

# The Hermeneutics of Givenness

## AQ1

Jean-Luc Marion <sup>1</sup>✉

Email jmarion@uchicago.edu

<sup>1</sup> University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

## Abstract

Hermeneutics is very often taken for granted: every statement, and by derivation, every fact or phenomenon, would have to be interpreted. This remains obvious, indeed. But, precisely because it looks obvious, we cannot avoid the question asking why it is so. And an answer may remain puzzling, as we could imagine that any correct formulation or description would need no additional commentary to be understood univocally. This could even define the utility of a correct use of language. However, notwithstanding the array of philosophical emendations of daily language (by grammar as well as semantics), we have all experienced that this univocity remains beyond our reach. Here, we suggest that hermeneutics becomes compulsory because the intuition of what gives itself overflows most of the times, if not always, what shows itself and what can be explained or understood by concepts. The excess of the intuition on the concept allows, more than that, asks for **an** hermeneutics. Therefore, far from a phenomenology of givenness forbidding hermeneutics, it opens its broad and unescapable field.

## Keywords

Phenomenology  
Hermeneutics  
Givenness  
Intuition  
Interpretation

## 2.1. The Objection of an Obstruction

One question is always repeated in phenomenology, from various angles—that of knowing if one can, and if one must, admit an irreducible, whatever it may be. This interrogation first arises, as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> from the reduction itself. But it also arises, as an aftershock, from what the reduction brings forth—perhaps. For the reduction, even by its operation and radicalization, makes evident, be it only by contraposition, the possibility, even the necessity, of an exception, of an irreducible. Whether it is understood as a particular phenomenon that is, in the end, non-reduced,<sup>2</sup> or whether it directly concerns the operation of the reduction itself,<sup>3</sup> this very indecision highlights the sole question: what end results from the reduction, to what does the reduction bring back the things when it transposes them into phenomena? Indeed, the identification of the possible irreducible is not self-evident. A rather long polemical tradition has, at least since Cavailles,

assimilated phenomenology into a philosophy of consciousness, even a philosophy of intuition, in opposition to a supposedly strict, rigorous, and sober philosophy of the concept (but can there be a concept without consciousness, be it only the consciousness of that very concept?); in this case, and consequently, phenomenology's supposed irreducible would consist in the intuition originally perceived by consciousness.

Thus approximately defined, givenness at once elicits an inevitable double reticence. — The first is due to its factual character, imposed *de facto* and always already achieved: the given, whatever it may be, indeed admits of no exception; the *de facto* given is always already there, or rather always already *here*, as close as possible, we are straightaway caught in it, our feet in it, enmeshed unto nausea in the horror of the ground<sup>4</sup> that glues us to it. Even our very experience of nothingness, supposing, besides, that we have ever really had one, already supposes a given, however small one imagines it to be, which in advance retains and contains us. The given therefore opens all experience, but as it opens it in advance and in fact, in that sense it closes it because it decided it before and *without us*, imposes it on us, makes us late from the beginning, orients it for us, conditions it for us and rations it for us without giving us any reason why. The beginning belongs to the given, and that beginning decides the end. With the given, from the beginning, we see the end, we are finished, in every sense of the term.<sup>5</sup> Whence the inevitable, even automatic, reflex of rationality: thinking and understanding will consist in recusing the *de facto* authority of the given, deconstructing it and suspending it in order to regain the initiative of deduction and reestablish another beginning, that of the *a priori*, conquered after the fact like an inauguration in reverse: all the less given, all the more thought. The duty of negativity requires undoing that simple *de facto* authority of the given to substitute for it the *de jure* authority of an *a priori*, whatever it may be, provided that it manages to regain the given within the voluntary legitimacy of the concept.

The second reticence follows and gravely redoubles the first. If in addition givenness in fact proceeds by intuition (and an opaque sensible intuition), then it defies all explanation and all discursive justification. Not only can givenness account for its intuition by its brute fact, but it defends this brute fact by the opacity of the elementary sensible idea: a clear *and obscure* idea; for, as Descartes noted, an idea can be clear (“[...] *menti attendenti praesens et aperta*,” [1964, 22] present and open to the attention of the mind), without however becoming clear, that is, precisely distinguishing itself from other sensible ideas to present itself clearly as such (“[...] *ab omnibus aliis ita sejuncta et praecisa, ut nihil plane aliud, quam quod clarum est, in se continat*”, “[...] so sharply separated from all other perceptions that it contains within itself only what is clear” [1964, 22/208]<sup>6</sup>). The sensible imposes itself (*s'impose*), but it is not posited (*se pose*) as such: a color appears, but without giving the criteria that define it and therefore without distinguishing itself from another; I say that this is red, and others can agree with me about this judgment (barring any eye diseases), and we can even distinguish it from other colors (yellow or blue), but neither they nor I can say what this red shows concerning red, this red as such, in short, what it *signifies* in itself. Summed up in the sensible intuition, the given remains mute regarding itself, it closes access to its brutal fact, refuses itself to identification, to differentiation, and therefore finally to signification. Without signification, the given, henceforth only *sensible*, therefore remains blind [*aveugle*], seeing nothing, but above all giving nothing to be seen, like a windowless room [*pièce aveugle*], *camera obscura*, invisible and without light—finally *insensible*.

The given therefore could not, especially if it doubles itself in a sensible given, ensure phenomenality. As such, mute and blind, a pure, indefinite “this,” it becomes insensible, without any *sense*.

Whence, doubtless, the recurring complaint that denounces the fetishism of the given and calls to hermeneutics for aid in order to, according to a critic's smug expression, restore the supposedly violated rights of “a phenomenology deflowered of the purity of givenness” (Sebbah 2001, 307).<sup>7</sup> For the so-called

“pure” givenness would impose “[...] a certain form of quietism,” for which it would henceforth only be a question of “showing, describing, and no longer [of] arguing, giving reasons” (Thomas-Fogiel 2015, 279, 281 ff.)<sup>8</sup> To the pure but dumb givenness, rational discursivity, the giving (*rendu*) of reasons, therefore hermeneutic endurance, should respond. This objection was introduced as obvious by undisputed specialists in hermeneutics, foremost among whom are counted J. Grondin<sup>9</sup> and J. Greisch.<sup>10</sup> It was therefore also largely taken up by public opinion, to the point of finding an echo among theologians.<sup>11</sup> But reading one of its most recent formulations, one sees at once the limit of this objection: “The real touchstone of the phenomenology proposed by *Being Given* is this unconditioned universality of givenness, from which nothing is excepted *and* which renders obsolete, *in particular*, the necessity of any recourse to hermeneutics” (Serban 2012, 88, emphasis added).<sup>12</sup> — And yet the entire question consists precisely in knowing whether, “[...] the unconditioned universality of givenness” being admitted, it does for all that “[...] rende[r] obsolete” the “[...] recourse to hermeneutics”: for, finally, no analytic link immediately joins the two terms, and one does not see how givenness *as such* would forbid hermeneutics, nor why it would not rather call for it, even demand it. The objection here supposes exactly what it would first be necessary to prove: the incompatibility of phenomenality’s resources with the differentiated assertion of its figures of sense. This incompatibility could be conceived only if givenness straightaway furnished an objectifiable phenomenon, one therefore constituted by a univocal sense, which would neither tolerate nor require any interpretation, being already included in a determinate signification or a closed concept. But does givenness always, even ever, give such an object with a univocal sense? Is givenness conflated with the efficient causality that produces a finished object? Is giving equivalent to placing an object beneath a gaze or to having it at hand? Who does not see that, thus reduced to production and efficiency, givenness would no longer give anything, precisely because it would no longer *give* but would produce, without retreating before that facticity as if it were a matter of violence or impropriety? And yet—and here lies all the difficulty—the very facticity of givenness still remains absolutely to be determined as such. It remains to *interpret* its neutrality.

Henceforth, it remains to understand what Husserl’s “breakthrough” towards givenness manifests—unless we leave it aside, as if it were either a marginal thesis of the *venerabilis inceptor* (an implausible hypothesis) or (stranger still) the deviant invention of an epigone. At the very least, Heidegger had, for his part, recognized givenness and, starting in 1919, had clearly designated it as such—neither as an all-purpose slogan nor as a myth for conflating everything, but as a question to decide in terms of phenomenality. And he asked: “What does ‘given’ mean? ‘Givenness’? This magic word of phenomenology and ‘stumbling block’ for others” (Heidegger 1992, 5/4).<sup>13</sup> Thus givenness arises less as an answer than as a question, less as a final argument than as a pending indecisiveness; take the rule posited by Kant—all knowledge supposes an intuition because only the intuition enjoys the privilege of “giving”—it remains to define what this givenness signifies. In other words, it remains also and first to define what it does *not* mean, that with which it is not conflated. For givenness does not produce like an efficient cause, nor is it confined to sensible intuition, because it is not conflated even with intuition in general.

## 2.2. Givenness, Not Intuition

In a reversal of its common understanding, we must not conceive of givenness as a *de facto* authority but as a *de jure* authority, or rather conceive that the fact of the given suffices to assure to this given the full status of a phenomenon: everything that shows itself shows itself because it gives itself. In this sense, the fact of givenness should be considered as a law.

Husserl does not let any ambiguity linger about this *de facto* and, indissolubly, *de jure* character of such a

norm: “Absolute givenness is an ultimate. [...] On the other hand, to deny self-givenness in general is to deny every ultimate norm [*alle letzte Norm*], every basic criterion that lends sense to knowledge” (1973, 61/45).<sup>14</sup> Thus the problem of a pure knowledge can be resolved only “[...] in the sphere of givenness, which provides the ultimate norms because it is absolute [*in der Sphäre der letztnormierenden, weil absoluten Gegebenheit*]” (Ibid., 76/53). Why indeed here describe givenness with the label *absolute*? Because givenness cannot be said to be relative or partial, since it constitutes the norm and the criterion of all presence, of all factuality, and of all actuality, which in return are judged only in relation to it. Factuality, actuality, and presence are measured only in relation to givenness, which alone fixes their level and degree. Thus even the difference between the regions of the world and of consciousness, which everything separates (immanence/transcendence, certainty/contingency, absolute/relation, etc.), to the point that one can describe it as “impassable,” is nevertheless still unfurled within the sole givenness: “Hence we hold fast to the following: while it is an essential property of givenness [*zum Wesen der Gegebenheit*] through appearances that none gives (*gibt*) its subject matter “absolutely” rather than in a one-sided display, it is an essential property of immanent givenness [*der immanenten Gegebenheit*] to also give an absolute [*ein Absolutes zu geben*]” (Husserl 1976a, 102/79).<sup>15</sup> Whatever “the most cardinal difference that is given [*es gibt*], that between *consciousness* and *reality*,” may be, it is nevertheless an “*intrinsic difference in the kind of givenness [der Gegebenheitsart]*” (Ibid., 96/74),<sup>16</sup> a difference referred to givenness, measured according to its norm and contained within its horizon. Givenness proves to be absolute because it relies on nothing else for its criterion, but all the rest is measured by reference to it. With each given, it is certainly a matter of a fact, of a *fait accompli* that admits no contestation; but givenness, in each given, constitutes more than a fact: it takes the ultimate measure of that fact, which it calibrates according to its norm. The given imposes itself as a fact, but givenness (as ultimate, *absolute* givenness) establishes the norm of this fact.

