

The Wake of Love: Critical Considerations of Steinbock's Gift

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DOI:10.22034/IYP.2021.525471.1029

Abstract:

In his book, *It's Not About the Gift: From Givenness to Loving*, Steinbock advances a new phenomenological analysis of the gift. In this analysis, the gift is not about what is being given but about the event of a loving relationship between two subjects. In this interpersonal relationship, the gift emerges as each beloved withdraws themselves to reveal the other as they are by being loved in humility. In this paper, I express two main challenges for Steinbock's account of the gift. The first concerns Steinbock's attempt to disengage the phenomenon of surprise from the possibility of the gift. The second involves his neglecting the body. This neglect raises serious questions about the kind of love during which the gift is supposed to emerge. In the epilogue, instead of a conclusion, I offer some thoughts on the gift that has yet to be given much attention in the philosophical discussion of the gift.

Keywords: gift, body, metaphysics of presence, Derrida, Steinbock, love, femininity.



Introduction

Philosophizing about the gift, in the sense of trying to define or phenomenologically describe what the gift is, carries on today even after Derrida's deconstruction, according to which the gift *is* an aporia.[1] For Derrida, the gift constitutes an aporia since it is impossible when it comes to its realization, but it is possible concerning its being somehow named and thought of. Thus, the gift suffers an "aporetic paralysis." (Derrida, 1992,p.28)

There have been many attempts to resist Derrida's analysis of/the gift. Marion's resistance, for instance, has refueled our philosophical interest in the gift by suggesting that the issue with the philosophy of the gift should not be about finding an adequate representation or, better yet, an accurate phenomenological analysis of or for the phenomenon of the gift.[2] Instead, it is to find instances in life that match our phenomenological description of the gift after having bracketed those elements Derrida identified that would otherwise make the gift (seem) impossible. For Marion, Derrida's work marks the limit of a phenomenological reduction, allowing us to bracket those elements that make the gift impossible (to find). It is within this spirit of tracing a different path for describing the gift that Anthony Steinbock.[3] Has recently written that the issue with the gift is not about the gift but loving. In his latest book, he attempts to show how the gift is not (about the) given gift or what is given(ness) but (what) emerges in a loving relationship with an Other.[4]

I want to raise some phenomenological concerns about Steinbock's account in this paper. The first one refers to his attempt to disengage the gift from being surprising. Steinbock is the first philosopher who attempts to separate the phenomenon of surprise from that of the gift. I want to raise some questions about the presuppositions that motivate this disengagement. The second phenomenological inconsistency concerns the body. Following Steinbock, if we accept that the gift emerges in the event of loving, that is, as we shall shortly explore, the taking place of the taking place of a loving (interpersonal) relation, then we are faced with the question of the body. Steinbock does not give any (phenomenological) account of the interpersonal relation in its embodied occurrence, and this raises serious questions about the (kind of) love in which the gift is supposed to emerge.

A Synopsis as a Beginning

I will employ Derrida's analyses as a reference point to summarise some of the issues concerning the gift. This decision is because Derrida's interrogation is extensive since most of his works deal with various aspects of the gift.[6] This will also help me raise the two issues I hypothesize are problematic in Steinbock's account. However, this is risky since, among the disseminated effects of this decision, one may wonder if I was using Derrida to fill the phenomenological gaps in Steinbock's account. This is not my intention, and by raising this concern, I hope that such a possibility does not over-determine the whole undertaking.

I will follow Derrida and start, as he does, with what would seem unequivocal about the gift. What could be a common understanding of the gift? A gift is something that we give to someone else. Insofar as we are all in agreement that a gift can be described or defined as 'someone gives something to someone else' or, to formalize it a bit, 'A gives C to B,' or $A \rightarrow(\text{gift})\rightarrow B$, then this conceptual representation can never take place as such without problems; or, with what Derrida calls reserves or remains. Furthermore, there are many. First, if the gift is justly defined by the above, anything we give that could harm someone must be registered as a gift. However, the gift is commonly presupposed to be something positive, something good for the other. Even if we amend the definition to 'someone gives something *good* to someone else,' the problems will remain. Moreover, these problems will not revolve only around the definition of the 'good' but about the realization of the linear structure of this gesture.

Briefly, for there to be a gift, A will have to give something and completely forget it; otherwise, the anamnesis or recognition of giving would destroy its linear structure since the anamnesis or recognition would take the form of a counter-gift as something exchanged for the gift, as something given-back. For instance, if I give a birthday present to my best friend, they cannot say thank you as this will destroy the linear movement required in the formula above. Nevertheless, even if they are ungrateful or keep silent, my memory of giving counts as giving something back to myself in a narcissistic exchange. For the same reason, as a giver, I should neither feel satisfaction nor contentment in giving. That is, if, when giving, I feel contentment,

then it would be as if I was giving something to myself in return: The “good conscience maintains the circle of exchange.” (Derrida,1974, p.59) If I were to give a gift, then I should not even tell a story about it; I should not in any way have a consciousness of my giving since that would defy the linearity of the formula above. To use a more technological example, if I were to (e)mail something to someone and track its reception, that would also destroy the possibility of being given since the certainty of reception comes back as a counter-gift. Even with social media, Snapchat, where the given message supposedly vanishes immediately after being sent, it would still not count as a gift since the possibility of tracking the sent item down through its servers and re-producing it would count as a counter-gift.[6] Similarly, the receiver must receive without receiving, for even the reception acknowledgment would destroy the linear movement of the gift structure. All the above suggests that the gift is impossible since both the receiver and the giver must intend to receive and give, respectively. However, this intention would have to vanish immediately after the event in order to avoid any form of counter-gift.

