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## Love without being. Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of love

Miłość bez bycia. Fenomenologia miłości Jean-Luca Mariona

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**Abstract:** Marion's work can be considered as an attempt to radicalize phenomenology. He achieved this basing on two categories: givenness and love. In the phenomenology of givenness, the subject occupies a secondary position relative to the phenomenon. He is not its "producer" but "the given" (*l'adonné*). Also in the phenomenology of love, Marion redefines the *ego* – the *ego cogito* is replaced by the *ego amans* which erotic reduction leads to and which is not based on the question "am I?" or even "do I love?", but on the question "whether someone (other) loves me?". Erotic reduction introduces profound transformations to understanding of time and space. *Ego amans* is not in some geographical "here" but "there", where the otherness resides, which enables me to ask "does anyone love me?" and thus assures me of my existence. Erotic time practically does not flow, but becomes a waiting for the arrival of that "elsewhere", which has the character of an event. Time and space of erotic reduction are focused in the experience of one's own body (*la chair*). Temporality in the erotic relationship is also understood as fidelity, which attempts to exceed the limits of death, becoming eschatological temporality.

**Keywords:** body, fidelity, givenness, love, Marion, other, phenomenology, space, subject, time.

**Abstrakt:** Dzieło Mariona słusznie określa się jako próbę radykalizacji fenomenologii. Dokonał on tego opierając się na dwóch kategoriach: donacji i miłości. W fenomenologii donacji podmiot zajmuje drugorzędą pozycję względem samego fenomenu. Nie jest on jego „wytwórcą”, lecz obdarowanym (*l'adonné*). Także w fenomenologii miłości Marion dokonuje redefinicji *ego* – *ego cogito* zostaje zastąpione przez *ego amans*, a prowadzi do niego redukcja erotyczna, która nie opiera się na pytaniu „czy jestem?”, ani nawet „czy kocham?”, lecz na pytaniu „czy ktoś (inny) mnie kocha?”. Redukcja erotyczna wprowadza daleko idące przekształcenia w rozumieniu czasu i przestrzeni. *Ego amans* nie znajduje się w jakimś geograficznym „tutaj”, lecz „tam”, gdzie rezyduje owa „inność”, która umożliwia mi pytanie „czy ktoś mnie kocha?” i tym samym zapewnia mnie o mojej egzystencji. Czas erotyczny praktycznie nie płynie, lecz staje się oczekiwaniem na nadejście owego „gdzie indziej”, które ma charakter wydarzenia. Czas i przestrzeń redukcji erotycznej ogniskują się w doświadczeniu ciała własnego (*la chair*). Czasowość w relacji erotycznej pojęta jest także jako wierność, która próbuje przekroczyć granice śmierci, stając się czasowością eschatologiczną.

**Słowa kluczowe:** ciało, czas, donacja, fenomenologia, inny, Marion, miłość, podmiot, przestrzeń, wierność.

Jean-Luc Marion begins his work *Le Phénomène érotique* with an essay entitled *Le silence de l'amour* (*The silence of love*) (Marion, 2003, pp. 9-24). This is not only an introduction to an interesting book, but above all a diagnosis of the whole philosophy, according to which it forgot about love and is silent about love. This is even more surprising if we consider the etymology of the word "philosophy" – love of wisdom. Philosophy should therefore

function in two areas: love and wisdom. Or, to be more precise, seek wisdom and truth through love. Meanwhile, according to Marion, philosophy from the very beginning threw itself into a vortex of wisdom, which was manifested in the construction of metaphysics, and forgot about love as its basic method. Philosophy went through the following stages: cognition of being – certain knowledge – science. Nowadays, the peak of cognition is the scientific one, but it omits many aspects of our life and is completely dehumanized. Hence Marion's postulate to return to love in philosophy. And it's not about emotions, but about a fundamental cognitive attitude – only when we learn through love do we really get to know something. “Metaphysical meditations” should therefore be supplemented with “erotic meditations”.

That said, it must be clarified immediately, because Marion's philosophy of love is not yet another moral or philosophical concept. Marion assumes that love is first than anything else. So “erotic meditations” should be conducted before “metaphysical meditations”. The philosophy of love claims to be the “first philosophy”. Marion argues here with Descartes, having Pascal as an ally. The latter distinguished three orders: bodies, minds and charity, between which there are no passages or connections. Marion's entire philosophy is developed according to Pascal's third order. It can no longer be a metaphysics, because metaphysics can only relate to the first two orders: the extended substance and the thinking one. In this way, the Marion's philosophy of love fulfills the 20th century postulate of overcoming metaphysics.

Since love cannot be considered in a metaphysical way, according to which we can only love what exists first, we should do the phenomenology of love, i.e. take it as it is given to us, starting from itself. Love within metaphysics is the question “do I love (something else)?”, while phenomenologically expressed love is the question “does anyone / something love me?”. In Marion the concept of phenomenology changes. As a contemporary commentator writes, his work is a great reconstruction of phenomenology, a change of its form, a kind of new life in phenomenology, far different from what its founders claimed (Canullo, 2008, p. 69). Marion gave phenomenology a new face based on two categories – givenness<sup>1</sup> and love, which, as a consequence, also changed the concept of the subject. Givenness and love mark the area of human existence, a living space in contrast to the dehumanized world of metaphysics. The philosophy based on love also leads to a redefinition of the *ego* – the *ego cogito* is replaced by the *ego amans*, to which a new type of reduction leads – erotic reduction, which is not based on the question “am I?”, or even “do I love?”, but on the question “does anyone love me?”.

