**Michel Henry**

## Contents

Is there Life after Barbarism? : Phenomenological Reflections on Science and the Future of the University

J. AARON SIMMONS & DAVID SCOTT 1

Between Consciousness and Life: Mapping the Freudian Unconscious in Henry and Ricoeur

SCOTT DAVIDSON 32

Religion und *Jouissance* im Verständnis von Jacques Lacan und Michel Henry

ROLF KÜHN 53

Knowing God as Our True Life: Phenomenology of Redemption in Michel Henry and Julian of Norwich

CHRISTINA M. GSCHWANDTNER 90

The Phenomenology of Birth

MICHEL HENRY 119

The Unity of Experience

ROLAND VASCHALDE 140

*“The Ox is bound. The Ox is nude …*

*The Vanquished sparkles.”*

Hélène Cixous, *Stigmata*

*Pli* (2017), 1-31

# Is there Life after Barbarism? Phenomenological Reflections on Science and the Future of the University

***J. AARON SIMMONS & DAVID SCOTT***

## Introduction

Despite a growing literature on the complicated authorship of the "new" or "radical" phenomenologist, Michel Henry,[1] only passing

[1] Just for some of the very recent work in this area, see Basil Vassilicos, 'Of Life that Resists: On Michel Henry's Notion of Self-Affection.' *Philosophy Today* 59:2 (Spring 2015) pp. 207-25; Brian Harding, 'The Old and the New Phenomenology of Religion,' *Heythrop Journal* LV (2014) pp. 533-44; Giovanna Costanzo, 'Towards a Phenomenology of Life and the Invisible: Generativity and Sonship in the Thought of Michel Henry,' in *Analecta Husserliana: Phenomenology of Space and Time—The Forces of the Cosmos and the Ontopoietic Genesis of Life: Book Two.* Ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (New York, NY: Springer, 2014), pp. 17-30; Christina M. Gschwandtner, 'Revealing the Invisible: Henry and Marion on Aesthetic Experience,' *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 28:3 (2014) pp. 305-14; Frédéric Seyler, 'Is Radical Phenomenology Too Radical? Paradoxes of Michel Henry's Phenomenology of Life,' *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 27:3 (2013) pp. 277-86; Michelle Rebidoux, *The Philosophy of Michel Henry (1922-2002): A French Chrsitian Phenomenology of Life* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2012); Brian Harding, 'Auto-Affectivity and Michel Henry's Material Phenomenology,' *The Philosophical Forum*

attention has been given to his small book, *La Barbarie*[2], in which he applies material phenomenology to what he perceived to be the contemporary crisis of culture.[3] This lack of scholarly focus, however, should not indicate that *Barbarism* was somehow peripheral to Henry's overall authorship. Drawing on the work of Simon Jarvis[4] and Michael Staudigl[5], we want to suggest that *Barbarism* represents something of a fulfillment of Henry's entire phenomenological project in that it unites his phenomenology of life with his social theory.[6] It is where the theoretical

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43:1 (Spring 2012) pp. 91-100; László Tengelyi, 'New Phenomenology in France,' *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 50:2 (June 2012) pp. 295-303. See also *Studia Phaenomenologica* 9 (2009), and *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17:3 (2009), which both feature very good essays on Henry's thought.

[2] Michel Henry, *La Barbarism*e, (originally published by Paris: Èditions Grasset & Fasquelle, 1987) English translation, *Barbarism*, trans. Scott Davidson (London: Continuum, 2012).

[3] For example, in François-David Sebbah's excellent book, *Testing the Limit: Derrida, Henry, Levinas, and the Phenomenological Tradition*, Henry's *Barbarism* doesn't even get included in the bibliography (trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012)). Jeffrey Hanson and Michael R. Kelly's excellent edited volume *Michel Henry: The Affects of Thought* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012) only mentions *Barbarism* in one of the essays (specifically in Kevin Hart's chapter, 'Inward Life,' pp. 87-110). Similarly, in his nearly 400 page book, *The Contemplative Self After Michel Henry: A Phenomenological Theology*, which is devoted entirely to Henry, Joseph Rivera only mentions *Barbarism* in passing a few times ((Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), see pp. 101-102, 114, 155). That said, for a few notable considerations of *Barbarism*, see J.G. Hart, 'A Phenomenological Theory and Critique of Culture: A Reading of Michel Henry's *La Barbarie*,' *Continental Philosophy Review* 32 (1999) pp. 255-70; Rolf Kühn, 'Crise de la culture et vie culturelle,' in *Retrouver la vie oubliée: Critiques et perspectives de la philosophie de Michel Henry*, ed. Jean-Michel Longneaux (Namur: Presses Universitaires de Namur, 2000), pp. 139-63. See also Simon Jarvis, 'Michel Henry's Concept of Life,' International Journal of Philosophical Studies 17:2 (2009) pp. 361-375; Michael Staudigl, 'From the Metaphysics of the Individual to the Critique of Society: ON the Practical Significance of Michel Henry's Phenomenology of Life,' Continental Philosophy Review 45 (2012) pp. 339-361; and J. Aaron Simmons and Bruce Ellis Benson, The New Phenomenology (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), chapter 8.

[4] Jarvis, S., 'Michel Henry's Concept of Life.'

[5] Staudigl, M., 'From the 'Metaphysics of the Individual to the Critique of Society.'

[6] For other places where Henry takes up such social theory, see Michel Henry, *From Communism to Capitalism: Theory of a Catastrophe*, trans. Scot Davidson (London:

phenomenological rubber meets the practical social road, as it were, or where Henry's material phenomenology of life's auto-affection meets the "rough ground," as Wittgenstein might say, of human existence in a cultural framework.

Considering the possible centrality of Henry's work on culture to his entire authorship, what might explain the lack of sustained scholarly engagement with his work in this area? Jarvis proposes a striking, and yet quite plausible, rationale: Henry's work on culture, art, and language, "are embarrassing because they make it clear how little of what we think of as the human sciences, or, indeed, ordinary common sense, could possibly remain in place if we were to accept Henry's project of a material phenomenology."[7] Such a suggestion is extreme, but not without some warrant given Henry's basic thesis that scientific modernity amounts to the death of culture.[8]

Considering the tendency of many scholars to find the contemporary relevance of phenomenology to exist precisely in its ability to work alongside, and as a resource for, the cognitive and human sciences, Henry's seemingly thoroughgoing critique of science would stand in stark opposition to this trend.[9] It seems that for Henry when it comes not only

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Bloomsbury, 2014); *Phénoménologie de la vie III: Sur l'éthique et la religion* (Paris: Presses Universitaries de France, 2004); *Phénoménologie de la vie III: De l'art et du politique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003); *Marx I: Une philosophie de la réalité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976); and *Marx II: Une philosophie de l'économie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

[7] Jarvis S., 'Michel Henry's Concept of Life,' pp. 364-5.

[8] Henry, M., *Barbarism*, p. 3.

[9] Moreover, such engagement is not new, but has occurred for many decades. For considerations of phenomenology's important relation to the social sciences, see Maurice Natanson, ed., *Phenomenology and the Social Sciences, 2 Vols* (Evanstan, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973); Maurice Roche, *Phenomenology, Language, and the Social Sciences* (London and Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973); Jean-François Lyotard, *Phenomenology*, trans. Brian Beakley (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991). For the recent trends in phenomenology and cognitive sciences, see Jean Petitot, Francisco J. Varela, Bernard Pachoud, and Jean-Michel Roy, eds., *Naturalizing Phenomenology: Issues in Contemporary Phenomenology and Cognitive Science* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

to phenomenology, but also for human existence itself, *the less science the better!* However, we should not be too quick to conclude that being a phenomenologist requires being opposed to technological advancement and experimental objectivity.[10]

But, is there a way of reading Henry's proposal such that it does not stand opposed to science, but instead serves to open spaces for reconceiving science itself as a possible means of Life's self-expression in the world? Given the increasing (and near exclusive) focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) disciplines in light of mounting corporate and political pressure on colleges and universities, the very future of the University is implicated in the answers to the questions raised by Henry's project. According to Henry, barbarism "corrupts society" in ways that will eventually make it "impossible to maintain a University that lives up to its own concept."[11] In order to restore the University, though, is the only hope found in the elimination of the departments of biology, chemistry, anthropology, and psychology, etc.?

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1999); David Woodruff Smith and Amie L. Thomasson, eds., *Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind, 2nd Edition* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012); Havi Carel and Darian Meacham, eds., *Phenomenology and Naturalism: Examining the Relationship between Human Experience and Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Matthew Ratcliffe, *Experiences of Depression: A Study in Phenomenology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). See also, Bernard Freydberg, 'What Becomes of Science in 'The Future of Phenomenology'?' *Research in Phenomenology* 32 (2002) pp. 219-29.

[10] Given the seeming opposition to science outright, perhaps Dominique Janicaud was right to suggest that new phenomenology is basically just (some form of) revelational theology in disguise! See, Dominique Janicaud et al. *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate,* trans. Bernard G. Prusak and Jeffrey L. Kosky (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2000). That said, we ask this question for effect and do not mean to endorse Janicaud's reading. Indeed, one of the present authors (Simmons) has argued at length against such a theological interpretation of new phenomenology (see Simmons and Benson, *The New Phenomenology*).

[11] Henry, M., *Barbarism*, p. 115.

These are difficult questions and often it seems like Henry just makes them more difficult rather than offering productive resources for answering them. *On the one hand, if we take Henry too seriously*, then it seems like we disconnect Life from the world to such a degree that we may have culture, but we are likely to be quite miserable. As Jean-Louis Chrétien writes, "World without life, life without world . . . one of the finest definitions of Hell that has ever been given."[12] Or, given Henry's account of the inescapable self-enclosure of life without contact with the world, Jarvis notes that for some, "Henry's thought can feel like an incarceration."[13] *On the other hand, if we don't take Henry seriously enough*, then we are in danger of falling into the very self-forgetting barbarism of which he warns. Basically, we find ourselves facing a tension with Henry's own thought. Ontological monism, and the scientific culture that endorses it, destroys the culture of life, but attending to the culture of life seems to be helpfully facilitated (at least to some extent) by the very technological and scientific developments offered in the modern world. What is needed is a way of appropriating Henry's critique without following him to the extremes toward which his account sometimes tends. Assuming that such a middle way is possible, how, then, should we understand the role of science in contemporary culture and the future of the University in light of Henry's account?

Faced with this complicated cultural and educational reality, we will suggest that we should resist the dual temptations of ignoring Henry's warnings along with overreacting in response to them. Accordingly, we will take seriously the potential extremism fostered by Henry's critique of science, but also take Henry's critique seriously as an important resource for (a) integrating science into contemporary phenomenology, and (b) the future of the University itself. In order to show the practical traction of such a *via media*, we will argue for two theses: *First*, by locating something of a tension into Henry's own thought, we will contend that he

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[12] Jean-Louis Chrétien, 'La vie sauve,' *Les etudes philosophiques* 51 (1988) pp. 37-49, cited by Jarvis, S., 'Michel Henry's Concept of Life,' p. 363.
[13] Jarvis, S., 'Michel Henry's Concept of Life,' p. 363.

can and should be read as only opposed to what we will term eliminative scientism, and not to science, more broadly. *Second*, we will argue that the University can learn from Henry about how to regain its necessary social position. To that end, we will offer three recommendations for how the University can successfully learn from Henry about how to move forward (1) disciplinarily, (2) evaluatively, and (3) institutionally. If the University is to find *life after barbarism*, as it were, and successfully incorporate the humanities, the arts, *and the sciences* into that life, then these recommendations are crucial for its future identity and continuing influence.

## 1. Husserlian First-steps

Given the significant focus that previous phenomenological discussions of culture have received—especially those by Husserl[14] and Heidegger[15]—Henry's own account should be read in light of that particular history. In order, then, to consider the constructive philosophy that occurs in his critique of culture, let's consider a bit of how his work in this regard occurs in concert with his phenomenological heritage.

Most importantly, Henry's basic idea of "barbarism" itself seems to be a direct appropriation of Husserl's diagnosis in *The Crisis* that "the reason for a failure of a rational culture . . . lies not in the essence of rationalism itself but solely in its being rendered superficial, in its entanglement in "naturalism" and "objectivism."[16] In response to this situation, Husserl continues on to suggest that:

> There are only two escapes from the crisis of European existence: the downfall of Europe in its estrangement from its own rational sense of life, its fall into hostility toward the spirit

[14] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).
[15] Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).
[16] Husserl, E., *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 299.

> and into *barbarity*; or the rebirth of Europe from the spirit of philosophy through a heroism of reason that overcomes naturalism once and for all. Europe's greatest danger is weariness.[17]

Notice that Husserl suggests that "barbarity" would be the likely consequence of Europe's continued slide into what he terms "objectivism." This not only directly anticipates Henry's own account, but also even the specifics of his language. Indeed, what Husserl terms "weariness," we find revised in Henry and described as the "sickness of life." The same inheritance can be found in relation to Heidegger's discussion of technology. For Henry, "technology" names the miserable state when science is allowed to exist "alone," rather than as simply one option among others that is available for human knowledge, and thus it loses all reference to living itself.[18]

Importantly, Henry's appreciation of the phenomenological heritage in which he is working only occurs with important caveats. Specifically, for Henry, Husserl's account remains all too wedded to intentionality such that he is unable to arrive at an understanding of what James G. Hart terms "the wisdom and first things, the essence and *telos* of philosophy."[19] As Henry writes in "La question de la vie et de la culture" –

> La conscience est pour Husserl la conscience du monde, elle est la conscience de quelque chose, à savoir l'intentionnalité. Que la conscience soit en son essence intentionnalité, cela veut dire que c'est l'intentionnalité qui place dans la condition de la phénoménalité, qui est la phénoménalité elle-même, c'est elle qui fait voir.[20]

For Henry, Husserl's critique of rationalism still problematically turns to

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[17] *Ibid.* (emphasis added).
[18] Henry, M., *Barbarism*, pp. 42-3.
[19] Hart, J.G., 'A Phenomenological Theory and Critique of Culture,' p. 256.
[20] Henry, M., *Phénoménologie de la vie III*, p. 13.

the "heroism of reason," rather than to the self-affectation of life itself, as the salvific alternative to barbarity. Nonetheless, Husserl's understanding of the dangers of objectivism might explain why Henry sees Husserl as being less explicitly guilty of ontological monism than those phenomenologists who come after him.[21] According to Jeffrey Hanson and Michael R. Kelly, this fact leads Henry to read Husserl "as much closer to the promise of (a) phenomenology (of life) as Henry understands it than his successors."[22] Alternatively, for Henry, Heidegger certainly understood the way in which technology eliminates the subjectivity of existing individuals in a way that resonates with Henry's account, but didn't appreciate the pathetic dimension of subjectivity as distinct from the objectivity of the world, as such.

Accordingly, in *Barbarism* Henry explicitly describes the "insufficiency of the classical approach of phenomenology" as follows:

> It takes the opposite course from Galilean science and carries out a questioning back from the world of science to the lifeworld and then from it to the consciousness of this world. Consciousness of the world is "consciousness of," intentionality, and ultimately the ek-stasis of Being in which intentionality is deployed in turn. It does not allow for the collection of sensation into oneself and thus its coming into being. Instead, in the opening up of ek-stasis, sensation is cast outside itself, disposed and dispersed as a "representational sensation." It is the humus of this world as the lifeworld, and as a result, this representational sensation can only ever be the irreal representation of the real sensation whose reality is found

[21] As Jeffrey Hanson and Michael R. Kelly write: "The originality of Henry's reading of the history of the method of phenomenology, if you will, is that it considers Husserl's sucessors more blatantly guilty than Husserl himself of the bias of ontological monism" ('Michel Henry and The Idea of Phenomenology: Immanence, Givenness and Reflection." In Hanson and Kelly, eds., Michel Henry: The Affects of Thought, pp. 62-84, 66).

[22] *Ibid*.

> in auto-sensation, not in the consciousness of the world but in life.[23]

Here, Henry not only summarizes his frustration with the objectivism of scientific culture, but also with classical phenomenological attempts to overcome that objectivism in ways that he takes to reinforce it, albeit in an indirect way. For Henry, classical phenomenology rightly critique objectivism while problematically continuing to grant the basic logic according to which it operates—viz., an ontological monism that "reduces all awareness to one form of awareness construed as a dyadic *relation* of knower to known"[24] For Henry, when it comes to life, knowledge is not the right category—as Hanson and Kelly explain, "Life cannot be known; it can only be lived."[25]

If classical phenomenology understands the risk of barbarity and technological blindness, but misunderstands the radicality of the solution required appropriately to respond, the reason lies in the framing of the problem itself. Despite the similarity in language and basic concern, Henry's own positive proposal begins by identifying the crisis slightly differently than his phenomenological forerunners. For Husserl, the crisis is one that requires explanation due to what he terms the "constant successes" of the sciences.[26] In this way, Husserl, more effectively than Henry, recognizes that the sciences are not only important for social existence, but also for the way in which they seem able to "be changeable in the total style of their systematic theory-building and methodology."[27] Indeed, Husserl even goes so far as to wonder if a philosophical critique of the sciences would lead to a regressive approach that would erase the impressive self-corrective aspects of modern science. Science, for Husserl, is not problematic, of itself, but simply due to the way in which

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[23] Henry, M., *Barbarism*, p. 41.
[24] Hanson, J. and Kelly, M.R., 'Michel Henry and The Idea of Phenomenology,' p. 63.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 67.
[26] Husserl, E., *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 3.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

its positivistic naturalism has led to a "loss of its meaning for life."[28] "The exclusiveness with which the total world-view of modern man, in the second half of the nineteenth century," he writes,

> lets itself be determined by the positive sciences and be blinded by the "prosperity" they produced, meant an indifferent turning-away from the questions which are decisive for a genuine humanity. Merely fact-minded sciences make merely fact-minded people.[29]

Such "fact-minded people" are literally products of the scientific proceduralism taken for granted in culture more broadly.

Almost anticipating a Sartrean conception of the individual, Husserl conceives of the person as free both in relation to individual and social action.[30] Such freedom necessarily connects to the rational dignity of human personhood. Only as rational can freedom be an expression of subjectivity, rather than merely a property of bodies in motion. Yet, this conception raises important questions about the task and function of scientific inquiry in relation to human existence:

> What does science have to say about reason and unreason or about us men as subjects of this freedom? The mere science of bodies clearly has nothing to say; it abstracts from everything subjective.[31]

Connecting reason with what he terms "the spiritual world,"[32] Husserl does not worry that science, as such, is barbaric, but that its modern focus on objectivity has come at the cost of being oriented toward that which makes such objectivity possible. We might even see Husserl's move here as an expansion of his early phenomenological idea that objectivity is only possible as a result of intersubjectivity. By reducing free, rational,

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[28] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

spiritual individuals to organisms of empirical study, "positivism, in a manner of speaking, decapitates philosophy."[33] Although flipping the metaphor, here Husserl's claim is reminiscent of Kahlil Gibran's claim that ultimately philosophers end up in a situation where they must "sell their heads to feed their hearts."[34] Both Husserl and Gibran point to the danger of erasing subjectivity from inquiry; of eliminating thinking from the history of thought; of replacing *philosophy* with merely a series of competing *philosophies*. Importantly, though, in seeming contrast to Henry, the critique of objectivism is made *in the name of science* (properly understood as a way of living rigorously), rather than a critique of science in the name of life.

The task outlined by Husserl requires keeping faith in the process of inquiry instead of merely seeking an accumulation of more data. "If a man loses this faith," Husserl explains, "it means nothing less than the loss of faith 'in himself', in his own true being."[35] In an almost Kierkegaardian vein, Husserl continues on to claim that "this true being is not something he always already has, with the self-evidence of the 'I am', but something he only has and can have in the form of the struggle for his truth, the struggle to make himself true."[36] Then, in a Heideggerian conclusion with which David Foster Wallace would agree,[37] Husserl proclaims that "true being is *everywhere* an ideal goal, a task of *epistēmē* or 'reason', as opposed to being [that] which through *doxa* is merely thought to be, unquestioned and 'obvious'."[38] What, then, should philosophers "who believe, do in order to be able to believe"?[39] Husserl's

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[33] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[34] Khalil Gibran, *Collected Works* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), p. 213.
[35] Husserl, E., *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 13.
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] David Foster Wallace, *This is Water* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2009).
[38] Husserl, E., *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 13.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

answer to this question is that "we must inquire back into what was originally and always sought in philosophy," which Husserl takes to be "the possibility of universal knowledge."[40]

According to Husserl, keeping faith in and for philosophy means interrogating the obviousness of the cultural forms of life in which philosophy now operates as a science. Again, though, for Husserl the problem is not science, itself, but merely the mode in which such science invites skepticism about anything other than empirical objectivity rather than striving toward the universal truth of reason as the animating impetus of ancient philosophical questioning.

**2. Henry's Diagnosis: Science vs. Life**

When turning his attention to the "sickness of life" that affects contemporary society and threatens to eliminate culture itself, Henry's focus is slightly different than Husserl's. Rather than beginning with Husserl's emphasis on the ancient calling of philosophy to strive toward the universality of reason as the way to turn science back to its connection with the meaning of human life and the freedom that defines it, Henry starts with a conviction that lies at the heart of his entire authorship: "Everything has a value because everything is done by and for life."[41] Yet, in line with Henry's challenge to ontological monism, any reductive emphasis on the relation of knower to known in an objectivist sense fails to appreciate life itself. Arising from this view is Henry's oppositional framing of life against the world; science against culture; the non-intentional phenomenology of life against the centrality of intentionality in classical phenomenological methodology. Resulting from such oppositions is Henry's fundamental connection of life and culture. Hence, Henry suggests that culture is best understood as simply "the auto-revelation of life in its self-growth."[42] This essential relationship between life and culture on the one hand, and the essential connection

[40] *Ibid.*
[41] Henry, M., *Barbarism*, xv.
[42] *Ibid.*

between ontological monism and barbarism on the other is ultimately what underlies our suggestion that *Barbarism* is not a deviation from Henry's overall phenomenology, but instead represents the fulfillment of it.

Henry's basic thesis is that "we are entering into barbarism."[43] But what does he mean by "barbarism," specifically? At its most basic, "barbarism" names "not just a question of a crisis of culture but of its destruction."[44] The destruction of culture matters primarily because it is tantamount to a "revolution of the human being."[45] Since culture "*is an action that life exerts on itself and through which it transforms itself insofar as life is both transforming and transformed*,"[46] Henry ultimately claims that life simply "is culture itself."[47] It might seem then that if culture is life and life is everywhere, then if anything culture is unstoppable, rather than being in existential danger. Henry distinguishes, however, between life "that forms the theme of biology and the object of science," on the one hand, and life "in the true sense—*the absolute phenomenological life whose essence consists in the very fact of sensing or experiencing oneself and nothing else*—of what we will call subjectivity," on the other hand.[48] So, immediately Henry contrasts what we might term *objective life* and *subjective life*.

This crucial contrast is not merely a difference relation, but reflects a normative hierarchy. Subjectivity is the condition of engaging in a discourse, practice, or discipline oriented toward objectivity. Borrowing from Mitt Romney, we might say that Henry is fundamentally trying to make the case that "scientists are people too!" That is, scientists are first and foremost alive—and should feel themselves as such. Living is immediate auto-affection. Life is never something that stands over-

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

against one's living. It simply *is* that living, that self-transforming, that self-cultivating of oneself in relation to oneself. "Life feels and experiences itself," Henry writes, "in such a way that there is nothing in it that would be experienced or felt. This is because the fact of feeling oneself is really what makes one alive."[49] This novel conception of true (subjective) life is fundamental to his conception of culture (as simply a different way of expressing the same idea) because it pits life against objectivity and intentionality, and thereby against modern science since "scientific knowledge is objective."[50] This opposition is especially highlighted in the title of an essay by Henry: "Ce que la science ne sait pas."[51] What is it that science cannot know? For Henry, it is life, as such.

Science's epistemic limit in relation to life is not due to a failure of evidential warrant, as if science just needed to gather more information before being able to know life, but is due instead to the nature of life itself as *non-evidential*. Henry's move on this front is part and parcel of his critique of Husserl's continued embrace of intentionality. Intentionality, especially as underwritten by Henry's all pervasive diagnosis of ontological monism, requires an object—that to which the "of" in "consciousness-of" refers.

The opposition between science and life is thoroughgoing and unambiguous: "Science as such has no relation with culture, because it develops outside of its realm."[52] Arguing that ethics, art, and religion are the three domains in which culture is embraced and fostered, Henry seems to make no room for art and science to be mutually reinforcing. "Science and art," he says, "fall outside of one another. The heterogeneity between their respective domains is so radical that the very thought of a relation between the two is, at least for the moment, impossible."[53] This distinction between the positive sciences that know nothing of life and

[49] *Ibid.*
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[51] Henry, M., *Phénoménologie de la vie III*, pp. 41-51.
[52] Henry, M., *Barbarism*, p. 23.
[53] *Ibid.*

those human cultural activities that do foster an appreciation for ever deeper and more engaged living (viz., ethics, art, and religion) amounts to a distinction between that which forces the dichotomy between knower and known and that which invites full participation and investment. When done most compellingly, ethics is not a matter of knowing what to do, but living well; art is not a matter of a theory of beauty, but of subjective feeling and sensation; religion is not about objectivist knowledge of God, but instead about lived devotion and subjective transformation.

That ethics, art, and religion are culturally significant because of their relation to Life (as praxis) is also a notion that Henry connects with his suggestion that life is Truth. In various texts, Henry distinguishes between the truth of life and the truth of the world.[54] That distinction now serves to underlie the idea that ethics, art, and religion are expressions of Truth, rather than merely relativistic illusion as would be the case for the positive sciences exclusively occupied with matters of the world.

## 3. Too Radical?

Given the stark dichotomies, the rejection of evidence, the critique of intentionality, and the seeming disregard to worldly concerns that characterize Henry's thought, it is not surprising that some critics have wondered "is radical phenomenology too radical?"[55] There is certainly much to wonder about in this respect, but since our focus here is on the way in which Henry sees science as the threat to culture, we will only address that specific issue. Is Henry's diagnosis such that it requires science, as such, to be replaced with artistic sensibility? Is there no room for science as a human practice within a thriving life-giving culture? In light of Henry's extreme opposition between science and life, it is tempting just to reject science altogether, and along with it all concern for the world as objective. Yet, we think that such a temptation amounts to taking Henry too seriously and thereby misses the nuance that is possibly

[54] See, for example, Michel Henry, *I am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
[55] Seyler, 'Is Radical Phenomenology Too Radical?'

present in his account.

Now, we want to make clear here that our middle way for reading Henry highlights a tension in Henry's thought that we think is sometimes difficult to appreciate due to his own tendency toward extremism in his oppositional rhetoric regarding ontological monism and the scientism that tends to be the contemporary manifestation of it. For example, although in *Barbarism* Henry proposes an absolute incompatibility between art and science, elsewhere he seems to leave room for a bit less stark contrast. In his discussion of the way in which a community defined by "pathos-with" does not abandon the world, but merely refocuses the way life and the world are related, he contends that,

> This pathetic community does not exclude the world but only the abstract world, which is to say, the world that does not exist and has put subjectivity out of play. But community does include the real world—the cosmos—for which every element—form, color, and so forth—exists ultimately as auto-affective.[56]

Here we can see that his real target is not objectivity, pure and simple, but *objectivism*. The problem is not that there are objects that can be known through scientific inquiry, but that we find ourselves in communities whereby all that is not appropriately an object for such scientific inquiry is either unknowable or irrelevant. Ultimately, then, the main issue for Henry is what he will term the *reductionism*, which we think is better understood as an outright *eliminativism*, that attends the ideological context in which modern science has itself become a pseudo-cultural mode of life in such a way that it erases the possibility of being enmeshed in one's living in favor of merely gaining information about things that are alive.

This more modest framing of Henry's project is important because it

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[56] Michel Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, trans. Scott Davidson (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 134.

begins to close the gap between his account and that offered by Husserl. As we noted previously, Husserl distinguishes between what we might term *science*, on the one hand, and *scientism*, on the other. For Husserl, good science will, itself, contest the reductive/eliminative excesses of scientism. Upon further reflection and careful analysis, we propose that a similar sort of distinction can be found in Henry as well. For example, he claims that even though he has established that "science has no relation with culture," he goes on to insist that this fact "on its own . . . does not justify any pejorative evaluation or condemnation that would lead to the disqualification of science."[57] The sentences that follow this statement are extremely important for avoiding an uncharitable, and perhaps "embarrassing," reading of Henry:

> The philosopher has the duty to intervene *only when* the domain of science is understood as *the sole* existing domain of true being and subsequently leads to the rejection of the domain of life and culture into nonbeing or an illusory appearance. . . . [I]t is not scientific knowledge that is in question; it is the ideology joined to it today which holds that it is *the sole* possible knowledge and that *all other ones* must be eliminated. Amidst the collapse of all beliefs, that is *the sole* belief that persists in the modern world, the previously encountered and universally echoed conviction that knowledge means science.[58]

Notice the repeated indication that it is the eliminativism of scientific ideology (what we are terming scientism) that Henry opposes. With such eliminativism comes abstraction from the praxis of living itself and that is where the death of culture occurs. Assuming Henry's claim that culture is life and life is immediately auto-affecting, if it is the case that such immediacy, and what Henry will term "sensibility," are things that science should reject in the name of mediated evidential data, then science is in trouble. But, when we realize that science is an activity

[57] Henry, M., *Barbarism*, p. 23.
[58] *Ibid.* (emphasis added).

conducted by living individuals in communities potentially defined by pathos-with, we begin to open room for science to be relevant to existence. Even if science is not culture producing in the same ways that ethics, art, and religion might be (given its perhaps more indirect relation to the Truth of life), it is not necessarily culture denying. Rather, it is an historical activity in which living individuals engage as situated in their lifeworld. Henry's point is that if the scientists would resist the idea of replacing the lifeworld with the abstract world of objective inquiry, then such inquiry would itself be of value in the world. Again, he is not opposed to the world, but to the *abstract* world, which is itself a product of the eliminative ideology so totally embraced unquestioningly by so many after Galileo.

"This reduction of the lifeworld to the world of science," Henry writes, "can only be prohibited by a thought that can grasp the lifeworld in its specificity, that is to say, as strange as it might seem, in its irreducibility to the world and to any possible world."[59] Instead of turning to a radical phenomenology of life, we have turned instead to technology—or science as taken as isolated in the world. Technology, we might say, is for Henry not the collective name for computers and cellphones, but instead is a reference to the condition in which meaning, identity, and value are mere products of the technological production itself. In this way, the epistemic revolution of modern science leads to an ontological revolution: "The knowledge that makes action possible and regulates it is no longer the knowledge of life but that of science."[60] Importantly, Henry connects this shift to the economic realities that undergird its actuality.[61] The sheer fact that, for so many, their sense of self is a result of their ability to get the new cellphone model or the latest option in the new car, or the slimmest version of the new computer, etc., is good reason to think that Henry was not entirely misguided in his concerns in this regard.

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[59] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[61] *Ibid.*, p. 48ff.

When understood as differentiating between science and scientism, Henry's account does not have to be viewed as being as radical as it might initially seem. Though there are certainly still questions that remain regarding his rhetorical framing of the issue such that all objectivity seems foreign to life, when it comes to science itself as being necessarily barbaric, we can see that he does not need to be read so starkly. When we appreciate this possible nuance in his argument, even if rarely in his language, we can begin to take him more seriously as offering a resource for how to reconceive of science within the context of the modern University and, thus, appreciate his critical challenge to contemporary society without taking him too seriously and overreacting to that challenge by abandoning science altogether. Though wanting to avoid reductionism/eliminativism, Henry must work to avoid falling into a different form of such eliminativism. Accordingly, the point is not to end scientific inquiry, but simply not to allow such inquiry to be self-grounding. In fact, in many ways Henry's own generally Marxist commitments should lead him to realize that often material products (often resulting from advancement in scientific research) allow for life to be embraced and celebrated by those who otherwise would likely be only concerned with continued survival. Technology can be disastrous for human self-conception, but it also can free up physical beings in ways that allow the time it takes to produce and reflect on matters that are of ethical, aesthetic, and religious significance.

