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## Madness at the Basis of Knowledge. The Heresy of Jean-Luc Marion<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The article addresses the development of Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology in one of his last book entitled *Certitudes négatives*. If negativity has always been present in the phenomenology of givenness through parallels with negative theology, the second term of the title addresses a Cartesian notion – the certitude of distinct and clear knowledge. Negativity that appears in late Marion is being interpreted as a gesture of compromise towards thinkers claiming the death of the subject and the triumph of the other in its otherness and, as such, it will be read as a new point in Marion's discussion with Derrida about the gift. Challenging negative certitude Marion exposes himself to a heterodoxical dialogue with other authors of the French Theory about knowledge, faith and fiction all entangled around certainty.

**KEYWORDS:** Marion • Derrida • negative certitude • *ego cogito* • madness • invention of the other

Is Hamlet understood? It is not doubt, but certitude that drives one mad.

Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*

This famous reference to Hamlet from Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* opposes the romantic reading of this character as a weak figure full of doubts. Concurrently as Hamlet is one of the best-known literary figures that have become a symbol of attitude toward life, the spectrum of understanding his attitude is very broad. The most common psychological attributes assigned to him are melancholy and insanity; the most modern is perhaps the Oedipus complex observed in Hamlet by Freud. But what is vital is the discussion about the origins of Hamlet's madness. Those who were too much attached to the rationalist paradigm could not read between the lines of the ghost scene something else than insanity. Moreover words of a ghost cannot be

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a reason for becoming an avenger. Educated at the Wittenberg University Hamlet was also aware that he requires an evidence of the murder, at least signs of remorse on the face of the murderer. According to strong-headed rationalists Hamlet is only haunted and torn by a mental illness after having encountered the presumed ghost of his deceased father. An alternate possibility of interpreting Hamlet's posture is to bring the unconscious into play and read Hamlet's "madness and method" as driven by involuntary drives derived from his relation with his mother. Within such hermeneutical horizon Nietzsche's approach appears revolutionary: "it is no doubt but certainty that drives one mad". The fragment is found in Nietzsche's autobiography in the part entitled "Why am I so clever?": "Is Hamlet understood? Not doubt certainty is what drives one insane. But one must be profound, an abyss, a philosopher to feel that way. We are all afraid of truth".

A crucial turning point operates here around madness – yes, Hamlet is mad, but it is not un-certainty that brings him mad but, on the contrary, it is certainty. Yet it is a specific sort of certainty, the one that requires the sense of a philosopher. And another trait needs to be attached to this philosopher – profoundness, a profoundness so groundless up to being called an abyss. The abyss-philosopher is the one who will not be afraid of truth and will face the most insufferable certainty, as well as equally unsupportable lack of certainty.

The philosopher in quest of certainty brings to our mind Descartes for whom the role of certainty based on the *ego cogitans* – the thinking subject – was on the opposite side of madness. In the Cartesian universe certainty was the lock to the door of the "Grand Enfermement" (using Foucault's subheading) of madness in exile. Gaining certainty about oneself as *res cogitans* meant that madness and insanity were kept at a safe distance. Therefore, when we ask what kind of certainty can drive insane, we need to follow the madman on the path of his banishment from discourse, alike philosophers who grew up as pupils of the three "great masters of suspicion" (according to Paul Ricoeur's expression): Nietzsche, Freud and Marx. Following the madman requires that philosophy becomes archeology instead of history, or "hauntology" in the place of ontology (Derrida's "hantologie" vs. "ontologie"). A difficult faithfulness to the voice of the other in his irreducible otherness was a challenge undertaken by philosophers who disdained the success of Descartes' certainty and felt haunted by one of these ghosts who asks to be remembered, like the one that Marx observed haunting the capitalist Europe at the opening of the Communist Manifesto<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> K. Marx & F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848: "Preface. A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism". See also J. Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: l'état de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale*, Galilée, Paris 1993.

On the other side were those who founded the notion of certainty on the “clair et distinct” of mathematics and instead of ghost-like figures were aiming at positive knowledge on objects.

