The challenge of postmetaphysical Scripture reading: Jean-Luc Marion's hermeneutics of saturation

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores Jean-Luc Marion's postmetaphysical reading of Scripture as a textual collection of saturated phenomena in relation to dogmatic reasoning. Through study of Marion's idea of the saturated phenomenon and specifically his hermeneutics of saturation applied to Scripture, this work attempts to point out and critically evaluate its philosophical and theological implications for a dogmatic way of thinking. It gives explanation of the role and function of saturated phenomena in Marion's postmetaphysical project and underlines the guiding principles of his hermeneutics. Furthermore, it examines Marion's understanding of various biblical texts used as examples of saturation with emphasis on theological and philosophical implications delivered by this sort of reading. It offers a concluding analysis and closing remarks in regard to the philosophical and theological impact of Marion's hermeneutic of saturation and his postmetaphysical understanding of Scripture on dogmatic forms of theological thinking.

Key Words: Scripture, hermeneutics, saturated phenomenon, Jean-Luc Marion, postmetaphysics, phenomenology, Revelation, dogmatics

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Jean Luc-Marion is one of the most important present-day postmetaphysical thinkers who first came under wider theological attention with the appearance of his groundbreaking book *Dieu sans l'être* in 1982, translated into English almost ten years later as *God without Being*. By his work Marion aimed to promote a way of thinking about God focused on God's revelation as pure gift, liberated from the onto-theological accusation of thinking declared by Heidegger and other metaphysical conceptions of God such as *ens supremum* or *causa sui* (Marion, 1991a:33-37). According to Marion (1991a:xix), his work was "written at the border between philosophy and theology" and "remains deeply marked by the spiritual and cultural crisis" in the time of nihilism and "the obscuring of God in the indistinct haze of the human sciences." Writing the foreword to the English edition of the book, David Tracy (1991a:xii) recognised that "Marion has clearly forged a new and brilliant postmodern version of the other great alternative for theology: a revelation-centered, non-correlational, postmetaphysical theology." However, by the time that the English translation of *God without Being* appeared, Marion had already moved away from specifically theological questions to explicitly phenomenological research that culminated in his theory of saturated phenomena. Actually, the idea of saturated phenomena first appeared in May 1992 in a colloquium with Paul Ricoeur, Jean-Louis Chrétien and Michel Henry and was published as *Phénoménologie et Théologie* later that year. After the English edition of this work became available in 1996, Marion's theory of saturation generated great theological interest mainly because his theory of saturated phenomena came shortly after the English publication of *God without*

Being, but also because of Marion's challenging proposition that "revelation" is the saturated phenomenon *par excellence* (Mackinlay, 2010:1).

With his notion of a saturated phenomenon, Marion intended an experience that cannot be entirely contained within concepts that can be grasped by human understanding. A saturated phenomenon is one that gives so much in intuition that there is always an excess left over, permanently beyond the bounds of conceptual, categorical, and intentional thinking. This is a phenomenon where "intuition always submerges the expectation of the intention" (Marion, 2002a:225) or where "intuition gives (itself) in exceeding what the concept (signification, intentionality, aim, and so on) can foresee of it and show" (Marion, 2002a:112). In other words, a saturated phenomenon disrupts the fulfilment of an intentional aim in intuition because the intuitive givenness of this phenomenon is excessive in content and must be allowed to overflow with an infinity of meanings where each of them is "equally legitimate and rigorous, without managing either to unify them or to organise them" (Marion, 2002a:112). A saturated phenomenon is thus named a paradox, for it resists being fixed into a determinate concept that can be integrated to a superior, logically articulated system of thought. Moreover, the paradoxical element of the saturated phenomenon "subverts, therefore precedes every intention, which it exceeds and decenters" (Marion, 2002a:227). Therefore, Marion's idea of saturation turns out to be the limit-case of phenomenology referring to autonomous phenomena, given on their own terms, rather than being given within bounds imposed upon them by a human subject who by some means constitutes them.

Furthermore, by describing phenomena that are not being contained in a single concept or even in a combination of concepts, Marion's idea of saturation "paves the way for an infinite hermeneutics" (Marion, 2002a:211). He actually redefines hermeneutics as "always an inquiry for further concepts …. generated when we witness an excess rather than a lack of information" (Kearney, 2004:12). Indeed, an "endless hermeneutics" is essential because of the conceptual

insufficiency. Henceforth, there is no possibility of arriving at an adequate ending concept since “hermeneutical investigation never completes its mission. It is never finished and should never be finished” (Kearney, 2004:13). By applying it to the domain of theological thinking Marion claimed that religious phenomena might show themselves in ways that surpass our capacity to grasp them and objectify them, thus leaving theological understanding without the possibility of finite conceptualisation. As a result, a hermeneutics of saturation turns out to be a new way of approaching phenomena in general, challenging philosophical and theological thought to rethink their methodologies of interpretation and to redefine their own concepts of understanding. Finally, and most importantly for this research paper, this hermeneutical approach represents real challenge to the view of Christian dogmatic reasoning as rational and objective interpretation of God’s revelation by usage of adequate human concepts, symbols, linguistic conventions which properly explain the meaning of God’s free, gratuitous self-manifestation to human beings. The meaning of dogma as humanly, and therefore historically and linguistically conceptualised teaching, articulated as doctrine, is thus seriously defied by Marion’s non-conceptual theory of saturated phenomena (Guarino, 2005: 1-25).

1.2 Problem Statement

Jean-Luc Marion unquestionably takes Scripture as an important source of saturation by using a number of well-known biblical events, such as the Transfiguration, the Resurrection or the road to Emmaus appearance to demonstrate the manifestation of saturated phenomena occurring in them. Consequently, his understanding of Scripture as a collection of saturated experiences has opened the room for a new hermeneutics of saturation and has made the way for reading the Bible within postmetaphysical predispositions aiming to disclaim any certain meaning of the text. Reading Scripture through the

hermeneutics of saturation takes the assurance of meaning away from the reader himself for two related reasons. Firstly, the saturation of a biblical text exceeds the intentionality of the reader who becomes aware of it. Marked by overwhelming excess, it contradicts the subject's conditions for experience and knowledge and thus the meaning of the saturation is not constituted or synthesised by the reader. Confronted with the saturated phenomenon in the text, the reader "sees the superabundance of infinity", which means that he "does not see it clearly and precisely as such since its excess renders it irregardable and difficult to master" (Marion, 2002a:215). Actually, although the intuition of the phenomenon is seen by the reader, essentially it remains "blurred by the too narrow aperture, the too short lens, too cramped frame, that receives it" (Marion, 2002a:215). Hence, the reader of the biblical text is not able to anticipate it, nor to comprehend or contain it by his own concepts. His horizons of understanding are overwhelmed and submerged by it consequently (Wespthal, 2013:26).

The first argument hints at the second one. The saturated phenomenon, as a non-objectifiable one, makes its appearance by its own overwhelming givenness. Indeed, the meaning of saturation does not come "from the decision of the hermeneutic actor, as from that which the phenomenon itself is" (Marion, 2013:41). The hermeneutic actor is thus not in a situation to "give" the meaning to the text, but finds himself in a position of waiting for meaning to be given, in which he "remains a mere discoverer and therefore the servant" (Marion, 2013:43). Essentially, the reader is only able to interpret Scripture by receiving what is given within saturation and thus he is related to it as a recipient, or what Marion would describe as a "gifted one" (*l'adonné*). The saturation phenomenon has its own phenomenal autonomy and does not depend upon the self who perceives it. It gives itself from itself and thus is not constituted by its agreement with the conditions of knowledge of the receiving subject. Therefore, the reader who is called to interpret the text is challenged. Actually, instead of being the subject of constitution, the reader becomes a constituted witness. Finally, the

Bible represents a collection of saturated experiences that request excessive reading of biblical texts where an interpretation of Scripture turns out to be essentially passive hermeneutics of the saturation.

Given the importance of Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenological reading of Scripture that opened the way for new understanding and application of the biblical content, the crucial question for this research is: What are the philosophical and theological implications of Marion's Scripture reading based on the hermeneutics of saturation? The questions that naturally arise from this problem are:

a) How to understand the position and function of saturated phenomena in Marion's postmetaphysical project?

b) What are the leading principles that regulate the hermeneutics of saturation? How to understand its "infinite" or "endless" nature? How to explain the role of an interpreter of Scripture described as "servant" or "gifted one" in relation to the text being read and studied? How does a reader serve the text and what does it mean for a hermeneutic interpreter to be in a position of passive interpretation?

c) How to understand the nature of biblical revelation if it is represented as a collection of saturated phenomena? What is its purpose if it serves to manifest the revealing God in a non-correlational way to the human agent? Does the saturation of the Bible point to a doxological reading that intends to emphasise the overwhelming glory of God in contrast to a rational reading of Scripture?

d) What are the philosophical and theological implications of Marion's hermeneutic of saturation for dogmatic reasoning based on Scripture?

1.3 Aim and Objectives

By focusing on the question of theology in the domain of phenomenological and postmetaphysical research, this study aims to contribute to the proliferation of

literature published in the last three decades on the religious radicalisation of phenomenology as a manner of postmetaphysical thinking. More precisely, this work pertains to the extensive group of studies that have been written in the last decade on Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenological turn to theology. However, in contrast to research analyses mostly done in areas of patristic and mystical theology, classical phenomenology or Descartes, which intended to explain the guiding principles of Marion's postmetaphysical religious thought, this work is one of the few that have concentrated on Marion's usage of the Scripture. It might be unexpected that Jean-Luc Marion's theological development after the principles of postmetaphysical reading of the Bible has received little attention by scholars of religious thought. However, it is also surprising that there is no comprehensive study related to the dogmatic implications of his postmetaphysical Scripture reading. Herein lies the main goal of this research paper. It aims to provide a critical evaluation of Marion's hermeneutics of saturation, examining and evaluating his Scripture-reading approach in order to point out its philosophical and theological outcomes and consequences.

In order to facilitate the achievement of the aforementioned aim of the research project, this study has the following four objectives:

a) To present and explain the role and function of the saturated phenomenon within Marion's postmetaphysical project.

b) To find out what are the guiding principles of infinite hermeneutics of saturation and how they relate to the role of the hermeneutic actor (reader).

c) To examine the various biblical texts used by Marion to confirm the presence of saturation in Scripture and to come to conclusions regarding the nature of biblical revelation.

d) To evaluate and critically assess possibilities and limitations of the dogmatic Scripture reasoning shaped after Marion's hermeneutical principles of saturation and applied to Scripture reading.

1.4. Central Theoretical Argument

The central theoretical argument of this thesis is that Marion's Scripture reading based on the hermeneutics of saturation has significant philosophical and theological implications for a dogmatic understanding of the Scripture. Marion takes Bible text as an account aiming to describe religious events in distinct form of saturated phenomena. Actually, the Bible represents the text which offers a particular collection of saturated phenomena *par excellence*. For him, these phenomena are essentially apophatic, Christological and faith-based in nature. These three main characteristics lead to non-foundational way of reading of Scripture which in not based on historical or socio-linguistical understanding of doctrinal truth claims. This kind of reading discards any form of theological thinking that includes positive and productive effects of history as necessary and vital for conceptually-based dogmatic statements. It therefore rejects rational theological interpretation and represents a non-correlative hermeneutical model that comes to be a subjectless, ahistorical, postmetaphysical theology of the saturated, hyper-essential God. In this way, this hermeneutical approach stands in contrast with the model of interpretation that emphasise the necessity of historical framework for theological thinking and significance of correlational hermeneutics for Scripture reading, which actually represents the model that the author of this research paper will use as a critical tool for his analysis of Marion's hermeneutics of saturation.

1.5 Methodology

This study will undertake an analytical approach to Marion's work which will have the form of a critical evaluation of his hermeneutics of saturation for the purpose of emphasising philosophical and theological outcomes delivered from its

application to the Bible. Basically, this analytical approach will critically assess Marion's prominent idea of saturation by relying on the assumption which claims that historical and correlational way of Scripture reading is inevitable context for philosophical and theological reasoning. At any rate, this research analysis does not presume to be an encompassing critique of Marion's project per se. It rather tries to work within the framework primarily related to Marion's hermeneutics of saturation and its application to Scripture reading. Therefore, the critical assessment of various aspects of Marion's project in this research is exclusively limited to this primary task of my analysis. Indeed, Marion's intellectual enterprise is so rich and in many ways original that it gives rise to questions, requires qualifications, and further discussions which go beyond the limitation of this study.

The study itself will be structured in seven main sections. After the opening chapter of introduction, the second chapter is intended to situate Marion's postmetaphysical thought in the wider philosophical context. This section of the study will actually give an overview of Marion's philosophy, the development of which started with Descartes and later on turned to theology and phenomenology in order to overcome metaphysics. Chapter Three introduces the idea of saturated phenomena. Basically, this section aims to give a philosophical overview of Marion's concept of saturated phenomena in order to indicate how it became the norm or guiding paradigm in his postmetaphysical thinking. Building on Chapter Three, Chapter Four provides an analysis of Marion's development of hermeneutics based on saturated phenomena. It aims to point out and critically assess the guiding principles undergirding the interpretative methodology of saturation. Chapter Five analyses the manner in which Marion applies the hermeneutics of saturation to Scripture reading. This section intends to examine various biblical texts that serve Marion for indicating the saturated presence in Scripture. Indeed, as a result of this enquiry, conclusions will be made concerning the nature and role of biblical revelation. Finally, Chapter Six of this study will give a critical analysis related to the possibilities and limitations of dogmatic reasoning

based on the saturation principle, thus emphasising concluding remarks about postmetaphysical Scripture reading and its potential for regulating Christian understanding and beliefs.

1.6 Schematic Presentation

Research question	Aim and objectives	Research method
What are the philosophical and theological implications of Marion's Scripture reading based on the hermeneutics of saturation?	This main aim of this study is to provide a critical evaluation of Marion's hermeneutics of saturation by examining and evaluating his Scripture reading approach in order to point out its philosophical and theological outcomes and consequences.	This study will undertake an analytical approach to Marion's work that takes the form of a critical evaluation of his hermeneutics of saturation.
How to understand the position and function of the saturated phenomenon in Marion's postmetaphysical project?	To present and explain the role and function of the saturated phenomenon and its hermeneutics within Marion's postmetaphysical project.	By analysing Marion's concept of saturated phenomena this study will provide an explanation of how it became the norm or guiding paradigm in his postmetaphysical thinking.
What are the leading principles that regulate Marion's hermeneutics of	To find out and evaluate what are the guiding principles of infinite	This study will undertake a philosophical analysis and critical assessment

saturation? How to understand the “infinite” or “endless” nature of this hermeneutics? How to explain the role of an interpreter of Scripture described as “servant” or “gifted one” in relation to the text being read and studied? How does a reader serve the text and what does it mean for a hermeneutic interpreter to be in a position of passive interpretation?	hermeneutics of saturation and how they relate to the role of the hermeneutic actor (the reader).	of the guiding principles undergirding the interpretative methodology of saturation.
How to understand the nature of biblical revelation if it is represented as a collection of saturated phenomena? What is its purpose if it serves to manifest the revealing God in non-correlational ways to the human agent? Does saturation of the Bible point to a doxological reading that intends to emphasise the glory of God more than a rational understanding of God’s word?	To examine the various biblical texts used by Marion to confirm the presence of saturation in Scripture and to come to conclusions regarding the nature of biblical revelation.	This study will undertake an analysis of how Marion applies his hermeneutics of saturation to Scripture reading in order to point out general conclusions on the nature of biblical revelation.

What are the philosophical and theological implications of Marion's hermeneutic of saturation for dogmatic reasoning? How does Marion's theology of saturation relate to the question of constituting and understanding Christian beliefs?	To evaluate and critically assess possibilities and limitations of dogmatic reasoning shaped after Marion's hermeneutical principles of saturation and applied to Scripture reading.	A philosophical and theological assessment of the possibilities and limitations of dogmatic reasoning in relation to Marion's hermeneutics of saturation and his postmetaphysical Scripture reading.

2.0 JEAN-LUC MARION'S POSTMETAPHYSICAL THOUGHT OF SATURATION IN CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

The defining issue undergirding Marion's entire philosophical project finds its place of origin in his engagement with metaphysics as well as in his attempt to overcome it. Kevin Hart (Hart, 2007:28) has pointed out that the end of metaphysics signifies a "major event that has provoked Marion's thought." Indeed, the confrontation with modern philosophy, which according to Marion's words (1991a:xx) stands for "the completed and therefore terminal figure of metaphysics", is most likely the essential feature of his whole intellectual and spiritual project.

Born in 1946, and educated at the École Normale Supérieure and the Sorbonne by distinguished intellectual figures such as Louis Althusser, Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida, he became aware that "old" philosophical thought was exhausted and impotent to withstand the combination of Heideggerian, structuralist and poststructuralist critiques of the day. Correspondingly, his theological interests came under the influence of theologians such as Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou and Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Marion was propelled into thinking about God within the important view that theology is able to render metaphysics destitute. As a matter of consequence, the final outcome has been a series of his writings in which the heavy terminology of old metaphysics, such as "substance," "cause" and Heideggerian "Being", is constantly called into question (Horner, 2005:3; Ian Leask and Eoin Cassidy, 2005:1-2; James, 2012:17-18).

It is generally considered that introducing Marion's thought and the settings from which it has emerged is not an easy task. Robyn Horner (2005:x) pointed out the two major difficulties one could face in doing that. First, Marion's philosophical thought draws in large part upon a wide range of conceptually difficult debates in continental philosophy. Without comprehending the background, language, history and status of these debates, "relevant texts are sometimes too readily dismissed" with claims that they are obscure and impenetrable. Second, Marion's writing style is "particularly taxing" and "classical" with a tendency to make progress in spiral rather than in linear fashion, which means that it is sometimes quite difficult to make a distinction between his exposition of other's ideas and his own, often contrasting, views. Furthermore, an additional obstacle could be the existence of many interpretations of Marion's thought which might cause great difficulty for making an overview of Marion's work as a whole. On the one side, there are some approaches mainly concentrated on Marion's influence on inner-phenomenological debates, such as with Derrida on the question of gift or the emergence of new phenomenology (Horner, 2001; J. Aaron Simmons and Bruce Ellis Benson, 2013). On the other, there are interpretations chiefly preoccupied with Marion's engagement in the age-old issue of the relationship of philosophy and theology (Janicaud, 2000; Robbins, 2003; Ward, 1998a). Finally, there are also those analyses dealing with his specific philosophical concepts such as saturation, phenomenology of givenness or the question of excess (Mackinlay, 2010; Gschwandtner, 2014). However, while different approaches to Marion's thought can be seen to stand independently, they actually converge in their aim to make a way forward for a much larger project – overcoming the metaphysics. More specifically, throughout all the stages of his thought – from his rereading of Descartes, over his theological work and final stage of phenomenology – Marion seeks to find the way to observe and investigate philosophical, theological and phenomenological concepts which

go beyond the metaphysical framework of thinking (Tracy, 2007:57-65; Horner, 2005:35-42; Gschwandtner, 2007:3-9).

In order to present the development of Marion's idea of saturation throughout his postmetaphysical project, I will offer an overall outline of three chronological stages of his thought. Therefore, the first chapter of this study will analyse all three generally recognised stages of Marion's intellectual development with an attempt to indicate how his thought gradually generated the idea of the saturated phenomenon. Taking into account the size of Marion's very comprehensive work, this section will be actually focusing primarily on the main philosophical concepts that marked each stage of his thought. Nevertheless, this limited approach will still be adequate for showing how the idea of saturation dominated his postmetaphysical thinking and his phenomenological project in general.

2.2 First Stage: The Reinterpretation of Descartes

Marion's career began in the 1970s with studies of Descartes' work while he prepared his doctorate on Descartes' early thought and his involvement in *L' équipe Descartes*, a group of intellectuals committed to scholarly examination of published research on Descartes. During those years, Marion published what he later describes as a "first triptych" on Descartes (Marion, 1999a:xv): *Sur l'ontologie grise de Descartes* (1975); the *Index des 'Regulae ad Directionem Ingenii' de René Descartes* (1976); and an annotated translation of Descartes' 1628 work *Règles utiles et claires pour la direction de l'esprit en la recherche de la vérité* (1977). Having received his doctorate in 1980, Marion completed his next work on Descartes, this time with a theological emphasis: *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes. Analogie, creation, des vérités éternelle et fondment* (1981). Finally, in 1986 he accomplished his "double Cartesian triptych" (Marion, 1999a:xv) with his work *Sur le prisme métaphysique de Descartes. Constitution*

et limites de l'onto-théologie dans la pensée cartésienne [*On Descartes' Metaphysical Prism: The Constitution and the Limits of Onto-theo-logy in Cartesian Thought*, 1999]. In all these early books, Marion analyses Descartes' work very thoroughly by questioning primarily the validity of Cartesian epistemology and metaphysics. Indeed, Gschwandtner properly observes that "he situates Descartes within late medieval theological, philosophical and scientific context and analyses the significance of his work in light of later developments" (Gschwandtner, 2007:xii). Moreover, these early volumes on Descartes were later supplemented by other books, mostly formed as a collection of Marion's research papers that carried further the study of the nature and status of Descartes' metaphysics: *Questions cartésiennes: Méthode et métaphysique* (1991) [*Cartesian Questions: Method and Metaphysics*, 1991] and *Questions cartésiennes II: Sur l'ego et sur Dieu* (1996) [*On the Ego and on God: Further Cartesian Questions*, 2007].

All these works on Descartes are highly specialised, very detailed and generally consist of very close examination and exegetical approach to particular Cartesian texts which might cause difficulties for the non-specialist to enter into the issues that Marion's research tries to explain. This might be the reason why Marion's writings on Descartes appear to be irrelevant to most people analysing his later work in theology or phenomenology – Arthur Bradley, for instance, calls Marion's later theological work *Idol and Distance* his first book, thus ignoring his entire comprehensive work on Descartes (Bradley, 2000:300). Derek Morrow, one of the very few thinkers comprehensively involved in analysis of Marion's work on Descartes, has pointed out that much of the "criticism suffers nonetheless from one glaring methodological omission: it fails to situate Marion's phenomenological concerns within the larger context of his extensive scholarship on Descartes" (Morrow, 2005:11). However, a number of more general themes emerge from Marion's studies of Descartes that could be applied to the larger

context of Marion's work and that are highly important for Marion's later post-metaphysical development of his thought.

This study will focus on the three themes of that kind. First it will examine the nature and status of Descartes' metaphysics within the late medieval context to which he belongs. Such an examination will show why Marion distinguishes Descartes' concept of metaphysics from that of his contemporaries by claiming that he develops a new and different kind of understanding. Secondly, since Marion is particularly interested in Heidegger's definition of metaphysics as onto-theo-logy while dealing with Descartes' metaphysical thought, the following analysis of this study will show how Marion actually questions whether such an understanding exists in Descartes and whether his metaphysical system can be actually charged as onto-theo-logical. This middle part of the section will subsequently focus on Descartes' two most significant notions, namely, *ego* and *causa sui*, which are substantially metaphysical in nature and, in Marion's view, have to succumb to the ono-theo-logical constitution. Thirdly, I will finish with Marion's recognition of two possible moments of saturation in Descartes' thought, that, by being excessive in relation to rational comprehension, are capable of going beyond the boundaries and limits of metaphysics.

2.2.1 Descartes' Metaphysical Breakthrough

Metaphysics is generally regarded as a philosophical endeavour intending to produce a systematised understanding of the ultimate nature of the whole of reality. Its main preoccupation is a search for certainty originated out of human pre-conceptions or the immutable things that do not change because of their essentially permanent state of existence (Loux, 1998:7-8). By answering its most important question — "what is" — metaphysics inquires about "first principles", "foundations" and "primary causes" of the whole of reality and, therefore, became widely known as the discipline called "first philosophy" [φιλοσοφία πρώτη]. Having

this in mind, Titans defines this kind of metaphysics simply as “a discipline that inquires beyond physical reality itself into its underlying structures” (Titans, 2003:6). In this way, metaphysics is actually *ontology* or the science of being. Philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas or Leibniz have been practising this kind of metaphysics in different ways throughout the history of philosophy until the present day. However, during the Renaissance, but particulary during the age of Enlightenment, a different kind of metaphysics emerged. It shifted its focus from the question of being as such to the mind of the knower. According to this second meaning, Titans defines it as “a discipline that inquires into the presuppositions of knowledge” (Titans, 2003:6). Hence, this metaphysics is *epistemology*, the science of knowledge. It concentrates entirely on the conditions of knowing the being instead of dealing with the ontological structures of that same being. This kind of metaphysics starts with Descartes’ epistemological doubt, but culminates in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*.

In his own analysis of the historical development of metaphysics, Marion recognises three most decisive moments. The first belongs to Aristotle and his *Metaphysics.* The second belongs to Aquinas and Suarez, who both redefined Aristotle’s view of metaphysics. The third moment belongs to Descartes, who was the first to identify metaphysics with the first principles of knowledge.

The philosophy of Aristotle signifies the first moment, the beginning of metaphysics, even though many Greek philosophers prior to Aristotle were concerned with the question of the ultimate essence of the whole of reality (Marion, 2002b:3-4). Aristotle was the first to use the phrase “first philosophy” in his *Metaphysics*, and also the first to give comprehensive consideration to the question of which aspects of philosophical knowledge should be regarded as primary. Therefore, in his *Metaphysics*, book Γ1, Aristotle compares particular sciences with a science he is searching for, the first philosophy or the first science. The other sciences are preoccupied with special attributes of being, but never with being in general, which has to define the first philosophy he wants to

establish: “There is a science which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature” (Aristotle, 1984:42). In other words, in order to be first philosophy the special science must not study particular beings and what they are, but being as such, “being insofar as being” (Marion, 2002b:7). In this sense, in another section of *Metaphysics*, book E1, Aristotle aims to place all things of knowledge into a hierarchy, namely, to classify all objects of thought into the areas to which they belong, in order to differentiate between special sciences and first science (Aristotle, 1984:84-85; Marion, 2002b:3). Actually, he recognises the three main areas of knowledge pertaining to all intelligible things: a) nature, which considers the aspects of changing and separated existing bodies; b) mathematics, which considers unchanging but non-separate realities; c) divine, which takes into consideration both unchanging and separate entities. Moreover, within this nomenclature of three sciences, philosophical primacy must be given to the area of knowledge that considers the last domain: “If there is something which is eternal and immobile and separated (εί δέ τί έστιν άΐδιον καί ακίνητον καί χωριστόν) clearly, the knowledge of it belongs to a theoretical science – not, however, to natural science (for natural science deals with certain movable things), nor to mathematics, but to science prior to both (προτεράς άμφοίν)” (Marion, 1999a:19; Aristotle, 1984:85). More precisely, the theoretical science of the divine has the privilege of being the only one able “to assume all philosophical primacy, following a universality without remainder”, and thus to justify Aristotle’s enigmatic standard of philosophical primacy: “καθόλου οὕτωα ότι προώτη, universal in this way – because first” (Marion, 2002b:4). The science of the divine is indeed only to achieve metaphysical primacy because it deals with the essential and highest thing that refers to the area of first philosophy: “the immutable substance/essence [ουσία άκίνητος]” (Marion, 2002b:4). In short, Aristotle comes to the conclusion that theology stands apart from the other two sciences because of its engagement with the highest substance and the highest

of existing things, which essentially transgress all other things that belong to either mathematics or physics.

Turning to the second moment in his historical overview of metaphysics, Marion takes Thomas Aquinas as first exemplary model of medieval thought (Marion, 2002b, 6-8). Aquinas redefined the meaning of Aristotelian first philosophy in his *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*. Unfortunately, Thomas's interpretation causes more confusion than clarification of the discipline (Titans, 2003:17). He identified three different meanings of metaphysics drawn from Aristotle and acknowledged that actually "three names arise for this science" (Aquinas, 1961:2; Marion, 2002b:6-7). The first is *divine science* or *theology*, since it considers preliminary substances (*praedictae substantiae*), namely "those things which are the most separate from matter" (Aquinas, 1961:2). This science refers to mathematical essences, God and other separate intelligences. The second is *metaphysics*, inasmuch as it considers the question of being and all the attributes that naturally follow it. Lastly, the third is *first philosophy*, insofar as it considers the first causes of things. In effect, metaphysics for Aquinas is primarily divine science, which concerns divine being as such, reinforced by the two other sciences (Marion, 2002b:7). This means that theology, as divine science, is supplemented by the science of being (*metaphysics*) and the knowledge of causes (*first philosophy*) in an attempt to define the foundation of being as such (Marion, 2002b:7). In other words, all three metaphysical disciplines are actually unified in studying the question of being at different ontological levels, and thus, generally and substantially, they altogether came to be characterised as the metaphysics of being. For that reason, Aquinas' recognition of ontological unity among metaphysical disciplines is finally asserted for Marion in the following statement: "Metaphysics simultaneously determines (how things stand) concerning being in general and concerning the first being which is separated from matter" (Marion, 1994a:574). However, this unification does not seem to bring more clarity into the Aristotelian ambiguity of the definition of metaphysics.

This situation continued throughout the Middle Ages with the exception of Francisco Suarez, who gave a simpler and clearer definition of metaphysics. It occurred at the end of the sixteenth century in his *Metaphysical Disputations* (1597). In fact, he managed to define metaphysics by two sciences linked together in studying the question of being. More precisely, although this interpretation calls to mind the two sciences of Aristotle, Suarez is the first who theoretically united them into a twofold system and offered a systematic elaboration. The first science refers to an analysis of being as being (*ens in quantum ens*), representing an ontology that generally examines the question of being as such. It is consequently entitled *metaphisica generalis* or general metaphysics. The second science of metaphysics deals with the question of God as being, or being of immaterial spirits, thus focusing mainly on what is called "three noble entities": God, soul and world. It is subsequently named *metaphisica specialis*, special or particular metaphysics (Marion, 1994a:574). Finally, he unites both kinds of metaphysics into a single one by relating them both to a common concept of being: "This science makes abstract palpable or material things ... and it contemplates on the one hand things that are divine and separated from matter, and on the other common reason of being, which can [both] exist without matter" (Suarez, 1965:2; Marion, 1997:280). Therefore, Marion (Marion, 1999b:2) summarises: "In both cases, metaphysics concerns being, whether it be common and apprehended as such or first and abstracted from matter." In other words, the whole metaphysical system became united in the question of being, which regulates the two different ontologies: one dealing with the first principles and investigation of being as such, and the second involved in the question of privileged beings such as God, angels or other separated substances. In short, the essence of all reality, even the Aristotelian *prima philosophia* (theology) has been reduced to the primacy that considers the question of being as such. This undertaking led inevitably to the institution of ontology as the dominant scholastic understanding of metaphysics. In that context, Marion (Marion, 1999b:40-54)

actually claims that this ontological understanding of metaphysics was “quite widespread” and generally accepted among Descartes’ prominent contemporaries such as Pererius, Peter de Fonseca, Scipion DuPleix, Abra de Raconis and Eustache de St. Paul.

However, in contrast to all his contemporaries, Descartes “breaks with this current” of taking metaphysics as the science of being as such (Marion, 1999b:53). Indeed, he relates metaphysics to epistemology. He is not concerned any longer with the traditional question of being, but with the actual capacity of the thinking subject who is in a position to grasp the knowledge of what essentially is. Accordingly, metaphysics as the science of first things has to be based on the order of knowledge, that is to say, “knowledge according to the order in which evidence is brought to light” (Marion, 1999b:53). Therefore, Descartes redefines the idea of metaphysical primacy by comprehending it as “a purely noetic anteriority” (Marion, 2002b:9). The knowledge of the first things is not referred to any certain type of being and metaphysical division of categories of being, but, on the contrary, is related to “the order of acts of knowledge, according to the order of reasons”, which essentially disposes “all things in certain series … insofar as they are able to be known, the one from the others” (Descartes, 1998:101; Marion, 2002b:9). Furthermore, when Kant (Kant, 1996:311), whom Marion (Marion, 2002b:10) considers “a Cartesian in spite of himself”, claims that “the proud name of an ontology, which claims to give synthetic *a priori* knowledge of things in general in a systematic doctrine (for example, the principle of causality), yields the place to a straightforward analytic of pure understanding”, he actually ratifies Descartes’ passage from ontological principles of metaphysics to that of knowledge. Noetic primacy in this way reduces metaphysics to what is intelligible (*cogitabile*), such that knowledge of being has to respond to the *a priori* conditions of its appearance to an *ego cogito*. The knowledge of being became actually the matter of being-known, so that which can first be known for certain became the first philosophy. Marion (Marion, 1999a:68) therefore explicitly states:

“metaphysics becomes first philosophy inasmuch as all beings are considered not first as they are, but as known or knowable; accordingly, primacy passes from supreme being (whichever might be) to the instance of knowledge (whichever it might be).” Interpreted in this way, Descartes’ metaphysical breakthrough has been essentially a radical subversion of an ontological understanding of metaphysics with the construction of a new epistemological foundation: “Metaphysics is constituted as a universal protologic of making evident” (Marion, 1999a:53).

After this observation of the metaphysical shift that occurred in Descartes, Marion, however, continues to explain more precisely in what way Descartes’ epistemological system might be called metaphysical. Indeed, he seeks to clarify his metaphysical grounds, since Descartes’ overturning of the previous definition of metaphysics was so radical that it may be possible for anyone to doubt that he really refers to metaphysics, even when he uses the term (Marion, 1999b:67). Marion (Marion, 1999b:3) thus finds it necessary to ask the question: did Descartes actually and fully redefine the previous ontological concept of metaphysics present in scholastic thought? Also, if this is the case, wouldn’t the radical modification of the old concept of metaphysics quite simply forbid one to apply the term and title of metaphysics to Descartes’ philosophy? In his attempt to resolve these demands, Marion employs Heidegger’s definition of metaphysics as “onto-theo-logy” as a valuable critical tool to clarify essential aspects of Descartes’ metaphysics. As a matter of fact, this application became a crucial instrument for Marion to discover both the presence of onto-theo-logical structures in Descartes’ metaphysics and some decisive moments of resistance to Heideggerian onto-theo-logical constitution. For that reason, the following three sections of this chapter will briefly explicate in what way Marion’s detailed analysis of Descartes’ metaphysics took him to link his thought with Heidegger’s onto-theo-logy and will also point out two important concepts that he came to notice as significant ground for his later postmetaphysical thinking.

2.2.2 The Onto-theo-logical Test

Marion's decision to embrace Heidegger's thesis of onto-theo-logic constitution as an analytical tool for assessment of Descartes' metaphysics may appear rather arbitrary or lacking adequate theoretical justification (Morrow, 2009:250; Horner, 2005:76; Gschwandtner, 2007:11). It has even been called into question by Marion himself at certain points (Marion, 1999a:81-90, 167-73). Actually, Morrow (2009:251) has rightly pointed out the main objection to which Marion has to give a response in order to justify his use of the Heideggerian onto-theo-logical model: Why is such an evaluation necessary and what assurances might someone have in imposing an external model for philosophical assessment instead of relying on a more straightforward, exegetical reading of Descartes' text? Marion (1999a:4) is quite aware of the likelihood and the potency of this objection and therefore responds to it in a seemingly short and categorical way in his introductory remarks in *On Descartes' Metaphysical Prism*: "This undertaking does not seek a forced or artificial originality." However, he additionally gives two crucial reasons that makes Heidegger's onto-theo-logical test "well-nigh ineluctable" (Marion, 1999a:4). The first issues from the necessity of finding out an interpretation that would enable one to speak without vagueness of "Cartesian metaphysics", to detect its concrete presence in the text of Descartes, and to relate its conceptuality plainly to the previous tradition that his way of metaphysics transforms. According to Marion, this task cannot be resolved from within Descartes' texts themselves, since Cartesian transformation has barred the way forward along the route of an unfolding of metaphysics: "One must have recourse to a concept of metaphysics as such, which can then be used to assess Cartesian thought" (Marion, 1999a:4). For this reason, Heidegger's model of onto-theo-logy for Marion "appears to be not only the most fruitful, but also one of the only ones available; moreover, it is not a question of imposing it on Descartes, but of using it to test in what ways Descartes is himself constituted according to a figure of

onto-theo-logy" (Marion, 1999b:5). In other words, there is an assurance for him that "in being applied to Descartes, the onto-theo-logic model will be able to suffer a new test of its own validity and endure some modifications" (Marion, 1999a:5). Marion thus seems to call upon Heidegger and Descartes to correct themselves and confirm each other. However, Morrow rightly observes again that this analytical relationship between these two thinkers could not in any way be equal because Heidegger is the one who serves as a point of departure (Morrow: 2009:254). The second reason, which Marion (1995:5) observes as "weaker of the two," actually derives from the first. Marion therefore says: "today we have recourse to the model of onto-theo-logical constitution because our previous studies call for it and permit it. In effect, from the beginning, our studies have been organised by reference to onto-theo-logy." In this way, Marion is just subjectively relying on his well-established and longstanding recourse to Heidegger's philosophy. Therefore, he thinks that his early involvement with Heidegger's thought makes onto-theo-logy a privileged discipline for consideration of all metaphysical models, including even Descartes' one.

Heidegger discusses onto-theo-ology throughout his whole career and explains it at several places, such as his lectures on *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (1930-31) and *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (1936), in his famous work *What is Metaphysics?* or in his later lectures on *Kant's Thesis on Being* (1962) and *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking* (1964) (Trabbic, 2008:5-6). However, his most comprehensive treatment takes place in an article "The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics", which belongs to his work *Identität und Differenz* (1956-57). In this work he actually makes one of his most prominent and precise statements in explaining onto-theo-logy: "the onto-theo-logical constitution of metaphysics stems from the prevalence of difference which keeps Being as the ground, and beings as what is grounded and what gives account, apart from and related to each other; and by this keeping, perdurance is achieved" (Heidegger, 2002:71). Indeed, Marion (1999a:86) fully

relies on this statement or, more precisely, on Heidegger's article for his explication of onto-theo-logy:

> Onto-theo-logy provides the fundamental trait of all metaphysics, because it marks not only the tension between two dimensions of being (being as such, τό όν ή όν and being at its most excellent, τό θεΐον) but also because it marks the foundation that unites them reciprocally and governs them from the ground up … The being *par excellence* finds its ground insofar as it accomplishes beings in their Being and exemplifies the way of Being of beings. Reciprocally, beings in their Being can be grounded in their mode of production by the being that excels at accomplishing the Being of all beings. Thus does the doubling of the foundation secure the specificity of onto-logy as well as theo-logy according to the single condition of a—logical—condition: λόγος, *ratio, causa,* sufficient reason, concept, etc.

In other words, the foundation that assures both ontology and theology may be named with various terms (such as *logos, ratio, causa, sufficient reason* etc.), even originating from different authors, but will always be identified as an onto-theo-logical constitution of metaphysics based on "the sole condition of condition itself – logical conditioning" (Marion, 1999:86). Onto-theo-logy in this way refers, on the one hand, to a grounding of an overarching thought or concept (*logos, ratio,* etc.) in an *ontology,* and, on the other hand, in a *theology*. Therefore, this means that metaphysics as onto-theo-logical constitution makes a double founding of the single logical condition that simultaneously grounds being in Being and in its supreme Being.

By taking this understanding of onto-theo-logy as his "working hypothesis" to determine whether Descartes "can live it up" (Marion, 1999a:86), Marion recognises two key metaphysical formulations that furnish evidence for an onto-theo-logic constitution present in Cartesian metaphysics. First, he recognises Descartes' formulation of *ego* as the ultimate founding norm. This means the *ego* represents the grounding principle that apprehends the world by turning it into an exclusive object of its perception. It thus becomes the *cogitatio* that perceives and grounds all things as objects of thought and thus measures them through an intelligible order in which things are known. In other words, the Cartesian *ego* achieves the prevailing status of ontic and theoretical foundation for all existence

by arranging the world according to its insights. It takes the determinant role of the "being *par excellence*" by having purpose to ground all beings, which are mere objects of its consciousness, into Being of beings as such. Moreover, the *ego* does not only ground all other beings as *cogitatum*, but proceeds further to ground them to what Heidegger has explicated by the formula *cogito me cogitare* (I think myself thinking). This means that *ego*, in his privileged position of "directing back" all objects of perception to itself, grounds all beings in inner being of its consciousness through an act of representation: "Descartes says that every *ego cogito* is a *cogito me cogito*; every 'I represent something' simultaneously represents a 'myself,' a me, the one representing (for myself, in my representing). Every human representing is – in a manner of speaking, and one that is easily misunderstood – a 'self'-representing" (Heidegger, 1987:107). By following Heidegger's model of *cogito me cogitare*, Marion subsequently constructed his own neologism, *cogitatio sui* (thinking in self-possession). Correspondingly, it implies the idea of *ego* inextricably related to its own *cogitatio* possessed by *ego* as "its reflexive": "The possessive here defines the very essence of the pure *cogitatio.* The *cogitatio,* as such, implies this possessive, exactly in the sense that, as such, it implies its reflexive: *cogitatio* means *cogitatio sui*" (Marion 1999:100). Therefore, the ontological founding of all beings "comes down to" the self-founding of the *cogitatio,* which "comes back to" or "returns to" itself by "coming back upon" itself. Finally, in founding by its self-founding, "it comes down to the *cogitatio* to come back to itself, until it cogitates itself first of all *(me cogitare),* to the point where it constitutes itself as a being *(ego)* because, more originally, it comes back upon itself" (Marion, 1999a:93).

Nevertheless, Marion is aware that Descartes' kind of understanding of *ego* as "being *par excellence*" makes the onto-theo-logical nature of the Cartesian corpus far from complete. In order to accomplish the privilege of full onto-theo-logical status the *ego* has to be raised "to the rank of onto-logical reason and principle" and should be more substantial in its function than mere *cogitatio*

(Marion, 1999a:111). More precisely, to get this status, Descartes' understanding of *ego* must be equivalent to what Leibnitz means by the principle of sufficient reason: "we must rise to metaphysics, making use of the *great principle*, commonly but little employed, which holds that nothing takes place without sufficient reason, that is to say nothing happens without its being possible for one who has enough knowledge of things to give a reason sufficient to determine why it is thus and not otherwise" (Marion, 1999a: 108; Leibniz, 1973:199;). Only in corresponding to this principle, the *ego* obtains the right to be an onto-theo-logical authority, unconstrained and unsubdued to any other principle. This might seem to be problematic, since the Cartesian version of *ego*, with its *cogitatio*, has to be assumed in terms of being caused, and while the cause of *cogitatio* can be traced back to *ego*, the *ego* itself must have its own cause, which refers to God as new being *par excellence*: "if the onto-theo-logy of *causa* oversteps that of *cogitatio*, the corresponding being *par excellence* must be displaced from the *ego* to God" (Marion, 1999a:109). Therefore, Descartes' metaphysical constitution of things is established far more by their being caused by God than by their being perceived by *cogito*. However, Marion does not take this as an obstacle for Descartes' egological constitution of metaphysics. On the contrary, he points out that although God is defined as the total and efficient cause of the *ego* by Descartes, he is nonetheless submitted to the *ego cogito* as his own *causa sui*. This means that God, though causing everything to exist, also succumbs to the requirements of causality which are arranged and disclosed in the thinking process of *cogito*. More specifically, it would not be possible to confirm God's existence without *ego* being capable of making it known in its own thought. However, *ego* as *causa sui* does not create God, since *causare* in this case does not mean *creare* (this meaning is possible only if God is being *causa*), but only determines the possibility of God's existence through the principle of causality, which leads to God as the first cause of everything and the supreme being of all creation. In short, *ego* as *causa sui* becomes the necessary source to think supreme being as its own

thought in order to make God's existence comprehensible (Marion, 1999a:124). Hence, Descartes makes a shift in this way from the ontological ground of *ego* as *cogitatio* to its theological ground as *causa sui*. Finally, Marion (1999:125-26) is able to conclude his study of Descartes' onto-theo-logical constitution of metaphysics in the following words:

> Thus is completed Descartes' second pronouncement about the most fundamental trait of being: being is as such inasmuch as caused; this way of Being grounds beings by deploying them as *causata* and, inseparably, is itself grounded in a being *par excellence*, which is marked as *causa sui.* The onto-theo-logical constitution deploys the Being of beings in terms of *causa*, and thus identifies the properly and definitively metaphysical dignity of Cartesian thought.

Therefore, on the one side, Cartesian metaphysics is based on epistemology that goes back to the foundation established in *ego* and its *cogitatio*. On the other, it is based on the egological principle of causality which confirms God as an antecedent cause of all creation. Having this "double-grounding" of *ego*, Marion is assured that Descartes' egology fully complies with the Heideggerian requirements for the onto-theo-logical constitution of metaphysics. He (Marion, 1999a:102-103) summarises this observation in the following way:

> We have established that beings are as objects; the object thus becomes *ens* only as *cogitatum*, and with the *cogitatum*, a way of Being is at issue. Likewise, the *cogitatum* in turn implies the *ego* [*cogitans*]. Therefore, the *ego* shows up in the meaning of Being that allows the *cogitatum* to be as being in its Being.... A declaration about the way of Being of beings (onto-logy) and a proposition concerning the singular existence of a being *par excellence* (theo-logy) thus maintain a reciprocal relation of grounding. The existence of the *ego* accounts for (*begründet*) the way of Being of the *cogitata*; the way of Being that is manifest in the *cogitata*, by revealing them as beings, grounds (*gründet*) the *ego* in its privileged existence. Such grounding, double and crossed, satisfies to the letter the characteristics of what Heidegger unveiled with the name "onto-theo-logical constitution of metaphysics."

Descartes' egological metaphysics based on *ego* as the single and overriding principle that unifies both the ontological and theological constitution of metaphysics clearly corresponds to the Heideggerian requirements of onto-theo-logy. Nevertheless, Marion discovers some elements in Descartes' philosophy that could possibly overcome the metaphysics of *cogito* and *causa sui*. Actually, he recognises two "exceptions" in Descartes' system that do not follow the logic

of his metaphysics in general. The freedom of *ego* and the idea of the infinity of God are two important figures that are entirely unfitting for Descartes' onto-theo-logy.

2.2.3 First Overcoming of Onto-theo-logy: Freedom of Ego

Heidegger had claimed that the first significant weakness in Descartes' system of metaphysics was his leaving the being of *ego* as *res cogitans* paradoxically undetermined (Marion, 1996:75-78; Marion, 1999a:167). Marion would not agree with this argument and in response to it he maintained that Descartes clearly defined *ego* as substance. He claims indeed that Descartes makes *ego* be identified with the idea of substance that comes out of it: "Substance can be accorded to the *ego* intrinsically only by coming from it; the ontological pertinence of the concept of substance implies that it is deduced from the *ego,* and from it alone" (Marion, 1999a:151). In this kind of deriving the substance from itself, the *ego* actually "determines" the "substantiality of substance" in such a way that "not only does substantiality determine the Being of the *ego,* but more radically the *ego* fixes the place of substantiality by rendering it thinkable on the basis of its own thought" (Marion, 1999a:168-69). Consequently, the *ego* and substance are used "synonymously" by Descartes, which means that the egological deduction of substance takes place after he "establishes the equivalence of Being and thought by constructing a substantiality that owes everything to the *ego* since it is deduced from it: *ego autem substantia*" (Marion, 1999a:169). Therefore, in opposition to Heidegger's claim of the indeterminacy of *ego*, Marion asserts that the Cartesian vision of *ego* as *res cogitans* is plainly determined as pure substance deriving from *ego* which essentially owns it as its own thought.

However, Marion nonetheless agrees with Heidegger in his other observation, which claims Descartes' consideration of substance as permanent presence: "Whatever its origin might be, Cartesian substance manifests its

substantiality as the permanence of a subsisting being – this is the sole decisive point according to Heidegger's project in *Sein und Zeit*" (Marion, 1999a:167). This signifies that the Cartesian *ego* is completely temporalised. It essentially exists as a thinking being whose thoughts, ideas and objects are always present to its mind. More specifically, the *ego* primarily examines and constructs the world in terms of clarity, order and mathematical measure by making the world of all things present to the perceiving mind which imposes structures upon them and constitutes them as objects being present to the *cogito*. In other words, it temporalises all objects of perceptions in present time since all of them are constantly present in its mind. Therefore, Marion (1999a:185) comes to following conclusion:

> The ego is established in terms of constant permanence; its ontic primacy over other beings depends ontologically on the understanding of the Being of beings as subsisting, thus as persisting in remaining itself, in such a way that it can satisfy the unconditional requirement of certainty.

Moreover, the *ego*'s own temporality expressed in terms of permanent presence actually serves as proof of its own existence. This means that *cogitatio* privileges presence of thought in order to confirm its own being: "The *cogitatio* gazes only on presence, and therefore keeps watch over existence as a certain object only insofar as existence is presented in the mode of presence in the present. The *cogitatio* temporalizes its *cogitatum* exclusively in the present because it first temporalizes itself exclusively in presence" (Marion, 1999a:190). All objects of thought must therefore persist in the presence of *cogitatio* since "the insistent persistence, which the temporality of the *ego* puts into operation, is deployed in all that is, or exists according to an egological deduction of presence in the present" (Marion, 1999a:192). Hence, Descartes' vision of *ego* as *cogitatio* that confirms own existence accomplishes an absolute unity of time by exclusive understanding of thinking thought in terms of the present. Consequently, Marion defines the temporality of Descartes' *ego* as that which "perdures in and through the *cogitatio* as the ultimate figure of presence" (Marion, 1999a:197).

Additionally, this kind of substantial presence of *ego* seems to belong to the "metaphysics of presence" in both Heidegger's and Derrida's terms, which Stapleton (2004:4) concisely defines as the "ideology that the world is constituted of stable objects of which attributes are predicated because time serves as the horizon by which being is defined, and in turn beings, the prioritization of the present within the history of metaphysics has led to erroneous understandings of the phenomenon of experience." Indeed, Marion (1999a:171-72) himself endorses the idea that the Cartesian *ego* complies to Heidegger's concept of *Vorhandenheit* (present-at-hand), which Marion calls "permanent subsistence" or "subsisting permanence." Also, he agrees with Derrida's view of a "metaphysics of presence" by pointing out that for Descartes the *ego* which is established in terms of constant permanence is defined with its ontic primacy over other beings. That means that it depends ontologically on the understanding of the Being of beings as subsisting, as persisting in remaining itself in such a way that it can satisfy the unconditional requirement of certainty (Marion, 1999b:174). Therefore, the Cartesian vision of *ego*, completely determined by presence and permanence of thought in the present time, makes Descartes' metaphysics of presence to be an "egological deduction of time in which time is interpreted through and through as subsisting presence" (Marion, 1999b:187).

Nonetheless, Marion still maintains that there is an exception to Descartes' metaphysics of presence. Simply, he thinks that the time modes of past and future of *cogitatio* could be recognised as intrusive elements to metaphysics based on the present as the dominant temporality of the *ego*. Marion is aware, however, that temporalities of the past and future are not so dominant in Descartes' thought, and it even seems impossible for him to reflect on them because of the strong primacy of the present, but he nevertheless admits that Descartes yet makes an attempt to recover both of them. This recovery actually gains a promising breakthrough in overcoming metaphysics by making *cogitatio* free itself from the present and thus getting into the position of "extricating itself from the necessary

thought of present evidence", which becomes the matter of "undoing present actuality" where finally the perspective of the present has to appear impotently for the *ego* itself (Marion, 1999a:195).

The temporality of the past became the significant sign of suspension of "potency of presence" through Descartes' acknowledgment of the mind's lack of attention, which is reflected in its inability "to remain attentive to the same piece of present evidence" (Marion, 1999a:195). Descartes actually explains that mind often reflects on things stored up in its memory since the "nature of the soul is such that it hardly attends for more than a moment to a single thing" (Descartes, 1984:234). This underlines human nature as unable to fix "mental vision continually on the same thing so as to keep percieving it clearly; and often the memory of a previously made judgment may come back" (Descartes, 1984a:48). This statement infers for Marion (1999a:196) that innattentiveness of mind became a characteristic for Descartes which suspends the hold that "present evidence exerts over thought" and succeeds in reaching the *cogitation* by the "indirect meditation of a memory". In this way, the memory represents both the "dissolution" of presence and opening of thought to the possibility of the past, which actually give rise to "the highest form of freedom, the freedom of positive indifference" (Marion, 1999a:196). The past thus "puts possibility into play" which "cheats the hold of actuality, eludes at every turn the necessity void of possibility" and subsequently ends in freedom of *ego* to determine itself by "screens of memory, forgetfulness and other reasons" (Marion, 1999a:197).

