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Is the Phenomenon of Revelation Possible? An Evaluation of Jean-Luc Marion's Response

French thinker Jean-Luc Marion (*Jean-Luc Marion*) is probably best known for his hypothesis of the 'saturated phenomenon' (*phénomène saturé*), namely, a hypothesis of a phenomenon that is characterized through the excess of intuition over intention or a hypothesis of nonintentional phenomenon. The most important characteristic of the saturated phenomenon is its unconditional self-giveness (*Selbstgebung, donation de soi*), which indicates the fact that this phenomenon shows itself beyond any meaning horizon and meaning giving activity of subjectivity. The saturated phenomenon shows itself through the unconditioned excess of intuition without the limiting measure of meaning intention or concept.¹

Marion's scholars have been mainly interested in his hypothesis of the saturated phenomenon without paying any attention to the distinction made by Marion himself between saturated phenomena and saturated saturated phenomena.² A close reading of Marion's work *Being Given (Étant donné)* reveals unconditional phenomena that are not saturated with intuition – Marion calls them 'phenomena saturated to the second degree' or 'phenomena of revelation'.³ Contrary to saturated phenomena, which are described as

¹ Marion identifies meaning intention (signification) with concept.

² Marion J-L. *Being Given: Towards Phenomenology of Givenness*. – Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002. – p. 235.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 245. Marion distinguishes Revelation (as actuality – the fact of God's manifestation) from revelation (as possible phenomenon). The latter is phenomenal figure of the saturation to the second degree (*Ibid.*, p. 367). In asking for the possibility of the phenomenon of revelation, I have in mind the possibility of phenomenal figure and not of actual fact of the Revelation.

intuitive givenness, phenomena of revelation are described as givenness without intuition.⁴

The aim of this paper is to question the meaning and phenomenological possibility of the phenomenon of revelation. This presupposes questioning the meaning of 'givenness without intuition.' The first and second part of the paper is devoted respectively to questions – what is givenness without intuition and how does it show itself? It will be argued that, based both on examples of the phenomenon of revelation and on its description found in Marion's work *In Excess (De surcroît)*, givenness without intuition shows itself indirectly. However, the idea of 'indirect phenomenization' is itself problematic. Therefore in the third part of the paper the following question is posed – is an indirect phenomenization a phenomenological possibility? Are there phenomena that show themselves both indirectly and unconditionally? It will be argued that, based on Marion's examples of givenness without intuition (birth, death and Revelation), it can be equated either 1) with unfulfilled meaning-intention (something that is merely thought) or 2) with a speculative ideal. In both cases Marion is not able to maintain the characterization of non-intuitive givenness as unconditional givenness that shows itself of itself and from itself. In other words, indirect phenomenization can be equated with either a phenomenon that shows itself as intentional object within the reduced sphere of transcendental subjectivity or with a speculative ideal that exceeds the sphere of reduced experience. In the first case it loses its unconditional character; in the second case – its phenomenological possibility.

The meaning of the phenomenon of revelation

In order to evaluate the possibility of the phenomenon of revelation, it is necessary to provide the meanings of different interconnected concepts used within Marion's phenomenology. Because Marion describes the phenomenon of revelation as givenness without intuition and as

⁴ Ibid., p. 246.

a phenomenon,⁵ most important among them would be the concepts of 'givenness', 'intuition' and 'phenomenon'.

The meanings of these concepts will be illuminated by questioning, why does Marion introduce the notion of 'givenness without intuition'? In other words, why does he distinguish between saturated phenomena and phenomena of revelation? Marion's objective, at least in his works after *Reduction and Givenness (Réduction et donation)*, is to find a 'new ground of an unconditioned primacy' for phenomenology.⁶ He finds this new ground in givenness understood as a 'process of [phenomenon's] arising into appearing'⁷ – a process that is freed from 'the limits of every other authority' besides itself.⁸ In other words, givenness is equated with the self-manifestation of the phenomenon.⁹ According to Marion, phenomena can manifest themselves differently – as he puts it: '[–] all does not give itself in the same way'.¹⁰ One way of givenness is a conceptual givenness; another way of givenness is an intuitive givenness. The conceptual givenness gives intentional objects;¹¹ the intuitive givenness gives saturated phenomena. While intentional objects appear on the basis of constituting activity of subjectivity and therefore are conditioned, saturated phenomena appear on the basis of excess of intuition over all intentions/meanings/concepts and therefore are unconditioned.