“Nothing becomes certain without at once becoming an object”<sup>3</sup> summarizes Jean-Luc Marion, but he adds: “we [nevertheless] do have access to knowledge without object” – what about certainty? Is it based on the distinctiveness and clearness of an object? Or is it attached to knowledge? Certitude requires more than knowledge about an object, states Marion, because it can also refer to what we accept as unknown (because of our finite condition or paucity of possible experience) and both Descartes and Kant are chosen as guides throughout the negative aspect of knowledge<sup>4</sup>. Jean-Luc Marion who was one of the rare contemporary philosophers who resists the enchantment of negativity approaches the flirt of this critical certitude with vigilance, aware that “même la dénégation peut relever de la donation”<sup>5</sup> (even denegation can proceed from donation). Knowledge without object used to be defined by Marion as saturated phenomenon (*phénomène saturé*) in which the donation of the phenomenon exceeds the frames of intentionality. But in 2010 Marion introduces a “third enlargement of phenomenality [next to hermeneutics and the invention of saturation]: the domain of negative certitude”<sup>6</sup>.

This new domain is specifically linked to our finitude. We are too narrow to understand the other, God or even ourselves; therefore in front of such phenomena we confront questions without answer, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the questions are themselves nonsensical. On the contrary, they enlarge our limitedness and defy skepticism in terms of infinite negativity. The rational may be enlarged and this possibility is defined by the notion of negative certitude. This concept appears as a surprising final word to the discussion between Jean-Luc Marion and Jacques Derrida (deceased in 2004). The discussion touched about the gift. The gift appeared originally in Marion's *Réduction et donation* (Paris 1989; and was later developed in *Étant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation* (Paris 1997) then, quite simultaneously, in Jacques Derrida's *Donner le temps, 1: La fausse monnaie* (Paris 1991), where the gift was presented as Derrida's quasi-transcendentals (using R. Gashé's expression) such as forgiveness, hospitality or *différance*.

<sup>3</sup> J.-L. Marion, *Certitudes négatives*, Grasset, Paris 2010, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 314: “Au-delà d'une herméneutique et de l'invention de la saturation, peut enfin s'envisager un troisième élargissement de la phénoménalité: le domaine des certitudes négatives”.

These figures are characterized by the fact that their conditions of possibility consist precisely in their impossibility. The gift, along forgiveness or hospitality is possible only when we require some impossibility – impossible giving – giving what we lack, forgiving the unforgivable, welcoming the other up to radical dispossession. Those figures have labelled Derrida's project of deconstruction as nihilist or at least indisputably negative despite many Derrida's denials. But the fact that the same "reduction" similar to Derrida's deconstruction has been made by Marion has inspired a group of scholars joined around the American Academy of Religion to confront the two philosophers in a discussion moderated by Richard Kearney in 1999 (*God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, ed. J. D. Caputo & R. Kearney, Bloomington 1999)<sup>7</sup>.

Up to *Certitudes négatives* Jean-Luc Marion seemed to oppose Derrida's praise of impossibility, being one of the exceptional philosophers ready to argue for the subject not only in its positive aspect, but furthermore in a plenitude of *sujet adonné*, conceived at the same time as the given, the donator, and the devoted<sup>8</sup>. Being not only a phenomenologist, but also a renowned Cartesianist, Marion was defending the subject who is capable of receiving the phenomenon even under its most saturated form, being over-abundantly recipient without becoming in debt. However if givenness is developed into saturation and negative certitude, and if these two categories are not the last ones in the process of expending phenomenality<sup>9</sup>, we must keep asking Marion whether this knowledge is mind safe. That is whether such an abundant, negative or estimated knowledge does not damage the economy of rational, the economy of common sense i.e. the one that suggests to give for the wedding banquet the leftovers from the funeral diner (*Hamlet*, Act I, Scene 2).