The temporal modality of the future also opens a significant room for freedom of *ego*. It gives an obvious possibility of an unknown future to transgress the permanent presence of the *cogitation*. However, it seems, at first sight only, that there is no place for this freedom in Descartes since he holds that the future is absolutely determined by God's providence and thus closed by necessity, which does not allow any possibility or freedom of thinking. He (Descartes, 1991:265) gives a quite explicit pronouncement: "The first and chief of these is

that there is a God on whom all things depend … this teaches us to accept calmly all the things which happen to us as expressly sent by God." Nonetheless, even though it appears that the future eliminates all freedom of human history, Descartes (1984a:39) does not close the possibility that the future may offer the freedom of choice: "I cannot complain that the will or freedom of choice which I received from God is not sufficiently extensive or perfect, since I know by experience that it is not restricted in any way." In other words, the future may be determined by God, but it doesn't restrict the human experience of freedom: "I am certainly very pleased with my freedom since I experience it within myself" (Descartes, 1984b:259). Therfore, the future might have been pre-ordained by God's providence, but human beings do not possess divine foreknowledge of it and so "if we simply consider ourselves, we will all realise in the light of our own experience that voluntariness and freedom are one and the same thing" (Descartes, 1984b:134). Descartes' understanding of the future makes Marion come to the conclusion that the *ego* is not able to make the future present in its own thought and therefore thinking of future events is only there to open the horizon for "the incomprehensible experience of freedom", which is "passing beyond any cognitive representation" (Marion, 1999a:203). Finally, Marion concludes that "in both cases, the past and future work to the benefit of possibility alone" (Marion, 1999a:203). He precisely summarises:

> In a word, the *ego* accedes to other modalities of Being besides presence, or to other temporalizations beside the present, by accomplishing a single and unique feat: transgressing the *cogitatio* of present evidence, such as it presents to itself the persisting presence of subsistent beings (Marion, 1999a:203).

Therefore, while the permanence and presence of the *ego* essentially determines the Cartesian metaphysics of actuality and presence, the same *ego* also renounces present evidence of its thought by thinking in modes of past and future. In other words, the *ego* is able to go beyond the present of cognitive representation by saturated elements of memory and hope. This kind of stepping out of the limits of permanent subsistence of *cogitatio* guarantees the possibility

of an incomprehensible freedom of thinking to the *ego* which actually represents the first substantial breach in Descartes' onto-theo-logical constitution of the metaphysics of presence.

2.2.4 Second Overcoming of Onto-theo-logy: The Infinite God

Marion shows special interest in Descartes' idea of God. He actually labels Descartes' understanding of God as *blanche* ('white' or 'blank'), referring thus to his refusal to reduce God to the philosophical or metaphysical language of his contemporaries. In fact, Marion underlines three particular forms of Descartes' unwillingness to subject God to metaphysical thinking (Gschwandtner, 2003:70). First, Descartes' understanding of God declines to speak of him univocally. It thus rejects any possibility of speaking of God in the same way and with the same terms as of creatures. Second, Descartes refuses to make mathematical truths equivalent or even superior to God and insists on the dependence of "eternal truths" upon God himself. Finally, Descartes' understanding of proofs for God's existence leads him to refuse the medieval doctrine of analogy and to make traditional ways of approaching God look futile. Having these characteristics in mind, Marion ultimately recognises that the idea of infinity is the first and most important name given to God for Descartes. Actually, this insight provided fundamental substance for Marion's latter philosophical claims since his later insistence on the incomprehensibility of God and his concern to protect God from metaphysical restrictive definitions arise out of his reading of Descartes and his understanding of God (Gschwandtner, 2007:106). DeHart (2002:95) makes a proper observation on this matter: "What makes Descartes the great thinker he is for Marion is that he acknowledges the failure of rational comprehension of the divine even as he refuses simply to abandon the drive to comprehend."

Descartes' assertion that God is infinite and so beyond the order of the rational method does not imply a deficiency for the human mind. He actually

claims that “it is possible to know that God is infinite and all-powerful although our soul, being finite, cannot comprehend or conceive him” (Descartes, 1991:25). Marion (1999a:231) makes an even further explanation of this, saying:

> If the infinity of God in principle passes beyond (creation of the eternal truths) the strictly objectifying method, incomprehensibility will not betray an imperfection, a deficiency, or an irrationality in the definition of God; on the contrary, it will attest to its perfection, as the sign of another rationality. God the infinite is not known despite his incomprehensibility, but through it.

This kind of definition is open-ended in character and appears to be the most significant and chief one for Descartes (Gschwandtner, 2003:76). It evokes, in a sense, the hint of negative theology, because as Marion (1991b:456) himself claims, “the infinite does not give itself to thinking except in refusing comprehension, does not reveal itself except in dissimulating the bedazzlement of its brilliance without equal.” Gschwandtner (2007:120) clarifies this experience in the following words: “The infinite imposes itself on the human mind from the outside. It is a thought that humans cannot invent.” In this way, Descartes’ idea of infinity seems to be interpreted in the traditional context of *via negativa*, but Marion in fact reads it “in an alternative manner by way of eminence or excess” (Horner, 2005:82).

Marion comes to his interpretation of eminence and excess of God’s infinitude by starting first with three divine [in]determinations: immensity, incomprehensibility and independence (Marion, 1999a:230-234). They all take up the prefix which is apparently negative in order to identify the infinite (Marion, 1999a:230). However, Marion (1999a:230) in fact sees the terms as “supereminent”, “more than affirmative”, rather than negative. Immensity is an attribute that portrays the infinity of God as immeasurable. Since measure relates to rational order for Descartes, it is obvious that by being immeasurable, God is thereby not subjected to a rational method of understanding. Likewise, the determination of incomprehensibility means that God cannot be understood by philosophical method, although “it is not the matter of renouncing the rational knowledge, but of allowing rationality to know the infinite, thus to know, beyond

the objectivity that it methodically masters" (Marion, 1999a:232). With regard to the third attribute of independence, there is no particular relationship to the rational method because God's infinity expresses the meaning of its independence as "uncreated and independent thinking substance" and thus relegates all else to the status of being dependent (Marion, 1999a:232). Therefore, in all three cases God's infinity is taken in the form of an attribute which overcomes and saturates human thought by its essential quality of eminence and excess.

Furthermore, Marion proceeds to Descartes' second description of God's infinitude which he relates to the terms of "power, perfection, and omnipotence" (Marion, 1999:234). More precisely, he points out that once Descartes started with infinity, which presupposes "theological negations" such as incomprehensibility, immensity and independence, he reverts to affirmative names and perfections of God – *summe intelligens, summe potens, summe perfectum* (Marion, 1999a:234-35). All of these characteristics could be grouped as "theological affirmations" and all of them have one point in common: "they open with the index of a superlative", which indicates the eminence of God, but this time by means of affirmation (Marion, 1999a:235). Therefore, Marion actually discovers that Descartes' essentially saturated understanding of God's infinity has two different pathways where superlative "theological affirmations" come only after and not before the "theological negations" (Marion, 1999a:235).

In this context, Marion goes further to his analysis of Descartes' second important definition of God, that of the omnipotence. This is an attribute of God that appears very early in Descartes' writings, and rises significant confusion. He takes it for granted as "the long-standing opinion that there is an omnipotent God", and vaguely explains it as prior to the order of reason by simply stating that it always comes before his grounding philosophical idea of hyperbolic doubt. Also, someone might be confounded by Descartes' claim that this omnipotence is the primary name for God, although he elsewhere asserts the attribute of infinity as

God's most important and first name (Marion, 1999a:236-40; Descartes 1984a:14, 25). In spite of these questionable remarks, Marion thinks this issue could be resolved. More specifically, he declares that strict analysis of Descartes' concept of omnipotence itself is not capable of bringing a solution. The only way of understanding omnipotence is actually to interpret it in relation to Descartes' idea of God the Creator. In this manner, the attribute of omnipotence functions as a key qualifier for God whose "creation is understood in terms of efficient causality, which is itself deduced directly from divine omnipotence" (Marion, 1999a:239; Horner, 2005:82). In other words, Marion claims that "Descartes renders creation intelligible by reducing it to omnipotence, which is itself rationalised as efficient cause" (Marion, 1999a:240). This strong link between omnipotence and causality subsequently emerges into the idea of God as *causa sui*, which also comes to be Descartes' expression for God whose nature is characterised by eminence, excess and saturation. As mentioned earlier, this characterisation of God is unique in Descartes since it refers to the incomprehensibly omnipotent and infinite God who creates everything including the *ego* and its *cogito*, but who, however, is succumbed to the thinking process of *ego cogito* in order to be known and his existence revealed to humankind.

Finally, Marion finds out at the end that God is defined by Descartes as the most perfect being*, ens summe perfectum*. This third definition of God relates to a number of qualifications which could be omitted in thinking of either God's infinitude or his omnipotence (Marion, 1999a:240). It actually points out attributes such as unity, eternity, truthfulness, goodness, beauty or justice. They are all applicable to God, since Descartes (1984b:35) asserts: "By 'God' I mean the very being the idea of whom is within me, that is, the predecessor of all the ideas which I cannot grasp, but which can somehow reach in my thought." On the basis of this, Marion subsequently explains: "God thus becomes accessible to thought in a new way: his idea, thus also his existence, is not imposed right away, as previously the idea of infinity was, but can be constructed by the human

understanding that counts up the perfections, reconciles them with each other, then attributes them to God." In short, Marion concludes with *ens perfectum* as the third name for God, which human reason can reach only through "the power of amplifying all human perfections up to the point where they are recognised as more than human" (Descartes, 1984b:255; Marion, 1999a:242).

In this way, Marion actually recognises three Cartesian metaphysical names for God: 1) the infinite, characterised by attributes of immensity, incomprehensibility and independence; 2) the most perfect being, which is associated with all possible perfections; 3) the *causa sui*, which designates the idea of God as omnipotent Creator. Corresponding to their characteristics, the first definition of God is an apophatic name (*via negativa*), the second is more related to kataphatic determination (*via positiva*) and the third may refer to way of eminence (*via eminentiae*). In effect, Descartes recognises three principal divine names that actually follow "the three moments of the theology of divine names such as it has unfolded since Dionysius the Areopagite" (Marion, 1999a:244-45; Caputo, 2003:127-28). Each of these names reflects back to one of the Dionysian ways towards God (affirmative, negative, eminence) and finally each one of them belongs to one of the well-known medieval thinkers – infinity to Duns Scotus, perfection to Ockham and *causa sui* to Descartes himself who invented it (Marion, 1999a:270).

As a result of this analysis, Marion finally proceeds to the ultimate task of examining the compatibility of the three names and determining to which extent they are related in the whole of Descartes' metaphysics. He (Marion, 1999a:244) actually asks the following questions:

> Can the three divine names here juxtaposed without a theologically justified organization be deployed without contradicting each other? Doesn't the absence of all hierarchy condemn them to unveil their incompatibility in the field of metaphysical pronouncements? In short, doesn't the metaphysical revival of the divine names outside of their theological situation lead to tensions that are so strong that, in the end, they appear contradictory?

This questioning actually shows that Marion is completely aware that a combination of these three names for God appears to be a system of contradictions. According to him, Descartes not only confuses the traditional Dionysian way of thinking of God, but exposes tension that shows an indispensable inconsistency: “Descartes at once and successively holds two determinations of God … which, historically, were posited as adversaries, and irreconcilable ones at that” (Marion, 1999a:256). In fact, the first definition of infinity is contradicted by the second definition that refers to God as an accrual of finite perfections. This means that God is assumed as incomprehensible by the first definition of infinite, while he is designated as perfect and comprehensible by the second one. Moreover, Descartes even describes God who is *causa sui* as both an infinite being and perfect being, without giving any concrete explanation for this seemingly obvious contradiction (Marion, 1999a:267). Therefore, Marion (1999a:270) consequently concludes: “Descartes employs several determinations that can no longer be used interchangeably as soon as their origins all refer to theological debates in which these determinations earned an irreducible singularity.” It seems that Descartes’ thought about God comes to be disputed and, as a result, becomes “a complex web of contradictions” (Marion, 1999a: 271).

However, in contrast to this confusion of terms, Marion finds an argument to claim that there is an interpretation that could give a reasonable explanation to Descartes’ juxtaposition of three incompatible names. By using the onto-theo-logical framework of thought again, he actually claims that the second and third definition of God correspond to this way of thinking. Moreover, both of them have to be overcome by the first name of infinity, which is unsettled by Descartes’ metaphysics. This is the reason why the name of infinity does not match either of Descartes’ two onto-theo-logical names for God. The infinite God is thus the only name able to escape the metaphysical confines and to get beyond them:

> The divine name drawn from the idea of infinity does not assume a place in any figure of post-Cartesian onto-theo-logy. Therefore, it ought to be understood as a

> nonmetaphysical utterance of Descartes' thought about God, belonging more to the previous theology of the divine names than to the subsequent onto-theo-logies, where the conceptual idol excludes God from the horizon of metaphysics by pretending to sequester him within onto-theo-logical functions (Marion, 1999a:275).

Marion thus suggests that the infinitude of God actually guides Descartes' philosophy, even as he articulated other metaphysical and idolatrous concepts of God. The figure of infinity transgresses metaphysics by designating God in terms of eminence, saturation and incomprehensibility, which evokes awe and adoration, a response that can be perceived even with Descartes' writings. Therefore, by having this in mind, he was decisive to conclude his examination of Descartes' understanding of God in the following way:

> We have not finished contemplating the import of this magnificent acknowledgement: "…I have never written about the infinite except to submit myself to it." And if the Cartesian names of God are organized in a confused complex of contradictions, this is not because Descartes lacked conceptual power or conceptual rigor; on the contrary it is because he dared face up to the contradiction that is necessarily imposed on the finite by the infinite advancing upon it—and to which, perhaps, only a certain conceptual madness can testify without being unworthy of it. Before God, reverentially, and as a rarity among the metaphysicians, Descartes stands hidden—he does not keep secrets, nor does he sneak away, but hides his face before that of the infinite— *larvatus pro Deo* (Marion, 1999:276).

Marion's interest with the divine names and especially with the ideas of infinity and incomprehensibility can be traced throughout all of his work. these concepts became so important because he recognised them in his early studies as those that are connected with the ametaphysical, and at the same time postmetaphysical, concepts of excess and saturation. Together, they all continued to dominate his later theological and phenomenological work, although in different forms and expressions. However, before taking this research to the examination of theological and phenomenological phases of Marion's thought, I will briefly turn to one more point which concludes Marion's analysis of Cartesian metaphysics.

2.2.5 Pascal's Third Order of Charity

Just after considering Descartes' redoubled onto-theology and his "two doctrinal elements" that are however irreducible to Cartesian metaphysics, Marion (1999:277) asks the final question: Is Descartes' thinking therefore post-metaphysical? His response is overtly negative. Actually, he stresses that although Descartes recognised the intrusive nonmetaphysical elements (the freedom of the ego and the infinity of God), they nevertheless remained captives of his metaphysics. Marion makes a strong argument for this by claiming that "these two properties do not find ample development among Descartes' heirs … post-Cartesian metaphysics privileges neither the determination of God as infinite, nor the determination of the ego as acting freely; to the contrary, it develops in the directions opened up by the *ens cogitatum* and the *ens ut causatum*" (Marion, 1999a:278). This means that the whole further philosophical development of these concepts was strictly directed within the metaphysical context after Descartes. More precisely, Cartesian recognition of their metaphysical resistance was just insufficient to demonstrate their real nonmetaphysical essence. Therefore, Marion comes to the conclusion that the only way to liberate these concepts from metaphysics is to find some reference point which is out of Descartes' system of thought. However, this other reference point should be the one that has knowledge of the Cartesian way of thinking, which recognises it as metaphysics and criticises it in turn in an exclusively nonmetaphysical way (Marion, 1999a:278). According to Marion, these characteristics are only applicable to the philosophy of Blaise Pascal.

For Marion, Pascal is the only contemporary thinker of Descartes who brings to a further point the Cartesian nonmetaphysical exceptions of infinity and incomprehensibility. In effect, he finds the way to escape metaphysics by using a theological analysis of these two ideas instead of a philosophical one. In doing this, Pascal never challenges Descartes' fundamental distinctions of God

philosophically. On the contrary, he transgresses them in terms of something that goes beyond them: “Pascal can revoke Descartes, for the sake of eventually overcoming what is metaphysical in him, only insofar as he reaches an authentic understanding of him” (Marion, 1999a:280). More specifically, he recognises a framework of three orders: the order of flesh or body, the order of mind, and the order of charity. Each of them is detached from the other two by an incommensurable distance, so that they are essentially separated in nature. In this framework of things, Marion does not want to spend much time to explain the order of bodies since it is not connected to Cartesian nonmetaphysical exceptions in any way. Therefore, he firstly classifies the second order of mind by declaring it as perfectly correspondent to Descartes’ system of metaphysics. As such, this order is subsequently not capable of proper thinking about the essence of God. Based on a metaphysical argument for God’s existence, it remains futile for two reasons. First, metaphysical arguments are difficult, hardly convincing and therefore uncertain: “The metaphysical proofs of God are so remote from human reasoning and so complicated that they make little impression” (Pascal, 1958:142). Second, they do not make any entry into the mystery of God who saves from sin through Jesus Christ: “All those who have claimed to know God and prove Him without Jesus Christ, have had only weak proofs” (Pascal, 1958:143; Marion, 1999a:295). Explained in this way, metaphysics can actually bring some knowledge about God, but the essence of God could never be associated with it.

According to Pascal, the essence of God’s nature is love. As such, the essential nature doesn’t belong to the order of thought, but to the third order of charity: “We know truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart, and it is in this last way that we know first principles; and reason, which has no part in it, tries in vain to impugn them” (Pascal, 1958:84). Furthermore, this order “is not a matter of either first or only knowing God, but of loving him” (Marion, 1999a:296). Therefore, Pascal’s order of charity is fully detached from Descartes’ second

order of mind. It transgresses it by referring to the essence incompatible with metaphysical categories of thought. For this reason, Marion (1999a:305) sharply points out that the relationship between knowing and loving God is utterly inverted in Pascal in comparison to Descartes' way of thinking:

> For Descartes, the knowledge of God is accomplished in the evidence because first of all it accomplishes the evidence itself: in order to know God, one must first, always, and only know: and if it is then fitting to worship him, indeed to love him, this will be possible only and justified only on the basis of a knowledge that is certain because it is clear and distinct. Here resides the blasphemy and the idolatry in the eyes of Pascal, for whom the love of God precedes and renders knowledge of him possible, since whoever reasons with regard to God thinks, whether he knows it or not, in a theoretical situation affected by the 'wretchedness' of sin.

Pascal's highest order of thought is entirely defined by the vision of charity. The idea of charity, utterly different from *cogitatio*, has power to rethink and change the whole understanding of the world:

> Thus, charity provokes the world, seen first in its two natural orders, to be soaked, tinted, and redrawn in the unthinkable and unexpectedly visible colours of its glory or its abandon. Beneath the bright and iridescent light of charity, the world appears in all its dimensions, according to all its parameters, with all its contrasts—in short, in truth (Marion, 1999a:313).

Indeed, it achieves "the rank of hermeneutical principle: once its point of view is admitted – that is to say, once the mind succeeds in reaching it, another world, or other dimensions of the old world, is disclosed to the gaze" (Marion, 1999a:313). Finally, the third order of charity transcends the first and second orders because of its infinitely superior character: "All bodies together, and all minds together, and all their products, are not equal to the least feeling of charity. This is of an order infinitely more exalted" (Pascal, 1958:222). It is superior because it is supernatural in essence: "From all bodies and minds, we cannot produce a feeling of true charity; this is impossible, and of another and supernatural order" (Pascal, 1958:222). Therefore, the charity, which is out of reach of the first order of bodies (extension) and the second order of mind (thought), cannot be epitomised by any comprehensive metaphysical way of thinking. Indeed, it always remains in excess to it because it always acts through

the mode of saturation which is facilitated by the fact that “love is made more than known” (Marion, 1999a:318).

In conclusion, Marion’s discovery of Pascal’s order of charity is a valuable example of how Descartes’ metaphysics can be overcome by the idea of love. Blaise Pascal was introduced as a figure representing the theological destitution of metaphysics, whose language of love is able to suppress the metaphysical concept of being. Obviously, this rejection of onto-theo-logy was based on an emphasis on the principle of charity over the principle of knowledge and thus became an important foundation for Marion’s own project dedicated to his further development and understanding of love. Actually, Pascal was an important incentive for Marion to make the next step and move from his philosophy to his theology. In order to clarify and explain this, I will now turn to Marion’s theological work.

2.3 Second Stage: The Theological Destitution of Metaphysics

The refusal of the metaphysical view of God in Descartes’ philosophy and the discovery of Pascal’s theological order of charity led Marion to generate his own systematic theological overcoming of metaphysics. Marion had written a couple of significant works in theology. His first important book was *L’idole et la distance* (1977) [*Idol and Distance*, 2001] wherein he sought to outline his thinking on the distance that essentially crosses and desolates the metaphysical way of thinking. The very idea of distance emerges gradually throughout this study. Marion goes slowly through a number of readings of Nietzsche, Hölderlin and Dionysius in order to settle the importance of this idea for postmetaphysical thinking. More specifically, he wants to reach an explanation of distance by referring it to “a distance outside of onto-theology for Nietzsche, a filially received distance of the presence of God who is paternally in withdrawal from Hölderlin, and a distance traversed liturgically toward the Requisite by the discourse of requestants for

Denys" (Marion, 2001:21). He finally comes to the conclusion that distance is designated by the marks of saturation and incomprehensibility, which are opposed to the contemporary metaphysical thinking present in Heidegger's ontological difference, Derrida's concept of *différance* or Levinas' thought of the Other.

His second book *Dieu sans l'être* (1982) [God without Being, 1992] was for a long time Marion's only work translated into English; it introduced him to the English-speaking world as a theologian and a philosopher of religion (Gschwandtner, 2007:xii). In this book, Marion describes some significant idolatrous views of God from both theistic and atheistic perspectives. In some cases these seemingly opposite viewpoints are so related that they even reach the point of being common to each other: "Theism and atheism bear equally upon an idol. They remain enemies, but fraternal enemies, in common and impassable idolatry" (Marion, 1991a:57). Therefore, the task of this work was not to attack atheism in the name of theism, but to find some ground which would escape the idolatrous thinking common to both theism and atheism (Tengelyi, 2010:22). Marion finds the way out from idolatrous thinking about God in the concept of the icon. In contrast to the idol, which is taken to be the mirror that fully exhausts and controls the gaze of the spectator, an icon represents an invisible mirror that inverts a spectator's gaze by glancing at him in turn. Consequently, while God as an idol eliminates the distance and becomes fully conceptualised and identified by the human gaze, God as an icon appears to overcome the full conceptualisation and therefore remains a permanent mystery and withdrawal for a spectator. On the basis of these opposites, Marion wishes to produce an iconic theology of "God without Being" which has the purpose of liberating God from the onto-theo-logy that lies at the foundations of all idolatrous thinking. The liberation process has to address and overcome the main onto-theo-logical idol represented in the concept of being. Finally, that comes to fulfilment by an iconic vision of God whose nature and revelation are epitomised in the gift of love.

These two books were Marion's most important theological works that were later supplemented by *Prolégomènes à la charité* (1986) [*Prolegomena to Charity*, 2002] and by an enterprise which deals with aesthetics and theology, *Le croisée du visible* (1991) [*The Crossing of the Visible*, 2005]. In effect, these later works are basically collections of papers that further emphasise and explicate the essential theological concepts that had already been developed in Marion's previous theological books.

It becomes obvious that in all of his theological works, Marion seeks to overcome the idolatry of metaphysics by pointing out some significant and fertile non-metaphysical concepts. He identifies them with the figures of distance, icon and charity. All of these terms become equated with the nature of God at some point of his study and all of them represent theological ways to protect God from idolatrous thinking. I will now turn to each of them separately in order to show how they provide the same postmetaphysical foundation for an absolute non-idolatry and how their common characteristics prepared the ground for the later development of Marion's phenomenology of saturation.

2.3.1 A Theology of Distance

The idea of distance is a multivalent motif that is most consistently used in Marion's work (Horner, 2005:51; Jones, 2011:20). It could refer to the space in which human interpersonal relationships become possible. In this space the distance is the key factor which prevents all relationships from becoming an absolute identification among persons involved in relationships. It also designates the absolute difference existing in the relationship between God and human beings. In this kind of relationship, distance operates as the guiding principle which has to define the non-coincidence of God with any human attempt to explain him as God. It ultimately refers to the distance within Godself, thus

characterising the Trinitarian relationship as “alterity beyond opposition” (Marion, 1968:62; Marion, 1972:53).

The major influence on Marion’s idea of distance came from Hans Urs von Balthasar (Marion, 1999a:307; Horner, 2005:51). His understanding of distance included both human and divine perspectives. In effect, Balthasar thinks that there are two distinguished dimensions of human distance which are separated from the divine perspective. There is natural human distance and a distance that comes out as a result of sinful human nature. The natural distance is called *diastasis* (difference) and is clarified by Balthasar (1993:173) by the following statement: “The basis of the biblical religion is the *diastasis*, the distance between God and the creature, that is the elementary presupposition that makes it possible for man to understand and appreciate the unity that grace brings about.” Therefore, this kind of distance does not mark the exclusive separation between God and humankind. On the contrary, it actually marks the space for their authentic communion where human and divine come together “in this ever-intensifying reciprocal interpenetration” (Balthasar, 1992:383; Lucy Gardner and David Moss, 1999:86). On the other hand, sinful distance (“deeper *diastasis*”) marks the space which designates a deeper separation of human beings from God. According to Balthasar, the separation is so significant that it could only be overcome by Christ, who closes the gap and who is even able to transform the extreme distance between God and humans into extreme nearness (Balthasar, 1993:175; Balthasar, 1990:12-13; Scola, 1995:82). From the divine perspective, Balthasar recognises the eternal intra-trinitarian distance of the Son from the Father as well as the distance shared between them on account of Christ’s taking of human nature. He remarks that the intra-trinitarian distance is established in the Spirit which forms the foundation on which “unholy distance of the world’s sin can be transposed into it, can be transcended and overcome by it” (Balthasar, 1992: 362). In this way, the intra-trinitarian distance founded in the Spirit opens up the way for another distance in Godself which is accomplished by Christ, who

separated himself from the Father in order to come close to humankind by his descent and sacrifice. Paradoxically, the intra-trinitarian distance and separation for the well-being of humankind have actually produced the new level of nearness expressed in inner-trinitarian love which overcomes the separation in the Godhead and with human beings as well. Therefore, Balthasar's theology creates a kind of permanent tension between distance and nearness which seems to be expressed in their unresolved reciprocity. This tension and exchange of two opposites has never been actually recovered, even though Balthasar concludes that distance is healed of its sinful dimension (O'Donnell, 1992:108).

The other important impact on Marion's understanding of distance came from Levinas (Horner, 2005:53). The idea originates in his observation of relationship with "the Other" that is irreducible to the thought or reflection: "the sway [*pouvoir*] of the I will not cross the distance marked by the alterity of the other" (Levinas, 1979:38). Indeed, this sort of relationship is marked by benignant distance expressed in "the Other" as "Desired" that could not be fully encompassed by someone's understanding: "it desires beyond everything that can simply complete it. It is like goodness – the Desired does not fulfill it, but deepens it" (Levinas, 1979:34). However, it is important to note that Levinas' recognition of saturation actualised in the distance of "the Other" is not exclusively affiliated with God as in Balthasar's theology. More precisely, he actually relates "the Other" to religious experience, but in a broader and philosophical way. It excludes the confessional manner of using religious propositions of any kind. Similarly, although Marion primarily relates the idea of distance to God, he nonetheless refers it, in much the same way as Levinas, to all relationships that protect the saturation of otherness (Horner, 2005:53-54).

By developing his own understanding of the idea of distance, Marion shared the view of Balthasar and Levinas of distance as the feature which determines and defines all kind of relationships, whether intra-trinitarian, divine-human or human alone. According to him, the key characteristic of distance that

makes all relationships possible is the fact that it “only separates to reunite” (Marion, 1968:61; Marion, 2001:104). This means that it keeps back any relationship from being totalised by reducing the other (God, human or any object) to someone’s own thought. The distance is always defining the other as essentially indefinable (Marion, 2001:198). However, on the other hand, the distance always asks for unity and closeness. It is therefore the tool that simultaneously claims the necessity of separation and the need to overcome it by an appeal to nearness.

Moreover, at one point in his work, Marion even observes that distance, in the strongest sense of meaning, has to be identified with God himself. Actually, he claims it should not be exclusively understood as a mere space that stands between God and humans, but, in fact, as a space that itself “is” God. In relationship with God, humans do not perceive distance, but they are rather held in distance itself and by distance itself. Distance thus does not form the third element in relationship, it is “neither subject of discourse nor object of science”, but is identified as God who himself represents the irreducible spacing of relationship (Marion, 2001:199). In effect, the distance, signified by spacing, not only makes the relationship possible, but it actually names God as the necessary term of the relationship: “distance must, in order that we might inhabit it, be identified” (Marion, 2001:139). On the other hand, Marion forbids any absolute reference of distance because of its very characteristic of saturation and excessiveness, which keeps it unidentifiable. In other words, though identified as God, the mark of distance is its withdrawal as well. It is ultimately saturated in nature and given in excess to human thought, which subsequently remains unable to comprehend it utterly. Consequently, the logical question arising from these two seemingly opposite stands is: how can distance both allow reference (God) but resist an absolute reference? Horner (2005:60) makes a direct comment on this by saying that “if distance (absolutely) refers us to God, then the very transcendence it is designed to protect is betrayed”, but Marion (2001:139-

140) himself disagrees and explains the complexity of this question in the following section:

> Since in it the intimacy of the divine coincides strictly with withdrawal, the paradox can lead to confusion: distance must, in order that we might inhabit it, be identified. It will be identifiable only if we can say it and speak of it. We will be able to speak of it only if we come from it and remain in it. To speak of distance: concerning it, and also starting from it. But what language can be suitable to distance?
>
> It is not a question of speaking the supreme Being within a predication of which it would be the object. Nor is it a question of letting the supreme Being, as absolute subject, state a predication about itself and by itself. It is a question of designating the advent of a withdrawal to us. No being, even supreme, gives itself to be grasped, since the gift surpasses what any being could here give. Doubly unspeakable, this stake is characterised no less by the very conditions of its ineffability. For if, as Denys posits in principle, "it is necessary to understand the divine things divinely," the impossibilities of thinking coincide with the authenticating conditions of that which gives itself to be thought. As a censure and as a condition, distance requires one to think the doubly unthinkable according to excess and according to lack.

In this way, Marion actually understands that distance, identified as "supreme Being" (God), remains incomprehensible not because of the incomprehensibility of space between God and humans, but because the spacing which is identified as God is infinite in terms of relationship. Hence, the play of distance as spacing and distance as God is legitimate. Finally, Marion (2001:198) is willing to conclude that this is not a contradiction of terms; he offers a short and seemingly enigmatic statement: "First, distance has a definition. Second, it remains indefinable by definition."

In an attempt to clarify further the incomprehensible nature of distance, Marion defines it to be neither the subject nor object of thought. He discharges any representation which tries to identify it as either *thing* or *being*. In this way, the distance precedes the idea of difference which is founded on the metaphysical principle of objectification as the rational categorisation of all things and beings of reality. However, Marion is afraid that the idea of distance could easily be confused with ontological difference, since both are marked by distinction which regulates all relationship within an asymmetry. Furthermore, both ideas essentially escape representation of thought. They are not susceptible to become

an object of mind and their meanings could not be entirely exhausted by human language and its concepts. However, according to Marion, the key point of distinction between them is the fact that ontological difference plays its role even if it comes to be forgotten. In other words, in the very forgetting of its application, ontological difference is still persistently in play. On the other hand, the idea of distance would turn into simple absence without being recognised as such. Victor Kal (2000:148) precisely explains this distinction in the following remarks:

> Difference is not recognized, but it is there, even when it is not recognized. Even in this lack of recognition difference is active. Only when we look back at it is difference not forgotten. The distance Marion has in mind, by contrast, is only there when it *is* recognized. When there is no person who maintains this distance from God, it is not there. Without that maintained distance, God is taken to be someone who is either present as a being or simply absent. In this lack of recognition of distance, distance is not active.

The ontological difference thinks of God on the basis of Being and therefore is closely tied up with metaphysics and ont-theo-logy. In contrast, Marion's concept of distance takes the thinking of God outside of Being in order to escape all ontological idolatries:

> God takes his distance from the idol of him proposed not only by the ontological difference but also, more simply, by Being. God withdraws in the distance, unthinkable, unconditioned, and therefore infinitely closer. Distance takes its distance from the ontological difference and from the Being that, among other things, it manages. Distance therefore cannot be formalized on the basis of difference (Marion, 2001:215).

In this context, Heidegger is confined to the second order of thought, which has been similar to that of Descartes' metaphysics, which is unable to think or imagine the excess of distance. His philosophical language remains limited to the onto-theo-logical concept of Being, which is powerless to approach the saturation of distance. Having this in mind, Gschwandtner (2003:112) rightly concludes that "we have here an argument not unlike that of Pascal against Descartes".

By following this distinction between distance and difference, Marion takes Levinas' and Derrida's projects to be principally unsuccessful. Both of them were incapable of getting beyond Heidegger's ontological difference. With regard to

Levinas, Marion accused him for merely inverting Heidegger's ontological difference in giving primacy to the other human being instead of Being as such, which cannot be confused with the idea of distance:

> Beings do not depend uniformly on Being, since the Other and its ethical justice transgress the ontological Neuter; it is not, however, a matter of inverting the ontological difference in favour of a primacy of beings over Being. Or again: distance is not to be confused with the ontological difference, but it does not refute it either, nor does it reject it. How to admit a distance that passes beyond ontological difference, all the while remaining homogenous with it? Or again: distance is not freed from the ontological difference by inverting the relation of its terms (moreover, it could not substitute one primacy for the other unless the Conciliation could be understood as a primacy, and nothing seems less sure), nor by camping on its terrain. It could therefore free itself therefrom only by ceasing to play on the field and with the terms of ontological difference, in order to reinterpret it, in situating it on another terrain of difference. This exterior terrain exceeds the exteriority of E. Levinas, it seems, in that it would not mobilize, following its example, Being and beings, but would reinscribe them in a place of exteriority, in a grid of separations, a combination of differences that, together, would situate and relativize them. The ontological difference would remain, but as transgressed (Marion, 2001:220).

Marion admits that Levinas seeks to overcome Heidegger's difference, but ineffectively. What was true for relationship between Descartes and Pascal remains true for Levinas and Heidegger. There is no point in destroying or inverting someone's thought in order to overcome it. Rather, one has to view it from a stance which is outside of it, by finding a new order of thought that will "situate it as merely partial, as neither absolute nor ultimate" (Gschwandtner, 2003:116). However, Levinas' attempt has not reached this point.

Finally, Marion (2001:225-26) comes to Derrida's concept of *différance* as another attempt to overcome ontological difference and summarises it as follows:

> Beyond onto-theology and Being/beings (óv), difference differs/defers (itself) indifferently (in) their difference, without having to grant it the least privilege, and above all not that which it would refuse to itself. The ontological difference would thus constitute only a particular case of a *différance*, a regional ontological difference, that one must not prefer any more essential instance: one must only adjoin thereto, in order to surround it, situate it, traverse it, and pass beyond it, the indefinite network of differences where *différance* differs/defers (from) (itself) without privilege, priority or dominance. Being/beings can be located as one of the possible centers, equal to all the others within the differing/deferring network, whose indefiniteness can admit, at every point, another center. To disappropriate the ontological difference of difference, to reappropriate difference in a perfect indifference to *différance.*

Marion claims that Derrida's concept only transgresses Heidegger's ontological difference by taking it to a new region of interpretation unfitted to get beyond it. Like Levinas, Derrida rejects making room for non-onto-theo-logical theology, which for Marion is the only possible way to overcome it. Both of them were inclined to a philosophical overcoming of ontological difference, while, on the other hand, Marion was driven by a theological framework. In other words, since both of them made their attempts to destitute Heidegger from the context of his thought, Marion believed Pascal's claim that "only a radically other dimension can truly overcome metaphysics" (Gschwandtner, 2003:117).

This examination of Marion's idea of distance indicates two important conclusions. First, this term has a primarily theological role which makes a ground for thinking of God otherwise and outside of Being. The actual function of distance is the theological destitution of onto-theo-logy by its characteristics of withdrawal, excess and saturation. Indeed, the meaning of distance derives from the higher theological order of thought which itself is unknown to metaphysics. Second, the idea of distance offers a closer look to Marion's apologetic intent. It actually reveals his insistence on preserving God's transcendence that must not be reduced in any way to human conceptualisations. The imperative of the immeasurable distance of God guards against any idolatry, but also pictures God as radically self-disclosing and revelatory. The revelation of God, in his radically self-emptying disclosure, comes to be the only way for Marion to approach and think of God within the borders of distance. On the basis of this, Marion's next logical step was to explain the nature of God's revelation. In this context, his figure of the icon is one of the best representations for the self-revealing God. Therefore, by turning now to an analysis of the icon, this research will show how this concept brought some new insights into Marion's postmetaphysics of saturation.

2.3.2 A Theology of Icon

As was already mentioned, *The Idol and Distance* presents Marion's theological work essentially preoccupied with an examination of the idolatrous concept of God. The idea of distance, the overriding motif present throughout the book, appears as the conceptual measure which determines any discourse about God. Accordingly, God becomes an idol of metaphysics when the thought of God abolishes distance. On the other hand, when the distance is preserved, God becomes an icon which requires a non-metaphysical way of thinking. In effect, Marion's work gives an outline of rethinking God in the context of icon and distance. Therefore, this kind of conclusion sets the stage for further development that came in his subsequent work *God Without Being.*

In *God Without Being*, the concept of icon is understood as the best way of speaking about God (Gschwandtner, 2003:124). It signifies the manner of interpreting the invisible without exhausting it or giving it to be fully seen to the spectator. It allows the invisible as infinite saturation to travel through it in a way that envisages intentional projections: "The essential in the icon—the intention that envisages—comes to it from elsewhere, or comes to it as that elsewhere whose invisible strangeness saturates the visibility of the face with meaning" (Marion, 1991a:21). More precisely, the icon inverts human intentional gaze that comes to be a decisive moment when it perceives an idol. In contrast to the icon, the idol offers the perfect fulfilment of an intentional aim of the spectator. There is a certain correspondence between the conscious intention of an observer and what the idol gives to be seen by him. With the idol, there is no shortcoming of intuition in relation to human intention, but rather a kind of balance or agreement between them: "In the idol, the divine actually comes into the visibility for which human gazes watch, but this advent is measured by what the scope of particular human eyes can support, by what each aim can require of visibility in order to admit itself fulfilled" (Marion, 1991a:14). In other words, Marion asserts that the

idol is defined as that which gives precisely what the gaze of an observer is able to find. The given is determined in advance by the perceiving ability of the gaze: “that god whose space of manifestation is measured by what portion of it a gaze can bear is precisely an idol” (Marion, 1991a:14). The idol thus submits the divine to the measure of human gaze which empowers the idol itself. Therefore, an idol becomes defined as such not because an image has a reference to a God, but only “because it functions as such in the eye of the beholder, and is there subject to the limitations of that perspective” (Horner, 2005:61). The icon, on the contrary, does not bring the invisible into the domain of visible as an idol does. It actually allows the visible to indicate or reveal a depth which is invisible as such, which can never be actually made visible. In effect, the relation between visible and invisible in the icon is manifested by a paradoxical and inverse correspondence. The more the visible and the invisible are brought together into unity, the more the invisible is esteemed as such and apprehended at an absolute distance from the visible: “the union increases in the measure of distinction, and reciprocally” (Marion, 1991a:23). Therefore, the icon is not seized by human gaze, but gazes upon it. In other words, the gaze does not belong to the observer any more, but instead to the icon itself. This is not a mere reversal of gazes. In this context, Welten (2005:193) has properly pointed out a conclusion: “What is important is not just that the intentionality of the icon is orientated towards me instead of the reverse, but the consciousness experiencing this as a gift that is given. The icon is the intentional gaze of the other in me. The icon approaches me, gives itself. The point is this gift to consciousness.”

In his other work, *The Crossing of the Visible*, Marion provides a complementary account of the idea of icon by examining it through works of art, a contemporary use of images in the media-centred world and particularly through their theological usage throughout the history. The main preoccupation of this book is to offer a detailed analysis of the iconography of the Eastern tradition and its theology of crucifixion and veneration in order to point out the significance of

religious aspects of icon. Marion actually suggests that in an iconic presentation God himself becomes visible only indirectly, in divine kenosis which goes all the way to death: “In order to recognize the holiness and the innocence of the invisible God, the human is given since then a visible mark: the injuries he has inflicted upon the body of God” (Marion, 1991c:131). In other words, God is ultimately rendered visible, through his agony “of the invisible holiness in the horror of the visible sin” (Marion, 1991c:149). God’s suffering and self-emptying in Christ is for Marion a far more convincing “evidence” than that of “efficient cause” or “supreme Being.” God is always only visible through the marks of the nails we drive into God’s hands (Gschwandtner, 2003:137). In this sense, this provides an account of God that is testified not through logical argument but through a supreme manifestation of love. Therefore, Marion goes further to conclude that the Cross of Christ serves both as an icon in its own right (God himself) and as a measure of all other iconic presentations (Marion 1991c:122; Horner, 2001:168-71).

Furthermore, the icon initiates a liturgical exchange which generates a “crossing of gazes” between it and the worshiper himself: “the gaze sees him who, praying, lifts his gaze toward the icon” (Marion, 1991c:42). In a liturgical “crossing of gazes” distance remains preserved on both sides of the relationship. On one hand, the visible icon has no reference to the observer’s perspective. In fact, the visible icon stays essentially invisible for human understanding of it. Therefore, Specker (2002:212) was ready to emphasise that the content of an icon “becomes visible as invisible and therefore points to the difference between the icon and the one represented in it.” Finally, the only possible way of approaching it is by allowing iconic saturation to be interpreted in a plethora of different interpretations without an ultimate or single reference to resolute meaning (Marion, 1991c:129-30). On the other hand, the gaze of a worshiper does not evaporate in a simple amalgamation or in an absolute identification with the gaze of the icon (God) which envisions him. More specifically, in contrast to modern-day culture, where someone loses his identity because he gets constituted by the gazes of those

who scrutinise him as an image on the screen, where he becomes an idol, fully seen and entirely determined by the tyranny of other's gazes, the icon gives the possibility for recovery of personhood and self-identity through vulnerability and devotion to God. Indeed, the icon invites veneration, which keeps transcendence unspoiled and welcomes the "crosses of gazes" instead of aiming at control or possession in this relationship. The worshiper is called to expose himself before the gaze of the icon without losing his face before the iconic face of God. Only such exposure is able to make a communion of love. The relationship based on disclosure of vulnerability and veneration preserves the distance only before and with God who does not violate it. The love is therefore the iconic figure of distance, because without the distance the love is impossible.

The love is actually an apex and culmination of Marion's theology. Gschwandtner (2005:141) rightly observes that "the final interpretation of the icon and of distance, in all of Marion's accounts of it, is the figure of charity." More precisely, an account of love becomes his "measuring stick for all appropriate talk of God, self, and other" (Gschwandner, 2003:138). Therefore, the last section which refers to Marion's theological project will examine the idea of charity as his final and most prominent theological concept.

2.3.3 A Theology of Charity

By identifying God with the concept of charity Marion has finally acknowledged that God's first name is love. Love is made known in revelation and revelation is only to be known by loving. This could actually round off Marion's complete theological manifesto that he has steadily unfolded in his theology through the years. As early as in 1970, Marion (1970:90) set the agenda for his entire later work: "The revelation that Christ brings, that 'God is love' (1 John 4:18) shows us not only what we can know [*ce que nous pouvons connaître*], but, moreover, how we can know [*comment nous pouvons connaître*]. Love constitutes the content as

well as the advancement of faith." This early statement obviously points out that the charity of God has biblical foundations. More precisely, it shows that Marion's thinking on love comes primarily from the biblical context, although Marion in his later works adopts the resonance of charity originated in the wider Christian tradition, particularly in the works of Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Bonaventure, and of the above-mentioned Pascal. Furthermore, this early statement discloses Marion's deliberate distinction available in French between knowing personally or with deep acquaintance (*connaître*), and factual knowing which depends on a fact or a thing (*savoir*). Horner (2007:237) makes a precise clarification of this distinction by claiming:

> The use of *connaître* rather than *savoir*, the verb usually used to refer to conceptual knowledge, suggests that the knowledge of love is based on personal recognition, and this proves to be a consistent feature of Marion's characterization of love. Nevertheless, he indicates that love is not only *how* we know, but also *what* we know – in other words, it has a determined content.

In his later work *The Idol and Distance*, Marion (2001:155) goes further to specify that love is truly the proper content of God's knowledge and thus it has to be rather received than comprehended:

> The unthinkable, as the distance of Goodness, gives itself—not to be comprehended but to be received. It is therefore not a question of giving up on comprehending (as if it were a question of comprehending, and not of being comprehended). It is a question of managing to receive that which becomes thinkable, or rather acceptable, only for the one who knows how to receive it… If love reveals itself hermetically as distance (which is glossed by *cause* and *goodness*) in order to give itself, only love will be able to welcome it.

The knowledge of love invokes the "distance" in order to protect excessiveness of saturation found in what is given to thought in the form of charity. Love is thus revealed hermetically in order to be received rather than grasped. It actually allows love to be at the same time thinkable and destructive for human thought. In other words, the love might be thinkable for a thought but never fully susceptible to a strict definition of that thought.

Having this in mind, it seems that Marion comes back again to Pascal in order to take a deeper look at his understanding of relationship between knowing

and loving. Pascal likewise believes that although charity goes beyond thought, it still bears a relationship with it: “When speaking of things human, we say that we should know them before loving them—a saying which has become proverbial. Yet the saints, on the contrary, when speaking of things divine, say that we should love them in order to know them, and that we enter into truth only through charity” (Pascal, 1963:355; Pascal, 1948:203). Marion (1994b:30; 2002c:160) shares Pascal’s opinion and confirms that charity provides access to a new kind of knowing: “Because love has also been distinguished from knowledge, we will attempt to think of love itself as knowledge – and a preeminent knowledge to boot.” Indeed, for Marion (1985:30) love is other than an epistemological kind of knowledge, because it recognises God only through the act of love itself: “the one who loves does not see God as an object, but recognises God as the dominant logic of his or her own act of love… In short, God is recognised as and in the very act by which God makes me love.” In this sense, God is known by the movement of love that some person is involved in: “New phenomena appear among the things of this world to an eye that is initiated in charity… Only those who love see the phenomena of love…” (Marion, 1992:469-70). Finally, these insights prompted Marion to conclude with two interrelated claims: 1) what is known is not an object, but the charity itself; 2) charity represents its own particular order of knowledge (Marion, 1985:30-31).

Having these features of charity in mind, Marion actually claims the priority of love as the divine name in *God Without Being*. This name has potential to go beyond ontological difference, but Marion (1991a:47) is primarily aware that the full potential of charity is still “unthought enough” to liberate God from the metaphysical language of Being. Marion (1991a:47) admits that the task of thinking of love is “immense and, in a sense, still untouched.” In other words, the idea of love requires further reflection in order to get “to the point that its full speculative power can be deployed” (Marion, 1991a:47). However, love proves promising for Marion because of two reasons at least. First, love does not suffer

from the fact that it is defined as “unthinkable or from an absence of condition, but rather is reinforced by them” (Marion, 1991a: 47). Love thus cannot be fulfilled through being conceptualised, named or comprehended, but rather is exercised in unlimited excessiveness of saturation: “If, on the contrary, God is not because he does not have to be, but loves, then, by definition, no condition can continue to restrict his initiative, amplitude, and ecstasy. Love loves without condition, simply because it loves: he thus loves without limit or restriction” (Marion, 1991a:47). In this sense, love’s limitless nature that thwarts all restrictions is a mighty force that has potentiality to overcome God as being by rendering it insignificant. Second, love is only fulfilled in giving of itself:

> Because, as opposed to the concept that, by the very definition of apprehension, gathers what it comprehends, and, because of this, almost inevitably comes to completion in an idol, love (even and especially if it ends up causing thought, giving rise—by its excess—to thought) does not pretend to comprehend, since it does not mean at all to take; it postulates its own giving, giving where the giver strictly coincides with the gift, without any restriction, reservation, or mastery. Thus love gives itself only in abandoning itself, ceaselessly transgressing the limits of its own gift, so as to be transplanted outside of itself (Marion, 1991a:48).

The ideas of charity and gift are more or less synonymous. God as gift of love could be thought without metaphysics only starting from himself alone, from “his sole and pure demand” (Marion, 1991a:48). God pours itself out in love, abandons itself and gives itself without limits. His charity is one of the utter kind of kenosis and complete self-emptying. Christ is the supreme example of love that denies all attachment to being, even to the extent of losing his own identity. Therefore, God’s givenness of love conveyed in excess of saturation goes beyond the limits of human rational definitions. Human beings have no alternative than only to respond to the demand of charity by receiving or refusing such self-giving love of God.

Marion carries this thought further in his *Prolegomena to Charity* (Gschwandtner, 2003:140). In his apologetics of love, which this work could be taken to be, Marion actually makes an attempt to prove that love, coming from the obscurity of what is given in saturation and excess, by no means overcomes

rational structures of thought. More precisely, the obscurity of love is not incomprehensible because it is imperfect or deficient, but because it is saturated to the extent that dazzles the spectator, which however makes no hindrance for a rational interpretation:

> As when confronted with the obscene (the menacing as well as forbidden), the divine, and above all the *kenosis of the Son,* our gaze cannot remain fixed; it blinks and closes. It finds too much to see there, too much to envisage and look at squarely, and thus, too much to interpret and to allow to interpret us, and so it flees…. In short, our gaze deserts, and closes. Only love, "which bears all" (1 Corinthians 13:7), can bear with its gaze Love's excess. In proportion to our love, our gaze can open, be it only by blinking, to the evidence of Love. In this proportion also, bedazzlements can become evidence, by the simple fact that we can envisage upholding them (Marion, 2002c:67).

This kind of hermeneutics taken from the obscurity of love becomes the actual basis for Marion's later development of the concept of saturated phenomena. It requires a different background, since love is possibly understandable, but as a different kind of understanding, a different kind of insight: "Love opens the eyes. Opens the eyes: not in the way violence opens the eyes of the disabused, but as a child opens his eyes to the world, or a sleeper opens his eyes to the morning" (Marion, 2002c:69). Therefore, a preliminary investment of love is required in order to interpret God adequately. In order to think of God truly, one must think it having in view the saturation of love which goes beyond the limits of reason and philosophy; one must think it with the heart.

In conclusion, Marion's theological works have outlined an order of thought different than that of the philosophy of metaphysics. This order thinks of God who is represented as icon, the One who is united with humans in love, yet detached by an unbridgeable distance. Marion actually develops further a Pascalian position against Descartes by constant attempts to demonstrate how the order of charity replaces and goes beyond that of reason. In this way, theology opens a new dimension that deals with philosophy but that no longer shows any concern for its metaphysical distinctions, rules and interpretations. The reliance on philosophical reasoning is shattered since the ideas of distance, icon or charity are essentially saturated in nature and thus incomprehensible to rational order

and evidence. God is rather recognised than cognised, received rather than appropriated. For Marion, God proves himself primarily through the heart and the will, not the mind. God comes close in love but always withdraws from reason. In this context, theology has provided, for Marion, the first significant escape out of metaphysics.

However, the final step in providing the complete ground for the postmetaphysical thought of saturation has still to be made. It is found in Marion's phenomenology and his phenomenological writings. Indeed, all of Marion's most recent works are dedicated to the field of phenomenology. He even indicates that his primary interests are now of a phenomenological and not of a theological nature (Caputo, 1999a:56). Nevertheless, Marion's phenomenology continues to accomplish more profound theological thought. His phenomenological project has led to some important phenomenological concepts which actually have taken their backround from his theological framework. I will therefore turn to them in order to show how Marion's final phenomenological stage completes his postmetaphysical project and decisively determines his phenomenology of saturation.

