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# Christian Revelation as a Phenomenon: Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenological "Theology" and Its Balthasarian Roots

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**Abstract:** This essay examines Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenal model of the Trinity expounded in his recent book *D'Ailleurs, la révélation* (2020) and attempts to give an initial assessment from a theological perspective. Since Marion's programme is largely indebted to the Roman Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar's own project, first I give an overview of the Balthasarian phenomenal approach to revelation famously termed "aesthetic theology". Next, I present Marion's ideas concerning the convergence between the phenomenological and the theological enterprise. The third part examines the theological rationale behind Marion's phenomenal model of the Trinity that again can be seen as relying significantly on Balthasarian trinitarian theology. In this section, I give an overview of the idea of the relationship between the immanent and the economic Trinity, and I inspect notions, such as trinitarian distance, kenosis and Marion's own concept elsewhere. The fourth section gives an outline of Marion's phenomenal model of the trinity where he develops a new trinitarian triad based on a phenomenal approach. The closing section reflects on the advantages and difficulties of Marion's project.

**Keywords:** Jean-Luc Marion; Hans Urs von Balthasar; revelation; trinitarian theology; trinitarian triads; phenomenology



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"Humanity will prefer to renounce all philosophical questions (. . .) rather than accept a philosophy that finds its final response only in the revelation of Christ".  
Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Retrospective 1988".

## 1. Introduction

The concept and the various models of Christian revelation have been the focus of theological reflection for more than half a century by now, and this once neglected and later on, much-debated notion seems to have acquired a well-established status and thoroughly comprehensive treatments by our own day. As one of the main themes of fundamental theology, it is part of the theological curriculum, the first building block for those wishing to become initiated into the discipline of theology. From a theological point of view, revelation is an unassailable foundational fact of Christian faith with well-defined content and a clearly laid out structure as well as clear-cut ideas concerning its channels and modes of reception. What is more open to discussion, though, is its relevance for contemporary life experience, which is not particularly welcoming to the "strange" claim that God reveals Godself in the midst of the human situation as someone who is a real transcendent Other.

Philosophy, at least since the time of the Enlightenment, has been aware of the troubling strangeness of the idea of revelation, however, most of the time it united its efforts in trying to establish rational conditions for its operation and delimit its field of validity—a process which rendered theological reflection on revelation an even more ambiguous task. Jean-Luc Marion's recent magisterial book on the critical history and a new (in his term) phenomenal concept of revelation (Marion 2020) stems from the recognition that—far from being a strange stumbling block pushed to the margins of philosophical reflection—a

serious engagement with the concept of revelation is central to any genuinely open investigation concerning the fullness of reality. This sustained treatment is not only a systematic recapitulation of Marion's earlier reflection on various aspects of revelation, but it is also a culmination of his thought on this issue which brings together former strands of investigation into a higher synthesis. One of his main concerns is to show that revelation is not a suspicious idea or a spurious experience, but that it is central to the integrity of human existence. His insightful phenomenological analyses make one understand that the right question to ask is not one of why one needs revelation at all, but the one concerning life without revelation, whether our existence would be meaningful or memorable without such an all-pervasive experience.

As one of the first commentators noted (Geske 2022), in order to follow Marion's complex argumentation in this book, a knowledge of philosophy must be complemented with a sound knowledge of Christian theology, without which the Christological and trinitarian chapters (namely, the entire second part of the work) remain inaccessible. Moreover, among the many theologians who shaped Marion's thinking in the historical and systematic reflections, a profound influence of the Roman Catholic Swiss theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, is undoubtedly decisive. In what manner, then, may theology relate to such an intriguing doublet of its central concerns (revelation, Christology, models of the Trinity), namely, in Marion's terms a phenomenal concept of revelation and a phenomenal model of the Trinity? What kind of a mirror does it hold up for theology? Is it illuminating in any way for the current work of the theological enterprise? In what follows, we shall try to give an initial and necessarily very limited assessment of Marion's challenging and admittedly groundbreaking (in the original sense of preparing new ground for future reflection) phenomenological "theology", confronting it first with its main source of inspiration, the innovative method of Hans Urs von Balthasar.

## 2. Inspiration: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Phenomenal Approach to Revelation

Famously, it was Balthasar who in the twentieth century first set the scene for a phenomenal understanding of revelation, arguing for a new method he named "theological aesthetics", that is—based on the meaning of the Greek term *aisthesis*—the perception and reception of the unity, mode and structure of God's self-manifestation. As the Swiss theologian makes clear, the method he wants to advocate does not concern an examination of various expressions of beauty or the sublime (as is the case in philosophical or literary aesthetics) but may best be likened to the procedures of philosophical phenomenology as practised, for example, by Max Scheler, whose "method appeals to a pure self-giving of the object" (Balthasar 2004, p. 12). On this analogy, before and beyond the usual logical and rational systematising work, theology must be phenomenological in its intention; it must, first and foremost, attend to what God gives to be seen, what gives itself as the one and unique phenomenon of Jewish–Christian revelation. And we may not be wide of the mark by suggesting that von Balthasar's entire programme can be conceived as a sustained effort to elaborate the conceptual tools for such a phenomenal understanding of the Christian faith, in other words, of "what is specifically Christian about Christianity;" (Balthasar 2004, p. 9) and nothing else but a constant search for the way we can "distinguish his [Christ's] appearance, his epiphany, among the thousand other phenomena in the world" (Balthasar 1993, p. 116).

What are the benefits of such a phenomenal approach to Christian revelation? Although Balthasar nowhere gives a systematic explanation of his method or an overall evaluation of the advantages, one may nonetheless gather from his writings some major achievements resulting from such a new vantage point.<sup>1</sup> First of all, it fits in well with the conception (laid out by the Protestant theologian, Karl Barth and endorsed by Balthasar) that the content, form and means of revelation come from God alone as God's self-manifestation which, in a self-authenticating manner, carries in itself its own warrant, logic and interpretation. If revelation is a "phenomenon"—God's self-appearance in perceptible form—then one's first task is to catch sight of it, to notice and observe it as a

meaningful whole, as something given “from above”, from outside of what one can ever expect or anticipate. God’s self-manifestation at once conforms to one’s capacity to see it and is also something unexpected that shapes and trains one’s power of perception. Therefore, what Balthasar does as part of his theological programme is to draw out the consequences of the Barthian claim in aesthetic–phenomenological terms by thinking over every aspect of the perception of one specific (and omnipresent) phenomenon, the phenomenon of beauty.