Indeed, it might be that like other new phenomenologists such as Levinas, Derrida, and Marion, Henry's rhetorical extremism is what allows for readers to be awoken from their complacency within the obviousness of inherited historical frames of reference. Technology can make us complacent and passive, but it can also allow us to be able to find the time to be reflective and invested in other tasks that would have otherwise been ignored. However, one place in which such critical awareness should be maximally fostered, regardless of the technological situation of a society, is the University. Yet, Henry warns that one of the casualties of the rise of barbarism is the University itself.

## 4. The De(con)struction of the University?

For Henry, the economic logic that underwrites the eliminativism of scientistic epistemology must be read in concert with the corporatization of the University as all being part of this dangerous slide toward barbarism. As science is funded in relation to specific conceptions of "progress" as defined by those with the money to be able to steer inquiry and cultural understanding, what was once a discourse that at least ostensibly understood itself to be neutral in relation to the results of its experimental endeavors now becomes predictably invested in those experiments that lead in particular directions—those that continue to shut down the realization that science is never able to be in isolation without the economic powers that benefit from such technological "culture." But surely a scientist could read some phenomenology and break free from this situation such that she could do science without giving in to the logic of scientism, right? Well, for Henry this situation "would never happen because the scientist is in the service of science" (read: the service of power relations that reinforce the elminativist logic of scientism toward the end of economic benefit of those already identified as powerful).[62] Even if such a person were to attempt to start such a radically phenomenological scientific revolution, she would be quickly replaced by "hundreds of others [who] would rise up and come along to take up the torch."[63]

Rather than originality, creativity, and life's own self-expression, barbarism understands humanity as nothing more than "unemployed energy."[64] Henry's use of this phrase is interesting given the increasing insistence within broader society that the point of the University is to prepare students for jobs in the "real world." Notice, though, that the "real world" is now often synonymous with scientific and technological abstraction, but packaged as practically important for what really matters

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 55.
[63] *Ibid.*
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

to our bodily comfort and material happiness. Not surprisingly, when we recast the "value" of a humanistic education in terms of its ability to get someone a job in a scientific world, the concern for value itself is devalued. Unemployed energy is not simply that life is unable to express itself on its own terms, but a revealing phrase that speaks to the heart of the problematic economic logic of scientism as defended not only by scientists but also by politicians. In such a situation, the University is no longer the shaper of culture, but merely the reflection of what now passes as culture according to the corporations, the politicians, and the powerful who benefit from the erasure of critique as a mode of practical action and lived existence. As Henry explains at the close of *Barbarism*:

> The concrete truth of this entire movement can be summed up as follows: *traditionally, intellectual and spiritual power was assumed by those who fulfilled the great movement of self-growth of life and who were dedicated to the task of transmitting it to others through a possible repetition, but this power has been taken away from the clerics and intellectuals by new masters who blindly serve the world of technology and the media—by journalists and politicians.*[65]

Why, though, should journalists and politicians be problematic spokespersons for the task of the University? The answer lies in Henry's conception of *marginality*. Henry rightly notes the paradoxical reality that the University is conceptually defined by a universality (*uni-veritas*) that makes it into a "homogeneous totality."[66] Yet, this universality is not truly universal, but instead constrained within a definite sphere such that "universities were thus constituted on a principle of marginality that was deliberate."[67] In other words, the University should stand out and, in many ways, stand alone as a sphere in which other social laws, rules, and expectations do not apply as they would elsewhere. Importantly, recent

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 136.
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 115.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 116.

case law and public controversies concerning freedoms of speech, expression, job-security, gun regulations, etc., on college campuses all speak to the university's continuing, but often losing, struggle to maintain this marginality.[68] While courts have recognized the need for lassitude in select academic practices,[69] claims for what we might term "academic" marginality have been more consistently rejected.[70] Supporting Henry's

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[68] As just two of numerous examples, universities have been steadfast in their attempts to buck the legislative and judicial trend against marginality when it comes to hate speech prohibitions and gun control on campus. For discussions of each in spite of routine losses in courts for the university, see Azhar Majeed, 'Defying the Constitution: The Rise, Persistence, and Prevalence of Campus Speech Codes," *Georgetown Journal of Law & Public Policy* 7:2 (Summer 2009): 481-544; and Michael Rogers, 'Guns on Campus: Continuing Controversy,' *Journal of College and University Law* 38:3 (2012): 663-707.

[69] *See, e.g., Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 305 (2003) (recognizing that universities have a compelling interest in promoting a diverse student body, and upholding affirmative action-based admissions decisions); *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez*, 561 U.S. 661 (2011) (holding that university may adopt policy that withholds recognition from student group that does not allow LGBT members). The Court's recent decision in *Fisher v. Univ. of Texas*, 579 U.S. ___ (2016), however, while ruling in favor the University, contains language limiting the deference accorded to universities in admissions decisions, and could mark a turning tide. Moreover, the 4-3 ruling in favor of the university is most likely due to the sudden passing of the late Justice Antonin Scalia, who had dissented in *Grutter*. Courts have also given universities some latitude in disciplinary decisions for faculty or graduate students (at least in private institutions) based on speech (see Michael LeRoy, "How Courts View Academic Freedom." *Journal of College and University Law* 42:1 (2016): 1-58), but it is not altogether clear that these decisions accord universities any special protection of the sort of Henry's concept of marginality. As noted, *infra* n. 9, according university latitude for disciplinary decisions cuts both ways for marginality, since it comes at the cost of professors' expressive and academic freedom.

[70] *See Urofsky v. Gilmore*, 216 F.3d 401 (4th Cir. 2000) (finding that professors had no right to academic freedom that would allow them to view sexually explicit material on work computers for research purposes, in violation of Virginia statute); *The UWM Post, Inc. v. Bd. of Regents of the Univ. of Wisconsin Sys.*, 774 F. Supp. 1163 (E.D. Wis. 1991) (finding university policy prohibiting discriminatory speech on campus, such as slurs and racial jokes, unconstitutional); *Dambrot v. Central Michigan Univ.*, 55 F.3d 1177 (6th Cir. 1995) (invalidating policy that prohibited racial and ethnic harassment as unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination); *DeJohn v. Temple Univ.*, 537 F.3d 301 (3d Cir. 2008) (invalidating policy that prohibited sexually or gender-motivated speech that had intention or effect of creating hostile, intimidating or

point, the predominant trend at least within U.S. courts is in the direction of treating the University like just another corporation or (for public universities) government agency bound by the exact same constitutional, statutory and common law restrictions as those entities.

Considering such recent trends, we should patiently hear Henry's point that marginality is crucial for the University to serve its necessary function as a creator of culture, rather than merely a reflector of the culture produced by the social forces concerned with externalities and economic status.[71] For Henry, ideally everything that occurs in the

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offensive environment); *Lopez v. Candale*, No. CV 09-0995-GHK (C.D. Cal. July 10, 2009) (invalidating sexual harassment policy that prohibited "intrusive remarks", "intrusive comments about physical appearance" and "humor about sex" that has negative impact on individual's "work or academic performance); *Students for Concealed Carry on Campus v. Regents of the University of Colorado*, No. 10SC344 (Colo. March 5, 2012) (invalidating ban on concealed carry on campus on statutory grounds); *Oregon Firearms Educ. Found. v. Bd. of Higher Educ.*, 264 P.3d 160 (Or. Ct. App. 2011) (same). While the Supreme Court's decision in *Garcetti v. Ceballos*, 574 U.S. 410 (2006) was about the First Amendment rights of a non-academic public employee, both the majority opinion and a dissenting opinion recognized the restrictive impact that this ruling might have for freedom of expression for academics. For excellent discussions of court decisions following *Garcetti* and its future impact on academic freedom for professors, as well as the need for increased protection for academics, see Bridget Nugent and Julee Flood, 'Rescuing Academic Freedom for Garcetti v. Ceballos: An Evaluation of Current Case Law and a Proposal for the Protection of Core Academic, Administrative, and Advisory Speech,' *Journal of College and University Law* 40:1 (2014): 115-58; and Kevin Cope, 'Defending the Ivory Tower: A Twenty-First Century Approach to the Pickering-Connick Doctrine and Public Education after Garcetti,' *Journal of College and University Law* 33:2 (2007): 313-60. The ruling in *Garcetti* has been used over the past decade as the basis for the discharge of a number of teachers and school administrators. Courts have held (following *Garcetti*) that academic freedom *does* extend to institutions themselves, but not to faculty.

[71] Unsurprisingly (to us, given our agreement with Henry's diagnosis), the strongest and clearest judicial statements recognizing marginality are seemingly from decades long past. *See, e.g., Sweezy v. State of New Hampshire*, 354 U.S. 234, 250 (1957) ("The essentiality of freedom in the community of American universities is almost self-evident. No one should underestimate the vital role in a democracy that is played by those who guide and train our youth. To impose any straitjacket upon the intellectual leaders in our colleges and universities would imperil the future of our Nation.... Scholarship cannot flourish in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. Teachers and

marginal space of the University never concerns anything other than "*entering into possession of oneself*"[72] Because such a task is never-ending, "there is always more to learn," so Henry concludes that "there is no reason to leave the University."[73] We take him to mean that the University should never attempt to become something other than what it is as the marginal cultural producer that then stands as the constant check on the otherwise inevitable slide toward scientistic abstraction. As such, the University is the social institution that roots us in ourselves rather than redefining ourselves as merely consumers who use things and who themselves get used up in the process.

In the context of scientistic-produced barbarism, however, the appropriately marginal University just becomes marginalized in the mundane sense of being irrelevant. "The University and Society thus stand face to face with one another as two opposed entities," Henry claims.[74] The continued social pressure on universities to be more focused on jobs than on questioning, on funding than on transformative praxis, and on the STEM disciplines than on the arts and humanities, the University threatens no longer to be a cultural producer and social critic, but merely another social institution that reinforces the objectivist ideology that it was supposed to stand against. The danger is that the historical opposition between the University and society will be smoothed out in the name of relevance to the "real world"—but the "real world," here is already a rhetorical device that ignores the reality of life in favor of the abstracted construction of technological desire and the ontological conceptions that result. Accordingly, today the University and society "face each other in a battle that can only be a struggle to the death."[75] This death-struggle is required by eliminativism: there can be only one!

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students must always remain free to inquire, to study and to evaluate, to gain new maturity and understanding; otherwise our civilization will stagnate and die.")

[72] Henry, M., *Barbarism*, p. 118.

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] *Ibid.* p. 119.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 120.

Rather than the productive tension that traditionally kept complacency in check, we are now faced with the exclusivism of self-forgetting and the obviousness of the point of a college degree: to get a job and be able to buy those technological devices that give our lives meaning.

Importantly, Henry is not being flippantly elitist in his worry about the point of higher education being understood as merely a means to employment. Indeed, he speaks to the dual task of the university teacher by saying that although "it is true that [teaching] must enable everyone to fulfill a social function and thereby to be able to get a job,"[76] more importantly, university teaching allows "one to use all of one's gifts and abilities in order to realize one's own individuality, that is, the essence of humanity in oneself."[77] Terming this second task of the teacher "the task of culture in its purity," he admits that the task of enabling employment might also be understood "as a partial process of enculturation."[78] We must not miss his point here. He is not opposed to the idea that the University should prepare students for lives of meaningful work, but instead merely illustrates that only when they are engaged in questions of meaning (of life) can they then understand why jobs matter. If the first task of the teacher is taken in isolation, then it is self-undermining. Only when we see the task of self-making to be the hallmark of culture production can we then appreciate the importance of invested concern in one's economic and social practices.

Henry rightly points out that only when the professors are invested in their own self-making through research and continued questioning are they cultured enough to be able to foster an appreciation of the importance of culture creation in their students. "For all higher education results from continued research that culminates," Henry suggests, "in lectures that it takes months or years to prepare."[79] Simply put, the idea that those who would claim that the main role of the university professor

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 121.
[77] *Ibid.*, p. 122.
[78] *Ibid.*
[79] *Ibid.*, pp. 123-4.

is simply to teach, end up missing the reason for teaching itself. In this way, "teaching colleges" are potentially incoherent in relation to the task of teaching and the conceptual identity of the University. He continues on to chastise the reallocation of professors' time according to a corporate model of productivity in objectivist terms that merely reflect the culture (or lack thereof) that guides society, rather than in subjectivist terms that create and shape the culture that challenges society's baser tendencies:

> These [lectures] normally result in the publication of works that construct a good deal of the culture of a country and a time. To augment the service of professors was not only to lash out against eminent people, it was to put an end to higher education and thus to the research vocation of the University.[80]

Sadly, this situation is not simply the result of external social pressure, but of internal restructuring of the University such that those former external pressures are now immanent academic realities—the University is now no longer marginal, but merely marginalized. In the attempt to overcome this perceived irrelevance, the University restructures itself in ways that make it relevant by eliminating its own historical, and absolutely necessary, social function. Eventually and ultimately, the professors are thereby responsible for their own fate:

> This augmentation of hours—that is in reality the destruction of the University—was called for by university professors themselves. . . This is a terrifying fact for anyone who can recognize what hides under this cloak of political demagoguery: the self-destruction of the University is the self-destruction of culture and life.[81]

In the attempt to become measurably relevant to "real life" (read as: "caring only about the truth of the world"), Henry argues, the University has abdicated its identity. That said, is it possible that the University can

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[80] *Ibid.,* p. 124.
[81] *Ibid.*

find life after barbarism? If we take Henry seriously without taking him too seriously, can we find a glimmer of hope in his narrative of destruction? We believe that there is and so will suggest that there is a possibility for de(*con*)struction to occur within what seems a hopeless situation.

## 5. Three Recommendations for the Continued Life of Higher Education

Things certainly look bleak in light of Henry's account of "the destruction of the university" in the wake of barbarism. However, we want to explore ways in which the University can and should be viewed as the site of culture's rebirth—especially when we rightly appreciate the distinction between science and scientism. The University is where culture has been created and protected for centuries, and we believe that by taking Henry's challenge seriously it can reemerge with renewed energy as it undertakes this task again in the context of barbaric assaults from all sides. There are three areas in particular that we think are maximally important to the University as it seeks to bring culture back from the brink. Those three areas concern the notion of disciplinary inquiry, evaluative standards, and institutional identity. For each area, we will give specific recommendations for how life can flourish once again in high education.

### *(a) Disciplinary Life*

Subjectivity has to be a concern even for disciplines guided by a concern for objectivity. As Henry himself points out:

> The modern and "democratic" University claims to adhere to a certain number of values that stand under the following rubrics: objectivity, impartiality and "rigor," in short, "neutrality." But can these values be evoked in the absence of a general theory of values and their basis and in the absence of an ethics that can justify fundamental choices, identify explicit ends, and define

behaviors?[82]

Essentially, Henry's question points to the fact that science (contra scientism) emerges as a result of subjectivity and must understand itself as such. Accordingly, what is required is interdisciplinary work and collaboration that allows for an enhanced focus on questions that take the form of "philosophy of X" modes of inquiry. Moreover, there needs to be an enriched appreciation of the theoretical stakes that attend all inquiry concerned with practice. In other words, moving to "applied" questions and concerns (even within philosophy itself) should not come at the expense of careful interrogation of the assumptions (whether ontological, epistemological, political, or whatever) and theoretical frameworks (which are themselves often disciplinarily conceived) in relation to which such questions of application can even arise. Simply put, we must pay better attention to the way in which what we do reflects who we are, and who we are becoming is being shaped by what we think we should be doing. In this way, we will better appreciate that abstraction is always a result of practice, and so a focus on practice without attending to the theories that prize such practices will lead us toward a dangerous self-forgetting rather than an enlightened appreciation of application.

*(b) Evaluative Life*

We must resist the "value-theory" that locates the importance of a discipline in terms of its monetary potential. Accordingly, we should seek out ways to rethink the function of the University itself that would challenge the logic of late capitalism that is encouraged by and encourages eliminative scientism. The University does not singularly exist to provide workers to corporations, but instead to encourage life in ways that allow individuals never to be reducible to their productive capacity. Taking Henry seriously requires us to understand what disciplines "do" in ways that are not translatable into a market-logic of objectivist consumption. Unless we resist such a frame, we risk transforming both professors and also students into nothing more than a

[82] *Ibid*., p. 126.

consumable good themselves. More students means more revenue generation. Fewer tenured faculty means less cost. But, both moves come at the cost of perhaps losing the generational importance of renewing the appreciation of life's meaning. As Henry warns, without realizing it we have allowed the University to be a reflection of the barbarism more generally presented. In this situation, "the human being [becomes] no different from a thing."[83] Rather than the University being a place that cultivates whole persons, it risks becoming just one more factory in which workers are replaceable mechanisms of production.

*(c) Institutional Life*

We must hold the line and require academic research to be a hallmark of *all* academic faculty and not merely a reflection of the privilege of *some* who are lucky enough to get jobs at the top research institutions. This can play out in a variety of ways. For example, at institutions where the focus is on undergraduate education, then undergraduate research opportunities that engage the specializations of the faculty themselves should be ubiquitous and not merely occasional. This would allow students to participate in culture-production and not find themselves reduced to being mere consumers of the culture produced by someone else. When it comes to university governance, administrators should themselves be academics so that the power of an institution is also in the hands of culture-producers who are actively engaged in the questions that foster culture's thriving, rather than in the hands of those who in the name of a monetary evaluative standard become unwittingly culture-destroyers as they reshape the university into a corporation model. Instead, the University must stand as a model for corporations. When the media and the markets determine culture, culture no longer exists as a lived reality, but instead is nothing more than another manifestation of spin. On such a model, truth, beauty, and goodness become merely three different presentations of bullshit,[84] rather than bullshit being contested in

[83] *Ibid.,* xviii.
[84] Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

the name of truth, beauty, and goodness.

**Conclusion: Having Life More Abundantly**

In conclusion, then, phenomenologists should not be "embarrassed" by Henry's account in *Barbarism*, but instead realize that there is a way to read Henry as less oppositional to science than he often seems. When we appreciate that possibility, then Henry's position becomes too important to restrict its relevance only to phenomenology. Instead, we educators, whether phenomenologists or not, should realize the danger that lies in abdicating our role to the culture-despisers who mistakenly view themselves as the realists who understand where culture must go. For the sake of our students and culture itself, embracing the challenge that Henry offers is necessary whether or not we endorse the specifics of his critique. We have admitted that Henry seems to push things a bit further than he should when he occasionally seems to *suggest* that science, as such, is the problem, rather than the scientistic logic that can underwrite its anti-cultural expression. Nonetheless, if the University is to have a life after barbarism, then it must find ways to be nuanced in its own cultural expression as an appropriately marginal site of cultural production that appreciates the importance of ethics, art, and religion, but also the possibility that science can contribute to the praxis of living life and not just the theoretical understanding of worldly affairs.

Objectivity matters because of subjectivity. The University matters because it is the best place that is currently available where this dependence relation can be cultivated as itself inviting a way of life, rather than simply a fact to be known about existing things. In this way, Henry gives us the best possible answer to the often-heard (and extremely loaded) question, "Is College worth it?" Along with Henry, the University itself must respond: It all depends on whether you want to continue *to live*, but only *you* can answer that . . . hence the need for the University to create individuals and communities able to understand the true stakes of the question. Ultimately, then, rather than reading Henry as a threat, we should hear him as basically trying to fill in the conditions under which

we all might move toward that "abundant life" expressed in the "words of Christ" in John 10:10. Whether religious or not, having life more abundantly should be a task to which we are all committed.

Henry helpfully enables us to see why having such abundant life is so important and also why it is so seriously threatened by our particular ways of (anti)life today. The answer he provides does not necessitate a retreat from science, but only a re-articulation of how it signifies as functions within culture itself. Accordingly, we should not encourage students to go to the University in order to become prepared for the "real world," but rather in order to become the sort of person who can rightly ask what "world" should be "real" in the first place.[85]

[85] We would like to express our appreciation to Michael R. Kelly for reading an earlier draft of this essay and providing us with important suggestions for improvement.

*Pli* 28 (2017), 32-52

# Between Consciousness and Life: Mapping the Freudian Unconscious in Henry and Ricoeur

***SCOTT DAVIDSON***

> "The light of life, to use the language of St. John, reveals itself in life and through life, but self-consciousness remains nonetheless the birthplace of truth and first of all the truth of life."
>
> Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, p.465

In spite of the personal admiration shared between Michel Henry and Paul Ricoeur, there would appear to be a sharp divide separating their two philosophical approaches. Henry's philosophy is marked by a radicality that overturns our ordinary conceptions of life. Separating the concept of life from any of its usual biological connotations, Henry defines its phenomenological essence in a non-naturalistic manner. In its original meaning, life is revealed in the radical immanence of the intimacy of one's own affective experience of life. Whereas each of Henry's works continually return to this essential teaching about life, Ricoeur's thought cannot be described as either radical or as having a single organizing theme. His is a thought of mediation between extremes and of detours. Moreover, life does not figure explicitly among the many prominent themes taken up in his work, and indeed, Ricoeur confides in a

late interview that he "had always fled" the topic of life due to his suspicions about "*Lebensphilosophie*, of the very idea of a philosophy of life."[1] As a result of these differences, there would seem to be little hope for a substantive and fruitful dialogue between Henry and Ricoeur.

Nonetheless, two important points can be invoked in favor of such a dialogue. First of all, it is noteworthy that each thinker did write about the other's work. Ricoeur, for instance, wrote an extended review of Henry's book on Marx,[2] while Henry contributed a couple of essays to collections in homage of Ricoeur: one in which he evaluated the notion of existential phenomenology and another in which he developed an extended critique of Ricoeur's book on Freud.[3] In addition to these written exchanges, it may also be possible to read against the grain of Ricoeur's admission above and suggest that the theme of life, though not an explicit focus in any of his works, does operate implicitly in a number of his texts. This is indicated in the aforementioned interview, where Ricoeur goes on to add that, in spite of his caution concerning a philosophy of life, he does intend to take up the questions of time, memory, and history "under the sign of the *Zusammenhang des Lebens*, the cohesion of a life. How does a life follow after itself? I stress the fact that this is indeed a life and not a consciousness."[4] Inasmuch as the gap between consciousness and life is also a central component of Henry's thought, Ricoeur's comment can be taken as an initial clue pointing toward a more substantive convergence between the two thinkers than has been realized up to now.

The gap between consciousness and life will be explored, in what

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[1] Paul Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 93.

[2] For my discussion of that exchange, see my essay "The Meaning of Life in Ricoeur and Henry" in *Ricoeur and the Body*, eds. Goncalo Marcelo and Cyndie Sautereau (Lexington Books: forthcoming).

[3] Michel Henry, "Ricoeur et Freud: Entre Psychanalyse et Phénoménologie" in *Métamorphoses de la raison herméneutique*, eds. Jean Greisch et Richard Kearney (Paris: Cerf, 1991), hereafter RF.

[4] *Ibid.* I take it that Ricoeur is referring here to work that would be published in *Memory, History, Forgetting*.

follows, through the Henry-Ricoeur debate concerning Freud. Ricoeur's book *Freud and Philosophy* [1965][5] was an important philosophical introduction to Freudian theory, and his interpretation of Freud is critiqued in Henry's essay "Ricoeur et Freud: Entre Psychanalyse et Phénoménologie",[6] which anticipates the thesis that is developed in more detail in his book *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis* [1985]. It is quite fitting that Henry chose to engage Ricoeur's book on Freud, inasmuch as Freud's writings were an important influence on both thinkers.

Ricoeur's book stemmed, in part, from his own engagement with the so-called "masters of suspicion". Through his study of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, Ricoeur discovered an important challenge to the reflexive philosophy which exerted an early influence on his thought. Reflexive philosophy belonged to the Cartesian legacy that advocated in support of the self-presence of the cogito, or in other words, a direct and indubitable knowledge of oneself. The masters of suspicion, each in their own way, shattered the illusions of immediate self-presence and in this respect were catalysts of Ricoeur's turn to hermeneutics. In response to the wounding and humiliation of the cogito by the suspicious, Ricoeur conceived the hermeneutic task in terms of the recovery of a mediated self-understanding that proceeds by way of a detour through the external world.[7]

The study of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud was important, likewise, in the development of Henry's phenomenology of life, although it led him in a different direction from Ricoeur's hermeneutic detour.[8] Henry was in

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[5] Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, tr. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), hereafter FP.

[6] Michel Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, tr. Douglas Brick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), hereafter GP.

[7] For more details concerning this dynamic, see the "Introduction" to *Hermeneutics and Phenomenology in Paul Ricoeur: Between Text and Phenomenon*, eds. Scott Davidson and Marc-Antoine Vallée (Springer, 2016).

[8] For a parallel to the interpretation of Freud developed here, see Henry's contribution on Marx entitled "Phénoménologie de la Conscience, Phénoménologie de la Vie" in a volume that pays homage to Ricoeur's work: *Sens et Existence*, ed. G.B. Madison (Paris: Seuil, 1975), pp.138-151.

search of a way out of the realm of intentional consciousness that defines the boundaries of classical phenomenology and found this escape route in the Freudian discovery of the unconscious. The unconscious does not signify another "scene" of representation, according to Henry, but rather points to an entirely different mode of appearing and being. The Freudian discovery of the unconscious thus cleared the way to another type of phenomenology, another type of appearing. And Henry's *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis* traced its significance back to life, which, with its drives and affects, is the original starting point that precedes consciousness.

It is clear, then, that the significance of the Henry-Ricoeur debate goes beyond the question of the relation between psychoanalysis and phenomenology. That question has lost much of its allure today due to the decline of psychoanalytic theory and practice. Instead, its significance and interest today has to do with the more general question of the nature and scope of phenomenology as such. For both thinkers, Freud's work affords the possibility of passing beyond the limits of traditional phenomenology. Yet, if they both seek to go beyond a phenomenology of consciousness, it is at the same time quite clear that they do so in very different ways. My contention is that the differences that emerge between their respective readings of Freud are emblematic of the differences that emerge between their approaches to a phenomenology of life. For Ricoeur, the engagement with Freud is guided by a hermeneutic phenomenology, while it takes place through a material phenomenology, for Henry. By closely following these two readings of Freud, then, we can discern two distinct pathways for a phenomenology of life to follow in passing beyond the phenomenology of consciousness.

## A Hermeneutics of the Unconscious: The Henryan Reading of Ricoeur's Freud

In his essay "Ricoeur and Freud: Between Psychoanalysis and Phenomenology", Henry praises Ricoeur's *Freud and Philosophy* for providing one of the clearest and most rigorous accounts of psychoanalysis. He rightly observes that Ricoeur's book, instead of being

a mere exposition of Freud's thought, performs a sort of Kantian critique of psychoanalytic discourse that determines the conditions of its possibility as well as its limits. In so doing, Ricoeur is able to accomplish a striking rapprochement between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, because he turns psychoanalysis away from its naturalistic tendencies and returns it to a situation of language, or in other words, of meaning. Phenomenology and psychoanalysis, as a result, come to signify two different ways of working back from meanings that are readily apparent on the surface of consciousness and deciphering the deeper meanings that remain hidden from view. Put simply, phenomenology and psychoanalysis become hermeneutic methods.[9] Yet, in spite of this commonality that joins them, Ricoeur also takes great care in his book to show that the two approaches differ with respect to how they understand the meaning and role of the unconscious.

Phenomenology, according to its Husserlian definition, is the study of intentionality, or in other words, of the various ways in which consciousness is directed toward its objects. Yet, Ricoeur surprisingly claims that "phenomenology is as radical as psychoanalysis in its challenge of the illusion of the immediate knowledge of oneself".[10] Ricoeur is able to make this claim because he interprets Husserlian phenomenology as a critique of direct and immediate knowledge in which the objects of consciousness are never fully given but are always only partial. In support of this view, three different aspects of this incompleteness of intentional experience can be highlighted. A spatial object, for instance, is only given in one of its profiles, while its other sides remain only potential and unactualized profiles. Likewise, the temporal dimension of an object is given only partially, that is, in terms of its present, even though it points beyond what is given in the present and toward a past that precedes it as well as a future that is yet to come. The same incompleteness characterizes intentional consciousness itself, inasmuch as conscious life includes both operative and thematic intentions. Alongside the thematic intentions that are actively presented in

[9] *RF* p. 128; *FP* pp.375-6.
[10] *RF* p.133.

conscious life, there is also a background of operative intentions that are there but not the focus of conscious life. These operative intentions, on Ricoeur's view, are able to decouple meaning from consciousness – in other words, they open up the phenomenological meaning of the unconscious.

The phenomenological unconscious, however, differs from the psychoanalytic unconscious in a fundamental way. The phenomenological unconscious always remains a potential consciousness, because it is made up of sedimented meanings and operative intentions that can be recovered and thematized. To the extent that these unconscious meanings can provide new layers of knowledge and understanding, they are able to contribute to the teleology of consciousness. Since the phenomenological unconscious in principle can always be converted into consciousness, Ricoeur observes that it is more analogous to the notion of the preconscious in psychoanalysis. By contrast, in psychoanalysis consciousness and the unconscious are separated by a bar that is very difficult, but not impossible, to cross.[11] Here it is not simply a question of a form of ignorance that must be combatted and overcome in order to bring a content into consciousness and thus become aware of it. In addition, there is often a resistance that the analyst encounters in trying to gain access to the unconscious causes that have given rise to the patient's symptoms. Psychoanalysis thus develops a set of techniques for overcoming the patient's resistances and for gaining access to the unconscious. But, this work of recovering the unconscious can proceed in two different directions, and this is precisely the point where the divergence between Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology and Henry's material phenomenology begins to surface.

Ricoeur's approach to the unconscious begins with the recognition that Freudian psychoanalysis has a "mixed discourse" about the unconscious, including an energetics in which the unconscious is understood as a set of biochemical forces and a symbolic dimension in which the unconscious is said to be "like a language". Freud's energetics

[11] *Ibid.;* FP p. 392.

provides a sort of "anti-phenomenology" in which, as Ricoeur puts it, there is a "reduction not to consciousness but of consciousness".[12] Here the unconscious is described in terms of a topography of biochemical forces and natural processes. We cannot have direct access to this world in consciousness, instead we can only gain access to it indirectly through its representatives. It is here that the forces of life and meaning intersect in such a way that "the drives are designated in the mind by representations and the affects that present it".[13] As a result, Ricoeur's point is that the components of Freud's energetics, including the drives and instincts of life, are not absolutely foreign to consciousness; they can be translated into conscious terms and represented symbolically. And it is through these representatives that we can become aware of the unconscious forces and drives that influence our conscious life. It is in this new foyer of intelligibility, which includes the representatives of the unconscious, that the truth of the subject can be discerned.[14]

This overview of Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach to the unconscious leads Henry to raise the question "which phenomenology accords with which psychoanalysis?"[15] For Henry the answer to this question is clear: if Ricoeur is able to bring about a rapprochement between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, this is due to the fact that he situates the two discourses within the same horizon. To be precise, it is because they are placed "*within the same philosophical horizon, constituted by shared ontological presuppositions, that phenomenology and psychoanalysis can be perceived as the same: as a hermeneutic*".[16] In fact, this is a justifiable interpretation, precisely because Freud himself, according to Henry, falls prey to a traditional philosophical definition of

[12] *RF* p. 135.
[13] *Ibid.,* p.137.
[14] Henry's reading, as we will show later, runs into difficulty due to his faulty conception of translation. Henry uses the notion of translation to mean that there is a transparent and complete transfer from one discourse to the other. But, as Ricoeur will emphasize in his later writings, although translation is possible, it is never perfect or complete.
[15] *Ibid.,* p. 138.
[16] *Ibid.,* (Henry's italics).

consciousness. For both phenomenology and psychoanalysis, being conscious comes to mean representing something; it is to bring something into the light of representation. As a result of their shared conception of consciousness, phenomenology and psychoanalysis ultimately come to understand the unconscious in terms of the process of becoming conscious by way of representation.

But Henry goes on to ask whether the concept of the unconscious only has the function of delineating the limitations of representation or instead whether it opens up a "radical calling into question of the metaphysics of representation and thus of the mode of phenomenality whose model is found in perception?"[17] Henry leaves this question open in his article on Ricoeur, but he does indicate that the latter option could only open up by a different type of phenomenology and by a different psychoanalytic interpretation of the unconscious. It is precisely this other approach to the unconscious that is pursued in his later book *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*.

