UNIVERSITY „AL. I. CUZA" IAȘI

FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL-POLITICAL SCIENCES

Jean-Luc Marion – the appraisal and the reconstruction of the phenomenological inquiry

(abstract)

Scientific Advisor:

Univ. Prof. Dr. Ștefan Afloroaei

Ph. D. Student:

Vameșul George

Iași

2013

Summary

The Subject and the purpose of research:

The present research is aimed to analyze the way in which Marion reassesses the phenomenological method and how he reorganizes the basic structures of phenomenology in order to expose disclose givenness itself. In other words, our inquiry follows the methodological instruments that Marion uses in order to accede to the originary of the phenomenon – meaning givenness – and how exactly givenness gives itself as a unity and as a multiplicity – thus, what is the relation between the multiplicity of the modes of givenness of different phenomena and givenness itself. We are not concerned here in establishing whether the paradigm of givenness matches within the frame of phenomenology. Such an inquiry requires a much wider endeavor than the one that we are proposing. But, we want to underline that, if givenness is to impose itself as the last paradigm of phenomenology, it must conform ultimately to the requirement that phenomenology imposes to every phenomenon, that is a unitary manifestasion.

The hypothesis of the unitary manifestation of givenness is justified not only by this general dictum of phenomenology but also by the things that givenness, as a phenomenological paradigm, must assume. Let's think firstly at what we can call the range of givenness. The initial step that Marion makes in order to clear up the concept of givenness in the pages of *Reduction and Givenness* aims to free givenness from the constrains of intuition. From this point of view givenness extends its range beyond the limits of intuition. Thus, for Marion, givenness covers the entire field of phenomenality, whether the manifestation comes through intuition or without intuition. From this statement results the universality of givenness.

Secondly, the universality of givenness points to the fact that it must be first in the order of manifestation. Thus, as we can see in the initial pages of *Being given*, Marion argues that givenness has the status of a first principle. But, if givenness is first, the I cannot accomplish anymore a transcendental function because then, he would rather obfuscate givenness than contribute to its phenomenological disclosement and analysis. In this respect givenness is absolute since it is the only "origine" that must be accounted for by the manifestation of every phenomenon. Givenness thus represents that original of the phenomena that phenomenology has always been looking for in one way or another.

But, if the concept of givenness is defined as universal and absolute and if the phenomenology of givenness is not to be just a simple taxonomy of different modes of givenness then, givenness, according to its own requirements, must give itself as a unity in the living flow of the I. The absence of such unity would lead to an indefinite plurality of modes of givenness, a fact that can be deduced from the link between givenness and the given. In this respect, the concept of the fold sustains precisely the necessity of working out the unity of givenness: if givenness is determined as the fold of the given, the process of his happening, than givenness must assume some unity if we are to have a consistent difference between it and the given. This difference is required also by the reduction to givenness. Thus, if the given appears and manifests itself, givenness never appears in the natural attitude since it is defined by a constant effacement in favor of the given. Thus, the reduction itself requires that givenness should be given not only as a plurality of different particular modes, but also as a unity. In addition to this line of arguments we see fit to point that at a certain point in *Being given,* Marion himself recognizes the necessity of disclosing the unity of givenness in opposition to the multiplicity of the modes of givenness.

The methodology of analysis:

The present research approaches Marion's phenomenology of givenness by means of a systematical method whose main components are the exposition and the text analysis. Through exposition we intend a clear, concise and objective presentation of Marion's phenomenology, focusing on the way its basic concepts are disclosed and how they function. The exposition is then doubled by a critical analysis of the text whose stake is to point several phenomenological precepts of the concept of givenness and then to indicate the weak places where givenness and the precepts lack overlapping.

