

The Secret of Manifestation

The Phenomenon of Revelation

by Jorge Luis Roggero

*“God is hidden even after his manifestation, or rather,
to speak more divinely, in its very manifestation.”*

Dionysius

This article aims to demonstrate that the phenomenon of revelation operates in Marion’s phenomenology as the paradigmatic phenomenon that shows the secret of manifestation. It accounts for the essence of phenomenality insofar as all manifestation has at its core its givenness in excess. Thinking ‘manifestation in terms of givenness’ implies understanding it as a secret, inasmuch as the appearing of all phenomena involves a movement in which something shows itself in its hiding and hides itself in its showing.

1. Introduction

In his 1997 main work, *Being Given*, after having introduced the notion of the “saturated phenomenon” (*le phénomène saturé*), in §24, Jean-Luc Marion explicitly inquires the limit of phenomenality:

“The question of determining the degree to which saturation can be deployed thus presents itself. Does it attain a maximum, or does it, by hypothesis, always transgress it – but also, is there any sense in envisaging a phenomenon that gives (itself) according to a maximum of phenomenality? This question arises inevitably from the mere fact that it alone permits all dimensions of phenomenality to be glimpsed, explores the region of saturated givenness, thoroughly inventories it, and cannot be dodged.”¹

Marion seeks to determine a phenomenon that presents the “maximum of phenomenality,” that is, the maximum degree in which saturation can unfold itself.

In 1992, in *The Possible and Revelation*, Marion argues that if phenomenology manages to return to the things themselves by freeing itself from the principle of sufficient reason, then revelation is not strange to it.

¹ Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given. Towards a Phenomenology of Givenness*, Stanford 2002, 234.

“By thus lifting the prohibition of sufficient reason, phenomenology liberates possibility and hence opens the field possibly even to phenomena marked by impossibility. Among other possibilities, religious phenomena would reappear again in philosophy, as *facts* justified *de jure* since given *in fact*.”²

This suggestion is taken up with a different emphasis a few years later in *Being Given*. The answer that Marion gives regarding the possibility of a phenomenon that appears “according to a maximum of phenomenality”³ is the phenomenon of revelation. Certainly, the question raised by Marion is undoubtedly relevant to a phenomenological investigation. However, Marion notes that this exploration is not carried out, and the reason, generally, is the fear that the cause for God will arise, since the theological seems to contradict the logical. However, Marion argues, what is at stake is not a theological issue, but a phenomenological one. It is about taking the project of “liberating possibility in phenomenality”⁴ to its ultimate consequences. And it is precisely this question that seems not to be duly noted in the debate on the ‘theological turn.’ What is Marion presenting with the phenomenon of revelation? Is it a matter of surreptitiously introducing a theological category into the field of philosophy? Or even more: is it only about introducing a confessional truth, or is it possible to understand his gesture in its philosophical possibility, beyond some supposed ‘evangelizing’ intention of the author?⁵ Is it not possible to read in this statement a strategy used by great thinkers (Hegel and Heidegger, to name just two), which consists of drawing on theological ideas to examine philosophical problems?⁶ My hypothesis is that revelation not only operates in the phenomenology of givenness as the validation of the fundamental theological phenomenon, but rather as a reflection on the secret of the manifestation. Revelation shows the essence of manifestation that consists precisely in being a secret inasmuch as it is, as Heidegger argues, the showing of something that somehow stays hidden in its appearing.⁷ In this sense, if Marion proposes to think of the saturated phenomenon as the paradigmatic phenomenon that accounts for its essence, then the doubly saturated phenomenon is the paradigm of paradigms. In §25 of *Being Given*, Marion writes:

² Jean-Luc Marion, “The Possible and Revelation”, in: id., *The Visible and the Revealed*, New York 2008, 1–17, esp. 5.

³ Id., *Being Given* (see fn. 1), 234.

⁴ Ibid., 234.

⁵ Of course that it is possible to conceive Marion’s thought as a whole as a Christian apologetics, presented perhaps as an “apologetics of vulnerability” – as Christina Gschwandtner suggested (*Christina M. Gschwandtner*, Jean-Luc Marion: A God of Gift and Charity, in: ead., *Postmodern Apologetics. Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy*, New York 2013, 123), but it is also possible to read in his project this other way of overcoming metaphysics, a philosophical one, that presents itself as valid for believers and non-believers.

⁶ Marion himself confirm the viability of this strategy in his last book, when he states that theology “[...] offers resources, paradoxes and difficulties which can, if understood correctly, support the philosophy to come” (*Jean-Luc Marion*, *La métaphysique et après*, Paris 2023, 15; transl. J.L.R.).

⁷ Cf. *Martin Heidegger*, *Parmenides*, Bloomington 1992, 62 f.: “The secret in the mystery is a kind of concealment, characterized by its insignificance, in virtue of which the secret is still an open one [...]. The ‘open mystery’ in the genuine and strict sense occurs where the concealing of the mysterious is simply experienced as concealedness and is lodged in a historically arisen reticence. The openness of the open mystery does not consist in solving the mystery, thus destroying it, but consists in not touching the concealedness of the simple and essential and letting this concealedness alone in its appearance.” I am very grateful to Jeffrey Bloechl for his insights on the topic of the

“My entire project, by contrast, aims to think the common-law phenomenon, and through it the poor phenomenon, on the basis of the paradigm of the saturated phenomenon, of which the former two offer only weakened variants, and from which they derive by progressive extenuation. For the saturated phenomenon does not give itself abnormally, making an exception to the definition of phenomenality; to the contrary, its ownmost property is to render thinkable the measure of manifestation in terms of givenness and to recover it in its common-law variety, indeed in the poor phenomenon. What metaphysics rules out as an exception (the saturated phenomenon), phenomenology here takes for its norm – every phenomenon shows itself in the measure (or the lack of measure) to which it gives itself. To be sure, not all phenomena get classified as saturated phenomena, but all saturated phenomena accomplish the one and only paradigm of phenomenality. Better, they alone enable it to be illustrated.”⁸

Marion postulates the saturated phenomenon as the one capable of officiating as a “paradigm of phenomenality” precisely because it allows one to think “the manifestation in terms of givenness.” But, then, following the gradual logic introduced in *Being Given*, if there is a phenomenon that manifests according to the maximum degree of phenomenality, then that phenomenon is the only paradigm for all kinds of phenomena.