Thus Husserl insists on the de jure authority of givenness, de jure as a norm and as an originary norm: “[...] *each intuition giving [something] in an originary way is a legitimate source of knowledge [jede originär gebende Anschauung [ist] eine Rechtsquelle der Erkenntnis]*” (Ibid., 52/74).<sup>17</sup> Or even: “The *original source of all legitimacy [Urquelle alles Rechte]* lies [...] in the *originary evidence* or in the originary givenness motivating those positings [*in der originären Evidenz, bzw. in der sie motivierenden originären Gegebenheit*]” (Ibid., 346/280–281). One could say that the de facto intuitive evidence (which is thus supposed to be originary) finds its norm (lets itself be measured) and therefore also its justification (to appear) as a fully de jure phenomenon in the givenness that accounts for it still more originarily. This passage from the simple fact of the given to the right that givenness confers on it should be all the less surprising as it is in fact brought about by the reduction, by the operation that brings what the natural attitude indistinctly experiences back to the real givenness content of its various givens.<sup>18</sup> “We are convinced that these experiences [*Erfahrungen*], even when *reduced*, retain their sense and legitimacy [*Sinn und Recht auch als reduzierte behalten*]. [...] So, too, we apprehend the *absolute legitimacy [das absolute Recht]* of the immanently *perceiving* reflection [...]” (Husserl 1976a, 184/144).<sup>19</sup> The norm of givenness, as applied in multiple ways by the reduction, suffices henceforth to disqualify its identification with sensible intuition. Moreover, this hypothesis is refuted straightaway by a correct reading of the *Logical Investigations I*: Husserl’s initial “breakthrough” consists in recognizing not only that intuition is not confined to sensibility (it can and must be extended to the eidetic and the categorical) but that intuition itself is valuable only inasmuch as it implements a givenness, a more original givenness since it also encompasses signification.<sup>20</sup> It is only on these conditions that one will avoid bringing down to the level of “a bad intuitionism” “the only genuine intuitionist philosophy, phenomenology” [Husserl 1956, 171/246, 182/260].<sup>21</sup>

In his way, which is certainly essentially other, Heidegger provides a warning rather similar to Husserl’s. Givenness can be defined neither by sensible intuition, nor by intuition, nor by anything that falls within the



horizon of objectness or thingness. And if givenness can be thought only by contrast to these determinations, which seem so self-evident that one does not suspect that they mask it, then accessing it is possible only starting from itself and itself alone, contrary to production, efficiency, and sensible intuition, all figures of subsistent presence. One cannot insist too strongly on the reliability of the diagnosis that led Heidegger, from his first Freiburg seminar onward, to interrogate the notion of givenness; for what do we understand by the designation *es gibt*? That only German here keeps givenness in view (*geben, gegeben*), while French and English dissimulate it straightaway under the thick evidence of localization (*il y a, there is*), reinforced by the two *auxiliary* verbs, at once betrays the difficulty of accessing that which it concerns: that all that happens would happen by givenness. Heidegger, far from seeing this as evident (like most of his contemporaries, following Natorp), discerns its radically enigmatic character: *Gegebenheit* intervenes, but how? “Is there even a single thing when there are only things? Then there would be no thing at all, not even *nothing*, because with the sole supremacy of the sphere of things there is not even the ‘there is’ [*es gibt*]. Is there the ‘there is’?” (Heidegger 1987, 62/52).<sup>22</sup> Simply put, it does not suffice to say “it gives, *es gibt*” to think and carry out a givenness, since with this term and this syntagma, one stops within the “sphere of things,” where, precisely, their presence persists because it *does not happen* through them but is produced, fabricated, and installed by an efficient cause, which straightaway annuls the simple possibility of the least “it gives, *es gibt*.” In order that “it give,” it does not suffice to say it; one must conceive it and therefore carry it out. In other words, according to a student’s note, “*Gibt es ein “es gibt”, wenn es nur ein “es gibt” gibt?*” (cited in Kisiel 1993, 42) — “Does it give an ‘it gives,’ when and if it gives only an ‘it gives’?” Put another way, givenness and the *es gibt* disappear or dissolve as long as one devalues them as a pure and simple production of things (in the sense of objects that are already constituted and have a univocal sense).

I was able to discuss elsewhere whether the passage *in fine* to the *Ereignis* did not dissimulate or cross out too quickly the enigmatic indetermination (“enigmatic It [*rätselfhaftes Es*]”) of the *es*, of *it* that gives, by bringing it down to the level of an “indeterminate power [*unbestimmte Macht*]” — exactly, moreover, as do the current translations, *il y a* or *there is*.<sup>23</sup> But it nevertheless remains that Heidegger, from the beginning, here marked an essential point and opened a real breakthrough: the originary arises from givenness, or more exactly arises *as* givenness, *as* the giving given. But all the difficulty consists in conceiving this given *as* such, *as* giving itself, and not as a thing in the mode of an object that, for its part, neither gives nor gives itself but finds itself produced, finds itself made, and at best persists in abandonment. What, and above all how, does the “it” give? What does this word [*mot*] “it gives” mean? And moreover, which word gives? How and by what right would a word give? Could it not rather be that “it” which gives does not give qua *this* word, “it” (which does not and cannot mean *anything*), but qua *the* word, that only *the word*, qua itself, gives? “If our thinking does justice to the matter, then we may never say of the word that it is, but rather that it gives [*es gibt*] — not in the sense that words are given by an ‘it,’ but that the word itself gives. The word itself is the giver. [*daß das Wort selber gibt. Das Wort: das Gebende*]” (Heidegger 1985, 182/88).<sup>24</sup> Givenness here keeps the last word because the word alone gives and because givenness is fulfilled in speech [*parole*]. Thinking strictly, about givenness there is nothing to say because one will never say anything save starting from it and it alone. Certainly, one must not speak of it, because it alone speaks. But thereby it does not close the discussion; it opens it. It gives the word [*parole*]<sup>25</sup> — and everything else.

Thus understood [*entendue*] (supposing that we know therefore how to hear [*entendre*] it, listen to it, and answer it), givenness would not only have the right to the word [*parole*], but it alone would legitimately call to it, far from closing our mouths, like a *de facto* authority that causes nothing but silence around itself. And then how would we not sense an entirely other relation between givenness and hermeneutics than that which the banal and *supposedly* commonsense objection does not cease to repeat? Could it not be that hermeneutics, far from disappearing with givenness (or making it disappear in order to begin speaking), awakens only in

answering the word that fulfills it?

## 2.3. The Construction of the Myth

Before envisioning such a reversal of the situation, we should understand how the given could have seemed (and often still seems) to forbid hermeneutics, what absurdity could have hidden the obvious fact that givenness *would free* interpretation. This absurdity in fact lets itself be very well recognized by the name with which the metaphysical critique has saddled its radical incomprehension of givenness—the “myth of the given.”

That the given is immediate, and yet that it gives an object already prepared for theoretical knowledge—such is the contradiction presupposed by the “myth of the given,” but also by its ceaselessly repeated critique: “[...] the concept—or, as I have put it, the myth—of the given is being invoked to explain the possibility of a *direct* account of *immediate* experience” (Sellars 1997, 58).<sup>26</sup> Thus understood, the given is first characterized as non-mediated, according to “[...] the philosophical idea of givenness or, to use the Hegelian term, immediacy” (Ibid., 13)<sup>27</sup>; and it is thus conceived as a sense datum<sup>28</sup> in the sense of classical empiricism (Locke). Hence it inevitably attracts an obvious objection: in order to be an incontestable and certain given, it must remain an immediate impression, but such an immediate, perfectly subjective given therefore does not yet offer an object, constituted and reconstituted at the level of the reason, but remains (and must remain) below any epistemological validity, since if it gained the slightest epistemological validity, it would lose its irrefutable immediacy (Ibid., 16).<sup>29</sup> But this same given would, at the same time as it is immediate, also be non-dependent, self-sustaining; noninferential knowledge (Ibid., 69 ff.).<sup>30</sup> Whence Sellars’s definitive argument: such a given cannot be constituted straightaway by itself but receives its validation from a constitution and therefore attests to a contingent dependence, according to its happening within an epistemological becoming. —This double objection is unified in Quine’s unified refutation: the connection between the supposed, immediate data (what  $x$  is at the instant  $t$ , in the place  $p$ , etc.) and an elementary proposition (according to the semantic rules) can never be ensured, except by a composition—I would say a constitution, which is inevitably mediated. A strict reductionism cannot be conceived without a constitution (Quine 1951). In other words, to speak like Neurath, there is no immediate protocol statement: “The fiction of an *ideal language* composed of *neat atomic statements* is as metaphysical as the fiction of Laplace’s spirit” (Neurath 1932, 206/91). Or even: “*There is no way to establish fully secured, neat protocol statements as starting points of the sciences. There is no tabula rasa. We are like sailors who have to rebuild their ship on the open sea, without ever being able to dismantle it in dry-dock and reconstruct it from the best components*” (Ibid., 206/92).<sup>31</sup> This critique of the “myth of the given” thus makes manifest a definition, precise but contradictory, of this given: it would conjoin on the one hand the immediacy of a sense datum, an immediacy confined to intuition, which would itself be restricted to sensible intuition, and it would amount to an affect that would be purely subjective, individual, indubitable by its very incommunicability (reserved to private [*privé*] language, and therefore in fact deprived [*privé*] of language); and on the other hand, it would benefit from the epistemological validity of a first object, an atom of intelligible evidence, therefore mediately constituted.

Does the critique of this “myth”—the given as the contradiction of an immediate object—have the slightest historically documented support, or is it literally a matter of an invented “myth,” a fictitious adversary for the purposes of shadow boxing (so frequent in analytic philosophy)? For once, it seems possible to identify the adversary. Locke indeed imagined combining the two contradictory properties in a supposedly unified concept of the idea. —From one perspective, the idea, provided that it is determined, offers “[...] steadily the

sign of the same object,” “[...] stands for whatsoever is the object of understanding” (Locke 1988, 13, 47). Not only does the sensible idea re-present (stand for the presence of) some object (“The idea is the object of thinking”), but also an external object (“[...] external, sensible object,” “[...] external, material things as the objects of sensation”) (Ibid., 104 [twice], 105).<sup>32</sup> It is self-evident that such an epistemological qualification of the idea (thought substitute for the real individual external object) demands of the object its mediated constitution according to the elementary concepts of objectivity: the idea of the object stands for the object itself, outside the thought for which it provides the norm and rule. — Yet from a second perspective, this same idea claims to always keep its immediacy, which is indeed supposed to ensure for it a certainty that is absolute as a moment of the flow of thought and that, in this sense, is indubitable. The idea is thus made immanent to thought: no knowledge (apart from that of God!) is more certain than “[...] whatever our senses have *immediately* discovered to us” (Ibid., 261)<sup>33</sup> — to the point that this immediate immanence of the idea to thought remains valid without any consideration of the nature of the object in question: “Whatsoever the mind perceives in itself, or is the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding, that I call idea” (Ibid., 134). This inscription of the idea in the immanence of thought goes so far that the very incomprehensibility of its process changes nothing: “It is therefore the actual receiving of ideas from without that gives us notice of the *existence* of other things, and makes us know, that something doth exist at that time without us, which causes that *idea* in us though perhaps we neither know nor consider how it does it” (Ibid., 630, emphasis added).