The stages of research:

Given the matters discussed in the present work we saw fit to preface it with quite a long introduction in which we pointed out several methodological and conceptual particularities of Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenology. Although such an introduction which discusses this kind of commonplaces may seem futile, our stake is not a random one: throughout the introduction we follow, beside the disclosement of some Husserlian and Heideggerian concepts that are also discussed by Marion, to point out the fact that before putting to work the entire phenomenological apparatus both Husserl and Heidegger paid a great amount of attention to the mode of acceding to the manifestation of the phenomenon. For Husserl the mode of acceding to the manifestation of the phenomenon is provided by the methodological reflection, while for Heidegger it is supplied by the formal indication which is backed up by a hermeneutical sight. Thus, the point of a way to access the manifestation of the phenomenon represents one of the guiding threads of our research.

The first chapter of our present work aims the text of *Reduction and Givenness* in order to bring to the fore Marion's first disclosement of the concepts of reduction and givenness starting from several analyses of the Husserl's and Heidegger's texts. Since the proclaimed stake of *Reduction and Givenness* is to investigate the degree to which phenomenology overcomes metaphysics in the direction of the self-manifestation of the phenomena, the first division of this chapter addresses the meaning that the concept of metaphysics has for Marion. Thus, we point out that the meaning of the term metaphysics indicates a certain founding schema which can be identified through a series of conceptual marks – like the *ego,* exemplary being, presence and so forth: to the degree to which these conceptual marks account for some inner inconsistencies they signal both the destruction of the schema and the way to overcome it[1].

Starting from this understanding of metaphysics Marion proceeds to analyze the Husserlian concepts of categorical intuition and phenomenological I. The main purpose of his analysis can be resumed in three points: firstly, Marion signals the fact that Husserlian phenomenology overcomes metaphysics through the development of the concept of categorical intuition; secondly, he analyzes the reestablishment of metaphysics by means of the concept of presence and thirdly he points out the concepts of reduction and givenness and

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[1] Jean-Luc Marion, *On Descartes Metaphysical Prism,* trans. Jeffry L. Kosky, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1999, chapters III și IV.

their inner link[2]. But, the overcoming of the metaphysics of presence through the concept of givenness is directly linked with the discussion on the categorical intuition. Thus, what we wanted to point out in the course of this discussion is that the autonomy of the categorical intuition can be supported within the *Logical Investigations* only in an epistemological context[3]. An ontological shade of the autonomy of the categorical intuition is, in our opinion, difficult to entertain. In this respect it is also difficult to conceive the autonomy of givenness in relation to intuition starting only from the discussion of the categorical intuition in the *Logical Investigations.*

The analysis of the transcendental I is occasioned in *Reduction and Givenness* by the critic that Heidegger addresses to Husserl according to which he had missed the question concerning being and the meaning of the fundamental ontology. In this respect Marion argues, on the one side, that Husserl misses the question concerning being due to a perfect elaboration of an ontology of the object and on the other side, following the reduction, the absolute region of consciousness is not included in any type of ontology thus indicating the possibility of an I outside ontology[4]. Nevertheless Marion states that such a possibility is not seen or elaborated in the context of Husserl's phenomenology. Our interest concerning this argument has been to underline how the indication of such a possibility threatens the entire Husserlian phenomenology, favoring a type of formalism against its intuitive feature. Thus, for Husserl, such a possibility of an I outside being would deny him any concrete fulfillment, reducing it to a pure form. The fact that Husserl lacks to oversee such a possibility may be understood as a way of not giving in too hastily to a quick and facile resolution of the tension between intuition and form. In other words, because Husserl wants to actually mediate between form and intuition he might have neglected or simply refuses to take account of an I outside the reduction.

At the end of the analyses of Marion's reading of these two Husserlian concepts – categorical intuition and transcendental I – we point out two conclusions. First, we stated that the disclosement of the concept of givenness must watch over the tension between intuition and form if it wants not only to fulfill but also to overcome the metaphysics of presence. Second, we indicated that, due to his critique, Marion distances himself not only from several

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[2] *Idem*, *Reduction and Givenness. Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger and Phenomenology* , trans. Thomas A. Carlson, Northwestern University Press, Evanston Illinois 1998, chapter I (from now on RD).

