

THE GIFTS OF DEATH IN PHILOSOPHICAL AND CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

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This essay outlines the phenomenological affective structures of responsibility proper to the philosophical life of reflection and the Christian “way of the heart” as they are presented in Jacques Derrida’s reading of Jan Patočka’s *Heretical Essays* in *The Gift of Death*.¹ It follows Derrida’s genealogy in its attempt to diagnose the particular features of responsibility peculiar to philosophy and Christianity respectively by examining the specific ways in which death is unthematically given in each. For the Platonic philosopher, the gift of death is prefigured in the establishment of the possibility of essential insight and the finitude of this essential insight through the figure of the mysterious Good. For the Christian, the gift of death is implicit in the establishment of a heavenly economy of expenditure and the new life that inaugurates it. My claim in this essay is that Derrida is successful in his attempt to differentiate a uniquely Christian structure of the gift of death that constitutes Christian responsibility, rather than offering a philosophical substitute in its place. This successful attempt is reflected in his investigation of the structures of

¹ Patočka, Jan, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago: Open Court, 1996). Derrida focuses on the fifth essay, “Is Technological Civilization Decadent, and Why?,” 95-118. Hereafter, HE. Derrida, Jacques, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Willis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Hereafter, GD.

secrecy and economy in the Sermon on the Mount recorded in the Gospel of Matthew.

PATOČKA'S FORMAL STRUCTURE OF SACRED RESPONSIBILITY

Derrida's investigation of the responsibility characteristic of the Platonic and Christian gifts of death begins with Jan Patočka's distinction between the profane and the sacred. The vast majority of our lived experience occurs in the ordinary routine of our everyday lives. The habitual character of the "average everydayness" enables us to organize our activities for maximal efficiency but when these habituated routines lose their determinative meanings, our everyday lives are threatened by boredom, drain, and indifference (GD, 36). The subtle danger of the mundane is that we can all too easily lose ourselves, so to speak, in the work-a-day world and thereby become estranged from meaningful, deliberative, and self-determined courses of action. In such cases, our actions become profane (HE, 99).

In contrast to the everyday which falls into the profane, Patočka distinguishes the exceptional, the holiday, and even the orgiastic. Patočka uses these terms to name an intensification of the average everydayness that exceeds the norm of our typical functioning by heightening the affective dimensions of experience through which the events in our lives occur. This general category of *pathos* is not a result of an accomplishment of our psychological selves, but results from the senses in which we are passively appropriated into a higher degree of sensitivity towards objects and states of affairs and awareness of our situation in general. These excessive departures from the ordinary life can become saturated to the point where the affective force of being passively appropriated carries on a life of its own, so to speak. Our heightened sense of awareness becomes dynamic as different series of events present themselves with a surplus of meaning or "meaning which [our lives] would not know otherwise" (HE, 99). Analogous to the way in which we lose ourselves in the fall into the profane, we can also lose our self-consciousness when we become enraptured to the point of frenzy. Patočka calls the general category of this dynamic overflow of meaning "the sacred."

This construal of the distinction between the sacred and the profane thus uses, for better or worse, the affective dimension of experience as its fundamental starting point. In contemporary psychological terms, the distinction might refer to the various aspects of manic-depressive tendencies. From a sociological point of view, the sacred refers to certain degree of collective exaltation that is characteristic of a given culture. Here is how Émile Durkheim describes the sacred from a sociological perspective:

It is easy to imagine that on this level of exaltation people lose all self-consciousness. Since they feel ruled, drawn along by some external power which makes them think and act otherwise than in ordinary times, they have understandably the feeling of being themselves no longer. It seems to them that they have been made anew: the decorations with which they drape themselves, the masks covering their faces, express this inner transformation outwardly more than they help bring it about. And since all of a company fell transformed at the same time in the same way...it appears to all as if they really had been carried over into a special world, quite different from the one in which they normally live. How could such experiences, especially when repeated daily for weeks on end, help but convince the experiencers that there really exist two diverse and incompatible worlds? In one of them they laboriously carry out their everyday life; the other they need but enter to stand in relation to extraordinary powers which galvanize them to the point of frenzy. One is profane, the other is the world of the sacred.²

Durkheim uses the distinction between the profane/sacred as the fundamental categories by which he approaches various cultures, i.e., totemic societies in Australia. Patočka analogously appropriates these categories in his existential-phenomenological framework that he applies not only to the overt ecstasies of the holy, but other spheres of experience such as the erotic, technological, and political. The distinction is even fundamental to the human condition, “Every form of humanity on whatever ‘level’ recognizes some form of the opposition between the ordinary and the exceptional...” (HE, 102).

