

## The relevance of “givenness” for the Indian religious traditions

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### ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on comparing some of the main results of the European tradition of phenomenology of religion represented and further developed by Jean-Luc Marion. His views on the constitution of the “I” appear promising for a comparison when contrasted with the views on the same phenomenon in Indian religious traditions. Marion, whose rich work is mainly devoted to the philosophy of donation, discovered a new way that led him from the givenness of the object of knowledge/perception, to the understanding of self-givenness of the subject, to a new understanding of the experience of god. The author chooses as a starting point the central question in Marion’s work: the constitution of the “I” and the problem of whether it is able to constitute itself or whether something exists that constitutes the “I” beforehand without leaving the concept of subjectivity. For the Indian side, he offers examples for the way in which the constitution of the “I” takes place or not and what relevance a kind of givenness has in this context not only for a concept of the subject but also for the theistic ideas in Indian traditions.

### KEYWORDS

Jean-Luc Marion; Indian philosophy; phenomenology of religion; continental philosophy; subjectivity; Advaita Vedānta

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## I

Gift-giving and its implications may be characterized in the following way: No act of giving is without consequence. It entails obligations and duties. The recipient is requested to respond. Thus, on the one hand, giving means a kind of sharing, because only the one who possesses something can give something to another person who has not. On the other hand, the act of giving may also establish superiority, because one receives what one has not and runs into debts or dependency. Such a kind of inequality may turn into hierarchy. The relation caused by giving is characterized by two points: the giver and the receiver become closer through sharing but by getting into debt a distance occurs. In fact, the relationship can become dangerous by turning from hierarchy into violence.

Now, facing India: The society of classical India relies on the exchange of gifts (*dāna*).<sup>1</sup> Every member of the society is bound by the duty to give and to receive. In his famous essay on *The gift: forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies*,<sup>2</sup> Marcel Mauss analyses the gift in terms of reciprocity. For him giving, taking and replying are fundamental activities in which way archaic societies reproduce themselves and their social relations are realized.

The decisive point Mauss develops in his famous essay consists in his statement that the gift cannot be unanswered. In many cases it becomes an instrument with which the other, if it is a human being, can be impaired or even killed or if it is a god can be forced to act. The gift can become dangerous, impure or lead to agonal controversy. At the end of the second chapter entitled *Theory of the gift (Hindu classical period)* (Mauss, 1966: 53–59), Mauss characterizes the materialistic aspect of the gift in the following words:

The gift is thus something that must be given, that must be received and that is, at the same time, dangerous to accept. The gift itself constitutes an irrevocable link especially when it is a gift of food. The recipient depends upon the temper of the donor, in fact each depends upon the other (Mauss, 1966: 58).

For India Mauss' observations were be partly affirmed and partly criticized, because he interpreted the exchange of a gift on the background of reciprocity and expresses his wonder about its absence. Therefore in the reception of Mauss' essay it was discussed if gift-giving presupposes reciprocity or not (e.g. Heesterman, 1985: 36–37). There could be several reasons for a change in understanding the reciprocity like impurity, which leads to the unacceptability of a gift, or the liberality produced by the attitudes of asceticism.<sup>3</sup> In this context, a con-

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed description and relevance of literature about *dāna* see Heim, 2004: 4–28.

<sup>2</sup> Originally: *Essai sur le don: forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïque. L'Année Sociologique 1923–1924.*

<sup>3</sup> For a further elaboration of the concept of reciprocity and its parallels with theories of greeting (*abhivādanadharmā*) and return greeting (Michaels, 1997: 253–258); Michaels

nection with a philosophical method like phenomenology may seem surprising at first. But in fact the tradition of French philosophy, especially as represented by Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion, has discussed important conclusions of Marcel Mauss’ famous essay (Derrida, 1992: 6–60; Marion, 2012: 71–118). Both Derrida and Marion approach the culture of exchange and gift by commenting on Mauss’ research results on gift, exchange and giving, and developing their own thoughts in contrast to Mauss.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless both thinkers have a different approach in their criticism which is found in their different view of the phenomenological method. While Derrida concludes from his criticism on Mauss<sup>5</sup> that after the phenomenological reduction nothing is left and a “pure gift” does not exist, Marion understood the gift on the background of “givenness”.<sup>6</sup> In the following passages I will neither discuss the arguments of Derrida and Marion in detail, nor defend Mauss against their criticism. I rather would like to ask, if their main philosophical concept developed in critical dispute with Mauss can also be applied to India.<sup>7</sup> Concerning this question I mainly refer to Marion’s phenomenology of “givenness”.