2.4 Third stage: Pushing Phenomenology Out of Metaphysics

Marion's writings on phenomenology deliver his most extensive and complete proposal of an independent philosophical project. Even if he is still overwhelmingly guided by Husserl and Heidegger, he works out his own phenomenology that goes beyond their structures and overcomes their difficulties. While Marion's phenomenological interests are already indicated in his theology and philosophical works on Descartes, they are most systematically presented in his phenomenological trilogy. In his first work *Réduction et donation: recherches sur Husserl, Heidegger et la phénoménologie* (1989) [*Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger and Phenomenology*, 1998],

Marion quite intentionally moves away from explicitly theological questions and expands classical phenomenological work by the creation of his own phenomenology of donation or givenness. This phenomenology pushes the whole phenomenological project to the utmost limits and in that way stands in opposition to both Husserlian and Heideggerian limited phenomenologies. Actually, Marion finds out that both thinkers impose metaphysical confines on the self-showing of phenomena: Husserl appears to be too much concerned with the constitution of objects, while Heidegger is too preoccupied with the language of Being. In contrast to them, Marion urges that phenomenology should be pushed to the new ground that has to employ a completely different kind of phenomenological reduction in order to keep phenomena unconstrained in their self-manifestation. Following this conviction, he shaped his own "third phenomenological redaction" founded on the phenomena of givenness. In its final outcome it is concerned with phenomena that give themselves purely and unconditionally. His second work *Étant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation* (1997) [*Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, 2002] continues with his already established notions of the gift and givenness and also shows some further grounds for escaping the metaphysical constraints of phenomenology. In a nutshell, it aims to promote some new phenomena that are suitable to his phenomenological framework of pure givenness and to reconsider further the meaning of subjectivity in the light of this new phenomenology. Finally, in his *De surcroît: études sur les phénomènes saturés* (2001) [*In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, 2002], Marion goes on to expound in much greater detail the idea of saturated phenomenon that is only briefly suggested in his second work *Being Given*. However, this last book of Marion's phenomenological trilogy is significant not only for detailed investigation made in the field related to the phenomena of saturation, but also for being the foundation for the delivery of a phenomenological hermeneutic that intends to understand and interpret these phenomena.

In the following short analysis of Marion's phenomenology, I will focus on two foundational notions of his phenomenological project established in his first two books: a third phenomenological reduction and the idea of givenness. These two notions are closely connected and both have undergone development over the course of Marion's phenomenological work. In turn they both have provided a most significant setting for the thought of saturated phenomenon. More precisely, I will show that these two concepts have been decisive phenomenological figures that paved the way for the idea of saturated phenomena that finally determined the pursuance of Marion's postmetaphysical research. In this way, this analysis will round up and close this chapter by providing a substantive background for the examination of Marion's key phenomenological motif of saturated phenomenon that will be discussed to a fuller extent independently in the next chapter of this research.

2.4.1 A Third Phenomenological Reduction

In his first comprehensive phenomenological work *Reduction and Givenness*, Marion dedicates most of this work to an outline of what he understands as the unfulfilled potential of Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenological projects. For him, they remain limited to metaphysics because both of them built their projects on the "absolute and unquestioned primacy of presencing of beings" (Marion, 1998a:15). Indeed, in Husserl's case "presencing" phenomena come from their constitution in intutive appearing to the presence of consciousness: "nothing constitutes an exception to intuition, and therefore, nothing escapes its reconduction into the full light of presence" (Marion, 1998a:15). Furthermore, the intuitive presence of phenomena represents only the foundation for further transcendental phenomenological insight. Husserl was actually interested in phenomena present in consciousness in its transcendental phase or, in other words, he was focused on the meaning of perceiving phenomena as distinct from

mere ‘facts’, thus taking into consideration their more universal (essential) nature, rather than their particular nature:

> As over against this psychological phenomenology, pure or transcendental phenomenology will be established not as a science of facts, but as a science of essential Being; a science which aims exclusively at establishing ‘knowledge of essences’ and absolutely no ‘facts’ (Husserl, 1972:44).

In contrast to Husserl’s transcendental reduction, Heidegger developed an ontological one. He wishes to overcome Husserlian reduction by redirecting phenomenology toward the question of Being (*Seinfrage*). This second or “redoubled” phenomenological reduction is achieved through “two distinct tactics: the analytic of *Dasein*, on the one hand, and, on the other, the ontological difference” (Marion, 1998a:66). For Heidegger, *Dasein* actually represents the foundation for understanding all phenomena, the ground source that is only able to think on the basis of ontological difference of beings (*Seinde*) and Being (*Sein*): “*Dasein* – as we have said over and over – is the being to whose existence the understanding of Being belongs… what is distinctive about *Dasein*, namely, that it relates itself to beings while understanding Being [*als Sein-verstehend*]” (Heidegger, 1985:148; Marion, 1998a:70). Marion immediately clarifies this: “the privilege of *Dasein* comes to it only from its disposition to undergo a redoubled phenomenological reduction; the latter passes from being to the ‘meaning of Being’ only by working *that* being which is determined above all by the Being of beings” (Marion, 1998a:70, emphasis in original). In this way, the analytic of *Dasein* takes the crucial place in an ontological reduction that accordingly makes the interrelation of being as phenomenon and Being as phenomenality (meaning of Being) entirely thinkable (Marion, 1998a:71).

According to Marion, (1998a:108) both Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenological breakthroughs and their reductions are failures:

> Phenomenology is accomplished by accomplishing, with the *Logical Investigations*, a first breakthrough: that of the intuition at play with intention in order to reach the things themselves. But phenomenology accomplishes a second breakthrough when Heidegger calls intentionality to return, as concerns things, not only to beings, but to the very Being of beings. Superimposed on, if not added to, the distinction between intuition and intention is the difference

> between Being and beings. The ontological difference wholly defines the breakthrough carried out (if not completed) by Heidegger. It does so, first, because it displaces phenomenology from the knowledge of beings to the thought of Being, first according to fundamental ontology and then according to the *Ereignis.* It does so, secondly, because the ontological difference alone allows one to make the distinction between metaphysics—attached to Being only as the Being of beings and with a view to beings— and the thought of Being as such; that is, it alone allows one to practice a 'destruction of the history of ontology' that, in fact, allows and requires one to rewrite the history of metaphysics as the history of the forgetting of Being, as an unthought history of Being. In short, the ontological difference decides on both the phenomenological thought proper to Heidegger and the site of all preceding metaphysics.

With Husserl, phenomenology is still restrained by metaphysics because of his thorough intentional constitution of appearing phenomena to the consciousness without thereby recognising the importance of ontological difference. Marion (1998a:162) even goes to the point of accusing him for "intoxication with constitution of objects according to the innumerable regional ontologies" followed by "his inability to recognize the ontological difference and therefore to see clearly that it is a question of transgressing." On the other hand, in Heidegger's thought phenomenology positively begins to free itself from metaphysics through his recognition given to ontological difference. Nevertheless, his project was also unsuccessful in overcoming the metaphysical framework because the unquestioned primacy of *Dasein* as the mediation of a Being of beings was essentially unable to consider ontological difference in its full extent (Marion, 1998a:135-140).

Consequently, Marion wishes to free phenomenology from any constraints imposed on self-showing phenomena. In order to achieve this, he performs a third phenomenological reduction. He is confident that it will liberate phenomenology from both the objectivity of consciousness and the question of Being by opening a new ground to the phenomenality of an appeal or, more precisely, "a call" that is antecedent to any metaphysical restriction:

> The call itself intervenes as such, without or before any other "message" than to surprise the one who hears it, to grab even the one who does not expect it. The model of the call exerts itself before the simple claim of Being, and more fully. Before Being has claimed, the call as pure call claims. Such a transgression of the claim of Being and of *Dasein*, supposing that it might be accomplished, raises

> above all a question of principle: Does it still lead to an authentically phenomenological situation or does it not rather renounce the elementary requirements of a "strict science"? A fundamental principle allows for a response: the transgression of the claim of Being by the pure form of the call belongs to the phenomenological field for precisely the same reason that would allow the *Dasein*-analytic to replace the constitution of the transcendental I: the Husserlian "breakthrough" and the Heideggerian "new beginning" alike proceed according to the reduction, in two figures that are different, to be sure, but equally phenomenological. Now, the reconduction of the claim of Being back to the pure form of the call, which, moreover, alone renders it possible, again repeats the reduction: more essential than the reduction of objects to the consciousness of an *I*, there intervened their reduction to the rank of beings, and hence the reduction of beings to *Dasein* as the sole ontological being; even more essential again, there was affirmed the reduction of all beings to Being, which claimed the putting into play of *Dasein*; more essential, in the end, than this (reduction by the) claim there finally appeared the reduction of every claim to the pure form of the call. After the transcendental reduction and the existential reduction there intervenes the reduction to and of this call (Marion, 1998a:197).

In this important passage Marion interestingly points out that both Husserl and Heidegger can be led back to this originary form of call by new phenomenological reduction. Therefore, the third reduction should actually be understood as a restitution of phenomenology that leads back to the idea of pure call, which originally appears to be the source of the previous two reductions. Accordingly, Marion (1998a:204) concisely summarises his whole project of *Reduction and Givenness* at the end of the book, making his reduction an inevitable outcome of pure phenomenology: "The third reduction—our entire enterprise has tended toward nothing other than to render the recognition of it inevitable—properly speaking *is* not, because the call that exercises it nevertheless rigorously no longer issues from the horizon of Being (nor of objectity), but from the pure form of the call."

Furthermore, as an outcome of its definition of terms, Marion's third reduction finds its phenomenological field of influence consisting of two main domains or principles. The first of them is the phenomenological subject as *interloqué*. According to Marion, the actor that accomplishes the third reduction is actually an auditor who is preceded and instituted by the call or the gift itself. In this way, at the centre of Marion's phenomenology stands no empowering subject presented as a constituting, thinking, resoluting "I". On the contrary, there stands

a subject in a weaker form, presented as a gifted one, whose "function consists in receiving what is immeasurably given to him, and whose privilege is confined to the fact that he is himself received from what receives" (Marion, 2002a:322; Marion, 1998a:204). The institution of *interloqué*, which identity is actually given and not constituted, implies the second phenomenological domain which becomes the guiding principle for Marion's phenomenological work. More specifically, his last paragraph of *Reduction and Givenness* reveals the principle of givenness [*donation*] as the main task for the future of phenomenology designed on the foundation of the third reduction:

> It remains to be understood precisely and conceptually how the pure fact of the call can allow the most strict reduction—hence immediately the most ample givenness, before and outside of objectity and the question of Being. But to think givenness as such—as originarily unconditional—it will be necessary to elaborate new and rigorous paradoxes (Marion, 1998a:205).

After a few years the third reduction, that only referred to the idea of pure call in *Reduction and Givenness*, went through its comprehensive development in Marion's second phenomenological work *Being Given.* In effect, this book aimed to explicate with precision the most essential principle of the third reduction expressed in the formula "as much reduction, so much givenness". Actually, this is the formula that leads phenomenology back to its original meaning, which essentially claims that every phenomenon that shows itself has to be seen as it shows itself. In this way, the idea of pure givenness represents the single and decisive factor which keeps phenomenology out of any restrictions which may be imposed upon the self-showing of the given. It makes the essential nature of phenomenology unhurt by metaphysics.

Since the idea of givenness became the phenomenological norm which ultimately defined Marion's phenomenology and came to be the grounding source of the idea of saturated phenomena, the final section of this chapter will turn to this important phenomenological principle. This final section will explain the last step made by Marion in his postmetaphysical project which eventually opened full access to his thought of saturation. However, the idea of the phenomenological

subject as *interloqué* will be explicated in more detail later in this research. Although the phenomenological character of *interloqué* has an important value for the understanding of saturation and saturated phenomena, it does not have the same grounding role in the origin of saturation like a principle of givenness. The subject as gifted one is antecedent to what is given in saturation, which essentially makes him to be the one who interprets the saturated phenomena given to him. Therefore, his primarily hermeneutical role will be referred to in the later sections of this research dedicated to the hermeneutical principles of saturation.

2.4.2 Givenness as Principle of Principles

Bearing in mind Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenological reductions, Marion continued to claim in his *Being Given* that phenomenology requires a third reduction that allows all phenomenological objects to show themselves only by giving themselves. These prominent thinkers have missed the achievement of a genuine access to the appearing of given phenomena and the explanation of it in a proper way because they both essentially neglected the principle of givenness. Husserl's negligence came through his transcendental reduction which takes the meaning of any given object in phenomenology of transcendental consciousness. This implies that every appearing phenomenon is exclusively limited to the consciousness to which it appears instead of being understood in accordance with a givenness that makes it appearing. In this way, the appearing phenomenon is constituted by the phenomenological subject in an act of transcendental perception rather than left to appear by itself and in its own terms of givenness. On the other hand, Heidegger's existential reduction takes phenomenological meaning to be radically limited to the phenomenology of *Dasein*. The basic phenomenological question of Being is thus restricted to the thinking existential subject to which all given beings reveal and submit themselves in an existential

analysis. Therefore, each of these reductions corresponds to merely one limited aspect of what is phenomenologically given: the given as an awareness in consciousness and given as an existential meaning. In contrast to this, Marion's third reduction wants to reach nothing other than pure givenness itself "that it can run its own course, coming from itself, through itself, starting from itself, in short, that it can itself manifest its *self*" (Marion, 2002a:9). Therefore, for him the object of reduction goes beyond any transcendental meaning of consciousness or even category of Being. It represents a sheer givenness that allows the manifestation of the appearing phenomenon, thus excluding all sorts of impacts made by a phenomenological subject on it. In this way, phenomenology comes to the point of being regulated by givenness instead of regulating it by its own initiative: "the initial and final paradox of phenomenology consists precisely in that it takes the initiative in losing it" (Marion, 2002a:9). In other words, phenomenology of the third reduction tries to protect the pure givenness of an appearing phenomenon by freeing it utterly from all other imposing restrictions, including those of objectness and Being. Therefore, instead of reducing phenomenology to the phenomenological subject who has the substantial role of constitution of phenomena of appearance, Marion reduces the whole phenomenological project to the foremost and originating principle of givenness that is only able to reveal the pure self of the phenomenon to the phenomenological spectator deprived of a constitutional role.

More precisely, Marion actually brings the principle of givenness to the forefront of phenomenology by recognising it in the phenomenological work of Husserl. However, he is unsatisfied with Husserl's understanding, because the idea of givenness is just mentioned implicitly in his works and without full phenomenological rigor. Indeed, Husserl inaugurated the phenomenology of givenness by defining his famous "principle of all principles" that intended to make phenomenology a presuppositionless science. More specifically, Marion came to accord with Michel Henry's idea that over the course of Husserl's

phenomenological corpus there emerged not just one, but four phenomenological principles (Marion, 2002a:11; Henry, 1991:3-26). All of them, however, came to be futile in providing a presuppositionless ground for phenomenology, since all of them neglected to define givenness in proper terms. The first principle, “so much appearing, so much Being”, originally introduced by Herbart and inexactly cited by Husserl (Husserl, 1962:47; Herbart, 1887:133), is discharged by Marion (2002a:11) as inadequate because it seems to make the appearance of a phenomenon correspond to Being, which always remains indeterminate: “primacy thus accorded to appearing, which becomes the sole face of Being, still leaves it entirely undetermined.” Likewise, the second principle articulated in the formula “to the things itself” (Husserl, 1952:43; Husserl, 1965: 96-97,146) is dismissed since appearing seems to have been out of work in describing “things” that are already there, accessible and constituted: “the primacy of Being over appearing lowers the latter to the metaphysical rank of a mere mode of access, which always shows less than it should since ‘things’ precede it and display themselves without it” (Marion, 2002a:12). The third formulation of the principle is more complex; in fact, it is the first and only formulation that assumes the title “principle of principles”: “*every originarily giving intuition* is *a source of right for cognition*—that *everything* that offers itself *originarily* to us *in intuition* (in its fleshly actuality, so to speak) *must simply be received for what it gives itself*, but without *passing beyond the limits in which it gives itself*” (Husserl, 1952:52). Nonetheless, despite several advantages of this principle that “frees phenomenality from the metaphysical ground”, its capital deficiency remains the intuition which “becomes the measure of phenomenality” (Marion, 2002a:12). In this way, intuition has an effect on the following phenomenological areas which it defines: first, since it becomes in itself an *a priori*, it actually closes the possibility of primacy in respect to the givenness of phenomena (Marion, 2002a:12). Second, the intuition as the “source of right” is sometimes lacking, meaning that intuition implies its possible impoverishment (Marion, 2002a:12-13). Third, such impoverishment is not fully examined in

Husserl's principle of principles, causing intuition to be self-evident or univocal and "admits neither degrees nor transformations" of itself (Marion, 2002:1998:13). Fourth, intuition remains limit of phenomenality due to the restrictive aim to fulfil an objectifying intentionality which is strictly organised by "objectivity and ecstatic consciousness" (Marion, 2002a:13). Fifth and finally, intuition as "measure of phenomenality" makes no reference to the phenomenological norm *par excellence*, the reduction: "the 'principle of principles" comes up before and without the reduction being operative. And yet without the reduction, no procedure of knowledge deserves the title 'phenomenology'" (Marion, 2002a:13). Marion is therefore led to propose a "last", fourth principle in formulation, "so much reduction, so much givenness" (Marion, 2002a:13). He argues that, even if it was not formulated in such a form until he himself made it, the principle of pure givenness is yet present in Husserl's work in an unfinished form. The first text where the "last" reduction is to be found is in *The Idea of Phenomenology* which Marion himself defines as "the very work which, in 1907, practiced for the first time all the figures of the reduction, is also the work which is most insistent in its privilege of givenness" (Marion, 2002a:13; Husserl, 1973a:11-14, 30-32). This books gives a formulation of givenness that escapes the problems emphasised in the previous three principles, and it is the only one that effectively keeps the self-giving of phenomenon protected: "Intuition in particular, thus also the transcendence of intentionality that it fulfils, can sometimes intervene, but it does not define the given; for, certain apparitions are given without objective intentionality, therefore without fulfilling intuition" (Marion, 2002a:17). Givenness therefore regulates all aspects of appearing phenomena. It is liberated from "every authority, including those of intuition" (Marion, 2002a:17). Finally, it came to appear in non-metaphysical form, without being submitted to concepts related to the metaphysics of presence, which dominated both in Husserl's and Heidegger's projects.

In order to determine further the non-metaphysical nature of givenness, Marion uses the phenomenon of gift as a paradigm. He actually engages himself in the phenomenology of gift by his close analysis of the phenomenological impossibility of gift pointed out by Derrida (Marion, 2002a:74-79; Derrida, 1992). According to him, Derrida's claim of the impossibility of the appearing of gift comes from his argument that every gift has to be considered in closed reciprocity where "gratuity on the part of the giver demands in principle, though tacitly, restitution on the part of givee" (Marion, 2002a:75). This scheme of interchange between giver and the receiver has its origin in Mauss's famous *Essay on Gift*, where the phenomenon of gift is considered to be exclusively defined within "the system of gift exchanged" (Marion, 2002a:75; Mauss, 1990:45). This system remains entirely metaphysical because of the absolute reciprocity which defines it: "the giver gives the gift in the role of efficient cause, mobilising a formal and a material cause (in order to define, reify the gift), and pursuing a final cause (the good of the givee and/or the glory of the giver)" (Marion, 2002a:75). Therefore, having this kind of exchange in mind, Derrida concludes: "At the limit, the gift as gift ought not appear as gift: either to the donee or to the donor" (Derrida, 1992a:14). In other words, the gift adapted to economic exchange has been objectified and thus closes off the possibility of its pure givenness to show up without *a priori* restrictions. Marion, on the other hand, suggests that Derrida's impossibility of the appearing of gift in its self-givenness only detects the problem but does not offer a solution. He therefore proceeds to show that the phenomenology of gift is not explicitly resigned to the economy of exchange or the metaphysics of presence, but, in contrast, reduced to the phenomenality of givenness. In this way, the gift is unrestrained from any thought that implicates it in metaphysics. The economic horizon of exchange is denounced along with its three constitutive elements: the giver, the gift as object and the givee (the recipient). This means that the gift interpreted from the horizon of givenness itself appears without restrictions caused by either donor or recipient or without being

objectified first. Each of these constitutive elements of exchange are “put into parentheses” by reduction so that gift can appear in its indigenous phenomenality of givenness as “such” (Marion, 2002a:86-113). Consequently, by performing triple bracketing in order to reduce each of the terms of exchange, Marion has been able to eliminate Derrida’s limitations of reciprocity and metaphysics of presence and finally to claim the gift as radically immanent: “The exclusion of exchange and the reduction of transcendencies finally define the gift as purely immanent. Givenness characterizes it intrinsically, no longer extrinsically” (Marion, 2002a:115).

Finally, Marion turns to define the non-metaphysical nature of the self-givenness of gift by outlining five determinations of gift itself: *anamorphosis*, *unpredictable landing*, *fait accompli*, *incident* and *event* (Marion, 2002a:119-73). All of them represent different and particular modes of appearing which make the manifestation of gift to be exclusively regulated by the principle of givenness. The determination of the gift as anamorphosis actually means that what is given comes across a phenomenological distance (*ana*) by taking a form (*morphosis*) from itself and arising from its own ground (Marion, 2002a:131). In effect, a phenomenon determined by *anamorphosis* appears in its absolute way of manifestation, from a particular perspective, without any restriction put on it by the recipient or giver himself: “If I do not find myself exactly at the point designated by the anamorphosis of the phenomenon, I simply will not see it – at least as such, as it is given. Anamorphosis therefore attests that the phenomenon is given ... it appears given by itself” (Marion, 2002a:131). In other words, the gift in the mode of *anamorphosis* absolutely governs the way of its own arrival in its self-giving manifestation. The determination of *unpredictable landing* gives all initiative of appearing to the gift that leaves a receiver in a mode of awaiting the shock of *anamorphosis*, of what arrives unpredictably as a gift: “according to discontinuous rhythms, in fits and starts, unexpectedly, by surprise, detached from the other, in burst, aleatory” (Marion, 2002a:132). It guarantees the unpredictability,

individuation and temporality of the phenomenon of gift which alone constitutes the phenomenological subject as a pure recipient who is waiting for the gift to be given. Furthermore, the arrival of what is given as the gift is always *a fait accompli* – an accomplished act. However, the mode of facticity defines the phenomenon in a very specific sense: “Facticity does not consist in my being reducible to the factuality of a fact, but in exposing me to the fact, which can thus be accomplished only by weighing on me, no longer as a detached observer but as an engaged actor—or better, a critical patient into whom the fact has crashed in being visibly accomplished” (Marion, 2002a:146). In other words, this arrival is an accomplished act that occurs as an accident and comes in a form of revelation that is always first and originary. The observer who testifies it is always constituted by this revealed phenomenon and not vice versa. Therefore, there is “reversal of intentionality here”, where an observer becomes actually “the objective of the object” that is perceived in its self-givenness (Gschwandtner, 2003:161). Moreover, the arrival of what is given happens as an *incident*. The gift that arrives “crashes even over consciousness” that happens to receive it with all its surprise and unpredictability (Marion, 2002a:151). Finally, Marion concludes his determinations of gift by identifying it as an *event*, which is absent of definite reason: “the event, I can wait for it (though most often, it surprises me), I can remember it (or forget it), but I cannot make it, produce it, or provoke it” (Marion, 2002a:160).

In all of these modes of appearing, Marion’s phenomenology of gift turns out to be pure phenomenology of givenness that is accomplished in five determinations where each one of them makes principles of metaphysics entirely reversed and subsequently rejected. Every single mode of appearing reduces the phenomenon of gift to the principle of givenness which fully suspends the metaphysical language of being, the idea of presence and reciprocal exchange. The given phenomenon goes beyond the usual metaphysical conditions of ontology and causality and appears in a radically different mode of phenomenality

that necessitates a radically different way of interpretation. This kind interpretation leads to the last thing left for Marion to consider, the question of degrees of phenomenality found in given phenomena. This remaining question pushed Marion to recognise “poor” phenomena first by relating them to mere “technical things”, then to shift to “ordinary” or “common” ones, and finally to discover those with the maximum degree of phenomenality, namely, the saturated phenomena. A detailed analysis of degrees of phenomenality that ended in the idea of saturation and saturated phenomena will be given in the next chapter of this research paper.

2.5 Conclusion

This analysis of Marion’s postmetaphysical project was an analytical overview of his thought, and clarified how his engagement in philosophical, theological and phenomenological domains has been permeated with the aim of overcoming metaphysics. His constant search for ideas of excess and saturation evidently exposed why each of his three phases of thought repudiated metaphysical thinking and, in contrast, emphasised the one which is postmetaphysical by nature and definition.

Having started with Descartes, Marion discovered two philosophical features that have potential to overcome Cartesian metaphysics. Descartes’ ideas of the freedom of the ego and the infinity of God were two breaches in his double onto-theo-logical constitution. The *ego* has freedom to open itself to the past and future and thus to renounce metaphysics on the basis of the present evidence of thought. On the other hand, the figure of infinity transgresses metaphysics as onto-theo-logy by describing God in terms of eminence and incomprehensibility. These two concepts are valuable intrusive non-metaphysical elements, but they are still captives to Descartes’ metaphysical system. Therefore, Marion turned to Pascal in order to provide a postmetaphysical system

that would explain them outside of Descartes' philosophical confines. He found that Pascal's order of charity, grounded in the theological language of love as the only way of speaking of God correctly, represents that system which liberates both *ego* and *infinite God* from the onto-theo-logical way of thinking. Finally, the Pascalian postmetaphysical system became a major incentive for Marion's next move that took his project from Descartes to theology.

In his theological project Marion makes an attempt to overcome the idolatry of metaphysics through non-metaphysical theological concepts identified with the figures of distance, icon and charity. The idea of distance brings thinking of God out of the metaphysics of Being by being characterised with elements of withdrawal and saturation. Both of them prove to be resistant and utterly ungraspable for an onto-theo-logical way of thinking. The figure of icon preserves the idea of distance in itself and thus allows the self-appearance of the invisible and infinite God to escape idolatrous constitution. The final figure of love is the apex and culmination of Marion's theology. By taking Pascalian observations to a further level, Marion explains how the saturation of love goes beyond the reason and metaphysics which a theology of love essentially excludes. Therefore, Marion's postmetaphysical approach to God makes God's nature essentially saturated by the concept of icon that reveals him in abundant Revelation, excessively united with humans in love and yet infinitely detached by an unbridgeable distance.

Theology provided a first escape out of metaphysics for Marion. The final one came through his phenomenological writings. His phenomenological project turns out to be characterised by the discovery of a third phenomenological reduction beyond Husserl and Heidegger, which leads to the pure phenomenology of givenness. In this context, all given phenomena are grounded in unrestricted self-manifestation that resists submission to the metaphysical conditions of Being, causality and reciprocity. Consequently, these self-giving phenomena seek a radically different, postmetaphysical way of interpretation of

their phenomenality. This final interpretation led Marion to the question of degrees of phenomenality, which ended in his detailed analysis of the idea of saturation and its saturated phenomena.

3.0 THE THEORY OF SATURATED PHENOMENA

3.1 Introduction

Marion's insistence on the primacy of givenness in appearing phenomena caused a radical rethinking of phenomenology which culminated in his introduction of a particular category of "saturated" phenomena. More precisely, while the principle of givenness represents the primary feature of Marion's phenomenology, the notion of saturated phenomenon comes out to be its most significant outcome. In this way, givenness itself is the central characteristic of the saturated phenomenon, which in turn, as an exemplary case of the givenness of phenomena, fully and precisely relies for its justification and explanation on a phenomenology of givenness. Marion (2002a:227) therefore proposes the saturated phenomenon for the role of the "one and only [*unique*] paradigm" and "norm" for understanding the phenomenology of givenness in general. In this specific context, he even openly asserts that his entire phenomenological project aims to think of all different kinds of giving phenomena "on the basis of the paradigm of saturated phenomenon", because it provides the only foundation from which all phenomena "derive by progressive extenuation" (Marion, 2002a:227).

Marion basically asserts that "the different types of phenomena can be defined as different variations of auto-manifestations (showing itself in and from itself) according to the degree of givenness" (Marion, 2002a:222). In fact, all appearing phenomena can be organised according to the level of intensity of givenness manifesting in them. The intensity of givenness is a key factor which determines to what extent a phenomenological subject is able to regulate the meaning of the phenomenality that appears in his intuition. Accordingly, there are

three original models with different levels of phenomenality: the poor phenomena, the common-law phenomena and saturated phenomena. The first group relates to the phenomena that “claim only a formal intuition in mathematics or a categorical intuition in logic”, namely “a vision of essences” and “idealities” (Marion 2002a:222). They are called “poor” because they require a simple intelligible concept to be determined. By being given in intuition that is formal and categorical in essence, these phenomena have a “privilege of certainty” – they do not admit any kind of meaning “that experience might render uncertain” (Marion, 2002a:222). Therefore, because of this “privilege”, the metaphysics rendered them always over and above all other thinkable phenomena, because their formal contents and unproblematic inerrability make them perfect objects of metaphysical thinking. Indeed, their objectivity gives them a privileged form of intuition that appropriates their phenomenality to rational structures of the mind (Marion, 2002a:222; Dettori, 2011:88; Steinbock, 2010:123). However, these poor phenomena cannot be the paradigm of the pure phenomenology of givenness for Marion. Their epistemological certainty becomes a “radical phenomenological deficit”, which does not allow there to be an “accomplished phenomenality” (Marion, 2002a:222). In other words, the manifestation of these phenomena does not provide and convey the full capacity of givenness. The second group of common-law phenomena are related to ordinary, everyday phenomena that may vary in terms of givenness. They are actually represented by objects that belong to the area of physics and the natural sciences. For Marion (2002a:222), these phenomena might be adequately given, which means that intuitive fulfilment is equal to intention, but mostly their givenness arises in an inadequate manner where intention remains “unconfirmed by intuition”. The deficit of intuition in these phenomena secures their susceptibility to the mastery of the phenomenological subject, who is able to maintain an abstraction thanks to a weak intuition, or to attain “a degree of certainty comparable (at least tangentially) to that of poor phenomena” (Marion, 2002a:223). Therefore, like the

poor phenomena, the common-law phenomena are intentionally accomplished or grasped by an objective thinking. Moreover, because of their weak intuition, the phenomenological subject is capable of having an idea of what is supposed to happen or appear before it actually happens or appears in their manifestation. This conceptual "foresight" makes common-law phenomena able to be anticipated in advance since their low degree of givenness causes their conceptualisation to be preeminent over givenness and intuition, so the way of their understanding involves the establishment of an objective certainty of conceptual maximums (signification and theories) on the basis of their intuitive minimums (sense data, experimental protocols or statistical accounts) (Steinbock, 2010:123). Finally, the third group relates to the phenomena saturated in degree (intensity) of givenness. They exceed all conceptions or restraining horizons that a constituting (phenomenological) subject could apply upon them. They might be called "rich", because they give profuse data to any phenomenological intention concentrated on them. By having such a characteristic, any attempt to impose objective meaning upon them remains deceptive or at least falls short: "Because it shows itself only inasmuch as it gives itself, the phenomenon appears to the degree [*à la mesure*] that it arises, ascends, arrives, comes forward, imposes itself, is accomplished factically and bursts forth—in short, it presses urgently on the gaze more than the gaze presses toward it" (Marion, 2002a:159). These phenomena give "too much" so they cannot be contained or controlled, but they remain overwhelming and bedazzling in their intuitive excess. They defy any attempt that analyses them in terms of causality since "the less they let themselves be inscribed in causality, the more they show themselves and render themselves intelligible as such" (Marion, 2002a:162). Finally, they undo all ordinary categories of experience. They actually appear in the form of "counter experience" which reverses the usual way of constitution of phenomena. Instead of consciousness constituting the phenomenon of intuition, the experience of the givenness of such phenomena constitutes consciousness

itself. In other words, the saturated phenomenon that happens to appear reverses the order of visibility (Marion, 2002b:113). It no longer results as the aim of intentionality that observes it, but withdraws itself into its "obscure origin", which suddenly befalls as disclosure to the phenomenological subject that receives it in the mode of "counter-experience" or "counter-intentionality" (Marion, 2008a:138; Marion, 2010a:314).

Marion describes the nature of the saturated phenomenon by relating it to Kant's four categories of pure understanding (*quality, quantity, relation and modality*). These categories are the most basic, *a priori* concepts of understanding for organising knowledge of all things in general. They are necessary instruments of objective knowledge since they provide the transcendental ground for obtaining a pure understanding, structured by the unity and determinacy of definitions (Kant, 1998:242-243). In other words, without the categories, the unity and determinacy of an object would not be possible for Kant. Having this context in mind, Marion employs Kant's four formal categories of understandings with the intention of defying the capacity of each of the formal categories by the excessive phenomenality of the corresponding four types of saturated phenomena. The only exception, or addition, to the four-fold structure is Marion's fifth phenomenon. This phenomenon does not correspond to any named in Kant's table of categories, because it encompasses all of them and thus becomes the saturated phenomenon of "second degree" (Marion, 2002a:225-247).

In this way, Marion's phenomenology of saturation actually challenges Kant's idea that human beings can have *a priori* knowledge of all things by means of categories of pure understanding imposed on the objects of thinking for the purpose of obtaining conceptual and definite meaning. More precisely, he aims to indicate that Kant's categories demanding all appearing phenomena to agree with the formal condition of an experience in general are ineffective when confronted with an excessive appearance of saturated phenomena (Mackinlay,

2010:59-60; Serban, 2011:190-199; Canullo, 2004). First, the appearance of a saturated phenomenon overcomes Kant's category of *quantity* by giving plenty of information, by overwhelming a spectator with the amount of data, and by providing a quantity of such abundance and complexity that it cannot possibly be delimited. For Marion, the saturated appearance of historical, cultural and personal events represents the types of phenomena distinguished by the unquantifiable excess of data given in the phenomenality of their manifestations. Second, there are phenomena that exceed the category of *quality* by being dazzling in their overpowering appearance. These saturated phenomena are works of art, particularly items such as idols and paintings. Third, some phenomena go beyond Kant's category of *relation* inasmuch as they appear in a way that no relation or analogy might be established with their visibility of appearance. In this context, Marion develops a saturated phenomenology of human flesh. Fourth, the phenomenon of the human face saturates Kant's last category of *modality*. In fact, Marion appropriates Levinas' idea of the face as suitable for showing saturation towards the facts of *modality* (possibility, actuality, necessity) which have the purpose of defining how existing things could, must or could not have been. Finally, he comes to the saturated phenomena of a "second degree", what he calls the "paradox of paradoxa", "the maximum of saturated phenomenality" that combines all of the other four aspects of saturation (Marion, 2002a:234). For Marion, the idea of Revelation as saturation of the highest kind liberates the full potential of the phenomenality of appearance. In contrast to all other types of saturated phenomena pushed to the very edge of the phenomenal horizon, the phenomenon of Revelation is the only one to transcend any horizon whatsoever (Gschwandtner, 2014:7). It is therefore the saturated phenomenon *par excellence*, taken to the maximum of givenness in every possible phenomenological respect (Mason, 2014:30).

In order to display the essential meaning of saturated phenomena, this chapter will make a general analysis of all five types of saturation mentioned

above. It will offer an analytical overview of all saturated phenomena by providing the facts of their progressive development throughout Marion's works. Moreover, this chapter will present an analysis that aims primarily to indicate and explain the vital characteristics and excessive structure of each of the five particular categories of saturated phenomena. In this way, this research section has a two-pronged purpose. First, it will clarify the grounds of Marion's understanding of saturated phenomena as the guiding norm in his postmetaphysical thinking and show how his project progressively ends up with the concept of Revelation, which is of pivotal importance for this research paper. Second, it will make a foundation for the hermeneutics of saturation, which principles and methods will be presented and analysed in the subsequent chapter.

3.2 The Event: Saturation According to Quantity

The category of quantity represents the first type of *a priori* conditions of pure understanding in Kant's system of categories and has three main particularities that determine it: *unity, plurality and totality.* Each one of them is related to the question of *extensive magnitude* and is intended to define the necessary quantifiable aspects for understanding of an object of experience (Kant, 1998:212). More specifically, Kant claims that the extensive magnitude measured by the principles of *unity, plurality and totality* have the purpose in which the representation of the parts makes possible the representation of the whole or the synthesis of the manifold, which defines it (Kant, 1998:287). In other words, all phenomenological parts of a manifestation have extensive magnitude of appearance which is accumulated in the perspective of the whole, which finally determines their general significance and concretises their meaning (Kant, 1998:288).

Correspondingly, saturation according to quantity is the first category of saturation considered by Marion. The phenomenon that he proposes as the

paradigm for this kind of saturation is the *event*. Marion applies the term *event* to two different but closely related meanings throughout his work, particularly in his *Being Given*. On one hand, as was already pointed out in the previous chapter, he takes "event" to be a characteristic of all given phenomena. For Marion, all given phenomena are generally "evental" or have their "eventness". That means that they give and show themselves as event, which is one of five characteristics of all given phenomena alongside *anamorphosis*, *arrival*, *fait accompli* and *incident* (Marion, 2002a:159-173). On the other hand, and more significantly for this research section, the event is proposed by Marion as one particular type of saturated phenomenon, namely the phenomenon which exceeds the limits of Kant's category of *quantity*. The event is thus a saturated phenomenon by manifestation of its giving appearance that overwhelms the limits of quantity in human experience. It gives "too much", so it can never be quantified, measured, unified in complete perspective or totalised as a whole. In this way, categorised as a saturated phenomenon, the event therefore refers to a specific or unique *instance* of appearing phenomenality, instead of referring to eventness as a *characteristic* of phenomenality which is applied to all giving phenomena (Mackinlay, 2010:80). Under the designation of saturated phenomenon, Marion identifies the event with three different phenomenological manifestations that are related to three essential areas of appearance: historical events (example of collective, social phenomena), friendship (example of intersubjective phenomena) and events of death and birth (examples of private phenomena).

In Marion's own words, a historical event is a saturated phenomenon in nature because "nobody can claim for himself 'here and now' that would permit him to describe it exhaustively and constitute it as an object" (Marion, 2002a: 228). A historical event as such always remains indescribable in principle by offering no prospect for an encompassing explanation or an absolute or privileged point of view. This is evident in Marion's explanation of the Battle of Waterloo, which is taken to be his paradigmatic historical event of saturation, specifically as

portrayed by Stendahl in *The Charterhouse of Parma* (Marion, 2002a:228-29). The historical depiction of the battle, in all potential forms, will at the end be presented as an incomplete perspective. Each possible interpretation will provide a personal, but partial and deficient historical account of what precisely occurred. In explaining this insufficiency, Marion points out the distinction between two historical views on understanding of past events, where both are charged with the impossibility of making a full-fledged analysis: *Geschichte* (history making itself, the historical event as it occurs by itself) and *Historie* (the historiographical, recorded and transmitted history). He argues that *Geschichte*, in such a complex event as the Battle of Waterloo, happens unpredictably in history that makes itself and comes to be absolutely indeterminate by itself. It appears without any unified horizon, which means that even those who participated in the battle (Wellington, military officers, or men on the field) could furnish only partial reports from their angle of vision of what happened there. No one of their individual horizons is well grounded enough to unify and foresee what really occurred at Waterloo. Therefore, the battle passed away on its own, without anybody making it or deciding it completely (Marion, 2002a:228-29). On the other hand, the recorded and transmitted history (*Historie*) could be a full-fledged account only if it includes conceptual horizons of infinite number (military, diplomatic, political, economic ones, etc.). The need for an indefinite number of historiographical narrations of different kinds practically forbids constituting this event in an exhaustive explanation. The plurality of hermeneutical horizons of this event virtually defies any objectification of its meaning and refuses to substitute an endless hermeneutics with a closed-up interpretation (Marion, 2002a:229). Therefore, Marion claims that neither Fabrice, nor Flambeu, nor Chareaubriand, nor any other historical report would be sufficient to clarify, speak and especially foresee the meaning of the historical incident that happened at Waterloo (Marion, 2002a:229).

In a similar fashion, the event of friendship comes to be an unexpected, unpredictable and indeterminate incident in Marion's *In Excess*. He actually uses the "banal" case of the friendship of Montaigne and Boétie as an event enjoying all determinations respected for saturated phenomena (Marion, 2002b:37). Friendship with the other person begins with *anamorphosis*, where someone gets to be submitted to the point of the view of another person who looks on him/her. In other words, friendship happens when one finds oneself at the exact point where one's own view comes to be in line with the view of another person who waits for him/herself to be exposed. That happened at the beginning of Montaigne's friendship with Boétie, which he explains in the following words: "we are looking for each other before seeing each other" (Montaigne, 1965:188; Marion, 2002b:37). To be looked for means that each one of the two who engaged in friendship situated him/herself first at the point where the look of the other could spontaneously settle on him/her. Furthermore, like in the case of Montaigne and Boétie, the event of friendship is accomplished all at once, without anticipation, as a sudden *arrival* and without any expectation: "At our first meeting … we found ourselves so taken, so known, so obliged between ourselves, that nothing from then on was as close as we were for one another" (Montaigne, 1965:188; Marion, 2002b:37). Friendship is therefore a question of fact always "already" accomplished. Finally, the phenomenon of friendship that gives itself abruptly and unpredictably also gives nothing other than itself. Its ultimate meaning remains inaccessible because it is reduced to its *fait accompli*, to its own *occurrence*. It does not refer to any substance and could not be assigned to any single cause or reason (Marion, 2002b:28). Montaigne articulated this as an unquestionable happening: "If one presses me to say why I loved him, I sense that this can only be expressed in replying: because it was him; because it was me" (Montaigne, 1965:188; Marion, 2002b:38). The phenomenon of friendship therefore shows itself in the saturation of a phenomenologically pure and perfect event which gives

itself by starting from itself, without exception; what shows itself only manages to do so by virtue of the self (Marion, 2002b:38).

As a final point, also in his *In Excess*, Marion takes the private phenomena of the temporality of death and birth to indicate the existence of saturation in the domain of self-experiences. The event of death shows itself as a saturated phenomenon to which no one has full access for two reasons. First, the death appears to be a simple passage from the state of being alive to the state of being a cadaver. This passage is not seen directly, for the death of the other person only shows itself in a flash and only gives itself in withdrawing from us the living other, without implicating myself directly. I, by enclosing myself in my own residual life, have no full access to the death of other person, since I am unable to experience the life and death of others (Marion, 2002b:39-40). Second, my own death involves me totally and appears as an event that attests a phenomenal givenness. However, such an event does not provide me with full access to the experience of death. If death passes into me as I die with it, I can never actually see the event in it. In other words, the experience of death is inaccessible since as long as I am, death is not, and, when it happens, I am no longer there to see it (Marion, 2002b:39-40). Therefore, the experience of death, in both cases, appears in a form of saturation without the possibility of a full-fledged philosophical approach. There is only the sense of anticipation in which death appears as life experience, but that still keeps it in the category of unexplained involvements. In other words, the event of death remains inaccessible since it gives and shows itself as a possibility of impossible definition (Marion 2002b:40). Accordingly, Marion properly applies the language of excess and saturation to the phenomenon of death by defining it as “unforeseeable, irreversible, unrepeatable as such, immediately past and devoid of cause or of reason” (Marion, 2002b:41). In contrast to the phenomenon of death, the phenomenon of birth does not show itself to me, since I am not yet present at the moment of birth. However, it still gives itself in a way which affects me as an event that actually originates me and

gives me an identity. In fact, even though I cannot, as a matter of principle, approach this undisputable phenomenon directly, the event of birth nonetheless represents a privileged phenomenon that my whole life is essentially occupied with, by reconstituting it, attributing meaning to it and responding to its silent appeal. It appears in an exceptional and paradigmatic mode of manifestation where it phenomenalises itself from itself, thus producing an indefinite, indescribable, and unforeseeable series of original meanings that accumulate throughout my life and define me to my end (Marion, 2002b:43). Anyone, as a matter of consequence, will continually try throughout his lifetime to find the words to say what the birth actually means, but without ever yet adequately explaining it, understanding it, or constituting it. The origin of birth thus remains originally inaccessible, not by default, but because the excess of givenness over conceptual understanding bursts open irremediably whenever I try to explain it (Marion, 2002b:44). Therefore, the event of birth for Marion does not give itself in penury (Derrida), but indeed in excess that is determined by the utmost phenomenological principle: nothing shows itself that does not first give itself (Marion, 2002b:44; Carlson, 1999:249-250).

In conclusion, the saturated phenomenon of event, structured in forms of collective, intersubjective and private phenomena, fulfils at least three important requirements of saturation in terms of quantity: 1) unrepeatability or irreversibility, 2) inexhaustibility or endlessness, and 3) unforeseeability or unpredictability. In other words, an event that has already occurred in the past gives no possibility to be repeated in an identical way. It has the character of facticity charged with the history exceeding memory which always remains irreversible. According to the present, an event possesses a surplus of effects, causes and explanations that makes it inexhaustible and never completed. It cannot be assigned to a single cause or exhaustive explanation, but requests an infinite number of them. In terms of the future, the phenomenon of event cannot be foreseen and anticipated since it always comes as a surprise, unexpectedly, as an unpredictable incident. It

remains an impossibility with regard to the system of anteriorly determined expectations. Therefore, in all three temporality modes, the event testifies to a saturation of givenness that overcomes conceptual thinking and thus irremediably escapes objectivity and all forms of metaphysical constitutions. Actually, they altogether emphasise that an exhaustive description of the event is impossible and demand a hermeneutic without end and in an indefinite network.

3.3 The Dazzling Idols and Paintings: Saturation According to Quality

The second type of saturation corresponds to Kant's category of quality determined by characteristics that are related to the *intensive magnitude*: *reality, negation,* and *limitation* (Kant, 1998:212). Kant argues that every manifestation of what appears in visible reality has an intensive magnitude of influence, which indicates "a degree of sensation" that an object of perception has on the intuition of the one who perceives it (Kant, 1998:290). Unlike extensive magnitude, which is cumulatively measured by quantity, the intensive magnitude of quality is only apprehended in terms of the anticipation of all perception. Before an object with extensive magnitude is formed by a synthesis of manifold perceptions, every sensation must itself have an intensive magnitude, which indicates its degree of influence on the intellect. Therefore, the intensity of magnitude cannot be measured on the level of empirical counting or accumulation, but only on the level of intuitive understanding and sensitivity (Kant, 1998:290-95).

Marion goes beyond Kant's principle and proposes that there are phenomena which bring perception to the point where intuition can no longer bear the intensity of their givenness. Actually, he describes those phenomena of saturation as dazzling (*éblouissant*), since they appear under the aspect of unbearable bedazzlement which exceeds human capacity to fully perceive them as appearing objects (Marion, 2002a:229; Mackinlay 2010:117). These phenomena are exclusively related to visual perception and works of art. In

contrast to mere technical objects, which need to be seen only once in order to be fully grasped, the saturated phenomena of arts fail to be fully perceived, thus keeping the human gaze constantly away from an essential understanding of their visibility. They are accordingly described as “blinding”, since the intensity of their appearance prevents anyone from seeing them as determinate objects. This blinding experience of saturation brings the “glory of the visible” and might be comparable to the experience that Plato ascribes to prisoners in a cave who are forced to look at the blinding vision of the light, rather than at the shadows (Marion, 2002a:204). In similar way, because of their powerful impact on the intentional looking, they are also described as “admiring”. In looking at them, intentionality remains “fixed permanently, quasi-fascinated” on what it meets, or on what happens to it (Marion 2002b:59). Hence, their appearance assigns admiration that represents an unexpected surprise to what appears to be an intense phenomenological manifestation. The admiration, therefore, in this case, must be understood as “the most powerful exercise possible of the look” (Marion, 2002b:59).

In order to illustrate this kind of saturation, Marion uses idols and paintings as appropriate paradigms. The idol as a model of a saturated phenomenon subverts the category of quality carried to the maximum by being defined as the “first visible”: “The idol is determined as the first indisputable visible because its splendour stops intentionality for the first time; and this first visible fills it, stops it, and even blocks it, to the point of returning it towards itself, after the fashion of an invisible obstacle—or mirror” (Marion, 2002a:229). In this way, the intentionality finds the idol as something that can fill it, which makes it to stop on it, to be captivated and fascinated by the visible that fills it, to exhaust it, and thus to retain it. In fact, this captivated and splendorous visible is therefore called the “first visible”, because for the first time, the intentional look halts on it, for the purpose of watching over it [*garder du regard*], to keep an eye on it [*garder d’un oeil*] and to keep it in custody [*maintenir en garde à vue*] (Marion 2002b:56). However,

paradoxically, the first visible of the idol is not indeed visible itself. The features of the idol are determined actually by the intentional look that fills it and therefore the first visible becomes just the reflection of that looking intention. It is thus essentially a “mirror”, invisible in itself, but showing the image created by the intentional look that it fulfills. Hence, the idol comes to be the fascinating, dazzling first visible that appears to human sight with remainder of invisibility, but made in accordance to our own image or reflection (Marion, 2001:4-7; 19-22; Marion, 2002b:60-61; Marion, 2004a:85-87). The terminology related to idol here belongs obviously to the phenomenological framework of interpretation which shifted from Marion’s earlier theological treatments. The idol is no longer a false or heretical vision of the divine, but a positive illustration of the saturated phenomenon. Nevertheless, Marion’s usage of the term still has substantial continuity with his prior theological analysis: the idol is still the first visible point of the gaze and it also functions as a mirror by returning the intentional gaze to itself (Gschwandtner, 2014:59).

Marion furthermore contends that “the privileged occurrence” of the idol is painting (Marion, 2002a:229). The more one seeks to understand the painting and to learn details about it, the less one is able to grasp its excessive givenness (Marion, 2002a:230). The encounter with it makes the intentional observer realise his own finitude (Marion, 2002a:206). The painting always arrives in the form of surprise and individuates the one who looks at it by addressing him directly in solitary fashion, provoking thus “an ineluctable solipsism” (Marion, 2002a:230). Marion actually describes the way in which paintings can function as the idols in his three different works: *The Crossing of the Visible*, *Being Given*, and *In Excess*.

In the early work *The Crossing of the Visible*, originally published in 1991, Marion describes the work of art as paradigmatic of visible reality, focusing especially on the paradoxical relationship between the visible and the invisible that permeates them. This interplay of visible and invisible is substantial to his phenomenology of painting: “The real space, empty or not, nevertheless cannot

be seen without a gaze. Yet this gaze stretches the visible by the power of the invisible" (Marion, 2004a:4). He even points out the "visible increases in direct proportion to the invisible", which subsequently means: "the more the visible is increased, the more the invisible is deepened" (Marion, 2004a:5). Marion describes this intersection or play of the visible and invisible in painting as equivalent to Husserl's intentional aim. Just as the invisible intention moves from the immediate lived experience (*Erlebnisse*) of consciousness to perceive an intentional object that is not immediately visible, so the invisible perspective of painting moves the intentional look from an immediate perception of the two-dimensional space of painting to a final spectacle that is perceived in three-dimensional reality, which remains marked for all that by a definitive incongruity (Marion, 2004a:13). In this context, he understands a painting as a work of art that plays between two extremes of intentionality: the lived experience, perceived, experienced and real, on the one hand, and the intentional object, aimed at, invisibly seen, and ideal, on the other (Marion, 2004a:13). Consequently, Marion points out two ways in which this interaction can be suspended in painting: either by removing the final object, or by removing the *Erlebnis*. Therefore, the first suspension of the intentional object saturates perception with the visible and matches the characteristics of Marion's explanation of idol (Marion, 2004a:14-17, 31-35). The second suspension of *Erlebnis* saturates perception with the invisible and conforms to his description of icon (Marion, 2004a:36-45). Marion even gives some examples of the removal of the intentional object: Monet's paintings of the London Houses of Parliament in fog, of Rouen Cathedral or of water lilies, and Pollock's "all over" or "action paintings". He argues that both painters show the disappearance of the objective, when the lived experience becomes the direct end of the painting and the sole visible (Marion, 2004a:14). In all their listed works they remove any final object from the intentional gaze of the observer, they "inundate the eye, to the point of saturating all perceptions" (Marion 2004a:15-16). The look is thus prevented from seeing anything beyond the painting. It

reflects back to itself, resulting in reflections that are striving to explain what is visible in the painting, rather than what is visible as such. In this way, the intentional gaze that reflects back to itself for understanding, without getting visible as such, is exactly equivalent to the description of the intentional gaze that Marion identifies in his theory of idols.