The sacred can either become irresponsible or responsible for Patočka, which is to say, the sacred in itself does not have an inherent relation to responsibility (HE, 100). If the sacred is a flight from the average everydayness that functions as an escape from its mundane economy, then it becomes irresponsible, decadent, or demonic (HE, 101). The sacred is decadent, more specifically, if it breaks with the average everydayness such that its movement towards transcendence becomes subsequently juxtaposed in a heterogeneous relation. “Ecstasy can pretend to be freedom and at times it does – [but] from the perspective of overcoming this orgiastic sacredness it is precisely then that it is seen as demonic” (HE, 101). When

² Durkheim, Émile, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 312-312. This quote taken from the *Heretical Essays* (100) and is translated by James Dodd. It should be clear that Patočka understands the profane as a certain kind of deficiency of the everyday, while Durkheim simply contrasts the sacred with the everyday as the profane itself.

we lose ourselves in the sacred and forget our immediate relation to the average everydayness, our experience becomes decadent in that it does not develop a response to the unsaturated and ordinary.

The sacred can nevertheless also become responsible by developing an essential relation to that which it transcends, when “the orgiastic is not removed but is disciplined and made subservient” (HE, 106). Patočka investigates the establishment of this responsive relation between the sacred and the average everydayness in both the Platonic and Christian traditions. In principle, however, it also applies to all historical religions:

This bringing into relation to responsibility, that is, to the domain of human authenticity and truth, is probably the kernel of the history of all religions. Religion is not the sacred, nor does it arise directly from the experience of sacral orgies and rites; rather, it is where the sacred qua demonic is explicitly overcome. Sacral experiences pass over [to the] religious as soon as there is an attempt to introduce responsibility into the sacred or to regulate the sacred thereby (HE, 101).

Religious experiences are not merely experiences of the sacred, but occur when the sacred is integrated with the ordinary in a responsible relation. Formally speaking, this religious responsibility thus involves two kinds of transcendence: 1) the movement beyond the everyday, and 2) the movement beyond the sacred.³

The distinctions between the profane/sacred and irresponsible/responsible are the fundamental distinctions for the discourses of Patočka and Derrida. Derrida adopts, subverts, and radicalizes them in his genealogy of the gifts of death in philosophy (especially in Plato and Heidegger) and Christianity. In this genealogy, the anticipation of death plays the figure of the exceptional, extra-ordinary, and sacred. Death is a more specific manifestation of the general category of sacred experiences. The central question that guides the genealogy concerns the similarities and differences between how philosophy and Christianity respectively incorporate death in a responsible relation to the average everydayness. How do we die responsibly as philosophers and Christians? How is death given and taken in these respective ways of living or life-styles? How does death haunt the philosopher and Christian such that it responsibly enriches the meaning of their ordinary lives?

³ Patočka’s use of responsibility here is vague at best and remains in its merely formal characterization. One of the ways Derrida radicalizes Patočka is by bringing to bear a uniquely Levinasian characterization of responsibility to enrich it.

DYING LIKE A PHILOSOPHER

These questions motivate Derrida's discourse and he is especially attentive to and interested in the uniquely Christian gift of death. But like Patočka, Derrida does not think that responsible Christian mortality is intelligible without an understanding of responsible philosophical mortality. This dependency is both historical and structural, which is to say, Hellenized (im)mortality is an essential component of Christian (im)mortality. Derrida uses the psychoanalytic categories of incorporation and repression to describe the inclusion of the orgiastic in Platonic and Christian experiences saying, "Platonic mystery thus incorporates orgiastic mystery and Christian mystery represses Platonic mystery. That, in short, is the history [of responsibility] that would need to be 'acknowledged,' as if confessed!...The history to be acknowledged is the secret of incorporation and repression, what occurs between one conversion and another" (GD, 10). Given that responsible philosophical mortality is assimilated or retained within the historical development of responsible Christian mortality, it is necessary to briefly investigate the basic structure of the gift of death in philosophy.

The philosophical practice for death (*meletê thanaton*) is an inherent component of the philosophical form of the care of the self (*epimeleia tês psuchês*) that is, in turn, fundamentally related for Plato to the care of the *polis*. The philosophical care of the self is inaugurated by the affective appropriation by the mood of wonder. Wonder characterizes the delight of the affective pull towards an astonishing and un-comprehended object or state of affairs. Rather than becoming disappointed in the lack of comprehension, the delight characteristic of wonder draws our interest to further investigation by affirming the concern that animates this interest with pleasure. Given that we lack adequate comprehension of the objects and states of affairs of the average everydayness, through wonder we are passively appropriated beyond this sphere to what Patočka calls the exceptional, extraordinary, and sacred (HE, 99).

