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An Analysis of Marion's Phenomenological Variations from Eros to Agape

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Abstract

In the *Erotic Phenomenon*, Marion shows his thinking about the intersubjectivity through Erotic Reduction, and the relationship between self and others is rooted in the "relationship of love". But in fact, Marion's definition of "Eros" is twofold: on the one hand, "Eros" contains the narrow sense of "Eros" between subjects, and on the other hand, it also implies the universal love as "Agape". Although Marion does not concentrate on the latter in this book, the limits of Eros's reduction come from the divine love that Marion regards as the "absolute Eros." If the reduction of Eros is regarded by Marion as the fundamental phenomenological reduction, then divine love is the theoretical pole for the realization of its "unity of all loves."

Key Terms: Jean-Luc Marion Eros Agape Phenomenology

Eros and agape are significant concepts in the history of philosophy. The former primarily refers to passionate love, namely eros, while the latter denotes selfless benevolence, or agape. The Swedish theologian Anders Nygren, in his work **Agape and Eros**, has posited them as fundamentally opposed concepts representing ancient Greek philosophy and Christian thought respectively: the former is based on eros, whereas the latter is founded on agape.

Jean-Luc Marion, a Catholic philosopher who navigates between phenomenology and theology, has also shown considerable interest in this conceptual pair. However, Marion rejects the notion of interpreting them as separate entities. Although various forms of love exist within the realm of love itself—such as friendship, romantic love, filial and parental love, and eros versus agape—we have reason to believe that the internal differences and even incompatibilities within love would undermine the concept of love itself. Therefore, Marion endeavors to maintain the undifferentiated nature of love to preserve its univocity and supremacy: love can only claim to be univocal in a unique sense (*sens unique*).

Marion's analysis of love begins with its univocity, conducting an Erotic Reduction. Self-love, love for others, and love for God can only be regarded as different stages in the pure advancement (*pure avancée*) of the lover (*l'amant*). In Marion's view, whether it is love in marital, parent-child, or human-divine relationships, these distinctions are merely formal rather than substantial. The essence lies in the lover's reduction through an Erotic Reduction that is distinct from both epistemological and ontological reductions, leading to a fundamental selfhood—a "decentered selfhood." The ultimate result of this reduction is not the "transcendental ego" on the side of noesis, nor the being-in-the-world that questions existence itself, but rather a self that is always oriented toward the other and gives love. The love given by the eros self is unified, and Marion asserts that "the lover supports everything."

It is noteworthy, however, that within the dynamic progression of the lover, one form of love receives particular favor from Marion: the giving of agape, with God being regarded as the "first lover" and the "best lover." According to Marion, although ambiguity persists between eros and agape, they are ultimately no longer distinguishable, both manifesting as selfless and gratuitous. While the history of thought has gradually emphasized a strict distinction between eros and agape, Marion believes that a foundational relationship can connect them. This foundation is the establishment of a universal logic of love, which ultimately appears as love without being (*amour sans l'être*), essentially an extension of Marion's concept of God without being (*Dieu sans l'être*).

I. The Origin and Development of the Erotic Reduction

1. The Withdrawal of Eros and the Silence of Philosophy

Philosophy and love have been closely intertwined since ancient Greece, with philosophy deriving its origin from love itself. At the outset of *The Phenomenology of Love*, Jean-Luc Marion clearly states that philosophy has today completely forgotten and abandoned love:

“Philosophy today no longer speaks of love, or rather, speaks of it hardly at all. On the other hand, this silence is more significant; it is so significant that when philosophy dares to speak of love, it wrongs and betrays the flame of love... Philosophers have, in fact, let love run wild, having lost the concept of love and ultimately abandoned it to the vague and restless margins through their presumptuous rationality.”¹ Marion rigorously criticizes the absence of eros in the history of philosophy. In his view, the history of philosophy is not, as Heidegger claimed, a “forgetting of being.” On the contrary, this forgetting of

¹ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditations*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.9.