The possibility of the gift requires nothing in return, a non-reciprocity, and non-return, a certain dissymmetry so that it does not annul itself by being entangled or turned into circuits of exchange. And these circuits of exchange may be narrow, as in the case of the giver giving alone to oneself, the giver and receiver being only two, or, as in the case of Mauss’ potlatch, (Mauss,1954) An extended circle of exchange that involves the whole social formation. For the gift to be a gift, it must remain in B (the receiver) and not be passed on to a D or E, and so on, as in the case of the potlatch. Therefore, what we take as given from this preliminary analysis of Derrida is, as Steinbock writes, “the moment the gift appears to another as a gift, when it takes on the meaning of the gift, it becomes part of the economic structure, a circulation of exchange in the circle of debt and narcissistic gratitude.” (Steinbock,2018, p.108)

Insofar as something is *intended* as a gift from either the giver or the receiver – in being received as something given by someone – there is a “delinearization” of the “linear trait” required for the phenomenological manifestation of the gift. (Derrida,1982, p.91) That is why there can be nothing in exchange for the gift. However, nothing in return does not mean absolutely nothing “nor an ineffable exteriority that would be transcendent without relation. It is *this*

exteriority that sets the circle going; it is this exteriority that puts the economy in motion."(Derrida, 1992, p.30) [7] Thus, the gift, if there is any, must be oxymoronically exterior to the circle as its transcendental condition and simultaneously in touch with it as its empirical condition. This "transcendental contra-band."(Derrida,1974, p.244) as a prime cannot be captured with the logic of Being, even if it allows for every possibility of Being. If we trace the gift through the logic of Being, then that would be its *λόγος ἐξωτερικός*; outside yet in touch with every possibility of Being. (Derrida, 1992, p.27-28) [8] This exterior logos or contra-band transcendental, sometimes also referred to by Derrida as 'quasi-transcendental' and which is analogized with the structure of the gift, would have to have come as a surprise in the sense of interrupting everything that is.

It has been suggested that the later Derrida traces the gift in the possibility of hospitality following Lévinas's account of visitation.[9] In *Adieu to Emmanuel Lévinas*,(Derrida ,1997) Derrida entertains, and we can even risk the hypothesis that he sides with it, Lévinas' account of visitation as an approximation of the event of the gift. According to Lévinas, the face of the Other constitutes a surface, an *ἐπιφάνεια* (epiphany)[10] Where we are presented to each other as we are: finite, mortal, by coming in contact, the Other breaks my course of action and compels me to act anew. I am compelled to take a stance faced with the Other who reveals my finitude reflected on their (sur)face. The face of the Other is a calling that compels me to act in a particular way, to help or dismiss them.[11] If we tamper a bit with the logic of Derrida's *Gift of Death*,(Derrida,199) The other as (w)holly other presents (me) with (my) finitude to the point of my being arrested, held hostage by them. However, this hosting is not an incarceration but an opportunity to be unconditional(ly one)self. The latter would imply a beginning as a decision.

What is very important about facing the Other is that this occurrence has no beginning or end. In his analysis of *Adieu*, Derrida appreciates this event as involving paradoxical reciprocity. In this paradoxical reciprocity, A and B give themselves to each other as they are in their naked finitude. The gift is nothing in particular passed from here to there but the revelation of each one to the other instantly in their finitude, their naked being. This means that the occurrence of the gift is to be appreciated not in what is given but as the limit of, the instance of, perhaps even the horizon of there where one and another

come to each other. We could also say where one counts and counters finitude. This encounter, an event anterior to any form of communication, is not about a meeting of subjects if we can borrow some elements from *Given Time*.^[12] The gift here loses its positive valence; it becomes a "stranger to morality." (Derrida, 1992, p.154) Moreover, it *comes to be* the instant of coming in touch with an Other. However, this coming to touch, this contact with one another other, requires the presence of bodies that meet instantly. This instant is complicitous, if not identical, with the phenomenon of disruption – to come in contact with another cannot take place without some disruption and a body.^[13]

Thus, the gift is henceforth problematized through the question of how we give ourselves to another. In *On Touching Jean-Luc Nancy*^[14] The whole work is about a gift without being a gift to Jean-Luc Nancy. Without going into the nuances of the performativity of Derrida's philosophizing, what is required in our analysis is the aspect that to give oneself to another outside of the discourse of the metaphysics of presence or, what amounts to the same, the logic of Being, comes to be how we extend ourselves to another; ultimately how communication would have had to have begun. However, this communication is anterior, prior, to any language as a system of pre-given signs which we learn to exchange to express ourselves.

Since every person is entirely different from another person, getting in touch with another ends up being a quest to another world. The gift comes to be how we give ourselves to others and request them. Here, however, Derrida will accept that the giving, which means how we get in touch with another, takes place whether we kiss or kick them. Since to extend to an Other as another world which is entirely other, wholly other, implies some breaking-in, the genesis of an opening, always already, then the question of giving positively would be a question of minimizing the violence of communication – which is the pre-given in the process of giving oneself to the other for whatever reason. In this construal, the topology of the gift does not entail a beginning as an ultra-transcendental principle. Instead, it can take place while interrupting what has been going on. That is why, as contra-band transcendental, it has no specific topology or chronology. However, for there to have been a gift, a form of disruption comes to be a priori.^[15]

Removal of Surprise as Surprising Removal

In the previous section, I explored some central philosophical issues around the gift with Derrida's analyses as a reference point. I also explored how the gift, if it exists, would have to be surprising in formal terms and interpersonal relations. The element of surprise carries with it a disruption that the occurrence of the gift would necessitate. This detour is significant since Steinbock attempts to make the phenomenon of surprise irrelevant to the gift. While acknowledging and representing Derrida's association of the two phenomena, Steinbock does not explore the reasons for which Derrida underscores the surprising element of the gift.[16] I shall now follow Steinbock's account to retrace this removal's movement.