Wonder is the source of philosophy but it is not yet philosophy. To speak with Patočka, it is the initial orgiastic component of philosophy. Wonder can develop into philosophy, however, by becoming incorporated into a particular form of the care of the self, one animated by theoretical interest. The delight proper to wonder motivates a shift from the attitude characteristic of the average everydayness to a theoretical attitude by nurturing a concern that exceeds our ordinary interests. Our interest in the instrumental features of objects and states of affairs becomes transformed into a non-instrumental interest. When this new interest becomes habituated

to the point of characterizing a certain posture or stance (attitude), it can more generally be called the life of reflection.

When wonder as the source of philosophy becomes incorporated into the life of reflection, it is transformed into the love of wisdom.⁴ Wonder continues to animate and motivate the reflective turn throughout, but when it becomes disciplined through the habitual reflective stance, it is transformed to a form of love that draws our concern to the goal of the life of reflection as a whole – wisdom. Like wonder, love affectively appropriates the lover to desire its object with a heightened intensity, which is to say, the love of wisdom is *also* an instance of Patočka's understanding of the exceptional, extra-ordinary, and sacred (HE, 106). Unlike wonder, however, the love of wisdom is a disciplined mood in that it appropriates the concern that is already characteristic of theoretical interest. It is not merely orgiastic, but it makes an essential contribution in the pursuit of wisdom by seducing theoretical interest towards its goal, a goal that it will never fully achieve. The full achievement of wisdom remains absent in the life of reflection, just out of reach, an impossible mystery that the philosopher is nevertheless directed toward through his/her appropriation through the disciplined or disciplining mood of love. To speak with Derrida, love accomplishes a relation without relation between the philosopher and wisdom.

Wonder and love are thus two essential features of the affective structure of the life of philosophical reflection. Inherent to this type of the care of the self is also certain relations-without-relation to death, which is to say, the reflective turn takes up and is put into certain implicit or unthematic relations with death. Both Patočka and Derrida recount Socrates' description of the practice of death in the *Phaedo* where the unthematic relation to death characteristic of the reflective turn is portrayed as prefiguring the separation of the soul and the body in death. This reflective turn that prefigures the separation of the soul and the body in death can be seen in the process of formalization that occurs in the transition from the experience of an object or state of affairs to a reflection on or examination of that experience. The Platonic philosopher abstracts the intelligible form of an object or state of affairs in order to comprehend its essential features. While these formal features are immanent to the materially instantiated thing, when we reflect on

⁴ Patočka unfortunately follows Eugen Fink in calling the philosophical attitude an "internal dialogue" (HE, 102-105). In order to avoid a psychological connotation by appropriating Patočka's use of such terms as "internal" and "interiorization," I will substitute them with the "life of reflection." Further justification for this substitute will be given in the discussion below concerning the abstractive procedure in philosophical reflection, which Patočka identifies as "eidetic intuition" (HE, 107).

an object we are reflecting on the formal features of a thing. Through this separation of the formal features from the materially instantiated thing the philosopher is able to grasp the essential formal features of the objects and state of affairs with which he/she is concerned, i.e., a just city, a triangle, or chair. These essential features are not relegated to the temporal determination of a materially instantiated thing, but have an intelligible structure that is trans-temporal. For example, the essential features inherent in the definition of a triangle are that a triangle is 1) a geometrical figure, 2) has three sides, and 3) its internal angles equal 180 degrees. These essential features apply across the temporal board, so to speak, and do not suffer the change characteristic of individually instantiated triangles. They are not relegated to a finite period of time, but live on after the individually instantiated thing has passed on.

In this process of formalization and eidetic intuition, the philosopher is put into an unthematic relation with death, one that is manifested in a particular way for the Platonist. The process of formalization also brings about a certain formalization of the formalizer. Socrates describes this formalization of the soul in the *Cratylus* as a unification or gathering of the soul that is privileged over the composite unity of the body-soul.

The truth rather is that the soul which is pure at departing and draws after her no bodily taint, having never voluntarily during life had connexion with the body, which she is ever avoiding, herself gathered in herself, and making such abstraction her perpetual study – all this means that she has been a true disciple of philosophy; and therefore has in fact been always practicing how to die without complaint. For is not such a life the practice of death?⁵

The abstractive procedure characteristic of eidetic intuition implicitly involves an abstraction from the body-soul composite wherein the souls assembles itself in an inherent unity. “Unity is the essence of the soul...a dialectic which is the proper method of insight and the essence of reason” (HE, 104; Cf. GD, 13). It forgoes its concerns, in the process, for the bodily cares of the average everydayness and becomes concerned with the objects and states of affairs of reflection that have trans-temporal features, i.e., immateriality, invisibility, etc. In the establishment of these respective concerns, the Platonic soul is constituted in a heterogeneous relationship with the body, a heterogeneous relation that prefigures the separation of the soul and the body in death.