In 2005, *The Banality of Saturation* was published. This fundamental text, in which Marion corrects *Being Given* and the static vision of phenomenality, allows us to think of revelation no longer as the highest stage in the phenomenological hierarchy, but as the heart of phenomenality, as the secret of manifestation. The modalities outlined in the topic of the saturated phenomenon (event, idol, flesh, and icon) do not constitute, in any way, an exhaustive enumeration of the only possible saturated phenomena, but their goal is to make explicit the extremes in which excess can be articulated. In his illuminating posthumous text, Carlos Enrique Restrepo highlights that, in this sense, the doctrine of the saturated phenomenon must be completed by a casuistry.⁹ Each case can exhibit a greater or lesser degree of saturation depending on how it combines the four features that define the essence of the manifestation: the unpredictable character, the unbearable character, the absolute character, and the unobjectifiable character.

To demonstrate these ideas, in the first section I will focus on the treatment of revelation in *Being Given*; in a second section I will give an account of the transformation of the static vision of phenomenality by a dynamic conception based on the notion of banality; in a third section I will analyze some relevant insights on revelation presented in Marion’s recent book, *Revelation Comes From Elsewhere*; and finally, I will draw some conclusions.

secret and the mystery and his reflections about this subject in Heidegger and Chrétien during the Summer Seminar “Phenomenology and Revelation.” The Seminar was organized by Christina M. Gschwandtner (Fordham University, New York) and Thomas Schärfl-Trendel (Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, Munich), and took place from August 9th to 16th, 2023, at the *Immaculate Conception Conference Center*, Huntington, Long Island, New York.

⁸ Marion, *Being Given* (see fn. 1), 227.

⁹ Carlos Enrique Restrepo, “Relectura de los fenómenos saturados”, in: Jorge Luis Roggero (ed.), Jean-Luc Marion. límites y posibilidades de la Filosofía y de la Teología, Buenos Aires 2017, 153–164.

2. Revelation in *Being Given*

At the beginning of the aforementioned §24, Marion recalls that his project consists of liberating the possibility of the phenomenon. The question about the limit of phenomenality, formulated in a more precise way, is then: How far can the possibility unfold respecting the requirements already determined? Which requirements? Marion summarizes them in two requirements:

“(i) the potential maximum must remain a phenomenon; that is to say, it must be inscribed within the already acquired definition of phenomenality (determinations in general, saturation in particular), as a variation of this one and only definition; (ii) the maximum must also remain a possibility, in the twofold sense of transgressing itself permanently without being fixed in a definite figure and also designing itself independency of all actual and worldly accomplishment of this maximum. The maximum of saturated phenomenality must remain an ultimate possibility of the phenomenon – the last, but still under the heading of possibility.”¹⁰

The phenomenon of revelation, according to Marion, meets these two requirements. In the first place, it is a phenomenon that constitutes the ultimate expression of phenomenality: it concentrates in it, completely, all the determinations of the phenomenon in general (‘an-amorphosis,’ unpredictable landing, *fait accompli*, incident, and event), and also, the four features of the saturated phenomenon. Thus, revelation “saturates phenomenality to the second degree, by saturation of saturation.”¹¹

Second, it is a possibility that remains a possibility in a double sense. On the one hand, in the famous note in this paragraph establishing a frontier between philosophy and theology, Marion assigns the study of the possibility of revelation to phenomenology, but prevents it from thinking about its actuality.¹² The latter can only be affirmed by theology. Yet, on the other hand, Marion also understands that, in phenomenology, “higher than actuality stands *possibility*.”¹³ The phenomenon of revelation is fulfilled as a possibility. Let us focus

¹⁰ Marion, *Being Given* (see fn. 1), 234 f.

¹¹ Ibid., 234 f.

¹² Cf. *ibid.*, 367, note 90: “Phenomenology describes possibilities and never considers the phenomenon of revelation except as a possibility of phenomenality, one that it would formulate in this way: If God were to manifest himself (or manifested himself), he would use a paradox to the second degree. Revelation (of God by himself, *theological*), if it takes place, will assume the phenomenal figure of the phenomenon of revelation, of the paradox of paradoxes, of saturation to the second degree. To be sure, Revelation (as actuality) is never confounded with revelation (as possible phenomenon). I will scrupulously respect this conceptual difference by its graphic translation. But phenomenology, which owes it to phenomenality to go this far, does not go beyond and should never pretend to decide the fact of Revelation, its historicity, its actuality, or its meaning. It should not do so, not only out of concern for distinguishing the sciences and delimiting their respective regions, but first of all, because it does not have the means to do so. The face (if there is one) of Revelation exceeds the scope of all science, including that of phenomenology. Only a theology, and on condition of constructing itself on the basis of this face alone (Karl Barth or Hans Urs von Balthasar, no doubt more than Rudolf Bultmann or Karl Rahner), could reach it. Even if it had the desire to do so (and, of course, this would never be the case), phenomenology would not have the power to turn into theology. And one has to be completely ignorant of theology, its procedures, and its problematic not to imagine this unlikeness.”