In a nutshell, (and trying to systematise a non-systematic account) what does the aesthetic perception of beauty teach one concerning the nature of Christian revelation? In the wake of classical–medieval metaphysical conceptions and their Thomistic higher synthesis, Balthasar conceives of beauty as having two basic and interrelated dimensions: “form” and “splendour”. On the one hand, beauty is embodied in form as a structured and organised whole with proportionate parts and a meaningful pattern to be grasped. On the other hand, such form points beyond itself by being the vehicle of a hidden depth dimension through which the goodness and truth of being shine forth and the splendour of the epiphanic character of reality is manifested. The classical Thomistic metaphysics of the transcendental attributes of being (the One, the True, the Good and the Beautiful) gives the philosophical background for Balthasar’s account of beauty, which, however, he also creatively tailors to his own purposes—the phenomenal understanding of worldly beauty and revelation—by reversing their order of significance and emphasising the formative role of beauty (and oneness) for both goodness and truth. Beauty represents the delightful, joyful and gratuitous apparition of the goodness and truth of being; it is the visible splendour of the self-manifestation and the free self-giving of reality; it comes first as the, for us, most accessible and perceptible property of being.<sup>2</sup>

Understood in this manner, the phenomenon of beauty holds together in one indivisible unity of epiphany and mystery, disclosure and an irreducible excess of depth dimension. Balthasar likes to remark that the beauty of form does not simply have a sign character, as something which may be discarded on having grasped what it signifies. On the contrary, it represents a site where the manifest and the non-manifest are simultaneously at work: “[a]long with the seen surface of the manifestation there is perceived the non-manifested depth: it is only this which lends the phenomenon of the beautiful its enrapturing and overwhelming character, just as it is only this that insures the truth and goodness of the existent.” (Balthasar 1982, p. 442). Put in another way, “[t]he appearance of the form, as revelation of the depths, is an indissoluble union of two things. It is the real presence of the depths, of the whole of reality, and it is a real pointing beyond itself to these depths” (Balthasar 1982, p. 118).

Because of its two-dimensional nature, beauty—as the paradoxical manifestation of mystery as a mystery—addresses the entire person and challenges her with the attractive imposition of its own intelligibility. In a self-authenticating manner, it offers its own credibility and interpretation. And, in addition to carrying in itself its own warrant, it also attunes the one who perceives it to a willing openness to reception. Its delightful character invites one to enter the depths to which it points and what it contains. Just like grace, beauty cannot be anticipated by the subject, it is given “from outside” as a free gift, as something unexpected and totally unmerited, as an event which opens one’s eyes to the joy of new perspectives. Last, but not least, in beauty the concrete and the universal form an indissoluble unity: the universal (which has no existence in itself) is realised in the unrepeatably instantiable of the concrete and so the concrete points beyond itself by having universal significance.

Such “aesthetic” considerations open the way for a renewed and more holistic concept of revelation, one which is equally able to avoid the pitfalls of the neo-scholastic propositional conception whereby the idea of revelation is narrowed down to being the acceptance of authoritative teaching (as a set of divine truths) through the act of faith, and the opposite fallacy of transcendental anthropological conceptions where revelation—viewed ultimately as an answer to humanly posed questions—becomes part and parcel of the transcending dynamics of human rationality and desire or a function of human reason and emotional

subjectivity, respectively.<sup>3</sup> Through an analogy with beauty, the phenomenal approach, on the one hand, counters the one-sidedly rationalistic interpretation of the propositional model by shedding light on the fact that revelation addresses the entire person and requires the active involvement of the receiving subject, and, on the other hand, it corrects accounts where the true otherness of revelation, its grace-like nature and arrival from outside of closed-down immanence (the “natural” order) is either overstressed or else compromised.

Furthermore, the analogy between beauty and revelation is also suitable for correcting a shared shortcoming of the neo-scholastic and the transcendental anthropological approaches, both of which presuppose in their analyses of the workings of the interrelated triad of revelation, reason and faith an ultimate duality between signs and what they signify. While the former (propositional) approach sets apart within divine revelation the communication of divine truths and the exterior signs which vindicate them—signs (events salvation history, miracles, etc.), being objects for reason to grasp and divine truths being objects of faith to be believed by obedient reception—the latter approach, which puts an emphasis on human desire and self-transcendence likewise makes the role of signs incidental and exterior with regard to the inner dynamism of human knowledge and faith. Ultimately, both accounts see signs as mere pointers towards the real content of revelation, having no intrinsic revelatory value in themselves.

Balthasar’s analysis of the phenomenon of beauty successfully overcomes this difficulty by keeping together in one complex unity the interrelated acts of reason and faith and by pointing to the fact that revelation is God’s self-manifestation rather than just the communication of divine teachings and the concomitant provision of vindicatory signs. As has been seen, the aesthetic notions of form and splendour ably demonstrate the essential unity between surface and depths, sign and signified, epiphany and mystery. In this analogy, the signs that testify to God’s revelation at once point to God’s mystery and also contain such mystery. Moreover, reason and faith are no longer antithetically opposed to one another, but are understood as two dimensions of the one indivisible act of the perception of revelation which, in the mode of beauty, addresses the entire person and appeals to reason’s capacity to transcend itself in the act of faith.

These considerations allow Balthasar to construct a phenomenal understanding of revelation based on biblical evidence where the counterpart of worldly beauty is God’s glory, that is, God’s perceptible and yet hidden manifestation and mysterious self-communication. On such reading, the Old Testament may be interpreted as a series of God’s apparitions with the aim of self-revelation, which in the New Testament culminates in the visible “form” of Jesus Christ. Balthasar is convinced that Christian revelation is epiphanic, just like beauty, in having the Christ figure at its centre in whom the visibility of a human person and the invisible depth dimension of his divine sonship form a distinctive unity. He also emphasises the fact that the Christ-phenomenon’s “objective evidence” carries in itself its own credibility, interpretation and splendour that originate in his divine trinitarian origin. What one grasps through the phenomenon of Jesus Christ is divine love as the trinitarian communion of the three persons, the essence of God’s divinity.