<sup>1</sup> Fr. *donation* can be rendered in English as “donation” as well as “givenness”, but we use “givenness”, a use upon which Marion has insisted. “Donation” keeps open a play between donation as an act (“Mr Smith made a donation to our Community”) and donation as a fact (“There was a donation left at the front door”). In other words, “donation” retains the possibility of a giver, and the distinction between act and fact is one Marion himself makes in *Étant donné*.

The aim of this paper is to present Marion's philosophy of love as the first philosophy. We will first discuss the category of givenness, which plays a key role in Marion's phenomenology. Next, we look at erotic reduction and its results, such as erotic time and space, and the body in an erotic relationship. Marion's phenomenology of love leads to the vision of eternal love. Undertaking the erotic phenomenon reverses the course of philosophy, which becomes paradoxical and also causes changes in phenomenology.

### 1. Givenness and love

In Marion love is closely related to givenness, enabling the latter to constitute a new type of phenomenology. In the phenomenology of givenness, everything is reduced not to objects or to being, but to what is given (*donné*), or rather to giving itself (Marion, 2012, p. 131; Marion, 2012a, p. 15). It is only in such a reduction that we can understand the sense of gift – the gift of ourselves, words, time, life, the gift of everything that is not objectifiable, especially love. The phenomenology of givenness introduces far-reaching modifications to the phenomenological method, becoming a “counter-method” (Marion, 1997, p. 11), because it impose a “counter-experience”, i.e. the experience that the subject surpasses, exceeds, saturates, the experience which gives itself against all attempts and before it is given any meaning, the experience which overcomes with its generosity and abundance (Marion, 1997, pp. 353-355). It is not I who constitutes objects in consciousness, but phenomena are given to it and even surprise it.

While Husserl's phenomenology was a descriptive theory of the pure experiences, and in Heidegger it was developed as a fundamental ontology in which being manifested itself in the external world, Marion takes a different path to radicalizing phenomenology and expanding the field of phenomenality. It omits the three famous Husserl's principles – “as much appearing, as much being”, “return to the things themselves” and the principle of all principles: “every originary presentative intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition” and formulates the fourth one: “as much reduction, as much givenness” (Marion, 1989, p. 303; Marion, 1997, p. 23-29; Marion, 2016, p. 29-34). In this way, the reduction gives the phenomenon by eliminating everything that can be captured as an object and reveals the primacy of givenness.

Marion also criticizes earlier phenomenological reductions – the subject reduction in Husserl (Marion, 1997, pp. 46-55; Marion, 1989, p. 22) and the existential one in Heidegger (Marion, 1997, p. 56-67; Marion, 1989, p. 73), and he proposes a more radical one – reduction to givenness. To reveal the givenness, he uses a triple *epoché*: parenthesis of the donor, the recipient and the gift (Marion, 1997, p. 140; Starzyński, 2007, p. 244). In this way, the givenness appears beyond the horizon of any object or being – there is no metaphysical dimension in it. So givenness is something paradoxical: since the gift has no “what” and is

reduced to pure giving, I give the most without giving anything, because then I give everything – I give myself. As Marion writes: “By giving these non-objective and non-objectifiable gifts, such as they escape comprehension and possession, do not provide any assignable gain or income and really provide *nothing*, I in fact give myself in my most perfect ipseity; with this *nothing* I give all that I have, because I do not give a thing that I do not have apart from me, but the very that I am. Hence this other paradox that I give all the more since I give nothing – no given gift limited in a substrate or a real predicate”<sup>2</sup> (Marion, 2010, pp. 159-160). Along with the reduction to givenness, the principles of metaphysics are abolished, because the gift is given without a reason, without a motive and with no “why”, so it forgoes the principle of sufficient reason and the principle of identity, exceeding all conditions and possibilities.

An inseparable part of Marion's phenomenology is the development of a new concept of the phenomenon, and especially the distinction of saturated phenomena (Marion, 1992, pp. 79-128; Marion, 1997, p. 329), which is the result of distinguishing phenomena according to the degree of givenness. Saturated phenomena are not of an objective nature but of events. They are not constituted by the subject, but they give themselves to it. Marion indicates four main forms of saturated phenomena: event, idol, body and icon, but this is not a closed catalog – saturated phenomenon may be the other, love, time, space, and especially revelation as saturation of the saturation (Marion, 1997, p. 383).

The phenomenology of givenness and the introduction of saturated phenomena lead to a modification of the subject's concept. While in classical phenomenology the subject was understood as the transcendental ego, i.e. the source and condition of objects and all phenomenality, saturated phenomena showed us that not everything that is given is constituted by the subject. Rather, the phenomena constitute him as “the given” (*l'adonné*) (Marion, 1997, p. 405). The subject is someone who receives phenomena, and with them he receives himself. In this way, “the given” hears the call, an appeal flowing from the phenomenon to which he responds by answering himself first. We have here a serious turn in the philosophy of the subject. As far as now, he was understood in a Cartesian way, as a source of itself, author and foundation of his representations and acts. However in Marion a human does not have himself, he is not his own source, because he is given to himself by the grace that surpasses him. Subjectivity is all permeated by a gift that is continuous. There is nothing un-given in it. As a subject, I am also given to myself as “the given” (*l'adonné*).