Very early in his *Being Given*, Marion proposes paintings as examples of phenomena that appear "only as given", determined exclusively by "nothing other than givenness" (Marion, 2002a:39). He argues that even though a painting may show objects, and might be treated as an object or a being by an art dealer or historian, a painting is first of all a given phenomenon. It appears reduced to its ultimate phenomenality in so far as it gives its effect to an observing intentionality (Marion, 2002a:52). In other words, perceiving a painting *as painting* is not a question of recognising colours and shapes of it, nor an observing of objects in it, but rather of being affected by it: "The effect makes the soul vibrate with vibrations that evidently do not represent any object or being, and which cannot themselves be described or represented in the mode of beings and objects" (Marion, 2002a:50-51). He uses the factor of the painting's effect to argue that in addition to "ontic visibility", in which something is seen, the painting also has a "survisibility, ontically indescribable" (Marion, 2002a:47). This "survisibility" is actually "invisible" because it is not related to *something* seen, but to the phenomenon that affects us. Therefore, what is seen first in a painting is not so much a phenomenon as the *appearing* of a phenomenon, but rather an appearing as such in its rising up, the event of the visible happening (Marion, 2002a:49). In a later part of the same book, Marion describes paintings as examples of phenomena that cause bedazzlement by the degree of saturation that appears in their visibility. He illustrates this dazzling experience by discussing some of Turner's paintings, which are characterised by showing objects which are not illuminated by ordinary light, but rather by the dazzling light of the sun, which makes it impossible to designate any object as " a thing" (Marion, 2002a:229). Accordingly,

he describes *The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire* as showing the sun's "dazzling fulguration (*lux*): an unbearable circle diffusing a fiery whiteness, where nothing can any longer be distinguished or put on stage" (Marion, 2002a:205). As with the paintings of Monet and Pollock mentioned above, Turner's works no longer make objects visible, but instead have the intention of describing the very making-visible itself.

Marion makes the most explicit link between idols and paintings in his *In Excess*. More specifically, the text of the third chapter of the book named "The Idol or the Radiance of the Painting" brings idols and paintings closest together in terms of their corresponding ways of saturation. Marion actually claims that a painter is able to make an image whose resemblance carries more weight than the original found in reality, so that it mesmerises the human look, which stops its roving, lost in admiration. The resemblance of a painting appears so much more than the original that it forces it out of the sight. In this way, the admiration of the look is concentrated on the resemblance, because "it no longer resembles anything", it stands alone, confiscating all the glory from the original, it "seems, appears, shines, sparkles" on its own (Marion, 2002b:58). Phenomenologically, it therefore becomes the original, and the ontic original gets no other status than a sketch or an outline that becomes a useless or even distracting object in comparison to the perfect resemblance of the painting (Marion, 2002b:58-59). It is this painted semblance that captivates the look, envelops it and assigns it and thus testifies that the *idol* is accomplished. Indeed, Marion asserts that a painting can fill the human look with such splendid admiration that it brings an idol to existence (Marion, 2002b:60-61). On the other hand, the excessive resemblance *par excellence* in painting returns to the look its proper measure, and thus determines whatever measure of visible it can provide. As with idol, the first visible of the look in painting shows not only what is first given to the look, but the measure of this look itself. In this way, the first visible of the look is equivalent to the "invisible mirror" of the idol (Marion, 2002b:61).

Finally, Marion argues that a painting can fill our look with saturation because it essentially eliminates the unseen, which generally lies behind what is seen and which sets up the visible. Actually, in contrast to Husserl, who claims that the perceiving of an object always includes other views that are not visible, the unseen views, given alongside the presented view, as multiple "appresentations", Marion refutes this position and points out that the excessive visibility of the perceived object eliminates the unseen instead (Marion, 2002b:63; Husserl, 1960:109). He claims that within the frame of the painting, the appresented tends to disappear and leave the way entirely free for the presented (Marion, 2002b:63). Hence, in painting, an appearing object totally gives itself in a single presentation limited by the painting's frame only, which thus excludes any appresentations of the unseen and makes the objects of a painting reduced to pure visibility which saturates the view: "This reduced visible, presented in the pure state without any remainder of appresentation, reaches such an intensity that it often saturates the capacity of my look, even exceeds it" (Marion, 2002b:63-64). For this reason, Marion subsequently comes to the conclusion that paintings radically accomplish the third phenomenological reduction where the visible contained in a frame of a painting gives itself so that it also shows itself under the regime of an idol (Marion 2002b:68).

In accordance with Marion's understanding presented above, it may be concluded that idols and paintings, as works of art, structured as saturated phenomena, require a special way of understanding how they appear as phenomena. They essentially function as the first visible before which the look of an observer becomes captivated with fascination, which then transforms them in an invisible mirror that measures the capacity of the fascinated look. Within this perspective, Marion wryly points out that the naming of an idol inevitably leads towards personal knowledge of the one who names it. Moreover, these phenomena bring their phenomenality of appearance to a maximum, thus making their visible manifestation excessive. Their appearance produces absolutely new

(saturated) phenomena that overcome natural visibles, the appearance of constituted objects, and therefore oblige an observer to see everything starting from the dazzling paradigms that their fascination enforces. Actually, this radical irruption of phenomenality cannot be exhausted by the limited look of someone who makes an effort to capture it in a single instance or in successive attempts, because it gives too much for the objectifying look, which aims to list, classify, maintain, value or conserve it. Therefore, with the works of art, the saturation of intuition results in an infinite hermeneutics of the visible that can never reach an end point.

3.4 The Flesh as Absolute Phenomenon: Saturation According to Relation

In contrast to the first two categories of quality and quantity that imply the *constitution* of appearing phenomena, Kant turns to the third category, which deals with the *regulation* of the relations between them. He argues that the mere relationship of appearances based on contrast and comparison is not enough for their understanding. For that reason, they must be synthesised into a connected unity that occurs in a single consciousness. The consciousness actually organises them according to its inner intuition which arranges all appearances according to three *a priori* synthetic principles of relation: 1) *inherence* (relation between substance and accident), 2) *causality* (relation between cause and effect), and 3) *community* (relation between two or more substances). These three principles are thus determined conditions of understanding according to the category of relation. They are essential instruments for allowing us to synthesise the diversity of appearances in a rational unity of their mutual relations (Kant, 1998:299-317).

In this context, Marion proposes the phenomenon of flesh as the paradigm that saturates the experience according to the category of relation. For Marion, flesh is an absolute, unconditioned phenomenon that appears without relation to

other phenomena. The flesh affects anyone immediately, there is no distance between his/her flesh and him/herself. It imposes itself directly and overwhelmingly on anyone who possesses it. This immediacy of flesh is an immanence that precedes any attempt of intentionality engaged towards an object of perception. Before flesh is able to perceive itself as a possible external object in the world, it perceives already (Marion, 2002b:87). Before making itself felt, it allows someone to feel. Also, before making itself seen, it makes someone able to see (Marion, 2002b:87). Therefore, the absoluteness of flesh becomes a phenomenon which undermines Kant's *a priori* understanding of relation.

Interestingly, comparing to other saturated phenomena, the phenomenon of the flesh is regarded as the least prominent one in Marion's philosophical works (Gschwandtner, 2014:95). However, it might appear striking that Marion himself asserts that this phenomenon establishes the very type of the saturated phenomenon because of its absolute character (Marion, 2012:150). In *Being Given*, he proves this absoluteness by indicating two distinct features of flesh: 1) the immediacy of flesh that affects the human being, and 2) its mineness. The first feature points out that affection by flesh is not affection by some *other*, but rather an auto-affection. This means that if someone is affected by pleasure, pain or other sensation, he/she is actually affected by the sensation of their own flesh that is affected by some kind of sensation. Speaking in terms of myself, the flesh is thus immanent to myself and I am affected by it in a way that this affection has no transcendence that is beyond myself (Marion, 2002a:231). The second feature of mineness refers to the fact that no other human being can ever experience my sensations. Mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*) is the foundational experience of myself as an individual that belongs to my flesh, and to it alone (Marion, 2002a:232). It has power to individualise me by letting the immanent succession of my affections produce myself alone. I am identified in it, or I am personally inscribed in it (Marion, 2002a:232). Hence, the mineness of flesh is the first and fundamental experience of myself as myself. It does not only appear by showing itself in giving

itself, but as representing the “first self”, because it essentially gives me to myself (Marion, 2002a:232). My flesh has the role of foundation. It represents the primary source or the basis on which I am constituted.

In his book *In Excess*, Marion provides an extended account of flesh by emphasising further the fact that anyone as flesh is originally given to him/herself. His first remarks are focused on Descartes’ erroneous claim that the *cogitatio* represents undeniable evidence for the existence of the *ego*. Marion argues that he is wrong, since every human being is primarily a *feeling* thing (*res sentiens*) and not a *thinking* thing (*res cogitans*). The faulty conclusion happened because Descartes failed to recognise the essential distinction between extended, sensible bodies in the world and the human body *gifted with sense* (Marion, 2002b:83-84; Descartes, 1990:101). The *ego* thinks only in so far as it feels itself, so its existence is fundamentally sensible rather than rational. In other words, before the *cogito* exists, the *ego* is already truly established in its existence as a feeling body (*corpus et sensus*) (Marion, 2002b:86). The *ego* identifies itself as flesh, even if one wants to hide it (Marion, 2002b:87).

In addition to Descartes’ phenomenology of flesh, Marion also turns to Husserl’s distinction between body (*Körper*) and flesh (*Leib*). In Husserl’s view, everyone finds their own flesh (*Leib*) to be an exceptional phenomenon, unsubdued to simple representation of a physical body (*Körper*) because of its immediacy. My flesh is so close to myself that *ego* finds it impossible to distance itself from it (Husserl, 1998:167). Therefore, Husserl defines flesh as *originally given* to me, with an essential character of *self-givenness* (Husserl, 1973b:567). By confirming Husserl’s observation, Marion points out that *ego* only takes flesh by being taken “in its flesh” and “as flesh” (Marion, 2002b:91). By using a sort of visual description, he claims that *ego* takes its flesh like cement or plaster “takes once the water has left it – in fixing itself” (Marion, 2002b:91). In other words, *ego* does not fix itself to its flesh, it actually fixes itself to itself as flesh (Marion, 2002b:91). Therefore, my mineness does not happen in a way that I give myself

to my flesh, but in a way that it gives me to myself, in receiving my flesh by actually receiving myself. In relation to my flesh, I am thus a gifted one (*adonné*, one given over) (Marion, 2002b:98).

In his most recent writing on the topic of flesh, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Marion develops a view that overcomes his earlier emphasis on the exclusive immediacy and mineness of flesh. He actually moves away from his understanding of the self-givenness of flesh, given in an auto-affection, to the idea of flesh given by another flesh, in a hetero-affection. However, he gives no clear indications that there is an actual conflict between this and his previous emphasis on the phenomenology of flesh (Mackinlay, 2010:139). Moreover, the first discussion of the book is quite consistent with Marion's earlier accounts. He explains the immediacy of flesh by pointing out that even "extended bodies of the physical world" are grasped on the basis of auto-affection. This means that in touching other body, the other body is felt by myself only because I experience it through the senses of my flesh that actually sensed itself through the touch of the other body (Marion, 2007a:38). However, the further explication of flesh in *The Erotic Phenomenon* takes Marion to new ground. He comes to it by explaining the role of flesh in the relationship with a loving other. For Marion, the loving relationship is defined by a *call* that someone receives from another who loves him/her. This *call* happens to arrive to him/her as an "impact" of the one who shows him/her love (Marion, 2007a:110). Indeed, the loved one receives it in the passivity which sums up all the impact that the other exerts upon the receiving I. This means that *ego* does not individualise its own self anymore by self-affirmation or self-affection, but by "proxy – by the care that the other takes with me in affecting me and allowing me to be born of this very affect" (Marion, 2007a:175). In this way, Marion actually claims that the role of the other is presented as essential for the very auto-affection of the *ego* that receives its own mineness from another's flesh. Therefore, it may be concluded that *The Erotic Phenomenon* gives an account on the flesh predominantly in the context of the

flesh of another, which seems to confuse his earlier accounts based on auto-affection of the flesh. However, he gives no suggestion that there is a conflict between these two positions. Indeed, it seems that Marion has no trouble moving back and forward between them, thus describing flesh as a relationally absolute saturated phenomenon either by auto-affection or by hetero-affection (Mackinlay, 2010:139).

Therefore, the saturated phenomenon of flesh, like the previous two related phenomena of idol and event, has a specific structure that overcomes rational apprehension that regulates understanding of appearing phenomena according to their mutual relations. By claiming absolute relational independence, the phenomenon of flesh needs to be interpreted in the context of the endless hermeneutics of saturation. It escapes objectivity and constitution by showing itself in an excessive way, always remaining indefinite in nature. It gives itself in saturation that goes beyond the intentional structures of the mind. Therefore, in order to be designated, this phenomenon needs an implicit hermeneutical structure that would comply with the principles of absolute givenness, the unconditional nature of the phenomenon and the passivity of the *ego* involved in the phenomenological reception of flesh.

3.5 The Face as Irregardable Icon: Saturation According to Modality

The fourth kind of saturation proposed by Marion corresponds to Kant's last category of modality. Kant takes this category to be distinct from other categories because it does not augment the concept to which it is ascribed, but rather expresses the relation to the faculty of cognition (Kant, 1998:322). In other words, in contrast to the other three categories of pure understanding, which determine the nature of appearing phenomena in themselves or in relation to each other, the modality only determines how the appearing phenomena themselves are related to the understanding and its empirical power of judgment, without any

transcendental use. For this very reason the principles of modality are nothing further than definitions of this relation expressed in three fundamental postulates of empirical thinking: possibility, actuality and necessity (Kant, 1998:321). For Kant, a phenomenon is *possible* if it accords with a *formal* condition of experience which embraces both sensibility and pure concepts of understanding (in particular, space and time). It is *actual* if it both agrees with formal conditions of experience and connects with the *material* condition of experience. In other words, a phenomenon is actual if it is both possible and if there is a certain sensation that gives evidence for its reality (i.e., actual perception). Finally, a phenomenon is *necessary* if it is actual and also determined by the *general* conditions of experience (in particular, by the law of causality) (Kant, 1998:322-333) Guyer, 2006:115; Höffe, 1994:104).

Marion claims that Kant's understanding of modality reduces a phenomenon to the exclusive measure of human thought and therefore it becomes alienated from itself. Its appearance is conditioned by and for another – that of the transcendental *ego* - rather than showing and giving itself by and for itself. In this way, the phenomenon is far from giving itself; it is staged only in a scene set by and for an actor without action, submitted to a spectator and transcendental director of phenomenal appearing (Marion, 2002a:212-213). More precisely, such a phenomenon lacks phenomenal autonomy since it renounces its privilege of giving itself to whoever happens to see it, and instead lets itself be constituted by whoever precedes it. It never appears except in response and in correspondence to requirements outside and interior to it (Marion, 2002a:213). This alienating approach to a phenomenon makes for Marion the property and status of a phenomenon fully submitted and conditioned to the objectifying gaze of the subject (Marion, 2002a:213-14). In contrast, Marion asserts that saturated phenomenon overcomes Kant's borders of modality and must be determined as nonobjectifiable, one that appears in such an excess that it "cannot be looked at, regarded" (Marion, 2002a:214). It does not admit constitution by and for a human

gaze because its phenomenality remains always objectless, or irregardable in relation to the empirical power of judgment.

After critical remarks regarding Kant's modality, Marion turns to the crucial question of whether a phenomenon that declines to let itself be objectively looked at can nevertheless be seen. His answer is affirmative and is made on the basis of the etymological distinction between "to see" [*voir*] and "to gaze" [*regarder*], which comes from Sartre's analysis of the objectifying gaze (Sartre, 1956:340-401). The *regarder* signifies more than simply "to see". The French expression *re-garder* transcribes exactly *in-tueri* and should be understood in term of *tueri*, 'to guard or to keep', which indeed means to keep an eye on, to watch out of the corner of one's eye or to keep in sight (Marion, 2002a:214). In other words, gazing, *regarder*, is about being able to keep the visible of a phenomenon in control of the seer, without letting it have the initiative in appearing. To gaze at the phenomenon is therefore not identical to seeing it, but indeed "to transform it" into an object visible within the limits of the object which is constituted or "kept" at the initiative of the gaze (Marion, 2002a:214). In contrast to *regarder*, Marion describes a saturated phenomenon as *irregardable*, unable to be gazed upon. Because a phenomenon is saturated with an excess of intuition, it has to be withdrawn from the gaze; it should be regarded as a "non-object" that is given in "counter-experience" – the experience that irreducibly resists the conditions of every possible objectification. This experience is always open to confess the superabundance of intuitive givenness of a phenomenon whose excess renders it irregardable and hard to master (Marion, 2002a:215).

Finally, the phenomenon saturated according to modality finds its appropriate expression in the figure of the face of the other person. Marion first referred to it in *God without Being*, with the brief suggestion that "every face is given as an icon" (Marion, 1991a:19). Shortly after, he focused on it more extensively in "The Intentionality of Love", an essay dedicated to Levinas, and again in "From Other to Individual" where he takes a step beyond Levinas'

presentation of face as ethical command. He then offered a short analysis of face in *Being Given*, but his most valuable remarks came to be exposed in the fifth study, *In Excess*, and finally in his phenomenological study, *The Erotic Phenomenon.*

In “Intentionality of Love”, Marion makes an attempt to find a solution to the aporia of love which is both *my* love and the love of *another* (Marion, 2002b:71-101). He finds the way out of this dilemma in two steps. First, in quoting Levinas, he describes another person as taking initiative by leaving me with a consciousness that flows against the current [*conscience à contre-courant*], overturning consciousness (Marion, 2002b:82; Levinas, 1998:58). In this “counter-consciousness” encounter, *I*, as a subject of experience, am seen rather than seeing. More specifically, *I* who is subject is replaced by *me* who is object, as expressed in the precise words of Marion: “the nominative *I* is dismissed in accusative *me*” (Marion, 2002b:84). Second, also in the manner of Levinas, this “counter-consciousness” is described by Marion as an ethical command of responsibility by claiming that even before I am experiencing the other who looks at me, I have already experienced the other as the one whom I am responsible for. Consequently, he is ready to declare that even if the other did not see me, and thus could not judge me, I would experience, by discovering *myself* as an accusative dismissed from the nominative, that I owe *myself* to him (Marion, 2002b:86). Therefore, in the relationship of responsibility, the face of the other never appears as an object constituted by me, neither am I, as a subject, objectified by or for him/her. Finally, this essay concludes with a call to render myself wholly open to another person with surrender to him/her in faith (Marion, 2002b:100-1). In this way, Marion actually evokes a particular kind of passive/receptive phenomenology which appropriates the meaning of responsibility found and demonstrated in the ethical command of respecting the other (Mackinlay, 2010:172).

In his second essay, “From the Other to the Individual”, Marion proposes a phenomenological structure defined in three stages of relation to another person: 1) the primacy of the existent over existence; 2) inverted intentionality assigned to the *other* who imposes an ethical command of responsibility 3) individuation of the *other* by love that goes beyond ethics. In all of these stages *oneself* and *other* are simultaneously interconnected and individuated in their subject-object relationship, escaping objectification of their meaning. However, in contrast to “The Intentionality of Love”, which is primarily an account of the second stage, where the other person appears in my experience of ethical command, this essay puts emphasis on the third stage of experience that overcomes the ethics of responsibility. This stage reveals the experience of loving relationship which is not achieved in the ethical injunction of the face, but remains anonymous. It is related to wholly *Other*, which transgresses the invisible face of the ethical domain and thus incites a transition from the ethical to the erotic dimension (Marion, 2004b:47). Reflection on this third stage of relationship became dominant later when Marion’s thought came to be increasingly focused on the relationship with another person in the context of the love experience, especially in *The Erotic Phenomenon*.

Marion only briefly considered the concept of face in *Being Given.* Generally speaking, this work is almost exclusively concerned with presenting the face in the view of icon. It describes the face as an icon that, as an irregardable phenomenon, no longer offers any spectacle to the gaze and thus tolerates no gaze from the spectator, but rather exerts its own gaze over what it meets with (Marion, 2002a:232). Similar to the second stage of “From the Other to the Individual”, the invisible face as icon charges me with responsibility which weighs on my gaze like a burden (Marion, 2002a:232). The other’s face assigns me by its own appearance, but only if its essential invisibility is understood (Marion, 2002a:232). In this way, this face of the other gives me nothing to see, but gives itself by weighing on me. I receive *myself* as witness of the very givenness of the

irregardable phenomenon of the icon and I learn of myself from what the iconic gaze of the other says to me in silence (Marion, 2002a:233). Finally, Marion claims that the icon as such gathers together all the particular characteristics of the three preceding types of saturated phenomena. Like the event, it demands a synopsis of horizons and narrations, because the other cannot be constituted objectively since it happens without a conveyable end. Like the painting or idol, it insists on being seen and being seen infinitely. Like the flesh, it affects the *I* so originally that it brings it close to an experience of auto-affection (Marion, 2002a:233).

Marion advanced to a deeper understanding of the concept of face in his fifth chapter of *In Excess*, entitled “The Icon or the Endless Hermeneutic” (Marion, 2002b:119). He proposes the idea of “envisaging”. To envisage a person means to open myself to him/her without anticipation of the determinate signification that would allow me to set up him/her as a comprehensible phenomenon. It allows a person to appear him/herself and for him/herself only when I abandon my demand of determined truth and approach him/her with absolute trust. Therefore, Marion claims that “confidence, not to say faith, offers the sole phenomenologically correct access to the face of the other person” (Marion, 2002b:121). It is so because the face shows only what it expresses, but without expression of any concrete meaning. Even when accompanied by an explicative word, the face cannot be converted into the concept of a finite proposition. The face expresses an infinity of meanings at each moment and during indefinite lapses of time. This endless flux of significations can never be reduced to a concept or be said appropriately. For that reason, the face of the other thus envisages me and does not manifest itself as a knowable phenomenon. The lived experiences of the other person remains definitely foreign to me, too complex and intermixed for me to be able to take account of them conceptually (Marion, 2002b:120-22). Consequently, the face that offers no univocal meaning demands an endless hermeneutics of its apparent and infinitely numerous, even contradictory expressions. The

interpretation of this phenomenon continues indefinitely, always beyond what can be attained in the present. On this basis, Marion makes a surprising comparison that has no other reference in preceding parts of his study of face: “it is necessary for me to wait for the manifestation of the face of the other person as I must wait for the return of Christ” (Marion, 2002b:124). Obviously, interpreting the face of the other corresponds to Christian experience where the return of Christ is not attained in the present and therefore requires recourse to faith in which this phenomenon remains always of inaccessible meaning.

In *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Marion gives a brief account of the idea of face, emphasising it in his most valuable context of love. In this relationship, the other person does not appear in the realm of transcendence that he/she has in the domain of ethical command of responsibility. Instead, the other person appears as a counterpart in a mutual crisscross of intentional looks. As in all his other works, Marion even here points out that the other has rights “over me by the intentionality that he or she imposes on me” (Marion, 2007a:125). He/she appears as “a stranger of the world”, the other as “an iconic face”, who “envisages me at distance” (Marion, 2007a:125). However, this relationship is not a one-sided imposition of the other to myself, but rather a mutual giving of one to the other, which in the case of a love relationship should be understood utterly in terms of fundamental reciprocity. Marion claims that it does not refer to the question of renouncing my priority so as to recognise it in the other, nor rendering my dues to him or her, but rather to the way of relationship where we have only “to give ourselves up” [*addoner*] to each other and to give ourselves the status of *l’adonné* reciprocally (Marion, 2007a:126).

Obviously, Marion’s understanding of the phenomenological structure of the figure of face, which is associated with the phenomenology of icon, is very similar to other saturated phenomena described above. Through all his accounts on this matter he continues to maintain, as in all other types of saturation, that the phenomenon of face imposes itself on a phenomenological subject in an

appearance that depends only on itself. The face manifests itself on its own basis by giving itself, rather than on the basis of any determinate signification that a subject might try to enforce on it. Beside the self-givenness of the face, there is also passive receptivity of this phenomenon. Actually, the face's appearance would be impossible without prior hermeneutical envisaging, in which the phenomenological *I* forgoes any demand for concrete meaning. In other words, any subject has to expose him/herself in faith to the other face, thus consecrating him/herself to an endless hermeneutics of all possible interpretations. The envisaging, objectness, faith and consecration are therefore just the elements of passive receptiveness following the pure givenness of an iconic face.

3.6 Revelation: Saturated Phenomenon *Par Excellence*

Having considered every single type of saturation separately, Marion accomplishes his classification of saturated phenomena by introducing a phenomenon that saturates all four groups of Kant's table of categories of experience. This final example of saturation is the phenomenon of "revelation", which he proposes as "the last possible variation of the phenomenality of the phenomenon inasmuch as given" or "the paradox to the second degree and *par excellence*" (Marion, 2002a:235). This means that the phenomenon of revelation not only falls into the category of saturation, which deals with the paradox of saturation in general, but it sums up all four kinds of saturated phenomena because it is given at once as event, painting (idol), flesh and face (icon). The fifth type of saturation does not appear as an additional category, which is arbitrarily invented in order to supplement the right of "divine" to the first four saturated phenomena. Instead, it confounds them in itself by saturation of the second degree, the saturation of saturation. In this way, the revelation represents an ultimate variation of the whole idea of saturation, the maximum of saturated

phenomenality, the *paradoxotaton* that encompasses all types of paradox (Marion, 2002a: 235).

Marion first proposed the notion of the saturated phenomenon of revelation in an essay entitled “The Possible and Revelation” (1988) before he further elaborated the concept in an essay entitled “The Saturated Phenomenon” (1992), which is published in *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn: French Debate*. Finally, after making some revisions, he decided also to incorporate this phenomenon in his book *Being Given* (1997). Marion’s understanding of revelation is quite consistent across these three texts, and many of his conclusions were already established in his 1992 essay (Mackinlay, 2010:182).

His early essay “The Possible and Revelation” is largely devoted to concerns about the difficulty that phenomenology encounters in considering religious phenomena. Marion believes that this difficulty has an essential problem which he defines as the “possibility of acknowledging a concept of revelation” (Marion, 2008b:2). Revelation is, by definition, “beyond (or outside of) the conditions of possibility of experience”, or more precisely, it is “transcendent to experience, [but] nevertheless manifests itself experientially” (Marion, 2008b:2). This means that, as experientially manifested and simultaneously transcendent, the revelation is both *part of experience* and *outside the conditions of experience* established by metaphysics based on the principle of sufficient reason – all that is, exists to the extent to which *causa* (actuality) *sive ratio* (concept) gives an explanation either for its existence, nonexistence, or for its exemption of any cause (Marion, 2008b:2). Since the phenomenon of Revelation belongs to a category which is irreducible to a conceptualisable cause, philosophy as metaphysics consequently dismisses it as illegitimate and hence impossible (Marion, 2008b:2). In this context, Marion offers two possible options for theology. First, theology can attain philosophical legitimacy by repudiating Revelation. Or, on the other hand, it can decide to remain faithful to Revelation, but only if it is ready to renounce its involvement with categories of concept, cause, and all

reason, which will consequently expel it from metaphysical rationality as "*Schwärmerei* [religious enthusiasm, or fanaticism] (Marion, 2008b:2). Furthermore, phenomenology cannot give its status to theology, because the conditions of manifestation contradict or at least are different from the free possibility of revelation. More precisely, phenomenology refuses to admit the full possibility of revelation, because it imposes two *a priori* limits on possibility in general: the *I* and the horizon. The revelation as possibility calls into question the axiomatic character of both of these two principles by transcending their limitations (Marion, 2008b:13). However, rather than taking this as grounds for a "divorce" between phenomenology and theology, Marion comes to a solution by suggesting a final hypothesis expressed in the following question: "Could not the requirements of theology permit phenomenology to transgress its proper limits, in order finally to attain the free possibility at which it has pretended to aim since its origin?" (Marion, 2008b:13). Such a transgression would entail going beyond the limits imposed by *ego* and the horizon. Instead of *I* constituting an object, *I* as a subject would be understood "from a givenness that cannot be constituted, cannot be objectified and is prior to it" (Marion, 2008b:14). Instead of acknowledging the horizon *a priori* and therefore renouncing its possibility, or excluding any horizon on principle, the revelation presents itself in a horizon only by *saturating* it (Marion, 2008b:15). In this way, Marion suggests that such a transgression of phenomenology by theology could open the possibility of revelation, hence possibility as revelation in this way comes to be free from the grip of the principle of sufficient reason, understood as the *a priori* condition of possibility (hence of impossibility) for any event to come (Marion, 2008b:16). However, Marion is aware that this requirement is radical in the way that "it merely confirms how radical the liberation in question will have to be" (Marion, 2008b:17). Therefore, a definitive response to the possibility of this transgression could only be "possible after long and difficult investigations, which are to a great extent still to come" (Marion, 2008b:17).

Marion begins “The Saturated Phenomenon” by restating the same concerns of “The Possible and Revelation” related to the difficulty that philosophy/phenomenology encounters in dealing with theology. In his view, this difficulty arises from the impossibility of describing religious phenomena as simultaneously addressing them as objects that are definable but without their religious specificity and as phenomena that are specifically religious in nature but without the possibility of being described objectively (Marion, 2000:176). To resolve this dilemma, Marion proposes that a religious phenomenon is able to render visible “what nevertheless could not be objectified” (Marion, 2000:184). It is therefore unconditioned and irreducible in nature, “a phenomenon *par excellence*”, escaping conditions imposed by either delimiting its horizon or the constituting *I*. In the remainder of the essay, Marion only gives an initial sketch that approves the religious phenomenon as a true possibility. However, he sets the stage for *Being Given*, where he makes a more comprehensive analysis of the religious phenomenon of Revelation.

In a separate section of *Being Given* entitled “The Last Possibility,” Marion introduces revelation as the ultimate and maximal possible figure of phenomenality (Marion, 2002a:234). It is the figure that accomplishes his entire project that has been dedicated to liberating possibility in phenomenality, to unbinding the idea of the phenomenon from limits such as the object, the being, the adequation or intuition (Marion, 2002a:234). However, he is well aware that proposing revelation as a phenomenon takes a considerable risk and that it is even more contentious to propose it as the phenomenon *par excellence*, the figure of the maximum degree of givenness in phenomenality. For even his most sympathetic readers may be doubtful of this explicit appeal to the theological category of Revelation as a clandestine way of introducing theology into philosophy (Caputo, 2007:81; Janicaud, 2005:40). Therefore, he tries to reassure his possible critics by emphasising, in particular, that he is not transgressing Husserl’s insistence that phenomenological reduction requires bracketing of all

forms of transcendence. His key argument here is that he is considering Revelation as “pure possibility”, without “presupposing its actuality” (Marion, 2002a:235). In this sense, the phenomenon of revelation remains inscribed within transcendental conditions of possibility, since these conditions would have no right to judge the phenomenon as possible by delimiting it *a priori* from impossibilities. They would actually have to free all possibilities by destroying all prerequisite conditions for phenomenality, therefore suspending all so-called “impossibilities” (Marion, 2002a:235-36). Therefore, Marion describes revelation as the “possibility of impossibility” that remains possible in the reduced immanence of givenness, without making any judgment on its actual manifestation or ontic status, which remain the business proper to revealed theology (Marion, 2002a:236). Finally, by seeking to avoid impending charges of theological “contamination” of phenomenology, he offers the explanation based on a distinction between *r*evelation (the part of phenomenological research) and *R*evelation (the part of theological study). He believes that *R*evelation, referring to actual historical, religious events, is never confounded with *r*evelation, referring to possible phenomena, and commits himself to carefully highlight this distinction by using a capital *R* only when the Revelation is related as actuality (Marion, 2002a:367).

After phenomenologically defending the possibility of theological study of *R*evelation, Marion gives an example of “saturation *par excellence*” referring to the manifestation of Christ, as it is portrayed in the New Testament (Marion, 2002a:236). The disclosure of Christ counts as the paradigm of saturation of second degree, which encompasses all of the four types of saturated phenomenon: 1) According to quantity, the manifestation of Christ gives itself intuitively as an event that exceeded all expectations. Indeed, Christ is “the one who is coming” (Jn 1:15), and his final coming remains unforeseeable even to him: “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mk 13:32) (Marion, 2002a:237). 2) According to

quality, Christ overwhelms what the gaze can bear because “his clothes became resplendent, excessively white” (Mk 9:3). The soldiers who came to arrest him fall to the ground when he calls himself by the divine name (Jn 18:6). In a similar way, Marion quotes Jesus’ own declaration that he still has many things to say, but that the disciples “cannot bear them now” (Jn 16:12) (Marion, 2002a:238). 3) In terms of relation, Christ is an “absolute” phenomenon by “saturation pertaining to flesh” identified at the Crucifixion (Marion, 2002a:239). The death offers an absolute phenomenon where Jesus’ flesh captures the looks of others who are ready to acclaim: “Truly this was the son of God!” (Mt 27:54). Also, Christ appears as absolute in this way ‘‘by always subverting the supposedly unique horizon of phenomenality, so as to demand a plurality of horizons that is never definite” (Marion, 2002a:239). In wishing to confirm this, Marion cites a number of Scripture’s passages or indications in which he considers this demand for a plurality of horizons to be obvious: the final verse of John’s Gospel, stating that “the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” if all that Jesus said and did were to be written down (Jn 21:25); the three languages used in the inscription above the cross (Jn 19:20); the plurality of titles accorded to Christ. 4) Finally, Marion identifies the phenomenon of Jesus Christ as irregardable, and thus saturated according to modality. Christ appears as an icon, the counter-gaze that inverts the gaze of another. He is the one who constitutes others as witnesses and disciples, while no one is able to constitute Him: “Christ constitutes his disciples as witness by electing them” (Marion, 2002a:240).

In conclusion, the saturated phenomenon which culminates in the type of paradox called *R*evelation has to be the one that embraces in itself – like the figure of Christ – an event, an idol, a flesh and an icon, all at the same time. By being transcendent, distant and infinite in excess, it requires a hermeneutical approach liberated from any kind of reduction associated with metaphysical categories of possible experience. Moreover, it exclusively insists on a hermeneutics that will involve a radical reversal of intentionality, where the subject

of saturation has no power to set the conditions of possibility under which the phenomenon appears, but rather receives what is given to him/her in the pure givenness of the maximal degree of saturation.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an analysis of saturated phenomena as a guiding phenomenological norm for Marion's entire postmetaphysical project. In general, the saturated phenomenon represents a "paradox" of experience in which intuition always submerges the expectation of the intentional subject. This phenomenon manifests itself in givenness which is excessive, as it always comes in a surplus that conceptual thinking is not able to organise. By giving "too much", the saturated phenomenon is also called a "rich" phenomenon, the phenomenon with a "maximal" degree of givenness.

Marion has recognised five types of saturated phenomena. He comes to this conclusion by employing Kant's formal categories of experience. The first four saturated phenomena correspond to Kant's division of four principles of pure experience. Each one of them is related to the corresponding category found in Kant's table of classification and also every single one defies the corresponding type of pure experience by the excessive phenomenality of givenness. Only the fifth one encompasses all four kinds of saturation and takes a higher rank of saturation named the "saturation of second degree". The first saturated phenomenon is *event*. In addressing Kant's category of *quantity*, this phenomenon saturates it by giving an abundant quantity of historical information that cannot be conceptually limited, quantified, measured or recreated. The second saturated phenomenon is *painting* or *idol.* These phenomena, generally representing works of art, are dazzling in their overpowering appearance, thus keeping human look constantly away from full understanding of their visibility. By addressing Kant's category of *quality*, they are unmeasurable, even described as

“blinding”, since the intensity of their appearance thwarts any attempt to determine them in fixed terminology. The third saturated phenomenon is *flesh*. It overcomes Kant’s category of *relation* as an “absolute” phenomenon that appears without any determined relational limitation. It shows itself by itself dismissing the possibility of establishing any kind of relation or analogy that would define the visibility of its manifestation. The fourth saturated phenomenon is *face* or *icon*. These phenomena go beyond Kant’s category of *modality* by avoiding being constituted by the restrictive intentionality of human gaze. By giving themselves in excessive phenomenality, they always remain objectless and irregardable. Finally, the fifth saturated phenomenon is *r/Revelation*. It has no corresponding category in Kant’s classification of experience. It is thus the highest kind of saturation that liberates all the appearing potentiality of saturated phenomenality. It is the saturated phenomenon *par excellence* that pushes the phenomenal horizon to the very edge of its possibility by simultaneously transcending every possible horizon of appearance.

Moreover, all types of saturated phenomena require a particular hermeneutical structure that would interpret their saturation. As presented in this chapter, each one of them overcomes by excessive manifestation a different category of experience defined by the metaphysical principle of pure reason. The phenomenon of *event* shows its saturation by claiming the interpretation that would be able to define its: 1) unrepeatability or irreversibility 2) inexhaustibility or endlessness and 3) unforeseeability or unpredictability. In the case of *paintings* and *idols*, there is a need for a hermeneutics which will assess the characteristics of: 1) passive apprehension of the viewer 2) phenomenon of invisible mirror. The saturation of *flesh* requires interpretation of its saturation from the perspective of an absolute relational independence. The phenomena of *face* and *icon* have need of a hermeneutical structure that would be able to interpret their saturated “envisaging”, which undermines any restrictive meaning. Finally, the *r/R*evelation as phenomenon *par excellence*, going beyond any limited horizon of appearance

and all metaphysical understanding of *ego*, looks for a hermeneutics that is at the same time liberated from all metaphysical restriction and capable of understanding the highest degree of saturation expressed in maximal possibility of phenomenon. How do such phenomena actually appear or become observable to human understanding? How does someone interpret, identify, or speak of them, let alone judge them? The prospect of such a kind of *postmetaphysical hermeneutics* and its interpretative principles and methods will be analysed and clarified in the following chapter.

4.0 HERMENEUTICS OF SATURATION: THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION AND ITS RATIONALE

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter of this research presented Marion's concept of saturated phenomenon as appearing phenomenality of the highest degree. It overcomes all metaphysical conditions of appearance and as such requires an endless hermeneutical structure that complies with its excessive givenness. In this way, saturation designates the phenomenon which is almost incomprehensible, or at least marks the limit from which the phenomenon in general is no longer possible. This focus on the most excessive instances of the givenness is unfortunate for some of Marion's critics. Jocelyn Benoist contends that Marion "absolutizes" the saturated phenomenon and pushes it to an unwarranted extreme that makes phenomenology more excessive than it needs to be (Benoist, 2003:77). Likewise, François-David Sebbah reproves Marion's concept of saturation as hovering on the very edge of phenomenality, while still remaining in the metaphysics of presence (Sebbah, 2012:104-122). Vincent Holzer names Marion's phenomenology a "radical phenomenology", Martin Gagnon calls it a "phenomenology at the limit", and Emmanuel Falque speaks of it as "phenomenology of the extraordinary" (Holzer, 1999:55-68; Gagnon, 1993:11-30; Falque, 2003:52-76) All of them actually claim that Marion made his phenomenology fairly unfounded by using superlative terminology in his description. Richard Kearney has joined critics of Marion by simply stating "that appearing – always already involves an interpretation of some kind" and that

Marion's insistence on the saturated givenness of phenomena excludes this obvious principle (Kearney, 2001:33-34).

When challenged by criticisms like Kearney's, Marion reliably replies by objecting that the idea of a saturated phenomenon does not exclude the need for hermeneutics. Actually, he confidently responds that it "not only does not forbid hermeneutics but demands it" (Marion, 2002b:33). Moreover, Marion is not ready to accept critical remarks which claim that the idea of saturation is unfounded when it comes to understanding. In support of his argument, he asserts a vision of an "endless hermeneutics" that is able to interpret the meaning of an saturated phenomenon within the horizon of unconditional and pure givenness. Marion insists that such a phenomenon should not be understood as a "limit case", an exceptional, vaguely irrational or mystical case of phenomenality. On the contrary, saturated phenomenon indicates the coherent and conceptual completion of the most operative definition of the phenomenon (Marion, 2000:212). In other words, he makes the ground for "endless hermeneutics" a methodology that is able to understand the unique structure of saturated phenomenon, which "alone truly appears as itself, of itself, and starting from itself, since it alone appears without the limits of the horizon and without the reduction to an *I*" (Marion, 2002:213).

This chapter aims to provide an explanation of Marion's rationale that guides his endless, open-ended and postmetaphysical system of hermeneutics. First, it will point out to the basic principles of his hermeneutics of saturation, which are only generally emphasised and mentioned in the previous chapter by describing specific structures of all five types of saturated phenomena. In that sense, this part of the section will provide a precise and systematic presentation and understanding of two core hermeneutical principles that lie behind Marion's interpretative methodology of saturation. Second, the remaining part of the chapter will concentrate on the philosophical justification that gives validity to Marion's views on hermeneutics. This means that his hermeneutical program will be analysed in broader hermeneutical tradition in order to define Marion's

interpretative stance and provide a clearer understanding of his hermeneutical direction. In conclusion, this research section will set the stage for the next chapter, which deals with an important hermeneutical analysis of biblical Revelation that, as the predominant idea of this research, represents the main concept which will be defined in Marion's hermeneutical structure of saturation.

4.2 The Basic Principles of Endless Hermeneutics of Saturation

The interpretative structure of all five types of saturation is looking for a model of endless or infinite hermeneutics. The model has to approve the asymmetric interrelationship between the given phenomenon and the phenomenological subject that perceives its phenomenality. It has to recognise and deal with the disproportion caused by the excessive nature of the saturated phenomenon that overcomes all attempts of definition. Therefore, it endlessly keeps the "itself" of the phenomenon hidden and inaccessible and thus prevents it from being reduced to a view of a subject or any kind of conceptual horizon. More precisely, Marion's entire project is based upon an inverse relation between the givenness of the saturated phenomenon and the subject. Namely, saturated givenness expands or increases its phenomenality in the direct proportion and to the exact degree to which the subject's activity decreases in its capacity to grasp it. Therefore, it comes as an expected result that Marion's phenomenological attempt to return to the things themselves, to the gift as it gives itself, demands a radicalisation of the subject's passivity.

In this context, the nature of Marion's endless hermeneutics is defined by two key hermeneutical principles. The first one explains *the subject of interpretation*. The phenomenological subject is presented as the receiving one. Her/his role is always to be a witness of saturation and never to be the constitutive agent of it. In that sense, the subject deals with the passive, testifying experience without the possibility of reaching out to any constitutional power. The second one

defines *the object of interpretation*. The saturated phenomena possess excessive self-givenness as the foundational norm for any hermeneutical framework. This feature defines the unconditional origin and excessive nature of the appearing phenomenon and represents the limiting condition of interpretive work from the very outset. Subsequently, this excessive nature of saturation produces the experience of *counter-objectivity*. Instead of constituting the object of saturation, the subject of saturation becomes constituted by the *call* received from the impact of the saturated phenomenon. This means that the endless hermeneutics of saturation subsequently becomes the hermeneutics of *inversion* or *reversal*. It is defined totally and solely by the effect of the hermeneutical object of saturation which leaves the hermeneutical subject in an insignificant phenomenological position.

These two principles are the normative guide for any attempt at an interpretation of saturated phenomena according to Marion's hermeneutical understanding. Therefore, the following sections will address each one of them in order to outline and explain the hermeneutical essence of both the subject and object of saturation and also to define the substance of their hermeneutical interrelationship.

4.2.1 Hermeneutical Subject: The Passive Recipient of Saturation

Marion's understanding of the saturated phenomenon requires a radical rethinking of the role of the hermeneutical subject. Since a saturated phenomenon gives itself from itself in excess, it remains out of mastery of the constitutive or transcendental *I* and thus transforms it consequently into a witness, a "gifted one". Instead of the subject who constitutes a phenomenon, Marion establishes a witness of it, the one who is constituted by it or who receives itself from this phenomenon. In this way, the receiving subject becomes the successor of what metaphysics designates as "subject" only because it stands clearly opposed to it

(Marion, 2002a:249). And even more, this opposition does not stem primarily from the fact that the receiver comes after the phenomenon, but rather from the fact that, as such, the receiving subject can no longer claim to possess or produce phenomena. It no longer stands in the relation of the possession of the phenomena, but in a purely receiving relation, which may be described as a "relation of unlimited usufruct, but without any guarantee" (Marion, 2002a:249).

Although Marion proposes a submissive role of the subject in all five cases of saturation, his phenomenology has no purpose to "destroy" or "to suppress it" (Marion, 2002a:322). He is aware that such an attempt always turns out to be a failure. To tear down the "subject" is "performative contradiction". The one who tries to annul it actually reinforces it at the very moment of annulment. Therefore, destroying the "subject" by denying its actuality becomes, indeed, giving to it all the more an ideal definition. By default, as repressed, the "subject" always rises again from each of its pretended destructions (Marion, 2002a:322). For that reason, to defeat the traditional role of "subject" does not necessarily imply to destroy it, but to reverse it – to overturn it. The *I* always stays situated at the centre of phenomenality and that should never be contested. What has to be contested is the mode of occupying and exercising the centre to which it lays claim. In other words, the contested is the claim that *I* holds the central position as a thinking, constituting, resolute *ego*, with transcendental "mineness". Instead, the central position should be held by one who finds himself as recipient or receiver. Therefore, at the centre stands no "subject" of metaphysical philosophy, but a gifted one, he whose function consists in witnessing of what is immeasurably given to him, and whose privilege is confined to the fact that he is himself received from what he receives (Marion, 2002a:322). The new "subject" is transformed from a *nominative* role to a more original, *dative* role, which assumes the *ego* as the "to whom" of the phenomenological given. Ian Leask describes this transformation into a dative recipient as a "necessary operative assumption" since

“givenness seems to require a dative subject to whom the phenomenon shows itself inasmuch as it gives itself” (Leask, 2005:187).

Marion’s explication of a reconstructed, dative subjectivity proceeds in several stages, to which he attaches different names. Each version of the new “subject” provides a more thorough and deeper account (Gschwandtner, 2007:206). In his earliest phenomenological writings Marion first outlined the receiving subject as *interloqué* or *interlocuted* (Marion, 1998b:175-80). Marion derives the terminology of the *interlocuted* from Heidegger’s figure of *Dasein* which became displaced/reversed by *Sein*. By introducing this reversal (*Kehre*), Heidegger situates *Dasein* in the position of receiver of the “call” addressed to him by the appeal of Being (*Sein*). In this state, *Dasein* comes to be the one who comes after the subject, but also after the metaphysical *I*, because he lets himself be claimed by the call of Being (*Anspruch des Seins*). The *interloqué*, however, emerges as a more originary form of *Dasein* who is displaced by the call that overcomes the appeal of Being. The *interlocuted* is turned into an accusative by the pure call: “The claim [*revendication*] calls me. I have not even been able to say I before the claim has already hailed me, and therefore has taken and comprehended me, because it has summoned and named me as a me” (Marion, 1998a:198). As Rolf Kuhn explained: “The reduction of the appeal of Being for Marion has finally no other goal than opening humans for a different appeal, better: for/toward any possible appeal, that is, to the appeal as such” (Kuhn, 1995:148).

Marion outlines three essential features of the *interloqué*: 1) it is always already involved in relationships because it is constantly addressed and convoked by the call of the Other, 2) it is experienced as surprise (not ecstasy) that dislocates any attempt to constitute itself as a “subject”, and 3) it is always already “judged”, summoned to court, put into question and thus interpellated as suspect and not as “subject”. Described as such, the *interlocuted* turns out to be a “subject

without subjectivity", the one who "sacrificed autarchy" and who always comes after the prior appeal that invites him to respond (Marion, 1998b:175-180).

Marion deepens and radicalises his vision of reversed subjectivity in *Being Given*, where he distinguishes between two other terms of the *ego*. From the one side, he describes the concept of *self* as the "beneficiary", or the one to whom something is attributed (*l'attributaire*), and from the other side as the "gifted one", the subject who is being "devoted" or "given over" (*l'adonné*). Marion investigates the status of *l'attributaire* in particular when he speaks of the fourth saturated phenomenon of icon, which imposes its own immediate effectivity or actuality on the *ego* (Marion, 2002a:212-21). It is designated by witnessing function to the sudden impact coming out from self-giving phenomena. Therefore, this second figure of *ego* emerges exclusively as a response, as a witness characterised by surprise and reception, not by control or certainty. It has no active role of organising data into the framework of universal scientific knowledge, but represents rather a passive self who receives the given that offers itself and at times even violently imposes itself. In this way, *l'attributaire* becomes characterised as "beneficiary", having its "being" only in relation to and in connection with the phenomenon to which it is "attributed" or from which it "benefits." There is no possibility of universal knowledge or complete certainty for the passive self that all the time comes after and in response to the self-giving phenomenon. Marion carries this vision of the responsive *ego* even further with his third figure of *l'adonné*. He describes it as one totally "devoted" and "given over" to the call that is implicated in the saturated phenomenon. In doing this, he actually uses again the paradigms of Heidegger's call of Being and in this context also Levinas' call of the Other. However, both form of call remain limited for Marion, because they are determined either ontologically by Being or ethically by the Other. Marion is ready to employ these paradigms but in order to make them free from their respective commitments to Being or the Other. Therefore, Marion insists that whatever saturated phenomena could represent a call to its recipient

who ultimately becomes “devoted” or “given over” to a variety of different calls, not solely Being or another human face, this new self, characterised by devotion to the call of saturated phenomenon, is *l’adonné*. Jeffrey Kosky translates this term as “the gifted”, wishing to retain the resemblance to Marion’s other prominent terms such as “givenness”, “the gift” or “the given” (Kosky, 2004:639). However, *l’adonné* rather means to be “given over to”, or even “addicted to”. “The gifted” as a term does not work either as a translation of the French term nor as a description of Marion’s use of it. In one German interview Marion wonders whether *l’adonné* could be translated with the German “*das Zugegebene*”, which is a synonym for “the gifted”. While the audience rightly responded that this does not really work in German, Marion suggested that connotations of “devotedness to” or “givenness to” are not expressed in the best way with this terminology. More precisely, since *l’adonné* has no reflexive and mediation role and comes to be a “result of the given”, it is not suitable to be translated in the fashion where the receptive relation of devotion and commitment to the saturated phenomenon is not clearly emphasised (Gschwandtner, 2007:213; Wohlmuth, 2000:64-65).

Finally, the devotion and commitment to the phenomenon that Marion emphasised by *l’adonné* is carried to its height in Marion’s work on the erotic phenomenon. In this case, *ego* is not only devoted to the saturated phenomenon whose impact it receives. Rather, it becomes absolutely committed as a lover that is beloved. Moreover, the lover (*l’amant*) as the ultimate instantiation of the devoted recipient becomes for Marion the furthest removal from metaphysics, or the most successful overcoming of the metaphysical subject (Marion, 2007b:8). This fourth figure of *ego* is able to respond to each of the metaphysical claims represented in the traditional vision of the subject. More specifically, to the vital characteristics of the metaphysical subject, Marion’s *l’amant* brings overcoming and reversal. Instead of taking a strong solipsistic posture of autonomy, it becomes receptive and radically dependent upon the impact of the phenomenon. Its obsession with control, permanence and presence is displaced by the

givenness of the saturated phenomenon that comes to it with surprise and constitutes it as a witness. Finally, the search for intellectual certainty in a radical system of doubt is replaced by assurance in the uncertainty of loving vulnerability. Therefore, the utter need for affirmation and assurance of being is not located in organised knowledge anymore, but in existential concern of the self to love and be affirmed by love (Marion, 2007a:41-42; 85-87).