In sum, von Balthasar’s entire theological output can be seen as the elaboration of this central claim, the novelty of which consists of its phenomenal perspective that holds together all the dimensions of revelation in one complex unity and successfully corrects both the one-sidedly extrinsic and the excessively intrinsic conceptions of divine disclosure. Interestingly, however, the philosophy coupled with such theological “aesthetics” is a recast version of Thomistic ontology attuned to the exigencies of questions posed from a phenomenological stance. The idea that Being is epiphanic in character and that it gives itself and speaks itself in the appearance of concrete beings where “in the appearance [*Erscheinung*] we grasp the essence that manifests itself [*Ding an sich*]” (Balthasar 1993, p. 114) points towards what one may call a “phenomenal ontology”, which is primarily interested in the ways Being phenomenalisises itself. It is not by chance that at the end of his career, looking back at the trajectory of his project, von Balthasar emphasises precisely (even if obliquely rather than openly) the phenomenological character of his starting point

(which is couched in the classical Thomistic doctrine of the transcendentals and the analogy of Being):

“I have thus tried to construct a philosophy and a theology starting from an analogy, not of abstract Being, but of Being as it is encountered concretely in its attributes (not categorical, but transcendental). And as the transcendentals run through all Being, they must be interior to each other: that which is truly true is also truly good and beautiful and one. A being *appears*, it has an epiphany: in that it is beautiful and makes us marvel. In appearing it *gives* itself, it delivers itself to us: it is good. And in giving itself up, it *speaks* itself, it unveils itself: it is true (in itself, but in the other to which it reveals itself)”. (Balthasar 1993, pp. 11–116)

All things considered, while he opens up a new avenue for a phenomenal understanding of revelation, in some respects, Balthasar can only go halfway down the road because the philosophy he constructs for buttressing his novel theological vision would need a more systematic and consistent phenomenological foundation, a rigorous procedure that helps to draw out all the consequences of such a wealth of “aesthetic” insights. And it is at this point that Jean-Luc Marion’s philosophy may be viewed as picking up the baton.

### 3. Development: The Convergence of Phenomenology and Theology

However, it is not at all obvious that the baton can be picked up without any difficulty since the phenomenological method first needs to be liberated from the self-imposed constraints that prevent it from becoming a suitable means for accessing a domain traditionally vindicated by theology. Marion registers an interesting convergence between phenomenology and theology: a spontaneous and organic development on the part of the phenomenological movement towards new terrains and problems in common with theology (Marion 2012, pp. 13–31).<sup>4</sup> As he explains, it is not simply the case that phenomenology must modify its essential terms and methods in order to become a reliable ally for theology in the investigation of revelation, but what is at stake is the integrity of the phenomenological enterprise itself, which during the past decades seems to have taken a new course by turning towards religious phenomena in various ways quite unexpectedly and almost involuntarily. In fact, as a surprising development, phenomenology (which in his view is never defined once and for all but constantly progresses) has come to realise that the phenomenon of revelation is particularly well-suited for phenomenological scrutiny and the challenges it poses to promote the advance of the discipline.

Marion is therefore convinced that by joining his predecessors in overcoming the triple obstacles (the proclaimed methodological atheism of phenomenology, the question of what may count as a phenomenon, and the issue of otherness and selfhood in the reception of phenomena) not only does he do service to theology, which has so far lacked a suitable philosophy for developing a wholesome account of revelation, but he also enhances the potentials lying dormant in his own discipline. The mutual benefits arising from a cooperation between theology and phenomenology may consist of the fact that, on the one hand, theology receives a reliable method that enables it to carry out a phenomenological exegesis best suited to Scripture texts (and especially the Christological content of the New Testament where the phenomenal character of the Christ-event is central), on the other hand, the phenomenologist receives from the theologian a new area of research, new spaces of manifestation for future scrutiny in conformity with the deepest interest and inherent inclination of his own discipline.<sup>5</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that with hindsight Marion’s entire oeuvre may be seen as being directed towards the realisation of such a task, namely, the laborious construction work of developing new conceptual tools and opening a novel imaginative space for the phenomenological analysis of the par excellence phenomenon: revelation in general and Christian revelation in particular. Within the broader concern of the possibility and conditions of religious experience originating from a transcendent source, the ultimate goal he is keeping in view is a phenomenologically consistent account of biblical revelation



understood in Barthian–Balthasarian terms as God’s self-authenticating self-manifestation that carries its own motive, logic and interpretation solely in itself.

To include revelation in the phenomenal field, he must modify earlier conceptions concerning the nature of phenomena, phenomenality and selfhood and his innovative (and by now well-known) notions of “saturated phenomena”, the “*adonne*” (as self), “paradox” and “counter-experience” all serve the purpose of expanding the field of phenomenality and of redefining the scope of the possible. What counts as impossible in the older scheme without these corrective notions, with their help enters the domain of possibility and opens it up for the paradoxical counter-experience of the highest instantiation of the saturated phenomenon: revelation from a transcendent origin. Ultimately, Marion presupposes a deep-seated analogy between the way phenomena give themselves and therefore show themselves, in other words, their self-donating and self-manifesting nature and God’s self-revealing and self-showing gesture in revelation which, as he stresses—despite being a sovereign act—nonetheless respects the conditions of God’s creation and human capacities for reception. Divine revelation is pre-eminent giving; hence, it must be viewed as accomplishing the very essence of phenomenality and, at the same time, being in continuity with the way common worldly phenomena give and show themselves.

In an essay published shortly before his seminal book (*D’Ailleurs, la révélation*) saw the light of day, Marion gave an overview of his project and further specified the relationship between the phenomenological and the theological quests (Marion 2019). Here, he unpacks the relationship between what one could call everyday “revelation” (events that have a revelatory value, his example being the way one comes to learn skiing and the experience of being in love) and divine revelation, arguing for their structural likeness and essential relatedness. Both types of phenomenality affect one in a personal manner; hence, what matters in them is not the content, the “what” of manifestation, but the person “to whom” they are addressed. Both transform those who receive them, opening up a new space, new time and a new self for the ones experiencing them; a new beginning and an unforeseen situation are delivered through them. Despite showing what was before unseen, both keep a reserve of the unseen within what manifests itself. Both happen of themselves and from themselves, imposing their own logic and way of manifestation on the one who perceives and receives them.

Marion characterizes both modes of revelation as the showing of a phenomenon that is distinguished from the rest of ordinary phenomena within the flux of ephemeral worldly appearances by being unforgettable. Revelation is something one remembers, something that cannot be identically repeated, something that has a lasting impact on one’s life. This leads one to the foundational common feature of both forms of revelation that Marion terms the “elsewhere” (*ailleurs*) of their origin.<sup>6</sup> Such an origin as elsewhere safeguards the true otherness of revelation and distinguishes it from all other phenomena. To think the elsewhere is Marion’s own distinctive way to account for the possibility of transcendence appearing within immanence and this notion provides the title and gives the guiding thread of his subsequent comprehensive treatment of revelation.<sup>7</sup> What this introductory essay emphasises is the fact that revelation, far from being an exception to phenomenality, confirms the radical definition of every phenomenon as such and so there may be a two-way movement posited between ordinary revelation and par excellence divine revelation. On the one hand, experiencing and understanding the characteristics of common worldly revelation may prepare one for the reception of God’s self-manifestation and give a foretaste of the richness of its plenitude, on the other hand, in the light of divine disclosure, the workings of worldly revelation become more intelligible and more meaningful. In this manner, divine revelation grounds, confirms and interprets worldly phenomenal experience.