In order to better understand Marion's point, it is necessary to outline his understanding of phenomenon. Following Husserlian definition

⁵ Marion J-L. *Being Given*, p. 234.

⁶ Marion J-L. *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*. – New York: Fordham University Press. 2002. – p. 15.

⁷ Marion J-L. *Being Given*, p. 68.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

¹¹ It must be noted that by conceptual givenness Marion understands confinement of intuition in objective (intersubjective), universal, identifiable, intelligible, univocally expressible and communicable meaning.

of phenomenon, Marion maintains that every phenomenon is composed of two elements: signitive intention (meaning) and fulfilling intuition. Signitive intention refers to an object that is merely thought (*bloss gedacht*) or expressed, while intuition fulfils it, making what is merely thought or expressed present to us in person.¹² Husserl's scholar Dermot Moran indicates that the paradigm case of a successful intentional act is an act where 'the meaning is fulfilled by full 'bodily presence' (*Leibhaftigkeit*) in intuition of the intended object: e.g. when I actually *see* something before my eyes, I have a *fulfilled* intuition. [--] Most forms of intending, however, are 'empty' (*Leermeinen*): e.g. when I merely think about something without having it in perceptual or categorical intuitive grasp'.¹³

Marion states that in Husserlian phenomenology only two combinations between these elements are taken into account: an adequation between signitive intention and intuition (in the case of ideal objects), on the one hand, and an inadequation between them resulting from a lack of intuition in relation to signitive intention, on the other hand (in the case of a perception of a thing).¹⁴ In both cases phenomena are characterized by shortage of intuition and, therefore, as intuitively poor phenomena. Contrary to that, Marion posits phenomena that are characterized not by the shortage of intuition but by the excess of it over signification or concept.¹⁵ He writes: 'Within these phenomena, intuition is not limited to fulfilling or to fulfilling the finite measure of the concept and/or the signification

¹² Husserl E. *Logische Untersuchungen*. Zweiter Band. Erster Teil. Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis. – The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1984. – S. 44–45.

¹³ Moran D. *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*. – Cambridge and Malden, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 2005. – p. 127.

¹⁴ Marion J-L. *The Saturated Phenomenon // The Visible and the Revealed*. – New York: Fordham University Press, 2008. – p. 27.

¹⁵ Marion identifies signification with concept and significative fulfilment with intuition, a move inspired by his understanding of similarity of Kantian and Husserlian thought.

but spills over to the point of saturating it.¹⁶ His point is, as Kevin Hart, Marion's scholar, notes 'that intuition must be given before it can be thought, and some phenomena have intuitions that overwhelm signification, intentionality, aim and so forth.'¹⁷ Phenomena that are poor in intuition, according to Marion's interpretation, appear on the basis of either empty signitive intention or fulfilled signitive intention; while phenomena that are rich in intuition appear solely on the basis on intuition. Are there phenomena that do not appear on the basis of either empty/fulfilled intentions or intuition? Is there a givenness that would be both nonintentional and nonintuitive?

There are several places in *Being Given*, which suggest that Marion's answer to this question is positive. Although Marion defines the saturated phenomenon through the surplus of intuition, he clearly states that 'it is not the question of privileging intuition as such, but of following in it (indeed eventually without or against it) givenness [--]'.¹⁸ He writes: 'Now it happens that the giving intuition does not yet authorize an absolutely unconditioned apparition, nor therefore the freedom of the phenomenon giving itself on its own basis.'¹⁹ Givenness must not necessary be either that of concept or intuition, there seems to be a third option – pure givenness or a givenness that does not show itself on either the basis of concept or intuition, but on the basis of itself. He writes: '[--] when givenness no longer gives an object or a being, but rather a pure given, it is no longer carried out by intuition, or rather, the alternative between the shortage and a saturation of intuition becomes undecidable'.²⁰ In other words, givenness is not necessarily accompanied by intuition.

