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“I only have the assurance that I am loving, for as long as I am loving – that is to say that I assume the risk of loving first; I only have the initiative insofar as I can love, and can make a primary decision to love without return, and can make it so that love, through me, loves.”
~ *The Erotic Phenomenon* by Jean-Luc Marion page 74

Although Jean-Luc Marion’s *The Erotic Phenomenon* was complex and a very difficult read, it was by far my favorite piece of writing we studied this semester. I think many people, including myself, have a hard time bridging the gap between what they know and how they behave. For example, I know, from what psychologists, scientists, and other professionals who study humanity and life have said, that I should not expect reciprocity in love. But my behavior and my deepest thoughts, did not reflect this. I did not see the point in giving so much, in opening my heart and mind, when I was unsure if anything would be given in return. But Marion’s writing helped me bridge that gap between how I would like to think and act and how I actually think and act. His book made me analyze the fundamental thought processes of my mind. Thoughts that were so deeply ingrained I did not even realize they were there till I read Marion. I have realized that I often want to give love but feel as if I have no one to give it to. I was, in a sense, waiting for someone to give love first instead of making the decision to love first. I was seeking an answer to the question “Does anyone out there love me?” instead of asking myself “Can I love first?” Through reading Marion, I have realized that I have been very afraid to love first. I have been afraid to risk myself in love because I am afraid to lose in love. To open my heart and receive nothing. But, as Marion explains, you can never lose in love unless you stop loving. As long as I love, even with the knowledge that others may not love in return, I have

not truly lost at all because I know now that I can still love. I am so grateful to have read Marion's book and received this insight.

Another one of the reasons I was so enthralled by Marion's writing was the phenomenological approach he took to love. There were no presuppositions or references to any other writings or persons, he just wrote about love as love is. Although the logic is complex, and I did not fully understand it, it gave me a sense of ease in a way that I did not think a concept so subjective and intricate as love could. I had never heard of phenomenology before our study on Marion, but it is now a subject I am very intrigued by and want to learn more of.