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points to the development of a “liberal spirit” under the influence of asceticism, which loosen up the exchange of gifts; he writes: “The return gift to a *dāna* is thus left ungiven not because the gift contains the giver’s defilement but because ascetic generosity is the fundamental desideratum. Altruistic generosity [...] is an ascetic virtue (and in some cases meant specifically for ascetics). In order to approximate the required motive of disinterestedness, the attitude of giver and receiver must be, as far as possible, not of this world” (Michaels, 1997: 260).

<sup>4</sup> For a broader context of Derrida’s reception of Mauss and other philosophers, see Giovannangeli, 1992: 265–271.

<sup>5</sup> One of Derrida’s main criticisms developed against Mauss is that a gift is never understood as a gift, but only seen in the context of exchange. There are several passages one can refer to in Derrida’s essay *Given time*; cf. for instance Derrida, 1992: 13–14, 24ff.

<sup>6</sup> A concise summary of the different views on gift of Derrida and Marion gives Dalferth; contrasting Derrida’s concept of the complete negation with Marion’s self-given givenness, he says: “«Reine Gabe» gibt es nur, indem man von allem absieht, was Gabe zur Gabe macht (dem Geber, dem Empfänger, dem Gabeobjekt). Was aber bleibt von ihr, wenn man alles negiert, von dem man reden müsste, wenn von Gabe die Rede sein soll? *Nichts*, meint Derrida und negiert die Gabe als Phänomen, während Marion kontert, dass ohne Gegebenes nichts negiert werden könnte, so dass genau das Umgekehrte gelten müsse: *Alles* phänomenal Gegebene ist als Sich-Geben Gabe” (Dalferth, 2005: 85).

<sup>7</sup> A first (as far as I know) comparison of Derrida’s thought on the impossibility of the gift with the Indian gift of fearlessness was done by Maria Hibbets; she also points out that Mauss concept of gift cannot explain the gift of fearlessness (*abhayadāna*), which can be brought nearer to Derrida’s concept of gift. She writes: “That the gift of fearlessness is both demanding (to the point of being impossible) and unrewarded reminds one of work of another modern thinker, Jaques Derrida. In his recent reflections on the gift, Derrida has argued that the gift is an almost impossible ideal (Derrida, 1992: *passim*). He criticizes Mauss for not seeing any contradiction between the terms «gift» and «exchange». Derrida means by «gift» what anthropologists mean by «pure gift», that I, a purely disinterested, freely bestowed gift. Thus, Derrida’s analysis leaves no room for blurring the lines between exchange and gift (Derrida, 1992: 37). For Derrida, once the gift enters the cycle of exchange by an obligation to reciprocate

If we take Marion's critique against Marcel Mauss seriously, it is not only necessary to reconsider the gift, it is also important to look for additional material. Seeing both Marion and Mauss in context raises the following question: can we ask about the Indian tradition, if the gift not only has its place in the realm of exchange and reciprocity, but points to a gift that is diametrically opposed to it? If so, the gift and that which is connected with it in Indian tradition is not only seen against the background of exchange and reciprocity, but it can also exemplify of what Marion tends to show: Giving in India can also be understood beyond reciprocity or economical exchange.

Marion, who follows the classical phenomenological method of reduction, directs his criticism of Mauss' observations against three dimensions of the gift, that is the giver, the receiver and the gift itself (Marion, 2012: 83). Hence, the path leads from the giver to the one who receives the gift; if any exchange of gift takes place, the gift is immolated for exchange. Why does Marion try to save the gift from exchange? In the following a few remarks on Marion's concepts are made in order to clarify the background of his argumentation against Mauss.