Early on, Steinbock admits that "[b]y a careful phenomenological analysis of the experience of surprise, I tease apart the gift from how it is usually accepted as tied to the surprise." (Steinbock,2018, p.10) The first chapter starts immediately with such a careful phenomenology of surprise. At the beginning of the section "1. THE BELIEF STRUCTURE OF SURPRISE," we read:

A peculiar relation to being can characterize surprise. Allow me to describe this relation by examining its "belief structure," especially concerning the future. I do this because it is commonly held that surprise is simply a rupture of what is expected." (Steinbock,2018, p.2)

With the use of the impersonal passive voice of phrasing possibility where *surprise can be characterized*, there is no direct reference to who is characterizing. At least one who can characterize can do so by having a surprise peculiarly related to being. This impersonal passive voice is not the same as the second one we follow in this passage, whereby *it is commonly held*. The adverb 'commonly' takes us to the possibility of common sense or what would have been unequivocal about surprise. Is this important?

To begin with, 'what is commonly held' is something we saw with Derrida. Nevertheless, such a beginning, such a tactic of starting with something commonly held or pre-given, possibly unequivocal, has a very long history. It starts with Aristotle's *Mendoza*, and it is even more amplified with Kant.[17] However, while Derrida starts with what is commonly assumed as a possible definition or representation

of the gift, he does not claim to be advancing a phenomenological analysis of the belief structure of the gift. Steinbock has announced a careful phenomenological analysis whereby the expectation would be to begin with some bracketing or phenomenological reduction rather than a beginning with a belief structure. Furthermore, it is even more surprising since the phenomenological analysis will now be on the belief structure of surprise rather than what is commonly believed about it or a phenomenological analysis of (the phenomenon of) surprise in the how of its givenness. Instead of moving to 'the things themselves,' which, in this case, would translate into 'to surprise itself,' we move to 'the belief structure of surprise itself.'

This transgression regarding the beginning of the phenomenological method, or what we would have expected as a phenomenological analysis of surprise, justifies Steinbock's move to request permission – in the request *to describe this relation*, the relation of being and surprise, *by examining* the belief structure of surprise. A request for permission is not usually expected when one picks up a book to read. Insofar as one is reading Steinbock's or any writer's book, permission has, in one sense, been granted. Read a book takes place while giving permission for the writer's expression. In the writer's offering of their writing, in an offering without a particular destination, our attention to it by reading it would already have been a permission of expression. Insofar as we give attention, we have already been giving.[18] Steinbock's is being given attention. To ask for an additional allowance comes as an effect of the surprise that one might, as we do here, experience in not being given what has been promised: "in the phenomenological tradition."

We start then elliptically and with a detour.[19] Following Steinbock's analysis, we see that his intended belief structure is not propositional but phenomenological. Phenomenological belief relates to how we come to believe and how we make sense. The constitution of sense in a phenomenological way is described temporally, and it may or may not involve our being fully aware of it, or as we sometimes say, without egoic activity. Following Husserl's notion of passive synthesis, we can make sense of and understand something, something being what it is as it is given to us, without egoic, that is, active awareness. Sense can be constituted passively, by analogical repetition, without the immediate reflecting ego.[20] In this way, "belief" need not necessarily be "an active, reflective commitment to

or positing of being." However, it may be a "presupposing" or "'passive-positing' of being, of pre-predicative 'taking in' what takes place or what is." (Steinbock,2018, p.5)

Steinbock provides a helpful example to summarise this process. Suppose I am on my way to enjoy how the ball will drop in Times Square on New Year's Eve. I walk towards the area believing the pavement to be even, even if I did not actively form this belief. I am on my way to cross the street, expecting the taxi to stop while my attention is directed toward the ball while I anticipate it to drop. All these future orientations harbor expectations that can be actively or passively constituted. The belief structure is always related to positing some future to an expectation. "Intrinsic to the act of expectation is the fact that the existence of something futural is posited. The expectation is carried out in the mode of belief as an unbroken, straightforward relation to something in the future." (Steinbock,2018, p.3) As Steinbock carefully observes, our beliefs involve expectations, and these expectations can be affected in many ways. Steinbock will locate the phenomenon of surprise, along with other modalities, such as a shock and a startle, in the modalities of the disturbance of our expectations.

So far, following Steinbock, we have explored what we refer to as phenomenological belief in general. In phenomenological terms, we have been describing the *eidōs* or the eidetic structure of belief. Now we move to the belief structure of the modalities of disruption of belief. To describe the structure of belief of surprise, Steinbock uses the following formula: "I believe what I cannot believe." (Steinbock,2018, p.4) "Surprise can be characterized as a movement of an 'I am now believing what I could not believe at first' or again, 'I am somehow accepting what I can't (in other circumstances) accept.'" (Steinbock,2018, p.5) Similarly, shock is when "I cannot believe what I cannot believe;" there is no acceptance of what I cannot accept. Finally, a startle would be the in-between modality between surprise and shock; "startle takes place under the threshold of the surprise and the shock." (Steinbock,2018, p.7)

According to Steinbock, the key difference among the modalities of disruption of belief revolves around the notion of 'reconstitution of sense.' While in surprise, I can reconfigure what is given as "shattering. (Steinbock,2018, p.7) " To what I already believe or take for granted as being in shock, there is no reintegration or

reconstitution of what is given and is breaking off my ongoing sense-making, which harbors futural expectations. Finally, in the startle experience, things can vary since the startle is placed as the being in-between surprise and shock since it “does not necessarily entail a reconstitution of sense.” (Steinbock,2018, p.9)

Focusing on surprise, Steinbock introduces another criterion to describe its belief structure. This criterion is the direction of attentiveness in the reconstitution of sense. As we have seen, surprise implies an interruption or disruption in the sense of disequilibrium or being caught off guard. After the disruption of having been surprised, the surprised person is thrown back into the experience by incorporating anew the disruptive given elements or the disruptive elements of the given by reconstituting (a new) sense. This throwing back, however, does not come to be reflective. Reflective here means not only thinking about what is happening but also about our involvement in the happening. According to Steinbock, surprise does not lead the surprised person to face themselves as if they were an Other. To understand what this means, we need to explore briefly some distinctions that Steinbock makes based on his other works.

