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Giving, Showing, Saying: Jean-Luc Marion and Hans-Georg Gadamer on Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Revelation

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Abstract: For more than two decades, the phenomenologies of revelation emerging from twentieth century French philosophy have met a North American reception framed largely within the context of a hermeneutic critique. This essay seeks to intervene in this situation by developing Jean-Luc Marion's own sketch of a phenomenological hermeneutics and putting it in dialogue with Hans-Georg Gadamer's account of language in *Truth and Method*. Thus, in an attempt to further develop Marion's phenomenological hermeneutics of 'giving' and 'showing', a space is opened for Gadamer's notion of 'saying'. As a result, in the midst of the horizon opened by language itself, the 'impossible' phenomenality of revelation shines forth.

Keywords: Jean-Luc Marion; Hans-Georg Gadamer; phenomenology; hermeneutics; revelation

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1. Introduction

For more than two decades, the phenomenologies of revelation emerging from twentieth century French philosophy have met a North American reception framed largely within the context of a hermeneutic critique. This has been particularly the case in the reception of the work of Jean-Luc Marion. The alternative within which this critique has been formulated has been succinctly expressed in a recent book. In *The Phenomenology of Revelation in Heidegger, Marion, and Ricoeur* (Graves 2021), Adam Graves argues that within the diversity of phenomenologies of religion, there are two approaches to the phenomenology of revelation. According to what he calls a radical approach, a phenomenology of revelation "seeks to disclose—either through a radicalization of the phenomenological reduction or a return to facticity, Being, etc.—a purely heterological experience of revelation, one that is not only anterior to objectivity and theoretical reflection but, crucially, prior to all forms of linguistic mediation as well" (Graves 2021, p. ix). Alternatively, he argues, the hermeneutic approach "characterizes revelation in terms of an eruptive event that unfolds in front of concrete texts—texts which are themselves recognized as invariably situated within a particular historic-linguistic milieu" (Graves 2021, pp. ix–x). As this formulation of the alternative suggests, the so-called radical approach to revelation is prone to neutralizing the content of revelatory texts insofar as it advances an account of phenomenality that precludes the work of interpretation and posits a view of subjectivity in which the recipient of revelation is entirely passive. The hermeneutic approach, on the other hand, is said to focus precisely on the content of the texts of revelation as they are understood within their historical milieu. As a result, the question of meaning is privileged over that of phenomenality and, thus, the self is understood as the acting and interpreting participant in a constructed and communal world.

In light of this critique and the alternative that frames it, questions emerge. First, what does such an alternative mean for a *phenomenology* of revelation? Is the hermeneutic critique a critique of phenomenology per se—such that a 'phenomenology of revelation' must be replaced by a 'hermeneutics of revelation'—or is it a critique of a certain kind of phenomenology? Has the hermeneutic critique assumed a place within the tradition of phenomenology, or does it seek to draw the study of revelation into a different discourse?

Furthermore, looking specifically to the special theme of this issue, we would have to ask: what does it mean to speak of divine revelation between phenomenology and systematic theology if the phenomenological status of revelation is contested by such a hermeneutic critique?

These questions, in turn, inspire an experiment. Is it possible to refuse the alternative stated above? Is it possible to advance a genuinely phenomenological hermeneutics of revelation? Such a refusal would require an account of revelation in which phenomenality and meaning are not played against each other; likewise, it would require an account of hermeneutic selfhood no longer calibrated by an opposition between a passive recipient and an active interpreter; finally, it would require an account of a hermeneutic horizon whose constitutive function is grounded not in a transcendental a priori, but in the coming to language of the things themselves. In order to carry out this experiment, I propose to stage an encounter between the work of Jean-Luc Marion and Hans-Georg Gadamer. In order to set the scene, I turn first to an essay by Marion that brings to light a curious convergence between, on the one hand, the phenomenological issues at stake in formulating a phenomenology of revelation and, on the other, the very concerns raised by advocates of the hermeneutic critique of Marion's work. Staying with Marion, I turn next to a more recent essay in which he explicitly takes up the question of a phenomenological hermeneutics and addresses the very issues central to overcoming the critical alternative described above. It is also in this essay that Marion himself gestures toward a conversation with the work of Gadamer. Thus, finally, taking Marion's cue but seeking to follow it further, I ask: what would happen if Marion's engagement with Gadamer was extended to include his treatment of language in *Truth and Method*? That is, how can Gadamer's phenomenology of language in Part Three of his magnum opus help us (i) to rethink the relationship between phenomenality and meaning (ii) in order to move beyond a notion of hermeneutic selfhood stuck in an active–passive opposition and, therefore, (iii) how does it provide the possibility of thinking a hermeneutic horizon open to what Marion will call the 'impossible phenomenality' of revelation in the very finitude of its infinite hermeneutic?

Two final points before jumping into the analyses. First, when I asked earlier about the consequences of the sedimented alternative between a phenomenology of revelation and a hermeneutics of revelation, I left open the possibility that adherents of the hermeneutic critique of Marion's work might see themselves not as criticizing or abandoning phenomenology per se, but as criticizing a particular kind of phenomenology. It is important to note that the experiment being proposed here is itself animated by a connection to this inner-phenomenological debate. As a result, I do not propose to subsume the work of Gadamer into that of Marion or the work of Marion into that of Gadamer. Rather, if the experiment is fruitful, what will come to light is a sketch of a phenomenological hermeneutics of revelation that seeks to build upon a set of concerns common to both thinkers. Thus, my second point: it is not the purpose of this paper to analyze Marion's recent and extensively developed phenomenology of revelation (Marion 2016a, 2020b). This is not to say that the phenomenological–hermeneutical questions at stake here drop out of sight in that work, but only that the scope and purpose of the experiment offered here must acknowledge its limits.

2. A Phenomenology of Revelation?

Written in the early 1990s, Marion's essay, "The Possible and the Revealed" (Marion 2008), is one of his first essays to address the question of revelation from a phenomenological perspective. Along with the more widely known essay, "The Saturated Phenomenon" (also appearing in Marion 2008), these essays have a programmatic but provisional status. In other words, what they announce is more significant than what they provide insofar as the analysis that they call for appears in more depth and with different emphases in the work that follows them. It is precisely this, however, that makes "The Possible and the Revealed" an important essay for my experiment and a good place to begin. Standing on the threshold of his development of a phenomenology of givenness and saturation, the essay brings to

light the issues crucial to both a phenomenology of revelation and a phenomenological hermeneutics. In a sense, then, the essay not only anticipates both the phenomenological program to follow *and* its hermeneutic critique, but it also locates both of these in reference to phenomena identified in reference to divine revelation.

The question that animates Marion's essay stands at the beginning of any treatment of a phenomenology of revelation: does phenomenology provide a suitable method for studying phenomena identified as religious? In fact, to ensure the legitimacy of the convergence of phenomenology and a philosophy of religion, Marion begins his analysis by imposing what he calls a "double requirement". On the one hand, he argues, what is needed is the justification of "religion to phenomenology as a possible phenomenon" and, on the other hand, the justification of "phenomenology to religion as a suitable method" (Marion 2008, p. 1). What must be established is that there is something essential about 'religion' that brings it into phenomenology's view and, likewise, that there is something unique about phenomenology that suits it to the study of religion. In order to fulfill this double requirement, he argues that what is at stake is a "concept of revelation" (Marion 2008, p. 2). Religion, he claims, "attains its highest figure only when it becomes established by and as a revelation, where an authority that is transcendent to experience nevertheless manifests itself experientially" (Marion 2008, p. 2). The nature of this experiential manifestation is important. Even though it occurs "effectively beyond (or outside of) the conditions of possibility of experience . . . [r]evelation takes its strength of provocation from what it speaks universally, yet without this word being able to ground itself in reason within the limits of the world" (Marion 2008, p. 2). Religion becomes fully phenomenal in making a universal claim to truth that is precisely not reducible to the universality of reason. What is crucial for Marion is that revelation relates, precisely through its unique phenomenal status, to the rational as such. This coming together of phenomenality and rationality marks the path that a philosophical analysis of religion must take in order to pass through metaphysics and into phenomenology.