In this essay too, Marion reflects on the respective tasks of phenomenology and theology and their common surprise at the fact that a phenomenal approach to revelation, which is at first sight foreign to them, nonetheless proves to be truly fruitful. While the philosopher may find investigation regarding matters of faith a strange subject for his

discipline, the theologian is likewise amazed that the Word of God can also appear as a phenomenon and that the entire “biblical Revelation (Jewish or Christian) is played out in terms of phenomenality” (Marion 2019, p. 23). Therefore, the guiding thread of phenomenality must lead the theologian on approaching Scripture and the figure of Christ who phenomenally himself by becoming man and made himself the visible exegesis of the invisible God. However, Marion is aware that theology cannot apply the rules of the philosophical description of phenomena to the biblical texts too rigidly because the phenomena of Jewish–Christian revelation might modify these rules according to the requirements of their own phenomenality. What links both enterprises is the shared *elsewhere* that grounds the phenomena of revelation (ordinary or divine), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the “perfectly univocal concept” of givenness as “the excess of intuition and the arrival of unthinkable significations” in phenomenology and as God’s gift in divine revelation in terms of God’s self-manifestation (Marion 2019, p. 25).

All this, then, foreshadows the reason why Marion includes a long “christological” unit in his recent book on revelation;<sup>8</sup> however, the purpose of the subsequent main part devoted to the elaboration of what he terms a phenomenal model of the Trinity might be less obvious.<sup>9</sup> While Christ can understandably be a shared phenomenon for both philosophical and theological enquiry (as the Son of God made man), it is much less evident that the invisible Trinity can likewise be treated in terms of phenomenality. And even if such a treatment were possible, would not it primarily belong to the expertise of a theologian to engage in such a task?

#### 4. The Theological Rationale behind a Phenomenal Model of the Trinity

##### 4.1. *The Relationship between the Immanent and the Economic Trinity*

One can find a useful clue for the understanding of the inherent (theological) presuppositions of Marion’s project in the trinitarian theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar, which also met non-comprehension and received criticism for going too far in the elaboration of details concerning inner-trinitarian life. Such criticism, however, proves to be unfounded if one understands the deeper logic of Balthasar’s approach, which in turn may favourably illuminate the main concerns driving Marion’s quest.<sup>10</sup> In fact, what Marion does in the “christological” and “trinitarian” units of his monograph on revelation is to transpose the main tenets of Balthasarian theology to a phenomenological key and this is why the result appears—at least from the perspective of a theologian—as a curious redoubling of trinitarian theology in the phenomenal mode.<sup>11</sup> What is the goal of such redoubling? What does it add to the original theological account?

First of all, Marion is convinced that “what Christian theology names the doctrine of the Trinity belongs to the phenomenal field of the disclosure of Christ as the paradox of the par excellence saturated phenomenon, Revelation”.<sup>12</sup> How is one to understand this claim? An answer may come from Balthasarian trinitarian theology that emphasises the essential interconnection between the scriptural account of Jesus’s relationship with his heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit and the intra-trinitarian relations with God. On this idea, what is revealed by the gospels and other New Testament documents concerning the central message conveyed by Christ’s life and teaching (namely, the nature of divine love) points to a hidden background, a “superstructure”, an “inner presupposition”, which alone founds its intelligibility. While Balthasar is cautious not to collapse the difference between the economic and the immanent Trinity (over against what he takes as Karl Rahner’s identification of the two), he nonetheless posits a two-way relationship between inner-trinitarian life and economic dispensation by viewing them as cross-interpreting one another, and, at the same time, maintaining the primacy and the foundational nature of the immanent trinitarian vantage point.

According to him, what is displayed in the economy of salvation (and redemption in particular) is a translation, an expression for us within creation and in humanly intelligible terms of what is eternally the case within the immanent relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In this manner, the hermeneutic key to the essential meaning of

economic dispensation lies in the understanding of the depth dimension of the immanent trinitarian communion of love, and, conversely, the mystery of intra-trinitarian divine life can be approached by way of a work of hermeneutic detection and by means of an attentive following of the thread offered by scriptural revelation back towards its origin. All this is underpinned, in Balthasar's thought, by the traditional principle of analogy that keeps room for the difference between God and God's creation, stressing—in addition to the essential similarity of the creation to the Creator—their greater dissimilarity. In other words, Balthasar holds that inference from worldly things to divine things cannot be made univocally, without taking into account their ever-greater difference.

This self-same principle of a reciprocal relationship between the immanent and the economic Trinity can be detected as governing Marion's phenomenal account, however, in a more radicalised form when he insists that the "[i]mmanent and the economic Trinity remain isomorphic since love is given as it is performed, precisely because it is performed in itself as gift".<sup>13</sup> In other words, the communion of love within the immanent Trinity works according to the logic of manifestation within the economic dispensation, their common element being the act of giving. The way the trinitarian persons realise their communion of mutual gifting corresponds to the way the phenomenon of their revealing gesture gives itself to us within the economy of salvation. Marion's translation of the Balthasarian principle into the phenomenal mode and applied to the theme of revelation enriches the original insight concerning the correspondence between the content of divine revelation (God's self-manifestation as love) and its mode (as the way of love). Explained in terms of the phenomenological rule that he takes as the axiom of his investigations (all that shows itself gives itself), the following trinitarian principle can be articulated: "because what gives itself to us is given first between the Father and the Son, what from it shows itself *ad extra* for us arises from the *ad intra* phenomenality of the Trinity with itself."<sup>14</sup> All this establishes what we could term certain asymmetrical reciprocity between the "phenomenality" of trinitarian inner communion and our economic perception of it. As Marion explains, while the economic trinitarian phenomenon (in Jesus Christ) truly demonstrates to us its origin and depth dimension in inner trinitarian communion, such demonstration is not the result of a transcription of the immanent Trinity into our logic, but, on the contrary, it transforms our logic and subsumes it into the same space that governs phenomenality within the Trinity.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4.2. Distance, Kenosis and Elsewhere

And here—with the idea of "space"—we come upon the pivotal notion that regulates Marion's entire account of revelation, the concept of *ailleurs*, that is, "elsewhere". Whereas it is clearly illuminating for an understanding of worldly revelatory experience (the essence of which is precisely its "foreign" character that changes the usual course of events and brings about a new situation by distancing one from everyday experience and arriving from outside, as it were), its role in a phenomenal account of the Trinity is less obvious. What meaning does it have and why does Marion make it an overarching interpretative tool of his innovative vision of (divine) revelation?