being is merely derivative, as it actually conceals a more fundamental oblivion: the forgetting of the wisdom of eros (l'erotique). In Plato, eros and logos were closely interwoven, but the separation between eros and logos emerged with Aristotle's establishment of the supreme status of reason and gradually faded into oblivion within the subsequent epistemological tradition (Descartes-Kant-Hegel). The highest form of being and freedom, whether at its beginning (in Aristotle) or at its end (in Hegel), manifests as spirit or reason, rather than eros. Heidegger pointed out that the definition of "man as a rational animal" imposes two limitations on the questioning of human essence: first, it excludes us from a space within which the essence of humanity becomes a phenomenon and finds its footing from the very beginning; second, it renders the inquiry into humanity perpetually ignorant². Marcuse shared a similar insight: eros has been absorbed by logos, which is the rationality that represses instincts. The history of metaphysics reflects an increasingly despotic domination over the world by the reality principle, and thus many insights contained in the metaphysical view of eros have been concealed³. Therefore, in Marion's view, whether one agrees or not, the essential attribute of humanity cannot be defined through logos or being, but through love (or hate).

The oblivion of eros confirms the impotence of philosophy and the absence of concepts. In the technological age of eros' withdrawal, Marion enumerates several phenomena that present themselves as "pseudo-eros": the sentimentalism caused by popular prose; the pornographic publications brought about by the idol industry; and the empty ideologies resulting from individual development. The misuse of the term "love" leads to the silence of the original eros in various contexts, ultimately rendering any contemplation or discussion of love meaningless (non-sens). The silence of philosophy regarding love reveals the fact that while we can experience various inclinations of eros, we are unable to articulate them through an appropriate concept. Thus, Marion argues that it is impossible to form a distinct notion of eros⁴. In other words, the Cartesian ideal that ideas grasped by reason must be clear and distinct (*claire et distincte*) recedes in the face of eros, because reason or concepts are rendered speechless when confronted with love.

² Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to metaphysics*, The Commercial Press, 2017, pp.171-172.

³ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 2012, pp.111.

⁴ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditation*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.14.

Although traditional metaphysics has been blind to eros, the contemplation of the authentic state of eros can only be the task of philosophy. However, this contemplation of eros will fundamentally replace all metaphysical meditations. Marion points out that this task is anti-traditional; it opens up what metaphysics, in its “somnambulistic” stubbornness, has missed by dismantling tradition, allowing the phenomenon of eros (phénomène érotique) to appear as it truly is⁵.

2. The Static Analysis of the Erotic Reduction

For Jean-Luc Marion, the Erotic Reduction, as a third reduction, has a significant advantage over the transcendental reduction (Husserl) and the ontological reduction (Heidegger) in that it allows the concept of eros to emerge. In both epistemology and ontology, philosophy has historically rejected the unity, rationality, and supremacy of eros.

First, eros possesses unity. Marion argues that the concept of love is reliable in principle because it can simultaneously hold various meanings. Non-erotic thought, however, ultimately severs and even tears these meanings apart based on its own prejudices. In other words, eros itself is a totality, and beneath this conceptual unity lies a space of meaning that makes possible the tension between whole and part, finite and infinite. In fact, Marion's position rejects the post-Ancient Greek practice of setting the various forms of eros in stark opposition to one another. This seemingly ambiguous unity of the concept of eros resonates with Plato's depiction in the *Symposium*—the desire for wholeness as the desire itself. The renowned ancient Greek comic playwright Aristophanes described a myth in which humans were originally androgynous. Zeus, punishing humanity for its blasphemy, split them in half. Thus, the origin of eros is the search by one half for the other, hoping to reunite and become one again. "Whether this search is successful or not, we humans must always remember to avoid impiety, lest we be split in half once more."⁶

⁵ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditation*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.20-21.

⁶ Plato, *The Symposium*, The Commercial Press, 2013, pp.30-32.