## A Material Phenomenology of the Unconscious: The Henryan Alternative

In his preface to the Italian translation of *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, Henry claims explicitly that "this book comes from phenomenology."[18] This assertion is especially significant because phenomenology and psychoanalysis are often set in contrast with one another. Whereas phenomenology provides a philosophy of intentional consciousness, psychoanalysis withdraws the core of our being from the realm of consciousness and its intelligibility. Ricoeur, as we have seen, sought to reconcile these two discourses by subsuming them under a shared hermeneutic task where they both aim to recover meanings that are concealed from straightforward consciousness. But, in contrast with Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach, Henry's writings on psychoanalysis set out to provide a "new interpretation of the

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 140.
[18] Michel Henry, "Préface à la traduction italienne de la *Généalogie de la psychanalyse*," in *Phénoménologie de la vie*, vol. 5 (Paris: PUF, 2015), p. 99.

phenomenology/psychoanalysis relation."[19] If Henry is able to unearth a new account of their relation, this is because he proposes an entirely "new conception of phenomenology"[20] and establishes a rigorous phenomenological definition of the unconscious.[21]

To understand Henry's account of this relation, it is helpful to begin with his definition of the concept of consciousness in both its ontic and its ontological senses.[22] Ontically, phenomenology is the study of how objects are given to consciousness, and as such, it studies the various modes of givenness by which something is presented to consciousness, be it really or imaginatively, fully or partially, and so forth. In this ontic sense, then, phenomenology discloses consciousness in terms of its contents. But, in addition to studying what appears in consciousness, it is also possible for phenomenology to inquire ontologically into the origin of appearing. In this sense, it reveals the power by which something comes to appear in consciousness. Here the "pure fact of appearing" is considered in isolation from what appears.[23] Just as consciousness admits of these two significations, likewise Henry contends that the concept of the unconscious can defined in its ontic and ontological senses.

The primary breakthrough of psychoanalysis is its discovery of a reality that escapes the confines of consciousness. Whereas consciousness and its representations appear in the light of visibility and exteriority, the unconscious does not show itself in this way. But how, as a result, can the unconscious be said to appear at all? Henry's response to this question is provided by two determinations of the unconscious that are derived from the ontic and ontological determinations of consciousness outline above.

Just as consciousness, understood ontically, is defined in terms of a content that appears in consciousness, the notion of the unconscious

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[19] Michel Henry, "*Phénoménologie et psychanalyse*," in *Phénoménologie de la vie*, vol. 5 (Paris: PUF, 2015), p. 61.
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] *GP* p. 281.
[22] This distinction is developed most fully by Henry in his article, "Phénoménologie et psychanalyse," which is also included in *Phénoménologie de la vie*, vol. 5.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 283.

would be defined ontically as a content that is not present to conscious. As such, it would be understood in negative terms, that is, as an absence that withdraws from the field of appearance and consciousness. But if the unconscious is to be something more than the negation of consciousness, Henry insists on the development of an ontological understanding of the unconscious. Considered ontologically, the unconscious is not simply a negation or lack of consciousness; it comes to be posited as a reality.

It is this failure to distinguish between the ontic and ontological determinations of the unconscious that leads Freud to stop short of the significance of his own discovery, according to Henry. Freud easily falls into the trap of defining the unconsciousness ontically, because he still remains under the influence of the history of Western philosophy in which consciousness is conceived in terms of representation. This leads him to think about the unconscious simply in terms of contents that have not yet come to be represented. Here Henry levies the same charge against Freud as the one he issued previously against Ricoeur. By defining the unconscious simply in terms of what is not-conscious, it becomes possible to translate the one directly into the other, such that "every unconscious content can take the opposite quality of consciousness and enter the light; every conscious content is destined to leave it and return to the unconscious".[24] To approach the unconscious in such a way, however, is precisely to re-inscribe it within the metaphysics of representation.

Henry claims to go beyond Freud (and Ricoeur, for that matter) by positing the unconscious in its ontological reality.[25] Henry sums up the contrast between these two different conceptions of the unconscious as follows: "the unconscious, therefore, has two wholly different meanings, depending on whether it refers to the inevitable obscurity of all mental content once it quits the 'present' of intuition and self-evidence and

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 281.

[25] But Henry's accusation can be answered by a similar realization in Ricoeur that "representation obeys not only a law of intentionality, which makes it the expression of some object, but also another law, which makes it the manifestation of life, of an effort or desire" (*FP* p. 457).

becomes a mere virtual representation or whether it refers to life itself, which necessarily escapes the light of ek-stasis".[26] Ontologically, the concept of the unconscious no longer has anything to do with representation or the light of ek-stasis, instead it is defined solely on its own terms, viz. its own mode of reality and its own mode of appearing. As a positive reality, the unconscious comes to be the condition of the possibility of anything whatsoever to appear; it is a transcendental power of appearing. This transcendental power is rooted in the power of life. Life, as a result, becomes the positive or ontological meaning of the unconscious – and the meaning of life, in turn, is revealed in the "radical immanence of auto-affection". Here the unconscious is identified with life's original essence and its accomplishment in "action, force, drives, Energy".[27] The components of Freud's energetics are thus reabsorbed into Henry's material phenomenology as components of affective life.

Once this ontological meaning of the unconscious is discerned, Henry asserts that the relation between consciousness and the unconscious is transformed entirely. First of all, they are now distinguished by two irreducibly different modes of appearing: there is a light of the world and a light of life, as the Gospel of John would put it. Whereas the light of the world admits of conscious representation, the light of life withdraws from representation. It is without intentionality, without ek-stasis, and even without the exteriority of language. Due to the phenomenological divide that separates the appearing of life from that of consciousness, the unconscious cannot pass into consciousness without being fundamentally altered and distorted.

In addition to this phenomenological distinction between the modes of appearing of consciousness and life, a new relation of ontological dependence comes to be established here. The unconscious, instead of being derived negatively from conscious, is called by "the name of life".[28] Under this name, the unconscious becomes a constant. It does not cease

[26] *GP* p. 318.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 286.

to influence consciousness because life does not cease and cannot be dismissed by it. To show that life is the transcendental power to make something visible and become represented is at the same time to show that consciousness is dependent on life and not the reverse. The significance of this ontological dependency is perhaps best illustrated by what Henry has to say about the nature of the psychoanalytic cure: "Does not the cure itself demonstrate that the representation of one's situation, its conflicts and their history, by analysis is useless so long as the precondition of that consciousness, a modification of life, does not occur?"[29] A true cure, or a true change, of the patient does not take place through becoming conscious of something, instead it must be produced in reality, as a change in the patient's life. But the question that will be posed, in what follows, is whether Henry's material phenomenology has adequate resources to describe such a change.

**The Teleology of Life: A Ricoeurian Reply to Henry's Reading**

Up to this point, we have outlined two different ways of mapping the Freudian unconscious in relation to phenomenology. Ricoeur, according to Henry's reading at least, is able to secure a rapprochement between psychoanalysis and phenomenology by subsuming them under the broader task of a hermeneutics of meaning. As a result, both discourses come to be guided by the shared teleological goal of knowledge, or more precisely, by the task of becoming aware of something that was previously unthought and unknown. By contrast, Henry charts a new way of thinking the relation between phenomenology and psychoanalysis in which they come to signify two different types of phenomenological appearing. Phenomenology is guided by the light of knowledge whose goal is to bring the unconscious into the light of conscious representations, whereas the Freudian unconscious appears in its own distinct way, that is, in the light of life through the pure auto-affective experience of life and its passions.

But, in response to the Henry-Ricoeur debate that has been pursued up to now, there are two additional lines of inquiry that can be opened up.

[29] *Ibid.,* p. 316.

The first has to do with the question raised above concerning whether or not Henry has sufficient resources to think about the process by which life develops and changes. This question will be addressed, in what follows, in terms of Ricoeur's account of the teleology of desire, thus pointing to a missing component in Henry's phenomenology of life. The other line of inquiry pursued here will have to do with the question of whether Henry's criticism of Ricoeur – which accuses him of reducing psychoanalysis to a phenomenological hermeneutics of meaning – really holds up under scrutiny. After showing that Ricoeur is the one who preserves the autonomy of psychoanalytic discourse, it becomes possible to perform a reversal that turns this argument against Henry himself: is not Henry, in turn, guilty of reducing psychoanalysis to a phenomenology of meaning, albeit to a different type of phenomenology?

In response to Henry's reading of Ricoeur, it is important to begin with the observation that Henry focuses only on the first half of Part III of Ricoeur's book on Freud, that is, on the chapters concerning the epistemological status of Freudian psychoanalysis and the archeology of the subject.[30] But Part III, which is entitled "Dialectic: A Philosophical Interpretation of Freud," is actually comprised of four chapters in total. The first is devoted to an examination of the epistemological status of Freudian psychoanalysis, showing that the shortcomings of Freudian thought can be rescued as a philosophy of meaning. In the second chapter, Ricoeur then proceeds to develop an archeology of the subject, which performs a reduction of conscious and traces the origins of reflection back to the influence of the unconscious. The third chapter then places this archeology with an "implicit teleology" in Freudian psychoanalysis in which the subject seeks to become conscious of its reality. Through this alignment of an archeology and a teleology, it then becomes possible in the fourth chapter to place two different types of hermeneutic – a critical

[30] In addition to this point of textual exegesis, it should be added that *Freud and Philosophy* does not exhaust the scope of Ricoeur's engagement with Freud. There is material both before (*Freedom and Nature*) and after (articles collected in *On Psychoanalysis* ) that defines the broader development of this engagement. For this historical account, see Vinicio Busacchi, "Postface: Desire, Identity, the Other," in *On Psychoanalysis.*

hermeneutics and a constructive hermeneutics - in a dialectical relation to one another. This dialectical relation is demonstrated with respect to religious symbols.

Consideration of the broader context of Ricoeur's discussion directly opens up a question concerning the possible limitations of Henry's reading. To be precise, by narrowing Ricoeur's "philosophical interpretation of Freud" to an archeology of meaning, does Henry have the necessary resources to explain how, if at all, the archeology of the subject can be integrated with the teleology of desire? Moreover, does this limitation in his reading of Ricoeur only signify a flaw in his reading of Ricoeur or does it also indicate a deeper problem in his own phenomenology? By demonstrating the irreducible connection between an archeology and a teleology, a Ricoeurian response to Henry will help us to identify not only a limitation in his reading of Ricoeur but more fundamentally in his account of material phenomenology.

At the outset of the chapter entitled "Dialectic: Archeology and Teleology," Ricoeur affirms that "in order to have an *arche* a subject must have a *telos*",[31] a point which he will continue to maintain in fact over the course of his career. Within the psychoanalytic context, this means that the unconscious does not place the subject entirely at the mercy of a symbolic anteriority. In addition to the archeological direction of psychoanalysis which shows how the past exercises an influence on the present, Ricoeur invokes a Hegelian phenomenology of desire in which the future also shapes the present. As a result of the dialectic between archeology and teleology, there turn out to be "two dispossessions of consciousness" that point in two opposite directions: toward an unconscious origin that precedes the present as well as the teleology of a future that shapes the development of the present.[32]

Through its archeology of the subject, Freudian psychoanalysis leads to the discovery that "the ego is not the master of its own house". One of the main preoccupations of Freudian thought, in fact, is "the

[31] *FP* p. 459.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 460.

theme of the prior, the anterior" in relation to consciousness[33]. Before the subject ever formulates its own perceptions and conceptions about "its own house", there is a reality that precedes the seat of consciousness. The subject is already immersed "in life" and the world. Conscious thoughts are thus secondary to life in the sense that they are the product of the prior inheritance of a body, a place, a history, a language. They take hold of the subject before it can possess itself in consciousness. This archeology of the subject, in passing beyond the scope of conscious reflection, makes psychoanalysis a sort of "anti-phenomenology"[34] that reveals the presence of the "other of oneself within oneself".[35]

The unconscious, according to this anti-phenomenology, is "id and nothing but id".[36] This thought-independent role of desire justifies the naturalistic traits of Freud's topography and his economics of the unconscious that place an emphasis on the complex interplay of cathexis.[37] Through the processes of investment in and withdrawal from objects, this economics of desire operates on its own terms without the influence of consciousness. This realistic or naturalistic dimension of desire is something that cannot by symbolized or brought into language: it signifies desire purely as desire.[38] And this is what justifies the dividing line, or "bar", that is drawn between "the reality of the id and the reality of meaning",[39] or what we have called the gap between life and consciousness.

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[33] *Ibid.*, p. 440.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 424.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 452.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 438.
[37] It should be noted that this aspect of the unconscious was already perceived by Ricoeur in *Freedom and Nature*: "in its unconscious aspect, subjectivity is like a physical nature. It imitates the object. It lends itself to the schemata of conflicts, compromises, products of forces, or as they psychoanalysts put it, of 'drives.' But 'force' in the language of subjectivity is, as we know, the thrust of a need or sovereignty of effort." See Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, tr. Erazim V. Kohak (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966) p. 398.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 454.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 439.

But, for Ricoeur, the anti-phenomenology provided by Freud's economy of desire should not have the only word in defining desire. The archeology of the subject, as we have indicated, must be joined to a teleology of desire. As a result, desire comes to be located at the intersection between the organic body that is studied by natural science and the conscious life that is the focus of phenomenology.[40] To develop the teleology of desire, Ricoeur turns to a Hegelian phenomenology of desire.

In Hegel's thought, the life of the subject does not begin with reflexive self-awareness, as it does in a Cartesian approach. It may be undeniably true to affirm that one is alive, but this originary affirmation can only be true in a trivial or superficial sense. Due to the fundamental obscurity of life, one does not know oneself fully in the immediate awareness of one's own living. Instead, one comes to know oneself better only through a progressive process of becoming self-conscious. This process is identified with what Hegel calls the "restlessness" [*Unruhigkeit*] of life. To say that life is restless, as Ricoeur explains, is to point to a "non-coincidence with one's self" and an inescapable obscurity of life.[41]

The movement of life, in other words, is guided by the work of negation, which is to say that it does not seek what it has but what it does not have and that it does not seek what exists but what does not exist. This continual striving of life accounts, at least in part, for its restlessness. For it means that the self always desires to become more than what it is and to be what it is not. The self is thus always divided from itself. The source of this self-division, as Ricoeur explains, is the "ever-recurring otherness residing in life. It is life that becomes the other, in and through which the self ceaselessly achieves itself".[42]

Importantly, in contrast with Henry, Ricoeur suggests that this

[40] On this topic, see Ricoeur's insightful observation that: "The unconscious indicates within me that not only my 'body' but also my psychic functioning lend themselves to objective treatment: there is an object-psyche as there is an object-body" (*FN* p. 398).
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 465.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 472.

process of self-becoming does not just happen in a willy-nilly manner, instead it is guided by an implicit teleology that is operative in Freudian psychoanalysis. This is introduced when culture comes to hold sway over the natural desires of life.[43] One example of the cultivation of desire occurs in education, which can be understood as a sort of *Bildung*, that is, as a way of reshaping and reforming what is given by nature. This influence of culture over the direction of natural desire lends meaning to Freud's important remark that "Where id was, the ego comes to be". It suggests that through processes such as identification and sublimation the natural desires of the id are tamed and brought under the tutelage of cultural influences that direct desire toward a goal. This teleological cultivation of desire informs the task of becoming a self.[44] But, in response to this teleology of desire, one might legitimately raise the question: Does this mean that desire can be cultivated and guided to a teleological goal that puts an end to its striving and brings life to coincide with itself?

Just as there is a remainder of life in the archeology of desire that precedes anything that can be recuperated by phenomenological reflection, so too Ricoeur emphasizes "the unsurpassable character of life and desire".[45] This means, in other words, that the movement of life and desire cannot be sublated or dialectically overcome. It is the case, of course, that specific desires may be satisfied and then surpassed, but the point here is that desire itself remains unsurpassable. It continues to live on, literally to survive, even after the satisfaction of any particular

[43] It is perhaps worth noting, as an aside, that Ricoeur does not only talk about desire in this way. Elsewhere, in *Fallible Man*, Ricoeur describes the "mixed texture" of affectivity as well, in which the affective sometimes fights on the side of reason and sometimes sides with desire. The affective life is a mixed discourse that is situated in between the vital affections and the rational affections, or in other words, between living and thinking. See Paul Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, tr. Charles A. Kelbley (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986).

[44] And with this in mind, Ricoeur could put this question to Henry: With his exclusive emphasis on an archeology of life which returns to the pathos of life's original embrace, can Henry articulate a teleology of life that accounts for the development and the cultivation [*Bildung*] of the self?

[45] FP p. 469.

desires. Due to the ever-recurring otherness in life, the teleological movement of desire survives and endlessly continues to move on.

By acknowledging that life is an irreducible remainder that both precedes conscious desires and also exceeds the teleology of desire, Ricoeur's account of this dialectic of desire is able to avoid the totalizing character of the Hegelian dialectic. Ricoeur's dialectic at the same time establishes a connection between life and consciousness but yet maintains their irreducible difference. This same point, likewise, allows Ricoeur to sidestep Henry's allegation that he collapses the distinction between phenomenology and psychoanalysis by subsuming them under an overarching hermeneutics of meaning. To the extent that life is irreducible to consciousness, it follows that a hermeneutics of meaning can only have a limited role. For, in Ricoeur's own terminology, there exists both the reality of the id and the ideality of meaning, and this is precisely the reason why he contends Freud has a "double epistemology" that is situated at the crossroads between an "energetics" and a "hermeneutics."[46]

**Two Approaches to a Phenomenology of Life**

The Henry-Ricoeur debate over Freud sheds light not merely on their respective interpretations of Freud but more fundamentally on the differences between their respective approaches to a phenomenology of life. Their approaches, as we have seen, indicate two essential differences in how they understand the gap between consciousness and life. The first point of contention pertains to their competing conceptions of life: while

[46] This point is expressed especially clearly in Ricoeur's essay "Psychoanalysis and Hermeneutics" which was first published in Japanese as "Seishinbunseki to Kaishakugaku" in *Shiso* (1978) and is included in: Paul Ricoeur, *On Psychoanalysis*, tr. David Pellauer (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012). The theory has to represent the psyche as at once a text to be interpreted and a system of forces to be manipulated" (pp.68). On this point, he notes the fact that Freud himself uses textual metaphors (translation, substitution, overdetermination, etc.) along with energy metaphors (condensation, displacement, repression) (*ibid.*). This indicates that Freud does not only have a mixed epistemology but that he uses a mixed discourse consisting of "motives" and "causes".

Ricoeur understands the forces and drives of life in biological terms, for Henry life has its own internal set of rules and logic that sets it apart from naturalism. The second contention has to do with the divergence between their conceptions of the relation between consciousness and life: while Ricoeur conceives translation from life to consciousness as difficult but not impossible, Henry conceptualizes this as an untranslatable and unbridgeable divide.

The difference between their conceptions of life, first of all, is evident through their respective interpretations of Freud's energetics. Ricoeur follows Freud in conceiving the energetics in naturalistic terms. Drives, instincts, and energies are rooted in our biological life, and as such, they are understood as biochemical realities that do not admit of a phenomenological description. But for Henry, to relegate the realm of energetics and physical forces to the natural sciences would be precisely to miss their phenomenological reality. In the development of his material phenomenology, Henry thus develops a non-naturalistic interpretation of Freud's energetics in which it becomes the stuff of a material phenomenology. Here the drives, instincts, and affects come to be defined by another type of appearing from conscious representation, namely, by the radical immanence of life in its affective reality. This means that the gap between consciousness and life, according to Henry, is not properly understood as a gap between phenomenology and naturalism but between classical phenomenology and material phenomenology.

Ricoeur, however, would not be able to accept the direct phenomenological approach to life that is taken by Henry. By the time he wrote *Freud and Philosophy*, Ricoeur had become aware of the limitations of his own use of the method of eidetic description that was practiced in his earlier book, *Freedom and Nature*. He could no longer endorse his previous reduction of psychoanalysis to "a hyletics of consciousness",[47] an approach which clearly resembles Henry's material phenomenology. For Ricoeur, it is not possible to grasp the figures of the involuntary – which include character, the unconscious and life - directly

[47] *FN* p. 405.

in immediate experience, instead he writes that "the rootedness of reflection in life is itself understood in reflective consciousness only in the form of a hermeneutic truth".[48] That is to say that we cannot apprehend the antecedent life of the unconscious in immediate experience, instead they remain fundamentally opaque and thus their meaning can only be disclosed indirectly by way of a hermeneutic detour. Consequently, even though both Henry and Ricoeur could embrace the claim that Freudian psychoanalysis offers a "mixed discourse" – made up partly of the language of meaning and partly of the language of force and affect – they disagree over how to approach the realm described by Freud's energetics.

They disagree, moreover, about the prospects of passing from one type of discourse to another. This becomes clear by comparing their views regarding the widespread view that the unconscious is "structured like a language." Henry rejects this view altogether, because for him to bring life – the world of affects, forces, drives, energy – into language is to bring a non-linguistic reality into language. Such a translation is necessarily a betrayal of the original reality of life, because it seeks to convey life in terms of an altogether different type of appearing that is not proper to it. The bar that separates life and the unconscious from language and consciousness thus establishes a sharp dichotomy between two different modes of appearing, for Henry. Ricoeur, likewise, acknowledges the limitations of the view that the unconscious is structured like a language, but he develops a more nuanced understanding of the relation between the unconscious and language. When it is said that "the unconscious is like a language", Ricoeur notes that "the problem is to assign an appropriate meaning to the world 'like'"[49]. To say that the unconscious is "like" a language is neither to say that it is or is not linguistic. For the bar that separates the law of conscious representation from the law of life is at once "a barrier that separates the systems and a relating that ties together the relations of signifier to signified".[50] As a

[48] *FP* p. 458.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 400.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 402.

result of this twofold dynamic in the passage between language and consciousness, Ricoeur is able to maintain that "there is no economic process to which there cannot be found a corresponding linguistic aspect" and at the same time that the economic explanation guarantees the separation between these two realms to the extent that it "is not a phenomenon of language".[51] This finely nuanced reading of what it means to be "like" something else lends additional support for the claim that Ricoeur's reading of Freud escapes the Henryan accusation that he would reduce the unconscious to a hermeneutics of meaning.

In spite of the sharp differences that have emerged between these two phenomenologies of life, however, it is important not to forget the underlying commonality that allows those differences to come to light. Both thinkers aim to redirect phenomenology toward the theme of life. A phenomenology of life calls for a departure from the Cartesian legacy and the Idealism that defines classical phenomenology. The phenomenological significance of the engagement with Freud, for both Henry as well as Ricoeur, resides in the fact that Freudian psychoanalysis challenges the primacy of the theoretical ego or "I think" and points to a reality that conditions consciousness. Prior to the activities of consciousness, there is the domain of life. The subject is initially rooted in practical and affective life. Practically, the subject is defined as a bodily "I can," which includes one's practical capabilities and efforts. Affectively, the subject is defined as a *conatus*, which refers to the desire to live and to persevere in one's own living. These are the shared starting points of their phenomenology of life, even though they differ in their respective conceptions of the meaning of life and of its relation to consciousness.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 403.

*Pli* 28 (2017), 53-89

# Religion und *Jouissance* im Verständnis von Jacques Lacan und Michel Henry: Zum Gespräch zwischen Psychoanalyse und radikaler Religionsphänomenologie

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Aus Lacans Stellungnahmen zur Religion ergibt sich durch sein Werk hindurch, dass die Psychoanalyse seiner Meinung nach die Religion keineswegs besiegen wird, weil die Religion in gewisser Weise unbesiegbar sei, worauf allein schon die durch die Wissenschaften selbst hervorgerufenen Sinnerschütterungen hinwiesen. Denn wenn das "Reale" (*le réel*) das ist, was stets als das Unmögliche in unserer Existenz hervorbricht,[1] dann wird die Religion angesichts solcher Infragestellungen des Lebens aller eine zukünftige Aufgabe beibehalten, für welche sie nach Lacan ungeahnte Ressourcen besitzt, um jede subjektive wie kollektive Erprobung zu heiligen. Die Religion sei in der Tat in der Lage, allem einen Sinn zu geben, dem Bösen der Schuld wie dem Sinnverlust in den biographischen Krisen jedes Menschen und angesichts seines Todes. Das Entscheidende ist hierbei für unsere

[1] Vgl. zur weiteren Diskussion des Begriffs des "Realen" (*le réel*) auch L. Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness. A Philosophical Reading of Lacan*, Cambridge/Mass., MIT Press 2077, pp. 104-139: "The Subject of the Real"; T. Eyers, *Lacan and the Concept of the 'Real', New York,* Palgrave Macmillan 2012.

Untersuchung nicht, welche Theologie, Weisheit oder Konfession sie dafür im Einzelnen bereitstellt, sondern ob sie eine Weise des "religiösen Diskurses" findet, welche den "psychoanalytischen Diskurs" einholt und möglicherweise in Zukunft sogar integriert oder ersetzt, wie Lacan[2] es nicht grundsätzlich ausschließt, insofern auch die "unmöglichen Erfahrungen" – wie etwa jene ganz neu aufkommende Angst in der wissenschaftlich-technischen Forschung selbst – aufgefangen werden können. In dieser Hinsicht möchten wir im Folgenden die Möglichkeit eines angemessenen "religiösen Diskurses" in Auseinandersetzung mit Lacan skizzieren, wobei wir gleichzeitig religionsphilosophische Analysen aus der Lebensphänomenologie aufgreifen, um Dialogelemente zwischen Psychoanalyse und dem Konzept einer zukünftigen "Lebensreligion" aufzuweisen.

## 1) Anerkennung und Kritik der Religion in der Psychoanalyse Lacans

Wenn Freuds Psychoanalyse selbst zu jenem geschichtlichen Augenblick um 1900 aufgetreten ist, um sowohl auf eine kulturelle Krise in der Gesellschaft wie in den Wissenschaften als Zivilisationsproblem zu antworten, und zwar als *Symptom* solcher Entwicklung, dann ergibt sich daraus die Frage, was in Zukunft ihr Verhältnis zur wahren und zu vielen falschen Religionen sein wird. Für Lacan ist die christliche Religion, die "römische", die "wahre Religion", da sie eben das von der Psychoanalyse offenbarte Symptom der Menschen heute durch den "religiösen Sinn" ihrer Wahrheit aufheben könne, wenn diese Wahrheit für die Zukunft stark genug bliebe. Ob es sich dabei um eine erneute Verdrängung oder eine wirkliche Symptomheilung handle, ist genau die Problematik, welche im Augenblick zwischen Psychoanalyse und Religion noch offen steht, da die Entscheidung des Überlebens der einen oder anderen noch nicht gefallen sei, auch wenn die alarmierenden Zeichen seitens der Wissenschaftsfolgen sich verstärken. Denn wenn die Religion zu ihrem

[2] Vgl. "Le Triomphe de la religion", in: *Le Triomphe de la religion précédé de Discours aux Catholiques*, Paris, Seuil 2005, 73ff. (dt. *Der Triumph der Religion, welchem vorausgeht: Der Diskurs an die Katholiken*, Wien, Turia + Kant 2009).

Gegenstand das "Heil" der Menschen hat (was von keinem speziellen Wissen abhängig ist, dann heißt dies, dass die Menschen zwar gegenwärtig empfinden, dass etwas in der Moderne mehr und mehr größeres Unbehagen hervorruft, aber letztlich selbst nicht wissen, woran es symptomal wirklich liegt. Und die Psychoanalyse hat demgemäß keinen Schlüssel für die Zukunft, auch wenn sie mit ihrem neuen Konzept des "Unbewussten" als Symptom und der entsprechenden therapeutischen Praxis den Finger auf das Subjekt als ein "SprachSein" (*parlêtre*) gelegt hat, um dadurch eine gewisse Parallele zum Beginn des Johannesprologs aufzuweisen: "Im Anfang war das Wort" (Joh 1,1).

Für Lacan bleibt allerdings bei dieser neutestamentlichen Aussage völlig undurchdringlich, wo dieser Logos (*Verbe*) vor dem Anfang war, denn der offenkundige Bezug zur Genesis des Alten Testamentes mache nur deutlich, dass Gott die Welt durch das Wort geschaffen haben soll. Dies impliziere nämlich, das Wort als Logos sei *vor* dem Anfang gewesen, aber wir könnten von Gott als "Vater" gemäß der christlichen Tradition nicht mehr ausmachen, als dass dieser Gott den Menschen die Möglichkeit gegeben habe, alle Dinge zu benennen, und von Gott selbst Weisungen und Gebote zu empfangen habe. Für Lacan kann dies in seiner Übereinstimmung mit dem Johannestext nur bedeuten, dass das Drama des Menschen, wie es das Christentum als "wahre Religion" bestimmt, mit der *Fleischwertung* des Logos beginnt. Anders gesagt wird aus dem Johannesprolog und der theologischen Inkarnationslehre Christi nach Lacan das Grundproblem des Sprechens der Individuen herausgestellt, was einerseits einen Genuss (*jouissance*) verheißt, aber dessen "Jubilieren" impliziere auf gleiche Weise alle Verwüstungen durch das Wort (*parole*), weshalb es als Logos (*Verbe*) gerade auch am Anfang jeder psychoanalytischen/theoretischen Praxis stehe.[3] Wie bei der Existenzfrage

[3] Vgl. *Ibid*., 88ff. – Zur Auslegung des Johannesprologs von Origines bis zu heutigen dekonstruktivistischen Deutungen in der Nachfolge Derridas vgl. M. Enders u. R. Kühn, *"Im Anfang war der Logos…". Studien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte des Johannesprologs von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Freiburg i. Br., Herder 2011.

Gottes[4] geht es Lacan also weniger um die christologische Logosfigur als historische und transzendente Wirklichkeit des Glaubens als um das (unbewusste) Implikat des Sprechens/Sagens (*Dire*). Nach der Interpretation von I. Benyamini[5] in der Nachfolge Lacans stehe der Sohn Gottes somit im Mittelpunkt der Existenz einer narzisstisch-christlichen Gemeinschaft, welche das christliche Imaginäre sowohl als Alternative zur heidnisch-fleischlichen Lust, aber auch zum jüdischen Gesetz begreife und damit die okzidentale Kultur maßgeblich bis heute beeinflusst habe.

Denn als lebendige Wesen, welche für Lacan vor allem immer auch sprechende Wesen im umfassenden symbolischen Sinne aller möglichen Signifikantenketten sind, bleiben wir nämlich einem "Realen" ausgesetzt, von dem wir ständig getrennt sind. Dies drücke sich in jedem Symptom aus, besonders aber im Verhältnis des sprechenden Menschen als Mann und Frau, also in der Sexualität, für die es keinerlei wissenschaftliche oder schriftliche Formel jemals geben wird, denn "für das SprachSein ist die Sexualität ohne Hoffnung".[6] Wenn in Zukunft deutlich werden sollte, dass es weder auf die Sprache noch auf die Beziehungen zwischen den Menschen im umfassenden Sinne eine technische wie moralische Antwort geben sollte, dann wird sich der Mensch nach Lacan daher wahrscheinlich erneut der Religion zuwenden. Dies bedeutet nicht, dass für ihn das Reale mit dem Transzendenten in metaphysischer oder theologischer Perspektive konvergiert. Denn wenn das Reale die unmögliche Erfahrung einer Ganzheit ist, die niemals bekannt werden kann, dann bleibt auch jeder Glaube (*foi*) der Versuch, jene Lücken auszufüllen, die wir im Realen symbolisch über die Sprache nicht in eine eindeutige Signifikanz überführen können. Lacan will seine Position

[4] Vgl. S. Askofaré, "Du nom-du-père au sinthome: Lacan et la religion", in: *Estudios pesquisasem psicologia* 1 (2008) pp. 12-23.
[5] Vgl. I. Benyamini, *Narzisstischer Universalismus. Eine psychoanalytische Untersuchung der Paulusbriefe mit Freud und Lacan*, Berlin, Merve 2013, 122ff.; außerdem F. Ensslin, "Accesses to the Real. Lacan, Monotheism and Predestination", in: *European Journal of Psychanalysis* 32 (2011): *Special Issue: Lacan and Philosophy: The New Generation*, pp. 49-91.
[6] *Le Triomphe de la religion*, p. 94.

nicht als ontologische, auch nicht im Sinne Kants als metaphysisch unfassbares "Ding an sich" gelten lassen,[7] da selbst der Begriff des Noumenalen noch an einer Auffassung des Ganzen des Wirklichen festhält, welche für uns nicht verifizierbar ist – auch nicht als teleologische Kategorie, wie sie etwa in der klassischen Phänomenologie nach Kant noch Husserl vertritt.