The tension between these two definitions of the idea could possibly be resolved only if one linked them together, like the two faces of the phenomenon, like on the one hand the lived experience (appearing) and on the other hand the intentional object (that which appears, in outline); but it would then be necessary to deploy nothing less than the entire “wondrous property” that allows perception to become “a perception of something”<sup>34</sup> (Husserl 1976a, 204/162); in short, it would be necessary to define the idea on the basis of the intentionality of consciousness and “[...] its remarkable ‘of,’” (Husserl 1976b, 162/159) an undertaking completely foreign to Locke, as is proven by his doubling of knowledge into two types of ideas, so totally heterogeneous that their labels *idea* and *quality*<sup>35</sup> become perfectly equivocal. Indeed, the perception of a thing is strictly divided, for Locke, into secondary “sensible qualities” and “insensible primary qualities,” which are radically opposed. First because sensible qualities are only “imputed” to things, without constituting “resemblances of something really existing,” whereas the “primary and real qualities” of bodies “are always in them.” Next, one notes that sense data, the only “sensible qualities,” occupy only a secondary place, whereas the place of “primary qualities” amounts precisely to that which *is not* sensible in “objects,” namely “bulk, figure, extension, number, and motion” (Locke 1988, 140).<sup>36</sup> Thus (i) in sensible perception itself, the sensible is not first but second; (ii) on the contrary, what becomes first is the ensemble of what Descartes named the material *naturae simplicissimae*,<sup>37</sup> that is, pure concepts that ensure a definition as abstract and immaterial as possible of Aristotle’s indeterminate matter, in order to reduce it to the extension of geometries; (iii) moreover, the supposed “primary qualities” doubtless owe their priority over “secondary qualities” precisely to the fact that they no longer involve anything sensible and (iv) that they consist only in *quantities*, or rather in quantification operators of the sensible; such that (v) not only does the object of sensible perception itself no longer involve anything sensible<sup>38</sup>; (vi) but only the effects of that object on the perceiving subject become, for that subject and that subject alone, sensible. It is necessary to conclude from this not only that Locke’s analysis of sense data is inconsistent and incapable of thinking even a hint of the slightest given, but also, paradoxically, that his doctrine of “primary” and “secondary” qualities validates strictly and to the letter the objections addressed to the “myth of the given.” Locke deserves and justifies the critique of this “myth” to the very degree that he did *not* think the given.<sup>39</sup>

The critique of the “myth of the given” vanquishes [*vainc*] its adversary, but it does not convince [*convainc*]

because the adversary in question is not the “given” but the phantom, the substitute, even the opposite of the given, at least such as Husserl thought it and bequeathed it to the phenomenological tradition. It remains that the critique of this non-object negatively informs what the given could want to lead us to think [*donner à penser*]. And first, since the “myth” straightaway posits the given within the horizon of the object (and it matters little here that this object is already constituted or yet to be constituted, since it is a matter of a being included in advance in the manner of Being of *Vorhandenheit*, of substantial permanence, of support for objectifying knowledge),<sup>40</sup> we retain from it the positive conclusion: the given can be thought only in opposition to the object’s mode of Being, which it does not yet constitute and in which it is not necessarily called to end; as soon as objectness appears, with its characteristics and its demands, the given has already disappeared. *The given can be thought only in its irreducibility to objectness*. The critique was indeed right to reproach the given for its lack of objectivity, for it arises and endures as such only insofar as it escapes objectness. But this resistance to and restraint concerning objectness precisely qualify it as given.

## 2.4. The Critique of Immediacy

But the critique of the “myth of the given” attributes to it a second property—indispensable for marking its contradiction—namely, that its objectivity would remain just as immediate. In this the critique rediscovers an assumption widely admitted in the most common readings in phenomenology: the strength and the weakness of the given are due to its immediacy, and proposing givenness as a “fourth principle” amounts to making immediacy (and even intuition) a principle. And yet from the point of view of a rigorous phenomenology, we should uphold the paradox that *it belongs precisely to the given to not give itself immediately*, and above all not in the immediacy of sense data—even though it gives itself in perfect facticity, or rather *because* it gives itself as an unconditioned and originary *factum*.

A first argument comes to us from Husserl. “The psychological phenomenon in psychological apperception and objectification is not really an absolute givenness, rather, only the *pure phenomenon*, the reduced phenomenon” (Husserl 1973, 7/64).<sup>41</sup> Or even: “One must get especially clear on the fact that the absolute phenomenon, the reduced *cogitatio*, does not count as an absolute givenness because it is a particular, but rather because it displays itself in pure seeing after the phenomenological reduction as something that is *absolutely self-given* [*eben als absolute Selbstgegebenheit* herausstellt]” (Ibid., 56/42).<sup>42</sup> As long as the phenomenon comes still and only from lived experience, therefore as long as it bears the character of immediacy, it remains doubtful, indeterminate, and therefore not yet actually given. For it does not suffice to make itself sensed and felt to be given: as an example that is as trivial as it is famous reminds us, the color of a tie, which varies from red to green or blue depending on whether the light comes from the artificial lighting of the store or the natural day of the street, therefore does not suffice to offer a sure and identifiable given; it would first be necessary to reduce it, either by bringing it back only to natural light or (if one admits that strictly speaking there is no fixed natural light that could be a referent) to a standard light (defined by a chosen, *given* wavelength). Thus the sensed and felt do not as such become an absolute and indubitable given, but only once they are submitted to the reduction, that is, inasmuch as they are mediated.<sup>43</sup> This mediation does not, however, add another component to the sensed-felt (such as, for example, a category, a concept); but mediation *brings it back*, possibly by elimination, by distillation as it were, brings back that which seems apparently given to that which, *in it but not straightaway*, truly appears in the end; such that the reduction mediates it in order to recognize in it that which does not cease to give itself absolutely and in person, to the point of managing to re-give itself.

This obviously does not mean that the given, because it is mediated and not only felt in intuition, should for



all that be constituted as an object. Let us consider, to understand this, a second argument, which comes from a precise interrogation by Heidegger. “The problem-sphere of phenomenology is thus not immediately and simply pre-given [*unmittelbar schlicht vorgegeben*]; it must be mediated [*vermittelt werden*]. What does this mean: something is *simply pre-given*? In what sense is something like that at all possible? And what does this say: something must be mediated, first of all, “brought” to givenness? [*allererst zur Gegebenheit “gebracht” werden*]?” (Heidegger 1992, 27/23). The interrogation here therefore bears without ambiguity on the nature of the given, of the given as such, of the given in advance, always already de facto achieved; how can we not conceive of this givenness simply as the fact of bearing [*porter*], of bringing [*apporter*] the thing to the presence of the fact? How can we not devalue givenness as a simple provision [*apport*] and transport [*transport*] of an object (in the sense in which Husserl warned that one does not come with one’s intentional objects “in one’s pocket”)? What “mediation” should intervene for a given to *give itself*, without production or provision according to objectness?

Here an analysis intervenes that is very simple in appearance but that one should take as a paradigm, so decisive was it for the young Heidegger. “The naïve consciousness, [...] instead of deliberating upon what is immediately and primarily given, already assumes too much and makes far too many presuppositions. *What is immediately given!* Every word here is significant. What does ‘immediate’ mean? [*statt sich darauf zu besinnen, was unmittelbar gegeben ist. Was unmittelbar gegeben ist! Jedes Wort is hier von Bedeutung. Was besagt unmittelbar?*]” (Heidegger 1987, 85/66). Asked otherwise: where does immediacy play out? Let us consider a case, the closest and most banal case for a class [*cours*] actually in progress [*en cours*]—the case of a professor speaking while standing behind his lectern; let us ask what of this the students perceive; in other words and more exactly, what phenomenon appears to them, what phenomenon *gives itself to them*? And yet, contrary to the assumptions of constructivism and the prejudices of empiricism, it is not sense data, improper immediates, derived and abstract immediates, that are given: the immediate given never consists in the color of the wood, nor in the real size of the lectern, nor in the details of its form, nor in the effects that the morning light produces there, nor in the resonance of the sounds of the voice, etc. Nothing of all that appears *first*, or more exactly all this appears (or better: will appear) later, thanks to the mediation of that which appears first, that which appears to me *as* the professorial lectern itself: “the lectern is *immediately* given to me in the lived experience of it [*im Kathedererlebnis*]” (Ibid., 85/66, emphasis added),<sup>44</sup> the lectern itself, as a signification, anterior to the sensible lived experiences and independent of them. The immediate consists in a signification, which mediates all the lived experiences that it alone qualifies to appear and that, without it, would *give* nothing to be seen. Let no one object with the case of a spectator who, by hypothesis, is entirely foreign to that signification; for even he who does not know what a lectern, or a class, or a professor, or listening students, or a university are and therefore does not know what they signify would, however, still immediately see a signification; doubtless another one (that of a ceremonial podium, of a celebration totem, of a call to rally, or of a collective emblem, etc.), but there would always first and immediately be *given* to him a global signification [*Bedeutung*],<sup>45</sup> within which alone could sense data, identifiable a posteriori, mediate and abstractly then take on their place and sense. Only the phenomenon endowed with signification, the phenomenon mediated by its own signification [*propre signification*], gives itself in the proper sense [*sens propre*] (the reduced sense). Only what happens by itself, therefore with its proper sense, mediated by the reduction (Husserl) or by its own signification (Heidegger), gives itself, unless the proper signification [*signification propre*] achieves de facto and de jure the most radical reduction possible—that of the thing to itself.

It is necessary, therefore, to envision “*the problem of givenness*” (Heidegger 1992, 127/100)<sup>46</sup> as an *enigma*, which situates it outside the common dichotomies of naïve consciousness: neither immediate in the sense of the sense data of subjective impressions, nor mediate in the sense of the objectness constructed for the

understanding. It is not a matter of choosing between terms that are all inadequate, nor even of finding an intermediate solution to this “problem.” It would indeed be better to know how to “fail to correctly ‘resolve’ it,” if its “enigmatic character [*Rätselhaftigkeit*] itself put us on the path of original understanding [*Verstehen*],” original because it is anchored in Being-in-the-world itself. Once again, it is necessary to hear the question, “What does ‘given’ mean? ‘Givenness’? This magic word of phenomenology and ‘stumbling block’ for others,” and therefore to remain within the enigma (Ibid, 5/4).<sup>47</sup> The indetermination of the given perhaps offers its only correct determination, that which distinguishes it from everything that follows, sense data, objects, knowledge, offshoots of its event.

## 2.5. Interpreting, or the Response to the Call

Thus that which gives itself does not give itself immediately, as the sensible was supposed to give itself, but it gives itself straightaway as a signification, and this signification itself reduces the sense data, in order to subordinate them to itself and confer on them, possibly and certainly mediately, their sense and status. If the sense data prove to be, at a certain point, given, it will be only on the basis of a signification, which will have brought them forth by decomposition and after the fact [*après coup*], after the blow [*après le coup*] of its ordinary apparition. In short, one will not say that sense data are given immediately and then mediately allow signification, but that signification arises straightaway and then mediately allows sense data. We are always as if surrounded by the uninterrupted arising of the appearing that gives itself, but this appearing gives itself in the form and outlines of a signification: I do not perceive a pure sound, but the murmur of a mountain stream (even of *this* river), the sound of a motor (and of *this* automobile); I do not perceive the color yellow (which one, moreover?), but this small section of this wall, not this blue, but that of Klein or of Cézanne; I do not perceive the taste of wine, nor even of a varietal, but that of this burgundy or of this coast, of this climate, of this producer, of this year, etc. In all cases, I perceive only if a signification opens the field to the mature appearing of pure sensations; and that is why the thing appears only ever as an outline—because the signification, straightaway achieved and visible for the spirit, must most of the time (at least in the case of common-law phenomena) wait for the *outlines*, always partial and to be completed, to come take their place there and little by little validate it. Such a reversal of the order of givenness requires, therefore, that the given, in the sense of sense data, have no immediate phenomenal validity, that it not yet open as such to phenomenality, because it depends on a signification—whether anterior (as in Heidegger’s example) or still awaited (as in Husserl’s description).