When looking for certainty Descartes adopts methodical skepticism, although the certitude he is examining is positive. The first reduction that is performed is to reduce to an object. This object must be clear and distinct (fr. *clair et distinct*) according to the model of science found in mathematics. The progress of science is based on such objects of knowledge and possible

<sup>7</sup> See R. Horner, *Rethinking God as a Gift. Marion, Derrida and the Limits of Phenomenology*, Fordham University Press 2001; U. Idziak, *Pojęcie Daru. Spór Jacquesa Derridy z Jean-Luc Marionem*, Wydawnictwo A, Kraków 2009.

<sup>8</sup> J.-L. Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2002. See W. Starzyński, *Neokartezjanizm fenomenologii francuskiej. Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Henry, Marion*, Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN 2014, pp. 264–268.

<sup>9</sup> A third form of expanding phenomenality could be read between the lines of a new reading of Descartes by Marion through the category of "estime/connaissance à l'estime" (estimated knowledge) presented in a lecture entitled "La connaissance à l'estime", given at the Institute of Philosophy of the Polish Academy of Science the 8th of March 2017.

certainty, although the results are temporal, which means ready to be falsified. Descartes has remarked in his *Regulae* that whoever will be capable of adopting his method will not ignore something for reason of some weakness of spirit, but because it will depend of an experience that is beyond his capacity. At that point Jean-Luc Marion discovers in Descartes the knowledge of the unknowable, expressed in the following words: “*quae cognitio non minor scientia est, quam illa quae rei ipsius naturam exhibet*” (“this cognition is not worst (minor) than the one that informs us about the nature of reality”)<sup>10</sup>. This cognition corresponds to the knowledge of what I cannot know because it exceeds the scope of my experience. But according to Marion, there is still certitude here because Descartes has explicitly affirmed that this cognition is not “worst”. This type of certitude corresponds to the limit of our *cognitio* (*ingenii limites*): I know that I am just unable to undergo such experience. And if we rely on Marion’s line of argumentation the *cogito* can appear to be the perfect example of such negative certitude. It is demonstrated that Descartes was conscious that the essence of man is never to be defined (because neither the *res cogitans* nor the *substantia cogitans* are definitions) and he has on no occasion admitted to be in possession of the knowledge of the *cogito*. That is the reason why he ends with this famous question: “*Quisnam sim ego ille, qui jam sum?*” (“Who am I this I that I still am?”)<sup>11</sup> He knows himself as a *moi* (me), which he is not because he is a *je* (I)<sup>12</sup>.

This question resonates according to Marion with another famous self-skepticism present in Saint Augustine’s Confessions *factus eram ipse mihi magna quaestio*<sup>13</sup> – I have become a question myself, I have become a question under the gaze of God. Not for reason of being questioned by God, but because I realized from what an immense groundlessness my call to God resonates.

Reflecting upon Saint Augustine, Spinoza, Malebranche and finally Pascal, Marion deduces that the “I” has no awareness of its own self: “*je n’a pas d’idée de soi*”. What remains is to determine if this claim could not be stated in terms of negative certitude, which would signify in terms of knowledge. To the history of philosophical approaches to the subject Marion adjoins the famous expression of Rimbaud that has become a leitmotiv of the

<sup>10</sup> R. Descartes, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, VIII, AT X, 393.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem*, *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, AT VII, 25, 14–15; *Meditations on First Philosophy*, ed. and transl. J. Cottingham, Cambridge University Press 2013, p. 34. “But I do not yet have a sufficient understanding of what this ‘I’ is, that now necessarily exists” (p. 35).

<sup>12</sup> J.-L. Marion, *Certitudes négatives*, p. 32.

<sup>13</sup> Saint Augustine, *Confessiones*, IV, 4, 9.

late XX century crisis of subjectivity “je est un autre”<sup>14</sup>. “The I is an other”/ “I is someone else” and Marion adds: „but here, it is to me / myself (*c'est à moi*) that this alteration happens”. This famous passage comes from Arthur Rimbaud's letter to Georges Izambard called “La lettre du voyant” (1871).

Rimbaud has written:

I want to be a poet, and I'm working to make myself to a Seer: you will not understand at all, and I hardly know how to explain it to you. The point is to arrive at the unknown by the dissoluteness of all the senses. The suffering are enormous, but one has to be strong, to be born poet, and I have recognized myself to be a poet. It is not my fault at all. It is wrong to say: I think. One ought to say: I am thought. – Pardon the pun. – I is someone else<sup>15</sup>.