Selbst wenn man also wie Comte und Boutroux innerhalb der französischen Metaphysikkritik und Epistemologie sogar eine Entwicklung von Naturgesetzen anerkennen wollte, welcher der Mathematiker Poincaré strikt widersprach, ergäbe sich für Lacan[8] aus einer solchen evolutionären Sichtweise unserer Naturerklärung keinerlei Transzendenz, insofern das Reale gerade nicht mit der Wirklichkeit (*réalité*) verwechselt werden dürfe, die sich in der Konstitution unseres Weltzugangs durch die symbolische Ordnung erschöpft. Der Rationalismus Kants zum Beispiel wirkt dem gegenüber wie der theologische Rationalismus der Kirche als Verstärkung des Phantasmas, welches mit jeder Rationalisierung gegeben ist. Denn ob ich die drei metaphysischen Grundfragen Kants nehme: *Was kann ich wissen? Was darf ich hoffen? Was soll ich tun?* – oder die drei Kardinaltugenden *Glaube*, *Hoffnung* und *Liebe* seit Paulus, stets wird damit eine universelle Neurose genährt,[9] die nicht unbedingt ein schlimmes Symptom sein muss, aber einen Auslöser von Symptomen nach Lacan darstellt. Nicht das Reale selbst werde hier zugelassen, sondern es würde das "Realitätsprinzip" (Freud) von allem verfolgt, damit die Dinge nicht so schlecht gingen, womit jedoch über einen erhofften "Sinn" die phantasmatische Angst vor dem Realen verstellt sei. Soll der zukünftige "religiöse Diskurs" wie der analytisch-therapeutische Diskurs gerade diese Verstellung ausschließen, dann wäre genau darauf zu achten, wie

[7] Vgl. allerdings P. Welsen, "Die Ethik des rechten Sprechens. Zur Frage der Verantwortung bei Jacques Lacan", in: *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 42/4 (1988) pp. 682-693, hier 689f, wonach das "Signifikats-Außerhalb" der *Chose* formal mit dem "Ding an sich" bei Kant verglichen werden kann.
[8] Vgl. *Le Triomphe de la religion*, 97f.
[9] Vgl. neben Benyamini auch P. Daviot, *Jacques Lacan et le sentiment religieux*, Paris, Erès 2006, Kap. IV: "L'épître aux romains" (pp. 75-99).

die Angst des Realen – des Unberechenbaren und Unbenennbaren in der Existenz – durch die Religion beantwortet oder als solche stehen gelassen wird. Dem Gleiten von Glaube, Hoffnung und Liebe in Richtung vergewissernder Bedeutungen, welche sich stets als imaginär erweisen, stellt Lacan folglich das Begehren des *Erwachens* entgegen, welches mit seiner oft paradoxen Sprech- und Schreibweise korreliert, um jeden fixierten Sinn aufzubrechen.[10]

Der Patient in der Analyse/Therapie kann daher nicht nur alles sagen, sondern tut es zudem mit dem Gefühl, dass das darin erprobte Ungewöhnliche des Realen ihn über sein bloßes Dasein hinaushebt, mit dem er an sich zufrieden sein könnte. Die ebenfalls damit immer auch gegebene Klage über die Umstände und Zustände macht ihm mehr und mehr deutlich, dass er nicht mit seinem ihm gesellschaftlich zugeschriebenen Wesen als Rolle identisch sein kann, da sich etwas als Symptom dieser Konformität entgegenstellt. Im "Herrendiskurs" wie im "wissenschaftlichen Diskurs" ist letztlich kein Platz für radikale (symptomale) Andersheit,[11] weshalb sich auch der "religiöse Diskurs" die Frage stellen muss, ob er nur in eine transzendente Sinnordnung das einzelne Individuum über Glaube und Hoffnung einführen will – oder dem Individuum als unbenennbar dessen eigene Wahrheit zurückgibt, die "Ich" sagt, ohne von der Symbolik gänzlich umfasst werden zu können. Denn im Imaginären des "Mich" (*moi*) mit der es stützenden Ordnung, welche das Begehren an bestimmte libidinös besetzte Objekte (*a*) in ihrer Wiederholung fixiert, dreht sich die Wirklichkeit im Kreise. Das "Ich" der Wahrheit als Selbst des Subjekts tritt genau aus diesem Kreislauf heraus, indem es die Grenzen der sprachlichen Verzerrungen verlässt, und damit eine Räumlichkeit, welche vom Denken zu schnell als identisch mit dem Realen identifiziert wird. Auch der wahre "religiöse Diskurs" müsste

[10] Zum Vergleich von Lacans Begehrens-Begriff und dem "höchsten Gut" bei Kant vgl. auch schon B. Baas, *Das reine Begehren*, Wien, Turia + Kant 1995.

[11] Für die Einführung dieser vier Diskursformen von Herrendiskurs, universitär-wissenschaftlichem, hysterischem und psychoanalytischem Diskurs vgl. J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire XVII: L'envers de la psychanalyse*, Paris, Seuil 1991. Dazu auch R. Kühn, *Diskurs und Religion. Der psychoanalytische Wahrheitszugang nach Jacques Lacan als religionsphilosophische Problematik*, Dresden, Text & Dialog 2016.

mithin die Realität sprengen, jedoch nicht auf eine repräsentierte Transzendenz hin, sondern auf eine Wahrheit hin, die im "Ich" ihre einmalige Stimme findet: "Ich, die Wahrheit, spreche", wie Lacan formuliert.[12]

Das Symptom als "Unbehagen" in einer Zivilisation (Freud), welche das Reale als Welt bestimmen will und damit scheitert, ist ein leiblicher Ausdruck der Furcht vor jenem Leib selbst, der solches offenbart. Als umfassende Angst von nirgendwo her, zumindest ohne angebbare Ursache, ergibt sich ein Verdacht als Gefühl, dass wir nicht auf unseren Leib als sichtbaren Körper reduziert sein können, wie der herrschende Objektivismus die Losung ausgibt. Durch ein solches Gefühl werde aber diese Angst als Furcht vor dem entgrenzten bzw. zerrissenen Körper zur Angst vor der Angst, welche jede Konsistenz von Imaginärem und Symbolischen schon aufsprengt, um die Angst vor dem Realen zu sein.[13] Der heutige "religiöse Diskurs" als Theologie antwortet hierauf zumeist metaphysisch oder kerygmatisch als eine erklärende Hermeneutik unseres Woher (Schöpfung) und Wohin (jenseitiges Leben, Auferstehung, Gericht), womit aber wiederum (noch) herrschende Herrensignifikate fixiert werden, welche das "Ich" wie die Angst und deren Wahrheit ihrerseits verdrängen, um einen Namen und Begriff an die Stelle dessen zu setzen, was – wie bei "Gott" und seiner Ex-sistenz – auch beim Menschen *unbenennbar* bleibt. Wenn sich im "Objekt *a*" jeglicher Genuss als ein unendliches "Mehr-Genießen" festmachen will, um das Symptom wie einen "Mehrwert" (Marx) zu nähren, das heißt ihm Konsistenz zu verleihen, dann ist die De-substantialisierung als Aufhebung eines jeglichen Phallus im Sinne von Vater, Sinn oder Gesetz ("Name-des-Vaters") auch das eigentliche Motiv des echten religiösen Diskurses. Angesichts des lauten Schreis Christi am Kreuz: "Mein Vater, warum hast du mich verlassen?" (Mk 15, 37), notierte schon Simone Weil, Christus sei in der Wahrheit verblieben, weil er sich in dieser äußersten

[12] "La scicnce et la vérité", in: *Ecrits II*, Paris, Seuil 1966, 232f. (dt. *Schriften I-III*, Freiburg/Olten, Walther Verlag 1973).
[13] Vgl. J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire X: L'Angoisse*, Paris, Seuil 2008 (dt. Das *Seminar X: Die Angst*, Wien, Turia + Kant 2010).

Verlassenheit seines Unglücks keinem Imaginären als tröstender Wahrheit zuwandte. Von daher wird verständlich, wenn Lacan[14] bemerkt, dass der viel von Simone Weil lernen könne, wer sich über die Natur des Imaginären im Zusammenhang mit unserer "vegetativen Energie" als Libido oder Eros Klarheit verschaffen möchte.

Der hier diskutierte "religiöse Diskurs", sofern er es mit der Symptomatik des Realen wie dem psychoanalytischen Diskurs zu tun hat, muss daher weder die Fragen des Unbewussten noch des Sexuellen als Grundrelation menschlicher Bezüglichkeit seit Freud fürchten oder sogar verneinen. Es geht vielmehr um die Antwort auf ein Fehlen (*manque*) im existentiellen Leben, obwohl das rein phänomenologische Leben der Selbstgenuss (Lust) schlechthin ist – mithin eine reine Selbstbezüglichkeit, die keinen Objektbezug (*a*) letztlich kennt, sondern die selbstaffektive Wahrheit des "Ich" bildet, welches von dieser realsten Erfahrung her empfindet und spricht, ohne sich jedoch selbst gestiftet zu haben.[15] Mit anderen Worten hat ein solch "religiöser Diskurs" von dem zu sprechen, von dem es weder einen Signifikanten noch ein Wort als Sinnreferenz gibt. Diese Diskurssituation ist zumindest ebenso paradox wie die von Lacan in Anspruch genommene Praxis der Kur als "Begehren des Analytikers", um die Zweideutigkeit jeglichen Sinns seitens des Patienten zu unterstreichen. Deshalb zielt Lacan im Gebot der Nächstenliebe als Paradigma für die Sublimierung in der analytisch-therapeutischen Praxis[16] auf eine Bezugsform außerhalb jener Sprache ab,

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[14] Vgl. *Le Séminaire VI: Le désir et son interpréation*, Paris, Editions de la Martinière 2013, pp. 361, 370 u. 442. Dazu auch H. Müller, *Die Lehre vom Unbewussten und der Glaube an Gott. Ein Gespräch zwischen Psychoanalyse und Glauben – Jacques Lacan und Simone Weil*, Düsseldorf, Patmos 1983, sowie besonders zur Diskussion der Weilschen Erkenntniskritik und Christologie ebenfalls R. Kühn, *Leere und Aufmerksamkeit. Studien zum Offenbarungsdenken Simone Weils*, Dresden, Text & Dialog 2014, 42ff. u. 126ff.

[15] Vgl. für diesen kritischen religionsphänomenologischen Hintergrund M. Henry, *Affekt und Subjektivität. Lebensphänomenologische Beiträge zur Psychologie und zum Wesen des Menschen*, Freiburg/München, Alber 2005, 23f.

[16] Vgl. *L'éthique de la psychanalyse (1959-1960)*, Paris, Seuil 1986 (dt. *Das Seminar. Buch 7: Die Ethik der Psychoanalyse*, Berlin, Quadriga 1995), Kap. XIV; *Le désir et son interpréation*, 555ff.; *Le Triomphe de la religion*, 45ff. u. 61f.

die immer nur eine imaginäre Bildgleichheit des "Nächsten" vor Augen stellt, vor allem auch im Verhältnis von Mann und Frau, um sie nach christlicher Tradition in ihrer jeweilig radikalen Andersheit dank ihres unmittelbaren Bezugs zu Gott als Schöpfer zu verorten – ein Bezug, der von jedem imaginären Genuss unabhängig ist, weil über die narzisstisch oder aggressiv geprägte Intersubjektivität hinaus gegeben. Die Anerkennung der zum Schweigen gebrachten metonymen Benennungen durch diesen religiösen Diskurs entspricht daher (wie in der Kur) dem letzten Schweigen in allen Beziehungen, wenn die (analytische wie religiöse) Arbeit der De-Substantialisierung erfolgt ist. Mit Lacan wie der Bibel gesprochen ist es der *Buchstabe*, (*lettre*), der tötet, und allein der Geist macht frei als Nicht-Benennung.[17] Ist nämlich die Sprache tot, in der Eros sich verfangen will, dann ist es genau deren Entflechtung, die so etwas wie eine Anerkennung der wirklichen Andersheit des Anderen möglich macht.

Anders gesagt verlässt unserer Auffassung nach der eigenständige "religiöse Diskurs" die Erkenntnis, welche uns von jedem Herrendiskurs und wissenschaftlich-universitären Diskurs vorgegeben wird, um für die Zukunft all jene Objektköder zu durchschauen, die einen unmittelbaren wie endgültigen Genuss verheißen. Ist dies deutlich geworden, dann bleibt in Auseinandersetzung mit dem Lacanismus zu klären, ob es nicht gerade ein Sprechen von Leib/Leben gibt, welches nicht an Signifikanten als "Verschwinden des Subjekts" gebunden ist, um so auch die Zerrissenheit des imaginär gespiegelten Körpers in jenem *lebendigen Voraus* zu hinterfragen, welches Michel Henry die schweigende "Selbstaffekion" des Lebens als transzendentale Geburt im rein phänomenologischen Leben in Auseinandersetzung unter anderem mit

[17] Zur Frage der "Buchstäblichkeit" vgl. J. Lacan, *Autres écrits*, Paris, Seuil 2001, 11ff., sowie auch das Kapitel über Lacan in H.-D. Gondek u. L. Tengelyi, *Neue Phänomenologie in Frankreich*, Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp 2011, 308f., und G.-F. Duportail, *L"'apriori litéral*". *Une approche phénoménologique de Lacan*, Paris, Cerf 2004.

Freud und Lacan nennt.[18] Und zwar mit einem ähnlichen Anliegen einer De-Substantialiserung aller Bezüge gemäß dem radikal phänomenologischem Hinweis auf ein rein immanentes Werden als Selbstbewegung des Lebens, welche zugleich ein Diesseits von Metaphysik wie Strukturalismus ankündigt. Wenn Lacan "Gott" insofern gelten lässt, wie dieser "ex-sistiert" und nicht als im Horizont des Seins gegeben ist, dann gibt es auch eine Anerkennung der "wahren Religion" über die Neurose hinaus, für die ein vorgestellter Gott zur Sicherung des eigenen Seins eingesetzt ist. Wird das rein phänomenologische Leben nicht substantialisiert oder ontologisiert, dann ist auch die ursprüngliche Wirklichkeit dieses Lebens über den toten Vater (Phallus) hinaus gegeben, der als imaginärer "Name-des-Vaters" im Großen Anderen (*A*) fest verankert ist, ohne die reine Bezüglichkeit des Lebens als solche – *le reel* nach Lacan – leben zu lassen.

Diese Ex-sistenz Gottes kann zusätzlich noch im therapeutischen Kontext so verstanden werden, dass die vorausgesetzte lebendige "Person" in der Verdrängung immer mitgegeben bleibt, jedoch nicht als eine phallische Einheit der Effekte (einschließlich der psychoanalytischen), sondern als eine Bezüglichkeit, welche nicht allein durch die Sprachstruktur bedingt ist. Freuds Atheismus lebt in der idealisierten Neurose eines Monotheismus weiter, den Moses durch den vergöttlichten Vater herbeigeführt sah, während der wahrhaftige Atheismus für Lacan eine Aszese darstellt, welche sich vom Phantasma der Allmacht löst,[19] um somit auch jedes vom Subjekt vorausgesetzte Wissen (*sujet supposé savoir; SSS*) in Frage zu stellen. Und auf der anderen Seite bleibt Freud ebenfalls nach Lacan bei der Liebe zum Unbewussten stehen und kann die Besonderheit der weiblichen Lust (*jouissance*) nicht wirklich zur Kenntnis nehmen, welche sich nicht auf

[18] Vgl. "Kritik des Subjekts", in: *Affekt und Subjektivität*, 33-50; *Généalogie de la psychanalyse. Le commencement perdu*, Paris, PUF 1985. Dazu auch E.J. Lee, *Pour une critique phénoménologique de la psychanalyse: Henry, Freud, Lacan*, phil. Diss. Universität Straßburg 2009.

[19] Vgl. *Le Triomphe de la religion*, 35ff.; *L'éthique de la psychanalyse*, 46f. zur Neurose als ethischem Konflikt.

die phallische Lust begrenzt. Ex-sistieren im *Intervall* der Signifikanten impliziere mithin eine Bezüglichkeit in der Trennung vom Sinn, der objektalen Lust und dem Genuss des Anderen (*A*), so wie auch die de-fixierende "wahre Religion" Gott als Sein de-ontologisiert. In den Intervallen von Sprache und Sinn herumzuirren (*errer*), erfordert mithin eine von Lacan gewollte Zweideutigkeit, nämlich das Irren im Sich-Täuschen (*errer*) durch das angebliche Wissen der Zeitepoche zu beginnen, aber in der Liebe zum Unbewussten als Liebe zur Wahrheit des Ich zu verharren. Dies hebt das Irren als Irrnis (*erreur/errance*) nicht auf, aber das Subjekt befreit sich dabei von der Illusion des scheinbar vereinheitlichten Wissens oder dem "Zug zum Einen" bzw. "einzigen Zug" irgendeiner Instanz, sei es hier die Psychoanalyse selbst oder die Religion bzw. die Wissenschaft. Denn die *jouissance* meint bei Lacan immer auch "ein die Lust-am-Schmerz-Genießen", wodurch von ihm Freuds Begriff des "Todestriebes" weiterentwickelt wird. Es ist also die Sehnsucht nach vollem Genuss bei gleichzeitiger Beschränkung durch Sprache, "Namen-des-Vaters", Gesetz etc., die das Subjekt in der neurotischen Illusion eines absoluten Genusses sowie gleichzeitig in einer hysterischen Sehnsucht durch solche Verunmöglichung gefangen hält.[20] Neben den klassischen Ethiken von Höchstem Gut, Glück, Gemeinwohl, Pflicht oder Lust (Aristoteles, Kant, Bentham) bleibt so eine Ethik vom Realen aus aufzufinden, deren Echtheitsanspruch mit dem Demaskierungsimperativ in der Psychoanalyse seit Freud korreliere, aber sich letztlich auf ein "Begehren des Begehrens" zu besinnen habe, welches nicht in das bloß organisierte Funktionieren des Objekt-Begehrens (*a*) aufgehe.[21]

Lacan hält daher den Mythos vom Vatermord nicht nur für den einzigen Mythos, den die Moderne hervorgebracht hat, sondern auch für

[20] Für eine diesbezügliche Analyse von *Jouissance* und Kultur vgl. F. Declercq, "Lacan's Concept ot the Real of Jouissance. Clinical Illustrations and Implications", in: *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society* 9/2 (2004 237-251, hier bes. 247ff.; außerdem B. Fink, *Das Lacan'sche Subjekt, Zwischen Sprache und Jouissance*, Wien, Turia + Kant 2006, 134ff.

[21] Vgl. *L'éthique de la psychanalyse*, 12ff.

einen solchen, der dem "Tod Gottes" seit Hegel im Sinne einer Zerstörung aller Götter durch das Christentum entspreche. Denn das Urdrama der Vatertötung liefere uns das Verhältnis zu einer primordialen Übereinkunft als Gesetz, welches mit einer Ambivalenz verbunden ist, nämlich mit der Wiederkehr der Liebe zum Vater, der jedoch weiterhin den Weg zum Genuss verbietet, obwohl der Vater als ursprüngliches Hindernis zu diesem Genuss beseitigt sei. Es gibt daher in der Rekonstruktion von Freuds Mosesfigur, dem Vatermord der Horde durch die Söhne und dem "Unbehagen in der Kultur" nicht nur eine verborgene "Christuszentrik" Freuds, wie Lacan annimmt, sondern innerhalb dieser Erlösungssicht vor allem die *Kluft* in einem Verbot, welches über die Schuld der Menschen dieses Verbot nur noch verstärke, so wie gemäß Paulus die Sünde durch das Gesetz übermächtig geworden sei (Röm 7,7ff.). Wurde aber Gott getötet, dann ist er seit *jeher* tot für uns, denn "Vater" war er nur in der Mythologie des Sohnes, wenn man Freud folgt. Und daraus folgert Lacan, "dass der Mensch, der den Tod Gottes inkarnierte, immer da ist", das heißt "er ist immer da in dem Gebot, das Gott zu lieben befiehlt". Für Lacan ist dies eine "gewisse atheistische Botschaft im Christentum", insofern der Mensch den Tod Gottes überlebe, für den er die Verantwortung trägt, "aber indem er dies tut, stellt er sich selbst vor uns hin".[22] Mit anderen Worten stößt die Verwerfung des Moralgesetzes durch einen zügellosen Genuss immanent auf Hindernisse, deren Heftigkeit nicht nur die alltägliche (klinische) Erfahrung zeige, sondern um zum (wahren) Genuss zu gelangen, ist eben eine Transgression notwendig – weshalb eben Genuss und Gesetz nicht voneinander zu trennen wären. Die üblichen Wege zum Genuss besitzen nämlich etwas, das sich totläuft – mithin die Neigung hat, nicht durchführbar zu sein, so dass das Gesetz die sich im Kreise drehenden Menschen immer wieder auf die Bahnen einer kurzen und auf der Stelle tretenden Befriedigung (im Sinne des Phallus) zurückbringe, wodurch auch das Moralgesetz sukzessiv stets kleinlichere Vorschriften ausbilde.

[22] *Ibid*., p. 209.

Freud[23] schöpfte daraus einerseits die kritische Beschreibung einer neurotischen Religionsform in individueller als auch kollektiver Hinsicht, aber seine psychoanalytische Ethik formte gemäß Lacan auch ein "gemäßigtes Ideal der patriarchalen Anständigkeit" aus – ein "Humanitätsideal" mit einem gewissen Begriff der Verpflichtung und Echtheit, der auch an Kant zurückerinnert. Diesem Ethikideal hält Lacan seinerseits eine "Weisheit" entgegen, welche die *jouissance* nicht verleugnet, indem sie sich nicht mit der bloß objektalen Befriedigung zufrieden gibt, sondern eher die Erfahrung der Unerfüllbarkeit des "Dings" (*la Chose*) zuteil werden lässt, wie Moses sie wohl im brennenden Dornbusch vor der Gesetzgebung am Sinai habe erleben können.

So folgt die Religion stets einer Tradition, die Irrtümer notwendigerweise einschließt, welche aber zugleich Hinweise auf Begehren und Genuss (*jouissance*) darstellen. Und all unsere Benennungen gehorchen dem eingangs erwähnten Zusammenhang von Gott/Logos, denn indem wir die Dinge benennen (vgl. Gen 2,19), sprechen wir vom Namen Gottes aus, um die Symbolik des Phallus (Gesetz) zu stärken, welche vom Unbewussten her wie auch zum Unbewussten hin spricht. Aber wenn Gott gemäß dem biblischen Schöpfungsbericht nicht selbst die Dinge wie auch Tiere, Pflanzen etc. benennt, sondern der einzelne Mensch als Individuum dies an seinem jeweils konkreten Ort der Lebenswelt mit Anderen (*A*) tut, dann muss gerade analytisch-therapeutisch wie religiös der "Name-des-Vaters" kritisch befragt werden, um die "Ex-sistenz Gottes" als "wahre Religion" in unser Leben zu integrieren – nämlich ohne Fixierung durch das ursprüngliche Phantasma von sichernder Objektsuche. Die zusätzliche Analogie zwischen Gottes Nicht-Existenz und der Nicht-Existenz des als "Vereinigung" gedachten Geschlechtsverkehrs nach Lacan bedeutet daher, nicht sofort des Irrtums (*errer*) enthoben zu sein. Denn es gebe weiterhin eine Harmonie, Einheit oder Allmächtigkeit, wovon das

[23] Vgl. "Zwangshandlungen und Religionsübungen", in: GW VII, Frankfurt/M., Fischer 1969, pp. 129-139.

sexuelle Begehren in seiner fusionellen Übertragung zwischen Mann/Frau oder Patient/Therapeut ein fundamentaler Ausdruck bis in die Verdrängung der Neurose hinein ist. Die Irrnis (*errer*) hat nach Lacan die Täuschung (*être dupe*) hinsichtlich einer "unendlichen Gerade" aufzugeben, damit diese sich nicht zum irrtümlich vollendeten Kreis des phallischen Genusses im Begehren des Anderen und des Sinns (*A*) schließe. Denn in jeder Berührung von Mann und Frau, in jedem Verständnis von Sinn gibt es einen Graben, der in dieser Welt nicht zu überbrücken ist, wobei Lacan soweit geht, den Versuch der Ausfüllung dieses Grabens als die "Sünde gegen den Heiligen Geist" gemäß dem Neuen Testament selbst anzusehen. Andererseits jedoch gilt auch, dass die Unverhältnismäßigkeit im sexuellen oder therapeutischen Bezug nicht dazu führen dürfte, sie durch irgendeine andere Formel zu ersetzen, welche wiederum nur ein Irren wäre, um weiterhin getäuscht zu werden.

Die Analyse/Therapie bringt nämlich zweifelsohne gute Effekte hervor, aber nur für eine jeweils kurze Zeitdauer meist, wogegen nicht anzukämpfen ist, so wie die Bewegung zum Vater hin nicht mit der Ex-sistenz Gottes verwechselt werden darf. Lacans sinngemäße Formulierung: "Gott beweisen, um nicht an ihn zu glauben", betrifft folglich Gottes traditionell gedachtes "Sein" durch Philosophie und Religion sowie andererseits die Ex-sistenz des Subjekts, welche nicht von der Gläubigkeit abhängt (sei es an den Vater oder den Anderen), sondern von einer Struktur, die zu einer nicht durchschauten Koex-sistenz von Subjekt und Gott im "Borromäischen Knoten" (*RSI*) des Genusses führt.[24] Zu durchschauen ist mit anderen Worten letztlich das "Loch" des "Objekts *a*", wie Lacan zunächst sagte, um dann schließlich die Bedingung des Genusses in diesem Knoten (als *sinthome*) zu entdecken.[25] Demzufolge geht es nicht um eine theoretische Beweisführung in Bezug auf Gott/Subjekt, sondern um eine Erprobung (*épreuve*) innerhalb der Analyse/Therapie, ob es einen Genuss geben könne, der nicht nur phallisch sein will. Und dabei erstaunt nicht, dass Lacan die

[24] Vgl. M. Bousseyroux, *Lacan le Borroméen*, Toulouse, Erès 2014; dazu auch das Schema *RSI* am Ende unseres 1. Teils.
[25] Vgl. *Le Triomphe de la religion*, 93ff.

alttestamentliche Gottesselbstaussage “Ich bin, der ich bin” aus Ex 3,14 als “Loch” bezeichnen kann, insofern dadurch Gott in seinem Wesen als unzugänglich erklärt wird.[26] Hinsichtlich der “wahren Religion” des Christentums bedeutet dies schließlich, worauf wir schon hinwiesen, dass Gott nicht das All oder das Ganze sei, um ihn mit der Idee einer Totalität des Universums zu verwechseln, die in sich selbst immer wieder vom Realen aufgesprengt wird. Lacan verkennt also nicht, dass die religiösen Traditionen entscheidend an der Bildung unserer gesellschaftlichen Bezüge mitgewirkt haben. Aber über die Frage der Krise im heutigen Neo-Kapitalismus und der Kirchen hinaus bleibt eben die Problematik, ob die Psychoanalyse, welche sich epochal an den Missbildungen unserer Kultur als Symptom gemessen hat, dies nunmehr weiterhin leisten kann, wobei der Analytiker/Therapeut das wäre, was die religiöse Tradition verhieß oder sogar in Anspruch nahm, nämlich “ein Heiliger zu sein”, wie die Definition des Analytikers nach Lacan lautet.[27] Lacan postuliert mithin einen “psychoanalytischen Diskurs”, welcher nicht nur äußerlich von der Religion emanzipiert sein soll, sondern vor allem auch die untergründige Kontaminierung metaphysischer Implikationen vermeidet, die dem menschlichen Denken als solchem inhärent sind. Denn der Analytiker als “Heiliger” enthält das Neue einer Entdeckung im Bereich der menschlichen Erfahrung des Leidens. Er weist keines von ihnen zurück, und jedes Leiden steht innerhalb der Therapie unter dem Zeichen eines Begehrens steht, das ein erfüllendes Objekt für seine Verwirklichung sucht, von dem sich der Analytiker/Therapeut allerdings in seiner Antwort selbst enthalten muss, indem er es weder psychologisch für sich selbst noch als solches schlechthin verlangt. Von solcher Natur ist

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[26] Vgl. J. Lacan, *Des Noms-du-Père*, Paris, Seuil 2005, 92ff. – Für die religionsphilosophische Diskussion vgl. jetzt auch J.-L. Marion, *Gott ohne Sein*, Paderborn, Schöningh 2013; “Das dem Menschen Unmögliche – Gott”, in: I. G. Dalferth u.a. (Hg.), *Unmöglichkeiten. Zur Phänomenologie und Hermeneutik eines modalen Grenzbegriffs*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck 2009, pp. 233-264.

[27] Für diese Bezeichnung vgl. M. Binasco, *Lacan et la religion* (Diagnonales de l’option épistémiques de l’IF – Document 2), Paris, EPFCL 2001, 97ff. Für entsprechende Fragen an die Sitzung als solche vgl. auch N. Langlitz, *Die Zeit der Psychoanalyse. Lacan und das Problem der Sitzungsdauer*, Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp 2005.

die “Heiligkeit” als Weise “psychoanalytischer Ethik” im Sinne Lacans.

Ob innerhalb solcher Ethik der erotische Geschlechtsbezug genommen wird, der noch bei Freud nach dem platonischen wie biblischen Modell einer Einheit von Mann/Frau verstanden wurde, oder ob es sich um die heutige allgemeine Entzifferung aller Dinge innerhalb eines stereotyp vereinheitlichenden technisch-wissenschaftlichen (digitalen) Denkens und Tuns handelt – stets geht es um ein vermeintliches Recht auf etwas, das autoerotisch oder narzisstisch die meisten Subjekte bestimmt. Und wenn in einer solchen Demokratisierung desselben “Rechts für jeden” dabei die Einsamkeit für die einzelnen Individuen aufkommt, welche wie die Hölle (Sartre) sein kann, dann vermögen neben die Religion und die Therapie auch die medialen *Entertainments* und *Events* mittlerweile treten, die einen Sinn für alles anbieten. Zwar gibt es bereits eine kulturelle Vermischung aller Identitäten weltweit, aber dies bedeutet noch nicht, dass die Erfahrung radikaler Andersheit wirklich ohne Ressentiment und Rivalität gelebt wird, mithin ohne sich von einem “Namen-des-Vaters” zu lösen, der auch hinter dem Rücken weiterwirkt – sei es auf der Ebene des Geldes oder der demokratisch eingeforderten Übereinkunft. Und da die Akteure hierbei ständig zunehmen, wird die Lösung über Verhandlungen als Spiel der Signifikanten immer schwieriger, weil die Zeit für Einigungen sich immer mehr verlängert. Insofern dabei die subjektiven Missverständnisse innerhalb des Bezuges zum Anderen (*A*) eine zentrale Rolle spielen, bleibt nach Lacan nur die eigene fragile “Rechtsautonomie” aufzufinden, welche ihre sich freisetzende Durchquerung von fremder Symbolik nicht leugnet, ohne sich dadurch erneut irgendeinem “Herrendiskurs” anzuvertrauen.[28]

Die religiöse Frage wird also bleiben, solange die Begegnung des Genusses mit seinem unsagbaren Objekt eine ursprünglich sublimierte

[28] Vgl. zur Problematik dieser “Rechtsautonomie” im strukturellen Zusammenhang mit möglicher Freiheit und sozialer Bindung D. Finkelde, *Exzessive Subjektivität. Eine Theorie tathafter Neubegründung des Ethischen nach Kant, Hegel und Lacan*, Freiburg/München, Alber 2015, 249ff.