¹³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Oxford 2001, 63.

on these two questions. First, Marion argues that it is possible to describe revelation without presupposing its actuality:

“Phenomenology cannot decide if a revelation can or should ever give itself, but it (and it alone) can determine that, in case it does, such a phenomenon of revelation should assume the figure of the paradox of paradoxes. If revelation there must be (and phenomenology has no authority to decide this), then it will assume, assumes, or assumed the figure of paradox of paradoxes, according to an essential law of phenomenality.”¹⁴

This Marionian affirmation has aroused a repeated objection: Vincent Holzer,¹⁵ Kathryn Tanner¹⁶ and Henri-Jérôme Gagey¹⁷ have coincided in pointing out that, in this way, Marion seems to introduce a kind of ‘transcendental theology’ (closer to Karl Rahner than to Hans Urs von Balthasar),¹⁸ by fixing the figure of a “paradox of paradoxes” as the condition of possibility for the manifestation of Revelation.¹⁹

Marion is aware of the plausibility of this objection. In *Being Given* he already foresees it,²⁰ and immediately responds by stressing that it is a condition of possibility that “does not consist in rendering the phenomenon possible by delimiting it a priori from the impossibilities, but in freeing its possibility by destroying all prerequisite conditions for phenomenality, therefore by suspending all so-called impossibilities, indeed by admitting the possibility of certain ones among them.”²¹ In this sense – following the suggestion of Emmanuel Falque to consider *Being Given* as an “inverted *Critique of Pure Reason*”²² –, I would dare to say that it is a ‘counter-condition’ of possibility, a condition of inverted possibility, since it does not operate as a limit that restricts the actuality of the phenomenon to pre-established ways of appearing, but rather, on the contrary, it frees the phenomenon from all conditions prior to its manifestation. It is, therefore, simply a matter of imposing the condition that there are no conditions.

¹⁴ Marion, *Being Given* (see fn. 1), 235.

¹⁵ Vincent Holzer, “Phénoménologie radicale et phénomène de révélation: Jean-Luc Marion, *Étant donné*. Essai d’une phénoménologie de la donation”, in: *Transversalités* 70 (1999) 56–68.

¹⁶ Kathryn Tanner, “Theology at the Limits of Phenomenology”, in: Kevin Hart (ed.), *Counter-experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, Notre Dame 2007, 201–231.

¹⁷ Henri-Jérôme Gagey, “La théologie entre urgence phénoménologique et endurance herméneutique”, in: *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 98/1 (2010) 31–57.

¹⁸ It is interesting to point out this supposed closeness to Rahner because Marion expressly criticizes his ‘transcendental theology’. In *The Possible and Revelation* (see fn. 2), 11, Marion points out that Rahner’s “ontological Christology” is an attempt to “reduce the Revelation of God by God to the measure of the ontological horizon of manifestation.”

¹⁹ Cf. also Gagey, “La théologie entre urgence phénoménologique et endurance herméneutique” (see fn. 17), 43: “When Marion tries to predefine the phenomenon of revelation by describing its possibility, without pronouncing on its actuality, does he not exceed the purifying function that he assigns to phenomenology to impose *a priori* conditions of possibility on actual Revelation?”

²⁰ Cf. Marion, *Being Given* (see fn. 1), 235: “In this sense, since revelation remains a variation of saturation, itself a variation of the phenomenality of the phenomenon inasmuch as given, it still remains inscribed within the transcendental conditions of possibility. Would I have come all this way only to recover precisely what I wanted to destroy – conditions preceding possibility and delimiting it a priori? Better, wouldn’t I have recovered precisely, in regard to revelation, the very type of phenomenon that neither can nor should submit to them?”

²¹ *Ibid.*, 235.

²² Emmanuel Falque, “Phénoménologie de l’extraordinaire”, in: *Philosophie* 78/2 (2003) 52–76, esp. 52.

Nevertheless, beyond the fact that Marion's response is unquestionably relevant, it is worth asking if this strategy of distinguishing between possibility and actuality allows us to fully achieve the objective of liberating possibility from impossibility. It is necessary to add – and Marion himself is aware of this – secondly, that the phenomenon of revelation is fulfilled as a possibility *qua* possibility. The determinations of the phenomenon and, particularly, the features of saturation acquire their ultimate fulfillment as long as they remain in their indeterminacy. The given always gives itself in the excessive modality of saturation, provoking a bedazzlement that can only capture an aspect of the appearing. In this sense, the phenomenon of revelation exposes the secret of manifestation, or rather, manifestation as a secret. Givenness is fully fulfilled, everything is there, but revealed as a secret, that is, as an event that in part remains hidden in its occurrence.

In this same paragraph, Marion analyzes how the four types of saturated phenomena operate in the figure of Christ. His manifestation is an *invisible* event (Mark 13:33: "As for the day and the hour, no one knows them, neither the angels in heaven, nor [sc. even; J.L.R.] the Son, except the Father"); an unbearable idol (John 16:12: "I still have many things to say to you, but you do not yet have the power to bear them" and John 18:6 f.: "When he said to them: 'It is me (I am)', they recoiled and fell to the ground"); absolute flesh, since the maximum visibility occurs in death (Matthew 27:54: "Truly this was the son of God!") and has an absolute character, for which there is no parameter (John 18:36: "his kingdom is not of this world"); and, finally, he is also an *irregardable* icon, who inverts the gaze, being he who calls us and constitutes us as witnesses (Matthew 28:18: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"). All these traits occur in a maximum degree of saturation. However, how should we understand this Marionian reading of the revelation in Christ?