Steinbock distinguishes interpersonal emotions and involves an Other, as another person, from those that do not involve the Other. The former is also called interpersonal or moral. In addition, he distinguishes between disequilibrium and diremption. Diremptive experiences are shame, humiliation, embarrassment, and the like, which involve an Other who engages with us in such a way as to “throw [us] me back on [ourselves] myself as before another.” (Steinbock,2018, p.16) In disequilibrium, however, I am “disoriented sheerly in relation to my previous orientation.” (Steinbock,2018, p.17) Moreover, thus not thrown back to myself as an Other. According to Steinbock's descriptions, surprise can be “neither a diremptive experience nor a moral emotion,” which is to say that surprise “does not reveal me to myself as before another, but it does catch me off guard and throw me back on the experience.” (Steinbock,2018, p.17) It creates a disequilibrium in my course of action, but it does not lead me to reflect on myself and my involvement in the situation as if I was an Other. Shame, for instance, would be a moral emotion and a diremptive experience. It requires another person who somehow disrupts my doings and motivates me to reflect on them as if I were an Other. Humility, on the other hand, is a moral emotion since I am

humble before an Other. However, it is not a diremptive experience since it does not disrupt my previous course of action. In humility, I am revealed to myself in virtue of another and not objectified or thematized by them as it would be the case in a diremptive experience.

Before advancing on how surprise is unrelated to the gift, some observations are required for the phenomenological description since some of the steps are difficult to follow. The first hurdle in following Steinbock's phenomenological description relates to the 'reconstitution of sense.' The difference between shock and the rest of the modalities that Steinbock explores rests on the fact that *there is no reconstitution of sense* in the former. The difficulty in this existential stipulation is the following: How could it be phenomenologically possible not to have a reconstitution of sense? *Is it ever possible not to have reconstitution of sense? What would it mean to have a disruption of sense such that it will not be reconstituted?*

Consciousness as the constitution of sense is an uninterrupted stream – this is perhaps the only axiom of Husserlian phenomenology. Let us try some hypotheses. No reconstitution of sense would mean absolute passivity, maybe being in a coma, shocked permanently without overcoming it. If the person experiencing the surprise, the shock, the startle can somehow relate it to their experience *after* the experience itself, then there is/or there would always already have been some reconstitution of sense *after* the shock – or whatever the experience of disruption. Maybe the case of being in shock is the limiting case, but still, we cannot say that no reconstitution of sense will take place. Otherwise, what would be the difference between being in a coma, unconscious, non-conscious, or dead, for that matter?

The instant of surprise, shock, startle, or whatever the experience of disruption of sense-making may be could be 'in-itself' void of sense-making. However, there is still a sense reconstitution *after the disruption*. To bring it back to the classical existential-phenomenological debates, even if in such experiences where the person is contracted to the point of meaninglessness is not being able to make sense, a solus ipse *Dasein* in (its) crisis, then, passive or active, reflective or not, there must be some sense-making, some reconstitution of sense; otherwise, after this limiting and limited point, we would be forced to claim a phenomenological death if not an existential one.[21]

The eidetic description Steinbock attempts is based on whether *there is* reconstitution of sense in the various modalities of disruption. The issue is about more than whether *there is* reconstitution of sense. Instead, we can ask phenomenologically in temporal terms: *How long does the reconstitution of sense take place in the various modalities of disruption of sense?* Furthermore, if we bracket the impersonal grammar, we can ask: *How long did I require to constitute what was just given itself to me?* Such a move will allow us to include other forms of disruption, which Steinbock still needs to include.

Along with the surprise, the startle, or the shock, there are other modalities in the eidetic vicinity, like fright and terror. We say, 'You gave me a fright.' Frightening someone is close to shocking or startling someone. In the case of the fright, overcoming the shock happens quickly, but there is still shock involved. An intense fright where one is petrified or frozen is analogous to a shock. The question that may orient us more effectively is whether surprise is always already included in all these experiences eidetically or whether each one is an *eidos*, as Steinbock suggests.

Since Steinbock puts the phenomenological register of belief as primary, we must consider the possibility that the belief as a passive sense constitution involves habits, or better yet, to use a Husserlian term, *habitualities*. Sense constitution in classical phenomenology is eidetically related to habits. What is expected is so expected only because the present allows for associations with past experiences. Furthermore, these associations allow *habituates* to form, which leads to beliefs.[22] These *habituates*, these similar passed or past associations, give rise to expectations that may not be actively posited. These associations are challenged and give rise to the phenomena we are discussing. These *habitualities* are the norms, the standard way of things. A disruption of sense does not mean a break, a void of sense but a difference, a different way, an unexpected way, an abnormal way that things unfold such that we have not experienced before in the sense of creating links with what has been lived through so far. Essentially, we are talking of a crisis or discordance of *hows*.

