

It-Reality and its Post-Metaphysical Shadow?:
A Voegelinian Dialogue with Jean-Luc Marion's "Saturated Phenomenon"

Introduction

At first glance, any serious attempt to place two such disparate philosophers as Eric Voegelin and Jean-Luc Marion into anything approaching dialogue might seem to be a strained enterprise at best. Whereas Voegelin's scholarship maintains, and indeed celebrates, its strong rootedness in the classical traditions of western metaphysics, Marion has made a name for himself as a phenomenological thinker who seeks to subjugate the erstwhile primacy of metaphysics to the fact of "givenness" as that which engages human consciousness most forcefully in the immediacy of "living time."¹ Indeed, he is perhaps best known in the United States for his early text *God Without Being*² which argues in favor of thinking divinity outside of metaphysics in the first instance. In this regard, Marion might be situated among the various postmodern thinkers who have influenced him and with whom he has also differed; the names Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas spring rather easily to mind.

It is also the case, however, that the Marion of *God Without Being* "does not remain 'postmodern' all the way through" in that text because his central goal is to think divinity primordially as "charity," a central mes-

¹ Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 255.

² Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

sage of the Christian Gospels.³ He admits willingly that *God Without Being* was "[w]ritten at the border between philosophy and theology."⁴ And although his more recent work has sought to reinforce and advance a more pointedly phenomenological agenda, a work as recent as *Being Given* still assumes the existence of "truth,"⁵ an assumption that I believe provides an incipient opportunity for dialogue with a thinker such as Voegelin. More specifically, Marion's situation of truth within what he calls "saturated phenomenality" or "paradox" will open up the possibility of dialogue with Voegelin's analyses of "It-reality" and "luminous consciousness" because such conceptualizations presuppose the fact of truth.⁶ What is more, both thinkers view human consciousness as capable of receiving truth or, in the case of Voegelin, symbolizations of it on a gradient ranging from the compact to the differentiated.

Both thinkers also consider revelation to be a privileged locus of truth; neither *necessarily* embraces an overt confessional position in relation to truth when analyzing its possible manifestations philosophically. While I am aware that this point is a contentious one in relation to both thinkers, it seems to me that each of them makes some effort to respect and uphold the boundaries between philosophy and theology. Such may not seem to be as true of Voegelin as Marion, since the former considers such boundaries

³ Marion, *God Without Being*, xxi. In this regard, Marion has been accused of harboring a covert theological agenda at the same time that he desires to be considered a phenomenologist. Cf. Robyn Horner, *Jean-Luc Marion: A Theological Introduction* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005), 6-8 for a brief overview of such critique.

⁴ Marion, *God Without Being*, xix.

⁵ Marion, *Being Given*, 216-217.

⁶ Full discussion of these terms follows below.

to be destructive of efforts to analyze the tension governing a human existence situated between earthly embodiment and attunement to transcendence.⁷ Yet although Voegelin champions what he considers to be Christianity's singular achievement, for example, a fully fledged monotheism that embraces all of humanity,⁸ he does not take up a specifically theological perspective understood in terms of denominational and confessional adherence. It is in this sense that I think Voegelin does uphold the aforementioned boundaries, at least to some extent. For his part and perhaps as a result of past criticism, Marion is careful to posit the phenomenon of revelation as "pure possibility" while leaving its "actual manifestation" to the analyses of "revealed theology."⁹ And although some of Marion's work is often associated with conservative leanings within the Roman Catholic tradition, his *phenomenological* analyses strike me as being sincere in their attempt to leave such leanings outside of implicit or explicit consideration. Whether or not he succeeds has received a mixed bag of critical responses.

My essay will therefore propose the fact of truth as a nexus between Voegelin and Marion, thus raising the following questions in relation to both thinkers' philosophical projects: what is truth?, where is it to be found?, to whom is it communicated?, and who or what does the communicating? The responses to these questions will highlight the centrality of Voegelin's "It-reality" and Marion's "saturated phenomenon" to each respective thinker's preoccupation with the fact of truth, however implicitly it may often hover

⁷ Cf. Eric Voegelin, "Quod Deus Dicitur," in *Published Essays, 1966-1985 of The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, v. 12, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 378.

⁸ Cf. Eric Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, vol. 1 of *Order and History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 515.