By these words the poet opposes the philosopher, the first one is thought, the second one thinks. The state of being thought equals suffering, a deregulation of all senses, therefore being *demens* – mad; but most of all instead of calling oneself a poet, recognizing the fact of being one. Marion who doesn't refer to the rest of the letter keeps attached to that *moi* that is being altered/alienated. Similarly to Saint Augustine's *Confessions: Factus eram ipse mihi magna quaestio*. However envisaging the entire passage we could suggest that negative certainty is gained by the “dissoluteness of all the senses”, through insanity in which “suffering are enormous”. Hence the question we have acknowledged concerning the status of an enlarged rationality reemerges with intensity. Perhaps the negative certitude that serves to enlarge the scope of rationality to include phenomena about which I have no positive knowledge – however still remaining conscious of the unknowable about them – should not be considered as a firm ground (Descartes) but rather an abyss (Nietzsche) where one falls into madness. In order to test such hypothesis we should study again the relationship between madness and method in Descartes – between the *cogito (quisnam sim ego ille?)* and madness.

As it is well known it is Michel Foucault who accused Descartes of having forbidden madness the right to speak, to be heard and understood. Since the XVII<sup>th</sup> century unreasonable speech is not only being deprived of arguments, but also cast away on bateaux ivres, removed into asylums etc. Foucault claimed that for Descartes madness is not even worth being

<sup>14</sup> J.-L. Marion, *Certitudes négatives*, p. 38.

<sup>15</sup> A. Rimbaud, *To Georges Izambard, Charleville, 13th May 1871*, transl. C. Magdelenat on webpage: <http://www.mag4.net/Rimbaud/DocumentsE1.html> accessed on the 15th of June 2015.

a hypothesis— there is no test of madness in Descartes' *Meditations* or rather there is a supposed test, but it is only noticed not serious enough to be undergone.

The mad, in effect, entirely delude themselves about what constitutes their actuality: they believe they are dressed when they are naked, they believe to be kings when they are poor. But can I use this example for myself? It is by such means that I will be able to transform into an effective resolution the proposition that I must doubt everything that comes to us in dreams? Impossible: *isti sunt dementes*, which is to say they are juridically disqualified as reasonable subjects, and to qualify myself as them, in the same fashion as them ("if I took anything of them") would disqualify me in turn and I could no longer be a reasonable subject for meditation (I would be [thought] equally mad)<sup>16</sup>.

The discussion about the moment of separation between madness and rationality has been the subject of the debate between Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Marion follows the line of those who noticed in the *Meditationes* an exclusion of the madman, because the madman who imagines to be a king or have a body of glass is incapable to put that thoughts under question – incapable of doubts<sup>17</sup>. Without referring at length to this discussion we would like to refer to a less known Cartesian trope of contemporary French thought within the same post-Heideggerian and post-Nietzschean tradition – that of Jean-Luc Nancy. This time it is not the *Meditationes* but Descartes' *Le discours de la méthode* that is taken under consideration. Firstly, we should mention that Descartes wrote the *Discourse* in French to make it accessible to those who did not know Latin, and this has made him worried about weaker minds of the possible readers. In the foreword and in many letters Descartes expresses his worries about those who will follow him, in order to prevent them from "falling into the extravagance of plans that go beyond their powers" (this *extravagance* is a French term for madness that appears only within the *Discourse*). A simple analysis of the place of extravagance in the *Discours de la méthode* reveals an ambiguity. The first "extravagance" appears in those who are supposed to follow Descartes and like knights in our tales of chivalry conceive plans beyond their capacity. The second emergence of extravagance is when the truth of the *cogito* is so firmly declared by Descartes, that all the most "extravagant suppositions of the skeptics" are incapable of shaking it. In this second case madness

<sup>16</sup> M. Foucault, *History of Madness*, transl. J. Murphy, ed. J. Kahlfa, Routledge 2006, p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> See J.-L. Marion, *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes. Analogie, création des vérités éternelles*, 1981.

is on the side of skepticism, extravagance is the synonym of hyperbolized skepticism, the one that encounters a limit under the figure of the *cogito* as the only firm ground. This first usage of extravagance should be considered more thoroughly and we should ask why Descartes refers to examples taken from fairy tales.