Second, eros possesses rationality. However, the rationality to which eros belongs is not the rationality of concepts in idealist philosophy or the rationality of reason itself, but the rationality of eros itself (*rationalité érotique*), which Marion regards as a "greater rationality."⁷ This rationality differs from the traditional metaphysical demand for knowledge of objects and the cunning design of concepts. Instead, it focuses on an extreme individuation towards the other, addressing the existential conditions of each self—such as life, death, and desire—in the ultimate sense (*en dernière instance*). Some things that appear "irrational" according to traditional rational thinking still find a place within the logic of eros, and this is precisely what makes the rationality of eros distinctive.

Third, eros possesses supremacy. Traditional metaphysics has always centered on the question of essence (*essentialité*). Therefore, in the history of philosophy, questions such as "Is anyone in love with me?" or "Do I love?" have been considered derivative, with the theoretical presupposition being the question of being, namely, "Why is there being rather than nothing?" Heidegger regarded this question as the primary one among the fundamental questions of metaphysics because it is the most extensive, profound, and original⁸.

Marion, however, refutes this by arguing that eros is not necessarily subordinate to being. In fact, we are fully capable of loving a non-existent or not-yet-existent being, and vice versa. In other words, following the approach of God without Being, Marion situates the discussion of the phenomenon of eros in a realm that does not require being. Eros is prior to being: "What welcomes me and shelters me is not first of all being ('to be' or 'not to be'), but a possible love ('Is anyone in love with me or not?')"⁹.

⁷ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditation*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.15-16.

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to metaphysics*, The Commercial Press, 2017, pp.1.

⁹ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditation*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.68.

3. The Dynamic Analysis of the Erotic Reduction

Through the Erotic Reduction, Marion aims to describe a unique mode of appearance, in which phenomena present themselves through themselves. Thus, the path of eros' manifestation, like Hegel's path of the return of self-consciousness, undergoes an arduous struggle. Marion describes the initiation and radicalization of the Erotic Reduction through two key questions, arguing that the true essence of eros lies in a love that suspends reciprocity and is thus infinite.

The first question is, "Is anyone in love with me from elsewhere?" (*m'aime-t-on d'ailleurs?*). This marks the initiation of the Erotic Reduction and the transformation of self-identity. In the new domain opened by the Erotic Reduction, the self assumes a new role (that of the lover) and stands in strict opposition to a transcendental subject (the ego) or an existential subject (*Dasein*). Marion notes that thinkers think only for the sake of being and use their thinking merely as a way to confirm their existence¹⁰. Therefore, the self-certainty established since Descartes is untenable in the domain of the Erotic Reduction. Being and all beings are "irradiated by the black sun of vanity (*vanité*).¹⁰" Thus, in the state of Erotic Reduction, no being or self can provide a guarantee for the question "Is anyone in love with me?" The traditional metaphysical question "to be or not to be" loses its most ancient philosophical privilege.

The second question is, "Can I, the self, be the first to love?" (*puis-je aimer, moi le premier?*). Marion regards this question as the radicalization of the Erotic Reduction itself. In the previous stage, the self, in order to resist the encroachment of vanity, chose to ensure its existence through love from elsewhere. Although eros had already gained priority over being in the previous stage, it inevitably returned to being. According to Marion, the previous stage was constrained by a fatal flaw—reciprocity. In other words, reciprocity dominated by the principle of economic exchange is fundamentally based on mutual benefit. "And this possibility condition prescribed by reciprocity also confirms the impossibility

¹⁰ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditation*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.51.

condition of love."¹¹. To avoid the difficulties resulting from this "commercial appeal", it is necessary to terminate the narrow economization of eros through the radicalization of the Erotic Reduction. The fundamental advancement of the second question over the first is that the self transforms from a lover guaranteed by the other to a lover determined to give first.

Eros, which suspends the principle of reciprocity, becomes the ultimate basis for progression, and the lover thus gains its supreme privilege: the more he gives, loses, and disperses himself, the less he loses himself; the more he loves at a loss, the less he forgets love. From this, we can conclude that the realization of eros is not guaranteed by receiving from elsewhere but is proven through the lover's own giving and losing. Marion concludes that the unique guarantee of this radicalized Erotic Reduction is not the assurance of being or the assurance about being, but the assurance of loving (*l'assurance d'aimer*).