[3] See Edmund Husserl, *Cercetări Logice,* vol. II/2, traducere de Chrsitian Ferencz-Flatz şi Ion Tănăsescu, Humanitas, Bucureşti 2012, Cercetarea a III-a şi *Logical Investigations,* vol. II*,* trans. by J.N. Findlay, Routledge, London/New York 2001, Cercetarea a VI-a. Thomas Nenon, „Two models of fundation in the Logical Investigations", în *Husserl in Contemporary Context,* ed. Burt C. Hopkins, Kluwer Academic Publisher, Dordrecht 1997, p.97-122.

[4] Jean-Luc Marion, RD, p. 152-162.

Husserlian concepts but also from his methodological reflection so that the disclosement of the concept of givenness will require a reassessment of this important methodological step within phenomenology.

In the last section of the first chapter we analyzed the way in which Marion exposes the concept of pure call starting from what Heidegger indicated as the call of being. The problem that we followed is concerned with the manner in which the pure call can be determined starting from the analysis of the counter-existential of boredom. In other words, we asked how exactly is the pure call to be determined if the counter-existential of boredom cannot establish, without certain major difficulties, a difference between the call of being and any other call and if the receiver – which displaces the Dasein – has but a secondary function in the entire play. The receiver, at least in *Reduction and Givenness*, has no possibility to determine the call for several reasons: through convocation he is already determined by a call that precedes him and appoints him as a self without making this appointment a type of self constitution; through surprise the call suspends all intentionality or anticipatory resoluteness thus discharging any ecstasy of the receiver and any transgression of the self; finally, due to its facticity the call determines the horizon of manifestation for any fact whatsoever. Thus, if the call compels the receiver to recognize an anonymous[5] a priori, the call itself seems to be condemned without any way out to this anonymity: from this stage there is no phenomenological possibility to decide anything about its character. In conclusion, *Reduction and Givenness* fails to elaborate a unitary concept of givenness but manages to signal the stakes and difficulties that such a concept entails.

The second chapter focuses on the first part of Marion's most important text in the field of phenomenology, that is *Being Given. Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*. Since this text takes a more direct approach in order to elaborate the concept of givenness without any detour through the Husserlian or Heideggerian texts, the stake of this chapter will be precisely to analyze this new and more direct approach and the way the concepts of reduction and givenness are formally disclosed. Due to the performed analyses we pointed out that the necessity and the reason of the phenomenological reduction is constituted by the fact that givenness never appears or it hides itself. Thus, what appears as given keeps on its surface the traces of givenness, so that the reduction enfolds that which appears – the given – toward its

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[5] Jean-Luc Marion, *L'Interloqué,* în *Who comes after the subject?*, ed. Eduardo Cadava, Petre Connor, Jean-Luc Nancy, Routledge, New York and London 1991, p.236-245.

own givenness[6]. Givenness is thus universal and absolute since no phenomenon can be imagined of thought of without him being previously given.

With this last indication we arrive at the ambiguity of the concept of givenness and the problem of the fold[7]. The ambiguity of givenness springs precisely form its lack of separation from the given. In this respect the concept of the fold comes to name the difference between the given and givenness which he formulates in the form of the difference between fact and process of that fact. But, this difference – which more likely tends to be an identity – must be emphasized due to at list two reasons: first, because the way givenness manifest itself never corresponds to the way the given manifests itself and second, because givenness doesn't always give something present so that the reduction itself would be threaten in the case it would be applied to such a non-present given.

Thus, the concept of givenness must manifest itself differently from the given and as a unity in order to keep its main characteristics as pure and absolute and to avoid to constitute a phenomenology understood as a simple taxonomy of different types of givenness that belong to just as many types of givens.

The third chapter explores the possibility that the unity of givenness may be given through the concept of the gift. The problem is that this concept makes the object of an important objection framed by Jacques Derrida in his work Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money. According to Derrida the phenomenon of the gift cannot realize itself *as such* because, once he manifests himself he is transposed into the horizon of economic exchange and thus he splits from what we understand by the concept of the gift[8]. The central point of Derrida's critique is constituted by the meaning of the *as such*. This term signals directly to the formal structure of description formalized as *something as something*. Due to this fundamental structure the manifestation of the gift breaks apart within the economical horizon of duty[9].