⁵ Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. B. Jowett, 4th edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 435. Taken from GD, 14.

The unthematic relation towards death makes an essential contribution to the constitution of the Platonic soul in various ways. Derrida highlights, following Heidegger, the anticipatory dimension of this relation, “Philosophy isn’t something that comes to the soul by accident, for it is nothing other than this vigil over death that watches out for death and watches over death, as if over the very life of the soul. The psyche as life, as breath of life, as *pneuma*, only appears out of this concerned anticipation of dying” (GD, 15).⁶ Through the life of reflection, the philosopher apprehends essential truths and the subsequent turn back to the concerns of pre-reflective life is informed and enriched by this essential insight accomplished in reflection, thereby contributing a greater sensitivity and awareness within the average everydayness. The concerns of the average everydayness are stretched out and expanded temporally in such a way that the philosopher’s own mortality, which is to say, the possibility of impossibility is manifested through the affective appropriation of anxiety. Anxiety allows for the relation-without-relation between the one who dies and their death. Death is never fully given, but neither does it remain fully absent. Anxiety is the mood that draws our concern such that it takes up and is put into an unthematic relation with death. This concern for death has a peculiar individuating function in that there is an irreducible “mineness” to my mortality. No one else can die my death in my place. I ultimately face my death alone. The concern for death thus gives rise to the individuation of the philosopher on the basis of this irreplaceability or singularity (GD, 41). This individuation co-functions with the assembling of the Platonic soul in the life of reflection and even reveals the essential characteristic of the philosopher as the one who is concerned *qua* concerned.

Patočka and Derrida incorporate this Heideggerian and Platonic structure as representative of the philosophical care for death, but their identification of the responsibility that arises is decidedly Platonic. They do not, in other words, follow Heidegger’s discussion of the call to conscience in *Being and Time* but turn to the role of the Good in the allegory of the cave.⁷ In the

⁶ Patočka relates the care of the self with the care for death as follows, “...the Platonic philosopher overcame death fundamentally by not fleeing from it but by facing up to it. This philosophy was *meletê thanaton*, care for death; care for the self is inseparable from care for death which becomes the true care for life; life (eternal) is born of this direct look at death, of an overcoming of death” (HE, 105).

⁷ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962). Derrida does rehearse the Heideggerian structure of responsibility in sections 54-57 of *Being and Time*, but only to call attention to the fact that Patočka does not follow it. See GD, 32, 41. Patočka’s introduction of the distinction between the sacred/profane is itself an attempt to go beyond the distinction between the authentic/inauthentic (HE, 98). “The opposition of the sacred and the profane...is not the

ascent from the cave through the arduous path of reflection, the philosopher achieves essential insight beyond the shadowy apprehension of objects and states of affairs in the average everydayness. Whereas only shadowy appearances are brought to light in the average everydayness, the reflective turn brings about the possibility of apprehending the essential features of those appearances. The essential features of the Good remain a mystery and its role in the illuminating process can only be described through analogy with the sun. Just as the sun illuminates the perception of visible appearances, so too does the Good illuminate the apprehension of the essential features of objects and states of affairs. The Good itself is not given as such, but conditions and makes possible the essential insight characteristic of reflection (HE, 105). It thus remains inaccessible, even to the reflective gaze, and symbolizes the incomplete character of reflection. Even though reflection is able to apprehend the trans-temporal features of objects and states of affairs with essential insight, complete insight nevertheless remains out of reach. The mysterious Good thus functions as a “bulwark” (HE, 112) that relativizes the life of reflection by de-motivating further concern for further essential insight directed toward the totality of comprehensive insight. Essential insight thus gains an inferiority to the Good. It may be an improvement of the insight of the average everydayness, but it nevertheless remains fundamentally finite, incomplete, always already out of reach - just as wisdom remains elusive to its lover.