## 2. The erotic reduction

The subject in Marion holds a secondary position in relation to the phenomenon – it is not its “producer”, but the recipient, who can receive the phenomenon, the witness, who

<sup>2</sup> All translations in this paper by Piotr Karpiński, unless otherwise noted.

follow it and think it. The subject as “the given” (*l'adonné*) is gifted because, along with what he receives in the phenomenon, he also receives himself. This subject's call is also the basis of the erotic phenomenon. Marion redefines the *ego* – the *ego cogito* is replaced by the *ego amans* (Marion, 2003, p. 52). A new type of reduction leads to the latter, which is erotic reduction and is not based on the question “Am I?”, or even “do I love?”, but on the question “does anyone (other) love me?” (*m'aime-t-on?*) (Marion, 2003, p. 39). This project Marion undertook in the work *Le Phénomène érotique* from 2003, the outline of which appeared as early as 1986 in *Prolégomènes à la charité* (Marion, 1986). Thus, not only did the turn in phenomenology take place, but more broadly in the whole philosophy, because Marion reversed the order of Cartesian reasoning, what he admitted in the preface to *Le Phénomène érotique*. In his opinion, Descartes' meditations should be resumed, starting not from the fact of thinking (doubts) and certainty of existence, but from the fact that before I already exist I love, or to be more precise, I exist as long as I love. In short, Descartes' metaphysical meditations should be replaced by the erotic meditations (Marion, 2003, p. 20).

Why can't the subject matter be kept in the horizon of being, and therefore in a metaphysical perspective? Marion in *Le Phénomène érotique* gives at least two reasons. First of all, the certainty of objects (*certitude*) has nothing to do with a human being. It consists in the fact that the subject is a source of the objects' certainty. But if we wanted to apply such understanding to a human being, it would turn out that either “I” is an object, not *ego*, or “I” is not an object which is certain, and then it gets its certainty otherwise or it doubts about itself (Marion, 2003, p. 28). In short, objects' certainty must be exceeded because it leads to a contradiction. Secondly, metaphysics is limited – it limits the search for wisdom to the search for truth and the search for truth to the search for certainty (Marion, 2003, p. 34). It deals with secondary, objects' certainty, and this one can be annulled by one question: “what for?” (*A quoi bon?*) (Marion, 2003, p. 35). This is a Nietzsche question that applies in the time of nihilism, where “everything exists in vain” (Fr. *vanité*; Ger. *Umsonst*) (Nietzsche, 2001, XII, pp. 5, 71). Everything that exists, it does in vain. Only next to love you cannot be indifferent, because this issue, especially in the form of the question “does anyone love me?”, is not indifferent to anyone. So we may say that love breaks nihilism.

Nothing exposes on the nihilist attack of “vanity” more than metaphysical proof of the existence of *ego*, or Cartesian *Cogito ergo sum*. The project of *ego amans* in Marion is therefore also a polemic with Descartes in the search for *ego* certainty. It cannot come from the fact of thinking or in any other way from the *ego*, but from some otherness that Marion describes as *elsewhere* (*l'ailleurs*) (Marion, 2003, p. 45). This author distinguishes between *certitude* and assurance (Marion, 2003, p. 44). I cannot draw my own certainty from myself, because then I subject to the “vanity” of being. I need an assurance that would come from *elsewhere* (*d'ailleurs*). This assurance comes as the answer to the question: “Does anyone love me?” (*m'aime-t-one?*). This question, in turn, has Pascal's provenance (Pascal, 1997, p. 306)

and this alone is a valuable indication – Nietzsche's nihilism is to be defeated by passing to the Pascal's third order (Pascal, 1997, p. 698).

The question “does anyone love me?” opens the erotic reduction. The subject has nothing of being, no objectivity, but is reduced to answering the question of whether is he loved. The erotic reduction allows you to see “lover” (*l'amant*) as “the given” (*l'adonné*), the body (*la chair*) as received from the other and love as always received from “elsewhere”. It is the reverse of the concept of love according to the natural attitude. It's about erotic possibility, i.e. the ability to love and be loved. In phenomenology, i.e. in the first-person perspective, it is about being loved by “anything else” that protects the *ego* from the “vanity” of being. The question to which the answer comes from “elsewhere” (*d'ailleurs*) opens the erotic reduction and at the same time closes metaphysics. The subject in Marion is no longer distinguished by its thinking, it is not *ego cogito*, but *ego amans* – it no longer asks the question “Am I?”, or “Who am I?”. For *ego amans*, the “to be or not to be” is no longer a problem. He exists because he loves and is loved. Hence the question: “does anyone else love me?”.

While in a metaphysical approach, love must be founded in being – in order to love you must be first, love in Marion is the first, before being. This is how the concept of “love without being” (*amour sans être*) emerges (Marion, 2003, p. 85). Of course, the one who loves (*amant*) must take a risk and put himself in love without being, forgoing any certainty (*certitude*) and reason (*raison*). He must have the courage to live in love. In the metaphysical approach, the judgement “I am loved” has a synthetic character, where “being loved” extends the meaning of the subject. However, in erotic reduction it is an analytical judgement, because being does not mean anything other than simply being loved.