Although Marion's vision of subjectivity displays some level of progression in going beyond the metaphysical subject, the foundation of his presentation remains nevertheless established on the common characteristics applied to all instances of overcoming of the metaphysical *I*. In other words, all four figures of subjectivity share the same following features: 1) subjectivity is stripped of its transcendental rank; it is no longer constituting, but constituted. In this way, the giving of meaning is inverted. The *I* can no more provide meaning to self-appearing phenomena, but rather these phenomena provide meaning for themselves. Therefore, the *ego* only remains "affected" or "constituted" by their manifestation. 2) The phenomenological intuition of saturated phenomena passes over any possible concept, which essentially means exceeding of any "hermeneutics of the concept". 3) Subjectivity is utterly subdued to the paradox of the saturated phenomena that control it and submerge it. This subordination takes away the anteriority of *I* as the egoic pole who is not capable of identifying itself any more, except by admitting the priority of such undetermined phenomena. The passive position leaves the *ego* stunned and taken aback, fundamentally surprised by the more original event that takes him away from himself. 4) Subjectivity is challenged and transformed by the *call* which characterises every saturated phenomenon as such. This essential feature of saturation actually causes the birth of a new subjectivity for Marion – the subjectivity that is entirely in conformity with givenness and that is entirely received by the given call that it receives. Just as a transparent screen becomes visible only upon being impacted

by the light, so too the receiver emerges only upon receiving the given. Here the question arises for Marion (2002a:266):

> If the receiver is determined as a thought that transforms the given into the manifest and is received from what it receives—in short, if it is born from the very arising of the phenomenon inasmuch as given, that is to say, from a given exerting the mere impact of its event—what will happen when a phenomenon given as saturated arises?

He responds: "The impact will be radicalized into a call, and receiver into *l'adonné*" (Marion, 2002a:266). In other words, in Marion's view, there could no longer be any question of imposing subjective conditions upon the given, since the given is itself anterior to the gifted. The only possibility that may arise consequently is the possibility of a call—a call which, insofar as it comes before any concept or horizon, is said to be both wholly indeterminate and entirely pure. Having this in mind, the following section will present in more detail the vital characteristics of the call as the second basic constituent of Marion's entire hermeneutical framework.

4.2.2 Hermeneutical Object: The Call as an Impact of Saturated Phenomena

Marion (2002a:266) is aware that reference to the call as a philosophical device can sometimes be "troubling". However, he finds several arguments that validate it. First, he turns back to Heidegger, who was finally obliged to explain the ontological character of *Dasein* by reference to *Being* that itself exerts a *claim* (*Anspruch des Seins*) over *Dasein*, who, as a result, gets the status of "claimed one" (*Angesprochene*). Moreover, Marion observes that the phenomenality of call or claim for Heidegger is not described exclusively in terms of the "question of Being", but could also be found within the Christian background, associated with the call of *Father* (*Anspruch des Vaters*) (Marion, 2002a:266; Marion, 1998a:196; Heidegger, 1998b:249). Drawing also on Levinas as well as the work of his contemporary, Jean-Louis Chrétien, he demonstrates that in their works a call is also exercised as an encounter which always claims a response. However, the

response does not exhaust the call and cannot do justice to it (Marion, 2002a:266-67, 289; Levinas, 1991:45-50; Chrétien, 2004). Also, in all of these examples the call has its own singular and irreducible phenomenality, regardless of which different authorities or phenomena (Being, Father or Other) would have leased it (Marion, 2002a:266).

After making such a foundation for his philosophy of call, Marion deepens it with his own presentation applied to saturated phenomena. In fact, he thinks that each type of saturated phenomenon makes a call possible, or even an inevitable occurrence. The event, unforeseeable according to quantity, comes to pass over the *I* by calling it to infinite and incommensurable phenomenality. The idol, unbearable according to quality, stops and returns the gaze of the *I* by filling it with the first visible in such a way that *I* becomes summoned to see it. The flesh, absolute according to relation, is enacted as auto-affection so that the *I* is called to respond as affected with the affecting of its own flesh. The icon, irregardable according to modality, exerts its own manifestation over the gaze of the spectator and invites him to submit himself to the presence of the iconic call. Finally, the r/Revelation, as the saturated phenomenon *par excellence*, transforms the *I* into a witness who is summoned to testify the saturation of the second degree (Marion, 2002a:267).

More specifically, in all types of saturation, Marion (2002a:268-271) takes the call as an impact on *I* in terms of four characteristics of its own manifestation: 1) It *summons*: The receiving *I* is summoned by a call in such a way that he must surrender to it, and that comes to be in the double sense of the French *s'y rendre*: being displaced and submitting to it. Thus he must abandon the privilege of the autarchy of self-centredness and self-actualisation. This relation to the call results in the crucial paradox: in and through the summons, the receiving *I* is identified, but this identification escapes him immediately since he receives it without necessarily knowing it. He consequently receives himself from what he thinks neither clearly nor distinctly, from the call that is exercised without coming

inevitably into evidence. He is submitted therefore to an originally altered and called identity. 2) It *surprises*: The receiving *I*, resulting from a summons, is stunned, taken over or astonished by a seizure of a call. The call surprises by seizing the *ego* without always teaching him what it might be. It reduces him to simply watching, freezes him in place and puts him in immovable availability without giving him a possibility for objectifying knowledge. The receiver directs all his attention to an essentially lacking object and therefore remains open to an empty presentation, essential loss of knowledge. Descartes (1985:350) may serve as a guide in this matter because of his definition of wonder: "When our first encounter with some object surprises us and we find it novel, or very different from what we formerly knew or from what we supposed it ought to be, this causes us to wonder and to be astonished at it." For that reason he is ready to conclude: "Since all this may happen before we know whether or not the object is beneficial to us, I regard wonder as the first of all the passions" (Descartes, 1985:350). However, this interpretation has its limits and is not entirely complementary to Marion's vision of the *I*. The wonder or surprise for Descartes is still a first passion of the *ego* in the traditional sense, therefore of the metaphysical subject. Marion, in contrast, is describing a more originary impact, which precedes the metaphysical subjectivity. Nonetheless, the *ego* might have the possibility to proceed from it, but surprise would definitely leave it destitute of its privilege or any metaphysical ground. 3) It causes *interlocution*: The impact of the call creates a dialogical situation in which two speakers make conversation with one another in an equal relation, but in an unequal position. The *I* as receiving subject finds himself as called, indeed assailed as the "unto whom" of an addressed initiative. It is no longer the case where he understands himself in the nominative position (intending the object – Husserl), nor in the genitive (questioning of Being – Heidegger), nor even in the accusative (accused by the Other – Levinas), but in the position of the dative: The *I* receives his own self from the pure call that gives him to himself before giving him anything that would be reduced to objectified

knowledge. Moreover, this position of dative could hardly be distinguished from the ablative, since the *I*, by being called by an unknowable claim, makes possible the opening for givenness of all other kinds of specific given phenomena. 4) It owns undeniable *facticity*: The receiving subject endures the call and its impact as an always already given fact. However, the call is not a given fact in terms of the mere metaphysical presence of meaning, but rather in terms of the very fact of its arrival, of coming upon and imposing itself on the *I.* This kind of facticity leads into irrefutable facticity of the receiving subject. Actually, that is the usual experience found among all mortals. For not one human has ever lived without experiencing a call and discovered himself as recipient of it. Or, more precisely, never has a mortal lived, be it only for an instant, without discovering himself preceded by a call that was already there. The appropriate paradigm for this facticity resides in the ability of speaking: for every human being, the first word was always already heard before he could utter it. To speak, therefore, always and principally amounts to passively hearing a word spoken by another. This word was first incomprehensible, coming as a pure given fact to be thought for the first time. In such a situation, not only is that first word never said by the *I*, and not only does it fail to give rational or objective knowledge, but it opens the very facticity that something given is happening to the *ego* in a way that precedes it and for that reason his own facticity proceeds from it. In other words, the call, and not the *I*, delivers the original becoming of the self. The result of this is the birth of the decentred, receiving subject that founds itself in conformity with givenness which by its own own facticity originates his own identity.

Finally, the call given in the appearance of the saturated phenomenon is defined by its anonymity and thus represents the “nameless voice” (Marion, 2002a:296-300; 2013:57-58). It is essentially founded as such for three phenomenological reasons: 1) The call issues from all types of saturated phenomena without specifying their identity. In other words, one cannot, starting from the call, go back directly to this or that type of saturation. The saturation is

related to five strictly different types of phenomena (event, idol, flesh, icon and *r*/*R*evelation) where each of them may accomplish the same and unique type of call without specifying the sort of saturated phenomenon that lies behind the call itself. Moreover, this indifference of the call to the type of saturation finds its utmost validation in the highest form of saturated phenomena, revelation, which involves all other phenomena. In this case, the call bears no name because the paradox of revelation assumes all kinds of saturation. For that reason, when God revealed himself to Moses by the highest name, he actually attested the insolence of every essential name or description that would be applied to him. By summing it up in an empty tautology – *I am who I am* – he opened the field for the endless invocation of all the names. As a result, Marion concludes: “The Name gives itself only in saying itself without any name, therefore in all” (Marion, 2002a:297). 2) The anonymity of the call is drawn from the definition of the gift which is defined by the third phenomenological reduction of givenness that is accomplished by the bracketing of the giver, which implies its name as well. In this way, the gift reduced to pure givenness is deployed according to an intrinsic givenness which owes nothing to the giver, not even its identity. 3) The call must remain anonymous because its function is never to name itself, only to call its recipient to respond and thus to arouse him. Therefore, the first and foremost function of the call is nothing more than to summon such a witness, and in no way to identify itself by revealing its name. Everything which gives itself as a call only shows itself when the recipient converts it into a phenomenon by its response. Only from that point does the call take on visibility and eventually receive a name. Until the response has happened, it remains always anonymous. Since the respondent may recognise what the call gives to himself and has the possibility to identify it after receiving it, Marion points out: “The call calls the respondent, never itself; it therefore receives its possible name only from the respondent, which gives a name to it after the fact” (Marion, 2002a:298) This establishes the essential determination of the call – it is always given as anonymous because it is heard

and identified only in the response of the recipient. However, the naming of the call, originating in the recipient's response, can never, even by proliferating indefinitely, do justice to the anonymity of the call. The response of any kind will always be suspected of having poorly or partially identified the call, or of not having perfectly accomplished its command, of not having exhausted all its possibilities. Therefore, Marion (2002a:303) straightforwardly concludes: "The call excites the response but is never appeased by it." Therefore, the response keeps the very nature of the call's anonymity by remaining always uncompleted and deficient.

For some critics, such as Carson, this understanding of deficient, never completed response has to be treated as a kind of hermeneutical debt or fault. For him, the role assigned to the phenomenological *I*, whose response is always inadequate, is actually a frustrating experience. The *I* is destined to receive the saturation of phenomenality by suffering humiliation and remonstration and by counting himself always already "inadequate to the given and so forever unworthy of it" (Carson, 1999:174). From the other side, the passive role of the subject who inadequately names the call, leads to the conclusion that Marion's phenomenology is essentially unintelligible and goes too far in emphasising passivity. For instance, Ricard (2001:92) thinks that the vision of a subject that reflects pure passivity and that becomes "a screen or a surface without depth" is an interpretation far too restraining. He actually thinks that this type of phenomenology has its origin from a "universe of magic" and "theatre imagery". In both cases, the subject or actor adjusts himself to the role given to him through the practice of "mimesis", which makes him only to be "a passive receptacle" (Ricard, 2001:94). In the same line, Horner (2004:61-80) criticises Marion's account of "counter-experience" subjectivity as too extreme, in which the *I* becomes utterly undecidable. In her view, this kind of presuppositionless phenomenology cannot be possible. There is no phenomenology that can ultimately work without a horizon and a constituting *I*, because it has to be reduced

to what can be known. Therefore, even though Marion maintains that it does work without these conditions, “the phenomenology he practices has gone beyond phenomenology.” Horner (2004:75) specifically points out that “in his figure of saturation, we have the perfect example of the positive failure of phenomenology.”

While Marion certainly recognises the deficiency of naming the saturation, he does not take the relationship between the saturated phenomenon and the receiving subject as a fault, but rather as a proper designation of the infinite kinds of saturation and the finite and imperfect receiving subject. Moreover, he claims that the subject’s experience of finitude and imperfection is not so frustrated because his role is not exclusively subordinated to the impact of the call. Instead of a passive role, Marion gives to the subject the role in which he is “neither the author nor the spectator of the phenomenon” (Marion, 2002a:147). In other words, contrary to the critics pointed out above, who reject the extremely passive role of Marion’s hermeneutics and assert the impossibility of interpretation, he claims that an understanding of saturated phenomena provides an intelligible interpretation offered by the subject who is neither passive nor active, but the one who has the status of “middle-voice.” His hermeneutical position is defined as the middle ground between the unconditional givenness of appearing phenomena and an epistemic act which provides a meaning to those phenomena. Therefore, Marion himself acknowledges his understanding of saturation as a hermeneutics of “middle-voice”. The explanation of this hermeneutics, its principles and its background will be analysed and clarified in subsequent sections of this chapter.

4.3 Hermeneutics of Saturation as Hermeneutics of Middle-voice

By claiming that the interpretation of a saturated phenomenon has to refer to a hermeneutics of middle-voice, Marion is actually seeking to find the middle ground between the passivity and activity of the hermeneutical subject. However, his phenomenological understanding of saturation belongs to a hermeneutical

position that interprets the meaning of a phenomenon as an epistemic act which always comes *after the phenomenon has already appeared*. This means that the actual appearing of the phenomenon is fully accomplished or given before any interpretation of its appearing is offered.

This kind of hermeneutics has a long lineage of representatives. It was pioneered by Schleiermacher and Dilthey and developed later in the twentieth century by prominent figures such as Heidegger or Gadamer. Having this hermeneutical context in mind, Marion's hermeneutics of saturation echoes Heidegger's way of interpretation introduced in *Being and Time*, wherein he situates the appearing of the phenomenon in the context of the middle-voiced verb *φαίνεσται*, specifying that this appearing cannot be understood either as the activity of the subject or as a purely passive experience of reception (Heidegger, 1962:51). Moreover, Marion's interpretation of the saturated phenomenon may also be compared to Romano's account of phenomenality which, as profoundly ontological, strives for a hermeneutics of middle-voice in the manner of Heidegger. Finally, the hermeneutics of saturation may be related as well to Gadamer's study of the historically-affected consciousness wherein he proposes a middle-voice hermeneutics which is able to relieve the tension between the activity and passivity of the subject who interprets the manifestation of an appearing phenomenon through the philosophy of prejudice (Mackinlay, 2010:37; 2005:169; Elliot, 2015:1-16).

In order to shed light on the rationale for Marion's hermeneutics, the following part of this chapter will clarify the position of the hermeneutics of saturation in a broader framework that is recognised as a hermeneutics of middle-voice. For that reason, the following section will commence with an explanation of ontological hermeneutics developed by Heidegger. Both Gadamer and Romano, likewise Marion, drew upon Heidegger's work in their attempts to reconcile the significant tension between the givenness of phenomena and a hermeneutical understanding of it. Therefore, this opening section will clarify

Heidegger's key characteristics of middle-voice hermeneutics which represent the foundation for its later development, including all the above-mentioned thinkers. Next, this section will address Gadamer's and Romano's hermeneutical projects and point out their understanding and contribution to middle-voice hermeneutics. Finally, it will compare Marion's hermeneutical project of saturation with all three examples of middle-voice hermeneutics in order to highlight the specific differences in their claims. Hopefully, this kind of analysis, together with the hermeneutical principles of saturation explained above, will offer a comprehensive understanding of the hermeneutics of saturation and will also prepare the ground for its application to the Scripture that will be presented in the next chapter of this research.

4.3.1 Ontological Hermeneutics of *Dasein*

Hermeneutics in its traditional form originated in dealing with problems of biblical exegesis and developed a theoretical framework to govern and direct such exegetical practice. However, at the end of the eighteenth century and in the early nineteenth century thinkers such as Cladenius and Meier, Ast and Schleiermacher developed hermeneutics into a more encompassing theory of textual interpretation in general. Hermeneutics thus became a discipline which provided a set of rules as a basis for good interpretive work for any subject matter. It turned out to be a method proper to the recovery of meaning no matter what the subject of interpretation might be. Additionally, Wilhelm Dilthey broadened hermeneutics still further by taking it as the methodology for the recovery of meaning that is essential to understanding within the "human" or "historical" sciences [*Geistesweissenschaften*]. In general the basic problem of hermeneutics for these thinkers was a methodological one. Their main hermeneutical question was how to develop the science of interpretation that would be effective in giving a proper understanding to what was interpreted (Malpas, 2016:3).

Already familiar with this kind of modern hermeneutical thinking, Heidegger diverted hermeneutics to a very different purpose and within a very different frame. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger declares his hermeneutical stance by claiming that the historical sciences' way of interpretation is of secondary importance because scientific understanding is always derived from the "primary sense" of hermeneutics founded on the interpretation of *Dasein*'s existence as Being-in-the world (Heidegger, 1962:62). Consequently, for him, "understanding" represents cognition that is essentially an "existential derivative" of the primary understanding founded on the "basic mode of *Dasein*'s Being" (Heidegger, 1962:182). Hermeneutics is therefore an epistemic act of interpretation derived from a more fundamental ontological or existential sense rather than a theoretical one.

Heidegger renders the hermeneutics of *Dasein* as pivotal to phenomenology by offering his analysis of the "as-structure" of meaning and interpretation (Heidegger, 1962:188-203). He argues that every circumspective consideration (*Umsicht*) of ready-to-hand objects, even a simple description of them, contains an understanding of what an object is for (*des Wozu*). Consequently, the interpretation of that "as" explains the meaning of the thing taken into question (Heidegger, 1962:189). For instance, seeing something *as* a door includes a series of understandings about buildings, and also thoughts of movement in and out of them. However, this simple, "ontic" or "apophantic" interpretation of *as* is derived from a primordial [*ursprüngliche*] *as* of an interpretation, which is an ontological or "existential-hermeneutic of *as*" (Heidegger, 1962:201). In other words, an apophantic interpretation explains an object *as* something without adding any signification to that entity. It only unveils that entity *as* embedded in a network of the world's relations and significations. According to Heidegger, whatever entity is encountered in-the-world has always an involvement which is disclosed in world-understanding, an involvement which gets meaning by interpretation that is inextricably linked with the existence of that

entity in the world (Heidegger, 1962:190). This network of relations in which inner-worldly entities are encountered simply as “world” constitutes the key aspect of Heidegger’s existential hermeneutics. As the world’s fundamental structure, worldliness (*Weltlichkeit*) becomes the “referential totality” within which particular entities are understood *as* being useful “in-order-to” accomplish some end “toward which” or “for the sake of which” they existentially aim (Heidegger, 1962:113-116). For that reason, in Heidegger’s most well-known example, an encounter with an entity such *as* a hammer is possible only in the context of its involvement with hammering; with hammering there is an involvement in making something fast; with making something fast, there is an involvement in protection against bad weather conditions; and this protection is for the sake of providing shelter for human beings, or more precisely “for the sake of *Dasein*’s Being” (Heidegger, 1962:116). Therefore, the entities in their being-ready-to-hand are never encountered in isolation, but always as a part of the worldliness of the world. They get their signification by involvement in this totality of the world’s relations, which finally always includes their relation to human being as *Dasein*-in-the-world. In the same sense, every human being is enmeshed in this worldliness, to such an extent that it defines even one’s very existence (Heidegger, 1962:33). A human being is therefore an entity that is always determined as Being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962:79).

As evidence for this essential worldliness of the human being, Heidegger points to the “state of mind” [*Befindlichkeit*], which more literally means “the state in which one may be found” (Heidegger, 1962:172). He argues that this understanding has three principal characteristics. First, the state of mind principally understands a human being as thrown into the world that is disclosed to him by aspects of mood or humour [*die Stimmung*, *das Gestimmtsein*]. Since Heidegger thinks that every human being encounters the world in a circumspective way, which is not by sensing something or staring at it, but implies concern and has a character of becoming affected in some way, the mood

therefore manifests the fundamental way of "how one is" related to the world and situated in it. It brings the human being to his "there" in which he is placed in the world. Second, this understanding highlights the closeness of the interrelation between the human being and the world. It represents the compound structure that indicates a "unitary phenomenon", which must be seen as an inseparable whole (Heidegger, 1962:78). Disposedness reveals "Being-in the world as a whole" as a basic existential mode of the "*equiprimordial disclosedness* of world, *Dasein*-with and existence" (Heidegger, 1962:176). This unitary presentation reaches its most intense point when Heidegger asserts that ontologically the world is a characteristic of *Dasein* itself and that the worldliness of the world is an existential determination of Being-in-the world, that is, of *Dasein* (Heidegger, 1962:92,121; Mackinlay, 2010:20). Finally, this disposedness existentially constitutes *Dasein's* "openness" [*Erschlossenheit*] to the world, which goes above all towards a more penetrating understanding of the worldliness of the world (Heidegger, 1962:176). Actually, the encompassing relation of openness to the world makes it possible that any acts of interpretation or cognition can occur.

This understanding of worldliness has an ontological-existential sense and not the sense of pure rational cognition, which is always secondary, derived from the more fundamental or ontological sense. The existential understanding is concerned with disclosing the totality of possible involvements and references of entities that *Dasein* meets as Being-in-the-world. This referential totality is shaped by an *in-order-to* or *for-sake-of-which* question, which necessarily involves *Dasein* as well, particularly in a way of his capacity-to-be, to possibly assign himself for something (Heidegger, 1962:119). Therefore, at the core of this understanding lies *Dasein*'s way of being as possibility. He is primarily *Being-possible*, which means that he is always what it can be and what it is capable of to be: "Understanding is the existential Being of *Dasein*'s own potentiality-for-Being; and it is so in such a way that this Being discloses in itself what its Being is capable of" (Heidegger, 1962:184). Heidegger calls this existential structure of

understanding “projection” [*Entwurf*]. The basic meaning of this noun is that of “throwing something off” or “away” from one. In ordinary German usage, and often in Heidegger, it takes the meaning of “designing” or “sketching” some “project” which is to be carried through (Heidegger, 1962:185). However, Heidegger warns that this German term does not mean that projecting has anything to do with “comporting oneself towards a plan that has been thought out, and in accordance with which *Dasein* arranges its Being” (Heidegger, 1962:185). In other words, projection should not be confused with autonomous and deliberate acts of self-determination. On the contrary, he claims that “as thrown, *Dasein* is thrown into the way of Being of projecting” (Heidegger, 1962:185). That means that *Dasein* is always already projected itself and therefore, as such, is continually projecting itself. In order words, *Dasein* always already understands itself and always is yet to understand itself as a Being of possibilities. Therefore, any actual state in which *Dasein* finds itself, be it as simple as working or longing, is always already a projection which actualises the projecting of possibilities based on the state of thrownness of Being-in-the world.

Heidegger persistently interprets *Dasein* as both actively projecting itself into its own possibility of existence, and as passively finding itself in a state of thrownness and dispossession. However, as *Being and Time* progresses, the tension between these two dimensions gradually collapses. The more active dimension of *Dasein*’s projection into possibility takes on an ever more dominant role (Mackinlay, 2010:20). Heidegger increasingly situates *Dasein*’s active side of projection to be the referential point and increasingly describes the world in terms of its relation to this dimension of projecting: “The ‘wherein’ of an act of understanding which assigns or refers itself, is that for which one lets entities be encountered in the kind of Being that belongs to involvements; and this ‘wherein’ is the phenomenon of the world” (Heidegger, 1962:119). This tendency reaches its most important point when Heidegger asserts that “ontologically, ‘world’ is not a way of characterising those entities which *Dasein* essentially is not; but is rather

characteristic of *Dasein* itself" (Heidegger, 1962:92). In this way, the world is presented more as a feature of *Dasein*'s own projecting than as the referential totality in which that projection is thrown in disposedness. For that reason, Heidegger's hermeneutics is not based on an interpretation of existence that arises after it is subsequently described as thrown into the worldliness of the world, but rather an interpretation of human existence *in the very structure of its active projecting* in the world. In this way, the phenomenon is not interpreted *after* it has appeared, but is *always already* interpreted in its very appearing (Mackinlay, 2010:36).

In this context of Heideggerian existential hermeneutics, Marion takes the stance that Heidegger has missed the opportunity to develop the proper hermeneutics of middle-voice. Although he gives him credit for valuable insights which contributed to the development of the hermeneutical structure of *Dasein*, he mostly recognise the limitations and deficiencies that prevented him from attaining the middle-voice interpretation to which he aspired. Since this paper has already given a substantial overview on Marion's understanding of Heidegger's key philosophical concepts in Chapter I, the following section will specifically and concisely present his response to Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics of *Dasein*.

4.3.2 Marion's Critique of Hermeneutics of *Dasein*

Marion's critiques of the hermeneutics of *Dasein* originated in his foundational conviction that Heidegger remained under the influence of the vision of the autonomous subject of classical metaphysics. In order to clarify this thought and give proper place to Heidegger's interpretation, he identifies different examples of hermeneutical subjects, which are linked with the proper grammatical case that corresponds to each one of them. Thus, Marion depicts Descartes' and Husserl's *ego* as a subject who acts in the nominative case, while Heidegger's *Dasein*

occurs in the genitive case (Marion, 2002a:269). In this grammatical sense of interpretation, all of them actually imposed conditions upon appearing phenomena by ascribing hermeneutical primacy to the subject. Descartes and Husserl reduced interpretation to a nomination made by the consciousness of an *ego*, while Heidegger emphasised the possessive role of an *I* and thus reduced all phenomena to *Dasein* as the sole ontological being (Marion, 1998a:197). In contrast to the nominative or genitive cases of the subject, Marion proposes a third option, which is no longer performed by a subject. In his view, the *I* is deprived of its right to the nomination or possession. The subject is rather a constituted *I*, which is "claimed, assigned and convoked in the accusative" or called in a more locative understanding of *Dasein* where "it will be necessary to learn to read *Dasein* more as *Da(sein)* than as *(da)Sein*, as the *there* of Being more than as Being in its *there*" (Marion, 1998a:200). As a final point, as has been already noted above, Marion comes to an understanding of the subject in terms of the dative or even ablative form. These cases describe the *I* as oneself who receives its own self from the givenness of the call as the first gift allocated by the call (Marion, 2002a:269). In essence, all this variety of grammatical cases actually has the purpose of reformulating the subject. By moving from the accusative to locative in *Reduction and Givenness* and subsequently to dative and ablative cases in *Being Given*, Marion makes no attempt to reconcile these descriptions. In that way, he indicates perhaps that he makes a series of evocative suggestions rather than proposing a systematic theory (Mackinlay, 2010:24). However, whether accusative, locative or dative, all these formulations are attempts to describe the first person as being determined by the claim, or call, that is made on it. This *I* is not constitutive but constituted, it is not possessive but possessed. Therefore, in contrast to metaphysical models, including Heidegger's, that stress the foundational role of the subject with its subjectivity, Marion inverts it by stressing the idea of the "subject without subjectivity" (Marion, 2008a:201).

Marion admits that Heidegger only pointed out the way of withdrawal from the metaphysical hermeneutical framework in his concept of *Anspruch des Seins* [the claim of Being]. However, he never developed it seriously as a fertile concept for postmetaphysical thought. Actually, Heidegger recognised the possibility of the "claim" by which a constitutive *ego* is called, saturated and surprised, but he nevertheless has rejected its priority. Thus, instead of causing the "destruction" of the metaphysical *ego*, it remained another aspect that subsequently led to a "confirmation" and even a "repetition" of it (Marion, 1998a:106). Therefore, according to Marion, Heidegger discovered fertile ground for middle-voice hermeneutics which aims at the balance between the subject and object or between the understanding of the *I* and the overcoming saturation of manifested phenomena. However, he never achieved it because the aporias of solipsism "forever haunt *Dasein*". His hermeneutics does not work out the way beyond the metaphysical subject, since, as "its last heir", it offered not so much an overcoming as a path toward possibly overcoming it (Marion, 2002a:261).

Marion's relationship with Gadamer's and Romano's hermeneutics of middle-voice is of different kind. Their projects do not have such a substantial place in his philosophical work as Heidegger's. Therefore, he never developed an analytical or critical approach to their hermeneutical views. However, since they altogether belong to the same hermeneutical tradition, and since they all developed an understanding based on a critical approach of Heidegger's interpretation of *Dasein*, it will be worthwhile to compare their views. This comparison will obviously offer more valuable insights that intend to shed light on the principles and values of the hermeneutics of middle-voice articulated in different approaches of philosophical thought. Also, it will clarify Marion's own hermeneutical stance and assess whether his interpretation of saturation has sufficient rationale to be identified as middle-voice hermeneutics.

4.3.3 Gadamer's Hermeneutics of Historically-Affected Consciousness

In Gadamer's own words, his hermeneutical project is a "translation" of Heidegger's philosophy into the realm of understanding in the humanities (Gadamer, 1980:24). Actually, he describes his philosophical hermeneutics as precisely an attempt "to take up and elaborate" Heidegger's line of thinking (Gadamer, 1998:47). He principally follows Heidegger in claiming that being in the world is the most deep-seated ontological condition of human life, and thus also of critical thinking. It ontologically precedes any reflective reason and thus cannot be turned into an entity of pure reflective examination. For that reason he might be understood as the "urbanizer" and disciple of Heidegger (Habermas, 1990:230). However, he is also understood to be the "founding father" of philosophical hermeneutics or, more precisely, the culmination of the whole of hermeneutical development (Costache, 2016:53-90). Therefore, his thought is not just an interpretation of Heidegger, but represents a radical reworking of the idea of hermeneutics that constitutes a break with the preceding hermeneutical tradition, and yet also reflects back on that tradition. Gadamer developed a hermeneutical project that provides its own ground for understanding. It is founded on the limited role of the hermeneutical method and the exclusive priority of understanding which happens always within the restrictive horizon of historical time. Therefore, interpretation has to be defined as a practical and historically situated activity, which includes elements such as prejudices and conversation (Malpas, 2016:5).

Inasmuch as understanding for Gadamer always arises against the backdrop of past human involvement, it always occurs on the basis of historical affectedness. In this way, understanding turns out to be an "effect" of history, while hermeneutical "consciousness" is itself that mode of being that is conscious of its own historical "being affected". Accordingly, it ultimately becomes defined as "historically-affected consciousness" [*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*].

Moreover, this awareness of the historically affected character of understanding is, for Gadamer, identical with awareness of the hermeneutical situation, which is defined by the phenomenological concept of “horizon” [*Horizont*]. In general terms, the phenomenological understanding of the “horizon” represents the larger context of meaning in which any particular meaningful presentation is situated (Malpas, 2016:7). Therefore, an interpretation is always a restrictive activity occurring from within a particular “horizon” that is constrained by historically-determined situatedness. A horizon is the essential limit within which all phenomena can appear, “the range of vision” that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point (Gadamer, 2000:302). For that reason, all human beings continually find themselves in a particular situation with a particular understanding of that situation (Gadamer, 2000:303). However, even though the horizon marks the limit beyond which nothing can be seen, the understanding is not, nevertheless, imprisoned within the horizon of its situation. Indeed, the horizon of understanding is neither static nor unchanging and thus does not close off an interpretation of new possibilities and different understandings. The historical situatedness of human life consists in the fact that it is never absolutely bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon. The horizon is, after all, subject to the effects of history, something into “which we move and something that moves within us” (Gadamer, 2000:304). Therefore, although the horizon designates the hermeneutical boundary, the horizon itself is dynamic, capable of being altered and reinterpreted. It is constantly susceptible to change, open to further insights and enrichment in meaning that defines it. In this dynamics of horizon, the understanding turns out to be an ongoing process. It has no final competition. It is not achieved through gaining access to some inner realm of subjective meaning or accomplished through some specific methodology that has the purpose of reaching a final determinacy of understanding. Therefore, there is no method or technique for achieving final understanding or arriving at

truth. In contrast, the understanding keeps an always open-ended form exhibited in human prejudice and activity of conversation.

The understanding defined as historical consciousness is essentially constituted by “prejudice”. Gadamer claims that any hermeneutic involvement employs “fore-structures” of understanding, that is, anticipatory structures that allow what is to be interpreted to be grasped in a preliminary fashion. The fact that understanding functions by means of such anticipatory structures results in an understanding that all the time involves what Gadamer terms the “anticipation of completeness”. It always involves the necessary presupposition that what is to be understood constitutes something that is understandable, that is, something that is constituted as a coherent, and therefore meaningful, whole. In other words, whenever some initial meaning emerges, the interpreter understands that meaning in relation to the totality of other, already supposed meanings. That is evident through the fact that whenever someone makes an attempt to understand the meaning of a text, person or event, he always expects to reach some unity of a meaning for the whole. That is, he always projects some kind of meaning onto what appears to him, and what he projects is rooted in his own prejudices, in the whole of what he expects to be said to him (Elliot, 2015:7). For that reason, Gadamer (2000:276) argues that prejudices are what constitute our being: “The prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being”. Again at another place he says: “it is not so much our judgments as it is our prejudices that constitute our being” (Gadamer, 2007:82).

The term “prejudice” has neither a positive nor a negative connotation (Gadamer, 2000:269). Thus, prejudice, as Gadamer claims, “does not mean a false judgment, but part of the idea is that it can have either a positive or negative value” (Gadamer, 2000:270). Actually, prejudices are handed down through tradition, and prior to any critical reasoning getting underway, the tradition shapes and conditions how every human being thinks. Gadamer (2007:276) thus says: “In fact, history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand

ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and state in which we live". In other words, although critical reasoning has the ability to bring the tradition into question, thereby determining its claims as either valid or invalid through the hermeneutical process, prior to that critical commitment, all human beings usually operate and for the most part act as if the prejudices received from our traditions were simply self-evident. This self-evidence, however, is not the same as irrefutability or absoluteness, since attaining an absolute and permanent viewpoint, in Gadamer's interpretation, is always outside of human grasp. Hence, "reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms—i.e., it is not its own master but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates" (Gadamer, 2000:276). Thus, even the achievement of critical reason, which means the ability to suspend the claims of tradition and then determine these claims as either valid or invalid, permanently stays within the boundaries of limited historical conditionality.

Finally, Gadamer comes to the conclusion that in the context of the horizon of historically-affected consciousness that is determined by prejudices, the conversation comes to be the basic model of interpretation and understanding. It involves an exchange between conversational partners that seek agreement about some common issue. More precisely, it is a form of negotiation, a hermeneutical dialogue which aims to come to an "agreement" about the matter at issue. Even if the interpreter projects from the context of his own tradition a meaning of the whole of whatever he comes to interpret, he does not remain closed within that tradition. Rather, hermeneutical interpretation requires that the interpreter brings his own prejudices into the play of the interchanging dialogue that is trying to determine them as either valid or invalid. Gadamer recognises this interchanging play as risk: "in fact our own prejudice is properly put into play by being put at risk. Only by being given full play is it able to experience the other's claim to truth and make it possible for him to have full play himself" (Gadamer,

2000:298). The hermeneutical experience requires that the interpreter stays open to the alternative claims of the partner involved in dialogue: “a person trying to understand must always be ready for the [other] to tell him something and thus must be sensitive to the [other’s] alterity” (Gadamer, 2000:269). Indeed, only when the meaning of the other is discordant with my own prejudices, are my prejudices brought out into open. It remains impossible to make myself aware of prejudice while “it is constantly operating unnoticed, but only when it is, so to speak, provoked” (Gadamer, 2000:298). Or, as Gadamer (2000:268) puts this in question form: “If fore-meaning gives rise to misunderstandings, how can our misunderstandings of a text be perceived at all if there is nothing to contradict them?” My prejudices remain undetected until I encounter some opposition from the other. Therefore, only then are they made evident to me. However, this “provocation” not only sheds light on the existence of my prejudices, but also gives me an insight on the incompatibility of my own prejudices and those of the other. What is thus shown is the fact that my own prejudices are possibly in need of revision, which entails a critical examination of my own position and also an attempt to find a possible “agreement” with other prejudices involved in the ongoing dialogue. This critical process of self-examination that aims at some kind of “agreement” means establishing a common framework of “horizon” that Gadamer names a “fusion of horizons” (*Horizontverschmelzung*). Inasmuch as understanding is taken to involve a “fusion of horizons”, it always involves the formation of a new perspective of meaning that enables an integration of what is otherwise unfamiliar, alien or inconsistent. In this respect, all understanding involves a process of negotiation and dialogue between what is familiar and what is foreign; in this process neither remains unaffected. This process of horizonal engagement is open-ended, an ongoing one that never achieves any ultimate completion or comprehensive explication. Moreover, inasmuch as my own history and tradition is itself constitutive of my own hermeneutic situation as well as being

itself constantly taken up in the process of understanding, so my historical and hermeneutic situation can never be made entirely transparent to me.

By concentrating his phenomenology on the givenness of saturated phenomena, Marion, like Gadamer, moves a distance from the hermeneutics of ultimate meaning and comprehensive explanation. He also tries to find an open-ended hermeneutics of middle-voice, but his claims seem more radical than Gadamer's. The following section, consisting of a comparison of their hermeneutical approaches, will point out how Marion's phenomenology of saturation departs from Gadamer's fundamental concepts of horizon, prejudice and conversation.

4.3.4 Marion and Gadamer in Comparison

Jean-Luc Marion and Hans-Georg Gadamer diverge most radically in their understanding of the hermeneutical function of the horizon. Marion argues that the horizon constrains phenomena and prohibits them from giving themselves in the fullest degree of their manifestation. The horizon delineates in advance the way in which these phenomena can appear. In this way, the horizon has an inherently violent and alienating function, for all phenomena are required to derive from its domain in such a way that closes off the possibilities in which they can appear. Actually, Marion argues that approval of any hermeneutical horizon ends in eliminating any chance for alteration of meaning. The "concept" which gets its meaning through the context of some existing horizon "never undergoes even the least variation or incident during the course of its intuitive actualization" (Marion, 2002a:224). Moreover, for Marion, the saturated phenomena indeed keep their nature of saturation by giving themselves without recourse to the horizon. They give themselves from themselves in fullest degree, so there is no possible horizon to embrace their appearance. The saturated phenomenon happens counter to any received opinion and any possible expectation since it "arrives against all that

representation or intention, in short the concept, would expect". It contravenes the horizon of "what previous experience should reasonably permit us to see" (Marion, 2002a:226). Therefore, in contrast to Gadamer, who sees the horizon as a productive hermeneutical background that is not merely closed off to new possibilities, Marion radically writes it off as a violent background for all phenomena that appear in its domain and especially as a substantial obstacle for the possibility of saturation happening in the manifestation of phenomena with the highest degree of givenness.

Furthermore, Gadamer's claim that understanding is constituted by prejudices seems to be alien to Marion, and for obvious reasons. For if human reasoning is constituted by the impact of prejudices, there would be some dimension in which the subject would constrain and corrupt the givenness of the saturated phenomenon. Actually, Marion (2002a:218) claims that by giving itself absolutely, the saturated phenomenon also gives itself as absolute, which means that it is "free from any analogy with already seen, objectified, comprehended experience. It is freed because it does not depend on any horizon ... this condition of possibility *par excellence*." Marion is thus committed to the assertion that in receiving the given phenomenon, the phenomenological subject also receives the medium through which he receives what is given to him. In this respect, the role of the subject becomes far too passive. For the same reason, Marion (2002a:199) also claims that "the saturated phenomenon cannot be aimed at [*ne peut se viser*]. This impossibility stems from its essential unforeseeable character [*son caractère essentiellement imprévisible*]." While it remains true, according to Gadamer, that the unexpected claim of the other is also unforeseeable, the implications that these two thinkers derive from this fact are different. For Marion, the saturated phenomenon cannot be aimed at, so it must therefore be received in its absoluteness. With this reception the subject also simultaneously receives the means by which he can receive the saturated phenomenon, which becomes "the filter", "the screen" in the phenomenon's manifestation. For Gadamer, on the other

hand, even though the unpredicted could not have been envisioned, it is still mediated through the network of meanings constituting our horizon. The process of that mediation exposes the hermeneutical influence of prejudices and allows for careful examination of the historically-affected position occupied by the subject. It thus allows for a critical dimension that does not result in the elimination of the self, but rather in a purifying of the self in terms of prejudices which might be qualified as either legitimate or illegitimate. In this process illegitimate prejudices are thereby eliminated and consequently the position of the self is revised. Therefore, even though the self undergoes the claim of the other, there is no room for the conclusion that the self is merely passive in that encounter. First, because the self was already projecting the understanding through the existing prejudices. Second, because the self in the encounter with the other self goes through an active examination of his own position, performing the careful work of modification.

Finally, it seems that Marion is in agreement with Gadamer's idea of the hermeneutical plurality of horizons and the open-ended character of interpretation. He actually takes the position that "the plurality of horizons practically forbids constituting the historical event into one object and demands substituting an endless hermeneutic in time" (Marion, 2002a:229). However, this endless hermeneutic is far from being identical to the endless hermeneutic promoted by Gadamer. As Mackinlay (2010:35) explains correctly, "Marion's 'endless hermeneutics' refers to epistemic acts that interpret the meaning of a phenomenon after it has already appeared." In this way, it is "fully accomplished independent of any such interpretations of meaning." Therefore, the endless hermeneutic in Marion's account takes its origin from the fact that the response of the subject to the saturated phenomenon is always inadequate and that makes it endless in nature and never subjugated to any response made with the purpose of explaining the call of the self-giving phenomenon. In contrast, what Gadamer explains in his hermeneutical vision is that both the manifestation of the

phenomenon and very constitution of the self are dependent upon the self's projection, which undergoes alteration and revision through the hermeneutical progression. As Elliot (2015:12) observes, in Gadamer's case "the act of interpretation does not succeed some initial givenness, but rather accompanies it throughout its entire course, from beginning to end." This interpretation is not merely the active projection of the self, but also the response to the disagreement between the prejudices of the historically-affected consciousness and that which shows itself. However, on Marion's account, the solitary response to the call of the phenomenon, and not the preliminary prejudices and projections, is that which constitutes the very subjectivity of the subject. It has to be concluded that the subject falls too far on the passive side in the manifestation of a phenomenon, even though, to Marion's credit, the self does remain active in endlessly responding to that which gives itself.

Another attempt of founding a middle-voice hermeneutics originated in the thought of French phenomenologist Claude Romano. His evential hermeneutics is closely related to Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* as self-projecting Being-in-the-world. However, while retaining a Heideggerian ontological focus, he has also made a decisive shift in emphasising the hermeneutics of "event" as crucial for defining human existential projection. Moreover, his evential hermeneutics has more similarities to Marion's understanding of event as saturated phenomenon. This makes the evaluation of their approaches more illuminating and subtle than the comparisons of Marion and Gadamer or even Marion and Heidegger. Therefore, in the next section, Romano's hermeneutical approach will be first explained and then compared to Marion's hermeneutics of saturation.

4.3.5 Evential Hermeneutics of Romano

Romano holds onto much of the structure of Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein*. Like Heidegger, he too designates the human being as self-projecting, self-

understanding, and self-determining in the world, acting, making decisions, and exercising freedom. Nevertheless, his crucial shift is to situate his philosophical approach in relation to events rather than to existence. He defines events as incidents that provide the fundamental phenomenological structure of human encounter with appearing phenomena. More precisely, events represent existential occurrences that determine the relation between the world and the reflective human subject who is open to understand it (Mackinlay, 2010:42). In that sense, as a substitute for an ontological interpretation, Romano develops what he calls an "evential hermeneutics," in which the human subject is understood in terms of openness to events. Consequently, it comes to his understanding through and in their advent, and therefore he cannot be defined just as a *Dasein* who is *a priori* conditioned by the ontological characteristics of the world. Like Marion, Romano gives the "subject" another name —*the advenant*— reflecting his understanding of how subjectivity originates by being shaped in the happening of the event. Even though the *advenant* preserves the basic feature of *Dasein* by having the capacity to appropriate eventual possibilities and to understand himself as possibility coming out as a result of their occurrence, the *advenant*, however, crucially differentiates, since he has no capacity to find in himself the origin of his existential possibilities (Romano, 2009:87). His existential possibilities are independent of him and rather opened to him in the opening of the world happened as an eventual event. In other words, the opening of the world offers to an *advenant* its possibilities as something "that is open to him through an inaugural event" (Romano, 2009:72). The subject is the one who arrives to herself/himself in the happening of an event in which she/he is implicated. The *advenant* thus becomes described by "the event that is constantly underway of my own advent to myself from the events that happen to me and that, by addressing themselves to me, give me a destiny" (Romano, 2009:52).

Moreover, in the context of evential possibility, Romano claims another characteristic of the *advenant*. It is its *passibility*. That means that the

hermeneutical subject represents “being exposed beyond measure to event in a way that cannot be expressed in terms of passivity but precedes the distinction between active and passive” (Romano, 2009:72). As such, it experiences a sort of pre-subjective opening initiated in the form of an event in which “a passivity that would be mine … is given only in the after-shock and counter-blow of the event” (Romano, 2009:72). In this way, *passibilit*y might be defined as a hermeneutical characteristic that arises from the origin of the human self-projecting adventure, lying outside of themselves, and coming before any activity or passivity of the human subject involved. It thus puts the *advenant* in the middle of active and passive role in his/her effort to interpret events. Therefore, this kind of understanding of event could be technically described as a project of “middle-voice” hermeneutics, although Romano himself does not refer to his project in exactly these terms (Mackinlay, 2010:42).

Romano’s central phenomenological insight is the distinction between two types of events. On one hand, there are events understood in the ordinary “evental [*événementi**el***]” sense, that have happened as actual and factual probabilities already present in the world, and are described by Romano as “innerworldly facts.” On the other hand, there are “events in a properly event*i*al [*événementi**al***] sense,” whose happening is a radical arriving (*advenir*), which upsets the actual and factual possibilities and thus reconfigures the meaning of the world (Romano, 2009:23-44). In other words, innerworldly events are very much ontic realities, they are impersonal – they happen to *nobody*, or rather to nobody *in particular*, and they succumb to causal explanation. In contrast, evential events reveal the fundamental significance of the happening of events, thus making the origin of the structures within which innerworldly facts can manifest themselves. These events refer to particular entities that cannot be explained by causes and effects. They reconfigure the world and occur with a “structural delay” that opens the future (Romano, 2009:27-31). There are strong parallels in this distinction to that made by Marion between events that are ordinary phenomena

and events that are saturated phenomena. On the other hand, Romano's distinction also has parallels to Heidegger's ontological difference (Mackinlay, 2010:42; Greisch, 2001:404). In the context of this distinction, Romano points out four vital phenomenological differences between innerworldly and evential events.

1) Innerworldly facts do not have univocal ontic assignation. This means that they do not address anyone specifically since they happen to "nobody" or rather to nobody "in particular" (Romano, 2009:27). This becomes obvious in simple events such as lightning, rain, snow or the train's arrival at the station, which are essentially impersonal without affecting any entity in principle and which are thus always treated as bare "innerworldly facts". More precisely, Romano takes these events to affect *some* entity. For instance, he describes the fact of the lightning that "affects" the whole sky, the earth, some cloud, the lake in which it is reflected, or the walker to whom it appears and whom it scares or dazzles. This case of lightning has two phenomenological characteristics: a) the event is not a change occurring in the subject with some particular existential question, since the being in question, the lightning, is nothing other than its sudden flash, the event of its own occurrence. b) The event still appears to *something* or *someone* by having an ontic support of assignation. However, the assigning of an event in such a case as lightning seems problematic and even impossible since it does not appear to someone in particular but rather to "an open plurality of beings: the sky, the lake, the countryside, the walker and his dog, etc." Subsequently, the ontic subject of assignation to whom or which the lightning appeared "*remains fundamentally indeterminate, because multiply determinable*" (Romano, 2009:24-26). On the other hand, an evential event is always addressed to some entity in particular, in such a way that "*the one to whom it happens is himself implicated in what happens to him*" (Romano, 2009:30). For that reason, to understand the meaning of an evential event is never to relate oneself to it in the impersonal mode of a pure observer, as one does with "objective" realities of

the world. Here, the one who interprets the event is strictly implicated in the very act of understanding. In contrast to the innerworldly event which does not put *me* in play myself, in my "unsubstitutable selfhood", the evential event addresses *me* in a way that I am myself in play in the possibilities it assigns to me and through which it "makes history by opening a destiny to me" (Romano, 2009:30). Finally, while the innerworldly fact just happens, this event "befalls" because an event in the "proper sense", originating from the Latin word *evenire*, not only signifies "happen", "occur", "come about" and "ensue", but "*befall: alicui to somebody*". Examples of this sort of event include experiences of a bereavement, a meeting, an illness and others of similar kind, which occur incomparably for each person and thus render each one of them incomparable to each other, giving him or her unique and specific understanding of existence (Romano, 2009:30).

2) Innerworldly facts appear each time within the perspective of the preexisting world, which has to be apprehended in a very Heideggerian sense as a "totality of these preexisting possibilities, from which all that happens happens, and is open, consequently, to *explanation*" (Romano, 2009:33). This means that the world is a hermeneutic landscape of possibilities within which humans make their interpretation of reality, understand themselves and project their own existential possibilities. "World" thus refers to the hermeneutic structure of meaning for all understanding, the totality of possibilities from which a meaning can come to light as such (Romano, 2009:35). On the other hand, evential events are of a different kind since they do not happen within the already-structured landscape of the preexisting world. They, on the contrary, rather *reconfigure* the world by overturning its possibilities, and thus appear in their own way, detached from any pre-established horizon. More precisely, when they appear to someone, his world-experience becomes reshaped, and all possibilities or life projects are affected. This event is "world-establishing" by the nature of its impact and represents a "metamorphosis of the world in which *the very meaning of the world*

is in play" (Romano, 2009:39, 69). It opens the world in a new way and results in the reconfiguration of its meaning.

3) Since an innerworldly fact is determined by an already-established horizon of projections it becomes consequently foreseeable within this horizon and therefore surrendered to causal explanation, or subordinated to "a universe of possibilities" (Romano, 2009:37). At the other hand, eventual events escape this subordination since they do not show themselves in a pre-existing horizon and thus they could not be acknowledged as the effects of the causes within such a horizon. To illustrate this, he offers an example of a friendship. As a fact, its actualisation is utterly explainable. It is defined by the facts of how, when and in which circumstances the two people have encountered each other. However, as the event, the encounter in which the new relationship of friendship initiated represents a radical transcendence that escapes any factual actualisation. It comes to be unforeseeable in its radical novelty. Its manifestation dismisses all attempts at defining it as an articulated experience of the world, since its appearance modifies all possible projections (Romano, 2009:42). From this point of view, the event of friendship is radically incomprehensible and may be described by the words of Montaigne, who simply finds his friendship with Boétie inexplicable: "If you press me to say why I loved him, I feel that it can only be expressed by replying: 'Because it was him: because it was me.'" In this way, far from being explained as the effect of the cause, an event, such as friendship, has its own origin. This origin should be taken in the radical sense evident in the German word *Ursprung*, which designates "pure bursting forth from and in itself" (Romano, 2009:42). This bursting forth of an event establishes a new horizon of meaning, with an ungraspable range of possibilities on which I can project myself. For this reason, its understanding only becomes possible *after* an event has already happened. Subsequently, there is a "structural delay" with an evential event so that it could be accessible only by "starting from its posterity" (Romano, 2009:46).

4) Finally, the last phenomenological difference between facts and events issues from the very nature of “structural delay”, and concerns the question of temporality. An innerworldly fact happens in a datable present as a *fait accompli*. It is accomplished fact, with no unutilised potential, located in exact time. However, an event is not datable. It is not so much inscribed in time. It represents something which opens time and could never be encountered in the present of its happening. Therefore, an event, not given as present actuality, might be only faced retrospectively, from the future that it opens. Its manifestation is characterised as a “movement of futurition”, by which a new horizon of possibilities opens up, and thus the time itself “wells up in the diachrony of its radically burst open and non-synchronisable time” (Romano, 2009:46).

4.3.6 Marion and Romano in Comparison

It seems obvious that both Romano and Marion take as their hermeneutical preliminary point a critique of Heidegger’s *Dasein* as a self-projecting Being-in-the-world. For both of them, Heidegger does not do justice to the appearing phenomena which appear on their own, by giving themselves as themselves, but rather reduces them to projections or modifications of the subject. This leads both thinkers to place strong emphasis on the genuine transcendence and otherness of phenomena. They agree that phenomena impose themselves within their own horizons, which excludes any pre-existing horizons established by the subject. For Marion, these self-appearing phenomena are defined in terms of saturation, while for Romano, in terms of the happening of evential events. Indeed, their accounts are foundationally so very similar that the differences between them at first sight seem very subtle and not particularly illuminating. Romano’s claims seem more modest than Marion’s, but his thought seems more dramatic and penetrating when it comes to the questions of the possibility and temporality of existence.