II. The Opening of the "Sacred Space-Time"

Under the Erotic Reduction

In the final stage of the Erotic Reduction, Jean-Luc Marion asserts that the boundaries between eros and agape no longer exist. In other words, these are not two forms of love in opposition, but rather two names among the infinitely many names that can be attributed to the unity of love. In the unfolding of the phenomenon of eros, Marion claims that this is the result of a strict adherence to phenomenological operations. The Erotic Reduction, which he terms a "fundamental reduction," has a distinct difference from classical phenomenology: Marion does not exclude knowledge of God from phenomenology. Therefore, it is reasonable for him to discuss agape. Although in *The Phenomenology of Love*, Marion does not elaborate on agape, but merely presents it as one of

¹¹ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditation*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.121.

the two theoretical poles of the Erotic Reduction—God as the initial and final witness of all lovers-agape still resonates throughout the self-manifestation of eros, especially considering that this work follows God without Being and The Idol and Distance. We can even argue that the logic of the Erotic Reduction not only fails to exclude God as the absolute transcendent but also requires the inclusion of this ultimate love to manifest itself as universal. The ultimate convergence of eros and agape further indicates that the Erotic Reduction opens a space for agape, a space that makes the gift of agape possible. However, the space-time in the state of eros remains fundamentally different from that of the natural attitude and traditional metaphysics.

1.Eventfulness: The Temporal Dimension of Eros

Eros is opposed to the continuity of time. From the perspective of the "natural attitude" (*natürliche Einstellung*), time is characterized by three dimensions: "past," "present," and "future." Moreover, from the standpoint of a homogeneous linear conception of time, the "present" is often regarded as the fundamental dimension among the three temporal aspects. To elaborate further, the time underlying the linear conception is objective time in the sense of physics, and thus it is quantifiable. In fact, a careful examination of the history of Western philosophy reveals that the examination of time is almost a task that every philosopher must engage in, and there are no shortage of philosophers who have made significant contributions to the understanding of time. Looking specifically at the phenomenological movement, both Husserl and Heidegger have criticized objective time. Husserl's view of internal time-consciousness as primal time and Heidegger's conception of time as the existential basis of *Dasein* can both be considered important annotations on the interpretation of time. Roger Maclure has pointed out that "all phenomenological conceptions of time (whether Husserl's, Heidegger's, Levinas's, or Merleau-Ponty's) are 'autonomous propositions.' The so-called concept of time is independent of 'non-temporal factors,' that is, independent of the objective elements in the natural attitude."¹²

¹² Roger Maclure, *The philosophy of Time*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, pp.2.

Marion bases his exposition of time on the concept of the event (l'événement), but the theory of events is not Marion's original creation. The idea can be traced back to Heidegger's discussions on the essence of history and the event of appropriation (Ereignis), where Heidegger regards the metaphysical questioning activity itself as an "extraordinary event," namely, a happening (Geschehnis)¹³. In other words, for Heidegger, history is neither a mere recording of historical events by historians nor a linear connection that flows uniformly in the stream of time. The essence of history lies precisely in *geschehen*, that is, "the occurrence of an event." Following Heidegger, Derrida, Deleuze, Badiou, and Marion, among others, have elaborated on the philosophy of events from different perspectives, including deconstruction, post-structuralism, political philosophy, and phenomenological theology, with the aim of revealing the underlying principle of change hidden behind thought and nature, as well as humans and society. In Marion's texts, the concept of the event has both broad and narrow meanings. In the narrow sense, the event refers to the first of the four saturated phenomena (le phénomène saturé), namely, the excess of quantity, characterized by its unpredictability. In the broad sense, event defines the mode of appearance of phenomena itself, representing the breakthrough of the phenomenon's manifestation from the constraints of the causal chain.