The answer can be found in an article from 1989, published in the journal *Communio: Nothing is Impossible for God* (and then republished in 2010's book, *Believing in Order to See*). There Marion introduces an analysis of the miracle and finds in this religious phenomenon the paradigm of the saturated phenomenon insofar as it constitutes an actuality that was considered impossible until then.²³ Indeed, in this article – where the expression "saturating phenomenon" (*phénomène saturant*) is used significantly²⁴ – Marion maintains that the miracle goes beyond the religious field: "The concept of the miracle does not belong

²³ Marion states that in everyday life "we call miracle any event that by really happening proves the possibility of what I held beforehand to be definitively impossible" (Jean-Luc Marion, "Nothing is Impossible for God", in: id., *Believing in Order to See. On the Rationality of Revelation and the Irrationality of Some Believers*, New York 2017, 109).

²⁴ In *Being Given*, Marion clarifies why he changed the expression "saturating phenomenon" to "saturated phenomenon": "I propose speaking of a saturated and not saturating phenomenon, as has sometimes been suggested to me. Actually, intuition saturates every concept or signification in such a way that this phenomenon is indeed manifest in a saturated mode by means of saturating intuition. Moreover, the intuition that saturates it saturates it solely in the name of givenness: the saturated phenomenon is so first with givenness. To be sure, such a phenomenon saturates next, and as a consequence, the gaze to which it gives itself to be seen and known. It therefore can also be called, rigorously, saturating. However, the saturation that it exerts in the field of knowledge only results from that which it receives in the field of givenness. Givenness always determines knowledge and not the inverse" (Marion, *Being Given* [see fn. 1], 362 note 37).

to the strictly religious realm but comes out of the conceptual if not specifically philosophical analysis of everydayness.”²⁵ This notion puts into question the historical primacy of actuality over possibility.

In the third section of the text, Marion examines the history of philosophy. From Aristotle onwards, metaphysics accounts for the submission of possibility to actuality. The Kantian formula ‘conditions of possibility’ is the clearest statement of a possibility limited by the conditions of actualization. However, it is in the same field of philosophy that the inversion of this principle can be found. According to Marion, it is phenomenology that is in charge of questioning the authority of the Stagirite. Already in §24 of *Ideas I*, we can find the liberation of the possibility, since Husserl affirms that the legitimizing source of cognition is not to be found in an external instance to the phenomena, but depends on the givenness to the intuition. Phenomena should no longer be justified before the ‘Court of Reason,’ but it is about giving credit to what appears. At this point, Marion formulates his strategy of philosophical appropriation of a theological concept quite explicitly: “How does the miracle fit into the phenomenological advance? First, by the fact that phenomenology liberates possibility by giving up deducing it from some preliminary condition or other and by deciding about it according to givenness.”²⁶

Marion understands that “the miracle offers the purest example of phenomenological givenness”²⁷ and, in this way, acts as a model of a saturating phenomenon:

“By saturating phenomenon I mean that which the manifest given surpasses – not only what a human gaze can bear without being blinded and dying, but what the world in its essential finitude can receive and contain. [...] Here [...] intuitive givenness infinitely surpasses what our intentional gaze can hope of significations and of essences, as well as what our intuition can bear of fulfillment.”²⁸

In the same way as the miracle operates as the paradigm that allows us to postulate, in the field of philosophy, the saturating or saturated phenomenon the phenomenon of Revelation is the model to think about the phenomenon of revelation as a philosophical appropriation of a theological idea.

At the beginning of *Revelation Comes From Elsewhere*, Marion uses this same strategy of appropriation. He points out that the phenomenon of revelation occurs on a daily basis. The world does not open itself as a space, but it unfolds itself like a flow, like a “totality of the possibles that befall me like things.”²⁹ Among these apparitions, there are some that concern us particularly, that appear to us by leaving a mark. This type of phenomenon is characterized not by what it makes manifest but by the one to whom it is addressed, whom it affects and transforms, and which Marion proposes to call “revelation.” Whether one is in the field of sensual, aesthetic, intellectual, moral, or religious experience, a revelation leaves an unforgettable trace in one’s life because its impact transforms it. “A revelation is

²⁵ Id., “Nothing is Impossible for God” (see fn. 23), 111.

²⁶ Ibid., 117.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 119 f.

²⁹ Jean-Luc Marion, *Revelation Comes From Elsewhere* (orig.: D’Ailleurs, La Révélation, Paris 2020), transl. Stephen E. Lewis and Stephanie Rumpza, Stanford 2024, 4.

defined, then, as a phenomenon that cannot be forgotten, like a presence that will not go away because it affects and transforms the one sees it, perceives it, and receives it.”³⁰

These revelatory experiences, which are not extraordinary but happen daily, have three important characteristics: first, they reveal themselves like coming from elsewhere (*d’ailleurs*); second, they impose themselves by revealing something of ourselves; and third, by impacting on us, they make possible new ways of social interaction.³¹ Marion gives the simple example of the beginner skier, who could be taught about the right movements and still never manage to do them well. This situation could continue over time, generating a discouraging effect, but if the beginner keeps on trying, he suddenly experiences a revelatory moment: he begins to ski. “This previously unfeasible and secret [*secret*] movement suddenly opens up to me and unfolds within me. Whence its first effect: it *reveals itself*, accessible, simple, evident, manifest.”³² And by revealing itself, it also reveals myself to myself in a new world, a world apprehended with new skills and with different interactions with others. This trivial example shows the logic of revelation and the experience of the *ailleurs* operating in everyday life.