⁹ Marion, *Being Given*, 236.

in the background for Marion. More pointedly and at the same time more generally, my essay will probe a set of localized contours of what I consider overall to be a sometimes porous boundary between metaphysics and its post-modern alternatives--a boundary that is, nevertheless, utterly important to maintain.¹⁰ Although it is abundantly clear that Marion pursues a post-metaphysical agenda, I will argue, finally, that Voegelin's analyses of "It-reality," with the attendant "luminous consciousness" that recognizes it, is perhaps not as inimical to postmodern consideration as might generally be expected.

Voegelin on Truth, It-reality, and Luminous Consciousness

Surely it isn't overstating the case to characterize Voegelin's scholarly preoccupation with "the millennial history of the philosophers' quest for truth"¹¹ as the linchpin of his entire search for order in history. As such, truth exists in different registers: as an object intended in the exercise of human conceptualizing consciousness and as "an event of participatory illumination in the reality that comprehends the partners to the event," issuing forth in imaginatively luminous "mythic and revelatory symbols."¹² Truth understood in the former sense belongs to the faculty of intentional consciousness as exhibited, for example, in the natural and human sciences although not exhausted by them. Such truth is often sought in the desire to

¹⁰ Cf. Gianni Vattimo's insistence upon "weak ontology" as a philosophical aid to the maintenance of liberal democracy in *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law*, ed. Santiago Zabala, trans. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 16-20.

¹¹ Eric Voegelin, *In Search of Order of The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, v. 18, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 28.

¹² Voegelin, *In Search of Order*, 30, 32.

understand, order, and thus exert mastery over the conditions that govern many aspects of human existence. Voegelin calls the reality to which such truth corresponds "Thing-reality,"¹³ fully intending the objectifying connotations that such denomination inspires. Certainly, however, conceptual truth is of vital importance and I have no sense that Voegelin would call *overtly* for its relegation to some inferior position. It seems to me, however, that such truth in fact does occupy a subordinate position in his thought because Voegelin's interests are largely concentrated on the kind of truth that is expressed through the symbols resulting from participatory events of noetic and pneumatic revelation.¹⁴

Such participatory events are preceded by the fact of human consciousness itself in its "luminous" attunement to transcendence even as it remains situated in embodied existence.¹⁵ More specifically, Voegelin views human existence as positioned in a very real tension generated by the experience of an embodied subject who is nevertheless gifted with the desire for that which exists "beyond" earthly and embodied confinement. Voegelin designates this "comprehensive" reality that encompasses "the partners in being, i.e., God and the world, man and society" as "It-reality." The truth that It-reality generates is what specifically concerns us here; It-reality is the ultimate source of this second kind of truth.

¹³ Voegelin, *In Search of Order*, 29.

¹⁴ "Noetic" revelation refers to "that which lifts a reality that is knowledge into the light of consciousness." "Pneumatic" revelation "stress[es] thematically the logos of a very intensive consciousness of transcendence." Cf. Eric Voegelin, "The Tensions in the Reality of Knowledge," in *Anamnesis*, tran. and ed. Gerhart Niemeyer (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1978), 183, 186.

¹⁵ Voegelin uses the term "metaxy" to designate the "between" status of consciousness, caught as it is in the tension between intentionality and luminosity, Thing-reality and It-reality. Cf. Voegelin, *In Search of Order*, 30.

In my own estimation, the most fascinating aspect of It-reality is that the consciousness which participates in it in a mode of receptivity and is inspired by it to generate symbols that express the truth of its order, resides in It-reality as a whole and is not merely confined to human consciousness as such, which is only one of It-reality's aspects. When contextualized within It-reality, human consciousness becomes its predicate, participating in it and receiving the insight into its order that inspires the generation of symbols expressive of such order. This is "luminous" consciousness for Voegelin, as opposed to the "intentional" consciousness that seeks to understand and master Thing-reality. Luminously inspired truth is generated as symbols by a luminous consciousness that has received its insight from its metaxically situated participation in It-reality.¹⁶

It-reality and the luminous consciousness it inspires suggest an at least incipient decentering of a subject who I believe Voegelin otherwise understands in largely metaphysical terms. We are right to ask after the identity of such a subject. Who feels the requisite degree of metaxic tension such that he or she is receptive to the plenitude of It-reality's potential symbolic offerings? Who is then able to "translate" the luminous insight gained into communicable symbols capable of inspiring others, the less attuned, the less gifted with such essential sensitivity? Voegelin identifies such individuals and notes their scarcity: "The prophets, philosophers, and saints, who can translate the order of the spirit into the practice of conduct without institutional support and pressure, are rare."¹⁷ They are the privileged ones whose open attunement to transcendence enables their recep-

¹⁶ Cf. Voegelin, *In Search of Order*, 28-30.