Eros itself manifests as an event, which cannot be foreseen, produced, or reproduced. Moreover, the event demands that every subject anticipate it and submit to its initiation. This view is precisely aimed at the temporal order of causality that Kant attempts to elucidate in the Transcendental Analytic section of the Critique of Pure Reason: "Temporal succession is the only empirical criterion for the causal relationship between an effect and its preceding cause."¹⁴ For Marion, the sudden arrival of an event which, can only be established through an instantaneous transition to create each "present moment," is crucial. "Eros is temporalized in its sudden arrival as an event."¹⁵ Therefore, in objective

¹³ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to metaphysics*, The Commercial Press, 2017, pp.6-7.

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique Of Pure Reason*, People's Publishing House, 2017, pp.154-167.

¹⁵ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditation*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.60-61.

time, things that pass do not persist, whereas in the time of Eros, time stands still as long as there is an expectation of love, because expectation interrupts the flow of time. What is expectation? Expectation is for something that has not yet happened but is hoped to occur. What is expected? The expectation is for an event of love, an event of divine revelation, and the coming of the Messiah. In his article "A Logic of Manifestation: The Trinity," Marion discusses that "the economy of revelation includes history but cannot be reduced to the ordinary (metaphysical) concept of history, because we are not talking about a process or a collection of objects, but a discontinuous event temporality."¹⁶ The phenomenon of revelation, as the core of saturated phenomena, is undoubtedly crucial for Marion. However, the history of revelation in Marion's view can only be reduced to the history of the event itself—a non-historical history—because revelation does not belong to the historian's history or the philosopher's history, but can only be inscribed in the unexpected arrival of the event. Through analysis, we can draw a conclusion: the event guarantees time. For Marion, the reduction of Eros is precisely an eventful temporal rupture, and sacred love and revelation manifest from this instant through endless expectation.

2. Heterogeneity: The Spatial Dimension of Eros

Eros also resists the homogeneity of space. According to Marion, in traditional metaphysics, "space is defined as the order of all possible constituents, as the order of all beings that can coexist."¹⁷ In this uniform space, any object can change its position at any time and interchange places. In Kantian philosophy, space, as the necessary a priori representation that underlies external intuition, is conceived as an "infinite given magnitude." Space is imagined as an undifferentiated representation that contains an infinite number of representations, precisely because "all the infinite parts of space exist simultaneously."¹⁸

¹⁶ Jean-Luc Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2016, pp.99.

¹⁷ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditation*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.55.

¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique Of Pure Reason*, People's Publishing House, 2017, pp.27.

Marion points out that beneath this homogeneous representation of space lies a paradox: the beings within space lose their sense of belonging to a specific location and exist in a state of rootlessness, where they could be here or there. This loss of a specific place logically contradicts the reduction of Eros. As mentioned earlier, each being asks the question “Is there someone who loves me?” to escape the threat of existential emptiness. The need for my love for the other is crucial to me because the “there” where the other is located is the only way for me to transcend emptiness. This means that the “there” where the other is situated is irreplaceable to me, and the “here” where I am as the lover of Eros is equally irreplaceable to a particular other. Therefore, Marion concludes that “here” and “there” no longer interchange in a neutral space; in the reduction of Eros, the “here” where I am lasts as long as the “there” of another¹⁹. In summary, under the reduction of Eros, space is not homogeneous but appears as mutually heterogeneous. “All those 'theres' can no longer be exchanged for an equivalent number of 'heres.’”²⁰.

In fact, what is implied beneath the opposition of the space in the state of Eros and the world space is precisely the tension between sacred space and profane space. Mircea Eliade, in his renowned work *The Sacred and the Profane*, proposed the concept of "sacred space" in contrast to Kantian space. According to Eliade, profane space is homogeneous and directionless. Once a hierophany—that is, the manifestation of the sacred—occurs somewhere within profane space, this homogeneity is shattered and transformed into sacred space. This can also be seen as a fixed point in the world of meaning, thereby endowing the entire space with direction and significance²¹. Thus, for Eliade, sacred space represents a rupture of homogeneity and establishes an order of heterogeneity.

However, Marion's fundamental difference from Eliade lies in his refusal to understand the domain of divine love as a space. Instead, he describes it as a "non-spatial space." In his essay "Christ as a Saturated

¹⁹ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditation*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.58-59.

²⁰ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditation*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.58.