## II

In the second chapter of *Etant donné* [Being given], Marion extends his concept of "givenness" and exemplifies it in its relation to the role of the gift. Referring to Derrida's remarks on the gift, and contrasting his own view against Derrida, Marion goes a step further. He does not make a claim for the impossibility of the gift like Derrida, but tries to affirm it and to connect it with "givenness". The originality of Marion's access is a transformation of the phenomenological method by which he elaborates the character of "givenness" of any reality. What Marion is interested in he describes by the word phenomenality which he explains as something that presents itself on a specific presupposition and thus becomes a phenomenon.<sup>8</sup> For example: something reveals itself not by means of human understanding but as far as something can reveal itself by itself. The manner in which something is seen by the subject is different from the way in which something that is given appears by itself.<sup>9</sup>

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cate, it ceases to be a gift and becomes just another kind of trade, distinguished from other economic transactions only by the extension of time for its return" (Hibbets, 1999: 454–455).

<sup>8</sup> Marion stresses the phenomenological status of givenness in another essay: "My intention in this essay will only be to verify the strictly phenomenological status of givenness, and therefore to understand it as a mode of phenomenality and not as an ontic given — as a givenness (*Gegebenheit*), and not as a metaphysical and ontological foundation" (Marion, 2011: 20).

<sup>9</sup> One of Marion's descriptions what happens on the side of the subject in case of apparition of something given is as follows: "as soon as apparition dominates appearing and revives it, the subjective specifications of appearance by this or that sense are no longer essentially important: whether I see, touch, feel, or hear it, it is always the thing that comes upon me each

Marion points out what presupposes each phenomenon. Whatever can be seen or can be known is preceded by a dynamism of self-giving. His phenomenological method is marked by the key terms, namely “reduction” and “givenness”, when he connects both according to his maxim: the more reduction, the more “givenness”. He characterizes their mutual dependency in the following words:

The reduction measures the level of givenness in each appearance so as to establish its right to appear or not. [...] nothing appears except by giving itself to and in the conscious I, but only what can give itself absolutely to consciousness also succeeds in giving nothing less than what appears in person (*Selbstgegebenheit*). Once again, there is no givenness that does not pass through the filter of reduction; there is no reduction that does not work toward a givenness (Marion, 2012: 15).

For him reduction means removing the obstacles which prevent something from self-manifestation.

The privilege of appearing in its appearance is also named manifestation — manifestation of the thing starting from itself and as itself, privilege of rendering i t s e l f manifest, of making i t s e l f visible, of showing i t s e l f (Marion, 2012: 8).

Thus, the term reduction helps to understand the difficulty of how to approach reality in a way that it can appear or become manifest by itself before it is objectified or viewed within a specific context. The context for the gift would be its exchange. Marion explains the act of giving oneself as a gift which is received and for which no gift in return can be claimed (Marion, 2012: 75ff.). He applies his method by successively bracketing the giver, the receiver and the gift itself. Such an application of the method of *epoché* liberates the gift from endless exchange, from objectification and from the danger of superiority, hierarchy, *etc.* Presupposing that “givenness” remains and can still occur after bracketing the giver, the receiver and the gift, and after having shown that within this relationship a gift can never take place, Marion summarizes:

From now on, the three terms of the gift are practiced in terms of givenness only by submitting to the reduction. They become pertinent, with regard to givenness, only to the degree that they are immanent according to the reduction. Showing itself is equivalent, once again, to giving i t s e l f (without exchange). And reciprocally, what gives i t s e l f without return or exchange arrives in the end at this unreserved abandon, the visibility of the phenomenon that gives i t s e l f (Marion, 2012: 116).

Marion’s thinking is also critical towards positions which presuppose a context in which something appears or can be derived (for example through *a priori*)

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time in person. And the fact that it comes upon me only in parts and in outline does not stop it from coming to me in the very flesh of its apparition” (Marion, 2012: 8).

from its being a phenomenon. He criticizes the subject's approach which may also anticipate that which can give itself; in this case something cannot appear in the way it appears by itself. Marion's method of phenomenology also in context with other religious traditions shows that the phenomenon always has a surplus which can never be sublated by the intentionality of a human being. For Marion the phenomenon of "givenness" throws the receiving subject into passivity or, as he puts it, in the dative case because something always is given to a subject. We cannot change the way in which something gives itself; it does not mean that our process of understanding is already predicted but the way something gives itself by itself cannot be influenced.