¹⁶ Marion J-L. Introduction to Mystics: presence and aporia // *Mystics: presence and aporia*. – Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. – p. 3.

¹⁷ Hart K. Introduction to Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion // *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*. – Notre Dame (Ind.): University of Notre Dame Press, 2007. – p. 22.

¹⁸ Marion J-L. *Being Given*, p. 199.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 185.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 245.

Marion introduces the idea of givenness without intuition in the context of ‘phenomena saturated to the second degree’²¹ or as he calls them ‘phenomena of revelation’. In order to understand the difference between the saturated phenomenon and the phenomenon of revelation, it is necessary to juxtapose them. Within the saturated phenomenon intuition saturates intention, however it does not annul it altogether. Marion writes: ‘objectivity [here] would simply be blurred but not overcome.’²² Within the phenomenon of revelation (the saturated saturated phenomenon) all intentions are annulled and there is no measure according to which one could determine whether there is intuition or not. Marion writes: ‘With the phenomenon of revelation, we come to the point where it is necessary to free ourselves not only from [--] [commonly accepted] determinations [of phenomenon], but even from their destruction.’²³ If the saturated phenomenon is still determined according to the relationship between intuition and signitive intention, then the phenomenon of revelation transcends these elements and is determined based on givenness alone. Because of that, Marion seems to abandon the term ‘intuition’ altogether and is talking about ‘givenness without intuition’. He defines this givenness as ‘what gives itself in the measure to which it reveals itself’.²⁴

In order to ascertain whether this phenomenon indeed reveals itself as givenness without intuition, it is necessary to look at the understanding of intuition in Marion’s phenomenology, on the one hand, and at the examples of the phenomenon of revelation, on the other hand. Marion uses the term ‘intuition’ with reference to Husserlian phenomenology – more specifically to Husserl’s work *Ideas I* – where intuitions are understood as concrete experiences in which what is intended is given directly²⁵ as ‘it

²¹ Ibid., p. 246.

²² Ibid., p. 244.

²³ Ibid., p. 245.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 246.

²⁵ Moran, D. *Edmund Husserl*, p. 97.

itself'.²⁶ For example, one can think about a house and one can perceive the house that is thought by looking outside the window. In the first case the meaning intention through which the house is thought is empty; in the second case – it is fulfilled: the house is directly given in a perception. Intuition here is responsible for the appearance of the house directly as 'it itself'. By introducing the hypothesis of the saturated phenomenon, Marion frees intuition from the role of meaning intention's fulfilment.²⁷ He writes: "[--] intuition is not bound to and by the intention, but is freed from it, establishing itself now as a free intuition (*intuitio vaga*). Far from coming after the concept and therefore following the thread of the intention (aim, foresight, repetition), intuition subverts, therefore precedes, every intention, which it exceeds and decenters."²⁸ Thus, for Marion intuition (being freed from its function to fulfil meaning intention) is a givenness that shows itself in and from itself without any mediation. The saturated phenomenon as the excess of intuition or intuitive givenness shows itself directly as 'it itself'. What is more, Marion gives a positive description of intuitive givenness – it is non-conceptual sensuous givenness.²⁹ Saturated phenomena (paintings, face of the other, flesh, etc.) appear as nonconceptual sensuous experiences.

If, as Marion maintains, intuition can be given independently from concept, it seems at least possible that the phenomenon of revelation theoretically might be characterized as intuitive givenness, even though it is impossible to measure it against the concept. In order to ascertain whether it is intuitive or non-intuitive givenness, I will look at Marion's examples of the phenomenon of revelation.

²⁶ Husserl E. *The Considerations Fundamental to Phenomenology* // Husserl. E. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology. – The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983. – p. 93.