Lösung erfordert. In ihrer Sinngebung selbst verlegt die Religion die Antwort dabei stets neu in die Leere eines anderen Ortes, sobald das menschliche Wissen bisher noch vorhandene Lücken in der Lebenswelt besetzt hat, um in einer solch objektivierenden Antwort "das Ding" (*la Chose*) des unerfüllbaren Genusses irgendwo anders hin in das Universum als Innerlichkeit oder Äußerlichkeit zu verlegen.[29] Die Getrenntheit zwischen Wahrheit/Wissen ist daher für Lacan erprobend auszuloten, um nicht technischen wie religiösen Verheißungen zu verfallen, welche alle Plätze besetzen und das entsprechende Opfer einer Gläubigkeit, Schuldhaftigkeit etc. einfordern. Dies ist vielleicht das Neue unserer gegenwärtigen Situation, dass Religion, Wissenschaft und Technik miteinander voranschreiten, um jenes Begehren zu kanalisieren, welches prinzipiell kein festes Hier und Dort kennt. Sofern die Analyse/Therapie das Symptom als *sinthome* zur Kenntnis nimmt,[30] ohne ihm in seiner illusionären Befriedigung als Wiederholung zu folgen, können dadurch alle Ersatzbildungen für die Darstellung von Wissen aufgerollt werden – das Symptom des Wissenschaftlichen ebenso wie jenes der Religion im bisherigen Sinne.

Der Prototyp des kurz erwähnten "hysterischen Diskurses" verweist dabei auf eine Instabilität, Phantasie und ein Unvorhersehbares, das sich dennoch in einer Ordnung definitiven oder absoluten Wissens wieder finden will – nämlich besser noch als alle herrschenden Diskurse dieses Wissen übersetzen will, wobei gerade eine solche letzte metaphorische Übersetzung nicht möglich ist. Ist der "Borromäische Knoten" von *RSI* (Real, Symbolisch, Imaginär) ein ständiges Sichverbinden und Lösen, insofern bei der Herausnahme eines seiner Fadenringe die beiden anderen sich frei bewegen (was nicht ohne Analogie zum Mysterium der Trinität von Vater, Sohn und Heiligem Geist im Christentum ist), so kann nach Lacan keinerlei umfassend geistige Schau dieses Knotens erfolgen.[31]

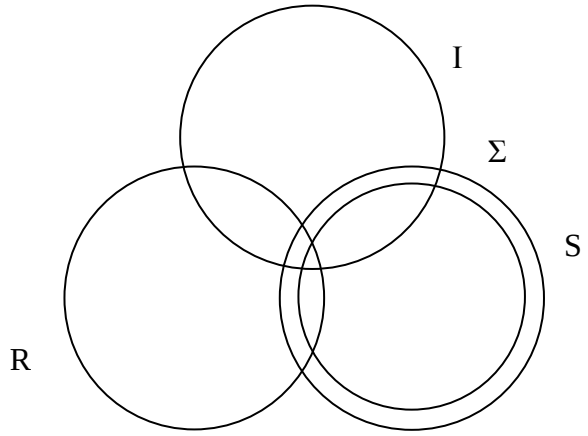
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[29] Zum "Ding" als Phantasma einer unaussprechlichen Genussfülle jenseits der Realität vgl. J. Lacan, *L´éthique de la psychanalyse*, Kap. II-V.

[30] Vgl. J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire XXIII: Le Sinthome*, Paris, Seuil 2005.

[31] Vgl. außer J. Lacan, *Ecrits II*, 239f., über den "Drei-Einigen Gott" sowie das *Filioque* bezüglich des Hervorgehens des Heiligen Geistes innerhalb der Trinität auch M.

Mithin muss der Zwang zu einer Gesamtdarstellung des Realen aufgegeben werden,[32] was die "wahre Religion" diesseits der Versuchung von ausschließlichen Sinnantworten versetzt, ohne die Leere der Antwort auf das Begehren selbst als subjektive Leere weiterschreiben zu müssen. Diese Leere selbst erfasst nämlich als solche im lebensphänomenologischen Sinne ihre eigene Fülle, ohne eine Einheit der Identifikation darzustellen, welche den Abschluss der Bewegung in Anspruch nähme, welche jedoch weder Existenz noch Leben zulassen. Mit anderen Worten darf die ständige lebensweltliche wie eigene "Anrufung" an etwas Anderes (*A*) nicht mit dem Anderen als Wahrheit schlechthin (einschließlich Gott) verwechselt werden, da die Wahrheit in keinerlei Kalkül eintritt. Dazu sei hier als Übergang zu unserem nächsten Teil auch die spätere Version vom "Borromäischen Knoten" angeführt,[33] um sowohl rück- wie vorausblickend die Implikationen der Lacanschen Diskussion ebenfalls schematisch zu verdeutlichen:




Kleiner, "Von der Häresie zum Heiligen Mann", in: G.Ch. Tholen u.a. (Hg.), *Übertragung – Übersetzung – Überlieferung. Episteme und Sprache in der Psychoanalyse Lacans*, Bielefeld, Transcript 2001, pp. 291-304, sowie *Ibid*., 195-208, den Beitrag von U.O. Dünkelsbühler zu "Schrift – Hysterie – Institution".

[32] Vgl. *L'éthique de la psychanalyse*, 28ff. u. 48ff.

[33] Wir bieten eine leicht veränderte Wiedergabe nach J. Lacan, *Encore*, Paris, Seuil 1975, p. 146 (dt. *Das Seminar XX: Encore*, Berlin/Weinheim, Quadriga 1986); "La Troisième" (Interview au Congrès de Rome 1974), in: *Lettres de l'Ecole freudienne* 16 (1975) pp. 6-26, hier 24; bzw. in J. Godebski, *Le tout dernier enseignement de Lacan. Un renouvellement de la clinique?*, Paris, L'Harmattan 2009, p. 82. Die Abkürzung *Σ* steht hierbei für das *sinthome*, welches der symptomalen Verknüpfung von *RSI* einen vierten Ring innerhalb des phantasmatisch bestimmten Symptoms (*S*) hinzufügt, indem es diesem als leiblich-affektive Ursprünglichkeit vorausliegt

## 2) Berührungspunkte zwischen dem späten Lacan und dem "religiösen Diskurs"

Hätte Lacan seine Erneuerungen im Bereich der Psychoanalyse über sein Todesjahr 1981 hinaus noch weiterführen können, so wären möglicherweise einige Berührungspunkte mit der Lebensphänomenologie, wie sie schon erwähnt wurden, noch deutlicher hervorgetreten.[34] Denn in den letzten Seminaren ab den 1970er Jahren, die um den "Borromäischen Knoten" von *RSI* und die *jouissance* kreisen, lässt sich sowohl ein Zurücktreten des Primats des Signifikanten wie des Symbolischen zugunsten einer subjektiven Wirklichkeit hin feststellen, die prinzipiell über keine Rede (*parole*) mehr vermittelbar ist und im *sinthome* als Kern des Symptoms zusammengeführt wird. Hier werden auch Sprechen/Handeln nicht mehr differenziert wie in der klassischen Kur, wodurch Leiblichkeit und lebensweltliche Ereignisse in eine neue Beziehung zueinander treten, insofern sie nicht mehr nur vom Phantasma des Imaginären im Sinne des operativen "Namens-des-Vaters" beherrscht zu sein scheinen, sondern von einem "Genießen", welches eine *Poesie* oder einen *Stil* in der Neurose selbst ausmacht[35] – mit anderen Worten eine aphoristische oder sogar tautologische (selbstaffektive) Daseinsweise, welche ihr So-Sein nicht weiter durch Sinn oder Gesetz zu rechtfertigen hat. Gerade dies rührt an die immanente Tautologie der Lebens-Selbstaffektion, worin sich das Leben selbst umschlingt, so dass die Unmittelbarkeit lebendigen Könnens und nicht die intentionale Zielrichtung des Handelns (die "Güter") im Mittelpunkt steht. Dies entspricht der je freudig erlebten Modalisierung des Lebens, in die sich auch der Schmerz lebensphänomenologisch als Oszillation der originären Grundbewegung von Sicherfreuen/Sicherleiden integriert.

Was konstitutiv bleibt bei Lacan, ist die "Kluft" oder das "Loch" des Subjekts, sich in keiner gesagten Wahrheit ergreifen zu können. Aber

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[34] Leitend für den gegenwärtigen Beitrag ist dabei die Analyse einer *Lebensreligion*; vgl. schon R. Kühn, *Lebensreligion. Unmittelbarkeit des Religiösen als Realitätsbezug*, Dresden, Text & Dialog 2013.

[35] Wobei dieser Begriff allerdings schon 1952 auftaucht; vgl. J. Lacan, *Le mythe individuel du névrosé ou poésie et vérité dans la névrose*, Paris, Seuil 2007, 11ff.

diese "Leere" als ein "zweiter Sinn", welcher eine "Abwesenheit des Sinns" bildet, ist gerade jene "Poesie, welche sowohl einen Effekt an Sinn wie einen Effekt des Lochs besitzt".[36] Wir finden darin das lebensphänomenologische Moment der unmittelbaren Ästhetik wieder,[37] die zugleich eine Lebensethik als unmittelbares Lebens-Können darstellt, was Lacan seinerseits unterstreicht, indem mit dem Symptom letztlich gerade ein solch "praktisches Wissen" vollzogen wird. Dies birgt dessen eigene *jouissance* in sich, ohne unbedingt an die Wiederholung des Phantasmas eines (traumatisch) verloren gegangenen "geliebten Objekts" (*a*) gebunden zu sein. Wir können diese Möglichkeit unsererseits den Vollzug einer subjektiven Praxis der Erprobung unmittelbarer Lebensabkünftigkeit nennen, und Lacan scheint Ähnliches im Auge zu haben, wenn der "sprechende Leib" als *parlêtre* ein "gekonntes Wissen" (*savoir y faire*) mit seiner *jouissance* darstellt,[38] worin die drei Dimensionen von *RSI* eine Erfahrung bilden, die nicht mehr nur durch Gesetz/Verbot oder Ödipuskomplex gekennzeichnet ist, sondern vielmehr durch ein Freiwerden von Worten, Imaginärem und Symbolik. Ist daher der "religiöse Diskurs" im bisher dargestellten Sinne ebenfalls von diesen Vorgaben befreit, wie es die Heterogenität von Leben/Welt bzw. von Selbstaffektion/Sprache unterstreicht, dann ergibt sich hier auch des Weiteren der kulturelle Berührungspunkt von Psychoanalyse und Lebensreligion, nämlich die Begegnungsweise zwischen den Individuen auf allen lebensweltlichen Ebenen selbst zu verändern.

Da Lacan in seinen letzten Seminaren ab 1974 die therapeutische Funktion des Wortes zugunsten des angedeuteten Ineinanders von Sprache/Handeln relativiert, zeigt sich in der Tat eine Verbindung, wo der Andere weder nur als Paranoia oder Intrusion auftritt, sondern gemeinsame Lösungen oder Projekte den Status einer nicht durch Worte

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[36] *Le Séminaire XXIV: L'insu que sait de l'Unebévue s'aile à mourre*, in: *Ornical* 12-18 (1977) 62f.

[37] Vgl. M. Henry, *Die Barbarei. Eine phänomenologische Kulturkritik*, Freiburg/München, Alber 1994, 116ff.

[38] Vgl. J.-A. Miller, "Parler avec son corps", in: *Mental* 27-28 (2012) pp. 27-39.

fundierten Schöpfung annehmen können.[39] Deren Lokalisierungen, Verschiebungen, Verknüpfungen etc. sind nicht vorhersehbar, was lebensphänomenologisch dem Wert jeder Modalisierung entspricht, in welcher die abyssale Lebensabkünftigkeit in jedem von uns erprobt zu werden vermag, ohne eine fixierende Einordnung im Horizont der Welt vornehmen zu müssen. Wenn Lacan diese Unvorhersehbarkeit weiterhin ein nicht zu füllendes "Loch" in der Gesamtstruktur von *RSI* nennt und dabei ein ständiges Dahin- und Ausgleiten (*ratage*) der subjektiven Existenz unterstreicht, dann ist damit dennoch eine unverzichtbare Singularität im Verhältnis von Realem/*jouissance* jeweils angedeutet. Damit dürfte auch die frühe Sichtweise des "menschlichen Pathos" eine andere werden, um die Affekte nicht nur durch die Signifikanten differenziert und seriell angeordnet sein zu lassen, sondern sie bezeichnen für uns eine wirkliche Lebenspassibilität, die dem Tod und der Auferstehung Christi über seine Übereinstimmung "mit den Schriften" hinaus eine wirkliche Autorität zuerkennt,[40] das heißt die Offenbarung des rein phänomenologischen Lebens zu bezeugen. Im "religiösen Diskurs" wird diese als einmalige Offenbarung eines transzendental lebendigen Individuums gewertet – als ein unüberhörbares "Wort des Lebens" selbst, das jeder ist.[41] In solcher Hinsicht zeigt sich damit schließlich eine religionsphilosophische Dialogmöglichkeit mit Lacan und seiner Schule, die für die Zukunft deskriptiv weiter genutzt werden kann.

Um einige diesbezügliche Diskussionselemente noch anzudeuten, müssen wir der Tatsache Rechnung tragen, dass die symbolische Ordnung heute nicht mehr von einem Begriff der *Religion* oder der *Natur* getragen wird, wodurch sich eben auch der "Name-des-Vaters" auflöst und die individuellen Rechte ohne Angst um eine Kastration (Verbot, Bestrafung, Schuld etc.) sich dem eigenen Selbstgenuss zuwenden. Hieraus ergibt

[39] Vgl. J. Godebski, *Le tout dernier enseignement de Lacan*, 77f.
[40] Vgl. *Le mythe individuel du névrosé ou poésie et vérité dans la névrose*, 67f. u. 106f.
[41] Vgl. M. Henry, *Christi Worte. Eine Phänomenologie der Sprache und Offenbarung*, Freiburg/München, Alber 2010 (frz. *Paroles du Christ*, Paris, Seuil 2002; dazu "Présentation" mit "Apparat critique" von J. Hernandez-Dispaux, in: *Revue Internationale de Michel Henry* 5 [2014] pp. 17-24, 143-156 u. 157-164).

sich zugleich eine Abschwächung oder sogar Aufhebung der ödipalen "Verdrängung", wie sie an die Vatermetapher seit Freud gebunden war, um eher eine *jouissance* aufzusuchen, die nicht so sehr die Überschreitung eines Verbots ist als vielmehr eine "leibliche *jouissance*" ohne transgressives Element, nämlich als symptomaler "Überschuss". Therapeutisch bedeutet dies, dass es sich dann im klinischen Bild um Differenzen in der Intensität handelt, zu denen eventuell eine gewisse Distanz gewonnen werden muss, um seine Existenz leben zu können, aber nicht um fest umrissene psychopathologische Formen wie in der Vergangenheit, als Neurose und Psychose als nosologische Erscheinungsbilder noch vorherrschten. Anders gesagt werden die Konturen der letzteren undeutlicher, was nach Lacan dahin tendiert, das *sinthome* als individuelle – und damit vielfältige – Form in der offenen Verknüpfungsstruktur innerhalb der Ringe von *RSI* anzusehen. Auf diese Weise finden wir die lebensphänomenologische Modalisierung als passible Intensität der originären Leiblichkeit wieder, die ebenfalls kein externes Element kennt, um den immanenten Vollzug solcher Intensität beurteilen zu können und dergestalt für die kulturelle wie religiöse Zukunft eine neue "Metaphysik der Leiblichkeit" als Ästhetik, Ethik und *religio* zur Orientierung anbietet.[42] Insofern diese Intensität als individuelles Maß prinzipiell nicht interpretierbar ist, entfällt mit dem Dahinschwinden des "Namens-des-Vaters" auch der Primat des Anderen (*A*) innerhalb der symbolischen Ordnung, was zur Folge hat, dass die Instanz des Vaters einer grundsätzlichen oder allgemeinen "Verwerfung" (*forclusion*) unterliegt und damit in der Verbindung von Realem und Symbolischem ein Mangel auftritt. Anders gesagt tritt eine Abwesenheit auf, die sich als ein Reales "außerhalb des Sinns" (*hors-sens*) erweist und nun vom Subjekt als subjektive Intensität im Sinne einer Verbindung von Fleisch (*chair*), Bild und Wort zu leben ist, was jede existentielle Form in der symbolischen Ordnung annehmen kann, so dass auch die Trennung von Normalität/Verrücktheit nicht mehr klar durchgeführt werden kann.

[42] Vgl. schon R. Kühn, *Begehren und Sinn. Grundlagen für eine phänomenologisch-tiefenpsychologisch fundierte Psychotherapie und Supervision – zugleich ein Beitrag zu Jacques Lacan*, Freiburg/München, Alber 2015, 43ff.

Daher erscheint vielen heute das Leben ohne jeden Sinn (ohne Gesetz, Vater, Autorität, Gott etc.), aber es muss hierbei gerade auch der Gewinn gesehen werden, dass alle abstrakten Wissensformen nur noch als spekulative Varianten des Verhältnisses von Theorie/Realem auftreten können – einschließlich des Freudschen Unbewussten, welches für Lacan nun zu einem "Hirngespinst des Wissens" wird. Die Psychoanalyse korrigiert sich auf diese Weise in einem ihrer wichtigsten Punkte, so wie Michel Henry[43] in etwa zur gleichen Zeit wie Lacan sagen konnte, dass das Unbewusste nur ein verfehlter Name für etwas an sich richtig Gesehenes sei – nämlich für das immemoriale Leben. Das Unbewusste ist damit wie der Name-des-Vaters eine Hypothese, welche nur jenes "Loch" im Sinne Lacans verdeckt, dass der Geschlechtsverkehr wie die *jouissance* nicht ohne eine letzte Leere denkbar seien, die jeden zu seiner kreativen Antwort auf diese Frage herausfordere. Der "religiöse Diskurs" stellt sich daher dem fundamentalen Sachverhalt, dass der "Name-des-Vaters" nunmehr nicht nur in der symbolischen Ordnung fehlt, sondern auch als Vorstellung oder Gebot letztlich nicht existiert, so dass auch andere Herrensignifikanten nicht mehr im Unbewussten aufzusuchen sind. Vielmehr steht nur eine originäre Verbindung zwischen absolut phänomenologischem Leben und individuiertem Leben am Anfang allen Erscheinens, dem von Seiten Lacans die rein singulären *sinthomes* ohne weitere Signifikantenreferenz Rechnung tragen. Therapie wie religiöser Diskurs vermögen so die Individuen auf den verschiedenen Ebenen ihrer Vorstellungen abzuholen, um die Existenz als je einmaliges rein phänomenologisches Leben in einem Kern zu situieren, wo die unmittelbar subjektive Wahrheit/*religio* stets zugleich Leere des Wissens *wie* Fülle lebendiger Wirklichkeit als "Reales" ist, ohne sich im Imaginären/Symbolischen zu verstricken.

Wenn der späte Lacan daher der *lalangue* mehr Gewicht einräumt als dem Gesetz und der Kastration durch den Ödipuskomplex und das Sprachsystem, dann deshalb, weil die ursprünglichen Laute des Kindes noch identisch sind mit einer Leiberfahrung, die erst danach durch die

[43] Vgl. *Affekt und Subjektivität.* 93ff.

Sprachgesetze den "Namen-des-Vaters" übernimmt. Dieses ursprüngliche Subjekt der *lalangue* als Ich, als mein Sein, als mein Leib bleibt im übernommenen Sprachsystem in der Stellung einer Außenheit, da kein Wort und keine Benennung mich bzw. meinen Eigennamen fassen können. Die Freisetzung einer späteren subjektiven Rechtsautonomie basierte auf diesem Hiatus, der als Leere durch keine symbolisch errichtete Einheit überbrückt werden kann, was auch bei Lacan letztlich fundamental darauf verweist, dass es eine Originarität des subjektiven Lebens gibt, welches durch keine Sprache begründet oder vereinheitlicht zu werden vermag. Aus dieser Vorgängigkeit entwickelt sich Lacans schon erwähnte spätere Lehre des Zusammenhangs von "Sprechen mit seinem Leib" und den Handlungen als Symptomen, so dass es hier in allen individuellen Leibäußerungen ein unmittelbares Sprechen gibt, auch wenn letzteres nicht an ein noch älteres (selbstaffektives) "Sprechen des Lebens" zurückgebunden wird. Gemäß seiner Narzissmustheorie benennt Lacan[44] mit dem Begriff der "Anbetung" (*adoration*) dieses einmalige Verhältnis des Subjekts zu seinem Leib, womit er die frühere rein imaginäre Sichtweise des Spiegelstadiums relativiert, um aus der Konsistenz des Leibes eine vor-symbolisch tragende Wirklichkeit zu machen, auch wenn sie noch an das selbsterotische Bild eines solchen Leibes gebunden bleibt, anstatt bis zur unsichtbaren Selbstaffektion dieses Leibes als Identität mit dem Leben selbst vorzustoßen. Denn der Leib ist zwar nunmehr auch für Lacan vorgängig in der Wahrnehmung seines Bildes, erfährt aber seine Einheit weiterhin durch die symbolische Bestätigung seitens der Anderen (Mutter), um so zugleich im Knoten von *RSI* mir immer noch fremd zu bleiben.[45]

In dieser Hinsicht bleibt daher die frühe Sichtweise vom "Ich als einem Anderen" bestehen, aber die weitergeführte Debatte zeigt, dass diese Andersheit (*A*) keine reine Signifikantenabhängigkeit mehr ist, sondern letztlich auch als Transzendenz des Lebens in der Immanenz

[44] Vgl. *Le sinthom*, 66; was in gewisser Weise von J.-L. Nancy weitergeführt wurde; vgl. *L'Adoration (Déconstruction du christianisme, 2*), Paris, Galilée 2010 (dt. Übers. *Die Anbetung. Dekonstruktion des Christentums 2*, Berlin, Diaphanes 2012).
[45] Vgl. *Le sinthome*, p. 37.

desselben als Leib ausgelegt werden kann, ohne eine intentionale Außenheit zu sein. Die Passibilität des Lebens ist "Andersheit" im Sinne unserer eigenen Nicht-Gründung durch uns selbst, jedoch keine Andersheit als ein "anderes Leben". Uns scheint daher, dass die Analyse Lacans zur *jouissance* eine größere Konvergenz zur Lebensphänomenologie sichtbar macht, denn die später bei ihm nicht mehr dialektisierte (phallische) *jouissance* durch Gesetz und Verbot entspricht einer "weiblichen Lust", die nicht länger durch Sprache darstellbar ist und den gesamten "sprechenden Leib" als *parlêtre* ergreifen kann. Dies repräsentiert auch die Mystik bei Lacan,[46] denn das Begehren, welches noch einen *Sinn* ergibt, ist nur ein Schein der Libido, während die *jouissance* ohne "Objekt *a*" ein Leibereignis beinhaltet, welches durch Freude und Leid (Symptom) niemals erlischt. In psychoanalytischer Sprache kann man dies die fundamentale "Selbsterotik" des Leibes nennen, der zu dieser immanent so schweigsamen Wirklichkeit nicht des Anderen bedarf. Aber jedes Sprechen hebt nicht nur von hierher an, wie wir durch den Zusammenhang von Affekt/Wort als innerer Ästhetik kurz anführten, sondern die Selbsterotik ist nur denkbar als Rückbindung an ein rein phänomenologisches Leben, welches in seinem Selbstgenuss gerade die Geburt eines jeden Individuums impliziert und daher eine prinzipielle Relationalität begründet.[47] Wenn die Lacansche Klinik nun dazu übergeht, das *sinthome* als Leben-Wollen des Leibes selbst zu verstehen,[48] dann impliziert dies therapeutisch die Distanzierung von Sinn, Signifikanten oder Symbolik, um jene anfängliche *jouissance* als Selbstfreude zu vernehmen, die sich in ihrer Heterogenität innerster und unmittelbarster Lebendigkeit durch keine Idealisierungen, Identifizierungen und Objekte (*a*) erschöpft. Hier berühren wir somit wohl die größte Nähe zwischen der Lacanschule und der

[46] Vgl. *Encore*, 92ff.; dazu J.-D. Causse, "Le corps et l'expérience mystique. Analyse à la lumière de Jacques Lacan et de Michel de Certeau", in: *Cahiers d'études du religieux. Recherches interdisciplinaires* 13 (2014) pp. 1-8.
[47] Vgl. schon R. Kühn, *Begehren und Sinn*, 150ff.
[48] Vgl. J. Godebski, *Le tout dernier enseignement de Lacan*, 36f.

Lebensphänomenologie, um innerhalb unseres Zusammenhangs von Therapie/religiösem Diskurs diese reine Selbstfreude des Leibes als das kulturelle Potenzial schlechthin diesseits allen "Unbehagens in der Kultur" (Freud) zu verstehen und zu verwirklichen.

Damit scheint eine gegenwärtige und zukünftige epochale Verständigung darüber möglich, was das "Reale" als das unsichtbare Erscheinen in seinem Anfang ist, um außer der rein phänomenologischen Leiblichkeit noch irgendwelche spätere Bewusstseinsinhalte bemühen zu müssen. Das Reale ist dabei für Lacan solange traumatisch, wie nicht die Begegnung mit dem Lebendigen/Leiblichen als *lalangue* und *jouissance* vor aller Verbindung mit dem Sprechen stattfindet. Wenn er diese primordiale Verknüpfung den Buchstaben nannte (*la lettre*), so darf dieser noch linguistische und teilweise strukturalistische Begriff nicht darüber hinwegtäuschen, dass er eine radikale phänomenologische Reduktion beinhaltet, nämlich die Trennung oder den Schnitt vom Sinn. So isolierte auch Kandinsky Buchstaben aus der Wort- und Bedeutungskette, um ihnen eine eigenständige ästhetische Wirkung zu verleihen,[49] die uns die Ästhetik wie Ethik als *religio* des Symptoms im Sinne von Freude/Leid verstehen lassen kann. Anders gesagt das Wirkliche nicht über den intentionalen (vorgestellten) Sinn zu erfahren, sondern den "Nicht-Sinn" des Lebens als seine ständige Fülle *diesseits* von aller propositional vermittelten Realität zu erproben – und dergestalt die "Durchquerung des Phantasmas" in seiner Entleerung als Wahrheit des Leben-Könnens ohne fixiertes Wissen zu *erproben*. Jedes Objekt bzw. jede Sinnkonstellation (*a*) in ihrem nicht zu vereinheitlichenden "Tod" kann so zur "Schöpfung" von *jouissance* in der Relation zur aller Wirklichkeit (*RSI*) werden.[50] Im Lacanschen Denken avanciert der Leib auf diese Weise *via* Symptom zum vierten Ring innerhalb des "Borromäischen Knotens" von *RSI*, aber in radikal phänomenologischer Sicht hindert nichts daran, diese Einheit von Leib/Welt von vornherein als

[49] Vgl. *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche. Beiträge zur Analyse der malerischen Elemente*, Bern, Benteli [7]1973; dazu M. Henry, *Voir l'invisible. Sur Kandinsky*, Paris, Bourin 1987.
[50] Vgl. J.-A. Miller, "Pièces détachées", in: *La cause freudienne* pp. 59-61 (2005).

*ge-geben* anzusehen, und zwar durch die Intensität solcher Leiblichkeit als Potenzialität allen Erscheinens von Wirklichem schlechthin, wie wir durchgehend im Gespräch mit Lacan hervorhoben.

Wenn es also als Kern des Realen im *sinthome* einen singulären Modus des Genießens gibt, der nicht durchquert und damit nicht dialektisiert werden kann, dann ist es letztlich ein Sophismus, diesen Verbindungspunkt zwischen dem Realen/Symbolischen als einen unaufhebbaren *Mangel* zu bezeichnen, der ein Erbe des frühen Lacan darstellt. Denn wenn es dadurch ein "Außerhalb-des-Sinns" gibt, das nur als leibliches Ereignis empfunden zu werden vermag, dann ist dies keine Opazität des Leiblichen (was nur aus dem Blickwinkel der Transzendenz als Außen oder Ek-stase her gesehen wäre), sondern es existiert in der Tat eine primordiale "weibliche Lust", die nicht im ödipalen Sinne über den "Namen-des-Vaters" vermittelt ist. Soll daher das Freudsche Symptom als "Unbehagen in der Kultur" geheilt werden, so handelt es sich nunmehr von der *jouissance* des *sinthome* aus um die Notwendigkeit, dieser subjektiven Potenzialität das reine Leibempfinden einer ästhetischen wie ethischen Verwirklichung zu ermöglichen. Mit anderen Worten ist dieses Symptom nicht länger metaphorisch und "keine Bildung des Unbewussten" mehr.[51] Wenn aber das Unbewusste auf diese Weise als grundlegende klassisch psychoanalytische Referenz relativiert ist, dann kann die von Lacan nicht weiter material phänomenologisch untersuchte Verbindung von *sinthome/jouissance* durchaus als Verhältnis der ursprünglichen *religio* im Sinne von Leib/Leben weiter im radikal oder material phänomenologischen Sinne analysiert werden. Die Kur/Therapie im Bereich des primordialen Leibes als *lalangue* eröffnet dergestalt die ständige Präsenz der *jouissance* als Permanenz selbstaffektiven Lebens. Die Reduktion des Symptoms auf solche *jouissance* als konkret transzendentale Lebendigkeit hin ist daher ebenfalls kein Denken mehr, sondern eine Verknüpfung von Leib, Sprechen und Handeln, welche diesseits des Sinns das Selbstempfinden des Lebens als nicht-doxische Identität des Individuums erfahren lassen können.

[51] Vgl. J. Lacan, *Le sinthome*, p. 40.

Indem folglich der "Name-desVaters" für den späten Lacan allgemein dahin fällt, weil auch durch die gegenwärtige Relativierung der Herrensignifikanten der Platz "Gottes" im öffentlichen Bewusstsein nicht mehr präsent ist, etabliert sich auf der kulturellen Symptomebene eine "generalisierte Psychose".[52] Hier ist die Abwesenheit des (metaphorischen) Vaters nicht mehr der Anlass zu einer Psychose im klassisch psychiatrischen Sinne, sondern es handelt sich um einen neuen Typus der Desintegration von *RSI*, welche nicht halluzinatorisch ist, da sie mit einer biographischen Normalität einhergehen kann, die allerdings von einer "existenziellen Frustration" durchzogen ist, wie unter anderem Viktor E. Frankl[53] schon diese neue Symptomatik nach dem 2. Weltkrieg diagnostizierte. Wenn wir hier die gesellschaftlichen, organischen und subjektiven Konsequenzen für diese gegenwärtig neue Erscheinensweise von diffuser Neurose/Psychose bzw. Bipolarität, Ambivalenz etc. nicht weiter untersuchen, so seien doch allgemein die dabei gegebenen Anzeichen einer fehlenden Konsistenz in Arbeit, Beziehung und Entscheidung hauptsächlich genannt, da ein *compensatory make-believe* benötigt wird, um die Existenz einigermaßen zu bewältigen. Mit anderen Worten wird der Verlust des traditionellen "Namens-des-Vaters" (Gott, Werte etc.) zu einem "beliebigen Glauben" an etwas, was diese Individuen am Leben hält, um nicht vollends an den gesellschaftlichen Rand gedrängt zu werden. Diese "generalisierte" oder "gewöhnliche Psychose" scheint uns daher ein Negativbild des diskutierten "religiösen Diskurses" zu sein, da sie ein Minimum an säkularen wie partikulären Glaubens-Illusionen benötigt, um ein Funktionieren von *RSI* im Sinne Lacans herzustellen, in dem die allgemeine Verwerfung (*forclusion*) des Vaters (Gesetz, Gott, Herrensignifikant, Unbewusstes etc.) einen mehr oder weniger soliden Ersatz findet, der nicht-pathologische Neurosen, aber auch rigidere Perversionen als Existenzweise zulässt.

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[52] Vgl. J.-A. Miller, "Effet retour sur la psychose ordinaire", in: *Quarto* 94-95 (2009) pp. 35-52, hier 46.

[53] Vgl. *Der leidende Mensch. Anthropologische Grundlagen der Psychotherapie*, Bern, Huber 1984, 9ff. ("Der Mensch auf der Suche nach Sinn"); dazu ebenfalls R. Kühn, *Logothérapie et phénoménologie. Contributions à la compréhension de l'analyse existentielle de Viktor E. Frankl),* Paris, L'Harmattan 2015.