Marion brings metaphysics into the discussion because in the tradition of Western philosophy, it has been metaphysics that polices claims to rationality. He explains: "Understood as metaphysics, philosophy is accomplished by continually (from Descartes to Hegel) radicalizing the implications of the principle of sufficient reason: all that is (being, étant) exists to the extent to which a causa . . . gives an explanation either for its existence, for its nonexistence, or for its exemption from any cause" (Marion 2008, p. 2). In this view, for something to be rational it must subject itself to a greater rationality as its horizon. If, however, the true essence of religion is its revealed nature and revelation points to that which is transcendent to experience but nevertheless manifests itself experientially in the realm of reason, it is clear to see what this metaphysical condition will mean for religious phenomena. According to the metaphysical rules of rationality, religion will be forced by metaphysics either to renounce revelation or renounce appearing according to the canons of reason. That the demand for this renunciation was immediately qualified by two subsequent metaphysical strategies did little to soften the blow. On the one hand, religion was to submit its claims to metaphysical rationality, thereby accepting the authorization of its claims by the metaphysical principle of sufficient reason (Marion 2008, p. 3). On the other hand, it was suggested that the concept of revelation could be put to work in support of reason itself, such that the manifestation of Spirit would be nothing other than the self-manifestation of the rationality of the real. In either case, Marion says, religion would still have to "renounce its specificity" (Marion 2008, p. 3).[1]

In his view, such a renunciation is the root of the confusions and betrayals that have come to determine modern religion. However, he claims, at the root of the problem is actually an earlier renunciation of the very challenge posed to religion by metaphysics. This challenge is to think "the possible possibility of impossibility" and, therefore, to consider that "possibility cannot be limited to what sufficient reason ensures" (Marion 2008, p. 4).[2] This is so because, he continues, as the religious phenomenon *par excellence*, revelation appears in relation to the principle of sufficient reason as an impossible phenomenon.

This, however, must be made a positive claim because it is precisely as impossible as the 'possible possibility of impossibility', that the religious phenomenon posits that "possibility cannot be restricted to the actuality that produces the cause" but, following Heidegger's suggestion, that "*possibility* stands higher than actuality" (Marion 2008, p. 4).[3] To explore the revealed phenomenon in this way, however, a mode of thinking must itself be possible that can think the appearance of a phenomenon without appeal to the principle of sufficient reason. It must be possible, that is, to recognize phenomena "without the preliminary condition of a *causa sive ratio*, but in the way as and insofar as they are given" (Marion 2008, p. 4). For Marion, phenomenology claims to be this mode of thinking and, therefore, it is for phenomenology to rethink not only phenomenality in general, but, and most especially, the case of a phenomenal revelation.

The recognition of the impossibility of religious phenomena when judged by metaphysics brings to light the way metaphysics acts as an anterior authority, deciding what is possible and what is not. It also points the way to a recognition of a mode of appearance not determined in advance by such an anterior authority but determined instead by the phenomenon's self-givenness. For this notion, Marion turns first to Edmund Husserl's breakthrough discovery of the 'principle of all principles' in which everything that gives itself to intuition must be accorded the right of an appearance solely according to the extent to which consciousness is affected by what is given. This turn to the lived experience of consciousness reopens access to phenomena marked with impossibility by understanding them in terms of their appearance to consciousness and not in terms of an objective rationality, which assigns to them a reason and, thus, allows them to appear in the world of objects determined by causality. As a result, Marion argues, "[b]y thus lifting the prohibition of sufficient reason, phenomenology liberates possibility and hence opens the field even to phenomena marked by impossibility" (Marion 2008, p. 5). As he explains further, this liberation is likewise developed by Martin Heidegger, who "integrates into phenomenality all that shows itself (*sich zeigt*) only by indication (*Anzeige*), inasmuch as the 'showing itself' is still accomplished 'from itself'—and hence he legitimates the possibility of a phenomenology of the unapparent in general" (Marion 2008, p. 7).[4]

Thus, on the other side of metaphysics, with a victory won over the principle of sufficient reason, phenomenology presents itself as perfectly suited to take up the challenge of thinking revelation in its impossible phenomenality. Marion argues: "The so-called religious lived experiences of consciousness give intuitively, but by indication, intentional objects that are directly invisible: religion becomes manifest and revelation phenomenal. What philosophy of religion tends to close, phenomenology of religion could open" (Marion 2008, p. 7). The convergence between phenomenology and revealed phenomena is achieved: religion achieves its highest figure in revelation and, therefore, finds itself perfectly suited to phenomenology. Likewise, phenomenology operates as a mode of thinking no longer restricted by the principle of sufficient reason and, therefore, one that is open to the kind of phenomenal appearance that is proper to revealed phenomena. The double requirement is fulfilled.

Nevertheless, a question remains: is *phenomenology* really up to the task of seeing revealed phenomena as they give themselves? In posing this question, Marion is concerned that with phenomenology's own liberation of the phenomenon from metaphysics, it could, in turn, impose new conditions which, for being more subtle, would be all the more likely to block revelation. He suggests, in fact, that these conditions could take the form of phenomenological presuppositions that might "merely reverse the metaphysical prohibitions regarding revelation, in such a way that, despite or because of its broadening of givenness, phenomenology would equally forbid the possibility of revelation by assigning to it a determined possibility" (Marion 2008, p. 8). In addressing this concern, Marion first turns his critical eye to the very center of the phenomenological method: the reduction. He points out how the phenomenological reduction is, in fact, carried out in reference to the lived-experiences (*Erlebnis*) of a subject, insofar as the "givenness of phenomena" in intuition "presupposes the point of reference that accommodates their givenness" (Marion

2008, pp. 8–9). The result, he considers, is that as "broadened as this givenness may appear, it nevertheless only allows things to appear to an *I* . . . since [the *I*] always precedes the phenomena as their condition of possibility regarding lived experiences" (Marion 2008, pp. 8–9). Furthermore, it is not only Husserl's phenomenology that maintains the primordial function of the *I*. Even in Heidegger's work, he suggests, where the *I* becomes *Dasein*, there is "an analogy to lived experiences in the Stimmungen [moods of attunement], which give rise to Dasein as the fact of being-in-the-world" (Marion 2008, p. 8). As a result, Marion continues, "nothing is constituted as a phenomenon that does not allow itself to be led back to Dasein, affected by diverse *Stimmungen* from the beings of its world" (Marion 2008, p. 8). Thus, such a reduction to the *I*, wherever it is found, seems to block the revealed phenomenon's imposition.

With this issue, we also discover the first issue common to the formulation of a phenomenology of revelation and the hermeneutic critique of Marion's work: the status of the 'I' as interpreter. The interesting thing about this convergence is that what Marion's search for a phenomenology of revelation raises as a potential failure of phenomenological method in the face of revealed phenomena, the hermeneutic critique puts forward as a necessary dimension: the interpretive work of a hermeneutically active subject.[5] As a result, in advancing toward a phenomenology revelation that is, in fact, a phenomenological hermeneutics of revelation, it will be necessary to keep our eye on this issue. We will have to seek, in fact, an understanding of selfhood that simultaneously topples the anterior authority of the constituting 'I' and maintains its finite place in the showing of that which gives itself.