Before I come back again to Marion's thoughts on "givenness", I will point to an example of the Indian tradition, which refers to Marion's connection between "givenness" and gift and tries to point out that a gift is not only given by the intension of reciprocity but transcends any kind of material exchange. However is it possible to speak of a gift without reciprocity?

### III

There are many aspects of the regulation of giving and of receiving which constitutes and affirms the identity of classes in Indian society. Here, one can differentiate between the receiver (*pātra/pratigraha*), the giver (*dātr*), the object which is given, how something is given (*dānavidhi*), and the result of the giving (*dānaphala*).<sup>10</sup> The result is especially important for the believe in the continuity of life after death or who seek immortality. According to this view, one believes: whatever is given may come back in/for another life. Or in other words, life is regulated by the idea of retribution in another life. I will offer a few examples of how the gift is reflected on the basis of reciprocity and how the giver or the receiver are qualified.<sup>11</sup>

One relevant aspect of the gift is expressed when the relationship between the *varṇas* is described; the necessity to give and to accept is taught for instance in the *Manusmṛti* 1.88–90:<sup>12</sup>

To Brāhmaṇas he assigned teaching and studying (the Veda), sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of alms). The Kṣatriya he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures. The Vaiśya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate land.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See Brekke, 1998: 290, with reference to the Jain tradition.

<sup>11</sup> For a good overview of the development of *dāna*, see Thapar, 2000: 521ff.

<sup>12</sup> For the following translations I quote Bühler, 1970.

<sup>13</sup> *Manusmṛti* 1.88–90: *adhyāpanam adhyayanam yajanam yājanam tathā / dānam pratigraham caiva brāhmaṇānām akalpayat // prajānām rakṣaṇam dānam ijjādhyayanam eva ca*

Examples for the religious merit of the gift can be found in the seventh chapter of the *Manusmṛti* verse 84–86:

The offering made through the mouth of a Brāhmaṇa, which is neither spilt, nor falls (on the ground), nor ever perishes, is far more excellent than Agnihotras. A gift to one who is not a Brāhmaṇa (yields) the ordinary (reward; a gift) to one who calls himself a Brāhmaṇa, a double (reward); a gift to a well-read Brāhmaṇa, a hundred-thousandfold (reward); (a gift) to one who knows the Veda and the Aṅgas (Vedapāraṅga, a reward) without end. For according to the particular qualities of the recipient and according to the faith (of the giver) a small or a great reward will be obtained for a gift in the next world.<sup>14</sup>

Prescriptions for the exchange of gifts cannot prevent the act of giving from failing. Thus, many examples, for instance if the gift is poisoned,<sup>15</sup> show that giving, receiving or accepting under the condition of exchange did not succeed, neither for the giver, nor for the receiver. Exchange does not always find a positive end, if it takes place under reciprocity. At this place the criticism of Derrida and of Marion, even they differ in their views, seems to be justified.

The gift cannot be seen as a gift in itself, it is dissolved in exchange. Either the giver or the receiver has an advantage or a disadvantage and is affected adversely. Exchange often lies completely in the realm of economy and reciprocity is in danger to be lost in imbalance. The insight may occur that stability or certainty is never guaranteed. A rest of incertitude always remains as do the danger of inequality and the possibility of transgression.

Against such an experience of potential instability the development of asceticism may be seen as one result. I do not want to give reasons for the sources of asceticism in India (around 600 BC) but in order to change the way we think about the function/meaning of the gift it is important: asceticism runs contrary to any reciprocity of exchange. The view on gift and giving get a new meaning in this context. It is well-known that the Indian *saṃnyāsīn* is a person who leaves society to acquire immortality and is declared ritually as dead in the social world. The world of obligation, relations, ritual activities ruled by the law of vedic *dharma* is forever and irreversibly left; in this way everything changes for the *saṃnyāsīn* for whom the new situation becomes manifest and can be exemplified by a different view on his body. Patrick Olivelle describes this changing view as

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/ viṣayeṣv aprasaktim ca kṣatriyasya samādiśat // paśūnām rakṣaṇam dānam ijjādhyayanam eva ca / vanikpatham kusīdam ca vaiśyasya kṛṣim eva ca // . Sanskrit text is quoted according to Jolly, 1887.