However, despite their many resemblances, the evential events and saturated events do not entirely correspond to each other. First, they basically belong to different domains. While Romano applies his model to ordinary events of innerworldly facts, Marion, by contrast, applies his idea of saturation to events per se and not to a category of a particular kind of event. More importantly, Romano is far more restrained than Marion in applying the characteristic of selfhood to an event. Marion does not hesitate to claim "the self of the phenomenon" (Marion, 2002a:159; 2002b:34-38) thus ascribing the initiative and origin of its happening to the phenomenon itself. Marion thus excludes any suggestion of the constituting subject being in any way involved in the appearance of the given event. On the other hand, although Romano also takes event as occurring by itself and on the basis of itself, he is more cautious by distancing himself from any prospect of the event having its own selfhood as such. He always situates it in the context of its happening to a human subject. It is nothing other than a "reconfiguration" of her/his possibilities, in which she/he is given capacity to understand herself/himself differently (Romano, 2009:54). This "new world" introduced by the initiative of the event itself thus always remains "my world" (Romano, 2009:43). For Romano, the new horizon of evential possibilities is always a horizon for the understanding and self-projection of the *advenant* to whom the event happens (Romano, 2009:43). Finally, in this context, Marion's exclusion of a constituting subject prevents his phenomenology of event to have any great significance for the one to whom a phenomenon appears. Since the phenomenon appears as "imposing" itself upon the receiver (Marion: 2002a:138), whose receiving is simply taken to be as it gives itself, like an image on a screen (Marion, 2002a:265), then not only does the subject have no constituting role, but the phenomenon itself comes to be received as an already-determined package, as a *fait accompli*. In this way, the receiving subject of this already-accomplished event has no other significance for the appearing phenomenon other than to let it be shown. This means that in Marion's account of saturation, the

phenomenological subject has the capacity of nothing more than to transform the givenness of the phenomenon into its manifestation. Her/his role is simply the transmission of an already-completed package that has appeared in terms of saturation.

Having all this in mind, the crucial difference between Romano and Marion comes to be their understanding of the activity and passivity of the role that the phenomenological subject has in addressing the appearing phenomena. Romano claims a *passibility* which precedes the normal human experience of activity or passivity, while Marion proposes the role of the subject that "mediates" (Marion, 2002a:264) or "goes beyond" activity and passivity (Marion 2002b:48). For Romano, the evential phenomenon provides a mediating origin for the tension between activity and passivity, or capacity and impotence of the subject. More precisely, this mediation is not merely restricted to the radical origin of the event, but rather is part of the ongoing structure of human self-projecting, in which possibilities for acting in the world are reconfigured by events that happen to her/him. The evential possibilities open a genuinely new horizon of projectable possibilities that offer an *advenant* a future that is radically other that what came before it. On the other hand, in Marion, mediation is based solely upon a consideration of the act of pure reception of the phenomenon. In fact, his description of the phenomenon as closed off and completed when it imposes itself upon a subject gives no room for any kind of self-projection of the subject and no sense of opening to the new world of existential possibilities. More precisely, at one point in his analysis, Marion goes some way toward the position of self-projection that opens to her/him as evential possibilities, but stops considerably short of it. He concludes that since an event is unforeseeable, the factual actuality of its happening addressed by a subject cannot be explained because that would include a "metaphysical point of view", which is "impossible" to be applied to a saturated phenomenon (Marion, 2002a:172-73). Moreover, he claims that when an event does happen "it begins a new series, in which it reorganises the old

phenomena … by the right that events have to open horizons" (Marion, 2002a:172). However, the series Marion has in mind seems to be an ordinary causal series of foreseeable effects, in which case the event only begins a new actuality, and not a new possibility as such. In this respect, Marion's account of events suggests that they are far more like endings than beginnings, which is consistent with the impression that he gives in the rest of his account. Although he admits that events call for an infinite "hermeneutic" of subsequent interpretations, he regards their happening as such as completely accomplished and closed in on themselves— literally a *fait accompli*.

Romano's evential hermeneutics offers a valuable contrast to Marion's phenomenology of saturation. Both are committed to the need to rethink the relation between subject and object in order for phenomena to be able to appear as themselves. However, Romano's appreciation of the hermeneutic dimension of phenomenality makes his account of *advenant* more like a thoroughly human story, built around human striving to realise possibilities in this world. On the contrary, Marion describes it in a more theoretical account of the imposition of a saturated phenomenon on a passive recipient. Consequently, because Romano's account is hermeneutics in an ontological sense, it highlights the extent to which Marion restricts hermeneutics to a purely epistemic interpretation.

Hence, Marion takes his version of hermeneutics of middle-voice to be an endeavour essentially characterised as an epistemic interpretation that always comes after a saturated phenomenon has already appeared. Although he claims that his hermeneutics represents the way to the middle ground between passivity and activity of the hermeneutical subject, it seems again that that subject falls too far on the passive side.

4.4 Conclusion

The structure of the saturated phenomenon requires a model of infinite or endless hermeneutics. Its excessive nature disables all attempts at making closing definitions and refuses all endeavours of reduction to the theoretical horizons. Indeed, the saturation generates the open-ended hermeneutics, which endlessly keeps the "itself" of the saturated phenomenon concealed and unapproachable by human conceptual understanding. This hermeneutics is based upon two main principles. Both of them reflect the inverse structure wherein the saturated phenomenon as hermeneutical object expands its phenomenality in the direct proportion to which the subject's activity of interpretative understanding decreases. Therefore, the first principle of Marion's hermeneutics is epitomised in a demand for a radicalisation of the subject's passivity. The hermeneutical subject is thus presented as a purely receiving one. It is merely a passive witness of saturation, but never the cognitive agent of it. Its experience is a testifying one, without any claim of constitutional power. On the other hand, the second principle ascribes constitutional authority to the saturated phenomenon as the object of hermeneutics. As an object of interpretation, it appears in the form of the *call* that causes the birth of new subjectivity. The subjectivity is entirely overwhelmed with the experience of the saturated phenomenon which is purely given through the receiving of the *call*. In this way, Marion's hermeneutics of saturation might be described as an example where the hermeneutical subject, as a transparent screen, becomes visible only upon being impacted by the light of the object of saturation, so that the receiving subject emerges only upon receiving the given phenomenon.

Having these hermeneutical principles in mind, Marion claims that his interpretation refers to a hermeneutics of middle-voice, characterised by an appeal to the middle ground between the passivity and activity of the hermeneutical subject. Like Heidegger, Gadamer or Romano, he asserts that his

understanding of saturated phenomena belongs to the hermeneutical tradition that takes the meaning of an appearing phenomenon only after its appearing manifestation is fully accomplished, namely, *after the phenomenon has already appeared*. However, while he offers an interpretation that tightly embraces the principle of coming always after the actual appearing of the phenomenon, Marion has apparently not reached the genuine middle ground between passivity and activity of the hermeneutical subject. The role of the hermeneutical subject gets to be too inclined on the passive side by being deprived of any constitutional power. As a result, it comes to be more constituted than being one who constitutes. However, it should be admitted that Marion's *I* still remains limitedly active in one certain way. In all its constitutional passivity it nevertheless endlessly responds to the saturated phenomenon which gives itself in the manner of a *call*. Overpowered by its excessive saturation, it transforms its overwhelming impact by making a response that consequently creates its new identity – a new subjectivity. Therefore, Marion's active hermeneutical role of the subject derives exclusively from its antecedent passivity. The subject comes to his active part only in his submissive response. This inevitably means that in order to be active it had to be firstly dispossessed of every initiative, influence and authority over the original appearance and meaning of the saturated phenomenon.

Marion takes Bible events as a special form of saturated phenomena. Actually, the Bible represents the text which offers a particular collection of saturated phenomena *par excellence*. As phenomena of the second or highest degree of manifestation, they likewise follow the hermeneutical key expounded above. In what sense, then, does the Scripture as a saturation account represent God's revealing Word? How should biblical phenomena be interpreted when the hermeneutics of saturation is applied? What comes to be the role of the theologian in reading the Bible as a collection of saturation events? By focusing on these questions in the following chapter, this research will come to its most

essential part, which explains Marion's hermeneutics of saturation applied to Scripture as a saturated phenomenon.

5.0 INTERPRETING THE SCRIPTURE AS THE SOURCE OF SATURATION

5.1 Introduction

By taking into consideration each type of saturation as described in Chapter 3, it was seen that Marion ends his classification of saturated phenomena by introducing a phenomenon of revelation as the last possible and most distinguished appearing phenomenon (see Chapter 3, 109-114). Its privileged status was presented as a logical outcome for two main reasons. First, it is the only phenomenon that at once overcomes in saturation all four types of experience presented in Kant's tables of categories. In this way, the phenomenon of revelation has a distinguished position in comparison to other models of saturation (event, flesh, idol and icon) since each of them overcomes only and specifically one of Kant's categories of experience. Secondly, it further encompasses all four of Marion's types of saturated phenomena by showing the highest level of appearing phenomenality. Therefore, the phenomenon of revelation, proposed as the final instance of saturation, is identified by Marion as *paradox par excellence* of the second degree.

Moreover, it was shown, at the end of Chapter 3, that Marion defines the phenomenon of revelation in two different ways (see Chapter 3, 113). First, the revelation as a phenomenon of maximum degree is designated with a small "r" – as "r" revelation. It refers to all possible phenomenological experiences that are understood as possible "impossibilities". It assumes the possibility of human understanding that is based on given revealing appearances that transgress all metaphysical conditions of the thinking of a constitutional *I* and that thus render

visible a saturated phenomenon that could not be objectified. More precisely, Marion considers “r” revelation as “pure possibility”, without “presupposing its actuality” (Marion, 2002a:235). In this sense, the phenomenon of revelation as “r” revelation remains a possible phenomenological kind of experience in the reduced immanence of givenness, which consequently implies avoidance of making any judgment on its actual manifestation or ontic status. The quest for defining its actuality in its particular appearance remains a business proper to revealed theology (Marion, 2002a:236). Therefore and secondly, by seeking to avoid charges of theological “contamination” of phenomenology, Marion offers the explanation based on a distinction between “r” revelation (the part of phenomenological research) and “R” Revelation (the part of theological study). He proposes that “R” Revelation, referring to actual historical, religious events, is never confounded with “r” revelation that refers to possible phenomenological phenomena, and commits himself to carefully highlight this distinction by using a capital “R” only when the Revelation is related as actuality (Marion, 2002a:367). By making this distinction, Marion actually gives to the theological/Christian concept of Revelation the highest genuine form of saturation, that is, the actual and most significant form of revelation as a saturated phenomenon. Since this chapter exclusively deals with the phenomena of Scripture that belong to the second and distinctive category of “R” Revelation, all examples related to this concept will subsequently be designated with a capital R.

The phenomenon of Revelation is the most criticised one in Marion’s work. Dominique Janicaud and others are frequently suggesting that by introducing a theological domain into the phenomenological framework, Marion actually compromised his repeated insistence that he is engaged in phenomenology rather than in theology (for further discussion, see Janicaud, 2000; Janicaud, 2005; Ward, 1998a). This debate is exacerbated by controversial claims about the influence of Marion’s personal religious beliefs on his work, which are obviously prompted by his own decision to emphasise Jesus Christ as the solitary

model and paradigm of the saturated phenomenon of Revelation. Nevertheless, this research project has no purpose to enter into this controversy as such. As was already clearly specified at the beginning of this research (see Chapter I, 5,6), by dealing exclusively with Marion's understanding of Revelation as saturated phenomenon and its theological/dogmatic implications, this research project will not be directly involved in a contemporary philosophical debate about a "theological turn" in phenomenology. Rather, it will mainly address Marion's specific claims about theology and Scripture, which are predominantly given in his well-known book *God Without Being.* Although this work principally deals with the conflict between the icon, which provokes a vision beyond itself into the veneration of God, and the idol, that merely reflects the scope of the idolator's gaze, the book also discusses substantially one of Marion's most original and productive theses: the theology of saturation. By taking it as fundamental for his understanding of theology, Marion directly links it to his hermeneutical ideas regarding the Eucharist and the role of Christ in the hermeneutical process. Moreover, the same thesis leads him to a provocative conclusion – that only the bishop can be properly called a theologian. Therefore, in the next sections of this chapter, I will first present Marion's phenomenological understanding of theology and Scripture, followed by an analytical approach of its outcomes.

More specifically, the chief concern of this chapter is to show how Marion relates to Scripture as Revelation in his own phenomenological/postmetaphysical project characterised by the hermeneutics of saturation. Accordingly, this section intends to show what it means for Marion that Scripture represents the collection of saturated phenomena by responding to a few pertinent questions: What kind of theological interpretation corresponds to the view of Scripture as a saturated phenomenon of Revelation? What is the role of the interpreter of the biblical text which is considered to be a saturated account of Revelation? In other words, how does a theologian interpret, identify, or speak of it, let alone judge it? In accordance with these guiding questions, this chapter will begin by presenting the

foundational aspects of Marion's understanding of Scripture as a collection of saturated phenomena of Revelation. This opening section will be followed by one which aims to describe the eucharistic interpretation of the Bible as a hermeneutical method, since Marion finds it the most convenient one for understanding of Scripture as a collection of saturated phenomena. The closing section will analyse the key hermeneutical aspects that permeate the role of interpreter/theologian as the reader and hermeneutical actor of Scripture.

5.2 Characteristics of Scripture as a Collection of Saturated Phenomena

In his phenomenological reading of Scripture, escorted by the idea of saturation as its hermeneutical background, Marion begins by taking as his foundational point the idea of Revelation of God through Christ who calls himself "the Word" (Marion, 1991a:140). In this way, the Bible text for him essentially reveals Christ who does not say the word of God, but who says *himself* as the Word. In other words, Christ does not speak the words inspired by God concerning God, but he says himself as the Word "because nothing else remains to be said outside of this saying" (Marion, 1991a:140). In trying to make this obvious, Marion (1991a:140) announces the absoluteness of Revelation in Christ by deliberately connecting it with the words of John 1:14: "He is said and all is said: all is accomplished in this word that performed in speaking the statement that 'the Word pitched its tent among us', because he has nothing to do, here, other than to say [himself]." Therefore, God's Revelation is simply completed in Christ's saying himself. In this saying all is accomplished and revealed.

By giving this idea of Christ the Word the privilege of the essential characteristic of Scripture, Marion continues to develop his conclusions further. The Revelation of Christ understood in this way actually abolishes two gaps existing in all ordinary human conversations or experiences. First, by being both the messenger and the message, Christ abolishes the gap between the speaker

(prophet or scribe) and the message itself (speech or text). Secondly, Christ abolishes a more fundamental gap that is essentially present in the human experience of thinking: the gap between the speaker, the sign and the referent. In other words, it happens that only in God's Revelation of Christ do he speaker, the sign and the referent coincide, or rather commune. Elsewhere, in all other human experiences of language, these things are irremediably dissociated (Marion 1991a:141). This coincidence of usually disconnected terms is possible because the Revelation of Christ is presented in a unique manner, that is, in the form of the incarnated Word. Therefore, as a speaker, even as he speaks our words, Christ is not said in them according to our manner. He proffers himself in them, not because he says them, but because he offers himself in them. He offers himself not as one who exposes an opinion, but as the one who exposes himself by incarnating himself (Marion, 1991a:141). As a sign, Christ appears in flesh and bone to open the splendour of an unfolding of divinity, which overcomes at once the order of human speech and meaning. Such an event of incarnation comes to us as a sign which always comes before our words, as anterior to the words. It represents an unfurling of divinity which, like an "untenable thought of abyss", opens the terror of God's manifestation, and transgresses at once the possibility of giving or applying the meaning to it (Marion, 1991a:141). Finally, as a referent, the incarnated Christ is revealed as someone who alone speaks with such freedom and authority that he only has to speak in order to be admitted (Marion, 1991a:142). In all three cases, in response to this revelation of God, human beings cannot render to the Word homage of an adequate denomination because they cannot say him as he says himself. The Word could not be fully proclaimed in any language, since it saturates language itself by revealing itself in the incarnation of flesh and bone. Marion (1991a:142) is clear: "No human tongue can say the Said of God. For to say it, one must speak as He alone speaks it, with *exousia* (Mark 1:22)."

With this Christocentric manifestation of the unspeakable God as a prevailing perspective, Marion makes two interrelated conclusions regarding the nature of Scripture itself. First, the Bible foundationally represents an event account of God's Revelation. In other words, it is a textual record which uses written words in order to convey or communicate the event of God's disclosure through the incarnated Word. Secondly and more specifically, the Scripture is above all a Christological event of saturation. Therefore, the Bible as an event account of Revelation aims to convey the message of the incarnated Christ and his life incidents by showing the overwhelming nature of saturation which underlies the whole story of Revelation. In this way, Scripture is originally an event account of Revelation proclaimed in the manner of a saturated manifestation of Christ. The analysis of these two foundational characteristics will be addressed in detail in the following section of this research. The results of this enquiry will shed a significant light on Marion's understanding of Scripture reading effected by his phenomenology of saturation. Also, they will provide a valuable and necessary ground for the forthcoming analysis of both the hermeneutical method and the role of the hermeneutical actor in the interpretation of the biblical text.

5.2.1 Scripture as an Event Account

For Marion, the Bible is the word of God which uses text in order to transmit or tell an event. That means that it does not convey the text, but rather, through the text, the event. However, the biblical text does not at all coincide with the event. At best, it consigns the traces of it by rendering a rapid delivery of the event that always transpires at the end. In order to explain this, Marion (1991a:145) compares it with the mysterious veil of Veronica. This veil has preserved traces of the face of Christ, though it touched it for only an instant. In analogy, he suggests that biblical text works in the same way. It retains traces of the event of Christ in order to point back to it. It is also similar to a nuclear explosion that only

leaves burns and shadows on the walls after it happened (Marion, 1991a:45). A gospel is thus taken to be similar to the veil of Veronica or a nuclear explosion since both examples offer the same important implication: the impossibility of claiming that the biblical text and a biblical event are identical. Rather, they fit to each other as sign (text) and referent (event) — language Marion of course closely relates to Derrida (Ward, 1995a:317). Derrida's (1997:158) famous announcement in *Of Grammatology*: “There is nothing beyond the text *[il n’y a pas de hors-texte*]” is actually answered critically by Marion. He claims that God is always beyond the text [*hors-texte*] in the sense of providing the condition for the possibility of the text. More specifically, the biblical text gives only traces of the Revelation event by a literary fixing of the effects of meaning and of the memory of those who were the witnesses of this unimaginable, unforeseeable, and in a sense invisible “explosion” of Revelation in Christ. Indeed, it offers shadows of Revelation without being able to reproduce the Revelation of God itself, likewise the flash of lightning could never reproduce the lightning itself (Marion, 199a1:145). In this way, Scripture assures us only negatively about the event that originally remains inaccessible. It could never fully correspond to it or comprehensively explain it, since it only results from it (Marion 1991a:145).

This gap between the Scripture as text (the sign) and the original event of Revelation in Christ (the referent) has two important hermeneutical implications for Marion. First, it undermines the value of a scientific exegetical approach to the Scripture. The reading of the Bible with the presupposition that it says nothing more than what it obviously says (historical meaning), frequently leads to triviality of the result. Indeed, by focusing on the text in its *sensus literalis*, exegetical interpretation actually ensures the impossibility of any event other than the biblical text, which by bearing only on itself, must fully support itself as the final and complete description of the event. The text, therefore, means nothing more “than it obviously says”, and the only thing one can expect from the text is an encounter between the reader and the text, not between the reader and “the Said” or “the

Word", that is, the event of Christ that the text witnesses to. In this sense, the only possible event will consist fully in the simple encounter of the biblical text by its reader. Hence, the attempt to master the Scripture scientifically implies a strict limitation of all utterance of the event of Revelation of Christ to the biblical text alone. The Word of God is thus limited to the *word* (logos) instead of being *Word* (Logos) itself (Marion, 1991a:145-46). This constitutes a hermeneutical impasse, suggesting to Marion that his thesis of the clear separation of sign and referent is more rewarding (Smith, 2003:30). Second, Marion is, however, aware of jeopardy residing in a radical nonfactual reading conveyed via a distinctive separation of sign (text) and referent (event). He knows that radical separation between the text and event could finish in a meaningless interpretation of Scripture. Accordingly, he identifies another hermeneutical deadlock of this kind, presented in the hermeneutical tendency to what he himself calls "prophetic" Scripture reading (Marion, 1991a:145). This hermeneutical approach implies a reading which does not refer back, but rather forward to a future event. In this way, the reader is tempted to disconnect profoundly the text and the event by claiming that the meaning of the text will be fulfilled in some inaccessible event which is still to come in the future of the reader himself. Thus the event, remaining vague and awaited, happens to hollow out the gap between the text and itself since it remains unclear in what sense the text really witnesses to it. Therefore, both of these two approaches constitute a dilemma for interpretation of the Scripture: to steer between the Scylla of verbal inspiration and the Charybdis of a hermeneutic which is so much based on the future that the text can in fact be regarded as superfluous (Smith, 2003:30). Obviously, both of them are inappropriate in Marion's view.

However, Marion believes that the gap between the biblical text and the event of Revelation opens the ground for a proper way of doing theology. This is possible only if theology takes itself to be *logos* in relation to Revelation as *Logos*. In this way, every doctrine, every theological theory or discourse, must let itself be regulated by the event of Revelation which is always anterior to the scriptural

account of it (Marion, 1991a:143). Marion (1991a:143), however, cautiously notifies that this is not simply a question of making concessions that admit that the event of Christ needs to undergo a few linguistic, hermeneutical modifications or even exceptions. Indeed, a theologian has to have an absolute awareness that one cannot do the "theology of God" if *logos* pretends to precede the *Logos*, since this *logos*, even with all concessions made, "blasphemes the Word of God" (Marion, 1991a:143). It is blasphemous because, by preceding the event of Revelation, human language is never capable of mastering it. The work of theology thus should have no intention to speak about the Word of God, but to let that same Word speak to us or make us speak in the way that it speaks of and to God. In other words, it is not important for a theologian to reach the point in which his discourse speaks of God, but to abandon her/his discourse and every linguistic initiative to the Word, in order to let himself be said by the Word. The theologian will be able to speak of God only to the degree to which he permits God, in his Word, to speak our language and teach him in the end to speak it as he speaks it. In short, the theologian is the one who lets himself be said by the Word, or rather lets the Word let him speak human language in a way that God speaks it in his Word (Marion, 1991a:144).

This understanding of reading the Scripture allows Marion to ask consequently two significant and final questions. The first one comes from phenomenology and is addressed to the theologians: why do theologians not undertake, or undertake so rarely (von Balthasar is an exceptional case) to read phenomenologically the events of Revelation recorded in the Scripture, instead of always giving privilege to historic, ontic or semiotic interpretations? The second question originates in theology and is addressed to the phenomenologists: if the manifestation of phenomena is always defined by the principle "as much reduction, as much givenness" which means that nothing is shown that is not given and nothing is given that is not shown, what does *to be given* mean? Why has phenomenology always practiced givenness as if it were self-evident and

always taken the reduction as problematic? Could it be that givenness, because of being more essential and anterior to any kind of human thinking and thus conceptual meaning, might also open the space for the most enigmatic phenomenon of Revelation that appears in the maximum degree of givenness (Marion, 2002b:28)? For sure, Marion's understanding of Scripture as a Christological account comes to be the suitable answer to both questions. The following section will display how Marion's understanding of the event of Revelation in Christ, as described or exposed in Scripture, tries to overcome the gap between theology as *logos* and Revelation as *Logos*, or better, between theological and phenomenological interpretation of Scripture. More precisely, it will display how interpretation of the Revelation of Christ as a saturated phenomenon provides the foundation for a eucharistic way of doing hermeneutics which is only capable of closing this gap.

5.2.2 Scripture as Christological Saturation Account

As already noted above, Marion's view of Scripture is fundamentally succumbed to the Revelation of Christ. There is nothing in the Bible which takes so much of Marion's attention as the Gospel accounts. However, his selection of biblical texts relating to Christ is quite eclectic. It seems very often that there is no evidence that Marion takes note of relevant New Testament scholarship, either in his selection of texts or in his interpretation of incidents he selects. He does not show any intention to use the Bible as a "proof text" to support, for example, his claim about the four modes of saturation in Christ which was explained in a previous chapter of this research. He just makes passing reference, as in his description of the Crucifixion, without giving any hint how this important event in Christianity inaugurated the reign of God and displayed Jesus as Saviour (Marion, 2002a:239). Therefore, it seems that Marion shows no appreciation of the ways in which Scripture is presumed and shaped by the faith of the Christian

community. His portrayal of Christ differs significantly from the straightforward readings present in contemporary biblical exegesis and scholarship, and shows his obvious disagreement that the Bible should be approached exegetically. More significantly, it appears that he cites only incidents where Christ appears in a dazzling or overwhelming way (Mackinlay, 2010:186). In that sense, his emphasis on the figure of Christ comes to be an exclusively phenomenological interpretation defined by its key elements of saturation, excess and givenness.

As has already been presented in this research, the figure of Christ embraces all aspects of saturation at the same time and represents the phenomenon of Revelation *par excellence* (see Chapter 3, 113-114). Obviously, Marion is certain that biblical Christology shows the specificity of Revelation in the finest mode and the purest manifestation/saturation. For that reason, Marion uses almost all the important historical occasions of Christ's life to assert his own phenomenological remarks. He primarily speaks about the biblical events such as Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus and explains them in the context of a saturated vision of Revelation. In this way, he shows that the crucial Gospel accounts equally and unambiguously attain the same saturated nature of appearance. Additionally, he explicitly takes into consideration some of the biblical accounts such as the journey to Emmaus in order to clarify some important aspect of saturation existing there. Therefore, the following part of this research will deliberately analyse all these biblical instances as interpreted and understood by Marion. More precisely, it will take into account the most important Gospel events presented in historical succession from Christ's Incarnation to his Ascension.

Marion's phenomenological interpretation of the Incarnation of Christ is founded on the biblical account of the annunciation given to Mary. In this account the very operational name of God is revealed by the display of God for whom nothing is impossible that looks impossible to human beings (Marion, 2007c:33). God thus reveals himself as the God of "radical possibility" (Marion, 2007c:33).

He announces the birth to Mary, and she responds with a “factual impossibility” by simply saying: “I know no man” (Luke:1:34). In contrast to Mary’s words, the angel responds by asserting the principle of radical possibility as right: “For on God’s part, no saying, no word shall be impossible” (Luke 1:38). Finally, Mary accepts God’s commission by declaring: “Let it be with me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). What Marion points out is that her final response is not an assertion of divine omnipotence, but acceptance of God who can fulfil what he promises. Mary has faith in God who is able to do it because he is able to do whatever he says: “On God’s part, saying and carrying out what is said coincide absolutely. Rather than the power to *do* anything, God has the power to *say* anything” (Marion, 2007c:34). In other words, Marion emphasises that the account of the annunciation does not raise the issue of whether God can do what he wants, but rather “what God is able to want and wants to be able to do.” To him “fidelity in God transcends and replaces omnipotence” (Marion, 2007c:34). This seems more grounded in a covenantal understanding of God and less indebted to metaphysics founded on the idea of omnipotence. Marion points out this covenantal picture by emphasising the Greek verb that relates to the future: “nothing *shall be (adunatēsei)* impossible” (Luke 1:38), suggesting that “as soon as Mary gives her consent, God will act, keep his promise, make it his business and that we will see the effect” (Marion, 2007c:35). In this way, Mary’s consent leads to something possible for God alone, accomplished in conception by the Holy Spirit and birth from a virgin. In this “radical possibility”, which seems “impossible” for the human mind, God becomes incarnated and “launches redemption.” Marion says the divine power in the annunciation “does not bring about just anything”, but rather what God purposes, and what he purposes is radically possible impossibility (Marion, 2007c:35).

With this understanding, Marion comprehends human recognition of the radical possibility of the Incarnation as “pass(ing) over to God's point of view” (Marion, 2007c:34). Being saturated in nature, it seems impossible for humans.

Therefore, in order to be accepted, it needs human consent rather than understanding. In order to confirm this idea, Marion refers to some other instances of "impossibilities" in the New Testament, which demonstrate the radical or saturated possibility of God's action in the midst of human weakness to grasp it. The first one he finds in Matthew 19:26: "With men this is impossible [that the rich can enter the kingdom of heaven], but with God all things are possible." This saying of Christ is brought up by the rich man who is a faithful observer of the law, but who comes to Christ because he still feels lack of assurance of eternal life. Christ issues a humanly impossible demand to this seeker. To achieve it the rich young man would have to reach a point of absolute lack, a necessary qualification to a "genuine conversion to God." Marion asserts that in coming to faith a human *kenosis* is indispensable, corresponding to the divine *kenosis* (Phil. 2:5-11): an abandonment of what is ours (including our metaphysical concepts of God) in order to make room for the saturation of givenness that God alone can give (Marion, 2007c:36).

The second account of radically possible impossibilities, which Marion brings up in the context of the saturated Revelation of Christ, is the healing of the man lowered by his friends through the roof of the house to Jesus (Mark 2:1-12). In his statement of forgiveness to the paralytic "Christ accomplishes what is possible to God and supremely impossible to men" (Marion, 2007c:37). The scribes recognise that Christ is exercising a divine prerogative because he does what is impossible on the part of men but is possible only for God. According to Marion, the forgiveness account shows that "nothing is impossible with him in our world—therefore he holds the rank of God, from which in turn it follows that nothing is impossible with him *even outside the world*." Therefore, by asking "Which is easier...? (Matt. 9:5), he forces men to decide about God in him" (Marion, 2007c:37).

In this way, Marion's view of Incarnation is seen as a presentation of what God alone can grant and what God alone can do. By the Revelation of the

incarnated Christ, God is able to accomplish what is humanly impossible, but not impossible from His point of view. Moreover, it appears that in harmony with Barth, Marion understands the possibility of this Revelation only as superabundant “gift given to us” (Barth, 1959:66). However, it is interesting to note that Barth begins his Christology with a strong affirmation of the Chalcedonian formula, while Marion begins with the vanquishing of metaphysics. Whereas Bart builds on dogmatic christological views, Marion takes the possibility/impossibility dialectic of saturation as a very horizon for his christological insights and conclusions (McNassor, 2009:116). Yet, Marion comes fairly close to the position of Karl Barth on the historicity of the incarnation event. Barth maintained that the incarnation was historical but beyond the confines of historical research, and Marion does the same. For both of them an historical event can only make itself be heard by witnessing to itself by itself (Smith, 2003:38; Ward, 1995b:101; Ward, 1998b:233-34).

The death of Christ belongs to the same possible/impossible framework of interpretation. For Marion, the sole phenomenon of dying represents the radical possibility of impossibility. In fact, it is the possibility *par excellence* since it fixes the event of an ultimate impossibility (of life). It is an absolutely certain event, although impossible to be determined. In this way, the death is the real possibility of impossibility and not an annihilation or nullity. Death is not a non-event that destroys the conditions of its reception by its manifestation. When it happens, someone is still there to receive it as a gift, because it appears before someone disappears. Death is therefore pure possibility at every moment of life and as such it can exert itself over human beings without ceasing to be a permanent and inescapable experience for all of us (Marion, 2002a:57). Accordingly, Marion makes two observations arising from this stance. First, he emphasises that the Epicurean paradox is not valid when it says: “Death is nothing to us, since when we are death is not” (Epicurus, 2005:50). Even though it nullifies the presence of life, or though it appears as non-being, the death always remains pure possibility

that defines the ownmost possibility of life, at all times and from every direction. In other words, the death does not manifest itself as a non-event which destroys all conditions of its reception when it appears. When it occurs it happens indeed to be an event coming to the life of someone who is still there to receive it because the event of death appears before someone who receives it disappears (Marion, 2002a:57). Second, death as a phenomenon of gift that permanently "gives me to myself as a possibility *par excellence*", is founded on Heideggerian phenomenology that does not describe death, but rather its phenomenological essence, *being-toward-death* (Marion, 2002a:58; Heidegger, 1962:179-185). Far from abolishing *Dasein* to which it is given, death gives it ultimate existential determination that becomes accessible only in a form of *being-towards-death*. As a consequence, Marion (2002a:58) makes his final remark that "never does givenness make itself more visible than in such a possibility." The death of Christ was the apex of his visible Revelation of God. In the moment of his dying at the Cross the closing acclamation came: "Truly, this was the son of God" (Mt. 27:54). This moment was the recognition of Christ that is prophetically fulfilled: "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced" (John 10:7; Zechariah 12:10). Correspondingly, it was the moment when his royal character was finally approved (John 19:19-22). Most importantly, it was the occasion that resulted in the possibility of new creation (Galatians 6:15). For that reason, Marion claims that the cross of Christ challenges all of the most elementary human understandings of the world, and consequently puts it "at the crossing" of new radical possibilities and an infinite number of interpretations (Marion, 2002a:239; Marion, 2002c:124). This principle of plurality of readings or rather understandings, governs all dimensions of the phenomenality revealed in the death of Christ at the Cross. Marion observes that his royal character, which is not of this world, is spoken in three languages, not in one (Luke 23:38; John 19:20). The four Gospel writers who described this event were necessarily in partial disagreement regarding the finite aspects and horizon of the Cross that

each was able to take into view and put into operation. Therefore, the radical possibility of interpretations marked by Christ's death can be deployed in the limited visibility of worldly perspectives only by remaining saturated in meaning and unable to be reduced to any common measure or finite analogy (Marion, 2002a:239, 240).

The most elementary horizon challenged in the death of Christ, but even more in the linked events of his Resurrection and Ascension, is the horizon of "presence" (*ousia*). More precisely, the challenge comes to the question of permanence manifested by sight and touch. The basic human habit is to approach everything in the world by way of the presence that is granted by human attention, which in turn becomes equated with the idea of permanence. Secured, expected and operational, presence manifests itself by sight or touch, the sensory experiences that condition and control the understanding of everything. On this background, it seems that the events of Resurrection and Ascension require a reversal of the natural attitude. Once the Resurrection has taken place sensory experience is not reliable any more. Christ says to his disciples, "Do not touch me" (John 20:17). He also "had become non-visible for them, *άφαντος*" (Luke 24:31). Furthermore, there is no more than an absence manifested in Christ disappearing out of the sight in "a cloud" (Acts 1:9) in his ascension "into heaven" (Luke 21:51). His incarnated bodily presence has become translated into his final appearance, manifested actually by disappearance and withdrawal (Marion, 2002c:125). However, this disappearance does not mean absence but, on the contrary, it means presence. In contrast to human relationships where withdrawal creates separation and absence, Christ's withdrawal makes room for his continuing presence and action. The paradoxical presence in distance is approved also in John's Gospel by Christ's saying in the Upper Room, literally: "I go away" (*hupagō*) "and I come to you" (*erchomai pros humas*) (John 14:28). Marion (2002c:126) notes that, in contrast to the customary chronological interpretation which gives a gap between the going and coming, John is rather

taking the removal of Christ as an event that establishes his presence: “I go away [to the Father who sent me and alongside of whom you do not have the capability to accompany me] and I come [at the same moment] to you.” Therefore, Christ comes to us in the very moment, and in the “very measure in which he goes away to the Father” (Marion, 2002c:126). Having this paradoxical interchangeability of presence and absence in mind, Marion consequently questions: What does the presence of Jesus mean after he has been dead and exalted as Lord in the Resurrection and Ascension events? How can we define the meaning of Christ’s presence after the reports of the empty tomb (John 20:2), or even his disappearance after the sign of recognition (Luke 24:30-31)? Moreover, if the event of Ascension speaks of the disappearing Christ in which the presence, as we commonly understand it, closes itself off, how can we grasp the event in which the reality of Revelation thus becomes “paradoxically translated by the non-presence” of Christ? How can we understand that this divine withdrawal of presence has a deeper meaning for Christian life than the actual presence of Christ revealed in his earthly ministry? (Marion, 2002c:125, 126).

With these questions in mind, Marion faults both liberal biblical exegesis and philosophy for inadequately addressing this question of presence in absence. For the liberal theologian, either rationalist or fideist, the disappearance of the Resurrected one would be the condition and the motive that lays behind the appearance of the Church. The mythical story of the Ascension belongs to the overall tactics that enabled the first Christian community to overcome its disappointment with the indefinite delay of the end of time (Marion, 2002c:126; Bultmann, 2007:45; Lohfink, 1971:13-31). From the other side, philosophers think that both the Resurrection and the Ascension should be spiritually interpreted by focusing on the rational, moral or even speculative relation between God and humans. In this way the figure of Christ has only a pedagogical role, provisional and henceforth fully consigned to the past (Marion, 2002c:126; Kant, 1960:115-138; Hegel, 1926:300-301; Hegel, 1980:418-419). Marion puts himself against

this “watering down” of presence in absence. He is not convinced that dissolving it in either a mythological or spiritualistic form of interpretation is the right move to be taken in understanding of these events (Marion, 2002c:127). Finally, he takes the historical-exegetical approach to be defiant as well on this matter. According to Marion, whereas literature does not really claim to have a referent existing in reality, history’s referent has been there once, but is not there anymore. Only the text referring to it is there, but that vestige of it is all that remains (Marion, 1991a:146). This constitutes a problem for historical understanding of theology since it “claims to tell the living one” (Marion, 1991a:146). If the death and resurrection of Christ are events that happened in the past, we do not have any access to them anymore. There is no way of getting back to the actual events by means of any crafty theological discourse whatsoever.

However, this is not an unsolved problem for Marion. Actually, this is not a new problem at all. The first disciples of Christ were confronted with the same difficulty. In Marion’s words, this problem faced them when “the Paschal event is accomplished” (Marion, 1991a:147). For the disciples, as for us, this event no longer belongs to the present. Marion points out that the disciples were aware that once things have happened, there remain only words (Marion, 1991a:147). This is similar to our own experience. There remains the text of the New Testament, just as for the disciples “there remained only the rumour, or already the chronicle, of the putting to death” (Marion, 1991a:147). Both we and the first disciples are dealing with the same perspective. We both have the sign (the New Testament), but not the referent, which is in fact “in history” and therefore done away with. The most we could possibly achieve by applying some kind of hermeneutic to a text is to retrieve a meaning from it, but this does not provide what we want: the actual “referent in its very advent” (Marion, 1991a:147). This is just what the disciples were doing, right after the death of Christ, when, in struggling to make sense of what happened, they came to perceive Jesus’ project as a failure. This was an expected conclusion to reach, but a seriously wrong one

as well. For that reason, the disciples “were kept from recognising him” when he appeared to them again after the Resurrection event (Luke 24:16) (Marion, 1991a:147).

At this point, Marion makes an interesting move by resolving this impasse with another biblical event. The answer comes from the story of the Emmaus road. This new event, which “coins the Paschal event” is the moment when Christ as referent in person completes and disqualifies the hermeneutics of the deluded disciples. Christ as referent itself approaches them and walks with them, interprets the biblical text to them and finally shares the Eucharist with them. Moreover, this event resolves the question of understanding the saturated paradox of Christ, expressed in the paradoxical interelationship of possible/impossible or presence/absence in its meaning. In other words, the Emmaus road event comes to be the key element for understanding the phenomenon of Revelation and therefore the grounding point for interpretation of Scripture for Marion. Or, more specifically, this particular biblical story became the most significant for the validation of Marion’s eucharistic vision of hermeneutics as the proper instrument for Scripture reading. For that reason, the following section of this chapter will focus on Marion’s eucharistic view of theology and its crucial importance for understanding the Scripture and the saturated phenomenon of Revelation.

5.3 Eucharistic Interpretation of Scripture

Marion turns to the paradigmatic account of Luke 24 in order to explicate how the saturation of Christ might be properly interpreted without being reduced to a rationalistic interpretation of Scripture. Three days after Jesus’ death, a group of women discover that his tomb is empty, and are told by angels that he has risen. The apostles do not believe the women’s account, though Peter goes and assures himself that the tomb is truly empty. Later the same day, two disciples travelling

from Jerusalem to Emmaus are joined by Jesus, but do not identify him. He asks them what they are discussing and, amazed at his ignorance, they tell him about their belief that Jesus was a prophet, their hope that he may have been Israel's redeemer, their distress at his death, and their confusion after what the women have told them. Jesus rebukes them for being "foolish" and "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared" (v. 25). He insists that the Messiah had to suffer (v. 26), and "interprets to them [*diermēneusen autois*] the things about himself in all the scriptures" (v. 27). At the end of the journey, the disciples press Jesus to stay with them, and "when he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him, and he vanished from their sight" (vv. 30–31). The text ends with the two disciples hurrying back to Jerusalem, where the apostles confirm that Jesus has indeed risen.

Marion primarily focuses on the ignorance of the two disciples, or more precisely, their incapacity to understand what has happened (Marion, 1991a:147; Marion, 2002b:146). In his view, they struggle not with a lack of evidence. Both of them are well informed because they already know what has happened in Jerusalem, they were with Jesus during his ministry and both of them are obviously quite familiar with the Scripture. Marion therefore insists that they have an abundance of intuition. However, they do not know how to explain the intuition they have received. In other words, their existing concepts are not sufficient to address the intuition and grasp the meaning of it (Marion, 2002d:146). They do not recognise Jesus because they are unable to conceive him being raised from death. Even though he appears visibly, they lack the capacity to understand what they see. Marion compares their situation to Peter, who is overwhelmed with the manifestation of Christ's glory at the Transfiguration, where, as a result, "he did not know what to say" (Mark 9:6). For that reason Marion (2002d:148) makes the general conclusion that standing before Christ in glory is always manifested by lack of words that we need "in order to say what we see, in short to see that with

which intuition floods our eyes." Therefore we are not able to "offer concepts capable of handling a gift without measure and, overwhelmed, dazzled, and submerged by his glory, we no longer see anything" (Marion, 2002d:148).

The way to understanding is provided by Jesus, who himself interprets the Scripture in such a manner that the disciples get enlightened with new concepts that are adequate to the intuition they have received: "And then, when the concept at last matches the intuition, the phenomenon bursts forth with its superabundant glory" (Marion, 2002d:149). On arriving at Emmaus, Jesus breaks the bread and the disciples recognise him. In Marion's reading, this Eucharistic action of Jesus should be understood conceptually. It gives the disciples "the signification that will at last give meaning to all the intuitions that up to then had remained scattered and absurd" (Marion, 2002d:150). More precisely, according to Marion, the disciples recognised Jesus because the signification of the Eucharistic act "was making visible" the phenomenon of Christ (Marion, 2002d:150). Their understanding is reflected in their admission: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" (v. 32). By receiving Jesus' "own significations and concepts" through the Eucharist, the disciples are able "to constitute the intuition into a complete phenomenon" (Marion, 2002d:151). In this way, their concepts are now adequate to the intuition that previously surpassed them. What was previously saturated because of its excess is now constituted and seen as what it is. However, at the very moment of recognition of Christ by the disciples, Jesus disappears. Marion explains this by giving two reasons for the sudden withdrawal of Christ. First, because the issue is not, or is not only "to *see* him, but to make him *seen*" (Marion, 2002d:151). In other words, he disappeared because He should not be recognised only by sight, but inwardly, by deep intuition and imitation of His character. In this context, Marion (1991a:151) explains Jesus' act of vanishing by John 16:7 and his proclamation of the Spirit's mission: "for it is for your advantage that I go away." He actually says that his disappearance is an advantage for the

disciples since the Revelation of Christ should be recognised by and according to the Spirit. This recognition does not belong to the domain of natural human seeing, but to the domain of spiritual perception. In fact, at the eucharistic moment, *seeing* Christ is not important since Christ has to be *seen* in spiritual intuition. It is manifested in the inward reception of Christ whom the disciples recognised or assimilated with. Second and more generally, Marion claims that such a phenomenon of Revelation, saturated *par excellence*, cannot be touched nor even fully contemplated in this world (Marion, 2002d:151). This argument only confirms his common position on the issue of saturation.

Furthermore, after "their eyes were opened" (Luke 24:31) spiritually in the eucharistic moment of revelation and they "entered into the place of the Word", they went up to Jerusalem (Luke 24:33) to testify according to the Eucharistic hermeneutic that they had experienced, and to sanction it: "they themselves recounted [did the exegesis, *exēgounto*] the things that happened on the way and how he was recognised by them in breaking of the bread" (Luke 24:34; Marion, 1991a:151). In other words, recognition of the saturated Christ is followed by their own repetition of the eucharistic hermeneutic. They repeated it for the first time, like one who tries a "new art, new thought, a new mode of the real, hence to perform it" (Marion, 1991a:151). The result was an immediate and supererogatory confirmation: "While they said these things, he himself stood among them" (Luke 24:37) to give the Spirit, and to be recognised again as absolute Word: "I am me, *egō eimi autos*" (Luke 24:38-39). In this view of eucharistic interpretation the circle of understanding gets closed. The hermeneutic assumes that the disciples occupy the eucharistic site of the Word, but their hermeneutic, in return, passes through every text and all speech, toward, again, the absolute referent of Christ (Marion, 1991a:152). In this way, the Christian community that celebrates the Eucharist only reproduces this hermeneutic site of theology where Christ comes to the community, and the community into him.

This eucharistically given explanation of Revelation leads Marion to his final conclusion. His final point is also the most valuable one. Marion claims that Christ intervenes in person in the Eucharist to accomplish the hermeneutics of Revelation (Marion, 1991a:150). In order to underline his argument, he emphasises that this happens not at the point where Christ speaks of the Scripture, explaining the Old Testament (Luke 24:27-28), but at the point where he makes the unspeakable speech, when "taking bread, he give thanks" (Luke 24:30; Marion, 1991a:152). Therefore, the Eucharist alone completes the hermeneutics and hermeneutics thus culminates in the act of Eucharist. Marion (1991a:151) concludes that if the Christ intervenes in person only at the Eucharistic moment then "the hermeneutic (hence fundamental theology) will take place, will have its place, only in Eucharist". The Eucharist is the exclusive site for doing proper theology since it becomes the only way for an interpreter to pass through the biblical text toward the Word as referent on the basis of the Word as self-interpreter (Marion, 1991a:151). In other words, the eucharistic site of theology is the only one which interprets the Revelation of Christ from the point of the view of the Christ who himself alone gives an explanation of himself as Revelation. Thus an absolute hermeneutic is announced. The Eucharist takes a central hermeneutical place and it alone may render Christ fully visible in the biblical text.

It should be noted that Marion's understanding of Eucharist stands in some opposition to the Roman Catholic tradition of transubstantiation, indebted to Thomas Aquinas' metaphysical arrangement. The conventional term "transubstantiation", which is an apt and fitting term to designate the change that occurs during the act of Eucharist, is originally founded on a categorical way of reasoning. Its root is established in the prefix "trans," which signifies a change or transformation, and "substantiation," denoting a substance that endures the change. This term therefore is closely related to contemporary metaphysics' ultimate referent expressed in the idea of Being. Transubstantiation denotes that

the being of Christian symbols of bread and wine is changed in the act of Eucharist. This sort of language is difficult to understand, and was difficult even at the time when it originated. Although the ideas of Aquinas and other scholastic writers were of utmost value, Marion is aware that their language is outmoded by making active verbs into static nouns. For example, the *substantia* and *transubstantio* are static nouns, representing Aristotelian principles of motion which are all but alien to modern people of faith. The mechanics are mainly esoteric to the modern reader (Marion, 2003:170; Coffman, 2008:12). While Aquinas and the medieval scholastics relied on metaphysical thinking in a theologically fruitful way, their theological systems are exclusive and distant in understanding for most contemporary Eucharistic participants. Marion thus demands that metaphysical conceptions such as transubstantiation be rescinded, without ending their contents, but rather liberating them from old metaphysical schemes. Since such concepts are essential to Catholicism, Marion accommodates his phenomenological interpretation of Eucharist in order to maintain its relevance for the contemporary Roman Church (Marion, 2003:170; Coffman, 2008:13). Nevertheless, although accommodated to the Catholic tradition, Marion seeks a serious revaluation of the Eucharist that might be suitable to his postmetaphysical vision and his idea of saturation. By working on this, he has moved the discussion of Eucharist beyond the usual conservative-liberal impasse in the Catholic church – especially the *Concilium-Communio* differences. Even though his sympathies are evidently with the Catholic journal *Communio* and not with *Concilium*, it is “stunning” and “heartening” how Marion avoids inner-ecclesiastical polemics by enlivening, indeed, genuine thoughtfulness which is necessary for every serious theology (Tracy, 1991:xv). In other words, although Catholic in essence, Marion’s vision of Eucharist stands beyond ecclesial controversies represented by true reflection on God whose Revelation is the phenomenon of saturation *par excellence.*

Marion's understanding of Eucharist has three direct implications for theology itself. First and foremost, as it has just been pointed out above, the theology finds its residence in the Eucharist because it offers itself as the exclusive site for interpreting the Scripture as the Word of God from the point of view of the Word of God. The theologian in this way fulfils the first principle of theology by letting "himself say (or be said by) the Word, or rather lets the Word let him speak human language in the way that God speaks it in his Word" (Marion, 1991a:144). Marion's understanding of theology here is not without Barthian overtones. The theology is only the proclamation of *Verbum Dei*. It does not explain it with human concepts expressed by human language, but it serves as the tool through which the Divine Word is spoken by itself, that is, proclaimed as itself. In other words, through the theology, the divine *Logos* speaks itself from itself. However, Marion is aware that someone might object that this understanding of theology could lead to "delirious presumption", or, more strictly, to "delirious interpretation", which causes an interpreter to take the place and position of the Word himself in order to explain it as Word itself (Marion, 1991a:149). On the other hand, is it at all possible to speak the Word by excluding human rationality from explaining the Scripture? How does a theologian arrive at the vocabulary needed for proclaiming the Divine Word from the point of view of the Word? He answers by claiming that this kind of question "matters little" (Marion, 1991a:149). Such questions are irrelevant because even "*after* the self-referential hermeneutic of the text by the Word, we remain equally blind, unintelligent" like the disciples from Emmaus (Marion, 1991a:149). In other words, human beings are not capable of understanding Revelation even when explained by Christ as God's Revelation himself. Luke 24 describes two disciples who did not recognise Jesus when he carried out the hermeneutics of the Old Testament text. He was unknown to them when he explained the Scripture by pointing out how it refers to Him. Christ was recognised only when the act of Eucharist took place. Immediately after the breaking of the bread, the disciples not only

“recognized him” and “their eyes were opened” at last, but, above all, only then the Christ’s explanation of Scripture became clear to them: “and they said to one another, Did not our hearts burn within us, when he was speaking along the way, when he opened to us [allowed us to communicate with] the text of the Scriptures?” (Luke 24:32; Marion, 1991a:150). In this way, Luke 24 distinguishes two acts of Christ: his act of interpretation of Scripture and his act of Eucharist. The first act remains obscure and never understood without the transition to the second one. Indeed, the understanding of Scripture is impossible without the Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharist accomplishes the hermeneutics of Scripture. Marion even emphasises this by noticing that the eucharistic celebration occurs in Luke 24:30, which is halfway between the two mentions of the Scriptures, Luke 24:27 and 24:32 (Marion, 1991a:150). Eucharist takes the central moment, it alone allows the text to pass to its referent. Therefore, for Marion the hermeneutic explanation of Scripture appears to be “truncated” and even “absent” if it is taken as separated from the Eucharist where the recognition of Christ takes place (Marion, 1991a:150). For that reason, theology should not be primarily intellectual speech about God. Rather, it should be essentially an act in which God as fundamentally revealed provides the source for interpretation of Scripture. This fundamental act and decisive source for theology is Eucharist, which, finally, becomes for Marion like the “obligatory site” where every theological thought comes to be tested (Marion, 1991a:161).