Henceforth, can one restrict oneself to the agreed-on relation between givenness and hermeneutics, that which the *supposedly* commonsense objection does not cease to repeat—the given, if it imposes itself of itself, forbids hermeneutics? Can one still admit the *agreed-on* refutation that pronounces in favor of the “myth of the given” because the given cannot impose itself as an object (for no object appears immediately)? Could it not be that hermeneutics, far from disappearing with givenness (or making givenness disappear in order to begin to speak), awakens only through responding to the enigma of sense data by the discovery of their signification? Hermeneutics then becomes an enigma rather than a ready-made solution that one would have only to summon to exit from the impasse of the given. Indeed, the “enigmatic character” of the given, neither immediate nor mediate, comes, according to Heidegger, from the understanding [*Verstehen*], which itself, as an existential linked to the “situation [*Befindlichkeit*]” comes from the “existential constitution of the Being of the ‘there’ [*Sein des Da-*].” Thus conceived, “[h]as not Dasein’s Being become more enigmatic [...]? It has indeed. We must first let the full enigmatic character of this Being unfurl itself, even if all we can do is come to a more genuine breakdown over its ‘solution’ [...]” (Heidegger 1963, 148/188).<sup>48</sup> For any question of interpretation [*Auslegung*], including that of the given, depends in its turn on this *Verstehen* and

therefore shares with it the same “enigmatic character.”

The first caution is to not resort to hermeneutics as the universal solution for determining the sense of the given, as if hermeneutics were self-evident and fell from the intelligible heaven onto a given that was, for its part, obscure and problematic; for the act of interpretation is no more self-evident than is the reception of the given, of which it shares the “enigmatic character.” For, since it happens that hermeneutics does not operate on objects, nor on sense data, it never consists in a pure and simple free interpretation (in the sense of a bicycle’s free wheel turning idly), which by an arbitrary authority would modify at will the sense of the appearing of the thing itself. Such an attitude does not come from hermeneutics, but would rather define its worst deviation, ideology. Ideology certainly interprets, but always for the prosecution: the ideologue knows better than anyone, therefore better than the thing, its signification; he knows that every “Titoist” is a “Trotskyist,” that is, a “Hitlero-fascist,” that every *ci-devant* is a counterrevolutionary, that every “Jew” is a mortal enemy of the “Aryan” and every “Crusader” a mortal enemy of the “believer”—as he knows that bourgeois science is opposed to Marxist or National Socialist science. Ideology can go so far as to persuade the victim that he has not five but six fingers on each hand, for it manages to convince itself of this. Ideology practices an absolutely free and perfectly active hermeneutics and thus accomplishes the worst (and in its view, the best) of what the will to power can dream—reducing everything to its evaluation. Thus one should not oppose interpretation and transformation (“The philosophers have only *interpreted* [*interpretieren*] the world in various ways; the point is to *change* [*verändern*] it” [Marx 1982, 1033/5]), for, especially in the case of Marx, interpreting is already equivalent to transforming since, moreover, no transformation would remain possible without an interpretation to explain and thereby *justify* it. As elementary as it remains, this reminder allows us to grasp that hermeneutics cannot be defined simply as the science of interpretation. For it is not for hermeneutics, in contrast to ideology, a matter of finding *a* sense (no matter which, as long as it reveals itself as useful) for that which requests interpretation; it is a matter of finding *the* sense that that which requests interpretation requests for itself. The sense that hermeneutics (re-)finds for what it interprets does not come from the ego but from the thing itself awaiting interpretation; the ego less fixes a sense for that which awaits one than it receives a sense from that which awaits one. The sense of that which requests interpretation comes to the interpreter, rather than the interpreter finding it, inventing it, or imposing it. One cannot imagine any activity of the ego-hermeneut with regard to a matter that would be passive for interpretation. In a sense, the ego must remain passive in order to receive *the* sense that suits exactly that which requests interpretation; *the* sense comes actively to the interpretable, of itself, the interpreter needing only (as with musical sense) to let unfurl itself that which is implicitly available in and suggested by the given itself.

The sign that the sense brought forth by interpretation correctly suits what requested it consists rather in the sudden disappearance of the interpreter, whose wisdom fades all the more as it becomes useless, since from now on the given disposes by and in itself of the sense that was given to it. The givenness of sense, of *its* sense, the given’s sense, implies (as does all givenness of any gift whatsoever) the retreat and the disappearance of the giver (in this case, the interpreter). Thus hermeneutics practices on the given a *givenness* of sense, of its sense, of a sense appropriated from the given in such a way that the given, instead of returning to anonymity and remaining in occultation, decisively frees itself in its manifestation. Hermeneutics does not give, by fixing it and deciding it, a sense to the given but each time lets it unfurl *its* proper sense [*sens propre*], that is, that which makes it appear as itself, as a phenomenon that shows itself in and by itself. The *self* of the phenomenon regulates, in the final analysis, the whole givenness of sense: it is not a matter of the ego constituting a given as an object, but of letting come to the phenomenon *its* own sense [*propre sens*], discovered rather than invented, recognized [*reconnu*] rather than known [*connu*], by the temporary intervention of the ego. The sense that hermeneutics brings forth arises not so much from the hermeneut’s decision as from the phenomenon itself, of which the hermeneut remains the discoverer and thus the servant,

never the author or the owner. The phenomenon shows itself in the degree to which the hermeneut recognizes in the given the sense of *that given itself* and effaces himself. The proof of a correct hermeneutic shows itself in that the authority of the interpretation must end by shifting from the interpreter to the interpreted.

Gadamer has clearly exposed this structure of reciprocal interpretation in the two following arguments, among others. —The first may be called “fusion of horizons.” Namely, the aporia of historical science [*Historie*] noted by Nietzsche: history either destroys the horizon of that which it interprets by understanding it on the basis of the interpreter’s horizon, or else it destroys itself there by abolishing its own horizon of interpretation in the horizon of that which it interprets. This can occur in three modes: monumental history, which imposes the horizon of the past on the interpreter’s present; critical history, which imposes the modern interpreter’s horizon on that of the past interpreter; and antiquarian history, which confines itself to juxtaposing them by impotence. Nietzsche asks a question: “To what degree does life need the service of historical science?”; and he denounces a danger: ending up with only a critical history without any serious concerns (“without need [*ohne Not*]”), an antiquarian history without any respectful piety (“without piety [*ohne Pietät*]”), and a monumental history that knows only a grandeur it can no longer achieve (“[...] who recognizes greatness but cannot himself do great things [(...) *der Kenner des Großen ohne das Können des Großen*]”) (Nietzsche 1966, 225/72). More radically, argues Gadamer, one cannot admit as unsurpassable the conflict of horizons that Nietzsche takes as the de facto point of departure. De jure, a hermeneutic becomes correct only if the two horizons meet and even, as it were, fuse. “Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. *Rather understanding [Verstehen] is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves*” (Gadamer 1960, 289/305).<sup>49</sup> But this fusion itself—this is the second argument—supposes a reciprocal approach between the given (here, the past horizon) and the phenomenon (here, the present horizon); how are we to define this reciprocity, which will double the interpretation by the hermeneut with the interpretation of the hermeneut himself? “Thus we return to the conclusion [*Feststellung*] that the hermeneutic phenomenon too implies the originariness of dialogue and *the structure of question and answer [die Ursprünglichkeit des Gesprächs und die Struktur von Frage und Antwort]*. That a text handed down by tradition becomes the object of interpretation means already [*bereits*] that it puts a question to the interpreter. Thus interpretation always [*stets*] involves an essential relation to the question that is asked of the interpreter. To understand a text means to understand this question. But this takes place, as we showed, by our attaining the hermeneutical horizon” (Ibid., 351/363, emphasis added).<sup>50</sup> Historical interpretation, which in the end results in the interpretation of texts, is a matter of a dialogue: “For the dialectic of question and answer that we demonstrated makes understanding appear to be a reciprocal relation of the same kind as dialogue [*das Verhältnis des Verstehens als ein Wechselverhältnis von der Art eines Gesprächs*]. It is true that a text does not speak to us in the same way as a Thou. We who understand it must ourselves make it speak. But we found that this kind of understanding, ‘making the text speak,’ is not an arbitrary procedure that we undertake on our own initiative but that, as a question, it is related to the answer that is expected in the text” (Ibid., 359/370).<sup>51</sup> Thus the question (which asks for the sense of the given) receives this sense, which will make the given show itself, only as the answer—an answer that therefore does not come, in the final analysis, from the interpreter but from the interpreted, from the text. “Thus the relation of question and answer is, in fact, reversed [*hat sich...umgekehrt*]” (Ibid., 355/366).<sup>52</sup> The sense given to the given is from now on a matter of *the sense that the given recognizes as its own, of the answer*.

Thus hermeneutics depends on the structure of question and answer, that is, in my nomenclature, on the structure of call and response,<sup>53</sup> therefore on the structure of the given, based on the visible: hermeneutics itself constitutes a—particular and exemplary—case of the play between what gives itself and what shows itself, between the call of the given and the response (by the sense) of what shows itself there. Whence this



first thesis: hermeneutics must be understood following the understanding of the given, in the form of the call and response. Far from hermeneutics exceeding givenness or substituting itself for it, it is unfurled in it, as a case of the original relation between what gives itself and what shows itself.<sup>54</sup>

## 2.6. Interpreting, Reducing Itself

Obviously, if hermeneutics finds its whole place and its whole legitimacy in its function of answering the question that the given poses, by fixing for it *its* proper sense, we must no longer speak of a hermeneutic status of phenomenology (as if the latter were inscribed in the former as one of its derivations) but must recognize the radically phenomenological status of hermeneutics: hermeneutics constitutes one of its essential operations, just like intentionality, reductions, and constitution, and only thus does it keep its full authority.

This implication becomes fully intelligible if one returns to the analysis in which Heidegger thinks interpretation [*Auslegung*], as and starting from the understanding [*Verstehen*], and not the reverse. For the interpretation by *Dasein* of a worldly being presupposes the understanding of *Dasein* by itself and results from it. Indeed, understanding, or rather being able to understand, something never first consists in transforming the sense of a subsistent object or in attributing a new sense to it, in short in interpreting otherwise the *Vorhandenheit* of an object. In that case, one would give way to an appearance, that of the unconditional anteriority of the apophantic *as*, which restricts itself to making an objective substratum evident by a predication, or in other words, to illustrating a “subject” by changing one of its attributes. This appearance is doubled by an aporia: changing one attribute into another is supposed to bear on the thing itself, whereas it is, however, brought about only verbally, by a simple assertion [*heraussagen*]; we must, therefore, admit between the ontic variation and the verbal assertion, which are, however, likewise heterogeneous, a supposed validation (a *Geltung* in Lotze’s sense). In fact, there results from this abstract montage only the irreducible and incomprehensible duality between two absolutely heterogeneous terms, the predicative assertion on the one hand, purely logical and signitive, and the intraworldly and actual phenomenon on the other, without the slightest phenomenological validation of their connection. The failure of the connection between the logical and the ontical is due to the incapacity to define the sense of Being for the one and the other respectively, senses of Being that are never brought forth as long as one confuses the interpretation by *Dasein* of a (subsistent) being of the world with the more original interpretation of *Dasein* by itself in view of its concern and its care; in other words, as long as one stops at the “[...] levelling of the primordial ‘as’ of circumspective interpretation to the ‘as’ with which presence-at-hand is given a definite character [...] [*Nivellierung des ursprünglicher “Als” der umsichtigen Auslegung zum Als der Vorhandenheitsbestimmung*].” In this case, hermeneutics, which disregards its originary status as the interpretation of *Dasein* by itself, is brought down to the level of a simple platitude, an arbitrary and illegitimate assertion of something about something [*Aussage*] (Heidegger 1963, 158/201). And yet interpreting [*auslegen*] first means understanding [*verstehen*]; and understanding, at least in its phenomenological (and therefore logical) legitimacy, supposes on the contrary the Being-possible, the radical possibilization of *Dasein*, such that it is only by first orienting itself toward the future; for the *Möglichsein* first has the status of an existential of *Dasein*, and not at all of a modality or a category of non-*daseinmäßig* being (where it is only a matter, when it comes to possibility, of a simple, not-yet-actual contingency). Far from the (positive) indifference of free will, *Dasein* frees itself for its ownmost possibility, even though it properly *is* only in the mode of a project [*geworfen*]. It is here a matter of a “sight” and not of a “vision,” according to a distinction that Mallarmé also made: “Yes, on an isle the air had charged /*Not with visions but with sight*/The flowers displayed themselves enlarged/Without our ever mentioning it” (“Prose for des Esseintes,” Mallarmé 1994, 46, emphasis added).<sup>55</sup> This is an important distinction, for vision bears on what

the sensible eye sees or what insensible perception represents of the subsistent object, in short on something of the world; while sight [*vue*], that sight by which *Dasein* is dazzled [*en prend plein la vue*], marks the opening of its gaze, once attained, after a long effort, the beautiful sight, the sight as far as the horizon, where it can see everything and does not stare at anything in particular, where it rather locates itself in the space thus opened by sight. It sees its own sight in the sight of the horizon and opens in it as itself: it is illuminated to its own eyes, understands itself and sees itself: “We must, to be sure, guard against a misunderstanding of the expression ‘sight (*Sicht*)’. It corresponds to the ‘clearedness [*Gelichtetheit*]’ which we took as characterizing the disclosedness of the ‘there’ (Heidegger 1963, 146–147/187).