¹⁷ Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, 376.

tivity to an inspiration that Voegelin does not hesitate to label "divine." And although the status of such a subject might seem to rely heavily on the ontotheological presupposition of a divinely suffused reality beyond the world, such that the other members of Voegelin's "partners in being"--humans, society, the inhabited world--are relegated to the status of "a secondary text,"¹⁸ the fact of the privileged subject's especially sensitive and open attunement also suggests the significant relativization of the autonomous, self-certain subject often assumed by modern philosophical and theological anthropologies.¹⁹ Even *nous* ultimately cedes its hegemony to *pneuma* as the privileged recipient of revealed truth; *pneuma* resides in the It-reality encompassing divinity and world, humans and society and is therefore not restricted to the human element of consciousness. Stated somewhat differently, the transcendent and comprehensive It-reality becomes luminous to itself by traversing and breaking through the conceptualizing structures of intentional consciousness, so as to animate luminously conscious receptivity, issuing forth in the divinely or transcendently inspired symbol. This, for Voegelin, is the site of pneumatic revelation.

Although I will maintain that Marion's subject is even more radically decentered in a way that Voegelin's thought cannot accommodate (and wouldn't want to), it is perhaps not altogether coincidental that both thinkers re-

¹⁸ Richard Cohen, "Translator's Introduction" to Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 2.

¹⁹ I in no way mean to suggest that the notion of decentered subjectivity is unique to postmodern thought. Marion is quick to point out what he considers to be similar tendencies in the thought of Descartes' *Third Meditation*, for example, a sentiment that is also found in the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. Cf. Marion, *Being Given*, 219; Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being Or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1997), 146.

serve a privileged place for apophatic symbolization in their work, particularly *The Divine Names* of Pseudo-Dionysius.²⁰ The apophatic mystic seems to claim an especially exalted position in both philosophers' thought because of the acute degree of receptive sensitivity he or she exhibits and the concomitant ability to express insight received symbolically in ways that are so enigmatic (or, as Voegelin would insist, luminous) as to escape any conceptual hypostatization whatsoever. Once again, *The Divine Names* is a paradigmatic case in point.

The foregoing discussion has already strongly hinted at the identity of "who or what does the communicating" of truth to the philosopher, the prophet, and the saint. Understood in terms of pneumatic revelation, which is of particular interest to this essay, the agent of communication is that "God" who, together with "man, world and society form a primordial community of being."²¹ I hazard to use the name "God" here with real hesitation lest it be immediately conceptualized in terms of one's religious commitments or lack thereof. To do so would constitute a serious and perhaps fatally hypostatized misinterpretation of this luminously inspired symbol. Perhaps a more suitable, because less dogmatically available, symbol would be that of the "Beyond:"

Divine reality is experienced as present in the divine-human ordering movements of the soul and, at the same time, as something 'beyond' its concrete presence The language of the gods, thus, is fraught with the problem of symbolizing the experience of a not-experientiable divine reality. While the imaginative symbols expressing this experience are never intentionalist concepts defining the nature of a god,

²⁰ Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 134-39. 144-49; Eric Voegelin, "Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme," *Published Essays, 1966-1985*, 361.

²¹ Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, 1.

they have linguistically the appearance of language in the mode of thing-reality.²²

Voegelin's idea of "a not-experientiable divine reality" might be somewhat misleading here. It is not that divine reality is incapable of being experienced, otherwise there would be no luminous symbolizations of it whatsoever. It is rather that the divine reality that *is* experienced is the "Parousia of the Beyond,"²³ the experientially available manifestation of the divine reality that infinitely comprehends and surpasses the symbolizing capacities of luminous consciousness. It is easy to identify the strongly apophatic thrust in this distinction between the "Beyond" and its "Parousia." Voegelin's invocation of *The Divine Names* is meant to emphasize this distinction, which Pseudo-Dionysius also recognizes: "A Pseudo-Dionysius, when he wants to speak of the God-Beyond, solves the problem by combining large numbers of philosophical symbols with the prefix *hyper*."²⁴ As will become apparent, this distinction will also function importantly, if implicitly, in the thought of Jean-Luc Marion because it will be limited to a focus on the "Parousia" aspect which I will put in dialogue with his analysis of the saturated phenomenon.