²¹ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 1987, pp.20-24.

Phenomenon: The Icon of the Invisible," Marion writes that divine love cannot be imagined as a profane space because it does not belong to this world. Strictly speaking, it can be regarded as "a sacred environment."²² Therefore, the "sacred space" depicted by Marion is not a space that can be readily unfolded. Neither in the sense of external meaning from traditional metaphysics (Kant) nor in the existential sense (Heidegger) does it apply, "because it is not an object to be gazed upon; on the contrary, I must place myself within it, be surrounded by it, and even lose myself in it"²³. In fact, Marion rejects any ontological terminology, and this is all due to his efforts in *God Without Being* to defend the transcendence of God and to draw a clear line with all metaphysics, so as to prevent God from ultimately falling into "being".

Thus, the time and space opened by the Erotic Reduction are purely those of love. In the state of Eros, the eventual giving of Agape and the opening of sacred space make it possible for Marion to claim that "God is the best lover." Although the Erotic Reduction dissolves the opposition between Eros and Agape, ultimately presenting them as one, the giving of divine love possesses absolute completeness and priority among all lovers. As Marion concludes in "The Erotic Phenomenon", God loves us infinitely better than we love ourselves or others. God, as the best lover, surpasses us²⁴.

III. Difference or Identity in Love?

Marion attempts to demonstrate through the self-manifestation of the Eros concept that the Erotic Reduction is a universal reduction. Its universality lies in the fact that any third party (whether the other or God

²² Jean-Luc Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2016, pp.71-72.

²³ Jean-Luc Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*, Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2016, pp.71.

²⁴ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditations*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.369.

as the absolute other) will submit to the logic of Eros itself, distinguishing Marion from Levinas. However, this path of reduction has been criticized by thinkers such as Claude Romano and Kyle Hubbard. Romano's classic critiques include: first, contrary to Husserl's suspension of meaning in the natural attitude, Marion's Eros adds a new layer of meaning to the world through the event; second, is the Erotic Reduction truly universal? At best, it is a regional reduction; third, Marion's concept of "love without being" is a continuation of his theological theory²⁵. Hubbard argues that although Eros and Agape ultimately converge, their lack of reciprocity makes them similar to the pure Agape described by Derrida²⁶. Romano's fundamental intent is to point out Marion's deviation from the classical phenomenological principles established by Husserl, while Hubbard's critique stems from the "gift debate" between Derrida and Marion. However, these are not the focus of this paper. Rather, the key is to accept Marion's Erotic Reduction and examine how the transformation from Eros to Agape is possible, even though Marion ultimately equates the two. What kind of identity is this?

First, from the perspective of the Erotic Reduction, Marion argues that Eros and Agape are a unity in difference. Under the logic of the Erotic Reduction, "God becomes a lover like us through the following: vanity, the need to be loved, the advance of being the first to love... until God unilaterally declares our loyalty."²⁷. In other words, under the universal demand of Eros, any third party is included, even God as the absolute third party, who, along with each individual, practices the logic of the Erotic Reduction through the same rituals. Thus, any form of love can only be understood within the univocal concept of love, and the univocity of love refers to the univocity of the concept, not the univocity of the state of love. Marion argues that Eros's inclusion of difference strictly differs from traditional metaphysics' pursuit of identity (l'identité), as the principle of

²⁵ Claude Romano. Ed, *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.2007, pp.329-333.

²⁶ Kyle Hubbard, *The Unity of Eros and Agape: On Jean-Luc Marion's Erotic Phenomenon*, Essays Philos , 2011, p.130-146.

²⁷ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique:Six méditation*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003,pp.368.

identity only dominates within the horizon of objectivity (l'objectité) and being (l'étantité). Thus, "according to love (Agape), unity no longer contradicts the multiplicity of humans, for this multiplicity constitutes the condition of unity, and unity is the realization of multiplicity." It is precisely because of the understanding of the factual differences of each individual that the Erotic Reduction can be described as universal. Thus, Marion has already answered Romano's critique: "Only under the condition that one accepts the inherent logic of erotic phenomena—the logic opened by the pioneering activity of the Erotic Reduction—can the evidence of erotic phenomena manifest itself."²⁸ In other words, Eros follows only its own rationality and logic, and any external rationality cannot legitimately speak of love.