In fact this reference to tale or fable is not unprecedented. The *Discourse of the Method* while describing its aim draws a surprising analogy to the fable:

Thus my purpose here – says Descartes – is not to teach the method that everyone ought to follow in order to conduct his reason correctly, but merely to show how I have tried to conduct mine. Those who take it upon themselves to give precepts ought to regard themselves as more competent than those to whom they give them; and if they are found wanting in the least detail, they are blameworthy. But, putting forward this essay as merely as a history – or, if you prefer, a fable – in which, among the examples one can imitate, one also finds perhaps several others which one is right in not following, I hope that the essay will be useful to some, while harmful to none, and that my openness will be to everyone's liking (...ne proposit cet écrit que comme une histoire ou, si vous l'aimez mieux, que comme une fable, en laquelle, parmi quelques exemples qu'on peut imiter, on en trouvera peut-être aussi plusieurs autres qu'on aura raison de ne pas suivre)<sup>18</sup>.

This is how we are made aware of the “fabulatory law” of the *cogito's* invention. Following Nancy we need to ask ourselves why Descartes is referring to fable? The most common reason to speak in fables is to cover a philosophical (most often ethical) message under its fictitious costume. These could be called aesthetical reasons. A “feigned story cloaks a universal truth”<sup>19</sup>. If it is so, what is the moral of this concrete fable by Descartes? And what constitutes the covering? It is not surprising that we don't find immediate answers. The category of fable seems hardly consistent with the autobiographical aspect of Descartes' *Discourse*. If both the *Discourse* and the *Meditations* are based on an authentic discovery of the *cogito* then no feint is possible. Why then turning autobiography into fiction? Jean-Luc Nancy answers that if such message is clearly delivered at the beginning of the *Discourse on the Method*, it means that we need to abandon the truth-

<sup>18</sup> R. Descartes, *Discourse on Method, and Meditations on First Philosophy*, transl. D. A. Cress, Hackett Publishing Company, Indiana 1986, p. 2. French original: R. Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, AT VI, 4.

<sup>19</sup> J.-L. Nancy, *Ego Sum*, Flammarion, Paris 1979, p. 100. English translation D. E. Brewer in: *MLN*, vol. 93 no. 4 p. 642.

fiction dualism. Therefore, the fable appears in a different role than literary ornament, and puts under question truth relations.

The only possibility that seems to be left is that the *Discourse* is offered as a specific fable of the method. The fable of the method is a fable because like fables it has a moral value, and, as it is explicitly said, it is constituted of elements that should be imitated (pedagogical aspect) and some other that should not. But who are the characters of this fable? There is only one – Descartes himself. And what does the fable teach us? – asks Nancy. And he answers that from the very beginning, it seems that this fable consists in withdrawing the moral. “I only tell you my story”, “...the way that *I* have followed”. Therefore *Fabula non docet* or, as Nancy summarizes *fabula, docet ut non doceat* (I teach above all that I am not teaching).

The authenticity of my own effort, the *courage* to speak in my own name receives the costume of a fable. I insist on the word ‘courage’ in order to prevent us from considering that Descartes wants to hide himself. We rather should discard the depreciatory attitude toward fable as “mere fables”, that is less reliable forms of discourse. On the contrary, as Jean-Luc Nancy states the morality of this fable is frankness. This fable is about frankness, like the one about the Hare and the Tortoise is about perseverance. Descartes also points out frankness just after he has presented his piece of writing as a fable. “I hope that it will be useful to some without being harmful to any, and that all will be grateful to me for my frankness”. This reference to frankness touches upon the imitative aspect of the fable. According to Descartes there are some imitable and inimitable elements of his fable but he doesn’t elaborate furthermore which corresponds to which. Except when he claims that the single resolution to rid oneself of all opinions one has previously come to believe is not an example that each must follow.