Wir fragen uns also, ob ein "religiöser Diskurs" im dargestellten Sinne bisher diese Verwerfung des Vaters heute nicht auffangen könnte, ohne zu einer neuen Vorstellung dieses metaphorischen Vaters als Gesetz in jeglicher Hinsicht zurückzukehren. Dies benötigt dann ebenfalls eine Neubestimmung des Glaubens, welcher nicht mehr dogmatische Inhalte betrifft, sondern die unmittelbare *Selbstgewissheit* des Lebens als jene absolute Immanenz des Erscheinens, mit der das Leben an sich selbst gebunden ist, ohne je von sich lassen zu können. So wird die phänomenologisch bisher unaufgeklärte Voraussetzung von jeder Differenz, Kluft oder Abwesenheit überwunden,[54] welche nicht nur bei Lacan auch die spätere Subjektbestimmung als leiblich-symptomale *jouissance* noch bestimmt, sondern das Erbe philosophischen, anthropologischen und hermeneutisch-religiösen Denkens überhaupt. Das heutige gesellschaftliche wie klinische Bild lässt in der Tat einen verstärkten Narzissmus anstelle ehemaliger neurotisch-ödipaler Konstellationen von Schuld und Sinnkonflikten feststellen, so dass das gemeinschaftliche Band einem individualistischen Diskurs in Bezug auf ein je unmittelbares *Mehr-Genießen* weicht. Diese Abwesenheit der ehemaligen Kastration im "Namen-des-Vaters" schafft dann insofern allerdings ein neues "Unbehagen in der Kultur", als der Andere als Intersubjektivität oder Relation kaum oder gar nicht mehr in Betracht gezogen wird. Man kann dies als eine verstärkte Permissivität diagnostizieren,[55] aber anstatt ihr mit einer neuerlich ideologischen Konstruktion von (politischen) Werten, Imperativen etc. zu begegnen, tut sich die Frage auf, ob ein radikal phänomenologischer Diskurs nicht gerade aufzeigen könnte, dass der je eigene Narzissmus nicht ohne seine primordiale Verbindung zum rein phänomenologischen Leben existieren kann. Daraus könnte sich ohne neue externe wie idealisierende Gebote und Verbote für das eigene "Genießen" ein Mit-Pathos entwicklen, der

[54] Dies dürfte das bleibende Verdienst von Michel Henry sein, der in seinen Werken eine solche Lebenswirklichkeit als "Selbstglaube des Lebens an sich selbst" in aller phänomenologischen Strenge herausarbeiten konnte; vgl. unter anderem *Affekt und Subjektivität*, 61ff.

[55] Vgl. J.P. Deffieux, "Y a-t-il encore des névroses?", in: *Lettre mensuelle* (E.C.F.) 263 (2007) pp.15-31, hier 25.

radikale Ipseität und Pluralität der Individuen als gemeinschaftliches *Ethos* impliziert.[56]

Letzteres hat den Vater- oder Herrschaftsdiskurs im unbewussten wie gesellschaftlichen Sinne prinzipiell durchschaut, aber auch die neuen Supplemente des Narzissmus und privater Symbolik als *make-believe,* um das Eigene mit dem Anderen so in einer gegenseitigen Aufmerksamkeit miteinander zu verbinden, dass darin die gelebte subjektive Selbstaffektion des Lebens nicht zur Verhinderung oder sogar zum Ausschluss der Ipseität des Anderen wird. Ein solches Ethos ist daher mit dem religiösen Diskurs selbst identisch als eine subjektiv-gemeinschaftliche Praxis, welche nicht der Intervention des Gesetzes zum Leben in Gemeinschaftlichkeit bedarf, sondern diese als das innere Band der eigenen permanenten *generatio* im Leben selbst erfährt. Die elterlichen, sexuellen und relationalen Differenzen unterliegen dann weder einer Ordnung der Kastration noch einem sadistischen Exzess, wo der andere Körper nur Teil meines partiellen Genießens ist (wie Lacan[57] in seinen Analysen zu Sade gezeigt hat), sondern alle gesellschaftlichen Strukturen tragen in sich durchaus die Wirklichkeit einer prinzipiellen Verlebendigung mit deren subjektiv-gemeinschaftlichen Potenzialisierungen, sofern die zuvor genannte Immanenz der Gegenseitigkeit effektiv realisiert werden kann.[58] Dies stellt epochale Anfragen an eine Globalisierung des "Menschheitswohls" durch eine ausschließliche Produktion und Konsumtion von "Gütern", so dass die Frage des strukturellen Zusammenhangs von Bedürfen, Begehren und *jouissance* in eine neue kulturelle Bewusstwerdung einzutreten hätte, wozu der in diesem Beitrag dargestellte "religiöse Diskurs" sicher einen entscheidenden Hinweis bieten kann.

Denn *Ideen* werden uns nicht mehr in Zukunft retten, falls die unmittelbar subjektive Würde eines jeden Subjekts in der Inkarnation

[56] Vgl. schon ausführlicher R. Kühn, *Begehren und Sinn*, 132ff.
[57] Vgl. *L'éthique de la psychanalyse*, Kap. VI u. XV.
[58] Vgl. die Texte im Teil IV "Ethik und Intersubjektivität" von M. Henry, *Radikale Religionsphänomenologie. Beiträge 1943-2001*, Freiburg/München, Alber 2015, pp. 285-335.

seines Begehrens als Leiblichkeit und Proto-Gemeinschaftlichkeit nicht erkannt wird, um zu einem neuen Habitus zu führen.[59] Jede Einheit von Sinn als Regel des Unterwerfungszwangs unter eine Wiederholung im psychoanalytischen Sinne ist damit in Frage gestellt, um das Unbewusste eher als unmittelbare Selbstaffektion zu verstehen, so dass ein Teil des Realen im Sinne eines Erscheinens auftritt, worin das leiblich Affektive als imaginäres Potenzial (oder *sinthome*) in den Zukunftsentwurf der subjektiv-gemeinschaftlichen Entwicklung mit einfließt.[60] Keinerlei Wissen vermag dieses *Werden-des-Lebens* im selbstgenerativen (und nicht temporal-geschichtlichen) Sinne einzufangen, so dass eben hier ein ständiger "Glaube" dieser Selbstgewissheit des Lebens als dessen unmittelbare Selbstverwirklichung notwendig ist, um dem Köder der idealtypischen Rationalisierungen zu entgehen. Für die Analyse/Therapie impliziert dies ein Zulassen aller Symptome innerhalb des allgemeinen "Unbehagens in der Kultur", um eine subjektive Leere zu verstehen, welche über die Einheit einer Bedeutung ihrem initialen Leib-Traumatismus als Begegnung mit Affekt/Sprache entgehen will, das heißt der Opazität und Fixierung des eigenen Begehrens eine andere Wendung geben möchte. Dabei der ursprünglichen oder radikalen Lebensaffektion ohne Wort und Gesetz (Signifikant) zu begegnen, ist dann zugleich ebenfalls ein stets gesellschaftlich-kulturells Ereignis, weil dadurch Kräfte freigesetzt werden, die dann als Mit-Pathos oder Ethos wieder in die Lebenswelt einströmen können, wie schon Husserl[61] in seiner Beschreibung von Krisis/Erneuerung ab 1900 gefordert hatte.

Daher ist der religiöse Diskurs am Ursprung jeder therapeutischen wie gesellschaftlichen Diskursivität nicht wegzudenken, indem diese

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[59] Vgl. dazu O. Ducharme, *Michel Henry et le problème de la communauté. Pour une communauté d'habitus*, Paris, L'Harmattan 2013.

[60] Zur Diskussion mit Rorty hierbei vgl. etwa H. Dusausoit, *Vie et Ironie. Dialogue entre Michel Henry et Richard Rorty sur la possibilité et les conséquences d'une critique radicalisée de la représentation*, Namur, Presses Universitaires 2015.

[61] Vgl. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie* (Husserliana VI), Den Haag, Nijhoff $^{2}$1976; ebenso E. Fink, *VI. Cartesianische Meditation. Teil I: Die Idee einer transzendentalen Methodenlehre* (Husserliana-Dokumente 2/1), Dordrecht, Kluwer 1988.

Potenzialisierung von Kräften subjektiven Lebens aus dem Sicherleiden des Lebens heraus das Fleisch (*chair*) jeder individuellen wie gemeinschaftlichen Entwicklung bildet. Der religiöse Diskurs überwindet folglich an der Nahtstelle von *Werden* im radikalen Sinne jedes Kausalitäts- und Finalitätskonzept als ideologische Abstraktion, um durch das Schweigen in solchem Werden dessen Wirktatsächlichkeit schlechthin erproben zu lassen, die der spätere Lacan über die Loslösung des *sinthome* von jeglichem Gesetz als Sinn und Sprache gewinnt. Was Lacan das "Kerngehäuse" (*trognon*) des Realen im Symptom nach der Arbeit am Symbolischen (Signifikanten) und Traum (Imaginärem) nennt, erreicht deshalb jenes unmittelbare Wissen/Können (*savoir y faire*), das jedes Subjekt als Selbst letztlich ist und worüber es verfügen kann. Da die Lebenswelt/Gesellschaft wesentlich von der Sprache bestimmt ist, wirft dies für den Einzelnen in der direkten Affektion durch den Kern seines symptomalen Leiberfahrens am Rande oder im Inneren solchen Schweigens die grundsätzliche Frage auf: *Warum und wozu hören wir nicht auf zu sprechen?* Meist zeigt sich in der Analyse/Therapie wie in der Alltagspraxis: um mich meiner selbst und Anderer zu versichern, uns zu überzeugen, zu verführen etc. – und dadurch ein Gefühl von lebbarer Existenz zu gewinnen.

Daraus ergibt sich nicht nur die spezifische Lacansche Therapieform, ein anderes Sprechen einzuüben, welches das offene Sagen (*Dire*) wichtiger nimmt als das informativ Gesagte (*Dit*) in Bezug auf den Anderen und die eigene Freisetzung von der Signifikantenherrschaft. Vielmehr ergibt sich hier auch die Begegnung mit dem "Kern" des religiösen Diskurses, dass jedes Sprechen als Performativität im Leben dessen Schweigen als Lebensankünftigkeit voraussetzt, in dem unsere Rede wurzelt. Über Begehren/*jouissance* im eigenen Sprechen hinaus (welches oft traumatisch bedingt ist) ergibt sich dergestalt über das Schweigen des Lebens als dessen ursprünglichste Selbstperformanz die Einheit mit dem Selbstgenuss (*jouissance de soi*) des Lebens. Als Poesie und Musik des Symptoms erfolgt auf diese Weise nicht nur ein je eigener "Dialekt", welcher im ersten affektiven Austausch zwischen Kind und

Mutter mit Grundelementen des Berührens, Hörens und Geruchs anhob, sondern ein "ewiges Wort" – "im Anfang", jenes welches auch unser Fleisch geworden ist. Um daher noch über die letzte Signifikantenherrschaft hinauszuschreiten, die unserer Auffassung nach selbst im Buchstaben (*lettre*) als symptomales Erstelement weiter zu bestehen scheint, vermögen wir des Schweigens der Inkarnation in unseren Worten selbst gewahr zu werden.[62] Dafür ist die letzte Reduktion durch einen "religiösen Diskurs" vonnöten, um nicht bei einem Naturalismus von *sinthome/jouissance* stehen zu bleiben und sich noch der kontingenten *jouissance* solcher *joussance* zu entkleiden. Das Haften an einem – wenn auch äußersten – Element symptomaler Feststellung im so genannten "Erleben" bliebe psychische Hermeneutik in der Verkennung der Selbstgebung (Ästhetik) des entsprechenden radikalen Lebensethos im zuvor angeführten Sinne. Denn ich kann redlicherweise nicht davon absehen (trotz aller stets möglichen Atheismus), dass das Leben mir *vor-gegeben* ist, und zwar ohne Gesetz, Vater und diskret sinnliche Minimalelement im Symbolischen wie Empirischen.

Was Lacan durchgehend gegenüber der Ausbreitung des Symbolischen als unendlicher Objektsuche (*a*) für die Analyse/Therapie als unerlässlich ansah, war indes die "Trennung" (*séparation*) oder der "Schnitt" (*coupure*). Dies schließt einen Augenblick des Schweigens in allem Sprechen ein, was durch Krisen oder Entscheidung bzw. Widerfahrnisse und Distanzierung herbeigeführt werden kann, wie eine Analyse zur ethisch-psychoanalytischen "Freisetzung" gegenüber lebensweltlichen Signifikanten zeigt.[63] In diesem Sinne benutzte er die Sitzung mit variabler Länge oder verfügte auch das Ausfallen einer Sitzung bei bleibendem Honorar, um durch einen solchen Schnitt im Realen eine Reaktion herbeizurufen: Auflehnung, Unterwerfung, Infragestellung, Initiativen etc. Dies erinnert an andere provokative oder

[62] Vgl. R. Vaschalde, *À l'Orient de Michel Henry*, Paris, Orizons 2014, Kap. VII: "Performativité absolue: parole de la vie et parole du monde"; G. Jean, "Sens et puissance: L'archiperformativité de la parole", in: *Revue Internationale Michel Henry* 5 (2014) pp. 165-217.
[63] Vgl. D. Finkelde, *Exzessive Subjektivität*, 268ff.

paradoxe Interventionen in den verschiedenen Therapieschulen, was zur Folge hat, dass sich der Patient über seine Liebe oder Aggression gegenüber dem Analytiker/Therapeuten Gedanken im Sinne möglicher eigener Nachfrage macht. Der religiöse Diskus "ohne Gesetz und Vater", wie wir kurz zuvor festhielten, ist daher analog ein *Schnitt* im Sinne radikaler Reduktion gegenüber allem horizonthaften und zeitlichem Welterscheinen, um für jegliche Biographie und die geschichtliche Bestimmung durch Vergangenheit und Zukunft einen lebendigen Anfang auszumachen, der selbst nicht mehr diesen transzendenten oder symbolischen Koordinaten länger unterliegen kann. Schnitt oder Reduktion beenden die Deutungen oder Sinninterpretationen des Daseins durch semantische Resonanzen bzw. metonymische Analogien des Verstehens, um diesseits des "Verschiebens" eines Teils für das Ganze (Freud) die subjektive Wahrheit des Begehrens im Symptom freizulegen. Dies impliziert nicht nur die Kastration von einem bis dahin unbewusst leitenden Signifikanten, sondern durch die Einsicht in die Verschränkung von Objekt *a*/Begehren wird die Bindung an jeden beliebigen Signifikanten offen gelegt, um die prinzipielle Nicht-Übereinstimmung zwischen Begehren/Sprechen zu erkennen. Denn wenn auch jedes Wort aus dem lebendigen Affekt (unbewusst oder immemorial) geboren wird und damit an eine *jouissance* gebunden ist, so kann dennoch keine Vorstellung oder Proposition bzw. Metaphorik des Ich oder der Lebenswelt jemals diese "Geburt" als "Rest" des Symptoms einholen, sofern man unter Symptom wie Trauma die Nicht-Reduzierbarkeit transzendentaler Lebendigkeit überhaupt hier verstehen kann.[64]

Die "Rückkehr zu Freud" bewirkte daher letztlich in der Lacanschen Analyse eine andere Sichtweise der Therapie wie Kultur "nach Freud", nämlich die Konfrontation mit dem Realen/Leben im nicht weiter deutbaren Symptom. Der Schnitt hebt die "Punktierung" (*ponctuation*) durch die semantischen Sinnvernetzungen auf[65] und führt jenes

[64] Vgl. J.-A. Miller, "L'interprétation à l'envers", in: *La cause freudienne* 12 (1995) pp. 24-41.
[65] Vgl. B. Fink, *Grundlagen der psychoanalytischen Technik. Eine Lacanianische Annäherung für Klinische Berufe*, Wien-Berlin, Turia + Kant 2013, 55ff.

*Außerhalb-des-Sinns* ein, das für den religiösen Diskurs ein absolutes *Vor-dem-Sinn* als das schweigende wie absolute "Voraus des Lebens" beinhaltet, wie wir für die Lebensphänomenologie unterstrichen. Da diese Möglichkeit in keinem existentiellen und kulturellen Tun grundsätzlich fehlt, ist der religiöse Diskurs nicht nur im Zentrum des therapeutischen Handelns, sondern als radikale Offenbarungsmöglichkeit in jedem subjektiven Vollzug gegenwärtig. Eine göttliche Figur der unterschiedlichsten Art bleibt für Lacan ein Schein (*semblant*) in jedem Diskurs, um das "Loch" zwischen Begehren/Objekt (*a*) bzw. zwischen Symptom/Realem zu schließen, so dass "Gott" nur noch am primordialen "Ort" der Begegnung von Leben/Sprechen eine Wirklichkeit darzustellen vermag, sofern das Sprechen (*Dire*) auf die *jouissance* von *lalangue* zurückverweist, das heißt auf die leiblich oder affektiv iterative Gegebenheit der *jouissance* ohne Unterbrechung in der Oszillation von Freude/Schmerz. Mit Lacan[66] kann man dies eine Poesie nennen, wie erwähnt wurde, anders gesagt einen "Signifikanten ohne jeden Sinn", was wir unsererseits jene Ästhetik des lebendigen Affekts nannten, der zugleich ein Ethos als Mit-Pathos bildet – insgesamt genährt von einer *religio*, deren thematische Leere selbstaffektive oder passible *Fülle* ist.[67] Dadurch stellt der "Schnitt" im Lacanschen Sinne nur ein "Loch" gegenüber dem Sinn von Signifikanten dar, aber keine Abwesenheit des Lebens als solchem. Als Selbstaffektion, die zugleich *jouissance* als Selbstfreude des Lebens ist, ergibt sich daraus durchaus ein "Sinn im Realen", ohne fixierte Bedeutung sein zu müssen – eben eine subjektive Praxis in der Immanenz des Lebens als dessen permanente Ankünftigkeit im Sinne einer "Fluidität", von der schon Hegel sprach, um die Erfahrung des Bewusstseins als ständiges Werden zu beschreiben.

Solche "Verflüssigung", von der auch Jacques-Alain Miller als Herausgeber und Kommentator der Lacan-Schriften seit längerem spricht, um die spätere Entwicklung darin hervorzuheben, lässt sich in ethisch-therapeutischer Perspektive ebenso verwenden wie für den religiösen

[66] Vgl. , *Le Séminaire XXIV: L'insu que sait de l'une-bévue s'aile à mourre*, in: *Ornicar* 12-18 (1977) 15.
[67] Vgl. R. Kühn, *Lebensreligion*, 33ff. u. 203ff.

Diskurs, sofern dieser die genannte Fluidität als Permanenz des In-Sich-Kommens des Lebens selbst als sein absolutes Werden oder seine *generatio* verstehen kann. Die "Verflüssigung" steht der "Benennung" (*nomination*) entgegen, denn durch letztere verknüpft sich das "Gerede" (*parlotte*) mit dem Realen.[68] Benennen ist daher nicht schon Dialog in der Offenheit des Sprechens, weil es den Zusammenhang von *RSI* verfestige, aber auch aufheben kann, um eben einem vierten Ring zu folgen, welcher den "Vater des Namens" als *Père-version* (neue Lacansche Schriftweise anstelle von ödipaler *per-version*) ausschaltet. Ist eine solche Benennung von Signifikant/Signifikat verhindert, kann das darin verschwundene Leben sich wieder neu in der Abwesenheit einer wiederholten Verknüpfung von Namen und Kastration mitteilen. Der Schein (*semblant*) der traditionellen Bezeichnung wird so durchbrochen, um die symbolische Einschreibung in das Sein zu durchkreuzen, welches nie identisch mit solchem Leben ist. Eine Ontologie *via* Vater-Benennungen als Hauptfunktion der jüdisch-christlichen Tradition hat daher anderen Möglichkeiten im 21. Jahrhundert zu weichen, wobei neue "Selbstbenennungen" über kreationistische Freisetzungen oder andere mythische Erzählungen keine Garantie gegen das Wiederaufleben der individuellen wie lebensweltlichen Phantasmen bieten. Der "religiös Diskurs" als radikale Reduktion auf die Lebensunmittelbarkeit ohne besondere Erzählung oder Hermeneutik hin setzt daher als "immanente Narrativität"[69] eine gewisse Übereinstimmung mit dem Bemühen Lacans, die Gefahr des Phantasmas im Bereich des Sinns und der Benennungen zu begrenzen. Dabei bietet neben der therapeutisch-gesellschaftlichen Herausforderung die religionsphilosophische Problematik der Zukunft eine besondere Aufgabe, nämlich von "Gott" zu sprechen, ohne den "Vater des Namens" für ihn fremde Identifizierungen zu missbrauchen. Insofern stünde der religiöse Diskurs erst am Anfang einer neuen Ära, die

[68] Vgl. J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire XXII: R.S.I. (1974-1975)* (Internetversion); J.-A. Miller, "Pièces détachées", 147f.; "Etre nommé…", in: *Quarto* 98 (2011) pp. 4-23, hier 11.

[69] Vgl. schon R. Kühn, *Wie das Leben spricht: Narrativität als radikale Lebensphänomenologie. Neuere Studien zu Michel Henry*, Cham (CH), Springer International 2015, hier bes. 28ff.

vielleicht mehr *im* und *als* Leben sprechen lässt, als *über* “Gott” zu sprechen – und ihn so eher zu verneinen.

*Pli* 28 (2017), 90-118

# Knowing God as Our True Life: Phenomenology of Redemption in Michel Henry and Julian of Norwich

***CHRISTINA M. GSCHWANDTNER***

> "The relation of Life to the living is the central thesis of Christianity."
>
> Michel Henry, *I am the Truth*

What does it mean for God to become human? What does it mean for humans to participate in the life of God? These central questions of Christian redemption are intimately connected, inasmuch as God's becoming human is generally interpreted as the condition for the possibility of human participation in the divine. As Athanasius said, God became human so we could become divine. Yet what does this mean? What does it mean for the impassible God, the Creator of the universe, to enter the human condition marked by suffering and death? And how does this enable human participation in God? How does the experience and action of *one* human being, the "God-man," enable the salvation of all of humanity in its plurality and diversity? The entire history of Christian theology could probably be written as so many attempts to respond to this question. Michel Henry's phenomenology takes this core insight of

Christianity and employs it in a radically novel approach to the question of human redemption and participation in the divine life. His proposal is not uncontroversial, however. Some have rejected it as an unacceptably theological and dogmatic approach that is so circular as to be impenetrable.[1] Others find the theological claims unacceptable, often rejecting them as Gnostic or pantheist.[2] Even more sympathetic readers think of his soteriology as "radical".[3]

In this contribution I intend to engage Henry's phenomenology of redemption by putting it in conversation with the account of incarnation and redemption found in the fourteenth century English mystic Julian of Norwich. This juxtaposition of phenomenology and mysticism might seem surprising, were it not for the fact that Henry himself appeals to mystical writings in several places. Already *The Essence of Manifestation*[4] includes several sections on Meister Eckhart (§§39, 40, 46, 49), *I am the Truth* mentions Eckhart briefly,[5] and *Incarnation* appeals not only to the mystics Eckhart and Silesius,[6] but also engages the theology of such patristic thinkers as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Augustine. The Christian gospels figure prominently in all three of his final works. Yet, while Henry's use of at least the mystical texts is usually fairly brief and highly selective (sometimes merely picking one sentence out of context), a more careful engagement with one mystical source may prove illuminating. Julian's account of incarnation and redemptionis strikingly

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[1] Sebbah, François-David. *Testing the Limit: Derrida, Henry, Levinas, and the Phenomenological Tradition*. Trans. Stephen Barker. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).
[2] Hart, Kevin. *Kingdoms of God*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014) pp. 34-54.
[3] Camilleri, Sylvain. "Phenomenology and Soteriology in the 'Christian Trilogy' of Michel Henry" found in Hanson, Jeffrey and Michael R. Kelly. *Michel Henry: The Affects of Thought*. (London: Continuum, 2012) p. 132.
[4] Henry, M. *The Essence of Manifestation*. Trans. Girard Etzkorn. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff., 1973).
[5] Henry, M. *I am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*. Trans. Susan Emanuel. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) pp. 104-105.
[6] Henry, M. *Incarnation*. Trans. Karl Hefty. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014) pp. 222-6.

similar to that of Henry in several respects. This will confirm both that there are strains of the Christian tradition that support Henry's seemingly idiosyncratic claims about human participation in the divine life and that reading theological and even mystical texts phenomenologically can be both possible and profitable.[7]

## I. Incarnation and Redemption in Michel Henry

Henry's most thorough account of Christian redemption is found in *I am the Truth* where he identifies his phenomenology of invisible life most explicitly with "what Christianity considers as truth".[8] This truth is essentially different from the truth of the world and utterly opposed to it, because it is a truth that shows or reveals itself. The meaning of Christianity cannot be ascertained from its texts (the Bible) or historical research (about Jesus), because it depends on a claim that cannot be verified by observation, namely that Christ is the Son of God who has come to redeem us. Instead, the truth of Christianity speaks of itself; it is self-verifying in Christ's claims about himself: God speaks in him directly. Christianity's truth is self-revelation or self-showing.[9] Phenomenology, as Henry proposes it (and has proposed it in his prior, more strictly phenomenological, works) is pure self-showing, where the showing and what is shown are identical. Genuine phenomenological life is self-revealing. It is not "seen" (as an object or thing) but "does" the seeing, alone makes it possible. Henry now contends that these theses are supremely expressed by the Gospels: Christianity speaks of this Life of pure self-revelation as God, a Life given to all "livings" via their birth in the First Living, Christ.[10] The Life of God as living is always expressed in Selfhood; it is the very nature of Life to generate. This selfhood as the

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[7] This is not to claim, however, as Emmanuel Falque does, that there is already phenomenology present in patristic or medieval writings (Falque, Emmanuel. *God, the Flesh, and the Other: From Irenaeus to Duns Scotus.* Trans. William Christian Hackett. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), pp. 3-19, 279-83). Indeed, Henry himself often speaks of Eckhart's or Christ's phenomenology.

[8] Henry, M. *I am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*. p. 1.

[9] *Ibid.* p. 13.

[10] *Ibid.* pp. 35-36, 53-68.

expression of the interior essence of Life is Christ (eternally generated from the Father). Life (God) and its expression (Christ) are not separate, but reciprocally internally related. Life engenders all other livings and access to God is only possible within life. This is not about "beings" in the "world" but about the self-generating movement of being alive via self-experience or living enjoyment (as pathos). Selfhood is this very experience of oneself (i.e., self-affectivity). Life's eternal embrace of itself is the love between Father and Son. The Son is hence the self-revelation of God, because he is the originary upsurge of Life, the continual actualization of the source of Life. He is the Arch-Son, God's very self-revelation. Christ does not have a human birth or genealogy, but is eternally born of the Father. This shows for Henry that no "living" is ever born in the world, but always generated directly from Life[11]. Nothing in the world can give life to itself; Life always comes from God. Birth means to come into Life (rather than "appearing" in the world). Christ is inside of Life and communicates this life to us. Humans are not "rational animals" or "material beings" but "livings," sons of God.[12] Christ as the Arch-Son, the very expression of the divine life, communicates life to all other livings; his sonship is the condition of our being and becoming sons. True human nature is thus not created, but generated from the divine life. The essence of Life in God, Christ, and humans is the same, namely the pathos of self-affectivity rather than worldly existence. I am a singular Self inasmuch as Life generates itself in me as me.[13] This is the radical interiority of living flesh.

The difference between God and humans is that God self-generates eternally, while we are dependent upon being generated and are incapable of giving ourselves life.[14] We receive Life, are affected by and within Life, are a "me" (not an "I"). The essence of the self is the pathos of life, the self-experience of life. The gift of Life is given via the Arch-Son to all other livings. They share in his flesh, but do so as a plurality of selves

[11] *Ibid.* p. 71.
[12] *Ibid.* pp. 76-9.
[13] *Ibid.* p. 104.
[14] *Ibid.* pp. 115-6.

who are related to each other via the life they share, while not being reciprocally exchangeable.[15] I am given to myself in my living flesh through Christ and reach others only via Christ's flesh. Only in this way am I a living individual.[16] Christ is the "way," the means of access to Life itself in its self-revelation.[17] Humans come into Life, while Christ is always eternally within it (his relation with Life/God is reversible, while ours is not). Many singular selves are generated by Life. We know of ourselves as a self via Life, but we forget this condition and assume that we give ourselves Life and generate our own powers.[18] Yet our capacities are not a possession, they are dependent upon and generated from life. To forget this is to succumb to a false egoism that turns the self into an Ego (an "I can") that pretends to be free and has the illusion of being the ground of its own Being. Salvation means to recognize our radical passivity, our dependence upon the absolute Life of God and a recovery of this condition that is already ours.[19] The only access to God is within Life, the invisible reality of experienced pathos. There is no distance to be bridged; it is an utterly immanent and immediate truth: we carry God within us, God is the self-affective Life working within us, our original condition. This is re-birth into Life. Life is expressed in love, realized in each living person. Absolute Life embraces itself in infinite love put into practice in us.[20] Christianity embraces true reality, *material* reality, the reality of suffering and rejoicing, of labor and love, of genuine human interaction.

So what does this say about how Henry thinks about the relation between God and humans? First, he distinguishes between several "transcendental" relationships: "the relationship between absolute Life and the First Living—between the Father and the Son, between God and

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[15] Henry works this out more fully (and without the religious language) in his essay "Pathos-with" found in Henry, M. *Material Phenomenology*. Trans. Scott Davidson. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008) pp. 101-34.
[16] Henry, M. *I am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*. p. 122.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 126.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 140.
[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 152-166.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

Christ; the relationship of absolute Life to all living things—of the Father to his sons, of God to 'men'; the relationship between the Son and sons, between Christ and living people; the relationships among sons, living people, and mankind—what is called in philosophy intersubjectivity".[21] While all these relationships are about the relation of life to itself and its self-expression in affectivity, the relation between the Father and the Son can be distinguished from that between God and humans: the former is reversible, the latter is not;[22] the former is generative, while the latter is generated[23], the former gives itself and its capacities, the latter receives itself in pure passivity.[24] Despite these distinctions, Henry often practically equates divine and human life. He confirms repeatedly that we are all sons of God: "All Sons are Sons of Life and, inasmuch as there is only one Life and this Life is God, they are all the Sons of God".[25] There is no separate "human nature," but "life has the same meaning for God, for Christ, and for man".[26] We are not created but generated out of the divine life: "Man has never been created, he has never come in the world. He has come in Life. And it is in this sense that he is in the likeness of God, cut from the same cloth as Him, as every life and as all the living are. From the cloth that is the pure phenomenological substance of life itself".[27] This life is communicated to us through Christ's incarnation, but that is not about "coming into the world" but about coming into the flesh and showing us our own condition.[28] Our true condition, hence, is that of living sons of God, not of beings in the world. We are generated from the divine life, not created as objects within the world. We have access to Life in Christ, yet access to Christ only in life: "there is no way of reaching the Son other than in the course of Life's self-embrace".[29] Life

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 110, 113.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 107.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 71.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
[27] Henry, M. *Incarnation*. p. 229.
[28] Henry, M. *I am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*. p. 81.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

experiences itself in Christ's ipseity, he is "this Life's subjectivity".[30] Therefore, "an essence of man different from that of Christ or God appears impossible as soon as man is understood as Son, and explicitly as Son of God".[31] Life (and hence God) defines our very essence.

That does not mean, however, that we are simply identical to God. Yes, we are to be deified, reborn into the divine life, but we are not divine in the sense of giving ourselves the condition for this divine life; it is given to us. Life is always experienced as passive, as gift, as pathos. This condition is provided by Christ: "Christ is the transcendental condition of any possible 'me'".[32] Simultaneously, "no self is possible that does not have as its phenomenological substance, as its flesh, the phenomenological substance and flesh of the Arch-Son".[33] Henry is harshly critical of any notions of self-sufficiency or of an ego interpreted as an "I can" that has powers at its disposal and exercises them as a possession.[34] Instead we are radically dependent on the life given to us. To be redeemed from sin and idolatry (forgetting our divine condition, rejecting life, and assuming our capacities are our own), we must be born again: "Salvation consists of carrying God within oneself while being his Son in this new sense".[35] In a later article he sums up his entire account of salvation in two succinct sentences: "The perdition of the flesh occurs when it becomes idolatrous of itself, takes itself as the source of its pleasure, and adores itself in terms of this principle as well as its effects. The salvation of the flesh occurs when it is given to itself through its generation in the Word, no longer loves anything within itself but the Word that connect it to itself in the beginning, and that it receives as its essence in the Eucharist".[36] What is this "flesh" that can be lost or saved?