Nevertheless, it should be noticed that Marion had already described this type of phenomenon in previous books (*Negative Certainties*, *Reprise du donné*) with the category of the event. A few pages further on, Marion will describe Revelation as “what erupts into our experience as an event, as the premier event [*l’événement par excellence*].”³³

3. The Banality of Revelation

In 2005, with the publication of *The Banality of Saturation*, the static vision of phenomenality, introduced in *Being Given*, undergoes a profound transformation from the idea of banality. In this text, Marion introduces a distinction between this last notion and that of frequency. Certainly, poor and common phenomena are more frequent than saturated ones, but this is because poor and common phenomenality overlap with saturated phenomenality:

“[T]he world is covered with an invasive and highly visible layer of poor phenomena (namely, the technical objects produced and reproduced without end), which ends up eclipsing what it covers over. And what does it cover over, if not other phenomena (e.g., the event, the painting, the flesh, or the other [*autrui*]), which I proposed naming saturated phenomena?”³⁴

The reason for the infrequency of saturated phenomena is this concealment by poor and common phenomena. However, Marion points out that this does not imply that they cannot be considered banal. “In the strict sense, what becomes banal, by political and legal

³⁰ Ibid., 6.

³¹ All revelations “involve the same, necessarily related moments: the revelation of the phenomenon by itself, the revelation of myself to myself (and of my world, of my space), and, finally, the revelation to others of the one that I have become from elsewhere.” Ibid., 11.

³² Ibid., 6-7.

³³ Ibid., 31.

³⁴ Id., “The Banality of Saturation”, in: *The Visible and the Revealed* (see fn. 2), 119–144, here 125.

decision, concerns all and is accessible to all.”³⁵ Marion explains the original use of the term and gives some examples that make it possible to notice this availability of the banal, which “concerns all” when the case requires it. Thus, the use of a forge, a mill, or a feudal lord’s land can become banal, that is, accessible to all, if the situation demands it. In this sense, Marion argues that the banality of the saturated phenomenon

“suggests that the majority of phenomena, if not all can undergo saturation by the excess of intuition over the concept or signification in them. In other words, the majority of phenomena that appear at first glance to be poor in intuition could be described not only as objects but also as phenomena that intuition saturates and therefore exceed any univocal concept. Before the majority of phenomena, even the most simple (the majority of objects produced technically and reproduced industrially), opens the possibility of a doubled interpretation, which depends upon the demands of my ever-changing relation to them. Or rather, when the description demands it, I have the possibility of passing from one interpretation to the other, from a poor or common phenomenality to a saturated phenomenality.”³⁶

In this way, Marion transforms his static conception of phenomenality; we can no longer speak of a rigid classification of different degrees of givenness with an immutable character. The topic of phenomena is reduced to ‘two modes of phenomenality,’ which must be conceived dynamically, as possibilities of phenomenization that are always present in any givenness.

These two modes of phenomenality will receive the denomination ‘objects’ and ‘events.’ In *Negative certainties*, in continuity with the consideration made in *The Banality of Saturation*, Marion explicitly proposes to articulate the topic of the phenomenon presented in §23 of *Being Given* with a new classification:

“In this way, we would lay out a new table of phenomena. On the one side, the phenomena of the object type, comprising the poor phenomena (logical forms, mathematical idealities, etc.) and the common-law phenomena (objects of the ‘natural’ sciences, industrial objects, etc.). On the other side, the phenomena of the event type, comprising the simple saturated phenomena (the event in its restricted sense, according to quantity; the idol or the painting, according to quality; the flesh, according to relation; and the icon or the face of the other, according to modality), but also the phenomena of revelation (which combine several saturated phenomena, such as the erotic phenomenon, the phenomena of revelation, Revelation, etc.). This table would complete and complicate the one found in *Étant donné* (IV, § 23, pp. 309-25) / *Being Given* (221-33), by binding saturation and eventness: a phenomenon shows itself to be all the more saturated when it gives itself with a greater eventness.”³⁷

Thus, Marion clarifies that it is not a matter of abandoning the classification of phenomena introduced in *Being Given*, but rather of ceasing to conceive it statically. The distinction between objects and events is confirmed in the 2016 work, *Reprise du donné*. There, Marion

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 126.

³⁷ Jean-Luc Marion, *Negative Certainties*, Chicago 2015, 262, note 76.

also points out that the givenness is always given in excess: “The givenness is always fulfilled in excess [...] A givenness without excess would contradict itself.”³⁸

4. Revelation in Revelation Comes From Elsewhere

In 2020, Jean-Luc Marion published another of his main books, *Revelation Comes From Elsewhere*. This work not only constitutes a masterpiece of theology³⁹ but also of philosophy. In this book, Marion presents his thoughts in a new way, enlightened by the idea of revelation. All the categories of the phenomenology of givenness (witness, love, reduction to givenness, saturated phenomenon, anamorphosis, paradox) operate to account for the phenomenon of revelation in its philosophical and theological dimension.