Marion on Truth and Saturated Phenomenality

²² Voegelin, *In Search of Order*, 83.

²³ Voegelin, *In Search of Order*, 83.

²⁴ Voegelin, "Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme," 361. It is important to point out that Voegelin never intends to limit truth as expressed in pneumatically inspired symbols to that of the Christian revelation, although I do believe he considers such Christian symbols to be the apogee of revelatory participation in the divine ground of being or It-reality.

Marion's terse formulation of "a phenomenal definition of truth, (to show oneself starting from oneself),"²⁵ hides its rootedness in what, for phenomenology, is the *sine qua non* of all phenomenality: givenness or more specifically, givenness to consciousness.²⁶ Such an origin is not without objection. Indeed, one could suspect that givenness, as "equivalent in fact to the phenomenon itself"²⁷ reduces phenomenology to a pure immanence that would preclude any theoretical consideration of transcendence whatsoever. Truth itself would be confined to phenomenality, accompanied by suspicions that phenomenology may be exposed as a naive empiricism in disguise. Worse for the our purposes, the futility of any possibility of a phenomenological dialogue with It-reality and its reception by luminous consciousness would become glaringly obvious and the entire project would be put to naught.

But phenomenality, as well as truth in the Voegelinian sense, exists in different registers and shows itself as given in the "incident" or "event" that arises without either sufficient reason or rootedness in "ousia."²⁸ Phenomenality's givenness as event implies the "self of the phenomenon," as opposed to the self of the constituting I, such that the phenomenon literally "gives *itself*, to the point of showing itself *itself*."²⁹ The implications are clear: there is no transcendental I before whose "tribunal" phenomenality

²⁵ Marion, *In Excess*, 121.

²⁶ Cf. Marion, *In Excess*, 20.

²⁷ Marion, *In Excess*, 21.

²⁸ Cf. Marion, *Being Given*, 158-159.

²⁹ Marion, *Being Given*, 159-160. Italics in original.

would have to "justify itself."³⁰ The I is now "me,"³¹ the recipient of the phenomenon that shows itself. The nominative is annulled in favor of the dative since the I is no longer the constituting agent. The "me" receives that which shows itself first and foremost through intuition, which is now identified as the "condition of possibility" of intentional conceptualization.³²

That phenomenality exists in different registers is due to the fact that phenomena give themselves to be shown to intuition in differing degrees. There are, for example, phenomena that are "poor in intuition" such as mathematics and logic, "common-law" phenomena whose givenness to intuition is equalled and fulfilled by intentional conceptualization such as is found in the natural sciences, and "saturated" phenomena where givenness to intuition overwhelms intentional conceptualization: "intuition surpasses the intention, is deployed without concept and lets givenness come before all limitation and every horizon."³³ The latter is of central interest to the purposes of this essay because Marion considers it to function as a privileged locus of truth as phenomenologically defined above: "The saturated phenomenon in the end establishes the truth of all phenomenality because it marks, more than any other phenomenon, the givenness from which it comes."³⁴

Using the Kantian categories of the understanding, Marion describes the saturated phenomenon as "*invisable* according to quantity, unbearable according to quality, absolute according to relation, irregardable according to

³⁰ Marion, *Being Given*, 188.

³¹ Marion, *Being Given*, 233.

³² Marion, *Being Given*, 193.

³³ Marion, *Being Given*, 222, 223, 199, 226.

³⁴ Marion, *Being Given*, 227.

modality."³⁵ Stated differently, saturated phenomenality is "essentially unforeseeable," unable to be borne, without relation or analogy of experience, and unable to be looked at by an I to whose measure it could never be reduced.³⁶ This final characteristic of saturated phenomenality is deserving of closer examination because it offers a particularly interesting point of dialogue with the Voegelinian model of truth.