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[30] *Ibid.*, p. 99.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 113.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 116.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 137.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 161.
[36] Henry, M. "Incarnation and the Problem of Touch." In Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor, eds. *Carnal Hermeneutics*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015) p. 139.

This is the topic of his book *Incarnation*, which seeks to develop a philosophy or phenomenology of the flesh, while also articulating a phenomenology of the Christian affirmation of the incarnation of Christ.

Basing himself on the discussion of the reality of Christ's flesh in Irenaeus and Tertullian, Henry claims that "the Christian problematic insurmountably disassociates body and flesh (and thus makes it impossible to confuse them)—the former are given back to the world in such a way that it is never a flesh, the latter restored to life in such a way that, in itself, it is never a body".[37] The Christian truth, in Henry's view, is always concerned with "flesh" rather than "body"; this is the very core of the "in-*carn*-ation," i.e. God's becoming flesh.[38] Incarnation refers to "the original correlation between flesh, the coming into flesh, and the self-revelation of absolute life in its Word".[39] Life is the very "condition of possibility" for flesh.[40] Henry claims that Irenaeus distinguishes between "flesh receiving life rather than that of Life being made flesh".[41] Consequently, "when the body is transformed into flesh by the operation of Life, it draws its fleshly condition only from Life, which gives it to undergo experiencing itself in it and to become flesh in this way".[42] Life does not know of bodies in the world, but is always concerned only with the flesh it animates. He argues that Irenaeus develops the following premises: "Nothing that is flesh fails to attest in its flesh that it is flesh. ... From now on those who claim that flesh is incapable of receiving the life immanent in every flesh, that gives it to itself and makes it flesh, just say that they are not living, that they do not have flesh—and do this while they live and accomplish all the activities of the flesh. The living must

[37] Henry, M. *Incarnation.* p. 130.
[38] Falque is strongly critical of this bifurcation between flesh and body, on both phenomenological and theological grounds (Falque, Emmanuel. *Le Combat amoureux.* (Disputes phénoménologique et théologiques. Paris: Hermann, 2014) pp. 197-238).
[39] Henry, M. *Incarnation.* p. 132.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] *Ibid.*

say that they are not living, the flesh that it is not a flesh".[43] Flesh, then, is never separate from life. It is flesh only because Life operates within it: "That Life is present in every flesh as what reveals it to itself, makes it a flesh and gives it Life—in every flesh, Life attests to this in the radical self-attestation of its absolute self-revelation".[44] Again, that implies for Henry that the divine life flows within our human flesh, that our flesh is united to Christ's: "The phenomenology of Incarnation has shown at length that the Arch-passibility of this Arch-revelation is, in its phenomenological effectuation, the Arch-flesh presupposed in every flesh".[45] Our flesh is only possible through absolute life and "is nothing other than that: the passibility of a finite life drawing its possibility from the Arch-passibility of infinite Life"[46]. On the one hand, flesh is what makes us alive, our very self-givenness: "The pathos of life is vested in every living [being] as a privilege that no one can ever take away; it is the sign of one's election and the reality of life. This invisible revelation is inscribed in fiery letters in the invisibility of our flesh; it is given in each of the flesh's impressions, in each of its powers, in a 'givenness from above'".[47] On the other hand, this life is expressed in the pathos of the flesh, in its sufferings and joys. Incarnate flesh is tantamount to suffering.

Henry stresses the element of suffering already in Christ's incarnation. Its ability to suffer designates its passivity (undergoing rather

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 135.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 136.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 236.
[46] Henry, M. "Incarnation and the Problem of Touch." In Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor, eds. *Carnal Hermeneutics*. p. 139.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 134. In this particular essay Henry briefly mentions the distinction between the extended or objective and the sensible or constituting and "subjective" body, where the sensible body grounds and makes possible the extended body (*Ibid.*, p. 131), which he had developed in much more detail (as objective and lived body) in his *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body* (see also *Ibid.*, pp. 139-44). In his later work (including in this essay) the flesh seems to do much of the work the "lived body" did earlier, although he does maintain here that body depends on flesh and the flesh provides access to the body (*Ibid.*, pp. 132-33), rather than arguing for a complete bifurcation between them as often seems the case in *Incarnation*. Yet even here the "subjective" body becomes subsumed by the flesh as our true self (*Ibid.*, p. 137).

than imposing), the central characteristic of affectivity. This is the defining characteristic of life; only a flesh that can be affected, that suffers, that has (or is) pathos, is genuinely alive: "In its suffering, the flesh does express some kind of affective modality of our life... It refers to absolute truth, to the hidden trial in which life occurs immediately in itself in its primitive suffering, in the Arch-Flesh and the Arch-Pathos of its Arch-revelation".[48] This is why it is so central that Christ came to suffer: Christ's is "a suffering flesh that draws the reality of its suffering from its pathos-filled phenomenalization in life. The incarnation of Christ, and in an exemplary way his passion, now have their reality and truth from a flesh that is defined by its suffering".[49] Why is suffering so central here? Because it is identified with pathos and pathos (or "passion") is the distinguishing characteristic of life. Life is passive, both in the sense of affected and in the sense of suffering or undergoing. Salvation is to recover this primordial condition of affectivity: "If life's radical passivity... contains the way of salvation, it is because there is no salvation for a life so generated, other than the generation in which it lives originally from the very life of God".[50] This is precisely why we do not give ourselves life, but experience it as being given, as passive "pathos."

What does this say about how we participate in the divine life via Christ's flesh? Life is what enables us to exercise our capacities and "powers." Henry explicitly links this to the Christian notion of the *imago dei*, of being created in "God's image": "Life's givenness to the living as a givenness of its Self, its flesh and its power, is not a pseudo-givenness, nor it is [sic] the givenness of an alleged Self, an apparent flesh, or an illusory power. The reiterated utterance that determined Judaism and was fulfilled in Christianity—'God created man in his image'—finds a radical explanation in the phenomenology of life".[51] We are in God's image, inasmuch as we experience the divine life flowing within us and live from

[48] Henry, M. *Incarnation*. p. 130.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 131.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 231.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

and within this life.[52] Christ becomes incarnate in our flesh, "among those who have been generated in Him and have always belonged to him".[53] Thus, Christ becomes word in our flesh, while our flesh only experiences itself in the Word of Life: "The native membership of our flesh in the Word of Life—only the arrival of this word in a flesh like ours, its Incarnation, can reestablish it".[54] Henry is quite adamant that this is not pantheism: "With the Christian concept of immanence as Life's immanence in each living being, every form of pantheism is struck dead".[55] And, indeed, Henry distinguishes radically between the "life of God" and the "life of the world," repeatedly insisting that they have absolutely nothing to do with each other and that "flesh" (the divine life) and "body" (things in the world) are completely separate and incompatible.[56] Yet, there is nevertheless an intimate connection between Christ's flesh and ours. To be "deified" is to become God. We are "'sanctified' in a radical sense, meaning not to become holy ones, but this One who alone is Holy: God. Sanctified, that is, deified, and only as such saved".[57] And, in fact, it is not only Christ and the individual self who are one in life, but all people: "it is only if all men are in Christ, one with him, if they are Christ himself, that, sanctifying himself, the Christ sanctifies all in himself, and at the same time saves them all".[58] He draws on the theological notion of the "mystical body" to explicate this. In this

[52] In the essay on incarnation, he describes this more fully: "For the Word that becomes flesh in Christ is the eternal Word of God. It is in Him that everything was created. This includes not only the world but also everything that is foreign to it: our flesh, the ipseity of our Self, and our life. When God breathed his life into dust from the ground, he turned it into the carnal living transcendental Self that makes up each human being. The body was only matter or dust, but the flesh was wholly alive. The arrival of each living being into its own carnal ipseity is part of the immanent generation of life" (Henry, M. "Incarnation and the Problem of Touch." In Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor, eds. *Carnal Hermeneutics* p. 138).
[53] Henry, M. *Incarnation*. p. 229.
[54] *Ibid.,* p. 232.
[55] *Ibid.,* p. 183.
[56] Again, this may be read as a revision of his earlier distinction between "objective" and "subjective" bodies.
[57] *Ibid.,* p. 235.
[58] *Ibid.,* p. 237.

body we are all one and yet do not give up our individuality: "From the phenomenological point of view, the mystical body is possible only if the nature of the relation that men are capable of having among themselves can attain this limit point, truly, where they are one, in such a way that, according to the presuppositions of Christianity, which are equally those of a phenomenology of Life, the individuality of each one is preserved, indeed, exalted, and in no way abolished in such an experience, if it must still be an experience of *the other*".[59] This is a community of the living, of all the "selves" that share life. It is called deification because "since the reciprocal phenomenological interiority of Life and its Word is repeated when the Word itself is made flesh in the Christ, every union with this is identically a union with the Word, and in this, with absolute Life".[60] We are "born again" into the divine Life, which is at the same time a "restoration of this original condition, in as much as man was created by God in his image".[61] And Henry insists over and over again that although it is the divine life in which we participate and which we experience as our flesh in a completely unification, at the same time this does not erase our individuality but actually makes it possible: "This absolute unity between all living Selves, far from signifying or implying the dissolution or destruction of the individuality of each one, is on the contrary constitutive of it, in as much as each of them is joined to himself or herself in the phenomenological effectuation of Life in its Word, and generated in themselves as this irreducibly singular Self, irreducible to any other".[62] Although "in the depth of its Night, our flesh is God"[63] as it self-manifests the pathos of life, it also makes possible our mutual love for each other and our salvation as individuated, living, carnal Selves.

## II. Incarnation and Redemption in Julian of Norwich

Julian obviously does not employ the same terminology as Henry for her account of God's relation to us, our being in God, or Christ's

[59] *Ibid.*
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 246.
[61] *Ibid.*
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 248.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 262.

incarnation and saving action. Yet, the picture that emerges from her reflections is strikingly similar to Henry's. First of all, already Julian's understanding of who we are and how God made us draws the divine and the human very close. We begin and end in God: "For his goodness fills all his creatures and spills into all that he does [*overpassith without end*].[64] He is our endless home: he only made us for himself; he remakes us by his blessed passion and always keeps us in his blessed love".[65] She argues that the soul, although "made" (i.e. created), has the same properties as God: "And the soul [*man soule*] is a creature in God, that has the same properties though they be made [*which hath the same propertyes made*]".[66] Indeed, like Henry's "night" we are made of "nothing," but come out of the divine: "And thus the human soul is made of God and in the same point is knit to God [*thus is man soule made of God and in the same poynts knitt to God*]. And thus I understand that the soul is made of nothing [*mannys soule is made of nought*]—that is to say, it is made but not from anything that is made. ... And so is our made-nature rightfully oned with its Maker, who is substantial nature, unmade [*And thus is teh kynd made rytefully onyd to the maker, which is substantial kynd onmade*]: that is, God. And so it is that there can, nor shall be, nothing between God and our soul".[67] As in Henry, this oneness of the soul with God is expressed as life: "For he wills us to know that our soul is alive, and this life, of his goodness, and by his grace, shall last unto heaven without end, him loving, him thanking, him praising. And just as we are to be without end, so were we treasured in God, and hidden, known, and loved without beginning. ... And furthermore he wills us to know that all the souls that shall be saved in heaven without end are

[64] I will provide some words from the medieval English text in brackets and italics, giving page numbers for the modern English translation followed by pagination for the medieval text.
[65] Julian of Norwich. *Revelation of Love.* [RL] Trans. John Skinner. [Modern English] (New York: Doubleday, 1996) p. 11; *A Revelation of Love*. [RLmed.] Ed. Marion Glasscoe. [Medieval English] (Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993) p. 8.
[66] RL. 87 / RLmed. 62.
[67] RL. 118 / RLmed. 85.

knit in this knot and oned in this oneing, and made holy in the holiness [*he will we wettyn that al the soules that shall be savid in hevyn without end at knitt and onyd in this onyng, and made holy in this holyhede*]".[68] Sometimes she will speak of this "knitting together" or "oneing" ["*this rythfull knitting and this endles onyng*"][69] in a way that leaves some room for distinction: "We ought to take great joy that God dwells in our soul, and even more joy that our soul dwells in God. Our soul is made to be God's dwelling place, and the dwelling place of the soul is God, that is unmade".[70] In other places, the two become almost indistinguishable; they are of one substance: "And a higher understanding yet is to see and know that our soul, which is made, dwells in God's substance: of which substance we are all that we are. And I saw no difference between God and our substance [*And I saw no difference atwix God and our substance*], but as it were all God, and yet my understanding took it that our substance is in God, that is to say, that God is God, and our substance is a creature in God [*our substance is a creture in God*]".[71] As in Henry, God is life, light, and love: "I had in part touching, sight, and feeling in three properties of God, in which the strength and effect of all the revelation stands... The properties are these: life, love, and light. In life is marvelous homeliness; in love there is gentle courtesy; and in light there is endless nature. These three properties were in one goodness; unto this goodness my reason sought to be oned and cleave there with all my might. I beheld with reverent dread, and marveling highly in the sight, and in the feeling of sweet accord that our reason is in God, understanding that it is the highest gift we have received, and that it is grounded in kind [*groundid in kinde*]".[72] Julian's strong insistence of our being of one "kind" with God from the moment of creation and "oned" with God in our very being is striking indeed.

This identification displays the same tension for her as it does for

[68] RL. 119 / RLmed. 86.
[69] RLmed. p. 85.
[70] RL. 119.
[71] RL. 120 / RLmed. 87.
[72] RL. 178 / RLmed. 132.

Henry: On the one hand, the soul is one with God, of the same "substance" or "life"; on the other hand, God creates or generates while the soul is created or generated. As Henry maintains that we are all livings generated within the divine life, Julian speaks of our soul as being of the same "kind" (or nature) with God. As Henry insists that we are utterly incapable of giving ourselves life and that such assumption of control over our own capacity is "sin" or "idolatry," so Julian always distinguishes "the courteous lord" from the humble "servant." Interestingly, she defines the soul as "sensual" in a way that is quite similar to Henry's notion of the flesh: "And our faith is a power that comes from our kind [i.e. like] substance into our sensual soul by the Holy Spirit [*comith of our kynd substance into our sensual soule be the Holy Gost*]".[73] We begin in the divine substance or life and return to it: "And at the same time that our soul is breathed into our body, when we are made sensual... [thus we hope] that we shall come again up above to our substance".[74] Although in places affectivity or sensuality seems to be what distinguishes us from God, in other places she affirms: "Thus I understood that the sensuality is grounded in kind".[75] Or: "For I saw quite clearly that our substance is in God; also that in our sensuality, God is [*in our sensualite God is*]".[76] These are striking affirmations of ourselves as not only finding our origin in God with whom we share a likeness, but of the extention of this likeness or kind to sensuality (by which she means something much closer to Henry's affectivity, and certainly not "sensuality" in the more popular sense). Indeed, "God is nearer to us than our own soul; for he is the ground in whom our soul stands, and he is the mean that keeps the substance and sensuality together, so that they shall never part [*God is nerer to us than our owen soule; for he is ground in whom our soule stondith and he is mene that kepith the substance and the sensualite to God so that thai shall never departyn*]".[77] Later she

[73] RL. 120 / RLmed. 87.
[74] RL. 121.
[75] *Ibid.*
[76] RL. 122 / RLmed. 88.
[77] RL. 124 / RLmed. 90.

identifies the "nature" (or, more literally, "kind") with reason, but still applies it to both God and humans: "I had, in part, a touching of God [*in partie touching*], and it is grounded in nature [*kynde*]. That is to say, our reason is grounded in God, who is substantial nature [*substantial heyhede* or *kyndnesse*]".[78] "Nor can we be saved merely by our nature [i.e. reason] grounded in God; but coming from the same ground [*kindly ground*] we also need mercy and grace".[79] Sometimes she comes very close to asserting a kind of reversibility between God and us: "We are enclosed in the Father, and we are enclosed in the Son, and we are enclosed in the Holy Spirit. And the Father is enclosed in us, and the Son is enclosed in us, and the Holy Spirit is enclosed in us [*We arn beclosid in the Fadir, and we arn beclosid in the Son, and we arn beclosid in the Holy Gost; and the Fader is beclosid in us, and the Son is beclosid in us, and the Holy Gost is beclosid in us*]".[80] At other times, the difference between the holy lord and our own wretchedness is immense.

Second, Julian's account of the incarnation is fascinating in its identification of Christ and the human, described as Adam. She depicts a vision or parable in which God and the human being are described as a king or lord and a servant, respectively.[81] There is only one servant because all of humanity is comprised in Adam ("For in the sight of God all men are one and one is all [*for in the syte of God al man is on man and on man is all man*]".[82] In what is itself theologically interesting (though not something I can pursue here), the servant "falls" out of his eagerness to serve the lord; rushing away to do the lord's bidding and having his eyes on the lord, he does not see a hole into which he falls and where he

[78] RL. 124 / RLmed. 90. The manuscripts use different words here: *heyhede* is sublimity, *kyndnesse* is kind/likeness. The next sentence begins "Of this substantial kindhede" (1993, 90) suggesting a conflation of the two.
[79] RL. 125 / RLmed. 91.
[80] RL. 120 / RLmed. 87.
[81] RL. 103. The centrality of this parable is evident in that she reflects on it extensively and, in fact, reports having thought about it for twenty years.
[82] RL. 103 [trans. mod.] / RLmed. 75.

is now in bitter pain.[83] Julian initially proposes this parable as a way of solving the difficulty of the existence of sin in light of God's mercy (which it does not really resolve), but it very quickly becomes a commentary on the incarnation. At first the servant is identified as the human Adam, us; but almost immediately the servant becomes Christ, who "falls" into the virgin's womb: "Now in the servant is comprehended the Second Person of the Trinity; and in the servant is comprehended Adam, that is to say all humankind [*that is to say, al man*]... God's Son fell with Adam into the valley of the Maiden's womb [*Adam fell fro lif to deth into the slade of this wretchid world and after that into hell. Gods Son fell with Adam into the slade of the mayden wombe*]".[84] These two falls are consistently equated by Julian: "When Adam fell, God's Son fell; because of the faithful oneing [*rythfull onyng*] which was made in heaven, God's Son might not part from Adam—and in Adam is

[83] Julian is quite insistent that the "fall" happens only out of love and with the best intentions: "For it was only his own good will and great willingness that had caused his falling; and he was as keen and as inwardly well disposed as when he stood before his lord all ready to do his will" (p. 101). And God also "continues to behold him with the same love and tenderness"' this look is "most meek and mild, having great ruth and pity" (*Ibid.*). Indeed, the lord is "greatly pleased" and rewards the servant for all the terror he has suffered (*Ibid.*). [It is utterly unclear to me how she thinks this solves the problem of the existence and reality of sin.] She essentially thinks of sin as contradictory to our nature and hence as unnatural: "And here we can see how it is in our true nature and kind that we hate sin, and grace too convinces us to hate sin; for kind is all good and fair in the self; and grace was sent out to save kind by destroying sin and so bring again fair kind to the blessed point from whence it came, that is God, with more nobility and worship brought by the virtuous working of grace" (*Ibid.*, p 140). "For sin is contrary to our fair kind: insofar as sin is unclean, so it is unnatural" (*Ibid.*, p. 141). It is fascinating that both Henry and Julian have tremendous difficulty articulating something like sin or falling away from God (forgetting one's source in the divine life or one's sonship, to use Henry's language). It seems that such a strong sense of intimacy or even merging with the divine requires an image of divine mercy that makes human sin ultimately incompatible with it. This is a fascinating point that could (and should) profitably be explored further.

[84] RL. 108 / RLmed. 78. "And then he set off promptly in answer to his Father's will, and at once he feel down low into the Maiden's womb, regardless of himself or his hard pains. The white smock is his flesh; its plainness, that there is nothing between the Godhead and the manhood; its straitness, his poverty; its age comes from Adam's wearing; the staining with sweat from Adam's labors; while its shortness shows how the servant must labor" (p. 109).

understood all humankind [*by Adam I understood all man*]".[85] Occasionally, she will try to distinguish between Christ's divinity and his humanity: "His starting was the Godhead and his running was the manhood; for the Godhead starts from the Father into the Maiden's womb, falling into the taking of our kind [*falling into the taking of our kynde*]; and in this falling he took great hurt [*he toke great sore*]; the hurt he took was the flesh in which he also had such feeling of deadly pains [*dedly peynis*]".[86] But most of the time, the divine and the human are closely identified, not only in Christ, but also extending to us. Julian repeatedly tells us that God makes no distinction between Christ's soul and ours[87] and that "where the blessed soul of Christ is, there too is the substance of all souls that are to be saved by Christ".[88] Like Henry, Julian not only closely associates Christ and us, but also the life of all livings together: "For I saw that in God our kind is whole; yet he also makes diversities flow from him which do his will, they keep our kind which grace and mercy restores and fulfills. None of these shall perish, for our substance [*kind*], which is the higher part, is knit to God in our making. And God is knit to the lower part of our substance when he took our flesh: and thus in Christ our two substances are oned [*and God is knitt to our kinde which is the lower partie in our flesh takyng; and thus in Christ is our ii kinds are onyd*]".[89] Thus, while our "soul" is always of a "kind" with God's life, our sensuality (for Julian, the union of soul and body, for Henry the flesh) becomes connected to the divine life via Christ's incarnation. We are "made sensual" when "our soul is knit to our body".[90] In the same way, Christ becomes sensual in the incarnation: "The very same virtues are stored up for us in Jesus Christ; for in the same time that God knitted him to our body in the Maiden's womb he took our sensual soul [*he toke our sensual soule*]. In this taking, having enclosed us within

[85] RL. 109.
[86] RL. 111 / RLmed. 80.
[87] RL. 109.
[88] *Ibid.*
[89] RL. 126 / RLmed. 92.
[90] RL. 126.

himself, he oned it to our substance and in his oneing became perfect man. For Christ, having knit to himself all those men and women that shall be saved, is the perfection of humankind [*for Christe havyng knitt in him ilk man that shall be savid, is perfit man*]".[91] Thus, using Henry's language, our flesh becomes animated by the life of God through Christ's incarnation, which communicates life to the flesh and restores the flesh to life.

Third, then, Julian speaks of redemption in quite a similar fashion to Henry. It is a return into the divine life and love. "For in humankind that is to be saved is gathered in everything made, yes and God that is unmade too: for in humankind there is God: and in God is all".[92] She repeatedly insists on this becoming one whole with God's life: "And then I knew that our soul will never be at rest until it comes to him: then we will know him as our true life and be filled with his joy, his happiness, and his courteous homeliness [*comith to hym knowing that he is fulhede of ioy, homely and curtesly blisful and very life*]".[93] Yet God desires this as much as we do: "This then is his thirst, a love-longing to have us all together and whole in him to be his bliss, this is what I see. For now we are not fully whole in him as we shall be then".[94] We are saved not just *by* Christ, but *in* and *as* Christ: "...for the langour and desire of all mankind that shall be saved appeared in Jesus; for Jesus is all that shall be saved and all that shall be saved is Jesus [*al that shal be savid is Iesus*]".[95] Christ enables us to return to our true nature: "And as regards our substance, it may rightly be called our soul; and as regards our sensuality, it may rightly be called our soul: that is because they are both made one in God. The worshipful city that our Lord Jesus sits in is our sensuality in which he is enclosed; and our kindly substance is enclosed in Jesus sitting with the blessed soul of Christ at rest within the Godhead".[96] For Julian (far

[91] RL. 127 / RLmed. 92.
[92] RL. 19.
[93] RL. 53 / RLmed. 37.
[94] RL. 60.
[95] RL. 110 / RLmed. 79.
[96] RL. 124.

more than for Henry who rarely speaks of the Spirit), this always has a profoundly trinitarian structure: "For our whole life is in three. In the first we have our being [*beyng*], and in the second we have our increasing [*encresyng*], and in the third we have our fulfilling. The first is kind [i.e. likeness], the second is mercy, and the third is grace [*The first is kinde; the second is mercy; the thred is grace*]".[97] We start off being of a "kind" with God and return to this through Christ's actions: "Thus I understood that all his blessed children which were born out of him by kind shall be brought into him again by grace".[98] In some ways, as in Henry, we are never parted from God and yet our redemption is necessary: "For by God's righteousness, all humankind that will one day fulfill heaven needs to be knit and oned to him in such a way that therein is a substance which might never, nor should ever, be parted from him; and all this is through his own good will and by his endless foreseeing purpose. And notwithstanding this rightful knitting and this endless oneing, yet the redemption and again-buying of mankind is needful and speedful in its every aspect, being done by the same intent and for the same end that holy Church teaches us in our faith".[99] Ultimately, grace and kind (or nature) go together: "Thus kind and grace are of one accord; for grace is God, as kind is God".[100] While we can theoretically distinguish between creation and redemption, ultimately they are all of one piece.

Finally, both Julian and Henry focus on suffering and affectivity as central for our identification with Christ. As we have seen, both struggle with articulating how to distinguish the divine from the human and to some extent even humans from each other. Suffering seems central to

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[97] *Ibid*. p. 129.
[98] *Ibid*. p. 142.
[99] *Ibid*. p. 117. One should note that Julian uses some sort of reference to "what holy Church teaches" whenever she finds something incomprehensible or incompatible with her vision but thinks it must be affirmed doctrinally. Although she always sees herself as a faithful daughter of the church, her references to church are almost all in contexts where she actually disagrees with something but feels obligated to state it.
[100] *Ibid*. p. 140.

this.[101] It does not deny the obvious: Julian is in her own body, experiencing its acute suffering and pain, both physical and psychological. And yet she simultaneously suffers with Christ, knows his suffering in her own flesh, experiences herself united to Christ in intimate ways that sees their identities merged to at least some extent. Similarly Henry repeatedly tries to distinguish between the Arch-Son, Christ, and all other sons who all have their source in the divine life, but his distinctions often seem to end up becoming further affirmations of their unity. Julian repeatedly speaks of her suffering with and for Christ, sometimes in quite graphic terms. She is pained by seeing Christ in pain: "Here I felt truly that I loved Christ so much above myself that there was no worse pain I might suffer than to see him in pain".[102] She often repeats such sharing of pain for the other. Suffering is what unites us with Christ: "And in this I saw a great oneing between Christ and ourselves; I knew it to be so: for when he was in pain, we were in pain".[103] It is not merely about becoming one with Christ, however, but extends to other people who are also Christ in some way: "Then I saw that each time we have kind compassion [*ech kynde compassion*] and charity for our fellow Christian, that is Christ in him [*it is Criste in him*]".[104] Indeed, our experiencing of the divine life is described by Julian in terms of affectivity, as feeling, hearing, smelling, and tasting: "Then shall we all come into our Lord, then we ourselves will know clearly and God will have us fully. We will be hidden in God without end, seeing him truly, feeling [*feland*] him fully, hearing [*heryng*] him in spirit and smelling [*smellyng*] him delectably and swallowing [*swelowyng*] him sweetly: then will we see God face to face, homely and fully [*homly and fulsumly*]; the creature that is made shall see and behold God who is Maker without end".[105] God is our origin, our accompaniment, our very life: "And so it is

[101] It is also interesting that in both Henry and Julian, joy and pain often merge or even become indistinguishable. This is true in many mystical accounts.
[102] *Ibid.* p. 39.
[103] *Ibid.*
[104] RL. 57 / RLmed. 40.
[105] RL. 86 / RLmed. 62.

we stand in the midst of this mingling [*medlur*] all the days of our life. But he wants us to trust that he is with us all the while. For so he is in three ways: he is with us in heaven, true man drawing us up into his own person [*in his owne person updrawand*]... and he is with us too on earth leading us on.... and he is with us within our soul endlessly dwelling, ruling, and caring for us [*endlesly wonand, us reuland and yemand*]".[106] Christ's "presence" in heaven and on earth cannot be neatly distinguished (temporally or spatially), nor can we make clear distinctions between Christ *as* human and Christ *with* humans.

Ultimately, we are made whole and one in love: "This is what was shown: our whole life is grounded and rooted in love, for without love we may not live. And therefore once the soul, by God's special grace, sees to such a degree the high wonder of the goodness of God that we are oned in him in love without end, it is utterly impossible that God should be wroth".[107] As Henry affirms that we can never truly lose our conditions of sons in the divine life, even if we can forget it, so Julian also says that "God is never out of the soul".[108] As for Henry, everything for Julian culminates in love or charity: "And at the end all shall be charity [*at the end all shall be charite*]. I had three manners of understanding about this light, charity: the first is that charity is unmade; the second that charity is made; the third is that charity is given. The charity that is unmade is God; charity made is our soul in God; charity given is virtue. And that is a gracious gift of working in which we love God for himself and ourselves in God and all that love God, for God".[109] Indeed, "We are made for this, for already our human nature is held in God's bliss [*our kindly substance is now blisful in God*], as indeed it has been since it was first made, and so shall it be without end".[110] God is in our reason and in our soul, because ultimately we are in (and maybe even as) God: "For it is his delight to reign in our understanding blissfully, and sit in our soul

[106] RL. 114 / RLmed. 82.
[107] RL. 96.
[108] *Ibid.* pp. 122.
[109] RL. 179 / RLmed. 133.
[110] RL. 89 / RLmed. 64.

peacefully, and to dwell in our soul endlessly, working us all into him. ... I saw in truth that our substance is in God [*for sothly I saw that our substance is in God*]".[111] We are made in love and become one with God in and through love.