²⁷ Marion J-L. Introduction to Mystics, p. 3.

²⁸ Marion J-L. *Being Given*, p. 225.

²⁹ Marion J-L. *The Banality of Saturation* // *The Visible and the Revealed*. – New York: Fordham University Press, 2008. p. 130–131.

2. The phenomenon of revelation: birth, time, death and Revelation

First example of the phenomenon of revelation is phenomenon of my birth³⁰ or as Marion sometimes calls it – event of ‘giving life’.³¹ Marion poses a question: ‘[–] how am I to understand that my birth shows itself as a phenomenon, when, properly speaking, I have never seen it with my own eyes and I must rely on eyewitnesses or a birth certificate?’³² He answers: it shows itself indirectly – ‘[–] my birth shows me precisely the fact that my origin does not show itself, or that it only shows itself in this very impossibility of [direct] appearing [–]’.³³ He describes birth as pure event (givenness) that shows itself without showing itself directly.³⁴ Marion notes that it also shows itself ‘by numerous intermediaries’.³⁵ Another important characterization is its privileged character. As Marion writes: it ‘gives me to myself when it gives itself’.³⁶ What is more: ‘it itself gives possibility to objective and being phenomena’.³⁷ In other words, phenomenon of birth is a necessary condition for the possibility of both me and all my experiences. To sum it up, phenomenon of my birth, according to Marion, appears indirectly as an event that makes possible the appearance of all other phenomena (because of the event of my birth all other events in my life become possible.)

If, as was indicated, intuition is responsible for the direct phenomenalization and phenomenon of birth (as an example of the phenomenon of revelation) appears indirectly, then it seems permissible to interpret the

³⁰ Marion J.-L. *In Excess*, pp. 41–44.

³¹ Marion J.-L. *Being Given*, p. 245.

³² Marion J.-L. *In Excess*, p. 41.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁷ Marion J.-L. *Being Given*, p. 245.

phenomenon of revelation as givenness without intuition. This conclusion is supported by Marion's distinction in his work *In Excess* between phenomena that appear directly and phenomena that appear indirectly.³⁸ The first would be saturated phenomena; the second would be phenomena of revelation. Another argument in favor for the absence of intuition in the case of phenomena of revelation is intuition's aforementioned characterization as nonconceptual sensuous experience. The same cannot be said about phenomenon of birth. It is not given to us directly as non-conceptual sensuous experience. The question remains – what shows itself indirectly? Are pure phenomena that show themselves indirectly possible at all? Before proceeding to the evaluation of the possibility of indirect phenomenalization, I will ascertain whether other examples of phenomena of revelation – time and death – also are characterized through indirect phenomenalization.

Second example of the phenomenon of revelation is time,³⁹ which is also characterized as an event⁴⁰ and givenness without intuition. In *Being Given* Marion doesn't explain what is time, but in another work (*In Excess*), in describing time, he refers to early Husserlian analysis of time consciousness.⁴¹ Time-consciousness consists of three modes of consciousness – consciousness of the present, the past and the future. The origin of time-consciousness is found in the consciousness of the present, more concretely, in original or primal impression. As Husserl puts it: 'Primal impression is something absolutely unmodified, the primal source of all further consciousness and being.'⁴² In his description of time, Marion refers both to original impression and to its role in phenomenalization. Time, according to Marion, starts 'from an 'original impression', which,

³⁸ Marion J.-L. *In Excess*, p. 42.

³⁹ Marion J.-L. *Being Given*, p. 245.