The world is composed of two kinds of minds to which it is not at all suited. These two sorts are the ones who precipitates their judgments and the ones who follow other’s opinion. As Nancy concludes “the world is roughly composed of them. Only I remain”<sup>20</sup>. The invention of the *cogito* moves through the pathway of a method that seems very unusual because it should not be imitated. The novel of this invention speaks to everyone, in the native language of everyone (French instead of Latin), including those who have not received a philosophical education. But nonetheless those hypothetical readers and followers are divided into two groups both of which won’t imitate Descartes’ dictum. Only the *I* remains. Through these lines Jean-Luc Nancy performs such a reading in *Ego sum*, particularly in the chapter

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 647.

entitled *Fabula Mundi*, of Descartes that the foundation of modernity turns into a withdrawing and an inimitable fable of the I.

[W]hat is fabulously inimitable is ridding oneself of all fables and all examples, and maintaining oneself in this divestment (disinheritance) – set up as a model that can no longer constitute an example since in order to imitate it one first of all can no longer come to believe it<sup>21</sup>.

Up to now we have paid attention to two elements of Descartes's foreword: the fact of changing the meditation into a fable or a story while deciding to speak to everyone, and, his worry about "disturbing weaker minds" that dismisses the universality of his method. As Descartes explicitly claims in many fragments these worries concern the radicalism of skepticism, the radicalism of doubts (which strengthen Derrida's position according to which madness is in fact treated under the form of hyperbolized skepticism) – the extravagance of the skeptic.

Bringing these issues to an end and a conclusion we need to decide whether for Descartes it is more doubt than certainty that risks to engender madness. And on the condition that we agree with Jean-Luc Marion that the *cogito* belongs to the category of negative certitude, is this new category capable of fulfilling the hopes that Marion has put in it?

Are we really capable of thinking about negative certitude as an enlargement of our finitude, as a 'je est un autre' where there is still a moi/je/I that is altered, however positively altered. If we apply this debate to the Cartesian *cogito*, what Jean-Luc Marion has called "certitude négative" Jacques Derrida has earlier in the 1990s called "invention". In the article entitled "Invention of the other"<sup>22</sup> Derrida speaks of invention in terms of its possible/impossibility. A radical invention in terms of impossibility *t r a n s - g r e s s e s* the program, the plan, the status quo. If it is truly an invention of the other it should not return to the same anymore. Derrida remarks that until the XVIIth century it has been legitimate to speak about invention in terms of beings (existences) or truths (verities) that are not created, but discovered or unveiled for the first time. Thus invention is caught between program, code, convention and the requested transgression of conventions because of the arrival of something new<sup>23</sup>. Invention has fascinated Derrida for a large extent, more than other figures of impossibility dealing with the other or the otherness of the other like forgiveness, the gift or hospitality.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>22</sup> J. Derrida, *Psyché. Invention de l'autre*, Galilée, Paris 1987–1998.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33

In these ethical figures the act suffers a double-binding between the other (his gift, or his being welcomed or forgiven) and the same. An invention is deprived of this ethical nature but can only be performed by a human being as subject (“L’invention revient toujours à l’homme comme sujet”<sup>24</sup>). A machine is incapable of inventing precisely because it cannot transgress its own software. Only man is capable of transgressing himself, transgressing his own methodology. If the ‘I’ is someone else, an-other, if we are ready to go rediscover ourselves as others, we need to be inventive. We need to transgress our “I” by all suffering and all sort of extravagance. The negative certainty, as understood by Marion, is only methodical skepticism put in different terms, *je est un autre* means here an alienation of myself. Whereas the invention of the *cogito* that proceeds through the fable of the method, in its idiomatic character, in its inimitable character achieves positive certainty – the one that really drives mad.