Marion describes the otherness that brings assurance as “elsewhere” (*d'ailleurs*). This is a very broad expression. What is it? It is about otherness understood as broadly as possible. Marion writes not to hurry with the answer to this question: “It is enough, for erotic reduction to be accomplished, to understand what I wonder: not a certainty of self by itself, but an assurance coming from elsewhere. This elsewhere begins as soon as the dreamlike closure of the self on itself gives way and an irreducible instance pierces to me, from which, according to variable and still undefined modalities, I receive myself. It does not therefore matter whether this elsewhere identifies itself as the other neutral (life, nature, world), or as others in general (such a group, society), or even as such other (man or woman, the divine, even God). It is only important that it comes to me from elsewhere” (Marion, 2003, pp. 45-46). So this otherness is radical and anonymous, which emphasizes its eventuality. This “elsewhere” interrupts my “autism”, deprives me of certainty (*certitude*), but at the same time ensures (*assurance*) that it loves me and thus defines me who I am by what I am to someone else. I am not because I think, but because I am wanted.

The erotic reduction understood in this way is then radicalized in Marion by another question: “Can I love first?” (Marion, 2003, p. 123). The subject takes the initiative to love

someone he does not even know and does not know whether he loves him or someone he does not love or loves him too much, or someone who is far away or does not even exist. After all, we are talking about love without being. Even if his love is not accepted, the lover does not lose anything, but he fulfills love perfectly, because even love despised still remains love. The loving as first does not require any reciprocity. Along with reciprocity, the principle of sufficient reason falls – there is no reason to love. I love beyond any reason and principle, and even without reason, because in the order of love, reason and its reasons are shaken. Love is from a different order than reason, but it is not irrational. Marion refers to the Pascal's third order, to the order of the heart – “the heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of” (Pascal, 1997, p. 208), as well as to Hans Urs von Balthasar, who writes: “At the moment that I understood love of the other for me, that is, I explain it on the basis of the laws of his human nature or I show its validity for the reasons lying in me, then this love turns out to be completely misplaced and abused, and the path to answer it cut off. True love is always incomprehensible and as such can only be a gift” (Balthasar, 2002, p. 51). In the erotic reduction, the access of the lover to the other is an access to the saturated phenomenon, which disrupts the classic definition of the phenomenon, according to which it appears as intuition (visibility), which fulfills my intentional meanings. The other comes to me and stimulates me, starting from himself. I do not constitute him. One can speak of reverse intentionality, counter-intentionality. It is not me who directs my intentional gaze at the other and gives him meaning, but he gives me meaning and restores me to myself, ensuring and freeing me from the vanity of being.

Speaking of the other, Marion uses the concept of “epiphany of the face” of Lévinas, but at the same time adds that the other appears as an icon. Therefore, the erotic phenomenon does not take place between the *cogito ego* and the objects of the world, but between two extra-world *ego*. The other brings me back, but also gives me my body. We can conclude that love is the final condition for the possibility of subjectivity. Only love gives me ipseity, allows me to know myself. The subject is not any *subjectum*, thinking substance, consciousness, transcendental condition of cognition. It is something that ipseity refers to, a place that abandons all worldliness, universality and begins to individualize. This individualization is called love. The phenomenological horizon, in which everything is reduced to givenness and to love, to “gift-love”, makes us living and incarnate.

### 3. Erotic time

The erotic reduction introduces far-reaching transformations in the understanding of time and space. It is no longer the time and space of natural science, or even of the world of things. Space in erotic reduction is not, like in Leibniz, an order of coexistence of the things. It also loses its homogeneous character – not all places in space are of equal importance to

me. Erotic time practically does not flow, but becomes a waiting for the arrival of that “elsewhere”, which has the character of an event. When it arrives, it makes my present possible with its presence. The past is not an accumulation of memories but a closing of the possibility of waiting for the other. So experiencing time in erotic reduction takes the form of waiting. Time and space in erotic reduction are focused in the experience of one's own body (*la chair*).

Analysis of time and its nature is one of the most difficult tasks in philosophy, including phenomenology. Marion does not analyze time in a physical, metaphysical or psychological perspective, but studies the phenomenon of time. Phenomenological analysis of time necessarily stems from the analysis of love. For Saint Augustine, who struggled with the aporias of time, Marion claims that time has an impact on our way of being, and if so, the aporia of time directly concerns me. Saint Augustine presented this aporia in *Confessions*: “What then is time? If no one asks me that, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know” (Augustine, 1955, XI). Therefore, we do not have an adequate concept of time. In turn, Husserl in *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* claimed that we know what time is, but we run into contradictions when we want to justify time-consciousness, describe the relation between objective time and subjective consciousness of time, understand how time objectivity can be constituted in subjective consciousness of time (Husserl, 1989, p. 109).

When we enter the order of erotic reduction, all our concepts change their meaning. What time can we talk about in erotic reduction? In the natural and metaphysical approach, time can be defined as the order of successive events. According to Aristotle, time is the “quantitative side of motion” (Aristotle, 1985, IV, 219b). However, when we leave the metaphysics in favor of erotic reduction, time has only one point of reference – not me, but the other, some “elsewhere” (*l'ailleurs*) in its eventuality. In love, the only temporary instance is an event of “elsewhere” that comes as an event, something that cannot be predicted, produced, which comes on its own initiative and makes me wait for it. The event of otherness imposes expectation on me. While in erotic reduction I can decide whether to love or not, I cannot decide on the moment of love, because it is about an event of otherness, about the temporality of waiting.