The issue may not be about whether we can associate the unexpected that imposes itself on us but how we will constitute it by reconstituting our expectations that have been challenged or put in crisis. One way, one 'how' is how long it would take to make or, better, re-make these associations that would allow for a renewed

sense-making which would include the unexpected as new. Put in such temporal terms, we do not only mean ontic time as measured time by a clock. This is also important. A severe shock might require more time to process what is happening than one which is not so acrid. However, this ontic time is always for the Other, not the self whose sense is in crisis. The time we mean here is the re-temporalizing of the given in the sense of coming to feel and tell the difference, the so-called just-before-and-just-after. Moreover, making sense, noema, or the constitution of things, experience *tout court*, as we learn from Husserl, is all about (this) difference.[23]

Now let us change slightly and think through (existential) psychoanalysis. A person in denial or bad faith is still making sense. I offer an anecdotal example. Imagine a man or a woman who would continue to serve coffee to their long-gone partner. The partner has died, but they continue to engage with their world as if the person was there. In one sense, the person alive could not believe what they could not believe, as Steinbock says, but they still believed *what they could not have believed* – otherwise, we could not talk about denial. Denial means attempting to negate a given situation as if to reconstitute it before it has been disrupted. The pluperfect modality must be introduced to make sense of how it is possible to believe what one *could not have believed* otherwise. The possibility of making sense of surprise comes *after* the fact or event. However, in the moment of doxically reconstituting it, that is, actively/reflectively, we are continuously already operating with a past passive reconstitution of sense. As Sartre put it in *Nausea*(2000), Nothing happens when we live; everything happens when we talk about the living. When we live, we feel continuously in different intensities. The disruption of this continuum may be described as a fold, not a complete rupture.

We see from the example above and similar cases that surprise, startle, shock, and the analogous modalities of freight and terror relate to the intensity of the disruption of the expectations we have actively or passively formed. It is not an issue of whether *there is* disruption but more of the intensity of the disruption. Whether something can be registered as one of the experiences above, it would already have to be re-reconstituted *after having (passively) reconstituted* the given. Since the given is constantly reconstituted somehow, otherwise, we would not be able to talk about it at all; the eidetic criterion for making sense of these phenomena could be the intensity of the disruption.

Furthermore, this intensity is about something other than whether there is an expectation in some of the disruptions and not in others. Instead, it would be about harmonizing the given with what one had expected it to have been.

This phenomenological observation is crucial since it dissociates the modalities of sense disruption with the possibility of expectation with which Steinbock attempts to associate them. An example that could make this obvious would be the following. Suppose I am returning to my house after a hectic day at work. I would expect to find the house as I left it in the morning while rushing out or a combination of the former and all the past times, I analogously left my home. My expectations could be many, but the important one that would be relevant here is the absence of other people in my flat. Now, for this particular time, imagine I open the door and...

1. I see my friends shouting, 'Surprise, Happy Birthday.'
2. I see a dead body lying in a pool of blood.
3. I suddenly see my partner shouting 'boo.'
4. I see broken furniture everywhere.

These and a million other possibilities could happen. Suppose I expect to find my residence the way I left it in the morning or how I have been experiencing it after work for the past x number of times. In that case, that means dialectically that any other possibility is unlikely. In case one, I am positively surprised. In case (2), I am startled, possibly shocked, and experiencing fear. In case (3), I am given a fright. In case (4), any disruption modality could be possible. Steinbock writes: "If a surprise arises as something unexpected, it is partly because of the temporal mode of givenness that we can call generally an expectation." However, the examples above show that this temporal mode we call an expectation cannot be excluded from the other modalities of sense disruption.

These observations impact how Steinbock attempts to classify emotions as moral and non-moral and diremptive and non-diremptive moral emotions. Although the first distinction appears straightforward in empirical terms, it does not so in phenomenological terms. If we go back to the examples above, an empirical observation would be that we only have others present in (1) and (3). However, phenomenologically and even phaneroscopically[24] The presence of

the Other is found in all examples as it can be traced through the remains of their intentions which (have) affected (ed) me. The difference can be traced to the embodied presence of the Other, lacking in (2) and (4). Steinbock's distinction, however, does not rest on the embodied actualization of the other person but on the Other who can affect us in some way; that is as if their presence would motivate us to reflect on ourselves, turn towards ourselves and see ourselves as an Other for better or worse.

Nevertheless, if the difference between moral and non-moral emotions cannot be grounded on the embodied presence of the Other, this Other could also be myself as an Other in a narcissistic exchange. In phenomenological terms, subjectivity is construed as the possibility of seeing oneself as another. Husserl makes this point explicit in his lectures on inner time consciousness, even in temporal terms.[25] The difference between reflection as seeing oneself as another and what Steinbock suggests to be a moral emotion would necessitate the embodied presence of the Other. Without the body of the Other, their embodied situated existence, what Steinbock describes as moral emotions would not be able to be differentiated from solipsism, narcissism, or pathologies of the self in a psychoanalytic register.

The problems which arise in this bodiless phenomenological description roll over to the interpersonal loving that the gift is supposed to emerge.

Love without Touching

For Steinbock, the gift emerges in a loving relationship. In this interpersonal relation, what emerges as a gift is not the gift but the revelation of each beloved, which takes place in their being directly related to each other by being loved in humility. "There is a direct "relation" with the other person that allows the gift to emerge as gift, for me as lover, and for the other as beloved, in humility." (Steinbock, 2018, p.76)

The problem we encountered earlier concerning the absence of phenomenological reduction has similar effects on understanding the event of love. Steinbock describes the love that would fit the schema of the gift whereby one gives something to someone else. As Steinbock seems to presuppose, is the loving relationship only a party of two beloveds? Furthermore, before one thinks of erotic

polyamorous relations, there is also the mother's case with her children. A mother's love, however, is never mentioned. The first love one experiences goes unnoticed. This mother's love that goes unnoticed and allows all the possibilities would approximate the gift as contraband that we explored with Derrida.

The omission of the role of the feminine leads us to other questions. Would a mother be revealed as she is in her loving relations with her children? Furthermore, what would that revelation be? Would it be exhaustive for the woman (as) mother? What would be the difference between this love and her partner's, especially if it is of the same sex? Furthermore, these questions should also be raised if the mother is not a woman. Steinbock's account of love is restricted to the problematic of revelation and manifestation, problems in thinking with(in) being, and the metaphysics of presence cannot welcome those questions affirmatively.