⁴⁰ Marion J.-L. *In Excess*, p. 41.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Husserl E. *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* // Husserl E. *Collected Works*, vol. 4. – Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991. – p. 70.

as 'origin-point', does not cease to rise up in and as the pure present [--].⁴³ He also writes: ' [--] 'giving time' gives nothing (no thing, no object), therefore mobilizes no intuition; and yet, in giving the nonobject par excellence, time, givenness grants to all the things that benefit from it, the possibility of giving and re-giving themselves'.⁴⁴ Giving time 'ensures possibility to all that is'.⁴⁵

If time is to be understood with reference to Husserl, where original impression constitutes only one (necessary, but not sufficient) element of time, then it is not clear why Marion would describe it as pure givenness. According to Husserl, time presupposes intentionality, expressed in the concepts of retention and protention. If it presupposes intentionality, it does not escape all constitution, as Marion claims.⁴⁶ It seems that Marion equates time with primal impression.⁴⁷ Because it evades all constitution, Marion sees it as pure givenness. Leaving the question about the equation of time with primal impression open, one could ask – how does it show itself? Being present, primal impression shows itself directly, and as such can be described with reference to intuition. Therefore it seems inadequate to describe primal impression as givenness that shows itself indirectly or as givenness without intuition. It can be concluded that example of time does not illustrate the 'indirect phenomenization' and, therefore, should not be taken into account in evaluating the possibility of non-conceptual and non-intuitive givenness.

Another example of the phenomenon of revelation is death. It is also characterized as an event, for without happening 'it cannot strictly be [--] it only appears inasmuch as it happens'.⁴⁸ Marion writes: 'Death only

⁴³ Marion J.-L. *In Excess*, p. 41.

⁴⁴ Marion J.-L. *Being Given*, p. 245.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Marion J.-L. *In Excess*, p. 41.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

shows *itself*, therefore, in giving itself by way of event.⁴⁹ The question still remains – ‘what does it show of itself?’ Marion asks: ‘Does it not succumb to the classic aporia according to which, as long as I am, death is not, and, when it happens, I am no longer there to see it?’⁵⁰ In order to answer to this question, he distinguishes between death of the other person and death of my own. In the first case, death does appear, but only indirectly:⁵¹ the event of death shows itself through the withdrawal of the other person. The death of the other person, then, according to Marion, can be characterized as givenness without intuition.

My own death, however, has not yet been given to me and, therefore, we know neither what it will give, nor the mode of its phenomenalization. Marion states that human condition is characterized by ‘the ignorance of the knowledge [–] of what happens (or shows *itself*) for me at the instant when my death passes in me’.⁵² Because it is impossible to say how it will give itself, Marion describes it as the possibility of impossibility which ‘keeps until the end the possibility of not showing *itself*, of showing nothing’.⁵³ On the one hand, Marion states that my death is an unconditional givenness, because when it will happen, it will annul all my attempts to constitute it (I cannot master it). On the other hand, he confesses that we do not know what it will give (and if it will show itself at all). It can be concluded that, when speaking about my own death, it is impossible to say either that it is givenness with intuition or givenness without intuition, because it has not been given yet. The example of my own death does not illustrate ‘indirect phenomenalization’ (according to Marion himself, it is impossible to say whether pure givenness shows itself at all) and, therefore, should not be taken into account in evaluating the possibility of non-conceptual and non-intuitive givenness.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., p. 40.

⁵³ Ibid.

Before proceeding to the evaluation of the possibility of non-intuitive givenness, it is necessary to mention another example of the phenomenon of revelation – Revelation or the event of God’s manifestation.⁵⁴ According to Marion: ‘If Revelation there must be (and phenomenology has no authority to decide this), then it will assume, or assumed the figure of paradox of paradoxes (the saturated saturated phenomenon or the phenomenon of revelation. – M.G.) [--].’⁵⁵ Marion claims that if God were to manifest himself (or has manifested himself), he would do that as a phenomenon of revelation,⁵⁶ e. i., starting from himself alone as saturation of saturation or non-intuitive givenness.⁵⁷ Being given unconditionally and non-intuitively, God would not manifest himself as something determined (intentional object), nor would he manifest himself as something indetermined (nonconceptual givenness or the saturated phenomenon) – he would manifest himself as the abandoned (*l’abandonné*).⁵⁸ The characterization of God’s manifestation as the abandoned indicates our impossibility to receive him. That, according to Marion, does not, however, mean that God does not show himself at all. Although Marion does not explicitly say it, it can be conjectured that, being given as non-intuitive

⁵⁴ Marion J-L. *Being Given*, p. 235.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 367.