This disappointment establishes the clarification of the proper role of reflection in the philosophical life-style. The movement of reflection is not a flight from the average everydayness in that the philosopher is now aware of the impossibility of such a decadent and irresponsible escape. Rather, the recognition of the finitude of the reach of reflection motivates a turn back to the average everydayness in order to clarify the shadowy appearances with essential insight. The life of reflection thus takes place *between* the illumination of the Good and the sun. It hovers, so to speak, between the reflective and the pre-reflective, just at the surface where the two come together in a responsive oscillation. The site of this in-between of the reflective and pre-reflective is language. The wonder which gives rise to reflection is thus chastened and disciplined to remain involved in the concerns of the average everydayness. This involvement is also an enrichment of the average everydayness insofar as essential insight accompanies the apprehension of objects and states of affairs and thereby resists the fall into profanity. For example, the philosopher not only recognizes whether or not a certain action will bring about a desired

opposition of the authentic and the inauthentic but rather belongs among the problems responsibility has yet to master (HE, 102).

outcome, but whether or not and in what manner this outcome and its action are beneficial. This double concern characteristic of the care of the self not only applies to individual philosopher, but to the concerns that he/she shares in common with others, i.e., bringing about justice in the city. The average everyday concerns for the city are accompanied and enriched by the concerns for essential insight regarding the city and which courses of action it takes. The care of the self implies a care for the city in that the philosopher is always already in the city as the place of the average everydayness. The oscillation between the pre-reflective and reflective concerns thus retain a responsive relation as the philosopher attempts to advance the goods of one course of action over the goods of another in accordance with their adjudication through essential insight.

The philosophical care for the self, death, and city can thus accomplish a responsible incorporation of the exceptional, extra-ordinary, and sacred into the average everydayness rather than using the sacred as a decadent and irresponsible escape from it. The sacred is disciplined and chastened in this incorporation, but the mystery of death and the Good also get repressed and harbored as secrets that are never fully brought to light. These mysteries remain concealed and unresolved, but they nevertheless are integrated into the philosophical life-style by determining its proper role. Direct concern for the mysteries of death and the Good is eventually re-directed towards the concerns of the average everydayness even though the former remains as a trace within the latter.

DYING LIKE A CHRISTIAN

Derrida's interest in the structure of responsibility characteristic to the Platonic philosopher is largely instrumental to his interest in a uniquely Christian structure of responsibility. The difficulty in diagnosing the "properly Christian event" (GD, 6) is that Christianity incorporates the philosophical structure of responsibility just as it traverses it. This incorporation, more specifically, is the understanding of the individual inaugurated by the Greek conception of the care of the self. The soul that gathers and assembles itself in reflection has an irreducible "mineness" that establishes an identity different from one's heritage, race, and citizenship. "Freedom is no longer defined in terms of a relation to equals (other citizens) but to a transcendent Good. The social problems of the Roman Empire are ultimately acted out on a foundation made possible by the Platonic conception of the soul" (HE, 106). Regardless of one's social, political, or economic status, the reflective life of essential insight can become available to you through education. The individual who lives the disciplined life of reflection does not ascend to the orgiastic fusion of the traditional religious

cults, but holds the average everyday and the exceptional in a responsive relation.⁸ Their involvement in the average everydayness is uniquely their own, which is to say, their unique concern for essential insight accompanies and informs their average everyday concern. One concern for essential insight cannot ultimately be privileged over another but are equalized one to another according to the properties of the essential insight itself. Agreement or disagreement might arise regarding these properties, but all individuals in principle have access to them.

The advent of the individuated soul thus takes its place in the history of responsibility and contributes to the various social and political dynamics of Hellenized culture. In Christianity, however, this individuated soul becomes radicalized and transformed in important ways that bring about a “mutation” (GD, 100) in the genealogy of the responsible subject. Patočka describes this transition as a retrieval of the tremendous characteristic of the sacred, a characteristic that is incorporated and even repressed in Platonism.

Christianity could overcome this Platonic solution only by an about-face. Responsible life was itself presented as a gift from something which ultimately, though it has the character of the Good, has also the traits of the inaccessible and forever superior to humans – the traits of the *mysterium* that always has the final word. Christianity, after all, understands the Good differently than Plato – as a self-forgetting goodness and a self-denying (not orgiastic) love. It is not the orgiastic – that remains not only subordinated but, in certain respects, suppressed to the limit – yet it is still a *mysterium tremendum*. *Tremendum*, for responsibility is now vested not in a humanly comprehensible essence of goodness and unity but, rather, in an inscrutable relation to the absolute highest being in whose hands we are not externally, but internally (HE, 106).

Derrida is interested in Patočka’s characterization of Christian responsibility as a “gift” and the associations this gift has with the (re)introduction of the *tremendum* to the mysteries of the responsible subject. Whereas the mysteries of death and the Good are held in secret in the philosophical care of the self, in Christianity these mysteries are intensified with a force that initially

⁸ “We believe that *I* in this sense emerges at the dawn of history and that it consists in not losing ourselves in the sacred, not simply surrendering our selves within it, but rather in living through the whole opposition of the sacred and the profane with the dimension of the problematic which we uncover in the responsible questioning in a quest for clarity with the sobriety of the everyday, but also with an active daring for the vertigo it brings; overcoming everydayness without collapsing in self-forgetting into the region of darkness, however tempting” (HE, 102).

produces the affective appropriation of terror, which is to say, a terrible mystery that produces trembling.