But Marion seems to have changed his position, he seems to have changed his mind concerning the necessity of establishing a clear distinction between philosophy and theology, as introduced in *Being Given*. This idea has been replaced by this new conception of phenomenology of givenness as a methodological tool that can be used in the philosophical field as well as in the theological one. And maybe this turn is even a new presentation of his thought – as it is composed from theological and philosophical elements with no clear distinction between them. We can certainly observe a productive dialogue between both disciplines, and for some moments we can perceive a certain absence of boundaries between them.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, as I have already established in the introduction of this paper,

³⁸ Id., *Reprise du donné*, Paris 2016, 185 f. In this sense, maybe it is possible to answer to Christina Gschwandtner's sharp objection regarding the need to reintroduce degrees of givenness and saturation. According to Gschwandtner, it is problematic to consider that any phenomenon that does not occur with extreme saturation can account for objectivity, since this does not reflect our daily experience (Gschwandtner, *Degrees of Givenness. On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion*, Bloomington, 2014, 8 f.). However, the notion of banality and the distinction between two opposing modes of phenomenality do not exclude the possibility of introducing degrees within each phenomenal type. This is so because this new dynamic approach allows the gifted to interact – from their active/passive receptivity – in the givenness of the phenomenon, taking into account the circumstances. When the situation requires it, the receiving subjectivity can become active and constitutes a poor or common object, or it can become passive and surrender to the advent. In this second passive modality, the gifted addressee can certainly receive a phenomenon that emphasizes some of the characteristics of the excess of the givenness (event, idol, flesh, icon) that combines to a greater or lesser extent some or all, or finally, that shows the maximum expression of each one of them.

³⁹ In a recent interview, Marion himself seems to be aware of the importance of his work in theology when he points out the favorable conditions of our time, that constitute the points of departure of his own thought: “To get thinking moving again, violent events were needed: the Nietzschean proclamation of the end of metaphysics, the explosion unleashed by Barth (largely betrayed by his followers, but well summed up by Balthasar), the rediscovery of the Fathers and the ‘nouvelle théologie.’” (Jean-Luc Marion, “À propos de *D’ailleurs, la Révélation*. Entretien avec Jean-Luc Marion”, in: *Communio* 284/6 [2022] 107–119, here 108.)

⁴⁰ As a testimony of this new attitude, we can refer to the Preface to the Spanish edition of *Étant donné*. Questioning himself about the layout of the frontier, Marion maintains that in order to understand the novelty of the saturated phenomenon that appears without or against any constitution of an object, it is necessary to no longer take the boundary between philosophy and theology as a “unquestionable dogma,” but rather to admit that such a borderline must be thought of as the product of the history of metaphysics; cf. Jean-Luc Marion, “Prólogo a la edición española”, in: *Siendo dado. Ensayo para una fenomenología de la donación*, Madrid 2008, 13. In a 2014 interview, taking up this idea, Marion affirms that the problem of the distinction between philosophy and theology is a metaphysical one because it implies supposing that philosophy can fix the conditions of truth: “Nevertheless,

in this section I will focus only on one term of this relationship – a term that in fact, with different accents but as a constant issue, characterized Marion's thought from the beginning: I will consider the advantages that philosophy obtains in this exchange with theology.⁴¹

In the envoi, Marion argues that the concept of revelation must be understood as a paradox.⁴² But this paradox must be read not on the plane of logical formalism, but, in the first place, as a paradox rooted in phenomenality itself.⁴³ Marion insists on this point: revelation concerns primarily phenomenality and not a question about beings and their being (existence) or about the knowledge of objects (demonstration).⁴⁴ The question about revelation is the question about the limits of phenomenality, that is, about the limits of visibility: "What do we see, what can we ever see of the invisible? Such is the question."⁴⁵ The key issue that gives revelation a 'phenomenal privilege' is that this phenomenon would not simply be capable of making the invisible visible, like the rest of the saturated phenomena, but would make the invisible visible insofar as invisible. Revelation as "a phenomenon coming from *elsewhere* [*d'ailleurs*] than from the world" implies "the apparition of the inapparent par excellence, the visibility of the invisible *as such*."⁴⁶ As we have emphasized above, this particularity is what makes revelation the phenomenon that reaches the limit of phenomenality because it is capable of phenomenizing the invisible as invisible or, I would dare to say, possibility as possibility, indeterminacy as indeterminacy. In this way, Revelation accounts for the secret of manifestation, which consists precisely in a revelation that leaves the secret unrevealed. Revelation implies an articulation of theophany and theocrypsis.⁴⁷ In Jean-Louis Chrétien eloquent words:

"[...] revelation is born from the secret, and comes to transmit it to us. Manifestation can be contradictorily opposed to non-manifestation, but revelation only lifts the veils which protected us from the mystery. [...] If the hidden God and the manifested God do not oppose each other, it is not only because they are the same and unique God, but because the revealed God

we find that, in fact, almost no contemporary philosopher still claims [...] to fix a priori the conditions of possibility of experience. Consequently, the opposition, whether conflictive or with conciliatory spirit, between philosophy and theology appears from now on as the opposition in a friendly match." (*Jean-Luc Marion, "Foi et raison. Jean-Luc Marion et Laurence Devillairs"*, in: *Études* 2 [2014] 67–76, here 72.)

⁴¹ As Marion himself recognizes, from the very beginning of his career that was the case: "This study of theology allowed me to enrich and broaden my philosophical work." (id., "Comment suis-je devenu philosophe", in: id., *Paroles données. Quarante entretiens 1987-2017*, Paris 2008, 31–41, 33).

⁴² In second part, Marion states: "Formally speaking, the concept of Revelation is that it has none" (id., *Revelation Comes From Elsewhere* [see fn. 29], 72.). Or more precisely, we can have a "*quasi-concept*" of Revelation that does not admit to be "excluded from any concept" (ibid., 72). However, Marion insists that nevertheless it is not "a matter of agnosticism or ineffability, since we can think about and say this paradox" (ibid., 72.).