Thus understood, hermeneutics [*Auslegung*] never bears *first* on a text (vision of its sense) nor even on the intra-worldly being to which the text refers, but on the understanding [*Verstehen*] opened to and by the possibility of *Dasein*. Hermeneutics proceeds from the sight of the interpreter on the avenue of its possibility. Thus in the situation, which is however still unappropriated [*uneigentlich*], of the wieldable being [*zuhanden*] there is no pre-given [*vorgegeben*], no piece, no fragments (Ibid., 150–151/191–192), in short, no “given” according to sense data, but always already sense, that character of *Dasein* and not the property of an intra-worldly being. “Meaning is an *existential* of *Dasein*, not a property attaching to beings, lying ‘behind’ them, or floating somewhere as an ‘intermediate domain’” (Ibid., 151/193).<sup>56</sup> Henceforth, it becomes clear that the apophantic “as” presupposes and stems from the existential “as” by a backlash: “The primordial ‘as’ of an interpretation [*ερμηνεία*] which understands circumspectively we call the ‘existential-hermeneutical “as”’ in distinction from the ‘apophantical “as”’ of the assertion” (Ibid., 158/201).<sup>57</sup> Is there not, however, some vicious circle here? For does sense come from *Dasein* (as in ideology) such that it no longer arises from the phenomenon as its appropriated signification that imposes itself on the interpreter, on *Dasein*? In fact, there is indeed a circle, but it is in no way vicious, and rather than avoiding it, we must take care to enter it correctly. Moreover, it is less a circle than a relation or, more exactly, what Gadamer names reciprocal speech [*parole, Gespräch*], the play of question and answer. Indeed, if hermeneutics (of the thing) originates in the understanding (of itself by *Dasein*), this understanding always means *pre*-understanding, and therefore *Dasein*’s opening to its possibility: “As the disclosedness of the ‘there’, understanding [*das Verstehen*] always pertains to the whole of Being-in-the-world” (Ibid., 152/194). *Dasein*’s possibility plays out in and by Being-in-the-world, for its Being is at stake only because *Dasein* itself brings itself into play in the world. Thus between the sense of *Dasein* and the signification of each being, the understanding [*Verstehen*], such as it permits interpretation [*Auslegung*], plays out in the “structure of question and answer” (Gadamer). But such a “structure” does not come from nowhere: it belongs to the game of call and response, such that one glimpses how hermeneutics can hinge on the question of givenness. If indeed the reception and the identification of the given imply that this given always remains to be interpreted as a phenomenon endowed with signification, then the hermeneutic instance sets the place of the given because it sets itself there. It is necessary to understand hermeneutics itself in charge of this reception and this identification of the given. Whence the final stage: knowing not only how to hear (interpret) hermeneutics itself, but how to hear it such that it hears (and well understands what concerns) the given.

## 2.7. Giving Itself, Showing Itself: The Gap

The given does not give itself immediately (or mediately either, moreover) as an already-constituted object. For the given does not yet show itself through the simple fact that it gives itself: this necessary condition does not suffice. Certainly, the phenomenon shows itself only if it happens as a given, but it does not suffice that it happen as a given for it to appear as showing itself, in full phenomenality. Since *Being Given*, of which this was one of the conclusions, I have emphasized that “[...] if all that shows itself must first give itself, it

sometimes happens that what gives itself does not succeed in showing itself” (Marion 1997, 425/309).<sup>58</sup> The given shows itself only in its reflection, in its reflexive return, in short, in the response to the *adonné*,<sup>59</sup> who sees it, but only insofar as he receives himself from this given. In other words, “[p]recisely because the principle ‘What gives itself shows itself’ remains intact, it becomes possible to observe the finitude of phenomenality in the realm of givenness. For what gives itself shows itself only insofar as it is received by the gifted [*adonné*], whose proper function consists in giving in return that the given show itself [...]” (Ibid., 426/310). But if the given gives itself as a call, if it shows itself only in the response to the *adonné*, and if the *adonné* remains, by definition, finite, then what shows itself also remains, for its part, late and in the background in relation to what gives itself. The resistance of the *adonné* fixes the limit, each time variable, of the transfiguration of what is given into what shows itself; its resistance, like that of the filament that in the lightbulb encloses the current’s power in order to restore it as a luminous radiance, brings to light, in the impact that it manages to retain, the given’s arising. Genius, to take up Kant’s thesis, consists only in a greater resistance to the given, which by holding it back more strongly allows a greater manifestation of what gives itself. Before the flux of the given, genius sets up a screen that displays the visible and becomes the jewel case holding the monstration. The finitude of the manifestation (of the auto-monstration of the phenomena) is brought out, by contrast, against the infinity of the obscure givenness of what still remains out of sight: “I am therefore obsessed by what I cannot or don’t want to let show itself. A night of the unseen, given but without kind, envelops the immense day of what already shows itself” (Ibid., 438/319). The gap between what gives itself and what shows itself from it irremediably characterizes the phenomenality of givenness because it results directly from the finitude of the *adonné*.

Whence the obligatory place and function of hermeneutics: *hermeneutics manages the gap between what shows itself and what gives itself, by interpreting the call (or, often, the intuition) by the response (the concept or signification)*. Intuition, given and received, remains blind—shows nothing yet—as long as the *adonné* does not recognize its signification or significations (or concepts) that will allow a fully de jure phenomenon to show itself there. The hermeneutic power of the *adonné* therefore measures, in the final analysis, the possibility for what is given to show itself, in short it calibrates the scale of the phenomenalization of givenness. Not only does “[...] the unconditioned universality of givenness” not “[...] rende[r] obsolete [...] the recourse to hermeneutics”,<sup>60</sup> but conversely, a *phenomenology* of givenness lets phenomena appear as givens only to the degree to which is exercised within it a *hermeneutics* of the given *as* shown and showing itself, *as* visible and seen by an *adonné*. Nothing appears that does not pass via its interpretation; every interpretation is achieved in the manifestation of what appears. Hermeneutics is not added to phenomenology because, without signification, the given would postpone its monstration. Day comes to the given only by its hermeneutic.

## 2.8. Hermeneutics of the Gap

In fact, my essays on the phenomenology of givenness have ceaselessly had recourse to the offices of hermeneutics.<sup>61</sup> Let us here highlight four of its interventions.

AQ2

In the first place, the call is necessarily defined, as I have said, by its sensible and/or semantic anonymity. Hermeneutics is therefore required straightaway. —First the call can be produced without any physical sound. This does not prevent some (*adonnés*) from recognizing it even (and sometimes precisely) in the silence of sounds. In other words, in silence, some hear something like voices, like a presence in the breeze of the evening, in the unsaid of the silence of the sea. In what does this interpretation of the unheard as a call

consist? Whether it is borne out or disappoints (it matters little at this stage of the analysis), interpretation always consists in the recognition of an intention happening to the *adonné*, who assigns it to himself as coming *for him*. This assigning of the signal (whether sonorous or otherwise, silent or visible) is in no way extraordinary: we accomplish it each time we, in the racket of an urban crowd, in the continuous rumble of the flux of sounds pouring out in a waiting room or at an airport gate, interpret one of these background noises, refrains, announcements not as fuss but as calls, then as calls destined for this or that other, then for me. This assumption of a noise (or of a silence) as destined *for me* can deceive me: I hear a first name or a last name, I turn around or I run to the information desk, to discover that it was a homonym or a mishearing. But in every case, it was necessary that I well and truly interpret this confused and confusing sound as a call *for me*. I therefore hear the call in and by my interpretation: I had to determine *that there was* a call and determine myself as its recipient; only then will the response, be it a denial, be permitted. And only my interpretation of the call will permit this response, thus confirming the rule that the call makes itself heard only in the response, which decides not only the content of the call but first its actuality (or its illusory character).

This hermeneutics of the call corresponds exactly, moreover, to that of the gift. For the phenomenon of the gift does not begin without interpretation: contrary to exchange and commerce, which exempt me from any interpretation and straightaway signify to me that there is indeed an already-available object to exchange, sell or buy (it is displayed in a store) at a price (fixed or to be negotiated, it matters little) with a patent (though possibly illusory) use-value and utility, no being or object offers a gift in itself. It can be a matter only of the raw state of a thing, of something lost, placed at random, without any intention that destines it for anyone whomsoever; it is first necessary to notice it and decide if it is an abandoned or lost object, to be taken to the lost and found—which is decided by interpretation. And even once one has decided that it is indeed a thing that has been made available and is destined for someone to receive it as a gift, it is still necessary to interpret which givee could legitimately benefit from it (the bottle of champagne in the hotel room, the fire extinguisher in the hallway, the rose in the vase, etc.): is it a “commercial gesture” or a personal intention, and towards whom? The response alone will make the gift, but the response will be made only by dint of interpreting each moment of the proposal of the gift like so many increasingly precise and, in a sense, increasingly risky intentions. And this interpretive risk increases with the grandeur and dignity of the gift. To the point that the gift par excellence—that which an *adonné* makes of himself to another *adonné*, the erotic phenomenon—the entire plot (which one cannot, moreover, reduce to a process of seduction, but which extends to the entire duration of its phenomenality according to erotic temporality, which fidelity measures) hinges on an uninterrupted series of coherent interpretations that reinforce each other, or incoherent ones that destroy each other.