Marion's second concern with phenomenology focuses on the notion of the horizon. He goes on to show that the constitutive subjectivity of the 'I' maintains an essential relationship to the deployment of a horizon. In fact, it is with the notion of the horizon that the full implications of the subjective anteriority of the gaze takes shape because, phenomenologically, the horizon is always the horizon *of* and *for* the conscious 'I'. This is so for Husserl because of the way he continues to understand the relationship between intuition and givenness. As Marion explains further in "The Saturated Phenomenon", because any given phenomenon must give itself according to intuition and, furthermore, because "any intuition, in order to give itself within certain factual 'bounds', must first be inscribed by right within the limit (*Grenze*) of a horizon," even a phenomenology enlarged to include the phenomenon's own givenness remains subject to the conditions of the horizon upon which it appears (Marion 2008, p. 22). This means that for Husserl, the "irrepressible novelty of the flux of consciousness remains by right always comprehended within a horizon" that is there before any particular experience is possible (Marion 2008, p. 23). Thus, in an openly Kantian gesture, the horizon not only contains but constitutes experience as its condition of possibility. According to Marion, however, as significant as this Kantian gesture is to Husserl's thought, it is Heidegger's employment of the notion of horizon that is particularly dangerous to the question of revelation. Indeed, he argues that it is Heidegger's ontologizing of the horizon in terms of the question of Being that produces the crucial consequence for God's disclosure in the world of phenomena. He states: "By establishing the unconditional [anteriority] of ontological difference over any other question, Heidegger always includes God within it: as one being among beings, even if the highest, God [receives his] ontic appearance [only] by the opening arranged by Being itself, the truth of Being precedes the light of the being-God" (Marion 2008, p. 10). For Marion, this means that God cannot be revealed "except by entering into a . . . 'space of manifestation', which is measured by the dimensions of Being and not those of God" (Marion 2008, p. 11). He concludes: "Container of any being, Being plays, in the case of God, the function of a screen. It precedes the very initiative of revealing, it fixes the frame of revelation, and it imposes the conditions of reception on the revealed gift" (Marion 2008, p. 11). At its deepest level, then, phenomenology seems to be blocked from accessing revelation by its commitments to the 'I' and its assumption of the a priori and ontological status of the horizon.

Once again, it is important to note the point of commonality between something raised as a potential failure of the phenomenological method and, on the other side, as a necessary dimension of a hermeneutics of revelation. Where Marion's search for a phenomenology of revelation sees the issue of a horizon of experience as a danger, hermeneutic critics of Marion appeal to the necessity of the historical and linguistic horizons of the texts which comprise revealed phenomena. As before, this convergence raises important questions for a phenomenological hermeneutics of revelation. In this case, it will be a matter of preserving the function of a horizon precisely by understanding it not as the transcendental fulfillment of an a priori condition, but rather, as the context of interpretation opened by the appearance of the things themselves in their appearance.

In "The Possible and the Revealed", Marion sets the questions to which his own phenomenology of givenness will respond. To recognize this, however, is also to recognize that the essay not only anticipates Marion's subsequent work but also the hermeneutic critique to which it will be subjected. This is so, I demonstrated, because the very issues that Marion identifies as potential problems for a phenomenology of revelation are the issues central to the hermeneutic critique of his work: the place of the interpreting 'I' in relation to revealed phenomena and the placement of those phenomena on the horizon of experience. As we advance, now, to the other end of Marion's work, these issues will come more clearly to light in reference to Marion's own attempt to sketch a phenomenological hermeneutics of givenness.

3. Givenness and Hermeneutics

In 2013, Jean-Luc Marion delivered the lecture "Hermeneutics and Givenness" as the Père Marquette Lecture in Theology at Marquette University.[6] This lecture was subsequently revised and published in a collection titled *Reprise du donné* (Marion 2016b), which, as the notion of *reprise* suggests, seeks to lay out again some central claims of Marion's project with an eye to his critics. In its English translation, the revised essay appears as "The Hermeneutics of Givenness", translated by Sarah Horton (Marion 2020a). In responding to the hermeneutic critique of his work, Marion's central concern is to establish that his phenomenology of givenness provides the condition for a properly phenomenological hermeneutics.[7]

The objection to which Marion explicitly responds is raised by Claudia Serban: "The real touchstone of the phenomenology proposed by *Being Given* is this unconditioned universality of givenness, from which nothing is excepted *and* which renders obsolete, *in particular*, the necessity of any recourse to hermeneutics" (quoted in Marion 2020a, p. 20). Seeing this, one could charge Marion with missing the point of the very hermeneutic critique to which he seeks to respond. Indeed, as most readers of the reception of his work would agree, Marion's portrayal of Serban's objection does not capture the essence of the problem which has to do with the role of the interpreter in receiving and constituting hermeneutic phenomena and with establishing a hermeneutic horizon within which the work of interpretation takes place. Nevertheless, as Marion's argument develops, he does turn specifically to these ideas, the very ideas already flagged in the essay I just discussed. Therefore, initially, it seems that his point in identifying the critique in this manner is to argue, in response to a critic who suggests that a phenomenology of givenness is incompatible with hermeneutics, that, on the contrary, givenness gives phenomena so as not only to require a hermeneutic (his past claims) but to provide one (his new claim).

The essay frames this response according to three points. First, it argues that a phenomenon that is defined as a given requires the further notion of givenness. Second, it argues that the notion of givenness requires a notion of *interpretation*. Finally, it argues that interpretation is a phenomenological category constitutive of the very form of selfhood (*adonné*) central to a phenomenology of givenness. In the midst of these three claims, the essay suggests a unique role for language in the unfolding of givenness and points to the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer.

Marion begins the essay by arguing that only by understanding the phenomenon as a univocal datum—a brute fact—could one preclude the work of interpretation required by givenness itself. This claim is then supported and developed with Marion's treatment of the debate concerning 'myth of the given'. Common to both arguments is the rejection of idea that an appeal to the phenomenon as a given could be construed as an appeal to either the brute facts of the naïve natural attitude or the pure datum of an empirical philosophy. In rehearsing these objections, his point is to show, a contrario, that all appeals to a given—to the phenomenon as a given—require the consideration of its givenness. He has employed this argument before. In *Being Given* (Marion 2012a), he argues that givenness "states what is found given: the gift made; the supposedly brute and neutral datum of givenness [*donation*] thus remains only the gift given" (Marion 2012a, p. 62). As a result, he asks "[w]hy then not content ourselves with nothing more than this gift given, a pure and simple given, shorn of any trace of its origin, pure of any relic, cut off from any antecedents" (Marion 2012a, p. 62). Answer: "This [way], however, represents an illusory way out. For the given, givens, and the datum, even reduced to their brute factuality, still bear in themselves the ambiguity constitutive of givenness" (Marion 2012a, p. 62). In order to point toward this crucial ambiguity of givenness, he employs an example: "During an academic examination, the givens of the problem have this in particular and evidently as their distinguishing characteristic: it is not I who chose them; or better, there is a problem . . . only to the degree that the givens are distributed to or imposed on me, therefore only to the degree that I do not give them to me myself. . . This movement of imposing itself on me, of arriving upon me from before or in front of me, is just enough to detect a certain givenness" (Marion 2012a, p. 63). Thus, to return to the present essay, he argues that the given phenomenon must be defined less by some sort of de facto status than by reference to the de jure conditions according to which its appearance arises. However, to ask about such conditions—especially to ask by what authority such conditions authorize the appearance of the given—is precisely to ask a phenomenological question: how do we speak not only of phenomena but their *phenomenality*?[8]

As is well-known, his answer to this question is: givenness [*donation*]. In this essay, Marion's reflections on givenness are focused on the goal of showing why givenness requires interpretation. He begins by clarifying the claim that givenness is *absolute*. He argues that to make this claim, following Husserl, is to state in the strongest terms possible the abandonment of a Kantian epistemology in which something of the thing-in-itself is held back from appearance. Marion explains: "Why indeed here describe givenness with the label absolute? Because givenness cannot be said to be relative or partial, since it constitutes the norm and the criterion of all presence, of all factuality, and of all actuality, which in return are judged only in relation to it" (Marion 2020a, p. 21). To see why such a claim connects givenness to interpretation, it is necessary to see the way in which this claim converges with Husserl's own discovery of the fundamental "correlation between *appearing and that which appears as such*" (Marion 1998, p. 32). Essentially, Marion argues, givenness gives absolutely insofar as it names the phenomenality in which everything that gives itself, gives itself in its appearance entirely as that which appears and, likewise, everything that appears is entirely given in its appearance. The given and givenness itself require interpretation because each given appears in its givenness, i.e., it appears absolutely and without restraint to a consciousness which must receive it. Thus, for Marion, interpretation is not required in order to make up a deficit in phenomenality but to receive its unfettered manifestation.