In response to this critique Marion proposes a triple *epoché* through which are bracketed one by the time all of the three elements of the gift – the giver, the givee and the gift[10]. Following this operation the gift appears either as immanent lived experience reduced to the consciousness of the giver under the name of givability, either as immanent lived

[6] *Idem*, *Fiind dat. O fenomenologie a donatiei*, trad. de Maria-Cornelia şi Ioan I. Ică jr., Deisis, Sibiu 2004, p.111-114.
[7] *Ibidem*, p.135.
[8] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992, p.12.
[9] *Idem*, *God the Gift and Postmodernism,* ed. John D. Caputo şi Michael J. Scanlon, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1999, p. 65.
[10] Jean-Luc Marion, *Fiind dat*, p.160-201.

experience reduced to the consciousness of the givee under the name of acceptability. Although such a description of the gift overcomes any metaphysical determination that might be indicated by this phenomenon it still cannot overcome the Derridian critique, since acceptability and donability both are precisely the kind of lived experiences described according to the horizon of debt. Thus, the unity of givenness cannot be realized through the conveyance of the gift without extending the aporia of the gift to the entire concept of givenness.

In the last chapter we paid attention to two things: the first was to analyze the concept of saturation in order to see if givenness can achieve a unity through it and second, we focused on subjectivity and the concept of the call.

Thus, according to Marion it comes to saturation and its four modes to realize givenness itself since ultimately, saturation parts with any given in order to acquire a pure givenness. Consequently, if the saturated phenomenon accomplishes givenness par excellence and if the paradigms of objectity and beingness must be recovered within givenness, it follows that saturation is the ultimate argument in favor of givenness as paradigm of manifestation. In other words, it comes back to the saturated phenomenon not only to realize a pure givenness beyond any mix up with any other paradigm, but it also must signal or even accomplish the unity of givenness as such[11].

After the analysis of the five types of saturated phenomena we tried to point out that if the unity of givenness is accomplished through the conveyance of the concept of saturation it will anly be possible to frame it as a formal unity that is, a pure form. Ultimately, the thing that forbids saturation to manifest and to accomplish in a concrete way the unity of givenness is precisely its purity. Thus, the problem of the concept of saturation consists in the break up between givenness and the given that saturation presupposes. In other words, in order for givenness to overcome any signification that might be imposed to it, it must give itself in such a way that no given can be identified. Thus, we can say in a Derridian sense, that if the given is the trace of givenness, in the case of saturation the trace itself disappears and we are left with a continual withdrawal. Because of this it is difficult to decide whether that which appears as saturation is a surplus or a lack of givenness in intuition.

But, if the given is missing and if givenness is withdrawing how is it possible to read givenness anymore? Starting from what given phenomenon will the reduction proceed in order to disclose the withdrawing givenness? This last difficulty that we pointed out shakes

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[11] *Ibidem*, p.310.

the entire phenomenology of givenness. Following the trait uncovered by it we end up at the discussion about subjectivity that Marion reserves for the last pages of *Being Given.*

In the context of givenness marion determines subjectivity by to figures: the receiver and the gifted. If the resemblance between these to figures of subjectivity is related to the fact that they both answer to the call of givenness, the difference is constituted by the type of givenness that makes the call: in the case of the receiver the call is made by a poor or common givenness while in the case of the gifted the call is exerted by a surplus. Once pointed out the problem of the call it is clear that it includes all the other difficulties counted till now of the unity of givenness. Thus, if givenness makes a call then its unity cannot reside in the I's synthesis since he must restrain himself to what he receives and to the role of the keeper of givenness. Even more, the entire topics of the phenomenon makes sense according to the call since the I is not forced to double or to hold the last word when it comes to decide between excess or lack of intuition, since the call already did it before him. Finally, the call of givenness radicalizes the figure of the receiver because, if he is constituted according to the answer given to a poor or common givenness, then the call of excess institutes what Marion calls the gifted[12]. Thus, the call suffices to constitute the gifted.