In the second place, what is true of the phenomenon in general, with the call that the gift and every given imply, is all the more true of the saturated phenomenon. In this case, intuition not only completely fills what the intentional signification aimed at regarding the objective phenomenon (the proof of adequate truth), but also it exceeds what the concept presumed regarding signification, such that the phenomenon escapes any foresight, to the point of becoming impossible to aim at [*invisible*], if not invisible [*invisible*] (thus the sublime, the infinite, the face, the flesh, the event, the idol, etc.). Or, to say it like Mallarmé, we should admit that this saturated phenomenon “[w]as growing too large for our reason.”<sup>62</sup> Henceforth, the height of the giving wave requires that one assign to it, in order to retain it, several concepts or significations. Here hermeneutics intervenes: not only to invent or rather find again the missing significations, but first to admit that they are missing and that it is no longer a matter of a common-law phenomenon, knowable as an object and being in the mode of objectness [*Vorhandenheit*], but of a saturated phenomenon that can manifest itself and therefore be known only as a non-object. For the gap, in fact never completely closed, between the



saturating intuition and the rarity of conceptual significations must, for want of being filled, be traveled along by the invention of several, if not of all possible, interpretations of the intuition. Let us note, moreover, that Husserl identifies this possibility. First by admitting that the constitution of a phenomenon can be unfolded indefinitely, each of the intuited outlines complicating the noema, then each of the other inter-subjective constitutions (it would be better, moreover, to say inter-objective) reinforcing that complication, to the point that the teleological dimension of the process endlessly puts off the final constitution of the object, which is, in a sense, always to come. Next by admitting that the temporal constitution of the object can, by dint of extending and complicating itself, end by “exploding [*explodieren*]” (1976a, 339/275–276, 347/281–282, 373/303). The “explosion” could define the rupture of the limits that the concept, or the concepts, try (and must try) to impose on the excess of the giving intuition.

This possible “explosion” must therefore be understood positively, as the crossing of the ideal limit of the adequation of the two faces of phenomenality. The inadequation of the noesis to its noema (in Levinas’s sense) is generalized and becomes from now on the rule of saturated phenomenality. One can also generalize what I have advanced concerning the face of the other, in other words the saturated phenomenon of the icon, where “[...] the face of the other person requires [...] an infinite hermeneutic” (Marion 2001, 152/126). The saturation of certain phenomena opens, therefore, a doubled field to hermeneutics, which takes up again the function that constitution can no longer assume within the limits of simple objectness: signification intervenes with an essential lateness, and the phenomenon remains haloed with a border of conceptual imprecision that doubtless will never fade. This imprecision does not, however, imply any unintelligibility or irrationality, since it attests a *reserve* of rationality and intelligibility still to come—a phenomenality that comes to mind because it is temporalized. Hermeneutics, by deploying it in the time of invention, transforms the (saturated) phenomenon from an object into an event.

In the third place, hermeneutics finds itself in charge of considering a new difficulty, inevitable because it results directly from its previous function: how can we distinguish between the degrees of intuition, in other words the poor phenomena, the common-law phenomena, and the saturated phenomena? And moreover, is it necessary to distinguish the three cases as so many fixed categories, definitely distinct and always irreducible? Or rather, should we not envision transitions from one to the other, such that saturation is not restricted to exceptional and marginal cases, possibly disqualifiable or legitimately placed outside the norms?

In fact, this interrogation, as obvious as it seems, still remains dependent on the metaphysical paradigm of a schema of phenomenality; it presupposes that between the degrees of saturation are fixed, as in a triptych or in the septet of a prism, suddenly and clearly, borders closing regions, with no crossing or transition (in the sense in which Husserl severed the consciousness-region and the world-region). And yet, as I have at least tried to establish, it is necessary to admit the gradualness of saturation, since the same intuitive given can end by showing itself (phenomenalizing itself) as more or less saturated, according to the hermeneutic that takes sight of it. Thus for sight, three horizontally superposed bands of different colors can cause to appear the simple signification of an object (a national flag) or a saturated phenomenon (an abstract composition by Rothko). For hearing, the same sound can transmit a univocal object (like the brief signal of a piece of information, of a message, reduced to their signification) or a musical melody (a concert without words, or without intelligible words, because without any univocal signification). For touch, the same hardness can indicate the resistance of an object before the advance of my hand or the smoothness of the marble of a Greek column. For taste, the same liquid can be objectively summarized by the chemical formula for its elaborate composition in an oenological laboratory or “rejoice the heart of man” to the point of giving him, with the spirit [*esprit*] of the wine, the wit [*esprit*] that he perhaps does not have. For smell, the same aromas can be summarized by the objective formula according to which the chemist produces industrial odors or deliver

perfumes “that sing the transports of soul and of sense” (“Correspondences,” Baudelaire 2015, 17).<sup>63</sup> Between objectness and saturation the crossing never ceases, which renders banal saturation itself, which can arise out of the poorest situations.<sup>64</sup> And yet the crossing from a poor phenomenality to a saturated (and saturating) phenomenality does not depend on the pure and simple given, but on the manner in which the *adonné* receives it, experiences it, and expresses it—in short, the manner in which he knows how to interpret it. This interpretation itself varies with the talent, the upbringing, also the courage, in short the resistance that the *adonné* can, each time, deploy to receive the given. Such a resistance—which, in one sense, consists precisely in *not resisting*, but rather in enduring the *insistence* of the given—comes from hermeneutics. The saturated phenomenon demands a hermeneutic, in which the existential *as* agrees to expose itself to the counter-experience, and therefore to wage a fight against the inevitably objectifying interpretation, dictated by the apophantic *as*; and these two interpretations are also articulated in an inversely proportional manner. And who decides on and exercises this hermeneutic conflict, if not the *adonné*? One sees how little the *adonné* should be conceived as passive and submissive before the given, for its part the hermeneutic agent par excellence. “The devoted [*adonné*] is in no way passive, since by her response (hermeneutic) to the call (intuitive), she, and she alone, allows what gives itself to become, partially but really, what shows itself” (Marion 2010, 181/143). The passage from a poor or common-law phenomenon to a saturated phenomenon belongs, by full right, to hermeneutics.

Finally, the exercise of hermeneutics is required to establish a fourth distinction, that which separates all phenomena into objects or events and which, as well, *transforms* the object into an event, or the reverse. We will here follow Heidegger’s analysis, when he establishes, with the example of the hammer, the difference between the phenomenality of the subsistent being [*vorhanden*] and that of the being ready-to-hand [*zuhanden*], and marks the possible transition from the one to the other (Heidegger 163, 157/199–200, 361/412–413). The ready-to-hand does not appear as such, and not as a subsistent being, by a real modification of its properties, but by the new role that he who uses it makes it play in the world; its new aspect, its new appearing depend so little on its real properties that it can happen that those properties either have no relation to the use of this ready-to-hand or even prevent it. Thus the hammer, as a real object, depends on its wielding and not the reverse: one can hammer with all sorts of hammers, of all forms, some permitting one to hammer in a certain manner (the mason’s hammer sculpts stone, instead of beating in nails), but one can also hammer *without* a hammer; thus with a stone, with some piece of metal, of hard wood, etc.; for it is the act or the intention of the hammerer that makes the hammer, and hammering makes the thief.<sup>65</sup> This is moreover, why one can make oneself a hammer (or any other tool): one indeed always makes the first tools without tools because the use precedes the tool. The use of a being therefore implies a new definition of its phenomenality: its real properties (physical and chemical, intrinsic, objective, so-called primary qualities, etc.) are bracketed, or at least revised by and subordinated to the finality that use imposes. The being, seen *as ready-to-hand*, becomes an improvised being (in the sense of an improvised weapon). And yet, as Heidegger emphasizes, in order to see the hammer as a wieldable being ready-to-hand rather than as an inert substance, it is a matter of bringing the existential “as” into play there, the “as” of the *Dasein* open to the world, who sees it *as* he uses it, in a radical hermeneutic.

One manages to conceive of the reversal of a phenomenon from the objectness of a first aspect into its secret eventuality by generalizing this analysis. Certainly the phenomenological characters of the object (the complete conceptual definition, foreseeability, repeatability, etc.) are opposed to those of the event; but because they invert them, they answer them and can be reversed into them. For the same being can cross over from the status of an object to that of an event, just as an event can take on the status of an object; it suffices to understand its temporality, either according to the permanent present (that is, by a metaphysical abstraction of the crossing and an arbitrary maintaining of the “now”) or else according to the future in advance (that is,

by an anticipation of what happens, surpassing all foresight by the one to whom it happens). Such a reversal engenders two possible interpretations of the same being; but these two interpretations themselves suppose a double postulation of the existential “as,” and therefore a radical hermeneutic decision. Doubtless this distinction of the two modes of phenomenality in general also admits of other characteristics. “But the essential remains: the distinction between the modes of phenomenality (for us, between object and event) can be joined to the hermeneutical variations that [...] have (ontological) authority over the phenomenality of beings” (Marion 2010, 304–305/199).<sup>66</sup>

The phenomenology of givenness therefore manages the gap between what gives itself and what shows itself, the stake of which fixes the *self* of the phenomenon, only by the exercise of a properly phenomenological hermeneutics.<sup>67</sup>

*Translated by Sarah Horton.*

## References

### AQ3

Baudelaire, Charles. 1961. In *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec and C. Pichois, vol. I. Paris: Pléiade.

— — —. 2015. *Les Fleurs du mal*. Trans. Eric Gans. New York: Spuyten Duyvil.

Benoist, Jocelyn. 2001. *L’Idée de phénoménologie*. Paris: Beauchesne.

— — —. 2011. *Éléments de philosophie réaliste*. Paris: Vrin.

Descartes, René. 1964. *Principia philosophiae*, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. VIII-1, ed. C. Adam and P. Tannery. Paris: Vrin. English edition: Descartes, René. 1985. *Principles of Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1. Trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch. New York: Cambridge University Press.

— — —. 1965. *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. X, ed. C. Adam and P. Tannery. Paris: Vrin. English edition: Descartes, René. 1985. *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1., Trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fink, Eugen. 1988. *VI. Cartesianische Meditation, Teil 1: Die Idee einer transzendentalen Methodenlehre*. Dordrecht: Kluwer. English edition: Fink, Eugen. 1995. *Sixth Cartesian Meditation: The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of Method*. Trans. Ronald Bruzina. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Franck, Didier. 1981. *Chair et corps chez Husserl*. Paris: Minuit. English edition: Franck, Didier. 2014. *Flesh and Body: On the Phenomenology of Husserl*. Trans. Joseph Rivera and Scott Davidson. New York: Bloomsbury.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1960. *Wahrheit und Methode*. Tübingen: Mohr. English edition: Gadamer, Hans-

- Georg. 2004. *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York: Continuum.
- Gagey, Henri-Jérôme. 2010. La théologie entre urgence phénoménologique et endurance herméneutique. *Recherches de Science religieuse* 98 (1): 31–57.
- Gondek, Hans-Dieter, and Lászlo Tengely. 2011. *Neue Phänomenologie in Frankreich*. Paris: Hermann.
- Greisch, Jean. 1991. L’herméneutique dans la “phénoménologie comme telle”: Trois questions à propos de *Réduction et donation*. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 96 (1): 43–63.
- — —. 1995. Index sui et non dati. Les paradoxes d’une phénoménologie de la donation. *Transversalités* 70: 27–54.
- Grondin, Jean. 1992. La phénoménologie sans herméneutique. *Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 2: 146–153.
- — —. 1993a. *L’Horizon herméneutique de la pensée contemporaine*. Paris: Vrin.
- — —. 1993b. *L’Universalité de l’herméneutique*. Trans. Jean Grondin. Paris: PUF.
- — —. 1994. *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gschwandtner, Christina M. 2015. *Degrees of Givenness: On Saturation in Jean-Luc Marion*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1963. *Sein und Zeit*, 10th ed. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer. English edition: Heidegger, Martin. 1962. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper and Row.
- — —. 1985. Das Wesen der Sprache. In *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, G.A. 12, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann, 149–204. Frankfurt: Klostermann. English edition: Heidegger, Martin. 1971. The Nature of Language. In *On the Way to Language*, 111–138. Trans. Peter D. Herz. New York: Harper and Row.
- — —. 1987. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie (Kriegsnotsemester, 1919)*, G.A. 56/57, ed. Bernd Heimbüchel. Frankfurt: Klostermann. English edition: Heidegger, Martin. 2008. *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*. Trans. Ted Sadler. New York: Continuum Press.
- — —. 1992. *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie (WS 1919/20)*, G.A. 58, ed. Hans-Helmut Gander. Frankfurt: Klostermann. English edition: Heidegger, Martin. 2012. *Basic Problems of Phenomenology: Winter Semester 1919/1920*. Trans. Scott M. Campbell. New York: Bloomsbury.
- — —. 2007. Zeit und Sein. In *Zur Sache des Denkens*, G.A. 14., ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann, 3–30. Frankfurt: Klostermann. English edition: Heidegger, Martin. 2002. Time and Being. In *On Time and Being*, 1–24. Trans. Joan Stambaugh, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.