When Marion turns to Heidegger's contribution to the notion of givenness, he brings to light another factor. For Marion, Heidegger at once recognizes both the danger of the term—i.e., that it could be made to function as an idea that names a cause or a process of production—and its enigmatic openness. As Marion explains, Heidegger captures this enigmatic nature of givenness in the German phrase *es gibt* that means, at once, 'there is' and 'it gives', and he asks, in particular, about the 'it' (*es*) of the 'it gives'. Yet following Heidegger further, Marion asks: "What does this word [*mot*] 'it gives' mean? And moreover,

which word gives? How and by what right would a word give? Could it not rather be that 'it' which gives does not give qua *this* word, 'it' (which does not and cannot mean anything), but qua *the* word, that only *the word*, qua itself, gives" (Marion 2020a, p. 24). As though in response to his own question, he then quotes Heidegger's own words: "If our thinking does justice to the matter, then we may never say of the word that it is, but rather that it gives [*es gibt*]—not in the sense that words are given by an 'it', but that the word itself gives. The word itself is the giver. [*daß das Wort selber gibt*. *Das Wort*: *das Gebende*]" (Marion 2020a, p. 24). In fact, in a striking claim—one, as we will see, that opens Marion's thought to that of Gadamer far more than even Marion himself foresees—he concludes: "Givenness here keeps the last word because the word alone gives and because givenness is fulfilled in speech [*parole*]" (Marion 2020a, p. 24).

Thus, with reference to both the pressing phenomenality of givenness itself, as the very reason of the given imposed beyond all brute factuality, and the enigmatic givenness that unfolds in language, givenness requires interpretation. That is, precisely where the brute factuality of a given shorn of givenness would close one's lips, the word of givenness calls for a hermeneutics, such that, "far from disappearing with givenness", a hermeneutics is awakened "only in answering the word that fulfills it" (Marion 2020a, p. 24). Nevertheless, beyond these two gestures orienting givenness toward a hermeneutics, the question remains: what is given by givenness that stands in need of interpretation? To explore this question and sketch further the content of his phenomenological hermeneutics, Marion returns to two categories that arose in his discussion of the 'myth of the given': mediation and immediacy.

It is this argument that allows Marion to affirm the central place of the phenomenological reduction. Essentially, he argues, without recourse to the reduction, the move from the given to givenness would leave one trapped between two false alternatives. On the one hand, a givenness without reduction would seek the condition for the possibility of a given's givenness in the immediate sense data of subjective impressions while, on the other hand, one would posit the givenness of a thing as the mediating work of the understanding in its construction of a concept (Marion 2020a, p. 31). In response to this false alternative, Marion argues: "the sense and felt do not as such become an absolute and indubitable given, but only once they are submitted to the reduction, that is, inasmuch as they are mediated. This mediation does not, however, add another component to the sensed-felt (such as, for example, a category, a concept)" (Marion 2020a, p. 29). In other words, rather than overdetermining the phenomenon from the outside (according to a construction in which the given would appear *along with* its givenness), the reduction accomplishes the work of mediation insofar as it participates in the coming to appearance of the phenomenon itself. In Husserl's view, it is the phenomenological reduction that leads the appearing of the thing back to the consciousness for which it appears. It does not, therefore, lead the phenomenon away from itself—into 'parts' from which it could be further composed or into the 'idea' by which those parts are constructed into a whole—but, rather, it leads it to itself, in its own most unrestrained appearing. The reduction gives because it mediates, but what it mediates is not something different from the phenomenon itself. As a result, the reduction releases mediation from its opposition to immediacy. For Marion, Heidegger brings this even more fully to light.

Heidegger's concern is to protect givenness from becoming a principal of production. As a result, according to Marion, he pushes further the paradoxical relationship of immediacy and mediation. Using Heidegger's example of a professor standing behind a lectern, Marion argues that what is given here is neither the sense data of the wooden lectern nor the sounds of the professor's voice, neither the concept of a 'seminar room' nor that of a 'professor' but, rather, the signification of the lectern itself as the immediate event of the lecture. It is this signification that is, at once, immediate and, thus, "anterior to the sensible lived experiences and independent of them" and that which itself "mediates all the lived experiences that it alone qualifies to appear" (Marion 2020a, p. 30). He concludes: "Only the phenomenon endowed with signification, the phenomenon mediated by its own signi-

fication [*propre signification*], gives itself in the proper sense [*sens propre*] (the reduced sense). Only what happens by itself, therefore with its proper sense, mediated by the reduction (Husserl) or by its own signification (Heidegger), gives itself" (Marion 2020a, p. 31). Once again, we see the idea that givenness leads to interpretation because what is given is the thing itself in its appearance. The consequences of this analysis for a phenomenological hermeneutics are considerable. Far from the work of interpretation being understood as the work of combination, construction, or even constitution, interpretation finds itself identified with the work of reception.

To make such a claim brings us back to one of the central issues of the hermeneutic criticism of Marion's work: that his phenomenology of givenness discounts the active work of interpretation in favor of a too passive subject. In light of his arguments so far, Marion is now able to respond to this criticism. His first point is to remind his critics that hermeneutics must not be appealed to "as the universal solution for determining the sense of the given" for "the act of interpretation is no more self-evident than is the reception of the given" (Marion 2020a, p. 33). Indeed, he suggests that the danger faced by any hermeneutics that understands itself as a 'science of interpretation' is that it will be reduced to ideology. "For it is not for hermeneutics, in contrast to ideology, a matter of finding *a* sense . . . for that which requests interpretation; it is a matter of finding *the* sense that that which requests interpretation requests for itself. The sense that hermeneutics (re-)finds for what it interprets does not come from the ego but from the thing itself awaiting interpretation" (Marion 2020a, p. 33). There is, then, an important parallel here between the 'work' of reduction and the 'work' of interpretation. In both cases, we have a work whose essence is to work itself out, i.e., a work in which the worker appears as successful only to the extent that he disappears in the work of appearing to which his work attests. In this account, the competitive dichotomy of activity and passivity has no place. Thus, Marion concludes, the "phenomenon shows itself in the degree to which the hermeneut recognizes in the given the sense *of that given itself* and effaces himself. The proof of a correct hermeneutic shows itself in that the authority of the interpretation must end by shifting from the interpreter to the interpreted" (Marion 2020a, p. 34).

It is at this point that Marion turns to the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Though his explicit engagement is brief—only one paragraph—he focuses on a crucial issue for Gadamer, namely, the logic of question and answer. He captures perfectly Gadamer's own paradoxical understanding of this relation, in which the question reappears in the answer, insofar as the answer itself marks out the direction opened by the question. Likewise, the answer folds back on the question, allowing it to arise as that which was required by the question.[9] Thus, in relation to the hermeneut and their work of interpretation, the "question (which asks for the sense of the given) receives this sense, which will make the given show itself, only as the answer—an answer that therefore does not come, in the final analysis, from the interpreter but from the interpreted, from the text" (Marion 2020a, p. 35). In providing this explication, Marion finds a parallel path between Gadamer's account of question and answer and his own account of the call and the response. In following this parallel path, we come to the final task of Marion's essay: to show how interpretation is the work of a self (*adonné*) already given to oneself in the unrestrained givenness of the appearing of that which appears.