Another critical question of love: How many are (be)loved in a loving relationship? Since Steinbock accepts the schema 'A-gift-B,' we must explore what is formalized or quantified under 'A' and 'B' as beloveds. Steinbock does not give in to the linearity of the gift since he takes the gift as an event following Heidegger's *ereignis*. Moreover, the reciprocal revelation in which he locates the emergence of the gift does not imply the dissymmetry required in the schema of the gift. In his analysis, the hints move us to consider that the beloveds are only two in a *direct relationship*, so they can be fully revealed as they are as if they were each other's other. To be in a direct relationship with another person would mean some exclusivity to that person. The revelation does neither suggest a schema where the one is revealed with many. What does this entail? In *The Gift of Death*, Derrida explores the implications of a possible direct relation that exhausts itself in a love of two at the sacrifice of all other beings. Even if it were possible to have such an exclusive love with only one other, that would be conditioned on an exclusion, a sacrifice of all others. I am found in an event where our revealed selves are two, at the expense of all others who could be loved and revealed as they are – and help me reveal me as well. Most importantly, in Steinbock's account, and this is the focus of this paper, the loving relation of the two does not only sacrifice all others but also their own bodies.

Finally, we go back to the beginning. Even if the gift would emerge in a loving relationship as described in Steinbock's philosophical

synthesis, could we not ask how would such love begin? How does one fall in love? Even in cases of love at first sight, the sight where sights meet requires bodies as pre-given. The presence of the bodies constitutes the pre-given, a pre-given which Steinbock neglects. Speaking phenomenologically, if love has its own eidetic region, what is the difference with that region of not being in love? If there is no interruption of our previous, not-being-in-love being, how would love be differentiated from any other habituality?

There can be no caress in a love where the body does not play a role. Can love take place without some caressing? In the phenomenological tradition, the caress's role in revealing the subjectivity of the other plays a key role. Even Henry (2015) recognizes the critical role of the caress in the erotic relationship. In Steinbock, however, there is no mention of caressing at all. Furthermore, there is no mention of touching either. This comes as a surprise since Steinbock has given us a rather exhaustive exploration of the role of the body in the phenomenological experience.[26]

Epilogue: A Poor Conclusion

In this paper, I have raised some challenging questions about the recent philosophical analysis of the gift offered by Steinbock. In this epilogue, instead of retracing the steps of these questions, I offer some thoughts on the gift for further discussion, which have yet to receive due attention.

I started with Derrida's analyses whereby the gift is an aporia. Before Derrida, 'aporia' has been used to designate an impasse. From the Aristotelian tradition aporia is a philosophical problem:

ἀλλ' ἢ τῆς διανοίας ἀπορία δηλοῖ τοῦτο περὶ τοῦ πράγματος· ἢ γὰρ ἀπορεῖ, ταύτη παραπλήσιον πέπονθε τοῖς δεδεμένοις· ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἀμφοτέρως προελθεῖν εἰς τὸ πρόσθεν. διὸ δεῖ τὰς δυσχερείας τεθεωρηκέναι πάσας πρότερον, τούτων τε χάριν καὶ διὰ τὸ τοὺς ζητοῦντας ἄνευ τοῦ διαπορῆσαι πρῶτον ὁμοίους εἶναι τοῖς ποῖδεῖ βαδίζειν ἀγνοοῦσι.[27]

The mind, as if tight in a knot, is found in a place where it cannot escape. The possibility of exiting this place is initially impossible. Interestingly, this is an aporia concerning the mind, a noetic or theoretical aporia. The metaphors used, however, to describe the

theoretical aporia take us back to our body. “For just as one whose feet are tied cannot move forward on an earthly road, in a similar way one who is puzzled, and whose mind is bound, as it were, cannot move forward on the road of speculative knowledge.” [28] Aporia is like suffering as if tied or bound. For knowledge, aporia constitutes a problem. However, for the body, it is there where it is found without being able to move or where the movement is very poor.

Aporia has a close semantic relation and a direct semantic relation with poverty. In Plato,[29] poverty is the very opposite of fullness, of abundance, of the god who symbolizes wealth; Poros – to transfer it in English, Porus. Taken by itself, in-itself, poverty, is an aporia: ἡ οὖν Πενία ἐπιβουλεύουσα διὰ τὴν αὐτῆς ἀπορίαν παιδίον ποιήσασθαι ἐκ τοῦ Πόρου. We could say that out of this extremity, out of these extremes, of poverty and abundance comes Eros – desire, love, elan, instinct, and the like. When poverty gives itself to abundance, there comes Eros.[30] Eros comes out of two extremes, constantly torn between two antithetical elements. However, the movement of fullness to abundance is out of nothing. As the absence of all possibility of movement passes, poverty creates a passage to fullness. Eros, as given in the antithetical relation between poverty and abundance, comes from an impossible movement.

Based on this exploration, the gift as an aporia could have the following possibilities if we take an analogical displacement movement. The gift could be this Eros as the in-between of extremes – a blind, mad desire or love. Alternatively, the gift could be the very movement or drive whereby poverty relieves herself from (her)self by copulating with its other. Or, the gift could be traced at or on the edge of the myth. Concerning Steinbock's gift, the latter would emerge like Eros, although it is not Eros but a full presence of the two extremes which it reve(a)ls. That middle area of a double-faced mirror allows each term to be revealed to itself without being manifested as such yet revealed as the condition of their revelation.