Husserl, Edmund. 1956. *Erste Philosophie I*, Hua. VII, ed. Rudolf Boehm. Leuven: Husserl Archives. French edition: Husserl, Edmund. 1972. *Philosophie première I*. Trans. A.-L. Kelkel, Paris: PUF.

— — —. 1973. *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*, Hua. II, ed. Walter Biemel. Leuven: Husserl Archives. English edition: Husserl, Edmund. 1999. *The Idea of Phenomenology*. Trans. Lee Hardy. Boston: Kluwer.

— — —. 1976a. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie I*, Hua. III, ed. Karl Schuhmann. Leuven: Husserl Archives. English edition: Husserl, Edmund. 2014. *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy I*. Trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom. Indianapolis: Hackett.

— — —. 1976b. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*, Hua. VI, ed. Walter Biemel. Leuven: Husserl Archives. English edition: Husserl, Edmund. 1970. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Trans. David Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Kisiel, Theodore. 1993. *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Locke, John. 1988. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P.H. Nidditch, 6th ed. London: Oxford University Press.

Mallarmé, Stéphane. 1994. *Collected Poemes: Stéphane Mallarmé, A Bilingual Edition*. Trans. Henry Weinfeld. Berkeley: University of California Press.

— — —. 1998. In *Œuvres complètes*, ed. B. Marchal, vol. I. Paris: Pléiade.

Marion, Jean-Luc. 1991. *Questions cartésiennes: Méthode et métaphysique*. Paris: PUF. English edition: Marion, Jean-Luc. 1999. *Cartesian Questions: Method and Metaphysics*. Trans. John Cottingham. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

— — —. 1997. *Etant donné: Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation*, rev. ed. Paris: PUF. English edition: Marion, Jean-Luc. 2002. *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*. Trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

— — —. 2001. *De surcroît: Études sur les phénomènes saturés*. Paris: PUF. English edition: Marion, Jean-Luc. 2002. *In Excess: Studies In Saturated Phenomena*. Trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud. New York: Fordham University Press.

— — —. 2004. *Réduction et donation: Recherches sur Husserl, Heidegger et la phénoménologie*, 2nd ed. Paris: PUF. English edition: Marion, Jean-Luc. 1988. *Reduction and Givenness*. Trans. Thomas A. Carlson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

— — —. 2005. *Le visible et le révélé*. Paris: Éditions du Cerf. English edition: Marion, Jean-Luc. 2008. *The Visible and the Revealed*. Trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner. New York: Fordham University Press.

— — —. 2006. L'irréductible. *Critique* 704–705: 79–91.

~~— — —. 2008. *The Visible and the Revealed*. Trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner. New York: Fordham University Press.~~

— — —. 2010. *Certitudes négatives*. Paris: Grasset. English edition: Marion, Jean-Luc. 2015. *Negative Certainties*. Trans. Stephen E. Lewis. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

— — —. 2012. *Figures de phénoménologie*. Paris: Vrin.

— — —. 2015. *Sur l'ontologie grise de Descartes: Science cartésienne et savoir aristotélicien dans les Regulae*, 5th ed. Paris: Vrin. English edition: Marion, Jean-Luc. 2017. *Descartes's Grey Ontology: On Cartesian Science and Aristotelian Thought in the Regulae*. Trans. Sarah E. Donahue. South Bend: St. Augustine's Press [forthcoming].

— — —. 2016. *Reprise du donné*. Paris: PUF.

Marx, Karl. 1982. *Thesen über Feuerbach, Thèses sur Feuerbach*. German and French translation in *Karl Marx, Œuvres*, vol. III, ed. M. Rubel. Paris: Pléiade. English edition: Marx, Karl. 1965. *Theses on Feuerbach*. Trans. W. Lough. In *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845–47*, vol. 5. New York: International Publishers.

Neurath, Otto. 1932. Protokollsätze. *Erkenntnis* 3(1): 204–214. English edition: Neurath, Otto. 1983. Protocol Statements. In *Philosophical Papers 1913–1946*, ed. Robert S. Cohen and Marie Neurath, 91–99. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1966. Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben. In *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. In *Werke*, vol. 1, ed. Karl Schlechta, 209–286. Munich: Carl Hanser. English edition: Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1997. On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life. In *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, 57–124. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Quine, William van Orman. 1951. Two Dogmas of Empiricism. *Philosophical Review* 60: 20–43.

Romano, Claude. 2010. Au coeur de la raison, la phénoménologie. Paris: Gallimard. English edition: Romano, Claude. 2015. *At the Heart of Reason*. Trans. Michael B. Smith and Claude Romano. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Sebbah, François-David. 2001. *L'épreuve de la limite: Derrida, Henry, Lévinas et la phénoménologie*. Paris: PUF.

Sellars, W.S. 1997. *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Serban, Claudia. 2012. La méthode phénoménologique, entre réduction et herméneutique. *Les Etudes philosophiques* 100 (1): 81–100.

Tanner, Kathryn. 2007. Theology at the Limits of Phenomenology. In *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart, 201–231. Notre-Dame: South Bend.

Thomas-Fogiel, Isabelle. 2015. *Le lieu de l'universel: Impasses du réalisme dans la philosophie contemporaine*. Paris: Seuil.

<sup>1</sup> See Marion (2016), Ch. I.

<sup>2</sup> As with the question of God, as I suggested in Marion (2012), Ch. 10 (reprint of Marion 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Which I have, in a sense, established: see Marion (2016), Ch. I.

<sup>4</sup> Marion here alludes to Mallarmé's sonnet "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui" ("The virginal, vivacious, and beautiful today"), of which the first tercet reads: "Its whole neck will shake off that white agony/By space inflicted on the bird that denies it/But not the horror of the ground where the plumage is caught." (My translation.) "Tout son col. secouera cette blanche agonie/Par l'espace infligé à l'oiseau qui le nie/Mais non l'horreur du sol où le plumage est pris" (Mallarmé 1998). For a less literal but more poetic translation, see "The virginal, vibrant and beautiful dawn" in Mallarmé (1994).

[Translator's note.]

<sup>5</sup> Note that "nous sommes finis," translated above as "we are finished," could also mean "we are finite." [Translator's note.]

<sup>6</sup> Whenever two page numbers are separated by a slash, the first refers to the original-language edition of a work, and the second to the translation. [Translator's note.]

<sup>7</sup> [My translation. — Trans.]

<sup>8</sup> [My translation. — Trans.]

<sup>9</sup> See Grondin (1993b), ch. IV (reprinted from Grondin 1992).

<sup>10</sup> See Greisch (1991) and Greisch (1995).

<sup>11</sup> See Tanner (2007); then Gagey (2010).

<sup>12</sup> [My translation. — Trans.]—Recently, Christina M. Gschwandtner has provided an excellent review of the debates concerning the supposed lack of hermeneutics since *Being Given* (see Gschwandtner 2015, 14–24).

<sup>13</sup> [Translation modified. — Trans.] On the neo-Kantian context of this diagnosis, see my study in Marion 2012, Ch. II–III.

<sup>14</sup> "Absolute Gegebenheit ist ein Letztes. [...] Andererseits die Selbstgegebenheit überhaupt zu leugnen, das heißt alle letzte Norm, alles der Erkenntnis Sinn gebenden Grundmaß leugnen" (Husserl 1973, 61).

<sup>15</sup> [Translation modified to follow Marion's wording more closely. — Trans.] I will not retrace D. Franck's convincing demonstration (Franck 1981).

<sup>16</sup> [Translation modified to follow Marion's wording more closely. — Trans.]

<sup>17</sup> [Translation modified to follow Marion's wording more closely. — Trans.]

<sup>18</sup> See Marion (2016), Ch. I, §4.

<sup>19</sup> "Wir überzeugen uns, daß diese Erfahrungen *Sinn und Recht auch als reduzierte behalten*, und in genereller Wesensallgemeinheit erfassen wir das *Recht* so gearteter Erfahrungen überhaupt, ebenso wie wir parallel damit das *Recht auf Erlebnisse überhaupt bezogener Wesenserscheinungen* erfassen. So erfassen wir z. B. *das absolute Recht* der immanent wahrnehmenden Reflexion" (Husserl 1976a, 184).

<sup>20</sup> See Marion 2004, Ch. 1. See also: "*Immediately seeing—not merely sensory, experiential seeing but seeing in general, i.e., any kind of consciousness that gives something in an originary fashion*—is the ultimate source of legitimacy of all rational claims. [Das unmittelbare 'Sehen' (noein), nicht bloß das sinnliche, erfahrende Sehen, sondern *das Sehen überhaupt als originär gebendes Bewußtsein welcher Art immer*, ist die letzte Rechtsquelle aller vernünftigen Behauptungen]" (Husserl 1976a, 44/36). [Translation modified. — Trans.] Or: "For the geometer, however, who investigates [...] not actual relationships but essential relationships, the *discernment of an essence* is, in place of experience, *the ultimately justifying act*. [Für den Geometer aber, [...] der nicht Wirklichkeiten, sondern Wesensverhalte erforscht, ist statt der Erfahrung die *Wesensschauung der letztbegründende Akt*]" (Ibid., 21/18–19).

<sup>21</sup> [My translation. Here the page numbers refer to the German and French editions respectively, as no English translation exists. My translations of all quotations from Husserl's *Erste Philosophie* largely follow the French, which Marion quotes,

but at times deviate from it to more accurately render the German. — Trans.]

<sup>22</sup> “Gibt es überhaupt eine einzige Sache, wenn es nur Sachen gibt? Dann gibt es überhaupt keine Sachen; es gibt nicht einmal *nichts*, weil es bei einer Allherrschaft der Sachspäre auch kein ‘es gibt’ gibt. Gibt es das ‘es gibt’?” (Heidegger 1987, 62).

<sup>23</sup> See Heidegger 2007, 22/16–17. On the passage from the *es [gibt]* to *Ereignis*, see *ibid.*, 24 ff./19 ff.

<sup>24</sup> I am here taking up a suggestion from Gondek and Tengely (2011), 165 ff.

<sup>25</sup> The French expression *donner la parole*, here translated literally as “give the word” means “to give the floor,” that is, to allow someone to speak. Note also that *parole*, unlike *mot*, refers to the *spoken* word and can at times (as above) be translated as “speech.” [Translator’s note.]

<sup>26</sup> This text was first given as a lecture in London: “The Myth of the Given: Three Lectures on Philosophy of Mind,” 1956.

<sup>27</sup> Two remarks in passing: why speak here of Hegel rather than of Kant? And why describe givenness in particular with the label “philosophical”?

<sup>28</sup> Here and elsewhere, the words “sense datum” or “sense data” appear in English in the original text. [Translator’s note.]

<sup>29</sup> Which indicates the dilemma well: what is sensed is a particular, so the sensible remains without status for the understanding; but in order for what is sensed to also become understandable, it must have the status of an object, so it would no longer be immediate or particular.