Second, considering Marion's theological background, we can see that behind Marion's logic of Eros lies an absolute identity: God is love (1 John 4:8). As a phenomenologist, Marion places divine love within the universality of the Erotic Reduction, but as a theologian, he inevitably maintains God's absolute transcendence. From a strictly philosophical or theological perspective, this appears contradictory: from a traditional phenomenological standpoint, discussing God within phenomenology is methodologically illegitimate; from a theological perspective, the issue is even greater, as God would never submit to a logic external to Himself. Thus, if Marion is to reconcile the two, he must equate the logic of the Erotic Reduction with God's own logic. Marion states, "God's self-manifestation (l'auto-manifestation) is because God truly gives Himself as a gift in the fundamental and unsurpassable sense that 'God is love.' Thus, His manifestation should... first be understood as gift and love."²⁹ Marion does not blindly exclude divine love because the equation of God with love allows Him to serve as a perfect example within the Erotic Reduction. Only by understanding Eros itself as a mode of self-giving can we grasp Marion's claim that "God manifests Himself first as love." For

²⁸ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditation*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.368.

²⁹ FangXianghong HuangZuo, *Descartes and phenomenology*, SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2020, pp.86-87.

Marion, Agape thus inevitably becomes the first and last witness of the Erotic Reduction, and because God not only reveals through love but reveals as love, He can love in the same way as individuals, following the unique logic of Eros. Thus, we can conclude that Eros, in both its original and final senses, manifests the dimension of divine love, and Agape always holds a priority in Marion's thought, both theoretically and practically: God loves perfectly, from beginning to end, without fault or error. He is the first and the last to love³⁰.

Finally, the variation from Eros to Agape reflects Marion's intellectual efforts. On one hand, theology, by avoiding the danger of idolatry, turns to the precision of phenomenology, allowing divine love and revelation to shed mere religious fervor. On the other hand, phenomenology, out of its own need, spontaneously turns to new domains. From "God without Being" to "Love without Being", Marion rejects the transcendental perspectives of Husserl and Heidegger. Neither the call of the object nor the call of being is a fundamental call; the fundamental dimension of the call is the pure call, the call of the Father³¹. Marion believes that the most important thing is to listen to another kind of speech: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one"(Deuteronomy 6:4). Thus, love and mercy no longer submit to being, "there, Agape becomes the necessary condition of being, there, being is surpassed."³² In an invisibility detached from being, and under the illumination of an invisible light from beyond the world, Heidegger's concept of the "world" is distracted and leaves the ontological difference in a state of indifference to ontology. It is also under the gaze from elsewhere that divine love, as the first instance of a gift and thus the first instance of the reduction of Eros, gives itself, phenomenologizing itself according to the logic of Eros itself. This kind of love not only gives itself as a pure gift, without expectation of return and in excess, but also calls upon every lover of Eros to embark on their own journey of love. Therefore, in Marion's thought, if

³⁰ Jean-Luc Marion, *Le phénomène érotique: Six méditation*, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003, pp.368.

³¹ FangXianghong HuangZuo, *Descartes and phenomenology*, SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2020, pp.336-339.

³² Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being*, Chicago:University of Chicago Press,1991, pp.126-132.

there is a term that can be regarded as the keystone of his theory, it is surely Eros—Agape.

IV. Conclusion

Although Marion regards the universal logic of the reduction of Eros as a fundamental theoretical cornerstone, for him, Eros is by no means a mere erotic love that stands in opposition to divine love. Instead, he insists on returning to its original dimension of meaning. As Socrates discusses in the Symposium, Eros acts as an “intermediary”: this means that it has not yet become what it desires, yet it longs for absolute truth and goodness. Therefore, when Eros reaches its culmination, it becomes one with divine love. As the initial gift and the final witness, divine love calls upon every lover of Eros to fulfill their promise: “Next year in Jerusalem!”