Derrida goes to great lengths in his attempt to identify the uniquely Christian structure of responsibility and its unthematic relation to death. His genealogy can be seen as a progressive purification of the diagnosis of the particular features of responsibility proper to Christianity. The task is to uncover this religious structure without bounding it within the limits of reason or “proposing a nondogmatic doublet of dogma, a philosophical and metaphysical doublet” (GD, 49) analogous to onto-theology.⁹ Derrida is after the unique features that characterize the Christian structure of responsibility, “What engenders all these [nondogmatic] meanings and links them, internally and necessarily, is a logic that at bottom...has no need of *the event of a revelation or the revelation of an event*. It needs to think the possibility of such an event but not the event itself” (GD, 49). The event of responsibility that Derrida seeks is the particular revelation of the gift of death presented in the Gospel of Matthew. Let us follow his description.

The mutation from the Platonic to the Christian soul can initially be indicated through the emphasis placed on the heart. The heart is the interior site of the individual’s motivations and intentions that remain invisible to the naked eye. Judgment and morality are no longer limited to the actions and behaviors of the average everydayness, but now extend to this interiorized dimension of the individual. The difference between these behaviors and the heart can be highlighted through Matthew’s discussion of adultery/lust and murder/anger.

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, “Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.” But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, “Raca,” is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, “You fool!” will be in the danger of the fire of hell... You have heard that it was said, “Do not commit adultery.” But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.¹⁰

There is no *prima facie* necessity that the turn toward the heart involves the reflection proper to the care of the self. The examination of the heart is not

⁹ Derrida accuses a provocative list of philosophers who privilege a philosophical form of religious content which includes Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Levinas, Ricoeur, Patočka, and Marion (GD, 49).

¹⁰ Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28.

accomplished merely by the individual in relation to itself, but the asymmetrical gaze of God (GD, 93) who sees the workings of the heart without himself being seen. This asymmetrical gaze of a personal God is a “motif that derives firstly and uniquely from Christianity” (GD, 28; HE, 107) and has access to the interior dimensions of the soul that remain inaccessible not only to 1) the gaze of others, but 2) the reflective gaze of the individual (GD, 90). First, Matthew admonishes his readers not to pray in public, as if morality merely concerned the benefits pursued in the average everydayness, i.e., in the synagogue and street corner. Praying in the publicity of the average everydayness is a behavior that has an ulterior motive that merely operates in an ordinary economy.

And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.¹¹

The ordinary reward system occurs in the average everydayness of the visibility proper to ordinary intersubjectivity. The economy proper to the heart is invisible to others, which is to say, the extra-ordinary reward system occurs in the privacy of the closet, invisible to the gaze of others. The privacy of the closet thus constitutes the first layer of secrecy proper to the heart (GD, 90). Second and more radically, prayer in the closet is not to be conducted as an accomplishment of the voice. The pagan rituals that babble in an orgiastic frenzy mistake the sacred as that which is accessible through language. The sacred, by contrast, is already available in the heart, prior to the voice. The language of the heart is “to be learned by heart...without semantic comprehension” (GD, 97). The asymmetrical gaze of the Father penetrates the heart, judging and rewarding it from within. This more radical invisible gaze is deepened beyond the visibility proper to the reflective gaze and constitutes a region of the heart that is cut off from itself. Matthew describes this split as occurring between the left and the right hand.

So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your

¹¹ Ibid., 5:5-8.

right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.¹²

Here we again come across the first layer of secrecy, i.e., the secret from the synagogues and the streets. But the second layer of secrecy is one that pertains from the individual to the itself, which is to say, when you give, do it in such a way that your giving is kept a secret from yourself (GD, 108). By forgetting your acts of charity, by hiding them from yourself, it insures that they will not succumb to the temptations of the economy of the average everydayness that operate according to calculation of recognition and remuneration (GD, 107). This economy does not merely occur within the visibility of others, but the visibility proper to yourself. What is this secret economy of the heart? How is it that only God's gaze is able to access it? What would it mean for a gift to be given with this double degree of secrecy?