<sup>14</sup> *Manusmṛti* 7.84–86: samam abrahmaṇe dānam dviguṇam brāhmaṇa bruvē / sahasraguṇam ācārye anantaṃ vedapāraṅge // pātrasya hi viśeṣeṇa śraddadhānatayaiva ca alpam vā babu vā pretya dānasyāvāpyate phalam //.

<sup>15</sup> For cases of poison in the gift, see Heim, 2004: 58–64.

the body's "deconstruction".<sup>16</sup> The *saṃnyāsin* distances himself from his own body and also from any earlier ideal of obtaining immortality, *e.g.* offspring. He does not only leave his social existence, the realm of exchange and reciprocity, and his physical body, but also the traditional way of accepting food. He can accept food, but cannot give food to anybody. He completely breaks out of the circulation of food. It is not only the renunciation of a worldly life, but the avoidance of any action caused by the physical body. Nevertheless, a relation to the world exists which is unaffected by the perishable body (now seen as a corpse) and uninfluenced by factors which before had formed the social life. He lives a new way of being which can be described by the change from fear to non-fear/fearlessness (*abhaya*). But why it is necessary to be without fear? Fear, that is the natural state of *saṃsāric* existence, causes birth, sickness, aging, and death in living beings.<sup>17</sup> Fear is both: something from which beings should try to escape through religious exertion and something without which the very same exertion is not possible.<sup>18</sup> Freedom from fear is an important aspect of religious realization in Indian tradition.<sup>19</sup>

The renouncer who has left every social connection is alone. He depends on nothing. He is without a second and this is a necessary condition for his fearlessness. As such, he can be identified with a so-called *brahman*, who is often characterized by the epithet "fearlessness" (*abhaya*). Fearlessness is complemented by immortality (*amṛta*). The sentence "He is the immortal, free from fear; he is *brahman*" (*etad amṛtam abhayam etad brahmeti*) is repeated six times in the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*.<sup>20</sup>

The important thing is that the renouncer in his state of being fearless, of his being immortal and of being *brahman*, donates the gift of fearlessness (*abhayadāna*), which is again connected with the precept of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), to all living beings.<sup>21</sup> What is given by the renouncer exists beyond any reciprocal exchange of gifts. The giver does not give any "material" substance, *i.e.* something to be consumed; as *brahman* he gives himself in a way, or one could say: it is the *brahman* who gives itself. As the highest *brahman* he is indeed self-given, independent, he reveals himself by himself and is in no way

<sup>16</sup> See Olivelle, 1995: 190: "The ascetic deconstruction begins with the body itself. Far from being something intrinsically pure that is under constant threat of impurity, ascetic discourse presents the body as impure in its very essence, the source indeed of all pollution."

<sup>17</sup> See Olivelle, 1995: 193: "The stability and security of a house is just as illusory as that of a body. A house represents all that is evil in social living; lust, sex, attachment, and prolongation of *saṃsāric* life. An ascetic has rejected it and freed himself from home."

<sup>18</sup> For this and other aspects of fear (*bhaya*) see Brekke, 1999: 439–467.

<sup>19</sup> For examples of freedom from fear (*abhaya*) in the *Bṛhadārāṇyaka-Upaniṣad* (like 4.2.4; 4.3.32–33; 4.4.25) see Geene, 2007: 61–70.

<sup>20</sup> See *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 4.15.1; 8.3.4; 8.7.4; 8.8.3; 8.10.1; 8.11.1.

<sup>21</sup> Heim indeed observes that it is difficult to classify the *abhayadāna* in the literature of Dharmaśāstra; see, for example, Heim, 2004: 122.



objectifiable. The recipient of the donation of fearlessness (*abhayadāna*) receives more than he can give back. Nevertheless, this kind of donation is still ambivalent, since the *saṃnyasin* stands outside of the world (he is ritually declared as dead), but it is also relevant for the world which receives peace in this way — more than it is possible to return.