Adieu, adieu, adieu! Remember me<sup>25</sup>

When Polonius informs the Queen and the King about Hamlet’s attitude he blunders “fiction” and corrects himself, saying: “fixation”. In fact Hamlet can seem contracted between those two, between the scene of the castle theater and the castle itself as theatrical scene observed in-between the supper of the funeral and the breakfast of the second royal wedding, but his madness is both fake and factual. Hamlet has recognized himself a poet or Seer and through the play of the actors invited to Elsinore, he is examining his new method. The “words” repeated three times (“words, words, words”), when Hamlet speaks with Polonius echo the “adieu” of the Ghost. Even though these words belong to the domain of fiction they remain the only adequate method of being faithful to the haunting truth. The negative certitude is the domain of poets and seers and it moves on the verge of madness – “it is here that is placed the fold of the [im]possible, it is here that the game of the veritable power takes place – the power that neither the world, nor metaphysics and without doubt nor philosophy can only have a nostalgic longing”<sup>26</sup>.

[...] Anyhow you had perish Hamlet you were not for life  
you believed in crystal notions not in human clay

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 36.

<sup>25</sup> W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, in: *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, Tegg & Co, London 1842, p. 744,

<sup>26</sup> J.-L. Marion, *Certitudes négatives*, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

always twitching as if asleep you hunted chimeras  
 wolfishly you crunched the air only to vomit  
 you knew no human thing you did not know even how  
 to breathe [...] <sup>27</sup>.

The other in his otherness spreads on the death of the subject, the death of the so-called Cartesian subject who becomes the synonym of knowledge-power alliance, of repression, of totalitarian regimes etc. The voice of the other, who doesn't understand the language of the tribunal that has judged him, is now carefully listened to. He is followed although he remains silent, he is remembered, and he will be revenged.

Marion gives the final word to his discussion with Jacques Derrida while operating in *Certitudes négatives* in the furthest areas of negativity. He touches upon the most controversial debates of contemporary philosophy referring to the animal-machine and bio-power meanders<sup>28</sup> still never betraying the positiveness of religious thinking. We cannot know ourselves, due to our resemblance to the unknown God<sup>29</sup>. *Je est un autre* because *I* have been created not according to genre, but "in the image of" God the Ultimate Other<sup>30</sup>.

While becoming a question to himself man follows the banished other/Other, he is haunted by this otherness, never certain of his "objectivity", never certain about the knowledge he gets. "The sufferings are enormous" nevertheless his skepticism (alike reduction and suspension) is only methodological. His doubts are not aiming at achieving certainty, but they are a medium for others – a fable, a piece of theatre – to experience as well the certainty one has achieved. Negative certitude is another term for paradoxical thinking and Marion follows Kierkegaard quoting this passage by the end of his book: "a thinker without paradox is like a lover without passion"<sup>31</sup>. The paradox appears in Marion as given, donation is a question of grace. We receive the grace of certainty, but also the grace of non-certainty. The philosopher looks into an abyss and within this vertigo he becomes

<sup>27</sup> Z. Herbert, *Elegy for Fortinbras*, transl. by Cz. Miłosz & P. Dale Scott, on webpage: <http://www.orangehigh.org/apps/download/ggyC9IzdsFQERqEb4lok4p5oDkA6MoLmlkLz-VDEgcIA7ihd7.doc/Elegy%20of%20Fortinbras.doc>, accessed on 15th June 2015.

<sup>28</sup> J.-L. Marion, *Certitudes négatives*, p. 54.

<sup>29</sup> *Idem*, p. 67–70. See: „Ainsi repère-t-on très ouvertement la ressemblance divine dans l'esprit humain, en ceci que celui-ci „sait seulement qu'il est, mais ne sait pas ce qu'il est”, p. 71.

<sup>30</sup> *Idem*, p. 76.

<sup>31</sup> *Idem*, p. 317: S. Kierkegaard, *Samlede Woerker*, second edition, Copenhagen 1920, t. IV, p. 230.

a poet, a story-teller, a *metteur-en-scène*. The given subject (*sujet adonné*) receives together with the negative certitude a unique experience – grace / givenness reveals its exclusivist character and the philosopher in his sincerity should warn his readers that it is no longer safe to follow him, as he stands on the threshold of madness. 

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