<sup>30</sup> As for the last characteristic that Sellars criticizes, namely, that the given remains necessarily non-conceptual, it is disqualified in advance by the Husserlian discovery of the givenness of significations, of the vision of essences, and of categorial intuition. [The words “self-sustaining; non-inferential knowledge” appear in English in the original text. — Trans.]

<sup>31</sup> [Emphasis follows the German text rather than the English translation. — Trans.]

<sup>32</sup> See: “[...] the ideas first in the mind, *tis evident*, are those of particular things [...], from the ordinary and familiar *objects of sense*” (*Ibid.*, 595, emphasis added)—but nothing is less evident than (i) that the first ideas are already ideas of objects, (ii) that these ideas are of singular and sensible objects. One thus names evident that which one cannot demonstrate, and which one does not even feel a need to verify, so much does one take it as established.

<sup>33</sup> “[...] it is plain to me, we have a more certain knowledge of the existence of God, than of anything our senses have not *immediately* discovered to us” (*Ibid.*, 621).

<sup>34</sup> [Translation modified to follow Marion’s wording more closely. — Trans.]

<sup>35</sup> “Idea” and “quality” appear in English in the original text. [Translator’s note.]

<sup>36</sup> See Locke (1988), 143.

<sup>37</sup> Descartes (1965, in particular VI and XII). See Marion (2015) and Marion (1991). With this notable difference that Locke keeps “solidity” among the primary qualities, whereas Descartes reduces it, under the name of “hardness,” to a secondary quality. (Descartes 1964, Pt. II, §4).

<sup>38</sup> “[...] insensible parts,” “[...] single imperceptible bodies” (Locke 1988, 135, 136).

<sup>39</sup> Husserl’s diagnosis of Locke says nothing else: “Consciousness, be it the seemingly simplest perception or having-consciousness-of without the slightest attention focused on anything, is never an empty possession of something, as if the subject quite simply had, in this case, his intentional objects in his pocket [*seine intentionalen Gegenstände wie in einer Tasche eben bloß darin hätte*]” (1956, 110/157). [My translation. — Trans.] See: “For whoever once learned what a genuine description was, the blindness of soul towards the proper essence of consciousness in all these universal and particular figures is revealed in that Locke’s descriptions (like those of his successors), could never extend to a correctly real description and analysis, namely by following the real parts and connections, because they again and again misinterpret [*immer wieder mißdeuten*] the intentional implications, which are seen, by nature inseparably and in a certain manner necessarily, as real implications” (*Ibid.*, 112/139). [My translation. As before, the page numbers refer to the German and French editions. — Trans.]

<sup>40</sup> Let it suffice here to refer to C. Romano’s definitive demonstration (Romano 2010), in particular the whole of Ch. 19.

<sup>41</sup> “Nicht das psychologische Phänomen in der psychologischen Apperzeption und Objektivation ist wirklich eine absolute Gegebenheit, sondern nur das *reine Phänomen*, das reduzierte” (Husserl 1973, 7).

<sup>42</sup> “Eben das muß man sich ja zur Klarheit bringen, daß das absolute Phänomen, die reduzierte *cogitatio* uns nicht darum als absolute Gegebenheit gilt, weil sie Einzelheit ist, sondern weil sie sich im reinsten Schauen nach der phänomenologischen Reduktion *eben als absolute Selbstgegebenheit* herausstellt” (*Ibid.*, 56). See also: “In the case of a singular *cogitatio* that lies before us, say a feeling that we are experiencing, we could perhaps say: it is given. But we could by no means dare to state



the most universal proposition *the givenness of any reduced phenomenon is an absolute and indubitable givenness—die Gegebenheit eines reduzierten Phänomens überhaupt ist eine absolute zweifellose»* (Ibid., 50/38.). And: “Only through a reduction, which we shall call a *phenomenological reduction*, do I acquire an absolute givenness that no longer offers anything transcendent” (Ibid., 44/34.).

<sup>43</sup> Eugen Fink clearly confirms this point: “In this context ‘givenness’ thus does not signify being-at-hand and lying before one, for instance, in the way things are given, are there, as objects of natural worldly experience; but it means *possible accessibility through the unfolding of the phenomenological reduction*”—to the point that if, as is almost always done outside phenomenology, one misguidedly identified the “given” with immediate sensible intuitiveness, it would be necessary rather to call the veritable phenomenon a *non-given*: “The ‘object’—or better, *the objects*—of constructive phenomenology are *not ‘given.’* The theorizing directed to them is not an ‘intuitive having given’ [*anschauliches Gegebenhaben*], it is not ‘intuitive’ [*intuitiv*]; but [...] is ‘non-given,’ this theorizing is *constructive.*” (Fink 1988, 63–64/57, 63/56). In other words, a sensible intuition does not suffice to give a phenomenon; a reduction is necessary.

<sup>44</sup> See also *ibid.*, 70–73/56–58.

<sup>45</sup> “a meaning [...], a moment of signification [*eine Bedeutung, ein bedeutungshafte Moment*]” (Ibid., 72/58). See my more detailed analysis in Marion (2012), Ch. 3.

<sup>46</sup> For “[a]nd then once again: the original region is not expected to be given, it may first have to be won” (Ibid., 29/24). See: “The original region is not given to us. We do not know anything about it from ‘practical life.’ It is far from us. We must bring it nearer to us *methodologically*” (Ibid., 203/153). In other words, the given depends on an approach, on a mediation, even on a practice. Which one, if not that of hermeneutics?

<sup>47</sup> [Translation modified. —Trans.] Admitting that the given remains an indeterminate but insoluble question: that is what resurfaces in holism and contextualism. It does not suffice to recuse this “given” too often and too clearly in order to be quits with it: denial, in the end [*à force*], reinforces [*renforce*] (see Benoist 2011, for example 14, 90).

<sup>48</sup> [Translation modified. —Trans.]

<sup>49</sup> See: “Understanding a tradition undoubtedly requires a historical horizon, then. But it is not the case that we acquire this horizon by transposing ourselves into a historical situation. Rather, we must always already have a horizon in order to be able to transpose ourselves into a situation. For what do we mean by ‘transposing ourselves (*Sichversetzen*)’? Certainly not just disregarding ourselves (*Von-sich-absehen*). This is necessary, of course, insofar as we must imagine the other situation. But into this other situation we must bring, precisely, ourselves. Only this is the full meaning of “transposing ourselves. If we put ourselves in someone else’s shoes, for example, then we will understand him—i.e., become aware of the otherness, the indissoluble individuality of the other person—by putting *ourselves* in his position” (Ibid., 288/304).

<sup>50</sup> [Translation modified to follow Marion’s wording more closely. —Trans.] See: “The historical method (*historische Erkenntnis*) requires that the logic of question and answer be applied to the historical tradition (*geschichtliche Überlieferung*)” (Ibid., 352/ 364).

<sup>51</sup> [Translation modified to follow Marion’s wording more closely. —Trans.]

<sup>52</sup> Which J. Grondin confirms literally: “Hermeneutics rests upon dialogical foundations: To interpret a text means to enter into dialogue with it, direct questions to it, and allow oneself to be questioned by it.” To the point that “comprehension is experienced [...] as the result of a dialogical game of question and answer” (1994, 74, 117). [I have modified the translation of the first quotation, and that of the second is entirely my own. See Grondin (1993b), 98, 179, the edition Marion cites. —Trans.]

<sup>53</sup> “Answer” and “response” translate the same French word, *réponse*. I here employ these two different English words because “question and answer” and “call and response” are already established phrases in translations of Gadamer and Marion respectively. [Translator’s note.]

<sup>54</sup> Thus I consider that I have finally answered Jocelyn Benoist’s earlier interrogation: “[...] it seems to me that the conversion of your phenomenology into a phenomenology of the call leads you inevitably towards a *hermeneutic*, for which, however, I see no place in your thought” (Benoist 2001, 101). [My translation. —Trans.]

<sup>55</sup> “Oui, dans une île que l’air charge/*De vue et non de visions/Toute fleur s’étalait plus large/Sans que nous en devisions.*” (“Prose pour des Esseintes” in Mallarmé 1998, 95, emphasis added).

<sup>56</sup> [Translation modified. —Trans.] This “sense [meaning], *Sinn*” corresponds exactly to what Heidegger had first described, in 1919, as “signification, *Bedeutung*” (see above, §4).

<sup>57</sup> “Das ursprüngliche ‘Als’ der umsichtigen Auslegung (ερμηνεία) nennen wir das existential-hermeneutische ‘Als’ im Unterschied vom *apophantischen* ‘Als’ der Aussage” (Ibid., 158).

<sup>58</sup> And already in §18: “For if all that gives *itself* shows *itself*, not all gives *itself* univocally” (Ibid., 250/178). [Translation modified. — Trans.]

<sup>59</sup> The French word *adonné* means to be given over, devoted, or even addicted to something. It contains within itself the words *don* (gift) and *donné* (given), etymological connections which are unfortunately impossible to render in English without sacrificing either meaning or brevity. While the translations “the one who is given over” or “the given-over one” would preserve both the basic sense of the word and its relation to *donné*, given, they are regrettably clunky. Therefore, as the original French *adonné* has already entered some English-language discussions of Marion, I have chosen to preserve it here. [Translator’s note.]

<sup>60</sup> See *supra*, §2.1.

<sup>61</sup> See, among other texts, Marion (1997), §23: “The hermeneutic [...] of the event [...]” (319/229); §26: “The event, unforeseeable according and counter to quantity, comes to pass by passing over the *I*, which yields to an infinite hermeneutic and lets itself be encompassed by it” (369/267); §30: “Far from underestimating the most recent advances in phenomenology — hermeneutics, difference, auto-affection, and the gaze of the Other—I am only trying to confirm them by assigning each a precise site within givenness” (441/321–322). Marion (2011): reply to J. Greisch and J. Grondin (39 n. 1/33 n. 3); on the hermeneutics of the event (43/36–37 and 135/112–113); “The Icon, or the Endless Hermeneutic” (the title of ch. 5, 125 ff./104 ff.); “Hermeneutics to the Infinite” (ch. 5, §5), etc. Marion (2005): ch. 4, “‘Christian Philosophy’: Hermeneutic or Heuristic?” Marion (2010): ch. 5, “The Unforeseeable, or the Event,” §30 “The Double Interpretation.”

<sup>62</sup> “O Spirit of litigation, know/When we keep silent in this season/The stem of multiple lilies grew/*Too large to be contained by reason.*” (“Prose for des Esseintes,” Mallarmé 1994, 47, emphasis added). [The alternate translation given in the text of the last line of this verse is my own and is more literal. — Trans.] “O sache l’Esprit de litige/A cette heure où nous nous taisons/Que de lis multiples la tige/*Grandissait trop pour nos raisons.*” (“Prose pour des Esseintes,” Mallarmé 1998, 95, emphasis added.)

<sup>63</sup> “Qui chante les transports de l’esprit et des sens.” (“Correspondances,” Baudelaire 1961, 11). One can, moreover, read all of Baudelaire’s poetry as an extraordinarily subtle search with an eye to transforming into saturated phenomena that which, to other, prosaic eyes, offers only objects, and sometimes the most disordered ones. It is thus, for instance, with the five variations on “Wine” or those on fragrances (including tobacco).

<sup>64</sup> See Marion (2005), Ch. 7.

<sup>65</sup> This phrase alludes to the French saying “L’occasion fait le larron,” which means “Opportunity makes the thief.”

[Translator’s note.]

<sup>66</sup> [Translation modified. — Trans.]

<sup>67</sup> Thus I am in accord with C. Romano’s thesis: “[...] *genuine hermeneutics is phenomenology and phenomenology is only achieved as hermeneutics*” (Romano 2010, 874/485.)