If the renouncer stands outside of the reciprocity of the gift it is also clear that the meaning of *brahman* as one without a second (*advaita*) becomes a practical meaning. Without fear means without death, pain, rebirth — everything which could also be related to the dangerous exchange of a gift, or may be seen as a consequence of exchange. Being without fear also implies the consequence of non-injury (*ahimsā*). Being without fear (*abhaya*) is realized in complete independence and freedom, which protects the renouncer eternally from any second person that could endanger his life or force him into reciprocity; nevertheless, he is giving but not something material which might bind him back to the world.

Being without fear is possible, because the renouncer is completely independent from anything else; no reason precedes the *brahman* as the finite reason and thus the human being can experience himself as self-given. Only through him, who is out of this world, can the world receive non-injury, *i.e.* peace or freedom. However, this is more than the world can give back.<sup>22</sup> The idea that freedom from fear is an important aspect of the highest spiritual attainment is present in the Upaniṣads as well as in the Vedānta tradition taught by Śaṅkara. One example from the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.7:

For when a man finds within that invisible, incorporeal (*anātmya*), indistinct, and supportless essence, the fearless state on which to rest, then he becomes free from fear.<sup>23</sup>

Śaṅkara comments on this passage and explains the difference between fear (*bhaya*) and non-fear (*abhaya*) by pointing out the need of a second or the absence of a second. For him it is impossible that fear arises by itself, thus the state of being alone means release from fear:

If he is the one who is steadfast in his own being, then he sees nothing else, hears nothing else, knows nothing else; [this is the case] because fear arises from somebody and by somebody; fear is impossible by itself for itself. Therefore, one is exclusively by one self the cause for fearlessness. If there are causes for fear, they will be completely known by *brahman*, who is without fear. And this [being without fear] would be impossible if *brahman*, who protects from fear, does not exist. At what time can the result of being without fear

<sup>22</sup> For a later development of *abhayadāna*, especially for the king, who protects every living being and thus gives fearlessness, see Hibbets, 1999: 442: “The description of security as something that the ruler can offer indicates that fearlessness is not regarded as the natural human condition — it has to be supplied by the generosity of the righteous king.”

<sup>23</sup> Trans. Olivelle, 1998: 305. *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.7: *yadā hy aiṣa etasminn adrśye ‘nātmye ‘nirukte ‘nilayane ‘bhayaṃ pratiṣṭhitāṃ vindate. atha so ‘bhayaṃ gato bhavati.*

be proved? [Answer: When he sees nobody else and no difference occurs in the self, then fearlessness arises; this is the meaning of the passage of *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.7].<sup>24</sup>

Sureśvara, Śaṅkara's closest pupil, picks up the thought that fear (*bhaya*) is caused by duality and in contrast, fearlessness (*abhaya*) by the one *brahman* alone. Duality arises by ignorance (*avidyā*), which means dependency on a second and the existence of fear. Thus the state of release can only be a state of fearlessness. Sureśvara describes the difference between ignorance and *brahman*, i.e. between fear and non-fear in the following verses, which comment partly on Śaṅkara's explanations:

“Having [erraneously] imagined by ignorance the one real existing self as manyfold, the one, who is ignorant, may attain fear, even he is by his own nature without fear (466).”

“Because one accepts by the word *hi* [in the quotation of *Brhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad* 1.4.2]] a second, which is the cause for fear, the Śruti has declared at another place: “By a second indeed, fear [arises] (467).”

“By which duality/secondness fear is caused, this comes into being by ignorance; if ignorance is burnt by the right knowledge of *brahman*, fear arises from nothing else (725).”

“Fear does not rise from something else, when ignorance is removed by knowledge of the highest Self in the pure inward self (726).”<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, for the further development of the philosophical tradition in particular, the Advaita Vedānta, the meaning of *brahman* as *svataḥsiddha*, *sva-yaṃprakāśa*, *svayamjyoti*, etc. always implicates the meaning of „being already self-existent/self-given/self-shining“ without any dependence from something else.

