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The Idea of Phenomenon in the Current
Phenomenology. Jean-Luc Marion
(Abstract)

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The research I undertake in my doctoral dissertation revolves around the investigations advanced by Jean-Luc Marion within the horizon of phenomenology. The intended aim of my research is to attain at an understanding of the premises that ground his phenomenological investigations and their specific goals, and to evaluate their internal coherence, in as much as an adequate manner as possible. For reaching such an adequate understanding of Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenological project, I am preponderantly employing a systematic method through which I look into the manner in which Jean-Luc Marion's guiding questions are articulated, the horizon in which they are posed and their rationale, the meaning of the terms that compose them and the distinctions drawn in contrast with their other meanings, the sense of the questions as such and their possible reformulations, the answers offered to these questions and the arguments advanced in favour of these answers, but I also look into the possibility of alternative approaches to all of the aforementioned variables. During my research I am trying, as much as possible, to stay within the limits of an immanent analysis, whose guide marks are Marion's writings as such and the phenomenological context in which they are situated. This latter guide mark forces me to assume, sometimes, a critical stance towards the theses Marion advances in his investigations, and to return to the classical phenomenology.

In accordance with the above mentioned research method my doctoral dissertation has two sections:

1. In the first section I pay special attention to Marion's *Reduction and Givenness*. The aim of this section is to understand the theoretical program upon which Marion's investigations are based, and the relationship it has with classical phenomenology. The guiding question of this section is: To which extent is Marion's interpretation of classical phenomenology a valid one?
2. In the second section, which revolves around *Being Given*, I am paying attention to the manner in which Marion applies the program advanced in *Reduction and Givenness*. The principal aim of this section is to assess if and to which extent the practical, applied version of the program from *Reduction and Givenness* is functional. The guiding question of this section is: To which extent is Marion's phenomenology consistent with its own premises and expectations?

The first section of my doctoral dissertation, the one in which I put emphasis on the relationship between Marion and the classical phenomenology, is led precisely by the guiding question of the investigation advanced in *Reduction and Givenness*: *to which extent can phenomenology exceed metaphysics?* (§ 1.)

The understanding of both the meaning of the guiding question, and of the possibility to answer it, require an analysis of the question and of the terms that make it, such as metaphysics, phenomenology, possibility to exceed and the degree of this

exceeding. (§§ 2.-2.2.2.) The understanding of the possibility of phenomenology to exceed metaphysics cannot be confined to a strictly conceptual level. Phenomenology's possibility of exceeding metaphysics must be applied to practical contexts, in order to present it as a real possibility of doing phenomenology. Consequently, the reconstruction of the identity of phenomenology must be done as concretely as possible, and, as much as possible, it must remain untouched by the presuppositions of metaphysics. Given these landmarks phenomenology is reconstructed by Marion from its breakthrough, Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. From this starting point, where it is still possible, phenomenology can unfold even beyond metaphysics. (§ 2.3.) In concrete terms the breakthrough could be interpreted not only as an emergence of phenomenology, but also as a breakthrough beyond metaphysics. This possibility can be actualized, according to Marion, if the breakthrough is understood not from the perspective of the broadening of the concept of intuition (§§ 2.4.-3.1.2.), but from the way phenomenology has access to the horizon of givenness. (§ 3.2.) The access to givenness is made possible by the phenomenological reduction, so that the new principle of phenomenology becomes *So much reduction, so much givenness!* (§§ 5.-5.1.)

The research conducted by Marion in *Reduction and Givenness* that leads him to a new principle of phenomenology is short of being without flaws. The specific critiques I raise in the

first section of my doctoral dissertation – especially when I am pointing towards a more fruitful interaction with Husserl’s phenomenology (§ 4.2.) and the indeterminate manner in which reduction operates (§§ 4.1., 5.2.) – help me substantiate the abusive relationship between Marion’s phenomenology and the classical phenomenology, and the questionable character of phenomenology as a phenomenology of givenness. To conclude, in order for Marion’s investigations to gain some phenomenological weight, it must become clearer, and it needs to get closer to the actual things it investigates. In other words, Marion must do more phenomenology.

The second section of my doctoral dissertation deals with Marion’s actual construction of a phenomenology of givenness, by following a rigorously phenomenological itinerary, and it mainly revolves around the investigations advanced in *Being Given*. The guiding question – *to which extent can phenomenology exceed metaphysics?* – remains but in the background of these investigations, and the foreground is took by its reformulation: *how is it possible to grant the manifestation, beyond any limits, of all things?* (§ 1.) After I review the critiques Marion raised against Husserl and Heidegger, according to which the classical phenomenology has limited the manifestation of things in general (§§ 1.1.-1.3.), I analyse the exact manner in which givenness is pointed out as the source of all things’ manifestation (§§ 2.-3.4.). This status of givenness ends up, on the one hand confirming the

principle of phenomenology advanced by Marion – *So much reduction, so much givenness!* – (§ 3.3.1.), and, on the other hand, by focusing on saturated phenomena, it ends up subjecting this principle to an inversion – *So much givenness, so much reduction!* (§ 3.3.2.). This inversion of the new principle of phenomenology will allow me, after analysing the manner in which Marion redefines the man as gifted and arranges the saturated phenomena in opposition with the Kantian categories, to question the understanding of givenness as source of phenomenality and the functionality of a phenomenology of givenness. In concrete terms, by using a re-description of certain saturated phenomena thematised by Marion, I highlight not only the dual character of givenness – that it can be a condition of possibility for the manifestation of all things in general, but also that it can be exactly a limit of this manifestation – and that such a phenomenology of givenness cannot work. (§ 5.)

The general conclusions I have reached in my doctoral dissertation regarding Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenological investigations can be arranged in two categories:

1. The principle of phenomenology of givenness – *So much reduction, so much givenness!* – has proven not to be functional for at least two reasons: 1.1. the givenness has proven to be insufficiently determined as regarding the agent operating it or the steps its operation involves; 1.2. the analysis of saturated phenomena revealed that the

principle is subject, in such cases, to an inversion: *So much givenness, so much reduction!*

2. The phenomenology of givenness as such is not functional, for at least two reasons: 2.1. its principle is not functional; 2.2. the givenness has a dual character, being able to be both the source of phenomena, and the source of their impossibility.

The general results of my doctoral dissertation can be arranged in three categories: 1. careful analyses of the questions Marion raises in his investigations, the answers he provides, and of the arguments he advances in favour of these answers; 2. general conclusions regarding Marion's phenomenological investigations; 3. emphasizing the efficacy of a systematic investigation of Marion's writings.

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