Secondly, theology considered as a eucharistic discipline is consequently infinite in nature. It is occupied by unceasingly trying to cross the gap from the biblical text (sign) to the referent (signified), or, more precisely, from the words to the Word (Marion, 1991a:156; Smit, 2003:33). It is only by the presence of the Word that the signs (text) are filled with their meaning. Actually, their genuine referent (the Word or Christ) is more or less traversing the gap between sign and signified. However, even by crossing the gap, the unspeakable Word saturates each of the signs of biblical text with the absolute of the referent (Marion,

1991a:156). In this way, the text itself consigns the incommensurability of the Word. Hence a sort of infinite hermeneutics is needed: the text's meaning is always open-ended and exceeds the limits of all possible meanings found in the written words and of the world in general. Marion (1991a:156) finds the confirmation for this at the end of the Gospel of John, which claims that if many other things of Jesus were put in writing, "even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). Indeed, the biblical text provides, potentially, an infinite provision of meanings and therefore entails an infinity of interpretations that lead every possible fragment of the biblical text back to the Word and to the point of view of the Word. Finally, the infinite nature of the biblical text consequently implies an infinity of Eucharistic hermeneutics characterised by the impassable, unique and transtextual revelation of the Word to the people of God (Marion, 1991a:156). In this context, theology is infinite in another way. The biblical text through eucharistic celebrations speaks to readers in the plural, not just to a reader in the singular. This makes Marion's hermeneutics different from any hermeneutical theory that argues for or assumes the authority of the individual reader, such as interpretative autonomy theory or Romanticist theories of interpretation. Furthermore, this plural understanding of hermeneutics becomes the place where Marion, by concentrating on eucharistic hermeneutics, actually strengthens his phenomenological theory of interpretation in a necessary plural sense: it speaks to the people of God rather than to a single reader addressed by God (Goodson, 2014:3). More precisely, in order to give an infinite hermeneutics of the finite text in view of the infinite Word, an infinity of eucharistic situations are implied from the point of view of the Word. Hence, there is an infinity of eucharistic services, celebrated by an infinity of diverse communities, each of which leads a fragment of the words back to the Word, to the exact degree that each one repeats and welcomes eucharistically the Word in person. This multiplicity of interpretations ensues from the unspeakable infinity of the Word as does the infinity of eucharistic experiences (Marion, 1991a:157).

Third and finally, the theological work, although able to progress in an infinity of interpretations, is, however, not progressive in its own nature. Actually, theology does not constitute an isolated discipline in the Church since it belongs to the initial charter of its foundation: “There has been given to me *all exousia* in heaven and earth. Go teaching *all* the nations … teach them to keep all that I have commanded to you; and here it is that I, I am with you all the days until the end of time” (Matt. 28:18-20). All has been given to the Church (space, nations, time, the days) so that the Church may bring it back to the Word who received all from the Father (Marion, 1991a:158). Theology therefore has not to deal anymore with the question of working to the achievement yet to come, because the achievement is already accomplished at the Easter event, hence at its point of origin. Accomplishment occurs in the time of the beginning, at the moment of origin and, moreover, alone makes it possible, fruitful and yielding a future development. Therefore, Marion (1991a:158) claims that “to speak of progress, of research, of discovery in theology, either means nothing precise or betrays a radical ignorance of the eucharistic status of theology.” It should be understood in a “roundabout way”, which means that theology does not progress in producing a new text, like every other discourse, but progresses eucharistically in a community, which achieves its own extension, through the text, to the Word (Marion, 1991:158). In short, for Marion, “theology cannot aim at any other progress than its own conversion to the already given Word.” When once all is given, it remains only to say it again. Theological progress would thus indicate less an uncertain, vague, and sterilised examining than “the absolutely infinite unfolding of possibilities already realised in the Word but not yet in us and our words.” Therefore, we find all already given, gained and available in theology. “It only remains to understand, to say, and to celebrate” (Marion, 1991a:158).

In conclusion, the theology based on Scripture as a collection of saturated phenomena, fulfilled in a eucharistic way of interpretation, is essentially celebrated before it is written. It becomes an act of eucharistic worship. Its

hermeneutical or intellectual reasoning turns out to be only secondary and subsequent in nature. Also, theology is defined as an endless discipline in two ways. First, its infinite nature originates in an impossible finite explanation of the Revelation, which exceeds all possible concepts of human words and the entire human world as well. Secondly, by being constituted in the plurality of the people of God, theology is endless in its incommensurable plurality of interpretations. Finally, it has no progressive nature since theology is always a repeated act of interpretation that endlessly tries to give meaning to the already given interpretation provided by the Word of God itself. Indeed, this kind of understanding naturally delivers some significant implications for the theologian who is involved in an attempt to interpret a biblical text. Therefore, the closing section of this chapter will consist of reflections related to the characteristics of Marion's comprehension of the theologian as hermeneutical actor. In short, the following analysis will clarify the role and the position of the theologian in the work of interpretation of Scripture, conditioned by elements of Christological saturation and its eucharistic manifestation.

5.4 The Role of Theologian as the Interpreter of Scripture

Marion's hermeneutics of saturation as applied to the biblical text, which subsequently proffers the Eucharist as the only true hermeneutical site for doing theology, has some implicit consequences for the role of the theologian as the reader of the Scripture. More precisely, there are two main and essential implications. The first one is more general and deals with the basic role of the theologian as a passive recipient of the text. She/he actually holds a subordinated position of "servant" of the saturated text. In other words, since the Word of God has been already, absolutely and completely given through the saturated Word of God, the theologian as hermeneutical actor represents the one who only gives back to the text what the text has already given to her/him as the interpreter. The

other implication is more specific and deals with the role of the theologian as the provider of the eucharistic understanding of Scripture. More specifically, it points out that only the bishop, in the full theological sense, merits the title of theologian.

5.4.1 Theologian as the Servant of Saturated Text

Throughout this study, it seems obvious that the theologian, determined by the saturated nature of the biblical text and its meaning defined in the Eucharist, could be represented only through the role of the succumbed reader who is not in a position to "give" meaning to a text. Or better described, the theologian represents a "servant" to that text. Actually, this is not a conclusion which follows just from the analysis made above. This predominantly passive role of the hermeneutical actor is something which Marion uses to describe the whole work of hermeneutics: "The meaning given by hermeneutics does not come so much from the decision of the hermeneutical actor" but, on the contrary, it comes "from that which the phenomenon itself is waiting for, and of which the hermeneutic actor remains a mere discoverer and therefore the servant" (Marion, 2013:41, 43). In applying this principle to the role of a theologian, Marion takes her/him to be an interpreter whose discovery comes always after what is already "given" within the text. Although the "given" remains mediated, the discovery leads to the conclusion that the role of the theologian is primarily that of "servant" in relation to the text being read and studied. The theologian serves the biblical text since the saturated phenomenon is "shown to the extent the hermeneutical actor gives to the given the most appropriate meaning of *that* given itself" (Marion, 2013:43). The saturated givenness of the biblical text thus has primary status in the act of interpretation. The theologian only gives back of what was already given to her/him through the text (Goodson, 2014:3).

In this context, the hermeneutics of Scripture has to be understood according to the understanding of the given phenomenon which is shown to a

theologian as its interpreter. More precisely, the hermeneutics of the biblical text depends on the question and answer structure, that is to say, the call and response structure (Marion, 2013:43). Hermeneutics itself is thus the special case of the play between what is given and what is shown, between the call of the given and the response of the theologian through the meaning of what shows up in it. Therefore, the role of the theologian is to manage the gap between what gives itself and what shows itself by interpreting the call by the response given in the form of meaning. In other words, the theologian interprets the call by responding to the saturated givenness of the text.

Consequently, Marion basically takes the meaning of interpretation to signify the attitude of attentiveness to what the text “gives” of itself and what it “shows” of itself (Marion, 2013:47). In this way, interpretation comes always before the act of understanding or explaining what actually happens. In other words, since the interpretation is principally based on the reception of the text and the attention given to the text, which primarily gives and shows itself to the hermeneutical actor, the understanding or explanation of it comes to be subsequently a secondary and derived act. As a result of this, the whole process of interpretation comes down to be an explanation of how the “given” gives itself and how it is received by the interpreter as a particular kind of saturated phenomenon. Hence, on the basis of this, it seems that Marion clearly advocates two interrelated principles of hermeneutics: 1) Hermeneutics must be understood according to the understanding of the given phenomenon. The phenomenon gives itself in the form of a call which asks for passive attentiveness and the derived response of a hermeneutical actor. 2) Hermeneutics is thus not a discipline chiefly related to the question of how to understand or explain the meaning of a text conceptually. Indeed, it is a discipline that deals more with how to understand or interpret a given text in order that it comes to be understood in the perspective of the saturated givenness in which it appears to the view of its hermeneutical actor (Marion, 2013:47, 51).

Moreover, this kind of hermeneutics has one more implication. Marion argues that the domain and purpose of the hermeneutics is that it "manages the gap between what gives itself and what shows itself by interpreting the call (or intuition) by the response (concept or meaning)" (Marion, 2013:55). By saying that hermeneutics is "managing the gap" between what gives and shows itself, Marion actually proposes that the gap is never actually filled. In his own words, he claims that "the gap, in fact, never filled, between saturated intuition and the scarcity of meanings or concepts, must be lived, failing to be filled, by the invention of many, if not of all the possible interpretations of intuition" (Marion, 2013:59). In this way, the hermeneutical task never replaces the caller with the responder. It never substitutes the reader's interpretation of the text with the text itself, although the text needs the reader to some degree because a "call" deserves a "response". It needs the reader because it needs to be recognised. Otherwise, the given text, by staying on its own, remains "blind": "Intuition (the call), given and received, stays blind – still shows nothing – as long as the 'adonné' does not recognize in it the meaning or the meanings (or concepts) which will allow a phenomenon to show legitimately itself" (Marion, 2013:55). Therefore, the text has to be acknowledged through the reader responding to what the text gives and shows to her/him. However, the response always arises on the terms of the text's own call.

This generally passive or receptive interpretation leads to the final, but principal norm for a theologian as hermeneutical actor: he/she should always try to do the same as "the theologian superior to him, our Saviour" (Marion, 1991a:148). In other words, he must transgress the text to reach the referent, to serve the Word itself, which means that he/she must interpret the text from the point of view of the Word. As Marion himself states, the theological rationale for this attitude is appropriately described in a sermon by Gregory of Nazianzus (Marion, 1991a:148). Gregory was worried that some members of the church would cause trouble by "introducing a foreign God added by fraud of writing and

battle excessively over the letter". So he emphasises that Christian members in good standing should not fear, "because their love of the letter is but the mask of their impiety" (Marion, 1991a:148). Marion (Marion, 1991a:148-49) continues by quoting Gregory who is saying that if one does not accept the necessity of this transgression of the letter of the text, one in fact denies the divinity of the Spirit, who proclaims the divinity of the Word:

> Then (t)he veil is lifted [from the prophecies], as soon as you move forward to the Lord; thus is non wisdom lifted, when you move forward to the Lord, and what was water becomes wine. Do you read the books of the prophets without hearing Christ? What could be more insipid, more extravagant? But if you hear Christ in them, not only do you saviour what you read, but you are elated by it, lifting your spirit out of your body, "forgetting what is behind you, no longer to strain but toward what is before" (Philippians 3:13).

Hence one should rely "less on the literality of the letter, than on the powers of the Lord and his justice alone" (Marion, 1991a:149). The simple comprehension of the text requires more than its reading. It requires access to the Word through the text. Similarly to Marion's view, to read the Scripture means to read it from the point of view of its writing, that is, from the point of view of the Word. More precisely, the theologian as servant of the Word must go beyond the text to the Word itself, interpreting it from the Word.

By taking the theologian's fundamental role as a servant of the text who goes beyond the text itself as hermeneutical actor, Marion even takes one step further in his understanding of Scripture reading. He comes to the final conclusion as to what that theologian's role should look like. He presents it in the role and service of the bishop, which comes to be one of the most disputed issues in his understanding of his biblical hermeneutics of saturation (Smith, 2003:29-40). The following section will analyse the way in which Marion takes the bishop to be the hermeneutical actor in interpreting the saturated biblical text, sustained by a eucharistic way of doing theology. However, the critical analysis and implications of Marion's apparently disputed view of the role of bishop and of his Eucharistic encompassing vision will be left for the following final chapter of this research project.

5.4.2 Theologian as the Bishop

As has already been pointed out in this chapter, the most important characteristic of Marion's understanding of Scripture reading might be defined as the conversation of the theologian in the eucharistic community with the Word itself. Additionally, it was seen that this conversation is endless in nature; it happens again and again. However, the progressive and also solid interpretation is impossible since the central event of the Eucharist has already happened (the first parousia), and is still to come, without the possibility of the community of faith having any effect on this having come and coming in future. Since the Word has already been spoken, it is already accomplished. Hence, all that remains to be done is to speak the words about the Word again, in the faith that the Word itself may come to say itself. More precisely, what has been said in and by the Word, has to be said in our language and in us. Therefore, what the Christian community does when it celebrates the Eucharist is nothing other than a hermeneutical reproducing of the Word. It reads the scriptural text first. Then it comes to its hermeneutical explanation of the Word in the sermon. Finally, it completes the process by having the Word in person. The priest in *persona Christi* breaks the bread and shares the cup (Marion, 1991a:152). In this way, the community of faith itself takes part in this hermeneutics of the saturated Word only as far as it is gathered and transformed by Christ, that is, as far as it is sacramentally interpreted by the incarnated Word. For this reason, Marion comes to his final claim. The hermeneutics of the Scripture by the community becomes possible only if the community itself is "interpreted by the Word and assimilated to the place where theological interpretation can be exercised, thanks to the liturgical service of the theologian *par excellence*, the bishop" (Marion, 1991a:152). In other words, if the Eucharist offers the only correct hermeneutic site where the Word can be finally said in the person who is representing Christ, and if that person is the only

one who has received authority to be *persona Christi*, then it must be concluded that "*only the bishop merits, in the full sense, the title of theologian*" (original emphasis, Marion, 1991a:153).

Marion is aware that this proposition "may appear paradoxical" (Marion, 1991a:153). However, even at the risk of oversimplification he insisted on it (Marion, 1991a:153). The main point for him is that the bishop is the only one who really received authority – it remains unclear how exactly, directly from God or via the community – to perform the hermeneutic mystery in the Eucharist, which is subsequently delegated to priests (Ben-Smith, 2003:33). Actually, he finds the argument for this in "teaching of the Word", which clearly portrays the apostles and those who follow in their place as presiding at the Eucharist (Marion, 1991a:153). The close tie between these two functions (teaching and Eucharist) in the early Christian church confirms that it is in fact a question of the same single service consisting of two different aspects (Marion, 1991a:153). In other words, without the presiding in Eucharist, the hermeneutic does not attain the theological site: the Word in person (Marion, 1991a:153). The priest presiding over the Eucharist begins the liturgical service by "carrying out the hermeneutic" (Luke 24:27) of the text, without the community yet distinguishing in him the Word in person (like the disciples on the road to Emmaus). However, through the service this hermeneutics becomes accomplished in the eucharistic rite where the Word, visibly absent, makes himself recognised in the breaking of the bread, characterising the priest as the *person*, who in *person*, reveals the presence of Christ. According to Marion, there is no doubt therefore that the hermeneutic of the Word can be delegated from the bishop to a simple priest who is presiding over the Eucharist.

And just as a priest who breaks his communion with the bishop can no longer enter into ecclesiastical communion, so a teacher who speaks without, even against, its bishop, absolutely can no longer carry on his discourse in an authentically theological manner (Marion, 1991a:153). In this way, no one can

avoid considering that every attempt to constitute theology as science is at least problematic. Scientific rigor requires the relaxing of the tie of delegation between the bishop, as theologian *par excellence*, and his teaching aide, who always tries to find a possible justification to act independently. However, this is impossible; it is even an “illusion” since to detach oneself from the bishop does not offer to “theological science” a neutral object of study, but does away with the eucharistic site of the hermeneutic (Marion, 1991a:153). Hence, instead of interpreting the text in view from the point of view of the Word in the service of the community, such a theologian takes an independent view which is no more theological in itself. Actually, a theologian accepts “positivistic scientific exegesis” by aiming at independent interpretation without relying on the original authority of the bishop. He/she thus produces the meaning of the text by her/himself, hence, ideologically, a new site of interpretation, in view of the new referent, who is not the bishop anymore. This scientific approach has two important consequences. First, by breaking with the bishop, the theologian no longer serves the community in any way, and he abandons it to the “hunger dodging of the pastoral” (Marion, 1991a:154). Secondly, by manipulating the bishop as he does the community, the theologian turns them away from the eucharistic site (Marion, 1991a:154). Accordingly, Marion (1991a:154) observes that these two attitudes led the Church to experience “their common impasse” throughout the years (Marion, 1991a:154). Therefore, a rectification of theology for him can only result from a restoration of the theologian *par excellence*, the bishop who constitutes the order of charity and edification of the church. The theological teacher is not justified unless he serves this order. Otherwise, he brings death. However, the more the teacher inscribes himself in the eucharistic rite opened by the bishop, the more he can become a theologian (Marion, 1991a:154). Without a referent found in the bishop who gives theological meaning in the eucharistic act, the theologian is not able to spot the right meaning in the text. There are many exegetes or theologians who commit massive misinterpretations of the text, either biblical or patristic, not for want of

knowledge, but out of ignorance of what is in question, of the thing itself. Marion claims that he who never experienced passion can with precision analyse a scene from Racine or Stendhal, but he can never understand it from the point of view of its author. He who never heard an orchestra sound can indeed decipher a musical score, but he cannot hear or understand it as the musician who composed it (Marion, 1991a:155). He who claims to go beyond the text as far as the Word must therefore know whereof he speaks: to know, by experience, charity, in short, "to have learned from what he suffered" like Christ (Heb. 5:8). Marion compares this with what Dionysius the Mystic said about divine Hierotheus:

> Either he received from the holy theologians, or he considered them at the end scientific investigation of the *logia* [text of Scripture] at the price of long training and exercise, of finally he had been initiated into them by a more divine inspiration – he did not learn things of God other than through what he suffered, and by this mystical compassion toward them, he was led to the perfection of mystical union and faith, which, if one might say, are not taught (Marion, 1991a:155; Dionysius, 2004:46).

In other words, going through the text of the *logia* in order, through passion, to receive the lesson of charity becomes a qualification, extra-scientific but essential, that makes someone a theologian. The referent is not shown, since it is encountered by mystical union (Marion, 1991a:155). In this mystical experience, the personal virtues of the theologian are not first at stake, but above all his competence acquired in the matter of charity revealed in knowing of the Word nonverbally, in flesh and Eucharist. This competence is provided only when the theologian "knows whereof he speaks in theology, only he that a bishop delegates knows wherefrom he speaks" (Marion, 1991a:155).

5.5 Conclusion

Marion defines his readings of Scripture around his central idea of Revelation manifested in Christ as the Word. He asserts that the Bible essentially reveals Christ, who does not proclaim the words of God, but who reveals himself as the

Word of God. Therefore, Scripture is not taken to be simply a collection of words said about God, but an event account of God revealing Himself. However, in describing such an event, the biblical text does not identify itself with the event. It is only the sign which points to the event of Christ, without being able to exhaust the final meaning of it. It only gives the traces of the event of Revelation without being able to fully correspond to it or comprehensively explain it, because it only results from it. The Revelation of Christ thus remains always saturated, inaccessible and uncompleted even in the form presented in a sacred account of such importance as Scripture.

This understanding of the incommensurable Christological event of Revelation, which traverses in meaning the account of Scripture, takes Marion to the conclusion that any kind of scientific, prophetic, spiritual or other conceptual interpretation has no validation at all. These interpretations try to get back to the actual event by means of crafty theological discourse, which is against the saturated Revelation found in the Bible. They describe Revelation as the final and complete description of the event without giving space to the possibility that its meaning might overcome the way in which it is described in the biblical text. In this sense, it means nothing more than what the Bible obviously says about it. The Revelation of Christ is thus limited to the biblical text alone. Finally, this inadequate understanding turns the Word of God (Logos) into the word about God (logos), which clearly contradicts Marion's opposite view that Scripture as the word of God should be interpreted from the point of view of the Word.

Marion finds the Eucharist to be the exclusive site for such a theology. It is the only one which provides an understanding of Revelation from the point of view of Christ who Himself gives an explanation of Himself. In his detailed analysis of the paradigmatic account of Luke 24, Marion points out that the story of the Emmaus road describes the crucial and only event in which Christ intervenes in person in order to provide the hermeneutics of Revelation. This happened by unspeakable speech, when Christ took bread and gave thanks. In this eucharistic

moment the eyes of the disciples became suddenly wide open and they finally recognised Him and subsequently understood everything He explained from Scripture. The Eucharist thus completes the hermeneutics of Scripture, and hermeneutics consequently culminates in the Eucharist. Therefore, at the moment of the Eucharist celebration Christ offers the eucharistic hermeneutics to be the only possible way of doing theology that allows Revelation to be treated as an unforeseeable and open-ended act of saturation.

Finally, the eucharistic vision of interpretation imposes some important conditions on the work of theology and the role of the theologian her/himself. Theology is understood to be a sacramental rather than an intellectual discipline in nature. It is also an endless, open-ended discipline because it deals with the saturated nature of Revelation and because of the innumerable plurality of interpretations. Lastly, it has no possibility for progress. It is always a repeated act of hermeneutics that ceaselessly attempts to give meaning to the already accomplished interpretation provided by the Word of God Himself. In this context, the theologian is considered to be the servant of the text, the one who in a passive kind of attitude has to interpret the biblical text by relegating his/her own hermeneutics to the point of view of the Word. Therefore, she/he must go beyond the text to the Word itself in order to be in a position to interpret it from the Word. By doing this, a theologian finds the right referent in the bishop. For Marion, only the bishop deserves, in the full sense, the title of theologian *par excellence*, since he is the only one who has received authority to perform the hermeneutic mystery in the Eucharist. In that way, through the power of the eucharistic act, he delegates his authority to priests to preside over the eucharistic service and makes the Eucharist to be the exclusive place for the theological enterprise. Just as a priest who breaks his communion with the bishop can no longer enter into ecclesiastical communion, so a theologian who speaks without or against its bishop can no longer perform theology in an authentically theological site. In other words, without a referent allocated in the bishop who provides the hermeneutical

foundation in the Eucharist, the theologian is not able to offer a right interpretation of Scripture.

This way of doing theology takes this research to its final questions: What are the implications of this kind of Scripture reading for a dogmatic way of reasoning? How does Marion's theology of saturation relate to the question of constituting and understanding Christian beliefs? The following chapter aims to provide answers and give final understanding. Besides, it has also has the purpose of evaluating and critically addressing Marion's eucharistic vision of theology, the decisive role of the bishop as theologian *par excellence*, and all other crucial elements and aspects of thought employed in his hermeneutics of saturation.

6.0 PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF HERMENEUTICS OF SATURATION ON DOGMATIC REASONING

6.1 Introduction

In accordance to what has been presented in previous sections of this research, there are certainly a number of reasons why Jean-Luc Marion as a postmodern thinker could be regarded as a significant contributor to the current philosophical and theological project. First, he should be praised for his determination to help make theology digestible to postmodern thinkers who might otherwise reject a discussion of God dismissively (Horner, 2005:14). Although Marion (1991a:xxi) claims that his work does not remain "postmodern" all the way through, his enterprise definitely qualifies him as a member of the group of postmodern thinkers who are assessed in Harvey's (1990:116-17) description as "obsessed with deconstructing and delegitimizing every form of argument they encounter." Next, as Guarino (2005:340) noted, Marion commends postmodern thought in such a way that it "demands that theology maintain a sense of openness toward the unfamiliar and the other". In this way it awakens us in the process to the "otherness" of God, thereby "rescuing us from latent rationalism, from theological Cartesianism, and from the naturalism endemic to human experience" (Guarino, 2005:340). Furthermore, Marion's writing style seems at times more like poetry than prose (Strudwick, 2008:192-93). As Guarino (2005:59) has pointed out again, it appears that in some instances his language approximates the forms of nonreligious aesthetics and the poetic mysticism of Adorno or the latter Heidegger. Poetry has certain advantages, especially if it is employed toward

what Marion has in mind. It might be the most useful tool in expressing non-conceptual, postmetaphysical thought that seeks a new way of articulation. Nevertheless, besides all these significant features of Marion's thought, the description that might most properly designate his philosophical yearnings and his entire scholarly project is embedded in Thomas Carlson's title, "liberation theologian" (Carlson:2007:153). Actually, in all his efforts, both theological and phenomenological, to understand and to explain revelation/Revelation as inconceivable and indefinable because unconditionally saturated, Marion composes one of the most challenging liberation theologies. Yet, his theology has no connection with liberation theologies which aim to place the unsettling power of theology in the service of all too human ends, such as social, political or economic ones (for instance, see Berryman, 1987; Cone, 2008). In contrast, Marion's theology mainly aims to liberate thinking about God from the estrangement in which God has been placed by the sovereignty of human sciences and especially by metaphysics. Both of these disciplines are inclined to get understanding of God in terms of everything but His own saturated self-givenness. They occlude the Revelation of God in its true sense because they demand that God appear not in his own way but according to conditions of objectivised human experience or, better, according to *a priori* grounds or reasons which alone are capable of defining everything, including God (Carlson, 2007:153-54). Therefore, Marion is a "liberation theologian" who yearns to find a postmetaphysical theological pathway which is able to exceed the limited scientific and metaphysical horizon and get to the point where thinking allows the pure givenness and saturation of God to be thought in an unrestrained phenomenological manner.

As has been presented in the previous chapter, Marion's understanding of the Bible is unquestionably related to this kind of liberation theology. Indeed, his Scripture reading is permeated by the quest for understanding the unconditional, saturated, self-giving God who revealed Himself through the Christ as the Word.

It actually tries to deliver God from the confines imposed by exegetical, prophetical or spiritual readings, which all, although in different ways, strain to consign God's Revelation to the limits of the biblical text alone. More precisely, in contrast to these disciplines that treat Revelation as nothing more than what the Bible says about it, Marion claims that Revelation as a saturated event could never be restricted to the text only. The saturated event of Revelation in Christ stays always outside or beyond the biblical confines since it primarily represents a real dynamic act, a historical happening, and not merely a written report which is only a secondary source. As such, it is permanently excessive, incommensurable, and open-ended for any description coming from the human point of view. Therefore, it overcomes the limits of Scripture as the Christological event, which, although enclosed in the biblical text, is never fully exhausted by it because of its overwhelming excess. For this reason, Marion claims that the phenomenon of Revelation has to be liberated from any interpretation that is limited to the text only, which, restrained as such, would only define it in terms of theo-*logy*, that is, a human word said about the divine Word. In order to get its meaning in terms of real *theo*-logy – divine Word said in human word – Revelation has to be interpreted from the point of view of the Revelation itself, in other words, from the Christ himself whose saturation overcomes all confines of Scripture. Finally, this interpretation ultimately happens in the act of Eucharist, where Christ makes Himself known and explained through eucharistic hermeneutics. Within such hermeneutical structure, Marion's phenomenological reading of Scripture comes to be preoccupied with making God's Revelation a leading phenomenological source or genuine origin for theological understanding that takes its saturated appearance in Christ as its grounding point. Therefore, Christ was consequently and radically presented as the sheer sign (the event of Revelation itself), the message (the Word in which Revelation is given) and the interpreter (the Word by which explanation of the message gets its own meaning).

All these characteristics are inseparable and come to happen simultaneously in the event of Revelation that appears as a saturated phenomenon.

As a result, this phenomenological interpretation of Scripture, based on the hermeneutics of saturation, could be characterised by three main features of theological understanding. First, it is apophatical in essence since it claims to go beyond human thought and therefore no intelligent concept could take hold of it. Secondly, it is Christological because Christ is the genuine source that makes it possible as well as understandable. Finally, it is a faith-based interpretation that is founded on the phenomenological act of passive reception rather than on the active procedure of rational deliberation. These key aspects of Marion's thought will indeed be the subjects of special concern for the analysis that will be presented in this chapter. Therefore, in what follows, I will first address them as leading characteristics of Marion's theology and his Scripture reading in order to critically analyse their significance for the theological/philosophical enterprise in general. Furthermore, after evaluating them, I will turn more specifically to the final question of dogmatic reasoning. In other words, the last section of this research will offer conclusive remarks on how Marion's theology makes an impact on dogmatic reasoning and how the chief characteristics of his thought are related to this way of thinking.

6.2 Apophatic Interpretation: De-nomination Theology

From his earliest writings, Marion's philosophical thought has been marked by an interest in apophatic theology (see Chapter 2, 39, 40). He is attracted to it because he is convinced that it offers a suitable model of an approach that endorses thinking about God without reducing it to the degree of human concepts. Indeed, it represents his guiding philosophical framework that allows God to appear as God, rather than as an idol or image of human thought. It shows God who gives himself not to be proved rationally or comprehended conceptually, but rather to

be received in pious contemplation and prayer, in an act of worship. Hence, Marion argues that apophatic thinking achieves this understanding of God because it is pragmatic rather than intellectual. It rather gives praise to God than defines him (Marion, 2002b:142-43; Mackinlay; 2010:212; Carlson, 2003:61).

Marion interprets Scripture by having this apophatic context in mind. He uses an apophatic way of thinking to liberate the biblical text from being interpreted by misguided attempts to determine God according to the proportions of human philosophical concepts, which include, first of all, the fundamental metaphysical idea of Being. In other words, his Scripture reading aims to reach an understanding that frees God's Revelation from being conceived on the preceding conditions of the subjective limits of human existence. This kind of understanding leads to an alternative hermeneutics defined by saturation, which begins with the initial hypothesis that Revelation is too excessive a phenomenon to be totally grasped and described with human affirmative concepts. Therefore, interpretation of Scripture has to begin with a negative assumption regarding the limited capacity of the human mind. Human reasoning is deficient and no intellectual effort is able to fully conceptualise Revelation as the highest degree of God's givenness.

Marion's apophatic interpretation is of a specific kind. He does not assume it in the traditional context of *via negativa* that undergirds the stance that nothing could be said of God because there is nothing in human capacity to say it at all. Marion comprehends it from another, alternative way that arises from the idea of the eminence or excess of God (see Chapter 2, 37-40). More specifically, his apophatic thinking is focused on the *supereminent* characteristics of Revelation that overcome even the greatest possible human thought with incommensurable superabundance. In this way, humans are able to say something about God that could be true, but at the same moment that would never be completely truthful since there is always overwhelming saturation that remains unspeakable. Indeed, Marion's apophatic understanding is negative only because divine majesty is

eminent and saturated and thus impossible to be fully elucidated by pure intellectual endeavour. It is not negative, because it is based on the fact that thought of God is absent as a thinking possibility for the human mind, and thus it has to declare the renunciation of any positive speech about God. Actually, it rather allows it with a demand that this kind of speech should always overcome the dangers of metaphysical objectivity that wishes to master it in an all-encompassing systematic and methodological thought. In other words, it permits it with the precondition of a humble admission that human language is essentially limited and therefore has to recognise the fact that even the most perfect human concept of Revelation always remains an unfinished, uncompleted thought about God. This kind of apophatic theology has several important sources that need to be pointed out in order to further clarify the nature and meaning of Marion's apophatic hermeneutics of saturation.

First, in his apophatic thought of God, Marion accepts and extends Pascal's famous distinction between the God of the philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or, more precisely, between the God of understanding and the God of will (see Chapter 2, 40-43). Marion argues, against both traditionally affirmative and negative theology, that the real hindrance within the human relation to God is not weakness of understanding but arrogance of will (Marion, 1998c:292). In other words, human beings move towards God by wishing to conceive him more clearly, but that happens only when they love him more fully. The love expressed through a life of worship is the unique source that is able to provide an original perspective of God that metaphysical concepts are not satisfactory to sustain or even to provoke. Indeed, as indicated by Heidegger, Marion argues that, since humanity "can neither pray nor sacrifice" to the God of the philosophers, the "god-less" apophatic thinking which must abandon the God of philosophy, or primarily the God of Being, is "perhaps closer to the divine God" (Marion, 1991a:35).

Secondly, at this point of Marion's apophatic thought the "death of God" announced by Nietzsche comes to play a productive role (Marion, 2001:27-80; Marion, 1991a:25-52). If the apophatic thinking of Pascal to which Marion appeals might provide a new understanding of God, then the "death of God" interpreted as the destruction of all metaphysical concepts may be able to hold real theological promise (Marion, 2001:27-35; Carlson, 2003:62). Nietzsche's philosophical idea should thus be re-interpreted as the death of "ontotheology", the philosophical system that takes the idea of God as equivalent to the category of the conceptual idol of the human mind, one that strictly presents God on the ground of the metaphysical thought of Being of beings. In this way, Marion argues that Nietzsche proclaims the death of God as a consequence of the failure of metaphysical thinking that accommodated the intellectual representation of the divine with purely human and idolatrous conceptions of it (Marion, 1991a:25). Therefore, Nietzsche's death of God is not the death of any possible thinking of God, but the death of the philosophy which thinks of him in a metaphysical way. Moreover, this re-interpretation of Nietzsche paves the way for thinking of God outside of ontotheology. It opens the possibility for approaching God by giving the absolute primacy to Christian Revelation liberated of any metaphysics. It unlocks a new theological vision where the apparent absence or withdrawal of God in modern metaphysical thought can actually be taken to mark the beginning of a new perspective of God's very presence or advent. In other words, according to Marion's new theological perspective coming after Nietzsche, the presence of God should be implicit only in the function of his absence, that no idea could ever present and clarify completely (Carlson, 2003:62). In short, Nietzsche is not the herald of the end of theology, but the prophet of a new apophatic theology of saturation that liberated itself from the old chains of metaphysics of presence. (For further discussion on this theme, see Valadier, 2006:247-61; Thissen, 2010:2-53).

Finally and most significantly, Marion frames his apophatic theology of saturation and absence and withdrawal predominantly according to the ideas and writings of Dionysius. Indeed, the most important source for his *via negativa* understanding is Dionysius' "divine names" theology, which has a tendency to substitute constative and predicative theological language with strictly pragmatic, liturgical forms of it (see Chapter 2, 37-38; Marion, 2008a:104). For Marion, this means that human linguistic responses to the incomprehensible saturation of Revelation can never capture the essence of that saturation or master it by means of predication or its claims to knowledge. "This unthinkable", he argues, "speaks even before we think we hear it" (Marion, 2001:198). Therefore, the anteriority of saturation holds out to the human subject a language that both precedes and inverts its predication. To move from constative to pragmatic models of language is to move from metaphysical language to one which overcomes the categorical reasoning based on alternatives of affirmation and negation. This move ends up in the creation of a third-way theology that comes to be Marion's post-Nietzschean project establishing a new postmetaphysical thinking announced by the death of the metaphysical God.

More specifically, Marion's apophatic way of the "third-way" theology refers to the idea of "de-nomination", which, by naming and un-naming God at once, points beyond both naming and un-naming (Marion, 2002b:134). Through this comprehension of "de-nomination", Marion actually aims to make a theology that exceeds the alternative between positive (kataphatic) and negative (apophatic) thinking of God. Since both of ways of thinking – apophatic and kataphatic – are based on categorical statements related to the essence of God, both of them consequently promote idolatrous theology of a metaphysical type. In other words, either being apophatic or kataphatic in essence, theology necessarily names God on the basis of the fundamental idea of Being. In both cases, comprehended either negatively or positively, God is metaphysically perceived as nothing else than the ground of all beings. For this reason, Marion insists that the most

valuable postmetaphysical contribution to liberation theology originates in Dionysius' negative moment of thinking about God which overcomes and goes beyond the two alternative categorical predications. This moment gives a signal to a third mode of theological language articulated in Dionysius' use of *hyper* terms or hyper-essential language describing God as beyond Being, beyond the idea of Good or even the idea of super-Good. This hyper-language aims to indicate the manner in which God, as the source of all creation, is both present as immanent and transcendent in the created world. Hence, God is able to receive the name of every created being, but He himself stands beyond any name or any being. He overcomes every affirmation and every negation by exceeding the metaphysical choice between God's presence of kataphatic theology and His absence of apophatic reasoning. Therefore, the naming of God is endless in nature. This infinite profusion of divine names provided by hyper-essential thinking enacts the desire of the theological subject in the face of God's inexhaustible anonymity and drives her/him to accept it as saturation. It therefore recognises the impossibility of pronouncing God's name in ways that are intelligible to human being. His name always remains unpronounceable. In doing that, this theology de-nominates God. It excludes his name from any predication on the basis of its essential anonymity. By standing in front of such anonymity, the theological subject could only praise God under the "index of inadequation" that permanently aims to preserve the insurmountable gap between language and the God to whom it refers (Marion, 2001:233). The de-nomination is therefore a sort of theology of absence in which the name of God is given as having no name, as not showing the essence and having nothing but this absence to make manifest (Marion, 1999a:37). In this way, God's Name is given to human thinking, not to be intellectually comprehended, but as an antecedent call that seeks response in which a theologian should name it in return, but always endlessly, as the unnameable Name that is rather praised than thought, in worship, or more precisely, in the Eucharist.

Within this apophatic, de-nomination perspective of God, it is obvious that Marion's articulation of postmetaphysical theology depends significantly on the Dionysian model of apophatic thinking, used in order to explain his vision of the theology of saturation and consequently his apophatic reading of Scripture. In referring to this observation, the most notable challenge to Marion has been addressed by Jacques Derrida. The disagreement between these two thinkers is very comprehensive and complex and it cannot be resolved in this work (for further reading, see Carlson, 1999; Caputo, 1999:185-222; Horner, 2001). However, the implications important for this research will be concisely pointed out. Actually, the most significant fact for this study is Derrida's suspicious attitude towards the degree and fashion in which the Dionysian God may be the theological key for Marion's vision of God without Being. Or, expressed in a more precise way, his suspicion about the degree or manner in which the theological discourse of praise and celebration could in fact remain non-predicative in nature. In relation to this context, Derrida thinks that the hyper-essential usage of language that Marion emphasises is actually totally inadequate to overcome the thought of Being or essence, because such language still intends to indicate the manner in which God actually is. Even if He is somehow beyond Being or above it, He is still conceivable as someone above Being. In this way, Marion's apophatic theology, although trying to reach thought beyond all affirmative and negative predications, even going beyond Being itself, still remains as hyper-essential thought of God in relation to God as Being. In other words, these hyper-terms do not indicate a liberation of God from Being but rather indicate the excellence of God's Being, the outstanding mode in which God is (Derrida, 1992b:77). In this way, Marion's apophatic theology of saturation understands absence to be nothing other than the function of the saturated presence of the God whose Being surpasses that of all finite beings. It is not a negation of the divine according to lack or absence, but according to an excess of saturated presence. This negative theology aims to preserve God's presence, not to deny it, and in this way the

negative thinking remains positive in essence, since it gives up finite language about God only in order to preserve God's infinite, hyper-essential language of presence (Caputo, 1999b:195-97). At this point, Derrida finally suspects that Marion's theology, attempting to speak about God beyond any human conceivable thought, would in fact remain onto-theological because by saying God such as he is, even beyond Being, or beyond all that is said, all that is known of him is saying actually some kind of factual truth about God (Derrida, 1995:69). In short, if Marion's apophatic theology provides language that uses positive and negative predications in order to pass beyond affirmation and negation in describing God, or if it insists on irreducible inadequation between human conceptual thinking and divine Revelation, it actually does so only in order to relate it to the saturated presence of God's hyper-essential Being. Despite God's metaphysical presence being refuted, since it is addressed outside the question of Being, the kind of superabundant presence is not in doubt. Moreover, Derrida argues that the assumption of this superabundant presence of God is even the starting point for such theology. Marion's theological thinking, developed on the basis of the endlessly referential undertaking of hyper-essential language, presupposes, however, a God as a referent who, even while being claimed to be absent as Being from a postmetaphysical way of thinking, nevertheless remains present as Being at the bottom of this thinking. God, therefore, is not beyond Being, but rather represents God in the most saturated, excessive, inexpressive mode of Being. Indeed, at the fundamental methodological level, this apophatic theology is permeated by its own inadequacy. In order to indicate the truth of God without Being, it nevertheless gets under the framework of ontotheology which measures God beyond Being according to very idea of Being which it seeks to overcome (Derrida, 1995:67).

Furthermore, Derrida questions the hyper-essential presentation of God as directly related to the usage of non-predicative theological discourse. As already mentioned, Marion develops a theory of non-predicative, pragmatic, liturgical

language of saturation. This language gets to be suitable to describe the de-nomination of God who, because without Being, would escape all names as sorts of predicative descriptions. Since explanation of God's essential nature is not susceptible to theoretical definitions, theological language cannot consequently establish anything conceptual of God, but only to praise God because of his incommensurability and ineffability. Hence, theological language must not be speculative, philosophical or metaphysical, but rather *theo*-logical, eucharistic or doxological. This language pursues the understanding of God not within fixed philosophical concepts but rather to glorify God through the eucharistic act or the ongoing performance of praise and prayer. In resisting this doxological view of doing theology, Derrida questions whether this theological language yet remains a predicative form of discourse. He suspects, in fact, that the doxological way of speaking does preserve "the style and the structure of a predicative discourse" (Derrida, 1992b:137). The act of praise, by and through its content, always has its addressee and thus it always makes a distinction of that addressee from other possible addressees, or other possible recipients of praise. For instance, in Marion's case, the determination found in the act of praise has the obvious function of distinguishing the Revelation in Christ from all other possible types of religious experiences (Derrida, 1992b:111). Therefore, the act of praise does not simply address itself to an anonymous God, but it rather speaks of that specific God, in distinction from all other possible divinities. Hence, however saturated in nature the language that addresses the Trinity or God without Being could be, that same language nevertheless remains invested in determinacy and determinations of God that are not empty. It actually addresses the peculiar horizon within which an indescribable God could be recognised and is taken to be, among other things, exclusively Christian.

After all these considerations, I understand that Marion's apophatic, third de-nominational way of doing theology comes to be radical apophasis developing a pragmatic speech of praise that, however, does not cease speaking

affirmatively of the divine, although he maintains that it does so. His theology still produces an apophatic form of speech of “something”, indicating God as the unconceivably greater than that “something”, beyond and otherwise than Being, of which Derrida’s understanding is seriously concerned as a possible return to the metaphysical language of hyper-essentiality, which designs God with a halo of a question of Being or the question of causality. In other words, I would agree with Derrida that Marion’s postmetaphysical view of God through the idea of saturation does not completely satisfy his quest for the liberation of God, whose excessive Revelation should provide endless hermeneutical space for the work of theology. Moreover, Marion’s phenomenological thinking could also be accused of being idolatrous thinking. By saying this, I am actually pondering on the following questions as real possibilities for his thinking: Does not Marion contradict his postmetaphysical project of liberating God of any human thought by seeking to reinforce the concept of God’s Revelation according to the thought of saturation? Is he at risk of attaining a conceptual idol conveyed in the form of the hyper-essential God? Finally, since his hermeneutics of saturation has become such an apt instrument for describing the immeasurability of God, is it possible that that same hermeneutics has become nothing else than God’s measure? By taking these questions seriously, it appears there is nothing of Marion’s aim to liberate God from idolatrous metaphysical thinking if the phenomenological concept of hyper-essential saturation has only replaced the function of metaphysical Being as a condition for understanding God. In other words, even if Marion thinks that the saturated phenomenon of Revelation escapes metaphysics (and I see no reason to dispute it), nothing is served if phenomenology takes up the same position in relation to it, and consequently, like metaphysics, sets its own conditions to the Revelation of God. Therefore, it seems that if the phenomenon of Revelation becomes the object of theological interpretation from a phenomenological perspective, it actually comes to be defined by anterior phenomenological claims that approach the question of God

through the phenomenological idea of saturation. Hence, in accordance with this kind of understanding, one can quite simply conclude that Marion's theology merely serves to fulfil the *a priori* conditions of the phenomenology of saturation, which provides it with the role and position of another kind of first philosophy. In this way, the saturated phenomenon of Revelation *par excellence* becomes or remains only to be the saturated idol *par excellence*.

Finally, this apophatic interpretation of de-nomination theology has two significant implications for dogmatic reasoning. First, it addresses and understands dogmatic history very narrowly by pointing it exclusively to the question of Being (Calcagno, 1999:1-7). This question is the most significant for Marion and has the regulatory philosophical status, since Marion believes that, by overcoming it, theology would thus subvert a viable metaphysical framework in which one may think about God. In this way, his application of the question of Being to the understanding of God is utterly negative. Indeed, Marion takes it as a most destructive philosophical idea. Its chief purpose is to demonstrate the bad consequences of its inappropriate application to the Revelation of God as a saturated phenomenon. In this context, speech about God based on the idea of Being comes to be an immense failure for both philosophical and theological enterprises. As a result, within this one-dimensional negative framework of Being, Marion neglects to give any positive characteristics of the relation of God's existence to human existence in the world. Indeed, he excludes from his view any good reason to think that God may somehow be valuable for human existence. However, this cannot be repudiated so easily as Marion did. Actually, one cannot profoundly separate the *ordo essendi* and the *ordo cognoscendi* as Marion does. Humans know by experience that they are not the cause of their own being. Traditionally, dogmatic theology views this as indicating that the being of creatures must have been ultimately affected by a fundamental cause or God as their Being. Therefore, while God is the fundamental ground of everything and the first principle of existence, He is as well an efficient cause of all creation. In this

way, human beings are analogously related to God existentially. God transcends humans, but is also immanent to their experience, although God and human beings could not be identical in any way. Marion tends to read this notion of analogy simply in logical terms without addressing the existential implications of this thought as well. On one hand, Marion charges that humans idolise God by conceptualising God as Being. On the other hand, Marion never carries out the full implications of God who is the cause of all existence, and never relates the fact that God has left analogous traces of his divinity within the created order. Therefore, if human beings have the capacity to think about God, they should be somehow related to Him in thinking, love or Being. Second and tightly connected to the first, Marion does not do proper justice to the Christian tradition of metaphysical theology because he openly disqualifies two other ways of thinking of God without offering any suitable and comprehensive explanation for doing that. It seems that his discrediting of other theological sources is rather *de facto*, instead of being previously carefully elaborated. Actually, beside revelatory knowledge, which Marion dominantly emphasises, there are two other generally recognised ways of knowing God: natural and experiential. Marion fails to give a comprehensive analysis of them, since he takes for granted that both of them belong to the metaphysical type of knowledge which is based on pure human reasoning and thus are unable to give credit to saturation as the primary form of thinking. By doing this, he has actually excluded the possibility of doing theology that includes different levels of knowledge of God. As a result, instead of approaching theological and philosophical thinking in distinct and various forms (natural, revelatory, experiential) and taking them as interrelated in order to illuminate understanding of God, Marion, in contrast, takes thinking of God to be exclusively saturated and therefore apophatic or doxological in nature and form. Indeed, he has created an exclusive form of apophatic, de-nomination theology which places the concept of the saturated phenomenon as the special paradigm for understanding of God. This paradigm is Christological in nature, and therefore

the next section will critically address it together with its eucharistic and episcopal implications.

6.3 Christological Interpretation: Self-referential Theology

The saturated phenomenon of Revelation, emphatically evidenced in the Christ event, is of such a kind that it can only be received in its self-givenness. Christ, the Word of God, is an excessive visibility of the Father that goes beyond all nomination. Moreover, the Christ event, in which the invisible God, through the Word and not the word, enters into the phenomenality of the world in a way that is overwhelming, excessive, even enrapturing and therefore essentially non-conceptual (see Chapter 5, 167-68; Robinnete, 2007:92). In this way, Marion's Christological understanding of theology gives priority to the Revelation of Christ, which is saturated to the degree that it has to be explained by itself only. More precisely, by being completely accomplished in Christ, this saturated vision of Revelation produces a self-referential theology that gets its meaning only in Christ, who, by referring to himself, explains the Revelation itself. In other words, theology has no other referent but Christ, who by giving his self-reference as the explanation of God, makes self-referent theology as a result. This self-referent theology is consequently counter-intuitive, shocking and therefore saturated in bedazzlement of what it reveals. It is also Eucharistic and episcopal in practice. Therefore, in order to offer a better understanding of its meaning, this section will make an analysis of the most important characteristics of Marion's Christological interpretation of Scripture. Moreover, it will also provide the important understanding of self-referential theology's role in the context of dogmatic reasoning.

First and foremost, the saturated phenomenon of Christ produces "bedazzlement" for the human gaze that looks at it. Whereas for metaphysics the object conforms to the transcendental structure of the knower, the Revelation of

Christ saturates the human gaze in the intensity of its saturated phenomenality. The Christ event thus overcomes the power of perception and knowledge. It gives and produces the insupportable manifestation of God's Revelation that causes perceptual darkness as a result. As in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, where immediate illumination creates impaired vision to unadjusted eyes, thus Christ's manifestation appears in its saturation in an absence of human conceptualisation, that is, in a negative theophany of bedazzlement. According to Marion, this paradox of presence and absence is most apparent in Christ's Resurrection and Ascension narratives of the Gospels (see Chapter 5, 179-80; Marion, 2002b:268; 2002d:145-52). In Luke's Emmaus story, the disciples encounter the risen One in the breaking of the bread with a unknown foreigner. Once recognised, the stranger disappears from sight (Luke 24:13–35). Also, upon his final commission to the disciples, the risen Christ promises to be with them until the end of the age, and immediately disappears from their sight, by "ascending" into heaven (Luke 24:51). Experience of bedazzlement is therefore the key consequence after the saturated Revelation of Christ has been revealed.

Marion's idea of bedazzlement corresponds naturally to the apostle John's biblical juxtaposition of light and darkness (Robinnete, 2007:92). Just as the Gospel of John discloses a significant interplay of light and darkness, kenosis and acclamation, so does Marion's rendering of the Christ event concentrate upon the crossing of visibility and invisibility in the form, the Christ as Word of God. These insinuations found in John's Gospel are most unambiguous as Marion speaks of "a phenomenon saturated to the point that the world could not accept it. Having come among its own, they did not recognise it; having come into phenomenality, the absolutely saturated phenomenon could find no room there for its display" (Marion, 2000:208). Furthermore, the idea of bedazzlement is also rooted in the aesthetic theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar, who figures prominently in Marion's theology of bedazzlement, indeed, especially in his theology of distance (see Chapter 2, 44). "The form of Christ", states von Balthasar, "appears in the world

with such a plenitude of meanings" that it "necessarily has on man the effect of an overwhelming superabundance and, hence, of a darkness from excess of light" (Balthasar, 1982:645). In a similar way, Marion's understanding of God's absence is due to the excessive givenness of God. It is given in the incomprehensibility of its fullness. Thus, the perceiver is able to bear what is emphatically given in saturation merely through a conversion of gaze. This conversion of gaze is similar to what the disciples on the road to Emmaus undergo by perceptual accommodation to the Revelation of Christ by asking: "Were our hearts not burning?" Therefore, the conversion of gaze proposes that what blindness interprets as a simple obscurity must be understood as a saturated bedazzlement. If blindness sees nothing there and does not even suspect bedazzlement, the responsibility lies not with the Revelation of Christ, but with the limits of the gaze that cannot accept the evidence. Accordingly, only the conversion of the gaze can render the eye apt to recognise the blinding evidence of Revelation that bedazzles it (Marion, 2002c:66).

This kind of saturated bedazzlement actually underscores the nature of Revelation which is self-given and also self-evidential. For this reason, it should not be apologetically secured. More precisely, as such, it allows a limited and pedagogical role of apologetics characterised as some kind of contemplative and mystical preparation for the gaze's conversion. However, this mild apologetics escapes the charge of mere "subjectivism" since its understanding is not originated by, nor indeed rests upon, any rational foundation (Marion, 2002c:67–68). Furthermore, this contemplative mode of thinking is far from the formless mysticism of pure negation. It is rather enraptured by the unbearable saturation of the Christ event. It coincides with obscurity in Dionysius because the excess of God "cannot be borne by any gaze that would measure up to it ('objectively'), it is perceived ('subjectively') by the gaze in the negative mode of an impossible perception, the mode of bedazzlement" (Marion, 2000:201). In short, perceived

absence has to be interpreted as subjective experience that is correlated to the objective surplus of pure givenness expressed in the mode of bedazzlement.