At this point, again, Balthasarian trinitarian theology might prove to be instructive for the understanding of the theological rationale behind Marion's considerations. I suggest that the Balthasarian counterpart to Marion's notion of "elsewhere" can be found in "distance" (*Abstand*), a term that Balthasar introduces with the aim to account for the real distinctness and the true freedom of the love of the divine persons on the one hand, and, on the other hand, in order to establish the basis for economic distance (the created world, an "other" to God) where the incarnate Son's redemptive action takes place culminating in the greatest "distance" from the Father in the abandonment on the Cross.

The Balthasarian notion of distance has a complex web of significations, hence it is not simply a synonym for "difference". The German word *Abstand* means "to stand apart from" implying a spatial relationship and this meaning forms the basis of its theological use by Balthasar. Despite the fact that in the early years of his career, he rejects the idea of



intra-trinitarian distance, later he makes it one of the cornerstones of his trinitarian theology (McInerny 2020, pp. 36–40).<sup>16</sup>

So why is this concept prone to misunderstanding necessary for a wholesome trinitarian account? Balthasar sees it as an essential conceptual tool for a truly intersubjective trinitarian model required by the central scriptural insight that God is love (1 John 4:9). He recognises that genuine love presupposes real otherness, distinct personhood and reciprocity arising from spontaneously unbound freedom and this can only be conceived with the help of the idea that the divine Father and the Son—albeit having the self-same essence—stand apart from one another, in other words, that their personhood consists of freedom implying genuine difference. Distance is not to be thought of as an entity situated between the Father and the Son, it does not characterise the persons *as persons* in their distinctness, rather, as an all-embracing concept it refers to the quality of personal trinitarian difference. Paradoxically, distance does not hinder nearness but exists precisely to enable nearness (in a technical term “circumincession”, the reciprocal indwelling of the persons); it allows for real communion in love, in Balthasar’s words “[l]ove is found only in distance, unity only in difference” (Balthasar 1979, p. 217).<sup>17</sup>

Such paradoxical distance originates in what Balthasar terms intra-divine kenosis (derived on the basis of the Pauline idea in Philippians 2:6–8 concerning the manner of the Son’s Incarnation), the primal self-emptying of the Father and the reciprocal self-surrender of the Son. This curious and much-debated idea of Balthasar’s has but one important purpose, namely, it describes the way the divine essence (as love) is not a fourth entity behind or beyond the persons but consists of the movements which constitute the persons. On this account, the Father “makes room” for the Son, in other words, makes possible the kind of difference that love requires, creates the “distance” necessary for genuine love by eternally giving away his divine essence to the Son, without, however, losing it within the Godhead. All this, however, must be conceived without temporality and without imagining the Father as a subject independent of the gesture of self-giving, as Balthasar explains, “[t]he Father must not be thought to exist ‘prior’ to this self-surrender (in an Arian sense); he *is* this movement of self-giving that holds nothing back” (Balthasar 1994, pp. 323–24).<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the Son’s self-emptying in the grateful acceptance of his divine being from the Father is not subsequent to the Father’s self-giving gesture, but the eternal (and yet generated) free reciprocal love of a Thou.

Remarkably and very importantly, the divine logic of love described in this manner allows for only one single distance and likewise one single kenosis within the Trinity: the mutual distance and the reciprocal single kenosis between the Father and the Son. Balthasar consciously avoids speaking about two distances or kenoses with regard to intra-trinitarian life and so the Spirit for him is not to be characterised as repeating the same self-emptying gesture. What is, then, the role of the third divine person?

The reason for keeping to the idea of one single distance/kenosis is to safeguard the real distinctness of the three persons. Were one to posit distance or kenosis in the case of the Spirit too, then one would have to face the infelicitous consequence that kenosis or distance is turned into a generic category, a common feature of the three persons. However, the trinitarian persons are not repetitions of the same divine essence, but they truly differ in their modes of being divine and here Balthasar’s conception of the role of the Holy Spirit likewise may offer interesting insights for interpreting Marion’s idea of *elsewhere*.

Balthasar holds that the Spirit is at once the “subjective” love of the Father and the Son and the “objective” excess of personified divine love, the third person of the Trinity. As subjective, the Spirit maintains the infinite difference between the two other divine persons, and, at the same time bridges it by bringing together a correspondence between their mutual love for one another. The Holy Spirit realises unity-in-distinction and is the “identity of the gift-as-given and the gift-as-received in thanksgiving” (Balthasar 1994, p. 326).<sup>19</sup> According to such a subjective aspect, the Spirit has no distinct place of his own but seems to melt into the mutual love between the Father and the Son. This is why in the economy of salvation the Spirit plays a similar background role by witnessing only to the

Father and the Son and never directly to himself. To put simply, the Spirit guarantees both that God is Love and One.

As “objective” love, however, the Holy Spirit displays more conspicuous personhood by being the un hoped-for fruit, gift, proof and witness of the love between the Father and the Son. As the personified excess of ever-greater divine love, the Spirit testifies to the infinite newness and fruitfulness of divine life.

One may argue that, quite noticeably, Marion’s *elsewhere* is in close continuity with the Balthasarian notion of trinitarian distance conditioned by divine kenosis. In fact, *elsewhere* can be viewed as combining the ideas of an empowering/enabling giving (kenosis), on the one hand, and the beneficial standing apart from the other in genuine and fruitful difference (distance), on the other hand. Through such a combination, the idea of distance is enriched with the dimensions of direction, dynamism, event character, newness and the unexpected. While distance might imply neutral and homogeneous “spatial” continuity, *elsewhere* emphasises an element of heterogeneity, a certain discontinuity (despite continuity), otherness, transcendence (in the case of worldly experience) and the possibility of the sudden arrival of unforeseeable novelty. Distance understood in terms of *elsewhere* is also qualified by the idea of empowering givenness, it is distance that has a source, a meaning and a goal. Such giving gives not only the content but also the mode of its reception and the possibility of free response. These considerations set the stage for Marion’s phenomenological translation of the Balthasarian insights.