⁴³ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 33: "Revelation, as its name indicates, plays out in phenomenality, which thus offers the privileged point of view for describing and receiving it. If it can ever be conceived, it will be by following the guiding thread of the question of phenomenality, much more than in accordance with the question of beings and their being (existence), and infinitely more than according to the question of a knowledge of objects (demonstration)."

⁴⁵ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Jean-Louis Chrétien, Lueur du secret*, Paris 1985, 17: "All Christian thought [...] has the task of uniting the theocryptic and the theophanic, of veiling and revelation."

is always at the same time one and the other. Revelation opens, without altering it, access to the inaccessible. That God reveals himself means that he hides himself by manifesting himself and manifests himself by hiding.”⁴⁸

Then, Revelation accounts for manifestation as a secret that always operates, combining the visible and the invisible, actuality and possibility, presence and absence.

Moreover, Marion argues that Revelation not only confirms the definition of phenomenon as what shows itself only insofar as it gives itself (in the form of the secret), but “Paradoxically and therefore also logically, Revelation would accomplish, by virtue of the giving that it alone performs perfectly, the essence of phenomenality.”⁴⁹ Revelation exhibits the features of the essence of phenomenality.

Marion’s main treatise of revelation explores in detail all these features. I will focus on just one that I find especially relevant for this paper. In the third part of the book, Marion explores the idea of Revelation as a phenomenon that comes from elsewhere (*d’ailleurs*). This allows him to introduce an opposition between the Greek logic of *aletheia* that implies the operation of unconcealing (*décèlement* or *dé-couvrement*) and the biblical logic of *apokalypsis* as the event of revelation.⁵⁰ Marion does not make it explicit,⁵¹ but we can find this same distinction in Levinas operating in the philosophical domain:

“To recognize truth to be disclosure [*dévoilement*] is to refer it to the horizon of him who discloses [...]. The disclosed being is relative to us and not *kath’ autó*. [...] The manifestation of the *kath’ autó* [...] does not consist in its being disclosed, its being exposed to the gaze that would take it as a theme for interpretation, and would command an absolute position dominating the object. Manifestation *kath’ autó* consists in a being telling itself to us independently of every position we would have taken in its regard, *expressing itself*. [...] *The absolute experience is not disclosure but revelation: a coinciding of the expressed with him who expresses, which is the privileged manifestation of the Other, the manifestation of a face over and beyond form.*”⁵²

According to Levinas, the revelation of the Other radically inverts the logic of disclosure (unveiling, unconcealing) and its objectifying procedure.⁵³ And it reverses it to such an extent that it is no longer a question of two modes of “knowledge,” since the “the relation with the face is not an object-cognition.”⁵⁴ Levinas points to an instance that is more original and that makes possible all unconcealing of being and knowledge of objects: the ethical

⁴⁸ Ibid., 17 f.

⁴⁹ Marion, *Revelation Comes From Elsewhere* (see fn. 29), 34.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 116 f.

⁵¹ There is only a mention in page 16, note 16. There Marion quotes this passage: “Revelation constitutes a veritable inversion objectifying cognition” (*Emmanuel Levinas, Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, The Hague 1979, 67).

⁵² Ibid., 64–66.

⁵³ Ibid., 67 f.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 75.

plane that pre-exists the ontological plane.⁵⁵ What is at stake in revelation is not the unveiling of “a thing as a thing,” but the manifestation of the manifested that coincides with its manifestation⁵⁶ and that expresses itself from itself, resisting all form or objectification.

According to Marion, philosophy is wrong to judge Revelation from the parameters of the operation of unconcealing or unveiling, for what Revelation claims to reveal does not belong to the order of what the truth of reason unveils or explains. Marion appeals to Pascal’s theory of the three orders. To gain access to Revelation implies gaining access to the third order, the order of charity that inverts the order between understanding and will. To know the objects of the third order, we should love them first. Marion explains that it is a “rational distinction between two uses of reason, based on the intended goal (the certainty of the object or else the phenomenality of *elsewhere*) and according to the hierarchy of modes of thought (primacy of understanding or primacy of the will, and therefore of love).”⁵⁷

At this point, Marion introduces the notion of ‘anamorphosis’ (this device that he has already used in several phenomenologically oriented previous books to explain the inversion of intentionality). If we want to enter into the realm of the rationality of love, he explains that we need to believe first:

“The one who agrees to believe *first* opens the possibility that what she will see may come to her from *elsewhere*. And by exposing herself to the *elsewhere*, she reverses its intentionality by an anamorphosis; from a self-centered ego, she becomes a witness of what she sees without being ever able to reduce it to her concept.”⁵⁸

The ‘anamorphosis’ – conceived here as a conversion⁵⁹ – makes possible the neutralization of the ego that reverses intentionality to receive what comes from elsewhere to see it. Marion defines ‘anamorphosis’ in this book in these terms:

“Anamorphosis designates the transfer of the anchor point of the intentional aim from one place (the zero point, *Nullpunkt*) to another that is distant and different, the displacement of the intentional ego from one point of view to another, according to mostly silent but all the more binding requirements of the phenomenon that gives itself to be seen; for some give themselves in such a way that they show themselves only if the one who claims to see them accepts to place himself at (thus to move toward) the site where the diverse character of intuitions, up until then scattered, chaotic, and confused, is organized from itself (and no longer from our *a priori* concepts) under a coherent, organic figure, which is in *a* sense (its own, not mine) born from itself.”⁶⁰

This trait of Revelation – the ‘anamorphosis’ – is decisive because it constitutes the “phenomenal arrangement”⁶¹ that actually gives the initiative of the self to the given (to the

⁵⁵ Ibid., 201.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 296.