⁵⁷ It must be noted that Marion does not claim that Revelation is necessarily con-founded within the phenomenon of revelation – ‘It could be that the fact of Revelation provokes and evokes figures and strategies of manifestation and revelation that are more powerful and more subtle than what phenomenology, even pushed as far as the phenomenon of revelation [--] could ever let us divine (Marion J-L. *Being Given*, p. 243).’ He also states the following: ‘The fact (if there is one) of Revelation exceeds the scope of all science, including that of phenomenology. Only a theology, and on condition of construing itself on the basis of this fact alone [--] could reach it (Ibid., 367).’ In other words, if God manifests himself, he does so as a phenomenon of revelation, however, that does not necessarily exhaust its mode of manifestation – only revealed theology can judge about it (Ibid., 235).

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 246.

givenness, God shows himself indirectly. God phenomenizes through different mediations (Scriptures, miracles, works of art etc.).

Unfortunately, speaking about God's manifestation, Marion is not consistent. In the paper *In the Name of* he writes: '[--] God remains incomprehensible, not imperceptible – without adequate concept, not without giving intuition.'⁵⁹ By writing that, Marion seems to maintain that God manifests himself as the saturated phenomenon (intuitively or directly) and not as a phenomenon of revelation (non-intuitively or indirectly). In fact, it seems that in this paper Marion has not taken into account the distinction between the saturated phenomenon and the phenomenon of revelation at all. It can be concluded that if God manifests himself intuitively as a saturated phenomenon, his manifestation does not illustrate the 'indirect phenomenization' and, therefore, should not be taken into account in evaluating the possibility of non-intuitive givenness. If however God manifests himself non-intuitively as a phenomenon of revelation, his manifestation illustrates 'indirect phenomenization' and should be taken into account in evaluating the possibility of non-intuitive givenness. As the aim of this paper is to evaluate the possibility of the phenomenon of revelation, for the sake of argument only the second option will be taken into consideration.

3. The impossibility of the phenomenon of revelation

Now, it is necessary to return to the question – what shows itself indirectly? What shows itself in the case of my birth, Revelation and death of the other person? It is clear that, according to Marion, it cannot be an intentional object (a concept), because then its appearing would be reduced to the constituting activity of subjectivity and it would not be an unconditioned phenomenon. It also cannot be a saturated phenomenon, because then it would show itself directly as non-conceptual sensuous experience.

⁵⁹ Marion J.-L. *In Excess*, p. 160.

While it seems understandable that phenomena of revelation could not be equated with saturated phenomena (they do not appear as non-conceptual experiences), it is not so clear why they could not still be equated with intentional objects. Meaning intentions that are not fulfilled (in intuition) also can be described as givenness that shows itself indirectly. What is more, Marion's examples of non-intuitive givenness can be interpreted exactly as unfulfilled meaning intentions. Phenomenon of God, for example, might be seen as something merely thought (indirectly) and not as something present in person (directly) – as something that is given merely in appresentation. The same can be said about the phenomenon of my birth. This can be illustrated by reference to Husserl's analysis of the constitution of the other ego in the 5th Cartesian Meditation. Husserl writes: 'A certain mediacy of intentionality must be present here [in experience of the other ego. – M.G.] [--], making present to consciousness a 'there too', which nevertheless is not itself there and can never become an 'itself-there'. We have here, accordingly, a kind of making 'co-present', a kind of 'appresentation' (Husserl: 109). What is appresented does not show itself directly – it always remains merely thought. The phenomenalization of my birth can be explained similarly to the constitution of the other ego – namely by reference to 'pairing as an associatively constitutive component of my experience' (Husserl: 112). Pairing is described as a constitution of the unity of two separate experiences based on their similarity. The meaning of the other ego is constituted based on my bodily experience. The meaning of my birth is constituted based on the experience of the birth of the other egos. In other words, I think that I have been born, because I have the experience of the birth of the other people. The death of the other constitutes itself based on the experience of the absence of the other within the body. As French thinker Dominique Janicaud states: pure givenness is 'a mere concept without intuitions, a concept that it might be possible to think, but that is impossible to experience and to know'.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Prusak B. Translator's Introduction // *Phenomenology and the 'Theological Turn': the French Debate*. – New York: Fordham University Press, 2001. – p. 8.