How to determine this temporality? Doesn't waiting stop time? Expecting often we have the impression that time has stopped. As Marion writes: “Erotic time does not pass as long as I wait, for a very clear reason: while I wait, there is nothing happening yet; I am waiting precisely because nothing is happening again and again and I am just waiting for something to finally happen” (Marion, 2003, p. 61). Here we see the difference between natural time and erotic time. In a natural attitude, what goes by does not last. In erotic time, there is only waiting for which nothing happens. Of course, this does not mean that nothing happens – while you wait a lot of things happen, e.g. reading, shopping, glancing at your



watch, a walk, a conversation in which you are absent. So why nothing is happening while waiting? Because nothing is happening I'm waiting for. Nothing happens as long as that "elsewhere", the otherness calls me and transforms my "here" (*là*) into its "here" (*ici*) (Marion, 2003, p. 62). In this sense, space rules times – the inner sense is conditioned by the external sense. It is no longer possible to define time as a dimension of spirit or consciousness. Time in erotic reduction is "the extension of the event, of the elsewhere, arising from outside the spirit and occurring on it" (Marion, 2003, p. 62). The event of otherness is not so much temporary as it is temporalizing: temporality is the way events come to us giving place to experience. This experience is nothing but erotic experience.

Therefore, erotic time is defined as a saturated phenomenon in which intuition exceeds all concepts or representations. Suddenly something else happens that has nothing to do with everything that surrounds me. It happens as an unforeseen event, I cannot attribute any reason to it, because it has a reason in itself. It has the status of a given and received present. As Marion writes: "The given present accomplishes the present moment, precisely because it goes beyond presence" (Marion, 2003, p. 63). We see here, by the way, how the present fits in to the phenomenology of givenness – the gift is achieved as there is no presence, no being. It is the parenthesis of the gift itself. What counts is the eventuality of this "elsewhere", i.e. the otherness.

The present that Marion talks about only comes to the one who is waiting for the gift and not is trying to constitute the object. Time gives itself to me starting from otherness, as a given phenomenon, because "elsewhere" (*l'ailleurs*) also means the first feature of the phenomenon of givenness – to give, to appear is to realize itself regardless of our exchange. Marion writes: "The present is finally accomplished, not as an enduring permanence, but as a given present, in short as a received present, not as present subsisting in itself" (Marion, 2003, pp. 62-63). It frees us from the painful future of waiting. The present accomplishes the present moment, precisely because it exceeds presence. As coming from "elsewhere", it is not so much realized in the present as it gives me my present.

Expectation characterizes me and distinguishes me from everything else that does not expect or expect something else, especially things. Waiting marks the "erotic boundary" between me and other beings. Absence rules the arrival of the presence, but the absence is so precise that I cannot mistake it for anything else. Waiting for the book to be published, or for the birth of a child – the expectation is about absent, but very accurate "elsewhere". Waiting not only temporalize me, but also identifies me, gives me my identity. So it is not me who constitutes time in consciousness – it is time that gives me itself, makes me more temporary, constitutes me, gives me itself as the present, erotic "now", present of the other (*l'ailleurs*).

The present of the other that has just come and happened also defines the past. How to define the past in erotic reduction? It is about the event of "elsewhere", its appeal, which has been heard, but which has already passed (Marion, 2003, p. 65). While in the natural

approach the past is defined as the present but preserved, maintained past, the past in erotic reduction is the time when the waiting has passed, the time when I am not waiting for anything, for any “elsewhere”, for any gift and presence. The erotic past is the lack of lack of otherness, it is not feeling the lack of the other, the lack of lack of loved one. Again, Marion undermines metaphysics – it is not the absence of a beloved being that makes the past, but the absence of his absence (Marion, 2003, p. 66). Love does not pass when the beloved disappears, but when the need and absence of the beloved disappear – when I miss his lack. “The past buries the dead, dead of waiting no more” (Marion, 2003, p. 66). Here you can clearly see the Marion’s concept of “love without being”. In it, we do not need any being to love, we can also love someone who is absent or deceased.

The suspension of expectations, or the past, remains temporary, because after a while I open myself to a new expectation. This new expectation, in turn, evokes an erotic future – waiting for the call of the other, for his coming and event. So expectation determines the whole erotic story. In a natural approach, history is about studying past events and skipping periods when nothing happened. In erotic reduction, this expectation rules history and determines it. Thus, the erotic phenomenon has its own historicity, which is not defined by what I do or constitute, but by what comes to me from “elsewhere”, and which constitutes me in my ipseity and in my own individuality. The history of the erotic phenomenon is not the history of my achievements, but the history of my constitution through the otherness.

That is why time presents itself as an event which is given through *anamorphosis*. In *Étant donné* Marion wrote: “*Ana-morphosis* indicates here that the phenomenon takes *form* from itself. Thus we understand better that the phenomenon can come both from «elsewhere» and from itself (...). The phenomenon always comes from «elsewhere», since it appears as giving itself (...)” (Marion, 1997, p. 206). So, the phenomenon of time gives itself to us starting from itself, starting from its special point. In erotic history I am not a hero, but “the given”, I am given to myself through otherness, this “elsewhere”.

#### 4. Erotic space

The erotic reduction also introduces profound transformations in understanding of space. We have seen that erotic time is not physical or metaphysical time, becoming rather expectation. And how is space? What space is the lover in? Does erotic space have the features of world-space?