In deepening his response to his hermeneutic critics and in advancing what he now calls "the radically phenomenological status of hermeneutics" (Marion 2020a, p. 36), Marion argues that not only is it insufficient to understand hermeneutics as a science of interpretation, but, furthermore, a genuinely phenomenological hermeneutics must start, as in Heidegger, from understanding [*Verstehen*] and not from interpretation [*Auslegung*]. This reorientation of hermeneutics explicates the phenomenological logic behind the so-called 'passive' dimension of Marion's hermeneutic. The important distinction emerges in the recognition that "understanding, or rather being able to understand, something never first consists in transforming the sense of a subsistent object or in attributing a new sense to it, in short in interpreting otherwise the Vorhandenheit of an object" (Marion 2020a,

p. 36). Indeed, in the same manner as a 'science' of interpretation, this way of viewing hermeneutics assumes the subject–object structure of modern epistemology, in which the hermeneutic question is reduced to: how does a 'subject' *interpret* an 'object'? In this case, though, the verb 'interpret' would point back precisely to the two false options that Marion's reading of Husserl and Heidegger already set aside—either to break down the object to its properties or to (re)construct it in thought by means of a concept. In this case, Marion argues, "there results from this abstract montage only the irreducible and incomprehensible duality between two absolutely heterogeneous terms, the predicative assertion on the one hand, purely logical and signitive, and the intraworldly and actual phenomenon on the other, without the slightest phenomenological validation of their connection" (Marion 2020a, p. 37). In order to overcome such a view of hermeneutics, Marion advances Heidegger's claim and argues that "hermeneutics [*Auslegung*] never bears *first* on a text . . . nor even on the intra-worldy being to which the text refers, but on the understanding [*Verstehen*] opened to and by the possibility of *Dasein*. Hermeneutics proceeds from the sight of the interpreter on the avenue of its possibility" (Marion 2020a, p. 38). At his point, however, one might ask: does this not turn to *Dasein* and its understanding actually reaffirm some notion of an active subject over the passive subject who disappears in front of the text and, in so doing, does it not reinstate a subject–object competition? That it does not do this has everything to do with the difference between a 'subject' and *Dasein*. For, as Marion argues, to speak of *Verstehen* in reference to *Dasein* is to recognize, behind the "apophantic *as*" that asserts predicates from the position of a subject, an "existential-*hermeneutical* as" in which understanding (to quote from Heidegger) "[a]s the disclosedness of the there [*Da*] . . . always pertains to the whole of Being in the world" (Marion 2020a, p. 38). This means, for Marion, that "between the sense of Dasein and the signification of each being, the understanding [*Verstehen*], such as it permits interpretation [*Auselung*], plays out in the 'structure of question and answer' (Gadamer)" (Marion 2020a, p. 38). In other words, because understanding and interpretation are linked from the side of understanding, the work of interpretation is the work in which the interpreter gives himself over to that which is given—that which demands to be shown—precisely because, as *Dasein*—as the being who understandingly finds himself in the world—the interpreter must interpret himself in light of the question put to him by the phenomenon he is interpreting.

On the other side of a hermeneutics understood as the science of interpretation and, more deeply, on the other side of a view of hermeneutics still beholden to a competitive polarity between subject and object, Marion claims a space for a phenomenological hermeneutics of givenness precisely in the phenomenon of call and response. Crucial to this claim is an idea central to Marion's phenomenology of givenness: that "the phenomenon shows itself only if it happens as a given, but it does not suffice that it happen as a given for it to appear as showing itself, in full phenomenality" (Marion 2020a, p. 39). On the one hand, it is crucial to Marion's project as a whole that givenness name phenomenality in such a way that what appears in its appearance holds nothing of itself back. As we saw, in order to shake off both the metaphysical principle of reason and the epistemological chains of Kantian transcendental conditions, givenness must account for how phenomena really and truly give themselves without condition. This claim is at once the wager and the challenge of Marion's phenomenology. On the other hand, "if all that shows itself must first give itself, it sometimes happens that what gives itself does not succeed in showing itself" (Marion 2020a, p. 39). This means, crucially, that the "given shows itself only in its reflection, in its reflexive return, in short, in the response to the *adonné*, who sees it, but only insofar as he receives himself from this given" (Marion 2020a, p. 39). It is here that Marion's new notion of selfhood—the self as *adonné*—aligns with his phenomenological account of call and response. Just as in Gadamer, where question and answer anticipate and fold back upon one another in a mutual event of signification, "the given gifts itself as a call" that is shown only in the "response of the *adonné*" (Marion 2020a, p. 39). The call is shown in the response just as the response refers us back to the call. The unconditioned appearing of that which appears *shows up* in the manifestation proper to the self who receives it, just as the

showing always points back to the giving (and claims no authority over it). Or, as Marion himself puts it: "The finitude of the manifestation . . . is brought out, by contrast, against the infinity of the obscure givenness of what still remains out of sight" (Marion 2020a, p. 39). At the center of this constitutive relationship is the "gap" [*l'ecart*] or separation between what gives itself and what shows itself. In fact, Marion claims that "*hermeneutics manages the gap between what shows itself and what gives itself, by interpreting the call* (or, often, the intuition) *by the response* (the concept or signification)" (Marion 2020a, p. 40). This permits Marion to speak of a "hermeneutic power" that "measures . . . and calibrates the scale of phenomenalization of givenness" (Marion 2020a, p. 40). As a result, he can conclude that "a *phenomenology* of givenness lets phenomena appear as givens only to the degree to which is exercised within it a *hermeneutics* of the given *as* shown and showing itself, *as* visible and seen by the *adonné*" (Marion 2020a, p. 40).

It is precisely in this gap that a space opens for the impossible possibility of revealed phenomena. As Marion brings this portion of his argument to a close, the status of the 'I' is rethought in order both to address the challenge made to phenomenology by revealed phenomena and the questions put to Marion's phenomenology of givenness by its hermeneutic critics. In light of Marion's arguments, it is clear that his position cannot be drawn into the debate between an 'active' and 'passive' subject. In fact, in the figure of the *adonné*, we find an account of selfhood in which the work of interpretation flows from the authority of the phenomenon through a receiver whose work of reception is as 'active', in the showing of *adonné*, as it is passive to the giving of the phenomenon. In the space of interpretation opened up here, the impossible possibility of revelation can appear precisely in and to a finite hermeneutic of reception and presentation.

Yet what about the issue of the horizon? As we saw, this is a crucial issue for the hermeneutic critique, which insists that all revelation takes place within an interpretive horizon. In order to address this question, I turn first to a brief discussion of Marion's notion of the saturated phenomenon. Following this, I turn to the final portion of the article and ask, with Gadamer, how a phenomenological hermeneutics of language might open a horizon that is, itself, the very space of appearance of an impossible phenomenality.

It is well-known that a phenomenology of the saturated phenomenon plays a key role in Marion's phenomenology of givenness. Since the early 1990s Marion has been articulating this type of phenomenality in dialogue with Kant's categories of quantity (event), quality (idol), relation (flesh), and modality (icon).[10] He returns to a discussion of saturated phenomena in his essay on the hermeneutics of givenness and, in so doing, leads us to an explicit discussion of the notion of horizon in a phenomenological hermeneutics. What is crucial here is the affirmation that was made earlier: to understand the work of interpretation, we are concerned not with a phenomenality that is lacking—e.g., delivered only in the particles of sense data that await combination and conceptual constitution—but with one that is unrestrained in the absolute appearance of that which appears. Thus, in the case of the saturated phenomenon, where what appears does so in a mode in excess of our ordinary receptive capacity, the receptive work of the interpreter is, first of all, a work of attestation—i.e., a work of witnessing to the authority of the phenomenon that gives itself.[11] As a result, in this case, the first work of interpretation is the work of admitting, on the one hand, that no horizon stands ready to engulf the phenomenon that presents itself and, on the other hand, that any notion of a horizon must come from the appearance of the phenomenon itself. Or, as Marion puts it, the first kind of knowing, in this case, is a knowing that, what gives itself to be known cannot be known as an object. The phenomenon is to be known only as a non-object (Marion 2020a, p. 42). However, just as interpretation does not start from a lack of phenomenality, neither does its non-knowing imply a passive resignation. As Marion argues: "For the gap, in fact never completely closed, between the saturating intuition and the rarity of conceptual significations must, for want of being filled, be traveled along by the invention of several, if not all possible, interpretations of intuition" (Marion 2020a, p. 42). Faced with the saturating phenomenality of the historical event, the radiant painting, the auto-affection of my own suffering flesh, or the gaze of the other, the

work of interpretation is the work of bearing a creative excess or, as Ricoeur would say, it is the discovery of a genuine "surplus of meaning" (Ricoeur 1976). Marion goes on to locate this surplus along temporal lines. He argues that, in the case of saturated phenomena, "signification intervenes with an essential lateness, and the phenomenon remains haloed with a border of conceptual imprecision that doubtless will never fade. This imprecision does not, however, imply any unintelligibility or irrationality, since it attests a *reserve* of rationality and intelligibility still to come—a phenomenality that comes to mind because it is temporalized" (Marion 2020a, p. 42). We see here a horizon of appearance that does not overdetermine the phenomenon in advance by regulating the range of possibilities by which it might appear but, rather, a horizon that is, itself, fundamentally open not only to the unfettered appearance of the phenomenon itself, but also to the historicity in which the phenomenon continues to give itself in its multiple interpretations. Thus, just as it is no more a question of doing away with an interpreter than it is of doing away with a horizon, both notions as they were employed within a still too metaphysically determined phenomenological method must be brought into line with the impossible possibility of saturated phenomenality.