It is always something that happened or existed before any initiative from the subject's side can take place. The *brahman* cannot be alienated by any individual or subjective tendency. Something that has existed earlier than me as a finite individual in its own *samsāric* existence. If one would like to go one step further it

<sup>24</sup> Śaṅkara's TUBh [= *Taittirīya-Upaniṣadbhāṣya*] zu TU 2.7: *atha tadā sa tasminn nānāvāsyā bhayahetor avidyākṛtasyādarśanād abhayaṃ gato bhavati. svarūpapraṭiṣṭho hy asau yadā bhavati, tadā nānyat paśyati, nānyac chr̥ṇoti, nānyad vidyatyādi. anyasya hy anyato bhayaṃ bhavati, nātmana evātmano bhayaṃ yuktam; tadmād ātmaivātmano'bhayakāraṇam. sarvato hi nirbhayā brahmaṇā dr̥śyante, satsu bhayahetuṣu; tac cāyuktam asati bhayatrāṇe brahmaṇi. tasmāt teṣāṃ abhayadarśanād asti tadabhayakāraṇam brahmeti. kadā 'sāv abhayaṃ gato bhavati sādhaḥ? yadā nānyat paśyati, ātmani cāntaraṃ bhedam na kurute, tadābhayaṃ gato bhavatyābbhiprāyah.*

<sup>25</sup> Sureśvara's TUBHV [= *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya-Vārtika*], Brahmavallī, Verse 456; 466–467: *nirbhayo 'pi svato 'vidvān ekaṃ santam anekadhā / prakalpyāvidyātmānaṃ tam eva bhayaṃ āpnuyāt // bhayahetor dviṭīyasya hiśabdena pariḡrahāt / dviṭīyād vai bhayaṃ hīti śrutir uccairato 'nvaśāt //*. And the same meaning 725–726: *bhayahetor dvayaṃ yasmāt tac cāvidyāsamudbhavam / pluṣṭāyāṃ vidyayā tasyāṃ na kutaś cana bhīrbhavet // paramātmadhiyaitasmin pratyaḡātmani kevale / nirastāyāṃ avidyāyāṃ bhayaṃ nāsti kutaścana //*

is interesting to see that the neuter *brahman* itself is understood in later tradition of the Advaita Vedānta as an experience (*anubhūti/anubhava*), which appears immediately but can in no way be acquired by any means of knowledge.

The concept of gift that is related to fear causing duality which is realized by the giver and the givee, finds its opposition in the concept of the renouncer who is not bound to any relationship based on duality; in contrast to the gift-giving relation the renouncer stands for the self-givenness of the neuter *brahman*. How can we bring this example closer to Marion's way of thinking?

#### IV

As we have said for his philosophical work, Marion's intention is to show that the human being is "gifted"; and this means: Whatever is done from the subjective side is already preceded by an answer to what was already given. In the same way one could say that the self-shining (*svayamprakāśa*) *brahman* cannot be influenced in his self-giving; whatever is added belongs to the realm of ignorance (*avidyā*).

Now, a comparison between Marion's study of givenness and the example of the Indian tradition, *i.e.* the renouncer who gives up any kind of relation, seems not in vain. Nevertheless, Marion's critical analysis of Mauss' research on the exchange of gifts exemplifies in another way what Marion works with: the more reduction, the more "givenness". The more the giver, the receiver and the gift can be bracketed, the more the gift, which can still exist, may appear in its "givenness" or "givenness" appears as a gift. The more the *samsāric* existence is left, the more the human being is understood in the light of being given. Like Marion argues against Mauss and shows from his own philosophical viewpoint and method, an understanding of gift without exchange, in the same way the Indian tradition itself develops by *abhaya-dāna* another or a new practice of giving and receiving.

The aspect of fearlessness is not mentioned in Marion's work. In the Indian context not only the independence of the person who is free of any bondage plays an important role, but also the fact that as the more the renouncer becomes free from the reciprocal exchange of the gift the more he is without fear (*abhaya*); and this is exactly what he gives and which is only possible as "givenness". However, this seems like a paradox, because fearlessness (*abhaya*) is given without cause and without response to something which might be given before. This also makes identification with the neuter *brahman* plausible, which is self-grounded like the non-fear in contrast to fear, which always presupposes a second, who can cause fear.

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