### 5. A Trinitarian Triad in the Phenomenal Key

From what has been said so far, the multiple reasons for the necessity of a phenomenological scrutiny of the Trinity must be clear. According to the logic of Marion’s thought, the Trinity is not simply a supreme phenomenon and the most challenging object of enquiry, but, more importantly, represents the source, the content and the mode of phenomenality at work in the case of all phenomena. Hence, worldly phenomenality can only be properly understood if one takes the pain and courage to engage in a serious attempt to contemplate what is not directly visible, and yet enables all visibility.<sup>20</sup> So what does he find on approaching the Trinity from the *elsewhere* of his new vantage point?

Significantly, the prelude to his trinitarian considerations is a Christological reflection based on a meticulous phenomenological exegesis of Scripture texts which, on his reading, present the reader with the phenomenon of phenomena: Jesus Christ as the Son of God.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, he is convinced that Scripture does not only draw us to the figure of Christ, but it also brings to light the general rules that regulate the perception of Christ’s phenomenality as God’s pre-eminent revelation and that an attentive reading of the gospels (and other New Testament texts) is instructive regarding both the content and the mode of trinitarian self-manifestation perceptible through the Christ-event.

What such a phenomenal approach to Christology yields is a trinitarian triad that may be detected via the economy of manifestation (and which Marion constructs with the help of Basil of Caesarea’s and Augustine of Hippo’s considerations): the Father as the “discerned invisible” (*invisible visé*); the Son as the “visible transparent to the invisible” (*le visible transparent à l’invisible*) and aimed for being the icon of the invisible Father; and the Holy Spirit as the “positioning invisible” (*l’invisible visant*) (Marion 2020, p. 500).<sup>22</sup> His extensive analyses are to the effect that the Incarnate Son as the “icon/image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15) phenomenalises the Father in an iconic way, namely, by being visible with double effect: he shows himself and in this sight, one may also discern the invisible Father with the eye of faith. Marion stresses the fact that the icon does not represent a doubling of visibility (there are not two sights, one visible and another one being the opposite of the visible, as it were, sealed off from visibility), but one single sight with a double effect: in Christ one may see the Son and also the Son’s invisible origin, the giving Father. The icon in this sense represents relationality and not homogeneous similarity between what is visible and what cannot be seen, rather, the Father *is* seen as invisible through Christ whom the Father gives for us to see. The Father is the origin of the gift, the

source of the *elsewhere* as the site of manifestation and giving. The Father's first gift is the *elsewhere* (of the Son and of the world): the elsewhere is prepared by the Father and gives access to Him. Interestingly, in Marion's reflection, the Father's role is given relatively less attention than the Son's or the Spirit's.

In the phenomenal model of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit takes pride of place. Marion makes clear that his attempt to construct a new trinitarian model hinges on a renewed understanding of the Spirit's role and status (at least what regards early traditional debates concerning the Spirit's divinity and distinct personhood). So, what is the role of the Spirit in the trinitarian play of manifestation? This question arises, all the more so because, as Marion emphasises, there is here only one single visibility or spectacle (Jesus Christ, and inscribed in him the invisible Father), and in no way two visibilities. Spelled out in phenomenal terms, the Spirit regulates in an invisible manner "the putting into icon" of the Son (a phrase Marion borrows from Basil of Caesarea), in other words, it is the Spirit who operates the trinitarian method that makes of a sight an icon by enabling the one looking at Christ to recognise through his humanity his divinity (to see him as the Son of God) and to discern in the face of a man the manifestation of the invisible Father. It is thanks to the third person of the Trinity that Christ receives the status of icon. In this manner, by positioning someone at the right viewpoint, the Spirit empowers him and trains the gaze to see in a novel way by anamorphosis—an optical term Marion likes to use as an analogy for the change in vision required by faith. The Spirit gives the gift of faith, a new perspective, a novel way of viewing that cannot be attained by inner-worldly means but is a gift arriving from the *elsewhere* of the Trinity.

To illustrate the Spirit's indispensable role in making it possible to see the one single shared visibility of the Father and the Son, Marion makes recourse to another optical term taken from the field of photography. In this analogy, the Spirit plays the role of a revealing agent/developer (*révélateur*) that brings visibility to an otherwise invisible image, namely, Jesus as the Son of God and the imprint of the Father. In a Balthasarian vein (who spoke of trinitarian communion of life in terms of "dramatic action"), Marion characterises the role of the Spirit as also being one of a stage director, who puts a play on stage without actually appearing on stage. And, yet on another optical analogy, the Spirit is the light, the illumination that enables seeing while being inseparably united with the sight.

As we remember, Marion holds that economic manifestation corresponds to intra-trinitarian giving even to the point of their "isomorphic" character, their ultimate identity. Consequently, granted that the phenomenological principle "everything which shows itself, gives itself" holds good, the Triune God whom we have known as showing Godself in a pre-eminent manner in trinitarian revelation, also displays the inner communion of supreme gift, since giving and showing are like two sides of the same coin, they are interrelated dimensions of the divine Trinity.

To describe intra-trinitarian giving, Marion does not construct another triad of his own, but (in an implicit manner) endorses the Balthasarian account which, he adapts to his own distinctive idea of a gift conceived in phenomenal terms and linked to the formerly elaborated triad of manifestation. To achieve this, he finds reliable allies in Augustine of Hippo and Richard of Saint-Victor whose trinitarian reflections concerning divine communion as love and the Holy Spirit as a gift provide him with support for the idea that the Spirit is the pivot of the logic of giving as well as the logic of manifestation, in other words, the selfsame logic of gift illuminates the relationship between visibility and invisibility both within the economic and the immanent dimensions of the Trinity.<sup>23</sup> The Spirit's outer invisibility is a direct outcome of the role he plays within immanent communion. The Spirit does not appear within intra-trinitarian giving because in him the realisation of the gift coincides exactly with the process of giving; the gift given is identical with the invisible manifestation of the principle of giving, which consists of the harmonisation and the communion of the two givers (the Father and the Son). The Spirit ensures "givability" and gives the capability to give within the communion of love that unfolds according to the logic of the gift.