For Marion, the saturated phenomenon as that which cannot be looked at does not suggest the invisibility of the phenomenon, but rather the powerlessness of the constituting I:

What, then, does this eye without gaze see? It sees the superabundance of intuitive givenness; or rather, it does not see it clearly and precisely as such since its excess renders it irregardable and difficult to master. The intuition of the phenomenon is nevertheless seen, but as blurred by the too narrow aperture, the too short lens, the too cramped frame, that receives it--or rather that cannot receive it as such . . . the eye does not see an exterior spectacle so much as it sees the reified traces of its own powerlessness to constitute whatever it might be into an object.³⁷

As discussed above, the I to which the phenomenality that gives itself to be seen actually shows itself has been recast as the receiving "me." This "me" that receives the saturated phenomenon is now constituted by it as the witness: the one who abdicates all transcendentality, egoic anteriority, and capacity for "synthesis or constitution," the one whose powers of intentional conceptualization fail resoundingly.³⁸ In short, saturated phenomenality re-

³⁵ Marion, *Being Given*, 199.

³⁶ Cf. Marion, *Being Given*, 199, 202, 206, 212.

³⁷ Marion, *Being Given*, 215, 216.

³⁸ Marion, *Being Given*, 215-216.

casts the recipient as "the simple, luminous witness,"³⁹ the one to whom truth is communicated.

Marion's important text *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* is largely devoted to an in-depth analysis of the four categories of saturated phenomena that correspond to the Kantian categories of the understanding: the event, the idol, the flesh, and the icon. It is in the reception of the icon that the I reconstituted as witness receives its "full phenomenological legitimacy" because the gaze with which the icon regards the I simultaneously gives the I to itself as "me, insofar as I receive *myself* from the very givenness of the irregardable phenomenon, me insofar as I learn of myself from what the gaze of the Other says to me in silence."⁴⁰ There is a fifth category of saturated phenomenality, however, which opens yet another opportunity for dialogue with Voegelin on truth: the phenomenon of revelation, "given at once as historic event, idol, flesh, and icon . . . saturation of saturation."⁴¹ Marion's analysis of revelation will not enable us to identify any potential agent of communication, however, as Marion is determined to remain within "the one and only figure of the phenomenon that, ever since the beginning and without interruption, I have been seeking--the given."⁴² As such, Marion can only analyze revelation in the immanence of the given, from whence my earlier indication that it can be put in dialogue with Voegelin's luminous symbol of the "Beyond" only in terms of the "Beyond's Parousia" which of course Voegelin also analyzes.

³⁹ Marion, *Being Given*, 217.

⁴⁰ Marion, *Being Given*, 233. Italics in original.

⁴¹ Marion, *Being Given*, 235.

⁴² Marion, *Being Given*, 236.

Even though the identity of revelation's communicator, assuming for the moment there is one, must remain unavailable to phenomenology, further investigation of the "me" who receives it may enable us to at least probe the contours of the separation that would forever divide the two.⁴³ Because revelation as saturation of saturation triggers the uniquely unforeseeable, the unbearable, that which is without relation, and that which is irregardable, the witnessing "me" that is its recipient could be constituted plausibly as the prophet or the apophatic mystic. Both may be said to answer a "call" that establishes each of them as "the gifted," Marion's definitive "successor to the subject" as understood in traditional metaphysical terms.⁴⁴ The prophetically or mystically gifted receives the revelatory given, which he or she⁴⁵ then "transform[s] into manifestation, by according what gives itself that it show itself on its own basis."⁴⁶ It is important to realize that the gifted's finite receptivity puts a limit on the degree of manifestation that may actually be deployed. Successive attempts at phenomenalization may be required, over time, in order for the relative fullness of givenness to be made manifest.⁴⁷ In the transformation into manifestation, it will also be remembered that the gifted receives him or herself from the call's status as saturated phenomenality that precedes the reception of its givenness. In my es-

⁴³ Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, "The Final Appeal of the Subject," in *The Religious*, ed. John D. Caputo (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 142.

⁴⁴ Marion, *Being Given*, 266, 268. Cf. 369, n. 27 where Marion denies that "any caller" is even implicitly assumed in his "phenomenological model of the call."

⁴⁵ Marion asserts that "only a 'to whom' (and never a 'to which') can assume the full role of receiver--presenting what gives itself in such a way that it shows itself in the world," *Being Given*, 265.

⁴⁶ Marion, *Being Given*, 264.

