

Topic

This course will take up some of the basic texts in the controversial “theological turn” in French phenomenology that centers on the work of Jean-Luc Marion but also includes the writings of Chrétien, Henry and Lacoste (and others like Claude Romano). Levinas is the principal philosophical predecessor of the movement while its main theological inspiration is Hans Urs von Balthasar. Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, also belongs to the theological background of the movement. Of course the ultimate source and foundation of the entire movement is the work of Edmund Husserl, the “father of phenomenology,” whose work has been controversially appropriated and reworked by these figures. Levinas is a figure of such eminence in his own right that I treat him in a separate course. I am also offering a separate course this semester in the philosophy department on the phenomenology of Husserl which I strongly recommend (see my homepage for the readings in that course.) The so-called “new phenomenology” conceives itself as a radicalization of Husserlian phenomenology, purporting to follow the principle of “givenness” to its most radical conclusion. This allows the appearance of “excessive” or “saturated” phenomena that were precluded by Husserl, not by the “principles” of his philosophy, they say, but by his own limited attention to more garden variety phenomena. The debate about a “theological turn” was engendered by Dominique Janicaud’s claim that a purely philosophical method—phenomenology—was being “hi-jacked” for theological purposes by these thinkers, who contrived to fit pre-given theological conclusions to supposedly neutral phenomena. The response to Janicaud was that any full account of human experience includes religious experience—whence de Lubac’s claim that there is no pure human nature—and that Janicaud was attempting to cut this move off by invoking a rationalist, modernist and even scholastic understanding of “pure” philosophy. Whence the link of this movement to “postmodernism” or thinking God after onto-theo-logy. The most sophisticated version of the new phenomenology, and the one most explicitly based on a reading of Husserl (and Heidegger), is Marion’s, and so we will spend the first five weeks on his texts. Then we will give about two weeks each to the work of Chrétien, who articulates this approach in terms of a certain religious solicitation or address made to us in experience, then by Lacoste, who shows how Heidegger’s idea of being-in-the-world is written over by what he calls “liturgy,” and finally by Henry, who has worked out a version of this in terms of the pure “auto-affection” of “life.” I will work in Janicaud’s critique about midway through the semester.

Required Texts

Marion, Jean-Luc. *Being Given* (Stanford UP ppbk)
 In Excess (Fordham UP ppbk)
Henry, Michel. *I am the Truth* (Stanford UP ppbk)
Chrétien, Jean-Louis, *The Call and the Response*
Lacoste, Jean- Yves, *Experience and the Absolute* (Fordham UP ppbk)
Janicaud, Dominique, *Phenomenology “Wide Open”* (Fordham UP hardback; also on reserve)
Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”: The French Debate, ed. Courtine et al
(Fordham UP ppbk.)

Secondary Sources

Horner, Robyn, *Marion: A Theological Introduction* (Ashgate)
_____. *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion and Derrida*
Leask, Ian, ed *Givenness and God* (essays on Marion)
Carlson, Thomas, *Indiscretions* (Chicago)
Caputo and Scanlon, *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, “Roundtable” debate between Marion and Derrida. Also, take a look at my article on Derrida and Marion in that book.
Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (Crossroad ppbk., 1998)
See also the introductions to the various translations, which are often very helpful.

Course Requirements

- (1) Seminar Participation (20%)
- (2) 2 Research Papers (40% each)

These papers should be approximately 4,000-4,500 words long.

The paper should be prepared in accordance with a standard style sheet and should be correctly documented (notes and bibliography).

The topic of the first paper is on *Jean-Luc Marion* and of the second paper on any of the other authors studied in the course. Comparative studies are welcome so long as you are not starting from scratch with the comparative figure.

Deadlines:

Paper #1 - proposal due Oct. 3; paper due Oct. 24;

Paper #2 - proposal due Nov. 14; paper due Dec. 15

Office (HL 508)

Although I have scheduled office hours—Tuesday, 3:45-5:30, Wednesday, 1:00-4:15—you should, for safety's sake, make an appt in advance by email at johnncaputo@comcast.net (preferably) or jdcaputo@syr.edu.

Syllabus

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| August 29 | Orientation; Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," in <i>Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn"</i> , pp. 176-217; <i>Being Given</i> , Book I, "Givenness" |
| September 5 | Marion, <i>Being Given</i> , Book II |
| 12 | Marion, <i>Being Given</i> , Book IV |
| 19 | Marion, <i>Being Given</i> , Book V |
| 26 | Marion, <i>In Excess</i> |
| October 3 | Jean-Louis Chrétien, <i>The Call and the Response</i> , chs 1-2;
"The Wounded Word," in <i>Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn"</i> , pp. 147-75.
Paper #1 proposal due. |
| 10 | Chrétien, <i>Call and Reponse</i> , chs. 3-4. |
| 17 | Janicaud, <i>The Theological Turn of French phenomenology in Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn"</i> , pp. 16-103 |
| 24 | Eid Ul Fitr (no class)
Paper #1 due |
| 31 | Janicaud, <i>Phenomenology "Wide Open"</i> |
| November 7 | Lacoste, <i>Experience and the Absolute</i> , Part One |
| 14 | Lacoste, Part Two
Paper #2 proposal due |
| 21 | Thanksgiving |
| 28 | Michel Henry, <i>I am the Truth</i> , chs. 1-7; "Speech and Religion," in <i>Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn"</i> , pp. 217-241 |
| December 5 | Henry, <i>I am the Truth</i> , ch. 8 - end. |
| December 15 | Paper #2 due. |