Again metaphorically, Derrida's gift would be “that which while *giving place* to that opposition as to so many others, seems sometimes to be itself no longer subject to the law of the very thing which it situates.”[31] Here, however, we are at an impasse precisely because what gives place, what fleshes out Eros as the opposition of the two extremes can be traced in poverty herself, or the feminine as poverty or *the very event (of the myth) of the birth of Aphrodite* who becomes

its own other without manifesting or revealing itself in the process. Aphrodite would have had to happen for all the rest to ensue.

Aphrodite, the paradigm of femininity, retreats in this myth which is for her; of her; because of her; in virtue of her...all the auxiliaries *come after her* to give the possibility to all and nothing. In Plato's myth, the event of the birth of Aphrodite cannot be referred lest through the birth of opposition and madness. Nevertheless, insofar as a totality can be exhausted in the apostasies, the distancing, the rebellion of poverty to abundance; the movement from nothingness to all that could be, to all the possibilities of being, those that have been and yet to come; insofar as totality requires its dialectical other, there will always have been the figure of Aphrodite, the (im)possible figure of the waking of the foam; literally Aphrodite.

End Notes

1. Góis, 1592; see The literature on the 'gift' is extensive and diverse. It is difficult to single out representative or exemplary analyses as a starting point. It is tempting to say that the interest in the gift starts with Mauss' anthropological research. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange*, trans. W.D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1954); hereafter *The Gift*. However, that would neglect reflections that can be traced back to Seneca (see Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *On Benefits*, trans. Miriam Griffin, Brad Inwood (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2011), and even Heraclitus. (see. Kostas Axelos, *Héraclite et la philosophie* (Paris: EDM, 1962)). Even if we start with Mauss' work in the sense that it sparks a renewed interest in the gift, we cannot ignore the debate between Bataille and Sartre on the implications of givenness and the limit of giving (see Douglas Smith, "Between the Devil and the Good Lord" in *Sartre Studies International*, 8 (2002): 1-17. For recent developments, see Alan D. Schrift *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity* (1997); hereafter, *The Logic*. For further research, one should not neglect the special issue on The Gift by Angelaki in 2001 and two edited volumes that make substantial contributions to the philosophical discussion. Yet, they have received little attention: Jean Baudrillard and Dan Cameron, *Il Dono: The Gift*, eds. Gianfranco Maranella, Sergio Risaliti, Antonio Somaini (Charta: 2002) and Genevieve Vaughan, *Athanos: Il Dono, the gift, a Feminist analysis* (Meltemi: 2004). Carvalho, 2018e; Góis, 1593b; see Carvalho, 2018f; Góis, 1593c; see Carvalho, 2018d; Góis, 1593a; see Carvalho, 2018c; Góis, 1593d; see Carvalho, 2018h; Góis, 1597; see Carvalho, 2018g; Góis, Álvares, & Magalhães 1598; see Carvalho, 2018i; Couto, 1606; see Carvalho, 2018j & 2018a.
2. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). See also the discussion between Derrida and Marion in John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, eds. *God, the gift, and Postmodernism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999); hereafter *God*.
3. Anthony J. Steinbock, *It's Not About the Gift: From Givenness to Loving*, (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018); hereafter *It's Not About the Gift*.
4. Derrida has also explored love with the possibility of the gift without analogizing the two events (cf. Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. And Richard Rand, (Lincoln, NE: 1984), 17-18; hereafter *Glas*.
5. In the foreword of *Given Time*, as well as in other works, Derrida avows that his work consists of a "set of questions which for a long time had organized themselves around that of the gift...whether it appeared in its

own name, as was often the case, or employing the indissociable motifs of speculation, destination, or the promise, of sacrifice, the "yes," or originary affirmation, of the event, invention, the coming of the "come." *Given Time*, ix. The relation of Being thought and the gift "has expressly oriented all the texts [Derrida has] published since about 1972." Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume II* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008); hereafter *Psyche II*.

6. See Cixous' analysis of the relationship between the unconscious and the gift in Schrift, *The Logic*.
7. my emphasis.
8. Such logos would be on edge or the edge of everything without belonging to anything, like the *punctum* that Derrida reads in Barthes: "this singularity that is nowhere in the field mobilizes everything everywhere; it pluralizes itself" (Derrida *Psyche I*, 288). Derrida explores an analogous structure in the metaphoricity of metaphor since "metaphor perhaps retires, withdraws from the worldwide scene, and does so at the moment of its most invasive extension, at the instant it overflows every limit." Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume I* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 51; hereafter *Psyche I*. Derrida has also explored an analogous structure in our having been given our proper name insofar as one would "be tempted to say first that a proper name, in the proper sense, does not properly belong to language; it does not belong there, although and because its call makes the language possible" (*Psyche I*, 198). Genevieve Vaughan also describes the gift based on such a structure of *λόγος ἐξωτερικός*, yet she places it as the desire to come in touch with an Other. Genevieve Vaughan, "The Exemplar and the Gift," *Semiotica* (2004): 1-27.
9. See Robert Bernasconi, "What Goes Around Comes Around: Derrida and Lévinas on the Economy of the Gift and the Gift of Genealogy," in Schrift, *The Logic*.
10. *ἐπιφάνεια* has a double meaning. It means both the surface of a body and the coming into light or view. See relevant entries in Lidell, Scott, and Jones.
<http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsg/#eid=42635&context=lsj&action=hw-list-click>
11. The calling here plays the analogy of the gift through a philosophical thread that can be traced in Heidegger's calling – See Marion *Being Given* and also *L'Interloque*: Jean-Luc Marion, "L'Interloque," in *Who Comes After the Subject?* eds. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York: Routledge, 1991) 236-245. Hereafter *L'Interloque*.