Derrida rightly points out that the reward system of the average everydayness is not exchanged here for a non-economic system (GD, 109). Rather, another economy emerges to supplement and subordinate the visibility of the earthly economy. One economy is "dissociated" (GD, 107) with another and this new economy offers a higher return on investments. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."¹³ The first economy of terrestrial visibility is limited to diminishing returns that are subject to the corruptibility of temporality. Sooner or later, moths will eat away at your fine linens and rust will begin to deteriorate your precious metals. Your treasures can also be subject to an unpredictable future, like the sudden surprise of being robbed by thieves. This temporal economy of the average everydayness is not the site where salvation occurs. The new sacred economy has a reward system has a much higher exchange rate and degree of security. Your assets will not depreciate in this celestial economy, but will appreciate exponentially if you decide to invest them here.

The site of trade for this new economy lies within the two layers of secrecy that represent the radical individuality of the heart. How is this new economy established or made manifest, even though it remains inaccessible to the individual? It is the individual's heart, but this individuality is nevertheless a heterogeneity that has thus far been symbolized as the left and right hand, by visibility and absolute invisibility. The doubling of this internal

¹² Ibid., 6:2-4.

¹³ Ibid., 6:19-21.

space is accomplished by the asymmetrical gaze of God who sees even the secrets you yourself do not see and does so without himself being seen (GD, 99). God's gaze takes up residence in the heart and illuminates its motivations and intentions. The heart itself does not apprehend the source of the exposing Light, but apprehends that which the Light illuminates. The Light makes manifest and reveals the secrets of the heart that have previously remained hidden to the individual. The unconcealment of these secret motivations and intentions is not a result of an accomplishment of the heart, but is made possible through the mysterious illumination of God's gaze.

How does this utterly transcendent Light manifest itself in the utter immanence of the heart of hearts without itself collapsing into this radical immanence? How does God's presence in my heart maintain its irreducible alterity, producing and maintaining the doubling of secrets and economies? God's gaze cannot be seen or manifested, yet we know it is there through the affective appropriations of terror and love. First, we are passively appropriated into God's presence-without-presence through the guilt over the divine exposure of our secrets (GD, 93). Nothing is hidden from the divine eye, no screen or clothes to conceal the heart of hearts. "The tradition of *mysterium tremendum*" (GD, 92) understands the manifestation of this exposure to occur through the terror of being invaded so intimately.¹⁴ No matter where we go or how much we distract ourselves from the divine gaze, it is always seeking us out and attentive to us. God's presence-without-presence haunts us as an invader whose arrival from without is nevertheless indeterminate from within. We know the gaze is inside us, but we do not know *where* it is inside us. Terror is thus a mood that gives God's presence-without-presence as an indeterminable force (GD, 37).¹⁵

Second, while the force of God's gaze initially manifests its presence through terror, this terror is gradually transformed into love (GD, 51). While God's judging gaze is forceful and relentlessly persistent, it is nevertheless merciful and forgiving. Its involvement in the heart offers new, better rewards than

¹⁴ In highlighting the "tradition of *mysterium tremendum*," Derrida is acknowledging that he and Patočka are only diagnosing one aspect of the affective presentation of God's gaze. There are other references that show that the force of this penetrating gaze is much more subtle. See, for instance, Revelation 3:17-20.

¹⁵ Derrida uses the mood of terror to criticize Kierkegaard's rendering of Abraham's sacrifice in *Fear and Trembling* as following the "Kantian logic of autonomy" (GD, 92). Abraham's sacrifice was not the sacrifice of affections, passions, and interests necessary for pure duty to the moral law. The terror concerning God's gaze is not disinterested or self-restrained, or autonomous. Terror reveals the irreducible heteronomy of Christian responsible subject. "Kierkegaard still follows the Kantian tradition of a pure ethics or practical reason that is exceeded by absolute duty as it extends into the realm of sacrifice" (GD, 93).

those available in the earthly economy. It offers an economic system to those who have been disenfranchised by this earthly economy of the average everydayness. Regardless of the debts you owe in this new economy, your file for bankruptcy (your admission of guilt) is always already met with a new chance to start over (GD, 51). The bottomless surplus of divine forgiveness that inaugurates this new economy is manifest through love. We cannot see into this abyss of forgiveness, but the abyss nevertheless shows itself as charitable. The giver of charity remains inaccessible, mysterious, and unknown and even the reception of the gift remains an unthematic secret of the heart. The gift is nevertheless made manifest by affectively appropriating the heart through love. The feeling of love reveals the gift without revealing the giver or manner in which it is received. The gift is sensed as given even though the exchange between the giver and receiver is unthematic. Love is thus the mood that gives God's presence-without-presence as an indeterminate generosity.