Nevertheless, we must ask one final question: given the significant place of language within the hermeneutic critique of Marion's work, should we not still seek a better understanding of the relationship between language and the horizon of interpretation? Or, to put it otherwise, does not the surplus of meaning, opened up precisely by the saturated phenomenon, always develop in language insofar as revelation itself remains meaningful? In order to explore these questions further, we follow Marion's lead and turn to the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer.

4. Gadamer's Phenomenology of Language in *Truth and Method*

To follow Marion into an engagement with Gadamer is, first of all, to recognize a conversation where others have seen only a refutation. It is also to focus explicitly on the two questions at the heart of both phenomenology's encounter with revealed phenomena and the challenges put to Marion's phenomenology of givenness by its hermeneutic critics: the status of an interpreting subject and the horizon of interpretation. Finally, in particular, it is to argue that in language itself that which appears in its appearance comes to light according to a mode of phenomenality that is the concretization of meaning itself. Because of this convergence of phenomenality and meaning, in fact, it is possible to understand the phenomenality of language—what Gadamer calls *Sprachlichkeit*—as constitutive of a horizon in which the finitude of concrete interpretation lives from the infinitude of an impossible possibility.

In order to execute my analysis and complete my experiment, it will be necessary to affirm three crucial claims about Gadamer's work.[12] First, while it is widely acknowledged that Gadamer's more explicit turn to phenomenology took place after he wrote *Truth and Method*, it will be necessary to demonstrate that, already in this great work from 1960, he is concerned with the question of phenomenality.[13] Second, in order to understand the question of meaning—and thus the very task of interpreting—in light of the phenomenality of language itself, it will be necessary to show the crucial unity between understanding, interpretation, and language. Finally, in order to establish the manner in which interpretation takes place on a horizon open to the appearance of that which appears in itself, even as it shows itself in the particular languages of finite interpreters, it will be necessary to explore the speculative structure of language and its mode of manifestation analogous to the beautiful.

I turn first to the notion of presentation (*Darstellung*) in *Truth and Method* in order to affirm its status as a category pertaining to phenomenality. Gadamer first introduces the notion in accounting for the mode of being of the work of art. In this context, it is clear that presentation is an ontological category, by which Gadamer means it pertains not to the subjective capacities of the individual, but, rather, to a mode of appearance anterior to subjectivity. It is important to recall, here, that at the end of Part One of *Truth and Method*, in

a brief discussion of Heidegger's crucial contribution to hermeneutics, Gadamer captures nicely his own understanding of the stakes of ontological statements. For Heidegger, he says, the "philosophical question . . . is directed precisely at . . . subjectivism itself. . .. The philosophical question asks, what is the being of self-understanding? With this question it fundamentally transcends the horizon of this self-understanding. In disclosing time as the ground hidden from self-understanding, it . . . opens itself to a hitherto concealed experience that transcends thinking from the position of subjectivity, an experience that Heidegger calls *being*" (Gadamer 2004, p. 86). Thus, as an ontological category, Gadamer affirms presentation as a mode of phenomenality. This becomes clear in his initial treatment of the notion in relation to the concept of 'play' (*Spiel*).

The connection between play and presentation can be seen first in Gadamer's connection of play to the medial category of the event. Once again affirming that play is not a subjective category, Gadamer argues that "the primordial sense of playing is the medial one. Thus, we say that something is 'playing' (spielt) somewhere or at some time, that something is going on (im Spiele ist) or that something is happening (sich abspielt)" (Gadamer 2004, p. 104). Precisely in this medial sense, he goes on to argue that play is "pure self-presentation" [*Sichselbstdarstellen*] (Gadamer 2004, p. 105; 1960, p. 111). Further, when we speak of human play, we recognize that something is played. That is, in playing, human play presents something (*stellt sie dar*), and this is what opens the space for art, which is not only a presentation of something, but, further, a presentation for someone (Gadamer 2004, p. 108). What is crucial for Gadamer, is that this presentation for someone—this "*darstellend für*—is the presentation of *meaning*. Thus, in response to any inclination to oppose phenomenality and meaning—where the latter would be understood as a subjective construction—Gadamer affirms that meaning is the particular phenomenality proper to a human presentation. As a result, insofar as the meaning of something is expressed in language, language itself becomes a mode of presentation with its own type of phenomenality.

Moving on now to the second claim, it is necessary to explore the unique relationship between understanding, interpretation, and language. Insofar as 'understanding' [*Verstehen*] is not a subjective capacity, but, rather, the way *Dasein* is present in the world, and insofar as language itself expresses a mode of phenomenality in which that world rises to appearance, language itself is essential to understanding. Therefore, Gadamer affirms that what is at stake in an understanding of language "is not that the understanding is subsequently put into words; rather, the way understanding occurs . . . is the coming-into-language of the thing itself [*das Zur-Sprache-kommen der Sache selbst*]" (Gadamer 2004, pp. 370–71; 1960, p. 384). Because of this, he continues, what must be understood is the "linguisticality of dialogue" [*Sprachlichkeit* des Gesprächs] (Gadamer 2004, p. 371; 1960, p. 384), the phenomenality of language itself.

In order to unfold this relation between understanding and language, and language and interpretation, Gadamer provides two crucial claims: first, that "*[L]anguage is the universal medium in which understanding occurs*" and, second, that "*[u]nderstanding occurs in interpreting*" (Gadamer 2004, p. 390). The connection is made more strongly in the original German: "*Vielmehr ist die Sprache das universale Medium, in dem sich das verstehen selber vollzieht. Die Vollzugsweise des Verstehens ist die Auslegung*" (Gadamer 1960, p. 392). Where the English translation misses the play on 'vollzieht' in the first sentence and 'Vollzugsweise' in the second—rendering them both with the word 'occurs'—it also misses the way in which understanding is 'carried out' (*vollzieht*) in the work of language and, thus, achieves its 'full force' (*Vollzugsweise*) in interpretation. Furthermore, this very language in which understanding is carried out is the language of interpretation because it is the very language of the interpreter herself. Crucially, therefore, Gadamer affirms that "[a]ll understanding is interpretation, and all interpretation takes place in the medium of language that allows the object to come into words and yet is at the same time the interpreter's own language" (Gadamer 2004, p. 390). In this case, we have neither any reference to 'language itself' nor to a univocal meaning. On the contrary, with this connection between language,

understanding, and interpretation, Gadamer preserves a fundamental connection between presentation (phenomenality) and plurality (interpretation). This is so because the language in which the thing itself is brought to presentation is, each time, the language of the interpreter. We see here a striking parallel with Marion, for whom the very givenness of unfettered phenomenality shows itself in the finite reception of particular interpreters.

Moreover, it is this very connection between presentation and plurality that grounds meaning itself in the phenomenality of language. This is so, Gadamer argues, because interpretation is nothing less than the "act of understanding itself, which is realized . . . in the explicitness of verbal interpretation" (Gadamer 2004, p. 399). In claiming this, he emphasizes that interpretation is not something added on to understanding, but, rather, it is "*the concretion of the meaning itself*" (Gadamer 2004, p. 399). In other words: "The verbal explicitness that understanding achieves through interpretation does not create a second sense apart from that which is understood and interpreted" (Gadamer 2004, p. 399). This is so, he continues, because the "interpretive concepts are not, as such, thematic in understanding" (Gadamer 2004, p. 399). In fact, just as we saw in Marion's essay, the work of interpretation works when, as a work, it disappears behind what it shows. Thus, for Gadamer, language is not presented so much as it presents. As a result, he continues, "interpretation is contained potentially within the understanding process. It simply makes the understanding [*bringt das Verstehen*] explicit [*ausdrücklichen Ausweisung*] [i.e., it brings understanding to an explicit designation]" (Gadamer 2004, p. 399; 1960, p. 402). For this reason, "it is not a means through which understanding is achieved" which would, subsequently, be left behind, but, rather, "it enters into the content of what is understood" (Gadamer 2004, p. 399). At stake here is the affirmation that in the work of interpretation one receives the *Sache*—the meaning being presented, the matter of the thing itself—precisely as it takes shape within the language by which it is received, the very language of the interpreter. Gadamer concludes that "interpretation in the medium of language itself shows what understanding always is: assimilating what is said to the point that it becomes one's own" (Gadamer 2004, pp. 399–400). However, in this case, the language of assimilation need not be feared. For what is assimilated is nothing less than the thing itself in its presentation. For that reason, such assimilation points to a transformation in which a language that is my own becomes the very language through which what is not my own appears.