12. See Derrida, *Given Time*, 24; 100.
13. Whereas the linearity of the gift is no more active in this encounter, its dissymmetry is, phenomenologically speaking, maintained precisely in virtue of the space of welcoming. Epiphany happens and takes place in giving a place of rest for the Other in their taking the free invitation to (rest on) the Other's (sur)face. Because this give-and-take happens instantly, a circle of exchange never happens, or the enclosing of the circle is continually deferred. The giving/taking distinction collapses into a double-off (er)ing. What is 'at stake' in this event, in all the semantic excess of at stake, is the body (*Psyche I*, 149;155).
14. Jacques Derrida, *On Touching Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), 2005; hereafter *Touching*.
15. To understand this thesis, one has to follow Derrida following Berkeley in *Touching*: "Marvelous Berkeley, the indisputable one." If to exist means to be, we are always already in touch with the world as part of the same and as totally other (137). In this logic, to give oneself to an Other comes to be *either* the creation of a contact which implies some breaking, some sort of violence – even if "everything we say or do or cry, however, outstretched to the other may be, remains *within us*" (*Psyche I*, 9; emphasis in original); *or*, an instantaneous, abrupt presence, as in the case of (Freud's lectures on) telepathy.
16. In the last section of the book, whereby Steinbock attempts to recast the gift through the philosophy of Maimonides, he represents one aspect of Derrida's analyses. Then he moves on to Marion and Maimonides without exploring further the conditions under which Derrida associates the two phenomena. Instead, he writes: "Because Marion appropriates Derrida in his own interpretation of the gift and the gifted, let me not dwell further on Derrida's critique of the economy of giving and the gift – which describes it as the figure of the impossible – but move directly to Marion. Marion assumes Derrida's critique of the economy of the gift but goes one step further by bracketing the economic movement to get at the meaning or sense of the gift, the giver, and the give – to get at givenness itself." (74).
17. Kant's transcendentalism is grounded on the *sensus communis logicus*. See Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans—Kathleen Blamey (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).
18. This is another way of rephrasing the transcendental contraband discussed earlier with Derrida. Attention is not thematic consciousness, as Simone Weil has explained. Attention in this example would come to be analogous to our continuous renewed decision to 'remain hostage' to

the writer, which takes place as long as we read. This giving could have been a gift if the book was not already involved in pre-established circuits of exchange. Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr (London: Routledge, 1952), 116-122. For the possibility of writing as offering and offering as writing, see Derrida's second part of *Given Time, Psyche I*, and *The Postcard*. Jacques Derrida, *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1987).

19. This beginning should not be looked at with suspicion. Sometimes a detour and an ellipsis are required to uncover a phenomenon's relational nexus. Derrida uses the same technique in *The Gift of Death*. The gift is not approached directly but through a detour constituted by an analysis of responsibility, faith, and sacrifice. Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1995).
20. Steinbock has offered us two critical essays from Husserl by translating them into English. These two essays provide an elaborate analysis of the structure of this passive synthesis. Anthony J. Steinbock, "Husserl's static and genetic phenomenology: Translator's introduction to two essays," *Continental Philosophy Review* 31 (1998): 127–134. It is very tempting to start pulling a thread about how Steinbock's gift would have taken place in his non-linguistic translations rather than his love, but that would take me astray (cf. Derrida on translation and the gift in his analysis on the tower of Babel in *Psyche I*, 191-224).
21. After Heidegger, who discussed the possibility of non-sense making *solus ipse Dasein* in what he calls anticipatory resoluteness in *Being and Time*, that is, in an a-temporal contracted point of the subject (vi)ty, there has been an ongoing discussion about whether such ultimate contraction could ever be possible. Moreover, if it were, the difficulty would be about the way of coming back, re-temporalizing, and reconstituting sense from an absolute point where there is supposedly no possibility of sense. Following the chronology of the discussion, see Martin Heidegger *Being and Time* Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962); Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence* trans. Richard F. Grabau (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971); Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (Washington, DC: Washington Square Press, 1993); Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being Vol. I am* trans. G. S. Fraser (London: The Harvill Press Ltd, 1950); and the recent interventions of Marion and Agacinski in *Who Comes After the Subject?*, Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor and Jean-Luc Nancy, *Who Comes After the Subject?* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991).

22. For the role of Habit in Husserl, see David Moran, "Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology of Habit and Habitus," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 42 (2011): 53-77.
23. In many of his works, but mainly in *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl takes much time to show that the eidos can only be given with the eidetic difference in virtue of which it is given. To access an Eidos, to have an essential seeing, we require to engage in free variation whose condition is different. Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic* trans. James S. Churchill (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1973).
24. For analogies concerning phenomenology and phaneroscopy, see Iraklis Ioannidis, "The Other Side of Peirce's Phaneroscopy" *Sofia Philosophical Review* 2 (2019): 74-99.
25. See Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*, trans. John B. Brough (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).
26. See Anthony J. Steinbock, "Saturated Intentionality," in *The Body*, ed. Donn Welton, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999): 178-200. If we looked at the architectonics of the text, we could interrogate how the phenomenological analysis passes into a hermeneutical analysis and why the phenomenological analysis precedes the hermeneutic analysis. Such possibility, along with the phenomenological questions raised earlier, leaves space to wonder to what extent Steinbock's analysis becomes reductive in the sense of dropping those elements that would not fit the account of love that he gives us (surprise, the body, the feminine).
27. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, retrieved from http://users.uoa.gr/~nektar/history/tributes/ancient_authors/Aristoteles/metaphysica.htm
28. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, retrieved from <https://isidore.co/aquinas/Metaphysics3.htm>
29. Plato, *Symposium*, retrieved from <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0173%3Atext%3DSym.%3Apage%3D203>
30. This giving echoes the mother of all genesis described by Derrida in *Glas*, as Genet's mother, the beggar, and the thief. *Glas*, 150.
31. Jacques Derrida, (1995), 75; 90, emphasis in original.

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