This affective structure of love and terror inaugurates the doubling of secrets and economies. On the one hand, there are the ordinary secrets and earthly economy of the visibility of the average everydayness and, on the other hand, there is the extra-ordinary secrets and heavenly economy of the invisible heart. How is death unthematically given in this structure? First, an implicit recognition of the individual's mortality is accomplished in the transition from the old economy to the new. The treasures of the new heavenly economy extend beyond the finitude of the earthly economy, which is to say, your investment in the heavenly economy transcend the here and the now and have value even after you die. These treasures, in short, are immortal and by investing in them the individual is put into an unthematic overcoming of death, an overcoming that nevertheless takes up an unthematic relation with death. Secondly and more radically, death is given without being given in the interiorization of the heart through the admission of guilt and promise of new life. When God's mysterious gaze illuminates the secrets of the heart, the fundamental finitude of the heart is also revealed. The heart is fundamentally in a debt that cannot be outstripped and is in need of the redemption that buys it back into a new financial life. The heart can be reborn as a result of the gift that reveals itself through love (GD, 40). This rebirth is an accomplishment that includes an unthematic relation with death – as you die to the old economy of the average everydayness, you are given a new authentic life that is everlasting. The gift of this new life is also a gift of death in that it allows both a turn towards the new economy and a turn away from the old. The gift of life thus “amounts to” (97) the gift of death.

The gift of death/life inaugurates the birth into the new kind of responsibility and remains as a mysterious secret within it. Just as God's gaze appropriates the heart through an unconditional charity, so too is this love to be reproduced with others in an enriched encounter of the average everydayness. Just as the strict economy of the heart is suspended by the gift of death/life, so too does love emerge in relation with others, whether they be enemies or friends, in our debt or not. This unconditional love operates between my heart and the other's heart and responds sacrificially regardless of whether this love is reciprocated. While we might disagree, go to war, and hedge our bets against the other insofar as we both calculate in the earthly economy, the love between hearts in the heavenly economy nevertheless adheres. We love the invisible sinner and hate the visible sin, so to speak.¹⁶ Nevertheless, this heart-ful love enriches and transforms the interactions with others in the average everydayness by establishing a new attitude or posture that is directed toward the heavenly economy. The Christian responsible subject thus not only functions in the earthly economy, but the heavenly economy that is folded over upon it.

CONCLUSION

Derrida's interest in Patočka's *Heretical Essays* lies in the attempt in these essays to go beyond Heidegger's account of (in)authenticity by recuperating a Christian structure of responsibility that can function as a resistance to the modern decline into technological and industrial profanity. Accompanying this attempt is Patočka's implicit task to retrieve a Christian conception of responsible subjectivity that is nevertheless not onto-theological. He "needs to keep his reference to a supreme being distinct from all onto-theological meaning in the sense that Heidegger, and Heidegger alone, gave to it...This is without doubt an implicit project of Patočka's discourse" (GD, 33).

The question of whether or not it is possible to avoid a "non-dogmatic doublet" (GD, 49) of Christian responsibility for Derrida rests on the possibility of being faithful to revelation of the event of responsibility given in Christianity's holy book. *The Gift of Death* is like a kaleidoscope of different figures and texts that Derrida manipulates in order to arrive at the

¹⁶ Derrida offers a brief discussion Carl Schmitt's distinction between the private and the political in *The Concept of the Political* in connection to this point. While the friend/enemy distinction is dissolved at the psychological, moral, and even metaphysical level of the heart, it does not apply to the political (GD, 103). The friend/enemy distinction, which for Schmitt inaugurates the sphere of the political, still applies in the public realm of the average everydayness in that the love for one's neighbor and even enemy is the love of the heart. Derrida identifies this problem, but defers a more extensive problematization of it (GD, 105).

particular shape of this revelation. Derrida's genealogy of the structure of Christian responsibility proceeds through a variety of figures and texts until it arrives with a confrontation with the Sermon on the Mount itself. This confrontation illuminates the unique way in which responsibility is tied to the unique gift of death in Christianity – through a radical interiorization of the subject that takes up and is put into a relation-without-relation with God's asymmetrical gaze. Deep within the recesses of the heart the Christian is put into a relation-without-relation with death that institutes a responsible loving relation-without-relation with others. For Derrida, "Death would be this possibility of giving and taking that actually exempts itself from the same realm of possibility that it institutes, namely, from giving and taking. But to say that is far from contradicting the fact that it is only on the basis of death that giving and taking become possible" (GD, 44). The finitude of the reach of reflection brings with it a logic of secrecy that establishes an open ended love towards others that allows for a self-forgetting in one's acts of charity. The new life in Christ is at once a death to profanity and a rebirth in a new celestial economy of heavenly responsibility.