In contrast to an understanding of meaning as the construction of a subject, Gadamer argues that meaning is the reception of the coming into appearance of the world in language precisely as language in its diversity of expression is the finite medium of human interpretation. It is as such a medium that language opens a horizon of interpretation that is, at once, finite, and open to the appearance of phenomena unconstrained by an anterior subjectivity or a transcendental a priori.

In the concluding sections of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer further explores this new notion of a horizon by turning to an analysis of what he calls the dialectic of the word, and the full flowering of its speculative structure in relation to Plato's treatment of the beautiful. To begin, Gadamer argues that what is necessary for a notion of an interpretive horizon open to phenomena in their appearance is an understanding of a dialectic that emerges from the *Sprachlichkeit* of language itself. This, he argues, is a "dialectic of the word which accords to every word an inner dimension of multiplication: every word breaks forth as if from a center and is related to a whole, through which alone it is a word. Every word causes the whole of the language to which it belongs to resonate and the whole worldview that underlies it to appear. Thus every word, as the event of a moment, carries with it the unsaid, to which it is related by responding and summoning. The occasionality of human speech . . . is . . . the logical expression of the living virtuality of speech that brings a totality of meaning into play, without being able to express it totally. All human speaking is finite in such a way that there is laid up within it an infinity of meaning to be explicated and laid out" (Gadamer 2004, p. 454).

In order to explicate the logic of this dialectic of the word, Gadamer turns to the notion of the *speculative*. He first describes the speculative in reference to a castle that is reflected in its image in a lake. In this case, the "mirror image is essentially connected with the actual sight of the thing through the medium of the observer. [The image] has no being of its own; it is like an 'appearance' that is not itself and yet allows the thing to appear by means of a mirror image" (Gadamer 2004, p. 461). In the second description, he suggests that a "speculative person is someone who does not abandon himself directly to the tangibility of appearances or to the fixed determinateness of the meant, but who is able to reflect . . . [and] who sees that the 'in-itself' is a 'for-me'" (Gadamer 2004, pp. 461–62). If the first description leaves open the status of the reflection itself—what sort of 'appearance' is it, this image?—the second one suggests that at stake here is a reaching out to phenomenality itself. To borrow Marion's language for a moment, we might say that the speculative person does not remain fixed on the factual given but is able to see it as an instance of the givenness by which it appears. Thus, the language of reflection orients us again to presentation. Gadamer's third description makes this clear. He argues that a thought is speculative if something is understood in terms of a relationship "in which the reflection is nothing but the pure appearance of what is reflected, just as the one [i.e., the appearance] is the one of the other [i.e., the phenomenon], and the other [i.e., the phenomenon] is the other of the one [i.e., the appearance]" (Gadamer 2004, p. 462). In this case, reflection points to the manner in which something appears precisely in its appearance. Thus, to truly see the thing is to see not just the thing but the thing in its appearance, in its presentation.

In Hegel's thought, Gadamer finds a philosophical exploration of this very movement from the thing to its appearance as the deepening awareness of the thing in its presentation. If the thetic gesture of the philosophical proposition asserts the tautological relationship between a subject and a predicate and, thus, brings about an "unaccustomed blockage that thought undergoes" (Gadamer 2004, p. 462), the properly speculative accomplishment of thought is to liberate thought once again by reopening the fixed determinateness of the tautology. This accomplishment is the work of the dialectic. Gadamer states: "The dialectical is the expression of the speculative, the presentation [*Darstellung*] of what is actually contained in the speculative, and to this extent it is 'truly' speculative. But since, as we have seen, the presentation [*Darstellung*] is no adventitious activity but the emergence of the thing itself, the philosophical proof itself belongs to the thing" (Gadamer 2004, p. 463; 1960, p. 472). However, in contrast to Hegel, Gadamer argues that the speculative moment of thought is implicit to language itself as "the realization of meaning, as the event of speech, of mediation, of coming to an understanding. Such a realization is speculative in that the finite possibilities of the word are oriented toward the sense intended as toward the infinite" (Gadamer 2004, p. 464). In other words, to "say what one means . . . means to hold what is said together with an infinity of what is not said in one unified meaning and to ensure that it is understood in this way" (Gadamer 2004, p. 464). He concludes: "Someone who speaks is behaving speculatively when his words do not reflect beings, but express a relation to the whole of being" (Gadamer 2004, p. 465).

In fact, to bring out the full impact of this argument, it is necessary to return to Gadamer's description of the dialectic of the word that the notion of the speculative was employed to explicate. We see now what it means to say that "every word causes the whole of the language to which it belongs to resonate and the whole worldview that underlies it to appear". The phenomenality of language is not reducible to the fixed determinateness of a single word as sign for a single thing because, in its presentation, each word refers beyond itself to the horizon of its appearance. However, to borrow again some of Marion's language, this horizon is fundamentally open to a givenness held in reserve, a givenness whose historical unfolding is the movement of historically effected consciousness itself. This is so, as Gadamer told us, because "every word, as the event of a moment, carries with it the unsaid, to which it is related by responding and summoning". Furthermore, for this very reason, we discover in the finitude of human language the surplus of its creativity. For, as we recall, the "occasionality of human speech . . . is . . . the logical expression of the

living virtuality of speech that brings a totality of meaning into play, without being able to express it totally. All human speaking is finite in such a way that there is laid up within it an infinity of meaning to be explicated and laid out".

As Gadamer turns to the final pages of *Truth and Method*, he summarizes his journey: "Our inquiry has been guided by the basic idea that language is a medium where I and world meet or, rather, where they present [*darstellen*] their original belonging together" (Gadamer 2004, p. 469, translation modified). At the heart of this argument, he continues, "the speculative structure of language emerged, not as a reflection of something given but as the coming into language of a totality of meaning" (Gadamer 2004, p. 469). Crucial to this emergence, is the claim that it is not the activity of the subject but "something that the thing itself does and which thought 'suffers'. This activity of the thing itself is the real speculative movement that takes hold of the speaker" (Gadamer 2004, p. 469). In fact, he claims, what is so crucial to this idea of language as self-presentation is the fact that "[t]o come into language does not mean that a second being is acquired. Rather, what something presents itself as belongs to its own being. Thus everything that is language has a speculative unity: it contains a distinction, that between its being and its presentations of itself, but this is a distinction that is really not a distinction at all" (Gadamer 2004, p. 470). In order emphasize and confirm the relationship between the being of the thing and its presentation, Gadamer turns to the ancient language of beauty. For it is here, in this tradition's language of 'radiance' and 'light' that we see affirmed the phenomenological force of Gadamer's thought.