Finally, the bedazzlement of Christ, as a vital experience in Marion's theology of saturation, is not simply immanent or symmetrical to the theologian as its recipient. It is saturated and self-referred in a way that as such maintains distance precisely in the midst of its proximity of being grasped by a theologian. In its excess, the Revelation of Christ is counter-intuitive and bedazzling. It always makes a call to a theologian as a hermeneutical actor who predominantly acts from the position of a passive recipient. This passivity of the theologian represents a real challenge to the theology itself. By addressing the bedazzling manifestation of Revelation, a theology becomes more a style or strategy than foundational or dogmatic in its nature. In this way, Marion's theology of saturation primarily provides incentives and skills for reading the Christ event in its self-manifestation. This reading has no link with explanatory or scientific sorts of theological approaches that have been so much widely accepted in theology since their scholastic configuration. Marion actually issues a powerful critique of these hermeneutical tools in theology. He clearly challenges all correlational types of theology. Whether historical-critical, existential, transcendental, hermeneutical, or liberationist, all should be neglected for Marion. In their attempts to correlate the Christ event with some conceptual explanation, there is a danger that analysis of the latter may place conditions upon the former, thus moulding the Revelation of God to some *a priori* horizon (Marion, 1991a:143). His revealed theology, as opposed to these theologies, is contemplative, a saturated "letting be", and imbedded in a theory of phenomenological perception in which the givenness of Revelation is essentially non-conceptual in form. This prioritisation of Revelation through the idea of self-givenness and the descriptive vocation of theology seen more as proclamation and doxology closely links Marion with Karl Barth and, of course, von Balthasar. "Why", Marion asks, "do [theologians] not undertake, or undertake so little (Hans Urs von Balthasar remains here insufficient and

exceptional), to read phenomenologically the events of revelation recorded in the Scriptures, in particular in the New Testament, instead of always privileging ontic, historic, or semiotic hermeneutics?" (Marion, 2002b:29). This demand is made as a call for a more "self-referential" type of theology that is more attendant to the self-giving character of God's Revelation. These theologies, as Hans Frei points out, seek to "put the reader in the middle of that world, instructing him in the use of that language by showing him how – extensively, and not only by stating the rules or principles of the discourse" (Frei, 1992:158-59). As in the case of Marion, the chief goal of theology is not primarily the "translation" of the God into another, probably more intelligible or credible framework, but to help the reader/participant become more adept at imagining, thinking and speaking within the dynamics of the saturated God. Therefore, it is the theological actor who is to be translated rather than the Revelation of Christ. However, there is still a question: Can a Christology interpreted in the context of saturated self-giving theology avoid being the fascinating reflection of one's own human gaze? Marion may argue that such avoidance should be inevitable. But, no matter how phenomenologically exacting the undertaking, no matter how Marion may argue its vitality, theological interpretation needs human understanding. Indeed, the important point of human understanding gets its best argument from the Christ event that itself had to be contextualised in historical necessity. If that had not happened, it would be appropriate otherwise to ask: What else would the affirmation of Christ's humanity really mean? (Robinette, 2007:99). On this theological ground human beings could say that the logic of incarnation demands its ongoing contextualisation and lived enculturation in human history. Nevertheless, Marion's theology has a right to continue to disturb all shallow self-assurance about such approaches, but, however, without ultimately rejecting their essential place and legitimacy.

Second, Marion's Christology is inscriptive more than descriptive in nature. It follows a logic of self-referential theology, where the evidential saturation of the Revelation in Christ requires explanation of saturating givenness in its

appropriated form. This means that what is saturated cannot be marginalised only as a matter of human conceptual thought, but has to be taken at the highest level of theological thinking. This level of thinking is participatory in form and has a performative character in its theological discourse. As such, theology becomes a practice. More specifically, it comes to be a “public work” of praise expressed appropriately in a eucharistic worship service. In this way, it is fundamentally participatory, operating in the order of sacrament and rite (Marion, 2010b:89).

The founding paradigm for Marion’s eucharistic self-referential theology is established in the experience of two disciples on their way to Emmaus. His relying on Luke 24 as his paradigmatic text has no explanation of how this event is related to broader New Testament scholarship and of what his motives are for taking this biblical incident as his foundational one. As already mentioned earlier in this research, Marion’s selection of biblical texts for serving his theological purposes is quite eclectic (see Chapter 5, 174). Therefore, without any given introduction, he simply begins by stating that two disciples have met Christ on the Emmaus road where he consequently showed himself by giving them the eucharistic way of hermeneutics. More specifically, Marion claims that a kind of closed hermeneutical circle is established in this event. First, Christ interprets the Scripture for them and they do not recognise him. Second, He celebrates Eucharist and their eyes are opened for recognition of him as the Word in person. Third, they go back to the biblical text and, in return, they finally see Christ as the self-referring referent of Scripture (Marion, 1991a:150-52). Moreover, for Marion, the celebration of Eucharist by the Christian community is nothing other than a reproduction of this hermeneutical circle of theological interpretation. First there is the reading of the scriptural text and explanation of it through the homily. Then it is experienced through the rite of Eucharist. Finally, this eucharistic hermeneutics is accomplished by the Word in person. Actually, the priest, in *persona Christi*, through eucharistic symbols of bread and wine, makes the community itself take part in this hermeneutics as far as it lets itself be assembled

and converted by Christ, that is, as far as it lets itself be sacramentally interpreted by Christ revealed in the presence of the incarnated Word (Marion, 1991a:151; Smith, 2003:33).

There are two important observations that should be noted in Marion's self-referential, eucharistic vision of theology. First, in his phenomenological interpretation of eucharistic symbols, Marion arrogates the principles defined by the Second Vatican Council. He clearly writes that "for our naturally blind gaze, the bread and wine are real, the consecrated bread and wine are real as bread and wine, sacramental ("mystical" in the ordinary sense) as Body and Blood of Christ" (Marion, 1991a:180). In this sense, Marion does not wish to undermine the mystical character of the changed eucharistic elements, but he rather proclaims that their change is not the final accomplishment of a eucharistic encounter. Since he takes the mystical Body of Christ as primarily the ecclesiastical body, both real and sacramental, the real presence of Christ is not therefore only reserved for the sacramental elements themselves, but, moreover, for the Christian community which undergoes change of becoming the Body of Christ through the eucharistic act of worship (Marion, 1991a:180). More precisely, the consecrated elements of the Eucharist become the ultimate symbols of Christ, who delivers himself to the Christian community in his saturated presence. Thus, the eucharistic symbols, for Marion, serve as the sacramental mediators for the community to receive the Word incarnate. As demonstrated earlier, this emphasising of the sacramental community rather than the sacramental act of transubstantiation has the purpose of liberating the Eucharist from a metaphysical conception (see Chapter 5, 188-89). The mystery, which is the ultimate reality of the eucharistic presence of Christ, is under abuse in theological discourse and therefore "it is necessary to revive here the doctrine, common though fallen into disuse, of the couple *res et sacramentum*" (Marion, 1991a:180). In other words, Marion is aware that metaphysics is able to reduce to an objective way of knowledge even such radically theological discourse as that of the eucharistic

understanding of presence/gift. He is actually afraid that the Eucharist understood in the traditional way as an act of transubstantiation is inclined to confine the presence of God to eucharistic objects, which consequently becomes an “idolatry of presence” (Marion, 1991a:181; Mitchell, 2000:114). In this way, the appearance of Christ might be reduced to the materiality of *here and now*, which is even at risk of metaphysical reification (Marion, 1991a:179). Moreover, metaphysics privileges the present moment on the basis of Being, which diminishes the moments past and future as not present in real time. Marion subsequently claims that the Eucharistic presence is less of an available presence, which defines availability as reification serving human needs. It is more of a new advent which encompasses time past, present and future. Indeed, for this reason Marion encourages the eucharistic vision of theology that goes beyond the metaphysics of time in order to see the present as a timeless gift, imparted by God, that encompasses all of time (Marion, 1991a:177; Coffman, 2008:18). In this context, he redirects the use of the doctrine of transubstantiation towards the purpose of celebrating community, which becomes conformed and transformed through the self-referring Word via the eucharistic meal and interpretation of Scripture. The eucharistic meal is not given only in order to feed. It is indeed made present to permit its consumption. In consuming the Lord’s Supper, believers do not assimilate Christ to their “social body”, like food that finds its end in the satisfaction of human need. In contrast, they become assimilated through the sacramental presence of Christ to his ecclesiastical body. Whoever takes the Eucharist in this way “will be not transforming Christ into himself, but instead will be passing over into the mystical body of Christ” (Marion, 1991a:179).

Furthermore, according to Marion, this mystical reality could not be confined to the metaphysical presence of *here and now*. Marion notes that in his understanding of mystical communion there are three distinct temporal manifestations that overcome the traditional metaphysics of presence. The first type of temporal presence is the memorial. This memorial manifestation of the

Eucharist has essential characteristics: it regulates and makes the foundation for the reality of the present by declaring the past as a decisive moment for the eucharistic presence (Marion, 1991a:173). In this way, the memorial ritualises a past paschal event, already accomplished in time, and serves to make that event present to the communion partakers here and now. Besides being a memorial, the presence of God in the Eucharist is also anticipatory in nature. Therefore, as a second type of presence, the eucharistic experience is related to the future as *epiktasis* – "until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). This eschatological quality of the Eucharist determines the eucharistic present by the future-oriented quality of the Eucharist that announces the first-fruit of Christ manifested in the new creation which is to come (Marion, 1991a:174) Accordingly, for Marion, the announced eschatological reality in the Eucharist is both an invitation and an imperative for believers to further participate in God and in a growing community of faith (Coffman, 2008:19). Finally, the eucharistic presence is also here and now, experienced in the present time, in an actual eucharistic participation that happens in an exact time and at a precise place. By pointing to this historic experience of present time, it is recognised through a momentary conscious encounter with the presence of Christ who reveals himself as the incarnated Word (Marion, 1991a:175).

All these postmetaphysical insights of Marion, that go beyond metaphysical objective knowledge and metaphysics of presence, actually stand in contrast to the doctrinal systems widely accepted within the Roman Catholic Church. In contrast to the approaches of Aquinas or Rahner, for instance, both of whom, as prominent Catholic theologians, take the question of the Eucharist as deeply grounded in the metaphysical tradition of Being and the corresponding idea of substance, Marion takes the Eucharist outside of metaphysics by emphasising the relevance of the faith community and the mystical union of the ecclesial body. In this way his insights are more rooted in the phenomenology of saturation than in traditional theology. However, although he claims that the

traditional eucharistic explanation through the idea of transubstantiation is at odds with the contemporary world, it could also be claimed that even his postmetaphysical insights are also relatively inaccessible to most modern readers. Marion's obscure postmetaphysical language and very comprehensive theological system offers limited potential for possible actualisation of such an ideological change. Understanding and adopting these complex insights within a church's metaphysically rooted thinking poses a large challenge that, as explained in Marion's way of thinking, might be greatly rewarding, but realistically hardly possible.

Third and last, Marion's Christological self-referential eucharistic theology gets its accomplishment in an ultimate idea that the bishop alone has the right to be called a real theologian. This view belongs to the generally accepted Catholic tradition whereby the bishop is presented as the visible head of the church. The concept of the presidency over the act of Eucharist by the priest who is delegated by the bishop is equally recognised by the Catholic Church (Catechism, 1997:296; Smith, 2003:34). However, in this Catholic ecclesiological setting, the first question that has to be asked is: How does Marion define the relationship between the presiding bishop and the eucharistic community? For him, this relationship is defined by the crucial fact that the bishop does not preside over the Eucharist in his own person, but *in persona Christi*. In this way, the presence of the bishop during the eucharistic celebration is primarily the presence of Christ and not his own presence as the presiding person of the eucharistic community. Marion obviously emphasises this fact since he assumes that if the bishop presides in his own person that would deprive him of being an icon through which the saturated visibility of Christ is manifested. In other words, if the gaze of the worshiper is fixed on the person of the bishop in his own presence, then the iconic view of Christ would be undermined and mere idolatry would come as a result. The bishop as a person in his own presence would thus become the measure for the worshiper's view, which under the principles of Marion's phenomenology is

characteristic of an idolatrous gaze. Therefore, the bishop has to act strictly *in persona Christi* in order to perform the task of icon, which provides a eucharistic vision that overcomes his person and leads into veneration of the revealing Christ. As a member of the eucharistic community, the bishop comes to be the actual high priest, Christ himself, who at the same moment both celebrates and presents the Christ. This understanding takes as a background the old traditional maxim *episcopus in ecclesia, ecclesia in episcopo*. In other words, in celebration of the Eucharist, the bishop is the church and the church is the bishop. However, this episcopal vision of the Eucharist seems imbalanced in Marion's theology. It looks as if he overstates the role of the bishop who celebrates the Eucharist for the community, but without himself taking part in that community. In this way, this comes to be a lopsided eucharistic interpretation stressing only the second side of the maxim – *ecclesia in episcopo* – and thus neglecting the first one – *episcopus in ecclesia.* The bishop also needs to be a humble believer that belongs to the ecclesial community. However, it seems that this fundamental link between episcopal presentation and community is a significantly missing part of Marion's eucharistic vision. His apparently imbalanced presentation of the relationship between bishop and community leads to the second and probably more important question: Is the bishop really the one who occupies the crucial hermeneutical role of the Eucharist? In my understanding, the bishop should not be the one who occupies the most significant place in the Eucharist. As the Eucharist is a celebration of the whole community, to which the bishop also belongs in his own person, the most significant place should be truly dedicated to Christ. Therefore all who are present in their own person can only follow and imitate, as human theologians, that theologian who is superior to us: Christ. No other person present in the eucharistic community or outside of it could have the iconic status of Christ's representation. This claim even follows Marion's usage of Luke 24:13–35, for there it is undeniably Christ, not the bishop, who is performing the eucharistic hermeneutics. The role of bishop belongs fundamentally to the

community, and therefore it is only Christ who occupies the hermeneutic site of the Eucharist. A final argument for this hypothesis might be found in the actual practice of the eucharistic service. It has to be noted that, unlike the figure of Christ at the Last Supper, the bishop himself also receives the communion as the person who is intrinsically part of the eucharistic community. This would not make sense if he is by his role separated in any way from the community. Therefore, the Eucharist is performed for the sake of the bishop as well as for the rest of the Christian eucharistic community. Finally, there is one more question that should be confronted: What role is then left for the bishop? By adjusting Marion's vision of eucharistic theology, it seems that the bishop should not be called a proper theologian, but only an interpreter who speaks of God. Christ alone can be called a theologian in the strictest sense, the Word of God who came to give a right interpretation of God himself (John 1:18). The only proper thing other theologians can do is to meditate on and consequently imitate the Christ who is the only and true representation of God.

At this point, it appears evident that both Marion's apophatic and Christological interpretations are predominately based on Catholic theological tradition. By relying on either the patristic apophatic tradition or a eucharistic vision of theology, they both point to the idea of saturation of highest degree in the Revelation of Christ. In this way, de-nomination becomes the proper way of speaking of God and Revelation comes to be self-referential in nature. However, these conclusions lead to one more characteristic of Marion's hermeneutics of saturation that will be addressed in the following part of this chapter. In other words, although Marion's interpretation of Scripture is apophatic and self-referential, it is also faith-based in nature, and therefore essentially decisionist.

6.4 Faith-based Interpretation: Decisionist Theology

By using his paradigmatic Gospel account of the journey to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35), Marion does not just establish his apophatic and eucharistic vision for theology, but also examines the relation between faith and the saturated Revelation of Christ (Marion, 2002d:145-52). The chief interest for Marion in this case lies in the disciples' "obtuseness", their incapacity to grasp why Jesus has to be crucified (Marion, 2002d:146). According to his view, the reason for their difficulty in understanding is not the lack of evidence. They have a knowledge of what has happen in Jerusalem on the paschal day. They are also acquainted with the Scripture and they know Jesus in person. Therefore, Marion asserts, they had actually plenty of intuition, but their concepts were not sufficient to grasp the meaning of the event they had discussed (Marion, 2002d:146). Indeed, they were unable to recognise Him when he joined them in their walk because they could not imagine him being resurrected from the dead. They have not recognised him because "they cannot even imagine that this is really him, Him" (Marion, 2002d:147). Although he is visible and present, standing beside them, they lack the capacity to see because, as Marion (2002d:147) states, "they see nothing in the sense that one sees nothing in a game of chess if one does not play." In order to clarify further their experience, he compares them to Peter, who "did not know what to say" after the incident of the Transfiguration of Christ (Mark 9:6). Therefore, he points out, "it is always words (and therefore concepts) that we lack in order to say what we see, in short to see that with which intuition floods our eyes" (Marion, 2002d:148). More precisely, he claims that God "does not measure out his intuitive manifestation stingily, as though he wanted to mask himself at the moment of showing himself", but, on the contrary, we, as human subjects, are unable to "offer concepts capable of handling a gift without measure and, overwhelmed, dazzled, and submerged by his glory, we no longer see anything" (Marion, 2002d:148). Accordingly, by explaining Scripture to them, Jesus finally

provides new concepts and meaning which is adequate to the saturated intuition they have received: “And then, when the concept at last matches the intuition, the phenomenon bursts forth with its superabundant glory” (Marion, 2002d:149). When Jesus breaks the bread they suddenly grasp the meaning of the phenomenon, which is reflected in the disciples’ imminent admission: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32; Marion, 2002d:149). In Marion’s view, this act of Jesus should be understood conceptually, since it actually provides “the signification that will at last give meaning to all the intuitions that up to then had remained scattered and absurd” (Marion, 2002d:150). The disciples have recognised him “because the signification was making visible his phenomenon” (Marion, 2002d: 150). In this sense, Marion finally comes to the conclusion that failure to see is actually failure to believe. He claims that faith alone “allows one to receive understanding of the phenomenon and the strength to bear its bursting forth” (Marion, 2002d:150). Because of their faith, they received the concepts that become adequate to their intuition that had previously exceeded their understanding. Therefore, in order to see, the human subject can and must decide to see. Anyone who makes a decision in faith opens the ground to see and recognise the meaning of what was previously invisible because of the excess of intuition.

Having this faith-based interpretation in mind, it seems that Marion maintains that faith is not a recompense for an absence of evidence or intuition, but rather a recompense for an absence of concepts that are needed for understanding of the saturated intuition given by Revelation. In his understanding, the Revelation of Christ gives more intuition than the human subject can grasp by means of his insufficient concepts. Revelation is a saturated phenomenon that prevents human understanding from having an adequate knowledge of God. Therefore, it requires the act of faith that compensates for the lack of human conceptual capacity. In other words, faith is the source that gives the clarification

of inadequate concepts. By a decision to believe, one can adequately accommodate the excess given to him/her: “I believe because, in spite of everything, I want to hold as true that which does not offer intuitive criteria sufficient to impose itself of itself’” (Marion, 2002d:145). In this way, it appears that Marion suggests a form of will, a decision of faith that is fundamental for theological understanding. The phenomenon of Revelation, saturated with overwhelming excess, has to be first truly “wanted, not denied and evaded”, since in order to be seen “one first must want to see” (Marion, 2002a:305). One must first believe by making a decision in darkness in order to see at all. The idea of “seeing as believing” is thus present at the core of Marion’s theological thinking (Carlson, 2007:153-179; Kosky, 2010:103-119). His theology is therefore a decisionist one.

There are several important aspects that should be marked out in Marion’s own vision of decisionist theology. First, as Mackinlay rightly points out, Marion’s interpretation of the journey to Emmaus is simply not a correct reading of the text (Mackinlay, 2010:191). Marion understands this biblical account to convey the phenomenological idea of how the invisible and dazzling saturation of Christ became visible and understandable. Indeed, the Emmaus story has quite the opposite direction of thought. It moves from an understanding that is clearly conceivable by the two disciples to a saturated phenomenon that is so unconceivable and therefore needs to be explained by Jesus himself (Mackinlay, 2010:191). Actually, at the beginning of their journey, the disciples believe they see Jesus clearly by talking about him as the Messiah who should have come. At that moment, at the very opening of the story, they apply to Jesus visible concepts of prophet and Redeemer. However, as the story develops, they realise that their primary concepts are inadequate, that their understanding of Jesus has failed, and that something has happened that saturates their minds, something invisible and beyond their intelligibility. Only then Jesus reveals himself to them in dazzling excess, as the resurrected one, and gives them an adequate meaning of what

happened in the Christ event. Therefore, rather than progressing from an exceeding invisibility to a clearly grasped visibility of Christ, the Emmaus story moves from ordinary visibility to a saturated Revelation of the resurrected Christ who gives an interpretation that changed the understanding and perspective of the disciples on the road.

Secondly, Marion exclusively restricts the disciples' lack of faith to their conceptual consideration of Jesus, since he emphasises that their religious concepts are inadequate, particularly because their vision of prophet and Redeemer did not include ideas of suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, which they grasped only after Jesus' appearance (Marion, 2002d:148). However, this biblical account does not point that out as the fundamental problem. Contrary to the translation used by Marion, Jesus does not reproach the disciples because of being "slow to understand", but rather, he accuses them for being "slow of heart to believe" (Mackinlay, 2010:191). Therefore, they are not confused because their thinking is conceptually wrong and thus short-sighted, but rather because they did not believe that there is more to be seen. In other words, the lack addressed by Jesus is not conceptual and related to ignorance or misunderstanding, but is their lack of faith, related to trust and believing expectation. The deficit of faith is thus not merely a deficit of conceptual understanding of the saturation in Christ, but more a failure and unwillingness of someone to open him/herself in faith to Revelation as such. Furthermore, Marion's emphasis on conceptual lack of faith is even more surprising because it seems contrary to his own theory of saturated phenomena (Mackinlay, 2010:191). He claims that the disciples came to full understanding when they received new concepts from Jesus himself, which enabled them to "constitute" their intuition as a "complete phenomenon" (Marion, 2002d:151). In this way, their inadequate and imperfect conception has been replaced by Jesus' interpretation that gave them "the strength to bear the bursting forth" of the Revelation in Christ, which had blinded them before by its saturated bedazzlement (Marion, 2002d:151). Actually, this is even in contrast to Marion's

consistent understanding of saturated phenomena that are overwhelmingly saturated in manifestation that could never be converted into any kind of visible or conceptual description. Ironically, his interpretation of the journey to Emmaus is actually doing that. The phenomenon of Christ that was initially saturated for the disciples becomes an ordinary constituted object of thought, which indeed has no longer the excessive or saturated nature of manifestation. Therefore, by insisting that faith is conceptual in nature, Marion comes to the point of referring to the disciples as those who fully grasped the Revelation of Christ and thus made it barren of saturation.

Thirdly and lastly, Marion's decisionist theology lacks an existential and hermeneutical sense of the understanding of faith. In his conceptual vision, faith gets to be understood as a passive reception of Revelation that is imposed on the faithful recipient, who consequently interprets it by means of certain religious concepts or beliefs (Mackinlay, 2010:194). In other words, faith is described as a passive decision of commitment to an ultimate or transcendent reality coming out from the Christ himself, which is subsequently expressed in faith beliefs that are in accordance with the Revelation in Christ explained by Christ as Revelation himself. Nonetheless, Marion's conceptual dimension of faith is only a derivative aspect of faith. More specifically, it could not be possible without a more fundamental level of faith that underlies it, that is, the understanding of faith as openness to receiving Revelation, as trustful acceptance of the claims made in Revelation, as confidence in what is given, and as readiness for making a personal commitment in response (Mackinlay, 2010:194). In this sense, the existential dimension of faith comes to be primary and fundamental, since it represents an original and necessary commitment from which beliefs and religious concepts are derived. Such an existential faith is a trustful commitment that opens a hermeneutical space which searches for meaning. In this space a phenomenon is recognised as revelatory in which the Revelation of God does not impose itself upon the passive human recipient. It is rather actively received and

accepted without undermining the active role of a recipient's faith. In this respect, it is evident that the question of initiative and priority found in the relation between faith and Revelation do not belong simply either to God or to the believer. Faith is given in and through the Revelation of God, but is also the condition for the possibility of the Revelation to appear itself in human experience. In order to be grasped, the Revelation has to be actively received in faith without being simply imposed on a passive recipient. However, on the other hand, it is not to be exclusively the believer's active reception that constitutes it as an object of his/her own understanding. The Revelation and faith therefore should be understood in a complex circular interrelationship, thus resisting any attempt at attaching the sole advantage to either of them (Mackinlay, 2010:215). While only those with faith and through faith are able to recognise God's self-revelatory appearance, this faith is itself received from God's grace. Revelation cannot be understood as simply imposing itself from itself on a passive believer, but neither can faith be understood as a completely independent choice to accept God's offer of Revelation. God is the ultimate source for both his self-revelation and for the believer's faith, which actually recognises and receives Revelation as a gift.

In conclusion, Marion's conceptual understanding of faith essentially limits the hermeneutical space of theology to a peripheral and derivative sense of conceptual interpretation after saturated phenomena have already appeared, in a similar manner as he limits faith to derivative concepts and understanding only after Revelation has already happened. In this sense, he excludes the vital dimension of faith as ontological or existential conduct that includes an active openness to the Revelation of God. Instead of being characterised as an active decision related to an acceptance of Revelation, it rather comes to be a passive decision related to acceptance of the self-explained Revelation. Moreover, instead of being taken first as personal faith, an active acceptance and trust before God, it has been expressed rather in a secondary way, through a conceptual system defined by theological beliefs and concepts. Marion therefore

neglects to see that the existential aspect of faith is the primary response to Revelation and that without it there is no possibility for Revelation to happen in human experience at all. Indeed, the lack of the existential dimension of faith is the primary reason why the disciples on their way to Emmaus were unable to accept Christ's death and resurrection, and finally incapable to recognise him. Only after the change of their existential attitude after they believed, they were finally capable of accepting Jesus as the suffering Redeemer. Therefore, faith remains an existential commitment that belongs rightfully and immediately to the believer's decision. God's Revelation of his excess and transcendence appears only in the experience of those who by their will accept it as Revelation, although they do not understand everything about it. The decision of faith makes them ready to open themselves to its excess and recognise it in faith. In short, although the saturated phenomenon of Revelation may well be defined as the phenomenon of "the second and highest degree," its appearing as Revelation cannot be understood apart from the active decision of its recipient and his existential commitment of faith.

The sections above have presented Marion's theological understanding of saturation as apophatic, Christological and faith-based. His interpretations of Scripture and his understanding of God is de-nominational, self-referring and decisionist in nature. Finally, after analysis and critical evaluation of these above-mentioned characteristics, there are some final questions that should be asked: What is the effect of this way of theological thinking on dogmatic reasoning? And how should these characteristics of the hermeneutics of saturation be regarded? By bearing these questions in mind, the following section will conclusively clarify in what manner these important characteristics of Marion's hermeneutics of saturation influence a dogmatic reasoning and how they are related to it.

6.5 Saturation and Dogmatic Reasoning: Non-foundational Theology

The de-nominational, self-referring and decisionist characteristics of Marion's theology of saturation share in common their profound non-foundational way of thinking. All these perspectives, grounded in the idea of saturation, have the purpose of rejecting "first philosophy" in any form and thereby any rational intelligibility of the church's classical understanding of doctrines. They actually refuse to accept the view that the Christian dogmatic assertions could have any resonance in human experience. In other words, the non-foundational thinking means that the theologian as a hermeneutical actor has no right to seek to show an "immanent" element of "reaching" the truth of doctrine, presupposing the congruency of the doctrinal tradition with human experience (Guarino, 2005:5). For Marion, the assumption that there is *something* substantial and common to human nature and the Revelation of God is deeply mistaken. It is an even greater oversight and subsequently a failure to presume that that *something* substantial and common is also *something* quite obvious, universal and irrevocable or objectively true. Therefore, in terms of understanding of Christian doctrine, theology cannot give support either to a historicised or social-linguistically generated understanding of doctrinal truth claims. Christian doctrine originates from the self-referring Revelation of God and is not borne as purely historical event. As a consequence, Revelation should not be taken to be historically affected, since it has no foundation in cultural and ideological systems of a theological way of expression. As transcultural and above all revelatory in nature, it refuses to give legitimacy to human thinking which includes positive and productive effects of history as necessary and vital for an objective theological enterprise. Finally, it may be asserted that, according to a non-foundational view of theology, there is nothing in historical-metaphysical thinking that can logically clarify the statements of Christian doctrine or the dogmatic features traditionally and consistently related to it.

In the context of these non-foundational claims, Marion's postmetaphysical theology of saturation admits the doctrines of Christianity, but exclusively on condition of severing ties with an infrastructure of metaphysical, objective thinking that is based on the principle of rational intelligibility. His turn to an apophatic kind of mystical Scripture reading does not put emphasis on the rationally universal and conceptually normative truth of doctrine. In his wish to cut all ties with any kind of first philosophy, he asserts Christian doctrines as true only at the level of phenomenological appearance, which, in turn, excludes their participation in any consistent rational logic founded on rational principles of interpretation that are constitutive for traditional Christian thought. In this phenomenological analysis, Marion emphasises the inadequacy of the theological usage of Being-language which builds conclusions on metaphysical assumptions such as *common-being*, *ultimate Ground*, or *causa sui*, all characterised by the correlative dimension of human Being and God's Being. By providing congruent and analogical links between human existence and God's existence, theology becomes the philosophy of presence *par excellence*, and thus incapable of thinking of the very possibility of self-givenness, the overwhelming excessiveness of Revelation as a saturated phenomenon. True theology necessitates, therefore, *God without Being*. It needs to die away from being modern theo-*logy* in order to become again genuine *theo*-logy. Consequently, Marion's abjuration of the language of Being forces his theology of saturation to a doxological turn, a kind of negative theology that has a more poetic and aesthetic form of understanding of the Revelation given in Christ. Such a doxological turn successfully undermines the enclosing dimensions of metaphysical thinking by directing the human look exclusively to God as saturated and never fully knowable. The only way of reaching an understanding of God comes by his self-givenness that comes to be his revelatory self-explication, which does not affect human conceptual thinking first, but rather more human experience of faith-filled life expressed in forms of adoration and praise. This liturgical experience, devoid of traits of conceptual reasoning,

profoundly defines Marion's theology of saturation as chiefly subjectless, contextless, ahistorical and thus postmetaphysical in nature. Thus it actually undermines any conceptually intelligible form of dogmatic reasoning and asks for a mystical dogmatic approach that is purified of metaphysical elements based on an innate congruity of human reasoning and Revelation.

Likewise, all sorts of non-correlational theologies, even Marion's theology of saturation, court the danger of becoming characterised as fideistic assertions of Christian doctrines that exclude any credit given to human efforts. His radical vision of saturation naturally leads to a radical passivity of the human subject of faith. According to him, Revelation is the sole theological foundation and thus any attempt to domesticate the reality of God is essentially idolatrous. The only way of protection from metaphysical idolatry is negligence of the active human role of understanding by emphasising the fideistic role of reception and passive acceptance. Reason, which is vital for developing rigorous philosophical concepts, is not capable of understanding the iconically self-disclosing God, since Revelation has not been given as a formal object of human thought, but as the Christian experience of a faith-filled life. Theology is thus no longer a cognitive penetration into the nature of God, but more a fideistic reception of God's saturation. Moreover, another deficiency of Marion's non-correlative thinking is related to his theological language. As long as he seeks to define subjectless, ahistorical, postmetaphysical theology, he actually endorses historical, subjective and metaphysical terms, since no thinking or speaking occurs outside socio-cultural relations or in an ahistorical vacuum. No sort of knowledge, although claiming its non-correlativity, could be devoid of a correlative and constitutive subjectivity (Tracy, 1981:100; Guarino, 2005:22). Therefore, as already mentioned above, in combating metaphysical concepts of Being or *causa sui* against the phenomenological hyper-essentiality of God, Marion still uses historical concepts which simply replace the function of opposing metaphysical

ones. In this way, Marion's ahistorical understanding of God is only a historical explanation of it.

In conclusion, Marion has clearly forged a new postmodern type of revelation-centred, non-correlational, postmetaphysical and essentially non-foundational theology of saturation. Like his prominent role model in patristic theology, Pseudo-Dionysius, his predecessor in Catholic theology, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and like his natural ally in Protestant theology, Karl Barth, Marion has developed a demanding and well-organised theological approach focused on the phenomenological appearance of Revelation as pure gift, indeed as overwhelming saturation. This new phenomenological approach, shaped in Marion's gifted hands, results in a series of profound theological inquiries into original and provocative categories such as the "idol", "icon", "gift", "Being" and, for this research most notably, the idea of "saturation". All these categories became significant means for Marion's Scripture reading, which aimed to liberate its interpretation from metaphysically objective reasoning, and which at the end established his de-nominational, self-referring, decisionist and non-foundational theology. Nonetheless, Marion's admirable efforts do not prevent one from asking whether his apophatic Scripture reading, accomplished in self-referring Revelation through the believer's passive faith-decision, does not move in the direction of a fideistic assertion of Christian doctrines severed from any ultimate philosophical intelligibility. Finally, does not his postmetaphysical approach still continue to be a metaphysical explanation of God? Truly, these questions will always remain the most profound challenges that will characterise any systematic explanation of Marion's thought, including this one related to the question of dogmatic reasoning.

6.6 Conclusion

Marion's theology of saturation is essentially apophatic, Christological and faith-based in nature. As apophatic, it tries to address the hyper-essentiality of God. Accordingly, it comes to be a "third-way" theology, or the "de-nomination" theology, which by naming and un-naming God at once as God without Being, points beyond both naming and un-naming, that is, to the kind of mystical theology associated with Pseudo-Dionysius. In this way, Revelation is given to human thinking beyond possible conceptual understanding. It has been given as an antecedent and saturated call that provokes response in which a theologian should name it in return, but always endlessly, as an unnameable Name that is rather praised than thought, in liturgical form, or more precisely, in the Eucharist. However, even if Marion thinks that his explanation of Revelation as saturation escapes metaphysics and all sorts of conceptual thinking, nothing of that is achieved when phenomenology takes up the same position as metaphysics in establishing its own conditions for thinking of God. In other words, when Marion's phenomenology of Revelation actually serves to confirm its hermeneutical standards, consequently it sets its own horizon for fulfilling its metaphysical status of first philosophy. In this way, the saturated phenomenon *par excellence* becomes only the idol *par excellence*.

By being defined in this way, Marion's apophatic vision of theology has two important aspects that are closely related to the question of dogmatic reasoning. First, it appears that Marion's postmetaphysical project approaches the understanding of dogmatic history very narrowly by pointing it exclusively to the questions of Being. In this quite one-dimensional framework, Marion almost exclusively escapes addressing the implications of doctrines such as God as Creator, the fundamental ground or primary cause, and refuses to connect them to our own human existence in the world. Moreover, he explains them in an utterly negative context. They represent very destructive ideas for theological thinking

since, when applied to the Revelation of God as saturated in nature, they cause idolatrous thinking which creates an understanding of God according to human image or thought. Second, and closely related to the first, Marion gives proper justice only to the knowledge of God as revelation and totally neglects the two other sources for doing theology, namely, natural and experiential. Without any comprehensive analysis, he wilfully disqualifies them as purely metaphysical and conceptual sources. Therefore, he excludes any possibility for linking theological thinking with three different levels of knowledge of God. Moreover, he creates an exclusive form of mysterious, liturgical theology which places the concept of the saturated phenomenon as the special paradigm for understanding of God. This paradigm is non-correlational to human knowledge, both in essence and practice.

As Christological, Marion's theology of saturation is subsequently self-referring. It is founded on Christ as the Revelation of God, who by explaining himself explains the Revelation itself. This self-referring explanation is experientially counter-intuitive, shocking and therefore saturated in bedazzlement. It is contemplative in nature and therefore it does not need to be apologetically secured. More precisely, this understanding allows only a limited pedagogical role of apologetics characterised as some kind of contemplative and mystical preparation for the gaze's conversion occurring in a reception of the Revelation of God. This contemplative mode of reception of knowledge of God is enraptured by the unbearable saturation of the Christ event. It thus addresses the obscurity of the excess of God that cannot be borne by any gaze that would measure up to it objectively. It is rather perceived subjectively in a negative manner, the manner of an impossible conceptual perception, or the mode of bedazzlement. In this way, the perceived saturation of God testifies to the absence of conceptual thinking and the presence of the surplus of pure givenness expressed only in the contemplative form of bedazzlement.

Furthermore, Marion's Christology as self-referring theology is inscriptive more than descriptive in nature. In this way, theology becomes predominantly a

matter of practice. It takes the form of praise expressed in eucharistic worship. It is thus profoundly participatory in principle, operating on the order of sacrament and rite and established on Marion's interpretation of Luke 24. In his phenomenological interpretation of eucharistic experience on the road to Emmaus, Marion appropriates the principles of the Eucharist defined by the Second Vatican Council. He actually redirects the use of the doctrine of transubstantiation towards the purpose of celebrating community, which becomes conformed and transformed through the self-referring Word via the eucharistic meal and interpretation of Scripture. Hence, he disregards the theology of Eucharist taken in the traditional way as the act of transubstantiation. According to his opinion, this understanding is in danger of confining the presence of God to eucharistic objects, which consequently becomes an "idolatry of presence." The appearance of Christ is thus reduced to the materiality of *here and now*, which opens the room for metaphysical reification of the eucharistic symbols. Therefore, Marion takes the eucharistic Body of Christ as primarily the ecclesiastical body, both real and sacramental. The real presence of Christ is not therefore reserved for the sacramental elements themselves, but primarily for the Christian community which undergoes eucharistic change in becoming the Body of Christ.

Moreover, his self-referring eucharistic theology is indispensably related to the overstated role of bishop and his presidency over the act of Eucharist by the priest which is delegated by the bishop. This understanding is founded on the teachings of the Catholic Church. In his lopsided presentation of the relationship of bishop to the community, Marion overemphasises the role of bishop, who celebrates the Eucharist for the community, but without himself taking part in that community. More specifically, there is no idea that the bishop should also be presented as a humble believer who equally partakes in the ecclesial community of eucharistic celebration. Finally, Marion overstate the role of bishop by giving him the most significant place in the Eucharist. As the Eucharist is a celebration of the whole community, to which the bishop equally belongs in his own person,

the most significant place should only and exclusively be dedicated to Christ alone.

As a faith-based interpretation of saturated Revelation, Marion's theology of saturation is decisionist in essence. He takes Luke 24 even in this case as an example of faith-response experience that is properly correspondent to an absence of intellectual concepts that are needed for understanding of the saturated intuition given by Revelation. The Revelation of Christ gives more intuition than the human subject can grasp by means of his insufficient concepts and therefore it requires the act of faith that has compensates for the lack of human conceptual capacity. In other words, faith is the source that gives the clarification of inadequate concepts. In this way, it seems that Marion suggests a form of will, a decision of faith as the ultimate ground for theological understanding.

His decisionist interpretation has three shortcomings. First, it does not represent a correct reading of Luke 24. Marion points out that this biblical account aims to convey the phenomenological idea of how the invisible and dazzling saturation of Christ became visible and understandable. However, the Emmaus story has quite the opposite direction of thought since it moves from an understanding that is clearly conceivable by the two disciples to a saturated phenomenon that is so inconceivable and therefore needs be explained by Jesus himself. Therefore, rather than progressing from exceeding invisibility to a clearly grasped visibility of Christ, the Emmaus story moves from ordinary visibility to a saturated Revelation of the resurrected Christ who gives the interpretation that changed the understanding and the perspective of the disciples on the road. Second, contrary to Marion, this biblical account does not point out the disciples' lack of conceptual understanding of Revelation as the main problem. The lack addressed by Jesus is not conceptual and related to ignorance or misunderstanding, but lack of faith related to trust and believing expectation. The deficit of faith is thus not merely a deficit of conceptual understanding of the

saturation in Christ, but rather a failure and unwillingness of someone to open him/herself in faith to Revelation as such. Third, Marion's decisionist theology lacks an existential and hermeneutical sense of understanding of faith. In other words, his conceptual understanding of faith essentially limits the hermeneutical space of theology to a peripheral and derivative sense of conceptual interpretation after saturated phenomena have already appeared. He limits faith to derivative concepts that become understandable only after Revelation has already happened. In this way, faith emphatically represents the passive decision of a faithful recipient and an almost inactive acceptance of the self-referring Revelation. In this sense, Marion excludes the vital dimension of faith as ontological or existential conduct that includes an active openness to the Revelation of God in the form of an existential commitment that belongs rightfully and immediately to the believer's decision.

Finally, Marion's apophatic (de-nominating), Christological (self-referring) and faith-based (decisionist) characteristics of theology of saturation aim at a non-foundational dogmatic reasoning. In terms of defining Christian doctrine, this non-foundational theology cannot give support either to a historicised or social-linguistically generated understanding of doctrinal truth claims. It neglects to accept any legitimacy given to human thinking that includes positive and productive effects of history as necessary and vital for an objectively construed theological enterprise. It actually undermines any conceptually intelligible form of dogmatic reasoning and asks for a mystical dogmatic approach that is purified of metaphysical elements based on innate congruity of human reasoning and God's Revelation. As such, Marion's theology of saturation courts the danger of becoming fideistic by asserting Christian doctrines without offering rational clarification for them. Its dogmatic reasoning is thus non-correlative and seeks to reach the status of a subjectless, ahistorical, postmetaphysical theology of the saturated, hyper-essential God. However, by aiming thus, Marion actually stays within the confines of metaphysical thinking. He wishes to describe God without

Being by providing postmetaphysical terms which seem to replace the same function of the opposing metaphysical ones. In this way, Marion's ahistorical understanding of God might be understood as still a historical explanation of it. Therefore, although he has forged a new postmodern dogmatic type of revelation-centred, non-correlational, postmetaphysical and essentially non-foundational theology of saturation, there are still two questions that undermine it: Does his theology of saturation move in the direction of a fideistic assertion of Christian doctrines severed from any ultimate philosophical intelligibility? Or more specifically, does his postmetaphysical explanation of God still continue to be a metaphysical one? These questions are most profound challenges that distinguish any systematic explanation of Marion's philosophical/theological thought, including this one related to the question of dogmatic reasoning.

7.0 FINAL CONCLUSION

This research project is based on Jean-Luc Marion's idea that Scripture is an important source for understanding the philosophical idea of saturation. In his view, the Bible is a textual collection of sacred accounts describing the Revelation of God as the saturated phenomenon *par excellence*. As such, this Revelation has the nature of an objectless, excessive and self-giving phenomenon; it has its own autonomy and it is independent of the one who interprets it and tries to give it a meaning. It gives itself from itself in the highest degree of visible phenomenality. As a result, the theologian as a reader or hermeneutical actor who is called to interpret the biblical text as a saturated phenomenon faces some hermeneutical challenges. His reading has to be correspondent to hermeneutics that declares itself to be a postmetaphysical interpretation of the saturated, superabundant and infinite phenomenon of Revelation that overcomes her/his intentionality and remains immeasurable and difficult to master. In this way, a theologian is not able to anticipate it, nor to comprehend it by applying her/his own concepts to it. All horizons of understanding are overwhelmed and submerged by saturation. Finally, instead of being the active hermeneutical actor of constitution, she/he becomes a constituted witness of the saturated phenomenon. Therefore, the interpretation of Scripture turns out to be essentially passive hermeneutics of the saturated phenomenon of Revelation and Marion's hermeneutical vision becomes another attempt at interpretation that seeks to define the relationship between the bedazzling appearance of God given in saturation and human experience that wishes to explain it meaningfully.

Given the importance of Jean-Luc Marion's postmetaphysical reading of Scripture in opening the way for a new interpretation of Scripture, the crucial

question of this research was: What are the philosophical and theological implications of Marion's Scripture reading for dogmatic reasoning? In order to get a response to this question, this research project had to include and address the following subjects: 1) the understanding of the place of Marion's idea of saturation in the wider philosophical context; 2) the explanation related to the questions of position and function of saturated phenomenon in Marion's postmetaphysical project; 3) the explanation of leading principles that regulate his hermeneutics of saturation; 4) the understanding of the role of Scripture and the meaning of Revelation represented through the collection of saturated biblical phenomena; 5) the analysis and explication of philosophical and theological implications of Marion's hermeneutic of saturation for dogmatic Scripture reasoning. By having the central research question in mind, all chapters of this thesis were structured in a way to follow and address its closely related, above-mentioned subjects of study.

Chapter 2 aimed to situate Marion's postmetaphysical thought in the wider philosophical context. It gave an overview of Marion's philosophy, the development of which started from Descartes and later on turned to theology and phenomenology in order to overcome metaphysics. It actually showed how engagement in philosophical, theological and phenomenological domains has been permeated by his constant search for ideas of excess and saturation. Having started with Descartes, Marion discovered two philosophical features that have potential to overcome his metaphysics. Descartes' ideas of the freedom of the *ego* and the infinity of God were two breaches in his metaphysical thought. Actually, these two concepts were significantly intrusive non-metaphysical elements, but still captivated Descartes' metaphysical system. Furthermore, he turned to Pascal in order to provide a postmetaphysical system that would explain them outside of Descartes' philosophical confines. Pascal's order of charity, grounded in the theological language of love as the only way of speaking of God correctly, represents for Marion a valid system that liberates both *ego* and the

infinite God from metaphysical thinking. As a result, the Pascalian postmetaphysical system became an incentive for Marion's next move that took his project from Descartes to theology. In his theological project Marion makes an attempt to overcome the idolatry of metaphysics through non-metaphysical theological concepts identified with the figures of distance, icon and charity. However, theology has only provided a first escape out of metaphysics for Marion. The final one had to come through his phenomenological way of doing philosophy. The chapter concluded that this final interpretation led Marion to the question of degrees of phenomenality, which ended consequently in the discovery of his most prominent idea of saturation and its categories of saturated phenomena.

Chapter 3 introduced the idea of the saturated phenomenon. Basically, this section of the study offered an overview and analysis of Marion's concept of saturated phenomena in order to indicate how it became the norm or guiding paradigm for his postmetaphysical thinking. It actually presented the saturated phenomenon as a "paradox" of experience in which intuition given in its manifestation always submerges the expectation of the intentional subject. This kind of phenomenon gives "too much", in excess and in surplus, thus a conceptual thinking is not able to grasp its meaning. Marion has recognised five types of saturated phenomena. Each one of them is related to a corresponding category found in Kant's table of classification and also every single one defies the corresponding type of pure experience by its excessive phenomenality of givenness. Most important for this research is that only the fifth one encompasses all four kinds of saturation and takes the highest rank of saturation, named the "saturation of second degree". The fifth saturated phenomenon is *r/Revelation*. It has no correspondent category in Kant's classification of experience. It is thus the highest kind of saturation that liberates all the possible possibility of appearing phenomenality. It is the saturated phenomenon *par excellence* that pushes the phenomenal horizon to very edge of its possibility by simultaneously transcending

every possible horizon of appearance. This type of phenomenon appears in Scripture.

Chapter 4 provided an inquiry into Marion's development of the hermeneutics of saturation, pointing out and critically assessing the guiding principles undergirding the interpretative methodology of saturation. Marion's hermeneutics of saturation is infinite or endless hermeneutics. It is based upon two main principles. Both of them reflect the counter-experience structure wherein the saturated phenomenon as hermeneutical object expands its phenomenality in the direct proportion to which the subject's activity of interpretative understanding decreases. The first principle of Marion's hermeneutics is epitomised by the subject's passivity. The hermeneutical subject is a receiving one. It is merely a passive witness of saturation and not the cognitive agent of it. Its experience is a testifying one, without any claim of constitutional power. The second principle declares constitutional authority to the saturated phenomenon as the object of hermeneutics. It appears in the form of the *call* that causes the birth of new subjectivity. The hermeneutical subject, like a transparent screen, becomes visible only upon being impacted by the *call* of the saturated phenomenon and subsequently emerges only after the given phenomenon is received. With these hermeneutical principles in mind, Marion claims that his interpretation refers to the hermeneutics of middle-voice, the interpretation that reaches the middle ground between the roles of passivity and activity of the hermeneutical actor. Indeed, like Heidegger, Gadamer or Romano, his understanding of saturated phenomena belongs to the hermeneutical tradition that takes the meaning of an appearing phenomenon only after its appearing manifestation is fully accomplished, namely, *after the phenomenon has already appeared*. However, his hermeneutics has not reached the genuine middle ground between passivity and activity of the hermeneutical subject. The role of his hermeneutical subject comes to be too disposed on the passive side by being almost utterly deprived of any constitutional power.

Chapter 5 had the objective of analysing the manner in which Marion applies the hermeneutics of saturation to Scripture reading. This section examined various biblical texts that serve Marion for indicating the saturated presence in Scripture. Marion defines his readings of Scripture around his central idea of Revelation manifested in Christ as the Word. The Revelation of Christ remains always saturated, inaccessible and uncompleted even in the form presented in the sacred accounts of such importance as Scripture. This understanding of the incommensurable Christological event of Revelation, which traverses in meaning the account of Scripture, takes Marion to the conclusion that any kind of scientific, prophetic, spiritual or other conceptual interpretations have no validation at all. Subsequently, Marion finds the Eucharist to be the exclusive site for such a theology. It is the only one which provides the understanding of Revelation from the point of view of Christ, who Himself gives an explanation of Himself. The Eucharist thus completes the hermeneutics of Scripture, and hermeneutics consequently culminates in the Eucharist. Moreover, Marion's eucharistic vision of interpretation gives only the bishop the title of theologian *par excellence*. He receives exclusive authority to perform the hermeneutic mystery in the Eucharist. Without him as the allocated referent there is no foundation for the hermeneutic of saturation provided in the act of Eucharist.

Lastly, chapter 6 of this study offered a critical analysis related to the possibilities and limitations of Scripture reading based on the saturation principle, emphasising conclusive remarks about Marion's philosophical and theological potential for dogmatic reasoning and understanding of Christian beliefs. Marion's theology of saturation and his Scripture reading is defined as apophatic (de-nominating), Christological (self-referring) and faith-based (decisionist). Within all three models of interpretation he aims at non-foundational dogmatic reasoning. This non-foundational way of doing theology cannot be founded in a historicised or social-linguistically generated understanding of doctrinal truth claims. It strongly rejects any form of theological thinking that includes any positive and

productive effects of history as necessary and vital for conceptually-based dogmatic claims. By undermining conceptually intelligible forms, it seeks to develop a mystical dogmatic approach that is purified of metaphysical elements based on the correlation of human reasoning and God's Revelation. As such, Marion's theology of saturation may be taken as a fideistic approach to the understanding of Christian doctrines. It rejects rational clarification, and in its non-correlative nature it makes efforts to reach the status of a subjectless, ahistorical, postmetaphysical theology of the saturated, hyper-essential God. However, contrary to his wishes, Marion's reading of Scripture and his theology of saturation do not pass the confines of metaphysical thinking. His saturated vision of God without Being provides postmetaphysical ideas that replace the function of opposing metaphysical ones. More precisely, his prominent idea of saturation has set the same stage of first philosophy as metaphysical ideas of *Being* or *causa sui*, which he has strongly disapproved. Moreover, all his postmetaphysical terms would hardly be intelligible without relating to their metaphysical counterparts. Marion's ahistorical attempt to understand God seems impossible without originating in the historical-metaphysical framework of theological thought. Therefore, it was concluded that although Marion forged a respectable and original postmodern dogmatic type of Revelation-centred, non-correlational, postmetaphysical and essentially non-foundational theology of saturation, his reading of Scripture still remains significantly embedded in a metaphysical way of thinking that he tries to overcome.

At the end, it seems that hermeneutics of saturation which belongs to the tradition of hermeneutics of middle-voice, becomes problematic if tries to overstep Romano's way of understanding of appearing phenomena. Like Romano, Marion has huge appreciation of the complexity of events, and fruitfully uses the idea of excess to develop his insights into the appearing of phenomena in general. However, his concern to distance his hermeneutical understanding from the structures of Cartesian and Kantian subjectivity has lead him to disproportionate

emphasis of the “self” of the saturated phenomena, which completely impose themselves on the essentially passive subject who receive them. In contrast, Romano’s appreciation of the hermeneutic dimension of phenomenality makes his account of *advenant* more like a thoroughly human story, built around human attempt to realise possibilities in this world, which makes his evential hermeneutics more balanced interpretation of the way in which we encounter the appearance of phenomena. It might be possible that Romano’s hermeneutics represents borderline that cannot crossed over by any hermeneutics that gives primacy to the appearing phenomena instead to the role of subject, but this matter has to be left for some possible further research. Also, there are a few another questions that remain as open ground for some further research: Is there really nothing that theology has to say about Revelation that Marion’s refined phenomenology prohibits? Does every biblical account of God’s Revelation in Christ, which follows the principle of self-givenness of that Revelation and not the *a priori* standards of metaphysics, conform precisely to Marion’s understanding of saturation? Does God at all times appear according to the phenomenological norm of saturated givenness? These kinds of questions represent a profound challenge for understanding of Marion’s phenomenological way of doing theology and hopefully some future studies will provide more elaborated ground for comprehension of various aspects of Marion’s thought, including even this one related to the question of saturation and its influence on dogmatic reasoning.

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