In phenomenological terms, the problem of the call is marked as follows: on the one side the call must precede the gifted and on the other side it must give at the same time in the answer that he is giving to it. In other words, although the answer of the gifted must be first in the order of manifestation, givenness must be read within its immanence in the form of a call that precedes the answer. In order to avoid a regress to the horizon of temporality by introducing a reflexive act that would explain the belatedness of the answer in the face of the call, Marion states that the gifted is responsible in front of all the saturated phenomena[13]. The problem of the responsibility of the gifted identifies itself with what Marion use to call earlier under the mane of acceptability that the gift imposes. Thus, the difference between the call and the answer, despite their simultaneous manifestation is given by the responsibility that the gifted experiences in front of the excess. So, if givenness makes the gifted responsible then it loses from its absolute and pure characters in order to inscribe itself in the horizon of debt. The reduction to givenness proves to be in this case not radical enough.

The universalization of debt is confirmed even in the case of the erotical reduction[14]. Considering that the advance of the erotic I is not enough to make the other manifest, the last

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[12] *Ibidem*, p.410.
[13] *Ibidem*, p.450.
[14] Jean-Luc Marion, *Fenomenul Erosului. Saşe meditaţii*, traducere de Maria-Cornelia Ică jr., Deisis, Sibiu 2004, p. 48-149.

one must give himself as a signification for the I's own excess of intuition that comes from his advance. But, in the first instance, recognizing the other as alterity is made within the horizon of debt through the commandment "you shall not kill!" that is afterwards transposed into the horizon of the erotical reduction. In this respect, the reduction to givenness proves ultimately to be not radical enough since it seems to quiver between two instances – the phenomenon and the gift.

But we believe that another reason stands at the base of all the difficulties that Marion faces in the disclosing of the unity of givenness. As we pointed in the introduction, phenomenology is a methodological way and thus a rigorous way to accede and determine the original of the phenomenon. Thus, in the case of Husserl's phenomenology the reduction is never enough to determine the phenomena. It represents only a way to secure them, in other words to secure a steady ground for their phenomenological analyses. That which brings to the fore the possibility of conceptualization and opens the essential possibility of discourse is constituted for Husserl by the methodological reflection.

If we now turn to Heidegger we can observe a similar thing. Quite a large amount of his juvenile writings – more exactly the courses that precede the work of *Being and Time* – are concerned to establish a new way to accede the original of the phenomenon. This methodological instrument is called by Heidegger formal indication and it is doubled in the case of fundamental ontology from *Being and Time* by a hermeneutical sight. With the aid of this two methodological instruments Husserl and Heidegger have succeeded in reaching the original manifestation of the phenomenon and in bringing it to discourse.

Thus, our hypothesis is that the difficulties that the phenomenology of givenness encounters are rooted in the insufficient attention that Marion pays to the disclosement of such a methodological instrument that would allow him, in the frame of phenomenology, to genuinely and not only formally accede to givenness. Due to this fact the reduction to givenness proves a double insufficiency: on the one side it is insufficient because it fails to secure the purity and the absolute of givenness which are contaminated with the horizon of debt; on the other side, as a way to secure a field of research for phenomenology – as Marion himself stated – the phenomenological reduction simply brings us in front of the reduction without offering us a genuine possibility to accede to it. In other words, the reduction is mostly a negative process that rather tells us what givenness is not, not what it is.

In this respect the recourse to the concept of intuition in order to classify all the phenomena and to determine the concept of excess within the phenomenology of givenness is nothing but problematic. The concept of intuition brings along with it, right in the middle of

the issue of givenness, the discussion about temporality and that about the reflexivity of the acts. In order to avoid a regress of givenness in such problems – problems that the phenomenology of givenness thought it has overcome since the end of *Reduction and Givenness* – Marion introduces givenness into the horizon of debt. In this respect we believe that the disclosing or the rethinking of such a methodological instrument would have facilitate the clarification of the difficulties of the phenomenology of givenness and might lead to the unity that we were asking for.

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