the theology of either the Capodocians or the Arians, and that therefore comments or commendations like “I am not surprised” are not meant to be authoritative.)

24. Furthermore, Derrida is not only reticent when it comes to speaking about theology: he is also somewhat reserved when it comes to discussing deconstruction. This is a striking admission, particularly when we may quite playfully but justifiably name Derrida “the father of deconstruction.” (Who else is more warranted than Derrida to speak in deconstruction’s name?) Nevertheless, Derrida has an aversion to speaking in the name of deconstruction, and makes the following exhortation during the debate with Marion over the gift: “deconstruction—I do not want to use this word and to speak as if I were speaking deconstruction” (“On the Gift” 71). Obviously, Derrida dislikes being deconstruction’s spokesperson.
25. So Derrida, by his own confessions, hesitates when speaking about either theology or deconstruction. But when Marion asks Derrida to respond to the discovery of an alignment between Capodocian theology and deconstruction, Derrida replies with an unqualified “That is not surprising.” This is indeed surprising. If Derrida is uncomfortable about speaking on behalf of deconstruction, then surely this unease would multiply when aligning one unfamiliar group of theologians with deconstruction at the expense of another little-known group. Not only is it impossible for Derrida to make an informed decision—for he knows little about the Capodocians and the Arians—but surely he would hesitate choosing one side over the other *in the name of deconstruction*. In other words, Derrida dislikes speaking in the name of deconstruction, let alone imposing upon one group of theologians the honor of having played the part of deconstruction, of having done the work of deconstruction, of having spoken in deconstruction’s name.
26. At the risk of speaking on behalf of either Derrida or deconstruction, I pose the following questions. Is not Marion’s attempt to align orthodox theology with deconstruction problematic? After all, is deconstruction partisan or does it seek to undermine and undo the dogmatism in all of our discourses? Would deconstruction *choose* between the Capodocians and the Arians—especially when both sides exude a certain confidence in relation to God’s thatness and whatness? Does deconstruction exclude or condemn—the way trinitarians and unitarians have excluded and condemned each other, the way Marion excludes and condemns the Arians for their metaphysics of presence? Speaking quite justifiably on behalf of Derrida—and perhaps deconstruction, Caputo announces: “When the Arians claimed that God is knowable and revealed by the names God is given, they were condemned. Of course, Derrida would be just as much worried over this inclination to exclude or ‘condemn.’” This quote (concealed as a note) deserves to be cited in full:

Far from being the inalterable fate of theology, or mystical theology, Marion contends, the ‘metaphysics of presence’ is actually a heresy. True theology is always a ‘theology of absence,’ not a metaphysics of presence. When the Arians claimed that God is knowable and revealed by the names God is given, they were condemned. Of course, Derrida would be just as much worried over this inclination to exclude or ‘condemn.’ Does not this condemnation of presence itself imply a desire for

presence, for the self-presence of an authoritative and self-gathering *ekklesia*? Does it not imply a politics of presence, an onto-theo-politics, a policing operation from which theology does not sufficiently distance itself? In one of its voices, Derrida says, mystical theology tries to be a little too authoritative about the secret, to say that nothing or no one can oppose this because mystical theology speaks from the heart of the secret as from the heart of truth and of hyper-fulfillment (“Sauf le nom” 66-7). It is always the other voice, the one that Derrida calls that of “hypercritique,” where nothing is assured, neither philosophy nor theology, that interests Derrida more. See Jean-Luc Marion (*God Without Being* 153) where Marion sides with the power of the bishop to enforce the law if a theologian breaks with the consensus. “Apostles of the Impossible” 218-219, note 9; cf. *Prayers and Tears* 47 including note 41.

27. And, *if I* were to speak on behalf of deconstruction, and *if* deconstruction were to play a part in theology, would it not play the part of subverting the Unity/Trinity binary upon which Marion’s essay and exchange hinges—the most fundamental and persistent of theological and ecclesial binaries? Would not deconstruction play with the thought of a trinit_arian_ God—or play on the slash of a trinit/arian God? Is it not possible that deconstruction-or-something-like-it would—in a vein similar but perhaps more radical than the “third way” of Dionysian thought—attempt to think God *otherwise-than-trinitarian-or-unitarian*?
28. And, at the double-risk of speaking anachronistically and in deconstruction’s name, we return to the question of Basil’s theology: if Basil is a “quasi-deconstructionist” (this is Marion’s term), does he at least “quasi-suspend” the question of the trinitarianism-or-unitarianism of divinity? Does he leave the question hanging? Does he see his trinitarianism for the gamble that it is?
29. We could, if we were really playful, read Marion’s decision that “the part of deconstruction was played by orthodox theologians” as “the part of deconstruction was *played* by the orthodox theologians”: “played” as in acted-out, simulated, or feigned. It is unlikely, however, that deconstruction could ever be *outplayed*.
30. Would not deconstruction play with these kinds of questions and possibilities? But excessive dogmatism denies the play of these thoughts. In this particular exchange between Marion and Derrida, deconstruction is reduced to a matter of choosing between one or the other side of the theological divide. Deconstruction becomes factional. I remind the reader that Marion qualifies his remark about orthodox theology playing the part of deconstruction with the words “I would say”—and this qualification is respected by casting my doubts as questions. It should be noted that the phrase “I would say” belongs to what may be called “a lexicon of humility”: “if,” “perhaps,” “maybe,” and so on. This vocabulary guards against our hubristic tendencies. But it seems this vocabulary is *inadequately* employed by Marion. Moreover, the inadequate deployment of a lexicon of humility is coupled with a competing terminology of certainty and violence, signaling a severe dogmatism.
31. Let us summarize the above considerations: (a) Derrida is not an expert in the field of theology (and especially in the specialized fields of Capodocian and Arian theologies); (b) Derrida dislikes speaking on behalf of deconstruction; and (c) it is possible that deconstruction would favor neither the Capodocians nor the Arians and would perhaps instead carry out the more radical work of deconstructing the binary upon which these theologies depend.