⁵⁷ Marion, *Revelation Comes From Elsewhere* (see fn. 29), 118.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 123.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 202.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 301.

⁶¹ Ibid., 312.

‘elsewhere’) to guide its eventual phenomenalization. This can be found in any saturated phenomenon. But as we have mentioned above, there is a banality of saturation, and that allows us to postulate the banality of anamorphosis. Marion points out that all true knowledge and access to ‘things themselves’ operate by ‘anamorphosis’:

“In fact, unless they’ve gone mad, everyone who experiences the world must practice anamorphosis. This is the case, for example, in study: you learn to take another point of view on what you’re studying, which at first you don’t understand; by moving around, you end up understanding it a little; by studying, you seek to become something other than what you were. Intelligence and open-mindedness are all about anamorphosis.”⁶²

Revelation, “the saturated phenomenon *par excellence*”,⁶³ works as the model of an everyday possibility of phenomenality: its eventual manifestation. Revelation constitutes the paradigm of phenomenality for the “genius, the lover, the gifted,” for everyone, in daily life, who has “the strength to become *weak* enough, docile enough to let himself be drawn by a saturated phenomenon seizing him, guiding him across the desert on an anamorphic journey, leading him finally to the promised land – the heralded un-covering.”⁶⁴

5. Conclusion

The phenomenon of revelation ‘accomplishes the essence of manifestation’ because it is the only case that fulfills all the features of the saturated phenomenon. To be able to think of a phenomenality that translates givenness in its own terms – in its eventual character – to be consistent with the idea of a phenomenon that shows itself because it gives itself first – from itself, from ‘elsewhere’ – we should recognize the perfect model in revelation. Thus, we can draw the following conclusions:

1) In the first place, it is necessary to warn that if the goal is to ‘liberate possibility,’ it is not enough simply to affirm that the only condition that can be imposed on appearing is a ‘counter-condition,’ that is, the condition that there are no conditions of possibility. Still, it is also necessary to make room for the phenomenality of possibility as possibility. The philosophical phenomenon of revelation gives an account precisely of a possibility that is phenomenalized as possibility or, if one prefers, of an invisibility that is phenomenalized while remaining in its invisibility. What is at stake is the affirmation of a phenomenality that can be experienced as something that remains undetermined. Moreover, this is precisely why revelation accounts for the secret of manifestation: because manifestation in its essence is a secret. Any phenomenon is at its core a secret because it contains certain indetermination, certain possibility, certain invisibility that shows itself as such, as hidden, in

⁶² Id., “À propos de *D’ailleurs, la Révélation* (see fn. 39), 112 f. In *Revelation Comes From Elsewhere*, he gives the example of a skier guide who opens a path in the mountain; cf. id., *Revelation Comes From Elsewhere* (see fn. 29), 301-302.

⁶³ Ibid., 150, 153, 161.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 240.

its appearing. Revelation is the paradigm of phenomenality because it implies an articulation of theophany and theocrypsis, of visibility and invisibility, of actuality and possibility, of presence and absence.

2) Secondly, if Marion's aim is to think 'manifestation in terms of givenness,' it is worth noting that only the phenomenon of revelation can fully account for it since 'givenness is always fulfilled in excess.' Revelation is the only phenomenon that always gives itself in absolute excess.

3) Thirdly, because of the banality of saturation, not only is every phenomenon, at least potentially, a saturated phenomenon, but every phenomenon is potentially a phenomenon of revelation insofar as it can potentially effectuate in itself all the features of saturation taken to the extreme.

4) Finally, if revelation presents another type of operation, which no longer refers manifestation to a horizon of appearing, as does unconcealing, but implies a revealing that introduces an 'anamorphosis' that understands manifestation as *kath'auto*, then the phenomenon of revelation is the only one capable of explaining the manifestation of the 'self' the phenomenon as the movement proper of the essence of manifestation.

Then we can conclude that indeed the phenomenon of revelation is the 'saturated phenomenon *par excellence*' and, therefore, becomes the paradigm of all phenomena, because it shows the secret of manifestation. In this sense, after the banality of saturation, the limit of phenomenality – as Carla Canullo lucidly points out – moves to the heart of the phenomenon to constitute its essence;⁶⁵ an essence that allows it to manifest itself in varying degrees of finitude, as required by the circumstances – that is, the *Sache* itself – but always open to infinite possibility. In other words, revelation displays the secret of manifestation, showing that there is a secret in every manifestation; revelation shows that in any manifestation, there is always something that reveals itself in its unrevealing as a possibility that remains as a possibility in its appearing.

In diesem Artikel soll gezeigt werden, dass das Phänomen der Offenbarung nach Marion als *das* paradigmatische Phänomen schlechthin fungiert, welches das geheimnisvolle Wesen des Sich-Manifestierens zeigt. Der Beitrag hellt das Wesen der Phänomenalität durch den Rekurs auf eine exzessive Gegebenheit auf, die allen Manifestationen zugrunde liegt. Manifestation im Sinne von ‚Gegebenheit‘ zu denken, bedeutet, sie als Geheimnis zu verstehen, insofern das Erscheinen aller Phänomene eine Bewegung beinhaltet, in der sich etwas in seinem Verbergen zeigt und in seinem Zeigen verbirgt.

⁶⁵ Carla Canullo, "Después de la banalidad de la saturación", in: Jorge Luis Roggero (ed.), *El fenómeno saturado. Reflexiones sobre la excedencia de la donación en la fenomenología de Jean-Luc Marion*, Buenos Aires 2020, 51–73.