In the natural approach, the space of the world is homogeneous, i.e. there is no highlighted point in it. Space is defined as the order of coexistence of things in which things can exist together without invalidating each other. They can replace each other, change places, circulate. What is important: each “here” can become “there” and conversely. Space in the natural approach remains indifferent. However, it ceases to be this way when we enter

the logic of erotic reduction. For a lover is just where the question “does anyone love me?” places him. There is only one place for a lover: where he can ask the question “does anyone love me?” (Marion, 2003, p. 56). His “here” is defined starting from the otherness, from that “elsewhere” (*l'ailleurs*), from the other whom I would like to love me, who would make me a lover and let me get out of the “vanity” of the world and its beings.

The erotic reduction removes the homogeneity of space and introduces its heterogeneity, because “there” cannot become “here” at all, nor “here” cannot become “there”. Whether I am “here” or “there” is not indifferent to me (Marion, 2003, p. 54). The place in erotic reduction becomes permanent, fixed and irreplaceable. I do not inhabit space in a geographical sense, “here” with a specific latitude and longitude. I only live “here” (*là*), where I hear the appeal from “elsewhere”, from the other who cares about me alone and I care about him, who becomes my unchanging and unchangeable center. Even if everything around me changes, the other, “elsewhere” (*l'ailleurs*) becomes my natural and own place (Marion, 2003, p. 59). So it is about a qualitative space, a “here” (*là*), which is not related to *ego*, but to the call of the otherness.

In *Au lieu de soi. L'approche de Saint Augustin* Marion examines his place starting from *Confessions* of Saint Augustine, whose main concern was to find a place where he could praise God (Marion, 2008). Praising God is calling Him to come to me. But how could He come to me if I am not a place to myself, if I am a stranger to myself? How could God come to me if my first experience of myself is to be an alien to myself? If I am not a place for myself, how could I be a place for God? So I can't call God to come to me, but I have to go towards Him. It is in Him, or the other, that I will find my place. So glory is not about calling God to come to me, but demanding that I come to Him. I'm alienated, but a confession to God makes some other place open. Access to myself is not “here” (*ici*), which immediately becomes “there” (*ici-bas*) – but “there” (*là-bas*), always outside of me, which becomes my “here” (*là*), closer to me than I am to myself. Analyzing *Confessions*, Marion states: “For me (...) here (*ici*) is only there (*là-bas*), so that I find myself when I go where I am not” (Marion, 2008, p. 330- 331).

Therefore, I am not in my place and I cannot stay in it as long as I keep going “elsewhere”. It is no longer about the Greek concept of natural space or the modern concept of geometric space. It is a place of transcendence: being in one's place means being able to go “elsewhere”, following the appeal of the other. I am not myself inside myself. More precisely, my interior becomes in the erotic reduction my exterior. “This reversal of «here» and «there» does not equal the presence of God in me or some divine part, but it means that I have no access to myself except by having «there» – in this case in God” (Marion, 2008, p. 331). Saint Augustine confirms that he does not live in himself, but that he is death for himself and that his place is always “there” – Marion calls it “conversion of the place”.

Human being remains restless when he stays within himself, moored to his *ego*. He can only rest by finding a place outside himself.

Along with love we leave the world space, or more precisely the world as space. In erotic reduction, the only space I can occupy is the other, the other's own body (*la chair*), which opens up to me and invites me, which calls me to explore, penetrate it and live in it. Space, then, does not become a geographical space, but a corporeal, breathing, living place. Stranger and deprived of myself, I overcome the distance and enter the otherness, which is closer to me than myself, in which I find my place and thus I achieve myself, my ipseity. Only love that closes this world and opens another, the world of corporeality (*la chair*), the world outside the world, can ensure my place for me and enable it to be reached by the other and in the other.

### 5. The eroticized body

The beginning of taking one's own body is an erotic junction with another body. This crossing of bodies (*croisée des chairs*) determines temporality, its present, past and future – it closes time of the world and opens the embodied temporality. In erotic reduction, the future is defined as the time to wait for the otherness, for “elsewhere”. The present as the time in which the otherness occurs and passes. The past is finally when the otherness has exceeded the moment of its present. So it's about time reduced to “elsewhere” of erotic reduction.

What does the future of the erotic phenomenon look like? What am I waiting for at the crossing of bodies? For nothing. I don't expect any object or thing. I expect the other will give me my own body (*la chair*). How long does the wait take? As long as the body does not resist the other body and allows it to come closer. Each body receives the other one as it receives itself. Bodies can erotize each other only as they constantly exchange their approach and distance. Therefore, the future of erotic reduction stretches endlessly, there is never enough of this expectation, there is no measure here, because love is immeasurable. The future of the body is waiting for the other to give me my own body; waiting for the other, who expects me to receive my body and thus my ipseity and individuality.

As for the present, for fulfillment to come about, the other must delay his arrival. Crossing of the bodies consists of not-ending. But at some point it has to end – Marion calls it a defeat that occurs in orgasm. The defeat of Eros is that my desire can no longer go and stops. Then I stop waiting for the other, I stop feeling his body. If I stop waiting for him, I don't let him wait for me, and as a result I stop receiving my own body (*la chair*). When the other delays, that is, he defends himself not to fail the orgasm, then he is more faithful than I am to my taking of my own body. The present of the erotic phenomenon is not accomplished in the existing presence, but in the passage of the other in his body. Corporeal

present is no longer defined by the consciousness of now. It is the passage of the other who transcends me, passes me, overtakes me, as he who does not resist me and taking his body.