⁴⁷ Marion, *Being Given*, 309.

timation, the revelatory given's manifestation to the gifted witness, as well as both given's and gifted's finitude, provide another point of dialogue with Voegelin's "Parousia of the Beyond," the luminous symbolization it inspires by participation in It-reality, and the trajectory from compact to differentiated symbolization that Voegelin tracks in his investigation into the various differentiations of order in history through symbols.

It-Reality and Its Post-Metaphysical Shadow? A Dialogue

"We do not grasp truth. Truth grasps us."⁴⁸ I hope to have already shown, at least in broad outline, that both Voegelin and Marion would readily subscribe to this assertion. It remains to take up again the finer points of each philosopher's project and put them in mutual dialogue. I hope such dialogue will demonstrate what I consider to be an at least potentially porous boundary between a clearly post-metaphysical analysis of the revelatory given with the "simple, luminous witness" or "gifted" who receives it on the one hand, and a somewhat metaphysically indebted analysis of It-reality with the luminous consciousness that recognizes and symbolizes it on the other. Obviously, the dialogical possibilities will constellate around three main issues: It-reality and saturated phenomenality; luminously inspired awareness in relation to the "gifted" or the "witness" to revelation as "saturation of saturation;" and the status of a transcendent "Beyond" versus the immanence of any phenomenological analysis of saturated givenness, including that of revelation as "pure possibility." It is notable that each of these points of dialogue presupposes the fact of truth. We find ourselves once again inquiring into truth's residence, its recipient, and its origin.

⁴⁸ spoken communication by Professor David Walsh at a Liberty Fund Seminar on Voegelin's text *Hitler and the Germans* in Indianapolis, IN, June 24, 2006.

We have already identified It-reality as encompassing "the partners in being, i.e., God and the world, man and society." The primacy of ontology as first philosophy is thus assumed to be self-evident, as is human situatedness in a metaxic tension between earthly embodiment and a divine ground of being clearly understood to be transcendent, thus setting up the transcendence-immanence dichotomy.⁴⁹ I believe that Voegelin's adherence to the distinction between the "Beyond" and its "Parousia" upholds this dichotomy at the same time that the "comprehensive" nature of It-reality may relativize it to some extent. There is perhaps a certain degree of fluidity here that softens the distinction noticeably, although I do not see the primacy of ontology being challenged in any appreciable manner.

Marion, on the other hand, asserts that phenomenality as such is not confined to being⁵⁰ and he cites as an example "the event of my death" as an instance of "pure givenness over phenomenality" because it gives itself without showing itself.⁵¹ Givenness does not require being to provide the conditions of its possibility and Marion remains firm in his post-metaphysical commitment. My sense, however, is that Marion might disagree with my own assessment of the ontotheological status of Voegelin's work because he would perhaps regard Voegelin's project as lacking a firm "concept of being," a "univocal application of this concept to God and creatures," and "the submission of both to foundation by principle and/or by cause," therefore not es-

⁴⁹ Cf. Eric Voegelin, *Plato and Aristotle*, vol. 3 of *Order and History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 277. I believe that Voegelin's allegiance to the transcendence-immanence dichotomy already answers the ontotheological requirement of a divinely suffused reality beyond the world that relegates the world itself to a secondary text because the experience of the world is not enough to establish truth.

⁵⁰ Cf. Marion, *Being Given*, 161.

⁵¹ Marion, *In Excess*, 40.

tablishing an ontotheological basis for his thought.⁵² What I consider to be potential "cracks" in Voegelin's ontotheology Marion might regard as the failure of ontotheology to assert itself in any definitive manner. Giving due weight to such a position, we may have a first indication of a potential degree of porousness between Voegelin's metaphysically-indebted project and Marion's post-metaphysical one.

In my estimation, saturated phenomenality's eschewal of the concept in favor of an intuition that is overwhelmed and a subject that is superseded by the gifted witness provides a radically decentered response to Voegelin's luminously inspired consciousness. It is difficult to overemphasize the degree to which Marion's project decenters the traditional notion of a transcendental I. I will argue that Voegelin's luminously inspired prophet, philosopher, and saint also presuppose the significant relativization of the autonomous, self-certain subject and as such constitute a second site of porousness, but not as radically as Marion's gifted witness. That such is the case rests on my sense that Marion's theoretical departure of "the self of the phenomenon," a givenness that "gives *itself*, to the point of showing *itself itself*" always already sets up an incipient decentering of even intentional consciousness that Voegelin's intentional subject does not exhibit. The disparity between each philosopher's philosophical point of departure perhaps plays the decisive role here.