In his phenomenal approach to the Trinity, Marion subscribes to a radicalised version of the Balthasarian idea of “trinitarian inversion” that concerns the order of operations of the trinitarian persons. While Balthasar holds that within the immanent Trinity, the order of processions is Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from both, within the economy, however, the Father sends the Spirit to bring about the Incarnation and to lead Christ, and so the Spirit seems to “precede” the Son.<sup>24</sup> Marion makes the inversion even more radical by arguing that in the phenomenal order of trinitarian manifestation, the Spirit is first as the one who opens the way (by enabling the anamorphosis of faith) towards the Father, through the Son.<sup>25</sup> And he even goes one step further in claiming, as we have seen, that the economic and the immanent Trinity share the same *elsewhere* and are ultimately identical. Consequently, the phenomenal order of operations springs from the communion of the immanent Trinity. In other words, what shows itself for us in our *elsewhere* is what is the case within the intra-trinitarian *elsewhere*.<sup>26</sup>

## 6. Taking Stock: Closing Remarks from a Theological Viewpoint

So where does this leave one? Our account of Marion’s phenomenal approach to trinitarian revelation remains necessarily very limited since it cannot do justice to the enormous complexity of his thought and the great variety of issues addressed in such a voluminous enquiry. In order to be able to concentrate on just one particular aspect of his treatment, we had to excerpt a crucial but fragmentary detail (just like peeling an onion) from a web of interrelated themes, such as, Marion’s larger programme of establishing phenomenology as an alternative method over against the metaphysical–ontological approach; the concomitant concern to construe a solid epistemological basis for knowledge through faith (truth as disclosure—*découvrement*, *apokalupsis*—over against the traditional understanding of truth as detection—*décèlement*, *aletheia*); the connected issue of knowledge through rational enquiry versus knowledge gained by loving; the question of the relationship between philosophy and theology; the project to establish an anti-ontological understanding of God; the endeavour to refine the panoply of his new conceptual tools developed for phenomenological enquiry and the effort to expand the horizon of phenomenality; the concern to include a more decisive interpretative element in the understanding of the reception of phenomena (over against criticisms to the effect that the recipient has a too passive role in his former accounts); and so forth.<sup>27</sup>

Such multiplicity of aims prevents easy access to his new phenomenal model of the Trinity that presupposes an acquaintance with his entire philosophical system and his novel phenomenological concepts as its distinctive building blocks. Moreover, as we have tried to show, his trinitarian approach rests on implicit theological presuppositions, which are dependent on a certain type of theology, namely, the seminal vision elaborated by Hans Urs von Balthasar, which Marion adapts for his own phenomenological aims. Therefore, a more direct engagement with Balthasarian thought in Marion’s reflections would enhance clarity and comprehension and would also be very interesting for a current assessment of the nature and extent of Balthasarian influence. Such an open engagement would also be instructive for a real dialogue between phenomenology and theology concerning the mode of revelation.

From a theological perspective, Marion’s account is at once illuminating as well as, at certain points, problematic. It is illuminating in offering an insightful—albeit idiosyncratic—reading of the trinitarian thought of classical figures of the Christian tradition (e.g., Basil of Caesarea, Saint Augustine, Richard of Saint-Victor) and so inviting theologians to leave the beaten track of standard interpretation and turn to these authors with a fresh eye, discovering in their works potential threads that have so far been overlooked. It also gives a very original exegesis of an extensive corpus of Scripture texts along the lines of Marion’s own distinctive understanding of gift and giving that may be inspiring for theologians in their own future enquiry. And, most importantly, the metaconcept of *elsewhere* may prove to be a truly innovative conceptual tool for the re-thinking of a host of interrelated issues, such as the possibility of transcendence within immanence and the concomitant question of

the nature of religious experience; the relationship between what is “natural” and what is “supernatural”; the nature of distinctive selfhood (both trinitarian and human); the issues of true otherness and genuine newness; and last, but not least, the traditionally vexing problem of the continuity between common human experience and divine revelation.

However, the theologian might also ask for some more elucidation concerning the relationship between creation and the Creator in Marion’s account of the Trinity and the *elsewhere*. Does the principle of analogy still hold here? Is there any difference between intra-trinitarian *elsewhere* and the *elsewhere* that manifests itself to us? Can our *elsewhere* be identical (without reservation) with the one of the Holy Trinity? And some further questions arise concerning the trinitarian *taxis* of the persons. If the phenomenal model dispenses with starting from the Father, and starts from the Spirit instead, as Marion seems to suggest, can one still keep to the traditional doctrine concerning trinitarian processions that have their origin and source in the Father?<sup>28</sup> On the whole, the larger issue is the relationship between Marion’s phenomenal model of the Trinity and the traditional model (he terms “ontological”). While his aim is clearly to offer an alternative approach against what he sees as ontologising theology (spelt out in terms, such as *ousia*: essence/nature and *hypostases*: persons), the theologian would warn of a too hasty dismissal of traditional concepts and would rather see the phenomenal trinitarian model as an insightful complement to already existing models, one that ingeniously helps to understand the crucial connection between revelation and the Trinity and that may also inspire further critical reflection. The ultimate question is this: in what sense is a trinitarian communion of gift primarily a communion of love?

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> On Balthasar’s conception of revelation see, for example, (Chapp 2004, pp. 11–23; 1997). On Balthasar’s aesthetical method and the relationship between worldly beauty and revelation see (Puskás 2012, pp. 25–52).
- <sup>2</sup> Balthasar writes: “The form as it appears to us is beautiful only because the delight that it arouses in us is founded upon the fact that, in it, the truth and goodness of the depths of reality itself are manifested and bestowed, and this manifestation and bestowal reveal themselves to us as being something infinitely and inexhaustibly valuable and fascinating.” (Balthasar 1982, p. 118).
- <sup>3</sup> In his work *Love Alone is Credible* Balthasar takes issue especially with this second fallacy, the two trends of which he terms, respectively, the “cosmological reduction” and the “anthropological reduction”. See (Balthasar 2004, pp. 15–50).
- <sup>4</sup> (Marion 2012, pp. 13–31). Tellingly, Marion refers to this article also in his book on revelation emphasising the necessity to carry out more extensive theological research in the future on the phenomenality of revelation. See (Marion 2020, p. 60, n. 2). For an account of the convergence between phenomenology and theology in Marion’s earlier thought (in 2008 and before) see (Dahl 2023, esp. pp. 1–12).
- <sup>5</sup> Marion suggests that his novel phenomenological approach can serve as a useful aid in the exegetical work of biblical Christology where the identification of various types of phenomena (ordinary/common law phenomena, various types of saturated phenomena, such as the idol, the event, the flesh, the icon, as well as the degrees and combinations of these) may contribute to the necessary groundwork before the comparison of Scripture texts according to their authenticity (e.g., *logia* etc.). Marion, “Qu’attend la phénoménologie de la théologie?”, 28–29.
- <sup>6</sup> As Brian W. Becker, the translator of Marion’s essay notes, the French title “Penser d’ailleurs” can be rendered in two ways: “to think of elsewhere” (as in thinking about another place) or “to think from elsewhere” (as in to think starting from another place). See (Marion 2019, p. 5, n. 1).
- <sup>7</sup> While *elsewhere* is made an overarching concept in Marion’s recent book (*D’Ailleurs*), it already appears as a distinct notion in his earlier treatment of revelation (his Gifford lectures published as *Givenness and Revelation*). See, for example, the claim that “Revelation comes to me from elsewhere”. (Original emphasis) (Marion 2016, p. 41).