The past has also corporeal character. The end of the eroticisation process is ambivalent: on the one hand it denies eroticization itself, on the other it shows that Eros is “non-final”, or imperfect. On the one hand, stopping eroticization is beneficial and relieving, but on the other, it is important for the bodies to delight in each other and receive themselves from each other – so it is a defeat of Eros. The past is the end of eroticization of bodies, i.e. defeat. As Marion writes: “The erotic past is then defined as a latency of possibility and a need to repeat the crossing of the bodies” (Marion, 2003, p. 226). How long does it take? As long as lovers do not stop repeating the process of eroticization and confirm again and again love in their bodies. The corporeal past is the finality of eroticization, taking of one’s own body (*la chair*) and the necessity to repeat the oath.

Thus, we see that Marion's erotic reduction is closely linked to the concept of one’s own body. How does a lover experience love with the other? There is no other way to experience love than in the body (*la chair*). Here lies the originality of the phenomenology of the body in Marion, compared to such philosophers as Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Henry – this is not about the fact that the body is a feature of my ipseity, but it becomes a place in which love is phenomenalized. Lovers in erotic reduction individualize each other. They do this first through desire (*désir*). But desire reveals my shortcomings – what I have is nothing compared to what I miss. Only the other can answer my shortcomings. In the erotic crossing of bodies (*la croisée des chairs*), each of those who love receives above all his own body. My own body (*la chair*) differs from the bodies of the world (*le corps*) in that the latter resist me. However, in a love encounter, the living body does not resist, but opens up to the other, invites him, is passive and submissive. The body of a lover, feeling as if under its influence the body of the other does not resist, begins to feel itself. In this sense, the other gives me my own body and, as a result, restore me to myself.

## 6. The eternity of love

The erotic subjectivity places lovers out of time and individualizes them forever, or at least through the desire of eternity. When the lover says “I love you” they both need it to be an eternal confession forever. Marion speaks of “eternity of intention” here. If someone confessed that he loved temporarily, he would not love at all. Temporary love is a contradiction. It shows us that love is out of time and opens the way to eternity. In this sense, we also say that love transcends death. Love cannot be destroyed even by betrayal, rupture or failure to keep a word. The act of love once made with the intention of eternity, which is the condition of love itself, remains forever and is irrevocable. In this way the oath is fulfilled:

once pronounced, it cannot be canceled. Lovers, therefore, share time that fulfills what Marion calls "time unity" – eternal time that only belongs to them.

The erotic phenomenon, however, has the feature that it constantly ends, interrupts, stops, brutally freezes. Along with the cessation of eroticization, nothing real disappears, no object, thing, being, because at its beginning there is no earthly object. When eroticization hangs, the body of the lover ceases to eroticize, i.e. it stops giving its body to the other, and the other analogously stops giving his body to the lover. Suspension of eroticization is suspension of erotic reduction. The body as a *la chair* disappears and the lovers become ordinary *les corps* again. Along with the disappearance of bodies, the *egos* are no longer lovers, but earthly beings. It is then that they realize that they are naked – not as a result of erotic reduction, but as a result of its suspension. The feeling of nudity confirms that they are physical bodies. They begin to dress to cover the disappearance of their own bodies (*la chair*).

For this reason, love demands constant repetition. At the time when I miss erotic reduction, I also doubt the phenomenon of the other. Orgasm is not a saturated phenomenon. It gives no visibility, nothing to see or say, and it takes everything with itself, even memory. Marion calls it the "crossed out phenomenon" (*phénomène raturé*) (Marion, 2003, p. 232). As soon as we would like to see it or say anything about it, we would immediately fall into physical bodies. The visibility of Eros is for Marion "prostitution" or "pornography" – the fall of love into the natural, objective world.

So the eroticisation of the body (*la chair*) is marked by finitude. However, this finitude should not be understood in a space-time manner. It is also not about the finiteness of my cognitive skills. It is about "radical finiteness", internal, inseparable, "erotic finiteness": bodies cannot eroticize indefinitely. So how do you maintain the continuity and eternity of love? The body constantly undertakes eroticization. If this process would last indefinitely, then the world with its time and space would be suspended and I would be completely uprooted from the world by erotic reduction. Suspension of eroticization keeps me in the world. It condemns me to continually repeating of erotic reduction, to my temporarily according to this reduction, i.e. according to the other's body (*la chair*).

We can say that death is such an endless eroticization because it eliminates the body understood as *le corps*, and we become *la chair* forever. We return to the sources, to the Lover (*l'Amant*) who became the body (*la chair*) to give us ours. Death is therefore an erotic encounter, an infinite union of bodies that knows no end or suspension. We do not repeat eroticization without end, because we are in love forever, we are given to ourselves forever, received forever. Hence the rapprochement between death and love in Greek culture, such as in *Antigone* by Sophocles or in *Alcestis* by Euripides. Here, time and space are suspended and we enter the erotic eternity.

Since the erotic phenomenon has inscribed finitude and suspension, we can ask, is there something that gives it durability and thus fulfills the condition of love that it is

irrevocable? What ensures the erotic phenomenon is the duration of the word or oath (Marion, 2003, p. 308). Marion defines this persistence of love as “fidelity” – it defines time and ensures the effectiveness of the erotic phenomenon. Of course, this is not about fidelity in the ethical or psychological sense, but in the “strictly phenomenological function” (Marion, 2003, p. 308), and therefore as something that enables the erotic phenomenon its temporality, durability and thus visibility.