In terms of any eventual relation between the saturated phenomenon and the luminously inspired symbol, I would hazard to state that for Marion, the luminous symbol would be the product of the gifted witness's encounter with the revelatory given which would achieve its subsequent, symbolized manifes-

⁵² Marion, *In Excess*, 145.

tation by giving itself to show itself on its own terms on the one hand, but within the finitude of the witness's receptivity on the other. I find this to be interestingly reminiscent of Voegelin's prophet, philosopher, and saint whose luminous attunement to the divine ground of being also issues forth in symbols that express the fullness of the truth of order, but can only do so in more or less compact or differentiated ways. It is also the case, however, that any seeming similarity would have to contend with the fact that the manifestation of Marion's revelatory given, as a luminous symbol for example, would be unable to acknowledge any eventual It-reality, much less divine inspiration, from which it had proceeded. I do not consider this to be a problem with Marion's project; it is rather the sober acknowledgment of the theoretical limits of phenomenology itself.

The foregoing discussion raises the question of the obvious transcendence of Voegelin's "Beyond" as over against the immanence of Marion's saturated givenness, including the revelatory given. As previously stated, Voegelin presupposes the fact of a transcendent, divine ground of being which he does not hesitate to call divine, although he is unwilling for it to be hypostatized and hence rigidified into dogma. Voegelin's structure of metaxic situatedness which characterizes the human condition depends upon such transcendence and Voegelin's theories of It-reality and luminous consciousness would be unthinkable without it. As noted earlier, Voegelin does make the distinction between what we might call the "beyond-Beyond" that infinitely surpasses all attempts at luminous symbolization and the "Parousia of the Beyond" that lies within the experiential tension of the philosopher's, prophet's, and saint's metaxic existence. Once again, *The Divine Names* of

Pseudo-Dionysius would constitute an example of the "Parousia's" symbolization.

The saturated phenomenon, on the other hand, proceeds from its own givenness in a gesture that remains confined to immanence. This is true for the revelatory given as well, as least within the theoretical limits under which phenomenology functions. It is for this reason that Marion describes revelation only as a "pure possibility" whose actual manifestation is left to theological analysis. This much is clear. But we are still left with the problem of such revelation's origin, assuming it has one. If Marion's gifted witness answers the "call" that the revelatory given gives, and that also constitutes the gifted as "myself,"⁵³ it is reasonable to assume the existence of a "caller," an assumption that Marion dismisses on phenomenological grounds. First of all, the facticity of the call establishes its absolute, unbridgeable anteriority to its recipient.⁵⁴ Second, the complete unforeseeability of the call surprises its recipient into "me-ness," prior to any knowledge of the call's origin.⁵⁵ Finally, the delay that separates my response to the call from its originating gesture inscribes what Marion calls "the origin of difference, or rather the origin as difference" between them.⁵⁶ In what perhaps is a response to Heidegger, Levinas, and Derrida, Marion claims that the "origin as difference" is "prior to the partition between Being and beings, also more ancient than the delay between the intuition and

⁵³ Marion, "The Final Appeal of the Subject," 139-140.

⁵⁴ Marion, "The Final Appeal of the Subject," 140-141.

⁵⁵ Marion, "The Final Appeal of the Subject," 142.

⁵⁶ Marion, "The Final Appeal of the Subject," 142.

the intention (or between the sign and presence)."⁵⁷ "Origin as difference" adds up to an inviolable infrangibility, which might be an effective way of summarily characterizing the contours of the separation between "me" as called and any eventual communicator of the call. It seems to me quite simply that the differences between Voegelin and Marion vis-a-vis the transcendence-immanence question are themselves unbridgeable. But yet "the simple, luminous witness" remains for both thinkers.

Truth also remains, and it remains that by which we are grasped. It is found in luminous symbolization and saturated phenomenality, with revelation as its privileged site. It is imparted to a luminous consciousness and a gifted witness who are situated in a position of receptivity. Both are de-centered from autonomous, self-establishing subjectivity to a greater or lesser extent. Truth is to be found in being and also outside of it; truth originates from a transcendent "Beyond" or from the immanence of its saturated givenness. But truth remains and it grasps us; on this central point both philosophers are in total agreement.

⁵⁷ Marion, "The Final Appeal of the Subject," 142.