With these thoughts in mind, it could be suggested that Derrida was probably unprepared, taken unawares—in a word: *surprised*—by Marion’s conclusive remark. Perhaps Derrida was surprised by Marion’s alignment of orthodox theology with deconstruction, and could do no more than reply: “That is not surprising.” Having re-thought the issue, I doubt whether Derrida would re-confirm Marion’s decision or his own nonchalance—or at least re-confirm these *without suspicion or qualification*.

32. Marion’s final words in this exchange also demand commentary. In relation to the revelation that “the part of deconstruction was played by the orthodox theologians” and Derrida’s concomitance (“I was not surprised”), Marion responds: “I was surprised. In any case, I am very glad that we agree to a large extent on many issues and nevertheless *the questions remain open*” (“In the Name” 47; emphasis added). These final words—“the questions remain open”—are both intriguing and commendable. They are intriguing because Marion’s essay and exchange is constantly marked by vocabularies of certainty and violence—“one,” “only,” “sole,” “heretics,” “adversary,” and so on—and *yet* ends on an unequivocally equivocal note. And, according to the logic and language of humility, this equivocality is certainly commendable. The text closes with an affirmation of keeping the questions *open*. Marion expresses here a humility which renders theology honest, for these questions cannot and should not be closed. To be sure, Marion’s final words are not the only mark of humility in “In the Name.” After all, this essay is a confirmation of the unknowing inherent in apophatic theology. Marion states: “God therefore can be known only as not being known” (“In the Name” 36). But the fact that Marion *writes about* unknowing contrasts sharply with his excessive dogmatism. Philosophical theology today should allow the questions relating to the deity—the if, the what, the how, and so on—to remain open, and they can only remain unclosed by resisting the dogmatism which closes them.
33. In sum, Marion’s discourse on Arianism in “In the Name” may be said to be rigorous insofar as it quite convincingly highlights what is severely metaphysical in Arian theology. But the essay is undermined, first, by its style, which exudes a certitude that is disturbing. This bias is demonstrated not only in the text’s structure and style, but also in terms of its content. The idea that the orthodox theology of Basil and the Capodocians escapes a metaphysics of presence is questionable. Furthermore, the attempt to align deconstruction with orthodox theology is a move that warrants suspicion. And, finally, following the rigor and radicalism of deconstruction and a *radically apophatic* theology (the latter perhaps being a truer, more faithful ally of the former), Marion could have insisted on the possibility that a daringly self-critical post-metaphysical theology should situate itself in the space between or beyond unitarianism and trinitarianism, between or beyond orthodoxy and heresy. By attempting to situate ourselves according to this third way—perhaps something impossible but possibly *thinkable*—we may begin eluding a metaphysics of presence and possibly letting deconstruction *play with us*—rather than assuming that certain privileged individuals play the part of deconstruction.
34. A handy summary of the kinds of dogmatism at work in the two texts studied here, texts which circumscribe the “that” and “what” of God, is expressed in a quotation by Gregory of Nyssa which is reproduced in “In the Name” (52, note 49). In a two-part statement, Gregory asserts: “That God is, everyone knows; but to know what and how he [sic] is, that is beyond the reach of all natural beings” (*De Trinitate*, III, 16). The first part of the statement (“That God is, everyone knows”) is a certainty echoed by Marion in the Preface to *God Without Being* when he states: “God is, exists, and that is the least of things.” The second, ostensibly humble admission (“to

know what and how he is, that is beyond the reach of all natural beings”) is echoed in Marion’s affirmation of apophatic theology but is undone in the context of a discussion of theologies (Arian and Capodocian) which have often been framed by vocabularies of certainty and violence, precluding the possibility of alternative ways of thinking divinity. After all—and acknowledging the problems associated with a generalization of the following kind, do not these dogmas entail a certain circumscription of the “what” and “how” of God? Is there not a danger that these doctrines, be they trinitarian or unitarian, risk erasing the various aspects of the deity’s unknowability—including the thatness and whatness of God? It is interesting to note that Gregory of Nyssa prefaces his treaty on the Trinity with the qualification that we cannot know the “what and how” of God but then proceeds to theorize about the triune deity. Acknowledging the laudable qualification that God’s whatness and howness is “beyond the reach of all natural beings,” Gregory’s work nevertheless arouses suspicion: are not treatises like Gregory’s fundamentally formalizations or formulations of the “what and how” of God?

35. Despite the marks of modesty in Marion’s work, his writing nevertheless exudes a dogmatism which disturbs the rigor of his thinking and the trace of uncertainty. Whereas thinkers like Caputo and Horner recognize and affirm the trace of undecidability in theology, Marion transgresses the “betting ring” of undecidability and anchors his thought on solid ground, placing too many safe bets when it comes to God’s “existence” and “nature.” For when we assume the role of philosophical theologian, we need to acknowledge and affirm that we are playing with dice and placing our bets. After all, what is theology if not a risky business—*perhaps the riskiest?*

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