Fidelity demands eternity because you can't love for a while, because that would lead to contradiction. To love for a while is not to love at all. If one is unfaithful in principle, he will never have access to the erotic phenomenon. How to understand infidelity? Marion comprehends it as a consequence of short loyalty, which at the base were true, honest, but which then failed. Fidelity is therefore a principle, because it is also a condition for the possibility of infidelity itself. It assures us that “even in its shortcomings, fidelity still defines the temporality of the phenomenon of love and its unique future” (Marion, 2003, p. 312).

Fidelity enables not only the future, but also the erotic past, because I remain faithful to my former lovers. How? Does not breaking relations undermine fidelity? How can you remain faithful to someone who is no longer loyal? These are questions from the metaphysical, natural order. They lose their meaning in erotic reduction, in which once experienced the erotic phenomenon remains inalienable, marks me and transforms me forever. I am faithful forever to my past loves, not because of my memory, a memory that can erase, but because I convince myself that I don't want to hear about them anymore. This denial is paradoxical because, confirming that I do not want to hear about them and I want to destroy them, I recognize that I was the lover of the one I am now trying to forget. Even if the other disappears or I forget about him, it does not mean that “the seal of erotic reduction did not sign me forever” (Marion, 2003, p. 313). I keep all acts of love inside me, or more precisely, they keep me and mark me forever, making me a definitive lover.

According to Marion, I remain faithful forever also to love that I did not answer, I did not return. Each directing of a loving gaze at me influenced me so much that it shaped my face. How to answer all the unwanted loves, how to accept unrequited ones? Let us remember that the principle of reciprocity occurs in a natural attitude, not in the logic of erotic reduction. There, I am a lover if I love. Here, however, the phenomenality of the oath is imposed. Everyone who loved me, who gave me a gaze of love, introduced me to the phenomenality of “here I am!” (*me voici!*) in erotic reduction in which they were already before me. So my erotic past is irrevocable.

Fidelity also stigmatizes the erotic present. Even if lovers take an oath, the question “does anyone love me?” does not cease to repeat. It will never receive a sufficient answer that could give you assurance forever – not because the other can lie to me, but for phenomenological reasons – he may not know whether he loves me or not. So I am not

waiting for an answer but I answer myself. I know better, I look at and evaluate his behavior. I am also a witness to the fidelity of the other and its judge. Every time I judge that he is faithful, that is how he becomes. But to assess it I have to be faithful myself. He must remain faithful to receive my faithfulness. In this way one decides about the fidelity of the other. The erotic present is an exchange of fidelity. The lover not only says "I love you", but he gives him a greater gift: "You really love me, I know it, I give you the assurance" (Marion, 2003, p. 317). The lover gives the gift of his fidelity to the other. Erotic temporality is no longer defined starting from earthly time, where fidelity is measured over time, and time decides whether I am faithful, but fidelity itself becomes a measure of time, it itself becomes time starting from the oath of lovers.

But how can a mortal being be faithful? How can he make his oath last, if he is not permanent? Marion defines the possibility brought by erotic reduction as "the impossibility of impossible" (Marion, 2003, p. 323). Love is beyond death because it does not present itself in the horizon of being. The sense of love lies in the very fact of love, in eternity: "The lover, from the start of his advance, anticipates eternity. He does not want it, he presupposes it" (Marion, 2003, p. 323). Only erotic reduction is confirmed beyond death. Marion is close to Gabriel Marcel here, for whom "to love a person is to say: you shall not die" (Tarnowski, 2000, p. 30). Only in a natural approach is love terrible and terrifying. Meanwhile, it turns out to be weak in erotic reduction, with the confession "I love you", which from the beginning proclaims the eternity of the lovers. Being is not able to transcend death, he will always be in conflict with it. Only love remains after death, because it exceeds the limits of the horizon of being and death, because it fulfills itself in its own horizon – the erotic one. So there is something absolute in it.

The oath of love is embodied in the third, in the child. But doesn't it break love? Isn't it its destiny to leave home, move away, live his own way? Thus, the erotic phenomenon is at risk, because union with the other is never definitive, the oath and crossing of the bodies must still be repeated. Therefore, the lover has only one solution – to love differently, as if the next moment was to be the last one. This is how Marion formulates the so-called "eschatological imperative" (Marion, 2003, p. 346): love at the moment as if you had no other to love forever. In this "erotic imperative" we have a transformation of some moment into the last, eschatological moment. I decide to love as I would like to be loved at the last moment and forever, as if this moment was the last one, as if it couldn't repeat, as if I would become a definitive lover. Lovers do not wait for eternity, they provoke it and give themselves to it now in love. Eternity, therefore, emerges from the oath, from the promise. It is not a reward or celebration of fidelity – it "meets the needs of strict erotic rationality" (Marion, 2003, p. 348). As Marion writes: "The lovers fulfill their oath in the farewell (*l'adieu*) – in the passage to God (*le passage à Dieu*), whom they summon as their last witness, their first witness, the one who never leaves and never lies" (Marion, 2003, p. 352). So ultimately



God can only guarantee the vow of lovers forever, for He is its supreme witness and the best Lover.

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