- 8 See Part IV titled “Le Christ comme phénomène” (Christ as a Phenomenon) in (Marion 2020, pp. 269–402).
- 9 See Part V “L’icône de l’invisible” (The Icon of the Invisible) in (Marion 2020, pp. 403–519).
- 10 For an illuminating, comprehensive and balanced treatment of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s trinitarian theology see (McInerny 2020). In what follows, I shall rely on McInerny’s account concerning the basic principles of Balthasarian trinitarian theology. See (McInerny 2020, esp. pp. 15–44).
- 11 As the authors of the introduction to *Givenness and Revelation* note, although reflection on the Trinity is relatively rare in Marion’s previous works, yet the thrust of his entire phenomenological thinking points towards this direction. And we may add that *Givenness and Revelation* rehearse in a nutshell almost the entire panoply of christological and trinitarian themes (in addition to the other major tenets) which will be further specified in *D’Ailleurs, la révélation* (Fotiade and Jasper 2016, p. xvi).
- 12 “ce que la théologie chrétienne nomme le dogme de la Trinité appartient au champ phénoménal de la dé-couverte du Christ, comme le paradoxe de phénomène saturé par excellence, la Révélation” (Marion 2020, pp. 405–6). (This quote and all subsequent quotes from this book will be my translation.) This idea also figures as a central statement in *Givenness and Revelation*, 89.
- 13 “La Trinité immanente et la Trinité économique restent isomorphes, parce que la charité se donne comme elle s’accomplit, précisément parce qu’elle s’accomplit en elle-même comme don” (Marion 2020, p. 470). This idea is foreshadowed at the end of *The Erotic Phenomenon* where Marion suggests that “God practices the logic of the erotic reduction as we do, with us, according to the same rite and following the same rhythm as us, to the point where we can even ask ourselves if we do not learn it from him, and no one else. [...] Except for an infinite difference. When God loves [...], he simply loves infinitely better than do we” (Marion 2007, p. 222).
- 14 “comme ce qui se donne à nous se donne d’abord entre le Père et le Fils, ce qui s’en montre *ad extra* pour nous relève de la phénoménalité *ad intra* de la Trinité avec elle-même” (Marion 2020, p. 396).
- 15 (Marion 2020, p. 523–24). Among several remarks throughout Marion’s book, a succinct statement of this principle can be found in this section.
- 16 See McInerny’s genealogy of this concept in Balthasar’s works. As McInerny notes, in Balthasar’s study on Gregory of Nyssa one finds the idea that *diastasis* (distance) must be excluded from the distinction between the divine persons and God’s nature.
- 17 Quoted in (McInerny 2020, p. 39, n. 145).
- 18 Quoted in (McInerny 2020, p. 22). (Original emphasis).
- 19 Quoted in (McInerny 2020, p. 28, n. 82).
- 20 Tellingly, an engagement with trinitarian phenomenality yields for Marion new insights concerning the nature of the gift which modify his earlier account. See his thoughts on the trinitarian ‘redundancy’ of the gift and the contrast between worldly gift and divine/heavenly gift (Marion 2020, pp. 495–519, 524–28).
- 21 See part IV “Le Christ comme phénomène”, in (Marion 2020, pp. 269–402).
- 22 Our overview of the role of the trinitarian triad is based on parts V and VI of Marion’s book, esp. 476–547.
- 23 Marion constructs his account of intra-trinitarian giving (in Augustine’s term *ratio donationis*) on a close reading of passages in Augustine’s *De Trinitate* and he takes Richard of Saint-Victor’s maxim as a guiding thread: “. . . *in Patre, plenitudo amoris gratuiti, in Spiritu sancto plenitudo amoris debiti, in Filio plenitudo amoris debiti simul et gratuiti*”—“. . . the fullness of the gracious love is in the Father, the fullness of the indebted love is in the Holy Spirit, and the fullness of both the gracious and the indebted love is in the Son”, Richard of Saint-Victor, *De Trinitate*, VI, 14, in (Saint-Victor 2021, pp. 270–71), however, in a modified meaning (the role Richard assigns to the Son, Marion assigns to the Holy Spirit and so, for him, the Spirit becomes “the fullness of both the gracious and the indebted love”). We note that a major source of Balthasarian trinitarian theology is likewise Richard of Saint-Victor’s intersubjective model.
- 24 However, such inversion, in Balthasar’s account is only apparent and does not change the Spirit’s middle position as being both the fruit and the love bond of the relationship between Father and Son (McInerny 2020, pp. 114–19).
- 25 Marion makes use here of Basil of Caesarea’s statement in a modified translation: “Le chemin de la connaissance de Dieu s’ouvre «à partir (*apo*) de l’Esprit un, à travers (*dia*) le Fils un, en direction (*epi*) du Père un [...] sans briser le pieux dogme de la monarchie»”. (The path to the knowledge of God opens from the one Spirit, through the one Son towards the one Father [...] without violating the pious doctrine of the monarchy.) (Marion 2020, p. 519). Marion quotes from (Basile de Césarée 1968, XVIII, 47).
- 26 “[L]a dé-couverte pour nous selon la Trinité économique ne pourrait se produire si notre *ailleurs* ne coïncidait pas avec *l’ailleurs* que l’Esprit Saint ne cesse de régler dans la Trinité immanente”. (The dis-closure for us according to the economic Trinity could not take place if our *elsewhere* did not coincide with the *elsewhere* that the Holy Spirit ceaselessly regulates within the immanent Trinity) (Marion 2020, p. 523).
- 27 On the role of the *adonné* in Marion’s earlier concept of revelation see, for example, (Carlson 2007, pp. 153–79).
- 28 Marion suggests that the traditional formula “from the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit” displays an ontic approach, while the one of “from the Spirit, through the Son, to/towards the Father” represents a phenomenal understanding of the operations (Marion 2020, p. 519).

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