In other words, pure givenness without intuition is nothing else than unfulfilled meaning intention.

In order for Marion to substantiate the phenomenological possibility of unconditioned non-intuitive givenness, he would have to show the difference between phenomena of revelation and unfulfilled meaning intentions. Unfortunately, Marion has not done that (apart from the argument that phenomena of revelation are unconditioned and, therefore, cannot be intentional objects). However, if their unconditionality is still to be proven, this argument is not valid.

How could Marion substantiate the difference between the phenomenon of revelation and unfulfilled meaning intention? He could do that by reference to unconditional non-intuitive givenness as a necessary condition of phenomenality. Namely, non-intuitive givenness shows itself indirectly in making possible the phenomenalization of other givenness. For example, the phenomenon of birth shows itself indirectly as an event that makes possible the appearance of all other phenomena (because of the event of my birth all other events in my life become possible.) It reveals itself as a necessary condition for all subsequent experiences.⁶¹ The question remains: in what way does it reveal itself as a necessary condition?

In order to answer this question, it is possible to refer to the analogy Marion uses to describe the experience of the saturated phenomenon. We experience the saturated phenomenon similarly as 'in the way that an excess of light is not seen directly on the photographic paper but is inferred indirectly from the overexposure [--]'.⁶² Even though Marion here talks about intuitive givenness (excess of intuition is inferred from the inability to constitute an intentional object), what has been said can very well be applied to the phenomenon of revelation as well. Unconditional non-intuitive givenness is not experienced directly, but is inferred from

⁶¹ While Marion does not describe God as the necessary condition of phenomenality, one can think about God in this way as well.

⁶² Marion J-L. *Being Given*, p. 216.

the givenness of other phenomena. For example, based on the fact that I experience something, I infer that I must have been born, that is, that once the event of my birth must have taken place. Non-intuitive givenness reveals itself as a condition through the inference.

However, one might ask whether the fact that it is inferred does not annul its unconditional character? Alexander Cooke argues that if unconditional non-intuitive givenness is experienced only based on inference, it becomes an 'empty, speculative ideal'.⁶³ Non-intuitive givenness is a speculative ideal, because it is accessible only through the inference which is confined to the sphere of meaning intentions, while at the same time it claims to be something more than a meaning intention, namely, an unconditional, non-intuitive event. It can be concluded that if Marion refuses to interpret non-intuitive givenness as unfulfilled meaning intention that appears indirectly within the sphere of transcendental subjectivity, maintaining instead that it reveals itself as a necessary condition for phenomenality, it becomes a speculative ideal, namely, an ideal that cannot be experienced and, therefore, exceeds the sphere of phenomenology.

One could, however, argue that the concept of birth used in the inference stands for the unconditional event of birth and, while the latter shows itself through the inference, it is not intentional. Although it might be that the inference establishes the necessity of my birth, the birth here is only a concept and not the event itself. It is still necessary to establish the transition from my birth as a concept to my birth as an event. Inference itself fails to do that and necessarily so, because it only establishes the transition from concepts to concepts. Therefore, the possibility of the unconditional event of givenness still remains to be justified and this justification should be looked for within the sphere of experience.

It can be concluded that, if non-intuitive givenness is equated with unfulfilled meaning intention, it loses its unconditional character.

⁶³ Cooke A. What Saturates? Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenological Theology // *Philosophy Today*. 2004, Nr. 2. – p. 183.

However, if it exceeds the sphere of experience, becoming speculative ideal, it loses its phenomenological possibility and its unconditionality remains undecidable. The phenomenon of revelation as Marion describes it – unconditional non-intuitive givenness that shows itself indirectly – is phenomenologically impossible.