When Gadamer turns to the concept of the beautiful he is particularly concerned with what he calls the "anagogical function of the beautiful" through which a "structural characteristic of the being of the beautiful becomes visible, and with it an element of the structure of being in general" (Gadamer 2004, p. 476). Such an anagogical function reminds us that at stake here is a discussion of phenomenality. As a result, it is crucial for Gadamer that the "beautiful appears not only in what is visibly present to the senses, but [that] it does so in such a way that it really exists only through [its beautiful appearing]—i.e., [that] it emerges as one out of the whole" and, thus, that the "beautiful is of itself truly 'most radiant' (to ekphanestaton)" (Gadamer 2004, p. 476). To speak of radiance is, of course, to speak again of presentation. Indeed, to be radiant is to appear (*phanestaton*) out of (*ek*) and, thus, it is to arise and come forward as that which appears. This is what Gadamer seeks to draw attention to when he highlights the 'shining' (*scheinen*) in all appearing (*Erscheinen*). He further develops this notion by arguing that beauty "has the mode of being of *light*" where "[l]ight is not only the brightness of that on which it shines; by making something else visible, it is visible itself, and it is not visible in any other way than by making something else visible" (Gadamer 2004, p. 477). As James Risser notes, for Gadamer, beauty "having the mode of being of light, is not something added to the appearance of something. The metaphysics of light has the character of self-manifestation" (Risser 2022, p. 258). Thus, if language presents in the manner of light, then, once again, it is not a question of doubling the presentation (phenomenality) with the thing presented (its meaning) but, rather, of recognizing in language the very correlation discovered by Husserl, retrieved by Marion, and affirmed by Gadamer's notion of the distinction between a being and its appearance that is really not a distinction at all. This means, further, that language does not function as a horizon that a contains appearances—and in so doing polices them—but, rather, language is the horizon of interpretation precisely insofar as it is the mode in which things appear according to their own arising fourth. Thus, as a mode that is open in its finitude to the infinity of the unsaid, the horizon of language is a horizon that gives itself over to the things that come to expression in it.

Gadamer seeks to capture this, finally, in "the close relationship that exists between the shining forth (Vorscheinen) of the beautiful and the evidentness (das Einleuchtende) of the understandable" (Gadamer 2004, p. 478). This connection identifies the fully phenomenological stakes of Gadamer's language of event. For, as he argues, "both the appearance of the beautiful and the mode of being of understanding have the character of an event"

(Gadamer 2004, p. 479). To speak this way is to recognize that "just as the beautiful is a kind of experience that stands out like an enchantment and an adventure within the whole of our experience and presents a special task of hermeneutical integration, what is evident is always something surprising as well, like a new light being turned on, expanding the range of what we can take into consideration" (Gadamer 2004, p. 480). To speak of meaning is nothing other than to speak of the full eventfulness of phenomenality itself. If meaning were something else—say the construction of an intentional subject—the shining of the beautiful (*Vorscheinen*) and the evidentness of the understanding (*das Einleuchtende*) would have to be articulated according to two parallel tracks, one pertaining to structures of appearance and the other to subjective concept formation. That this is not the case for Gadamer is affirmed each time he reminds us that what speaks in language—indeed, in the very language of the interpreter herself—is the presentation of the thing itself. In fact, Gadamer concludes, the ideas of beauty, radiance, and light lead us to understand truth itself in terms of the phenomenality proper to language. For here, in the common language we occupy in all our communal work of interpretation, the "weight of things we encounter in understanding plays itself out in a linguistic event" where "the play of language itself, which address us, proposes and withdraws, asks and fulfills itself in the answer" (Gadamer 2004, p. 484). Indeed, to see in language the speculative unity of its presentation is, precisely, to see the space of interpretation opened by a distinction that is not a distinction. In the space of that traversed distinction—that gap [*l'ecart*]—a light shines and, as Gadamer says, that light is the light of the word (Gadamer 2004, p. 478).[14]

5. Conclusions

In this paper, I have sought to conduct an experiment. In relation to the critical reception of Marion's treatment of the phenomenality of revelation within his phenomenology of givenness and saturation, I asked if it might be possible to refuse the sedimented alternatives between phenomenality and meaning; between an active and passive subject; and, thus, the dichotomy between a horizon feared (as an obstacle) and asserted (as a fact). By drawing together, in a mutual exchange, the work of Jean-Luc Marion and Hans-Georg Gadamer, I sought to intervene the positing of each of these false alternatives and, in doing so, to suggest that Marion's own phenomenological account of 'giving' and 'showing' can be fruitfully extended by Gadamer's notion of 'saying'. Furthermore, in light of such a saying, I have shown that Gadamer's thought opens the space of interpretation for phenomena unconstrained by the anterior conditions of a sovereign subject or its transcendental horizon. What is more, far from abandoning either the notions of selfhood or the horizon, Gadamer's thought deepens that of Marion by articulating the constitution of meaning within a horizon that is, itself, opened by the appearing of what appears for a finite self whose very own work of interpretation is animated by the presentation of the things themselves.

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Notes

1 Marion takes up this argument again in his Introduction to *Givenness and Revelation* (Marion 2016a, pp. 1–4).

2 Thus, we see here an early employment of the language of impossibility. Marion returns to this language, giving it a central place in his understanding of God in his later work. See, particularly, the essay on God in *Negative Certainties* (Marion 2015, pp. 51–82).

3 In "The Saturated Phenomenon", Marion writes: "When does it become impossible to speak of a phenomenon, and according to what criteria of phenomenality? Yet the possibility of the phenomenon (and therefore the possibility of declaring a phenomenon impossible, that is, invisible) in turn could not be determined without also establishing the terms of possibility taken by itself. By

subjecting the phenomenon to the jurisdiction of possibility, philosophy in fact brings its own definition of naked possibility fully to light. . . Or better, the rational scope of a philosophy that is measured by the extent of what it renders possible is also assessed by the range of what it renders visible, thus, according to the possibility of phenomenality within it" (Marion 2008, p. 19).

4 For readers familiar with Marion's later work in phenomenology, it will be clear how his thought develops from its early formulations here. In both *Reduction and Givenness* (Marion 1998) and *Being Given* (Marion 2012a), he not only shifts the emphasis of his reading of Heidegger away from the notion of the 'indication' and toward Heidegger's treatment of the *es gibt*, but his treatment of Husserl's 'principle of all principles' also becomes more critical in his effort to move the notion of givenness beyond the constraints of a philosophy of intuition.

5 The most sustained treatment of this critical point is to be found in (Mackinlay 2010). More recently, see Robert Elliot's further development of this criticism in relation to Gadamer (Elliot 2017).

6 Both the French text and an accompanying translation of the original lecture was published as (Marion 2012b).

7 When it comes to hermeneutics and the critical questions that have been posed to his work, Marion has always been clear that the hermeneutic question must be, first, a phenomenological one. Indeed, already in the same note in which he first mentions the hermeneutic critiques coming from Greisch and Grondin, he notes: "The debate does not concern the necessity of a hermeneutic, out of the question at least since Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer, but its *phenomenological legitimacies*, which assure some saturated phenomena better than others" (Marion 2002, p. 33, n. 3, italics added).

8 For one of Marion's first and most detailed discussions of the phenomenological significance of the shift from the phenomenon to its phenomenality, see (Marion 1998, chp. 2, pp. 40–76).

9 Günter Figal also captures this well when he explains that "[b]ecause every saying is to be conceived as an answer, whatever is brought to speech must already have been linguistically disclosed, and, at the same time, it must be said again. In this 'dialectical of question and answer' (TM 472), the question refers to the possible answer and the answer refers back to the question" (Figal 2002, pp. 110–11).

10 Marion's most sustained treatment of saturated phenomena remains his book, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomenon* (Marion 2002). While the essay to which I have referred—"The Saturated Phenomenon"—presents a more succinct description, Marion modifies his account in later writings, particularly the relationship of the revealed phenomenon to the saturated phenomenon. He first sketches this new account in *Being Given* (Marion 2012a, pp. 225–47).

11 The concept of witness is important to Marion's understanding of the saturated phenomenon. It becomes even more central to his explicitly developed phenomenology of revelation (see Marion 2016a; 2020b, pp. 37–61).

12 When citing and quoting from *Truth and Method*, I always begin with the English translation and, thus, I usually cite the English edition only. When it is necessary to highlight something in Gadamer's German, however, I also provide the citation to the German edition.

13 For a recent treatment of Gadamer's later 'turn' to phenomenology, see (Keane 2021).

14 Jean Grondin has recently turned our attention to Gadamer's discussion of beauty at the end of *Truth and Method* (see Grondin 2021, 2022). What I have tried to do here is to show how what Gadamer argues there—in the language of beauty, radiance, and light—affirms and completes the phenomenological work that begins with his understanding of play as presentation and comes to light in his understanding of language.

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