What is particularly fascinating—and here she is quite different from Henry—is the fact that Julian often employs maternal imagery to speak of our being born in the divine life: "God rejoices that he is our Mother [*he is our moder*]".[112] Even more striking is the fact that she repeatedly refers to Christ as mother: "And our Savior is our true Mother [*our very moder*] in whom we are endlessly born [*be endlesly borne*] yet we will never come out of him".[113] Christ is our two-fold mother, both in regard to substance and in regard to the sensual: "And more than this, I saw that the Second Person, who is Mother of our substance [*moder substantial*], the same most dear Person [*derworthy person*] is become our Mother sensual [*moder sensual*]. For we are doubly of God's making: that is to say, substantial and sensual [*substantiall and sensual*]".[114] Julian has no trouble speaking of Christ simultaneously with variously gendered terms, mixing them indiscriminately: "And in the Second Person, in wit and wisdom, we have our keeping as regards our sensuality, our restoring, and our saving: for he is our Mother, Brother, and Saviour".[115] Christ as Mother refers both to "creation" and to "incarnation": "and the Second Person of the Trinity is Mother in nature, in our substantial making [*the second person of the Trinite is our moder in kynde in substantiall makeyng*], in whom we are grounded and rooted; and he is also our Mother in mercy in taking our sensuality [*he is our moder in mercy in our sensualite takyng*]".[116] Or: "And thus Jesus is our true Mother in kind, by our first making; and he is our true Mother in grace by his taking our kind

[111] RL. 128 / RLmed. 93.
[112] RL. 113 / RLmed. 81.
[113] RL. 127 / RLmed. 93.
[114] Indeed, she is very realistic about the difficulties of motherhood, which she associates with the passion: "We well know that all our mothers bear us to pain and to dying" (RL. 134).
[115] RL. 129 / RLmed. 94.
[116] RL. 130.

that is made".[117] She distinguishes the trinitarian persons and holds them together at the same time: "Thus in our Father, God almighty, we have our being; and in our Mother of mercy we have our reforming and restoring [*in our moder of mercy we have our reformyng and restoryng, in whome our partes are onyd and all made perfitt man*], and in him our parts are oned and we all are made perfect human beings, and by the recompense and giving in grace of the Holy Spirit we are fulfilled. And our substance is our Father, God almighty, and our substance is our Mother, God of all wisdom [*moder, God al wisdamm*], and our substance is in our Lord the Holy Spirit, God of all goodness; yet our substance is whole in each Person of the Trinity, which is one God. While our sensuality is only in the Second Person, Christ Jesus, yet in him is the Father and the Holy Spirit".[118] Indeed, at times motherhood seems applied to all three persons or at least expressed in three different ways: "I understand three ways of beholding the motherhood of God [*I vnderstode iii manner of beholdyng of moderhede in God*]: the first is grounded in the making of our kind [*groundid of our kinde makeying*]; the second is his taking our kind, and then begins the motherhood of grace [*moderhede of grace*]; the third is the motherhood of working, and there begins his going forth [*forth-spreadyng*]".[119] Here Henry, whose language is always exclusively male (God is always Father, Christ is always Son or Arch-Son, and humans are always "sons within the son"), could learn something from Julian.[120] Birthing and mothering language may express the kind of intimacy Henry articulates between the divine life and our

[117] *Ibid*., p. 132.
[118] RL. 130 / RLmed. 95. "Thus our life is grounded in our true Mother Jesus in the foreseeing wisdom that he has from without beginning, with the might of the Father and the high sovereign goodness of the Holy Spirit" (RL. 141).
[119] RL. 132 / RLmed. 96.
[120] Nor is he the only one; most of the French accounts (Lévinas, Marion, Lacoste, etc.) are exclusively male. Indeed, Marion insists repeatedly on the importance of the paternity of the divine (although admittedly, unlike Lévinas and Henry, he generally speaks of the "child" rather than the "son").

flesh far better than the engendering and paternal language he employs.[121]

## III. Conclusion

What are we to make of this version of redemption? On the most basic level, the similarities between Julian and Henry reveal that Henry's phenomenological account of Christianity (or Christian account of phenomenology), is not as "un-Christian" as is often supposed. As Henry's own references to Meister Eckhart indicate, there are other mystical writings that unite divine and human more intimately than mainstream Christian theology has generally felt comfortable doing (and while Eckhart was questioned by the inquisition and some of his theses condemned, Julian's orthodoxy was never in doubt). At the very least one should admit that such an account is one legitimate way of depicting God's relation to the human and human participation in the divine. Besides Eckhart and Silesius, Henry could surely have drawn on other

[121] It is possible that a distinction made by Maximus the Confessor and taken up by John of Damascus between "genesis" (as creation) and "gennesis" (as begetting or generation) could help resolve some of the difficulty both Henry and Julian have in distinguishing between divine and human life in explicating how one is generated out of the other. Here is the Damascene's succinct summary: "Ἀγένητον and γενητόν, written with one ν, belong to nature and mean 'uncreated' and 'created.' On the other hand, ἀγέννητον and γεννητόν—that is to say 'unbegotten' and 'begotten'—being spelled with two νs, belong not to nature, but to person. Thus, the divine nature is ἀγένητος, that is to say, uncreated, whereas all things except the divine nature are γενητά, that is to say, created. Now, in the divine and uncreated nature the unbegotten is found in the Father, for he was not begotten, whereas the begotten is found in the Son, since he is eternally begotten of the father, and the procession is found in the Holy Ghost. Moreover, the first individuals of every species of living beings were unbegotten but not uncreated, because they were made by the Creator and not begotten of their kind. For, while γένησις is creation, γέννησις with God is the proceeding of the consubstantial Son from the Father alone, and with human beings the proceeding of a consubstantial person from the conjunction of male and female. Thus, we know that to be begotten belongs not to nature, but to person, for, if it did belong to nature, we should not find the begotten and the unbegotten in the same nature. So, the holy Mother of God engendered a Person who is known in in two natures and who in his divinity was timelessly begotten of the Father, but who in the last days became incarnate of her and was born in the flesh." John of Damascus. "On the Orthodox Faith" found in *Writings*. Trans. Frederic H. Chase. (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1958) pp. 341-2. Such a suggestion would obviously have to be worked out much more fully.

mystics, such as Julian or Hadewijch, or on other theological accounts, such as those of Origen or Irenaeus (in the latter case more fully than he does).[122]

Yet, maybe more could be said here (though it will have to be said very tentatively and in very preliminary fashion). Maybe Henry and Julian provide an insight about Christ's incarnation and passion and our participation within it that we have missed in both theology and phenomenology (albeit in different ways) and that might be worth recovering. Maybe our (theological) understanding of Christ as a separate individual who becomes incarnate at a particular point in time (within a linear "salvation history") and whose solitary death on the cross somehow serves to appease the Father, restore God's honor, triumph over the devil, or pay some sort of debt, is not the best way for describing redemption. Maybe our (philosophical) thinking about human beings as isolated individuals, separate and solipsistic egos for whom one must undergo great phenomenological acrobatics to provide a convincing account of "the other," based either on an extension or likeness of my own consciousness or as an utterly foreign interruption or implosion within my psyche, is simply mistaken and not the best starting point for a phenomenological account of human experience.

Phenomenologically speaking, maybe we must abandon the singular

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[122] John Behr claims, for example, that for Origen, "the God and Father, his Son, Christ, our great God and Saviour, the Holy Spirit, and all rational and intellectual beings are held together in the flow of one continuous sentence, expressing one movement from God, through Christ, through the Spirit, through whom all rational beings, in return, send forth the praise to God" (Section 2, p. 25). He describes Origen's account of the incarnation as follows: "The Incarnation, therefore, should perhaps be thought of as the enfleshing of the eternal heavenly reality, the assumption of flesh by the eternal Word, which simultaneously (as iron in the fire) transforms the earthly properties of the flesh, through the fire of the Passion, into the very properties of the Word (so that they are no longer seen), as the man Jesus goes to the Father, preparing the way for others to follow him and in so doing ministering divinity and the anointing to them, so that the eternal reality of the heavenly court and its liturgy is enfleshed in those who follow him" (Section 4, p. 49). See also his account of creation in Origen in Section three of the introduction to Behr, John. *Origen: On First Principles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

starting point of the Cartesian ego that still prevails pervasively—even when its "subject" has been turned to a more passive "self"—and instead begin to articulate human experience in more communal and connected terms. Even in a purely genealogical or biological sense, we are not as disconnected as it seems: we are born out of each other and in many ways are utterly dependent on each other. An infant that is not held and touched dies. Life is affectivity and there is no affectivity without the other, no life without feeling oneself touched and embraced. And this is obviously true not only for infants. Even an adult life that does not include touch and that is no longer "in touch" with others withers away; it is not a life worth living. We are most acutely "alive" when we suffer with and for the other, share together in joy and pain, share in each other's lives in such a way that they are not really separate or disconnected. Relationship or "being-with-others" does not come "after" having a "self," but we develop a "self" only in intimate relation with and distinction from others within relationships. Affectivity, even self-affectivity, is not really thinkable without an account of how we touch *each other* and not just ourselves.

Furthermore, it is not clear that either Henry's account of the flesh or Julian's of the "sensual soul" has really been taken as seriously in phenomenology or theology as they deserve. Henry is starkly criticized by some as reinstituting the Cartesian soul-body division via a similar stark distinction between flesh and body.[123] Yet, in many ways his flesh (or lived body) does the work of soul and body together and it is only the objectifying, scientistic, purely external account of corporeality that he rejects. Similarly, Julian's sensual soul may suggest that at least aspects of the Christian tradition are considerably less dualistic than is often assumed.[124] Hers is clearly not a disembodied soul or a pure logos without pathos. Do these considerations of pathos-filled flesh and sensual soul enable us to rethink the meaning of body and flesh today and to give more complex accounts of corporeality and affectivity on both

[123] Falque, Emmanuel. *Le Combat amoureux. Disputes phénoménologique et théologiques*. (Paris: Hermann, 2014).

[124] This is also true for much of the patristic tradition where soul, even when distinguished from body, usually includes sensation and affect in Aristotelian fashion.

phenomenological and theological levels?

What might all this mean for a theological account of redemption? It might suggest that Christ is as intimately part of us as we are part of each other, not a separate "individual" who comes "down" at some point in time, but always already part of our life, always already participating in our flesh. Paul uses the language of the first and second Adam, to which both Henry and Julian appeal, to speak of Christ's recapitulation of Adam's condition. Julian's depiction of Christ's "falling" into Mary's womb and becoming the Adamic servant, communicates this precisely. Ultimately it is Christ who most fully shows us (theologically speaking) what it means to be human, because he is humanity (not just human) in the fullest sense.[125] All flesh (indeed all materiality) is hallowed in Christ, redeemed in him. That is what all the ancient liturgies proclaim; this is what every Eucharist celebrates. Our modern (hyper-individualistic) minds have become so used to firm distinctions, principles of non-contradiction, convictions about the exclusion of x by non-x, that we seem unable to deal with the rich liturgical language that messes with all these neat and exclusive distinctions. In every liturgy we enter into the divine life and Christ is born anew in us, today, at this moment and in this place, in our material flesh. And this moment in liturgy—the work of the people together, never just in solitary fashion—is a "doing" of all of life, an intensification (and maybe also repeated "practice" or training) for how we are to live every moment of our lives. Liturgy, especially eucharistic liturgy, unites us into one people of God, one body of Christ, together, rather than as separate individuals. Redemption, then, might be more about a full realization (as is repeatedly reported by the mystics) that I am part of the other and the other is part of me, that when seen with the "eyes of God" we are all one and therefore what hurts you will hurt me also, what affects me also affects you, that we are not saved without each other. In that sense, then, we might say with Henry and Julian that

[125] This is not to say that we are somehow miraculously part of the same "seed" or are present in "Adam" in some anticipatory fashion that connects us to him in a purely biological way or that we share in a common human "soul."

there is no other life than the life of God, flowing within us and drawing us into the divine life in Christ through the Spirit.

And if this were so, theologically speaking, then maybe it would aid us, phenomenologically speaking, in articulating a different account of the human in relation—not an account of "Christ's phenomenology" (as Henry, Falque, and at times Marion do) but a genuinely and fully *human* account—inspired by theological insights and metaphors, but thought rigorously on purely phenomenological terms.

*Pli* 28 (2017), 119-139

# The Phenomenology of Birth

***MICHEL HENRY***

What does it mean to say "to be born"? To be born: is this not to come into being, to enter into existence, outside of which, before which, and after which, there is nothing? Thus the question of birth seems to return from the outset to that of being, which dominates the tradition of thought to which we belong. That in this tradition being [*l'être*] may not be truly thematised for itself but more or less confused with beings [*l'étant*] and understood from the latter, far from contradicting the primacy of the question of being, demands rather that this primacy might be fully established and, consequently, the philosophical problematic reformulated.

To thematise being for itself is not, however, to take philosophy before its most pertinent task nor to truly correct the tradition. And this is because being is never first, taking its being only from appearance as it is. "So much appearing, so much being" [*Autant d'apparaître, autant d'être*],[1] this fundamental principle of phenomenology is mocked when the traditional theme of ontology becomes once more that of philosophy, much more so when one claims to assign this traditional theme of ontology to phenomenology itself as in the retrograde declaration according to which: "[W]ith regard to its subject-matter, phenomenology

[1] Translator's note: while unreferenced, this principle originates in the Marburg school.

is the science of the being of beings."[2]

The claim to lead phenomenology back to ontology by making of it the simple instrument of a thought of being is only an illusion of language that affects nothing of the inescapable foundation of the latter in the former inasmuch as in the fact of beings [*l'étant*] there is only that which appears, and in the fact of being [*l'être*] only the appearing proper. The universality relative to language [*universalité langagière*] of the question of being has only a formal priority if it is true that it is in the concrete modes of the effective phenomenalisation of phenomenality and in it alone that the question of what being is all about is decided, and not in the empty concept or pre-concept thereof.

This priority of ontology, the presumed universality of the meaning of being, is what the question of birth breaks apart. When one says birth, one cannot mean exactly 'to come into being' so long as this lays claims to the rank of a systemic principle, and thus to universality. For 'to come into being [être]' is the fact of all beings [étant], of the rock, of air, of water, and yet none of these things proceed from a birth; they are neither born nor die, except metaphorically. Being born is the fact of the living and of that alone. Being born cannot, therefore, arise from being understood as universal in 'the sense of being in general' – a sense that applies as much to the rock as to the living. This sudden impropriety of the meaning of being requires from the question of birth a reevaluation of the theme of ontology, which amounts to its dismantling. For this is not a fact of ontology itself. Only a radical and pure phenomenology, discarding all extraneous presuppositions in order to thematize only the appearing [*l'apparaître*] itself in a phenomenality which is each time its own, can recognize and thereby dissociate the appearing in which the coming-into-being of the birth of the living consists from the one to which all beings of the world and this world itself owe their being – in

[2] SZ 37 / BT 61. Translator's note: Reference corrected from the original. All references to *Being and Time* will follow the given format where the first number refers to the German edition of *Sein und Zeit* (Tubingen: Niemeyer, 1967), while the second refers to *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988).

such a way that the ‘being’ of the coming into being of birth and that of the world have nothing in common, except the secret imbrication of the modes of appearance to which being returns each time, an imbrication that is itself phenomenological.

The phenomenological transcription of ontological themes is possible because phenomenology was no longer presented in a pure form in past philosophy than even traditional ontology was able to do without a phenomenological grounding determining its unknown. The appearing that governs traditional ontology is that of the ‘world’, an appearing whose phenomenality consists in the ‘outside’. To come into being means to be within this ontology, transcribed into phenomenology and upon which it rests: to come into the world. But to come into the world, is this not, in the eyes of everyone, philosopher or not, what being born means?

The difficulty that there is in attributing being in the same sense to beings such as the rock, which shows itself in the world, and to the living, which, by its birth, comes into the world and to whom the world shows itself, as real as this may be, does not seem insurmountable for a precisely phenomenological reason: the appearance [*l’apparaître*] in which the rock shows itself is the same as the one which shows the living [*le vivant*] – it is the appearance of the world, that is, the ‘outside’. Because one and the same appearing confers being to the rock and to the living, it is one and the same being that extends its reign over one and the other, the universal being whose universality rests on that of the appearing to which it returns.

Let us, then, lay here some fundamental phenomenological questions. How does appearance confer being to the rock? In making it appear. How? By making it seen. How? The rock is seen insofar as it is placed outside of itself; it is the being of this exteriority to self that defines at the same time its appearing and its being – which is being as such. If being can be thought further as temporality, then this is because “Temporality is the primordial ‘outside of itself’ in and for itself.”[3]

[3] SZ 329 / BT 377.

How does appearance confer being to the living? Is this, again making it seen, by placing it outside of itself, in such a way that it may also be seen in the same way as the rock? In this case, the phenomenological situation of the living being the same as that of the rock, their difference would no longer be an essential phenomenological difference generating an essential ontological difference, but a difference of the ontic order. The living sees the rock, whereas the rock sees nothing. This is a wholly paradoxical situation under the apparent evidence. How could two beings – let us continue to call, provisionally, the living a being – arising from one same phenomenological status present, conversely, between them a phenomenological difference in an absolutely essential sense that affects their very relation to phenomenality, namely, that one of them possesses such a relation, whereas the other does not? How could the living, coming into being in the same appearing, lit by the same light, receive the special favour of inwardly transforming, in the illumination of the appearing, in such a way as to be nothing other than this light, whereas the rock, lit by this same light, would remain in itself foreign to this light, blind, forever opaque, given over to a night so profound that we could only conceive it via the abstract negation of this brightness of the world, in which all that reveals itself which is susceptible of being [*d'être*] for us?

Here arises a crucial phenomenological difficulty: that one and the same appearing at one time lets appear outside of itself an *x*, thus deprived in itself of the phenomenality of this appearing, and, at another time, confers upon this *x*, become *y*, the extraordinary privilege of receiving this in such a manner that this *y* identifies itself with it and is nothing other than a kind of pure phenomenological matter – this double condition, which can only define itself phenomenologically, is, however, independent from the nature of this appearing, from its phenomenality – and this is because this appearing is supposed to be the same in the two cases, because there is only one. To stand in the interior or on the exterior of the appearing owes nothing to its essence, but rather owes everything to what finds itself originally and in itself heterogeneous to the appearing

and its deployment, to beings [*l'étant*]!

In classical thought, the absurdity consists in this: that such a thought finds it impossible to legitimate the distinction between subject and object even if this might be that upon which it rests and gives as essential. The object is beings [*l'étant*] themselves but perceived in their appearing, which are outside of themselves as such, insofar as the ob-ject is being outside of itself, seen and perceived as such. By what, then, can the subject differentiate itself from this ob-ject, that is, from the outside of itself in which appears being, if there is no other appearing than this outside of itself, if its 'consciousness' is reduced to this 'outside-of-itself' as such – a condition which will be recognized by the philosophy of consciousness in its 'progress' and particularly by phenomenology for which, as one knows, consciousness is essentially consciousness of something, intentionality or, in its ultimate sense, *In-der-Welt-Sein*?

We speak of birth interpreted as coming into being [*venir à l'être*], which can mean only a coming into appearing [*venue à l'apparaître*], which is interpreted as coming into the world. This designates, however, two totally different conditions of which only one refers to birth and can serve to define it, whereas intra-worldly being [*l'étant intermondain*], limiting itself to enter and to leave from this finite place of light that is the world, is in itself foreign to the phenomenon of birth as well as to that of death. The phenomenality by which one defines the coming into the world of birth permits thus no distinction between what is susceptible to birth and what is incapable of it.

This strange difficulty cannot be dismissed so long as the definition of birth as coming into the world subsists. When referred to *In-der-Welt-Sein*, the phenomenon of birth which presents this singular characteristic as its link to life and seems essential is effaced. In order to clarify this novel paradox, it is germane to interrogate the relation of *In-der-Welt-Sein* to life, a matter hastily examined in §10 of *Sein und Zeit*. In this text, truth be told, the consideration of the great contemporary philosophies of life to should be dismissed and whose theses are confined to some citations chosen at random, substitutes for a consideration of life whose

analysis is reduced to the affirmation that life is a particular kind of being [*eine eigene Seinsart*].] The poverty of this affirmation does not, however, remove the error, if it is true that life is not any kind of being nor a being that finds its phenomenological presupposition in the 'outside of itself'. Such is, nevertheless, the explicit thesis of Heidegger, "Life, its own right, is a kind of being; but essentially it is accessible only in Dasein."[4]

What does birth mean when access to life arises from *Dasein* and from it alone? This access appears *prima facie* confusing, not being specific – not only access to life but to all intra-worldly being. To access living being, inasmuch as this access consists in the exteriority to itself of the living as is the case of the rock of which Fichte speaks, is at the very most to see this living in the way in which one sees the rock, without knowing, moreover, why one attributes the character of living to this being – *this is not in any way to become living oneself*. Such is, however, the meaning of birth: to access life in such a way that one becomes oneself living, taking part from now on in the infrangible experience of living [*du vivre*], of its suffering and its enjoyment.

Can *Dasein* found at once access to non-living being, access to living being, and, finally, access to life, in a sense where *Dasein* would itself become living? With respect to the access to non-living being, *Dasein* is nothing other than that, the 'outside of itself' in which all being shows itself as 'other' or 'opposed' [*en-face*]. With respect to living being, *Dasein*, insofar as this 'outside of itself', undoubtedly shows this being, in the same way as any other. But what no longer arises in any way from *Dasein* itself is that this being discovers itself now as 'living'. With regards to living, one recognizes here an essential law of appearing by which phenomenality consists in the 'outside of itself', namely that the unveiling accomplished in such an appearing does not explain in any way that which finds itself unveiled, in this case, the living character of being. Only, if the character of being alive [*d'être vivant*]– the fact of living or the simple signification of being that way – does not arise from the appearing proper to *Dasein*, *where then does its phenomenological origin*

[4] SZ 50 / BT 75.

*reside?*

What is, first of all, perfectly possible to comprehend is why the appearing proper to *Dasein*, that is, the outside of itself constitutive of the appearing that it frees, is incapable of giving access to life. In the outside of itself each 'point' of this 'milieu' is not only exterior to all others, as in space, but also outside of itself, each 'point' finding itself still on the exterior of itself in such a way that this 'outside of itself' is its appearing, an appearing that leaves room for this only *from the exterior* and, in this sense, *from the other*. Consequently, in this milieu of radical exteriorization, no kind of living is possible if to live is to experience oneself and not to experience something other – to experience oneself in an immediacy so radical that nothing could ever break the pathetic flesh of which this experience is made and that placing this *pathos*, which is in essence in-ecstatic, outside of itself could mean only its destruction. The phenomenological material heterogeneity of the pathetic appearing, in which life achieves itself, and the ecstatic appearance, which deploys itself in the difference of the world and of things, is radical, irreducible, insurmountable.

What does it mean to say that 'life achieves itself'?[5] That is auto-affects itself, that the phenomenological matter of this original affection is pathos, that this pathetic auto-affection is a process, the eternal process by which life attains and does not cease to attain itself – in such a way that there is no other means to reach life and its living than in the interior of this process of auto-affection and by it. This is why no access to the living of life [*vivre de la vie*] is in any way possible in the appearing of a world, why, in the latter, life can only be represented in the form of an irreal noematic signification, of which the character of being alive [*d'être vivant*], of a living being [*d'étant vivant*], insofar as its objective character, is only the statement. This is why, in the end, the illusion according to which access to life occurs in the being-in-the-World of

[5] This question is, ironically, formulated by Heidegger apropos the achievement of acts which characterize a person according to Scheler (cf. SZ, p. 48: "Aber welches ist ontologische Sinn von 'vollziehen'?").

*Dasein* entails the ruinous confusion between the interior living of life and the exterior appearance of living beings [*d'êtres vivants*] whose property of being such, far from founding or exhibiting it, refers to this living and presupposes it.

The incapacity of *Dasein* to give access to the living of life concerns, in the first place, the incapacity for *Dasein* to open up to life in becoming itself living. As the outside of itself and, because in this outside no living is possible, *Dasein* is incapable of coming to life [*venir à la vie*]. From this incapacity of *Dasein*, understood existentially as being-in-the-world, one finds in Heideggerian philosophy an unconscious avowal. This takes place in an unforeseen way within a problematic that seeks to establish, against all skepticism, the original character of truth – which holds that in the opening of being-in-the-world as the opening of *Dasein*, truth is always presupposed – as well as *Dasein* itself insofar as it is mine. From the presupposition of the truth of *Dasein*, understood in a certain way as that which always precedes and as such does not have to be questioned, arises the abrupt question: "*Has* Dasein *as itself ever decided freely whether it wants to come into* 'Dasein' *or not, and will it ever be able to make such a free decision*"?[6]

To come into *Dasein*, for *Dasein*, is to be born. The question of knowing whether *Dasein* decides freely to come into *Dasein*, that is, to be born, immediately calls for a negative response. That is, in truth, a characteristic trait of birth [*du naître*] and of its mystery, namely that birth is a kind of absolute beginning and that this absolute beginning nevertheless presupposes a 'before it'. It is this antecedence to the absolute beginning of birth of a 'before it' more absolute still that this makes the phenomenon of birth a limit experience, referring within this very experience [*l'épreuve*] back to that which seems impossible to experience [*d'éprouver*]. Needless to say, there is, concerning the coming of *Dasein* into itself, no free decision, which would presuppose that one finds oneself placed in this before birth in which alone one could decide

[6] "Has Dasein as itself ever decided freely whether it wants to come into 'Dasein' or not, and will it ever be able to make such a decision?" SZ 228 / BT 271.

and form an attitude with respect to it. But it is precisely this impossibility of an attitude towards it, as implicated in every birth, that it concerns us to understand. It is necessary to avoid here, on the one hand, the existentialist *dérive* – for example, the Sartrean thesis of a man 'condemned' to be free – which treats the impossibility in question as purely factual, and, on the other hand, the Heideggerian interpretation, which, reducing the "not" of this incapacity to the *Nichts* of being and thus to ecstatic phenomenality, denatures only more definitively the decisive phenomenon of the impossibility for *Dasein* to decide whether it wants to come into itself or not.[7]

This double *dérive* can only be removed if the question receives a radical phenomenological signification, since it concerns here neither decision, freedom, wanting nor not wanting. In phenomenological terms, the question asks: how can one come into *Dasein*, how does the mode of revelation which gives access to *Dasein* reveal? That *Dasein* does not itself decide to come into *Dasein*, that, according to another proposition, it might not be "[B]rought into its 'there' of its own accord."[8] means in phenomenological terms: it is not in *Dasein* – in the outside of itself of being-in-the-World – that one reaches *Dasein*, so as to take one's place in it, to identify with it, and, once placed in it in such a way and identified with it, to be able in it and with it to relate to the world, 'to have' a world, to-be-in-the-world. In this way, our coming into the world presupposes our coming into *Dasein*, which, nonetheless, is not the fact of *Dasein* itself. How do we come into *Dasein* in such a way that this coming owes nothing to it, owes nothing to the outside of itself of being-in-the-world? In life and by it. Far from us having access to life only in *Dasein*, it is in and by life alone that we have access to *Dasein*.

If *Dasein* itself is only possible insofar as living *Dasein*, then the elaboration of the question of birth is achieved as follows. To come into the world presupposes coming into being-in-the-world itself, that is to

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[7] See above, cf. our critique of Heideggerian *Nichtigkeit* in *L'Essence de la manifestation* (Paris: PUF, 1963), §§ 42-3.

[8] SZ 284 / BT 329.

say, into *Dasein*. But to come into *Dasein*, which does not bring itself into it, owes nothing to it. Far from resolving the question of coming into the world, the question of coming into *Dasein* is an entirely new phenomenological question, referring to a mode of revelation structurally different from that of *Dasein*. If we come into *Dasein* only in life, the question of birth finds itself entirely displaced; it abandons the world and being-in-the-world. Nothing of what relates to the latter – existential structures and categories as much – interests it. For if one comes into *Dasein* only in life, the question of birth is that of knowing how one comes into life. Understood in its originarity [*originarité*], the question of birth refers back to an original birth, an *Ur*-birth [*Ur-naissance*] which has nothing to do with what we in the first instance and naïvely understand by birth. The *Ur*-birth presently at stake eludes the sciences, which relate to the world, as much as traditional philosophy which only thematizes this relation.

To be born, then, is to come into life. It is now a question of understanding this proposition, for it includes at least two meanings of which the most immediately graspable is not the most essential. To come into life means, of course, to come to life, to enter it, to access this extraordinary and mysterious condition of being from now on someone living [*un vivant*]. This mysterious character is connected to the phenomenological status of life insofar as the elucidation of this status is one of the essential tasks of a phenomenology of birth, which is thus only possible from within, and as a branch of, a phenomenology of life. But it is the second meaning of the proposition 'to come into life', which must occupy us for the moment. To come into life means here that it is only in life and starting from it that this coming is liable to occur. To come into life means to say to come from life, in such a way that life is not, so to speak, the point of arrival, but the point of departure of birth. This rooting [*enracinement*] of all birth as *Ur*-birth in the prior essence of life explains why man as living – not intra-worldly man, being-man [*l'étant-homme*] endowed with this character of being alive, but true man whose entire essence is the fact of living – why this original man that we will designate

in anticipation as the living *ego* [*l'ego vivant*] is, however, nothing originary, nothing that can gain self-understanding starting from itself, but only starting from the essence of life which eternally precedes it in the very process by which life never ceases to engender it as that which is its necessary result, by which life never ceases to give birth to it.

How does life engender the *ego* in it, making of it a living *ego*? Insofar as life engenders itself and by the way in which life makes it. Life engenders itself in the process of its eternal auto-affection, a process in which it comes into itself, crushes against itself, experiences [*s'éprouve*] itself, enjoys itself, and is nothing other than the eternal happiness of this pure enjoyment [*jouissance*] of itself. To live consists in this pure experiencing oneself as pure enjoyment of self, is possible only in this way, and does not exist elsewhere. That this auto-affection in which the essence of living consists might be a process means that it realizes as a movement, the auto-movement in which life does not cease to come into itself and to experience itself. The auto-movement of life is a specific temporalization, the radical immanent auto-temporalization, in-ecstatic and pathetic, that is, the very temporalization of birth to which we'll return. In this auto-temporalization of the auto-affection of the experiencing oneself of the living of life an ipseity takes shape, in so far as the experience [*épreuve*] of living is possible only as the feeling of experience [*épreuve*] that it constantly makes of itself – only if, as a consequence, the structure of this experience is identical with that of a Self [*un Soi*]. Thus life auto-engenders itself as a Self. But no Self is possible if not as a singular Self. And this is true so as long as the experiencing oneself that is achieved in the process of the pathetic auto-affection of life, is one in effective terms, an experiencing oneself which is necessarily itself, this experience with its particular content and thus singular, in such a way that the Self involved in this actualized and singular experiencing oneself is also such, in both effective and singular terms. It is not, to be precise, the particular content of experiencing oneself that particularizes the Self implicated in the auto-affection of this experiencing oneself; it is the singularity of this Self which is engendered

at the same time and in the same manner, singularity thus belonging to it on principle, which singularizes any 'content' prone to be experienced by the Self. I am myself this singular Self engendered in the auto-engenderment of absolute life and am that alone. Life auto-engenders as myself. The generation of the singular Self – that I am myself – in the auto-engenderment of absolute life is my transcendental birth.

Provided, however, that this transcendental birth self-realizes starting from life, that is to say, in it – that my generation as a singular Self is therefore possible only in the auto-generation of absolute life and as its effectuation, the first is then not separable from the second, the singular Self that I am happens to itself only in the coming into itself of absolute life, and carries life in it as its never-to-be-abolished presupposition, as its condition. Thus life penetrates each of those that it engenders in such a way that there is nothing in it which is not living, nothing either which does not contain in itself this eternal essence of life. Life engenders me as itself. Generated as singular Self in my transcendental *Ur*-birth, I am born. Insofar as this *Ur*-generation is only a mode of the auto-generation of absolute life, which is not born, I am not born.

Let us successively explore these two points further. First of all we need to understand why the singular Self that is generated in the auto-generation of absolute life presents itself all of a sudden as a transcendental me [*moi*] or as a transcendental *ego*. 'Transcendental' because what is at stake here is its most interior possibility: its ipseity. Now, me [*moi*] or *ego* is not the same thing, even if classical thought slides from one to the other in the most extreme confusion and without even seeing that there is at least a problem in this constant double designation of the Self. That the singular Self be said and must be said first of all in the accusative as a 'me' translates the fact that it is engendered, not having itself moved into this condition, which is its own, experiencing itself as a Self, but only holding this condition from the eternal auto-affection of life. Because this engenderment of the me [*moi*] in the auto-affection of life is phenomenological in a radical sense, being

the original phenomenalization of this life as its immanent pathetic temporalization, what motivates putting the me [*moi*] in the accusative can be read in the me; it is this feeling [*sentiment*] that the me has of being inherently passive, not only with respect of its own 'states' [*états*], including the most active, but first of all regarding itself and its own 'condition'. Me, I am for myself, or, rather, I am myself without being myself for nothing in this 'being myself', I experience myself without being the source of this experience [*épreuve*], I am given to myself without this gift arising from myself in any way. I affect myself and thus I auto-affect, it is me who is affected and I am affected by me in the sense that the content which affects me is again me – and not some other thing: what is felt, touched, willed, desired, thought, etc. – but this auto-affection which defines my essence is not my doing. Thus, I do not affect myself absolutely but I am auto-affected and in this way engendered as a Self in the auto-affection of life. Me [*Moi*] designates ultimately this character of being auto-affected by the singular Self that I am.

Provided, however, that the Self, engendered in the auto-affection of absolute life, experiences itself passively and thus as a me, then this me is not only a me: experiencing itself in the immediation of suffering and of joy constitutive of this experience, the me gains possession of itself at the same time as of each of the powers that penetrate it, that can be exercised. A new capacity is thus conferred upon it, as extraordinary as that of being a me [*moi*], even if it's as a simple consequence. It is the capacity of the me to be in possession of itself, of making but precisely one, with it, and with all that it carries in it and that belongs to it as the real and multiple components of its very being [*être propre*]. Among these components, there are for example the powers of the body, of taking and of moving, of touching, etc. Because it is in the pathetic experience that the me makes each of these powers, that the me is able to implement them and thus to act – to deploy all the powers of its body and mind; this feeling of experience [*épreuve*] is then the ultimate power which gathers in it all these powers, the ultimate capacity in virtue of which it manages all these capacities. Insofar as it advances armed thus with all its powers

and keeping them at its disposal, then this me, which has seized itself and all that lives in it, is an I [*un je*].

I write: I Can. I Can is not a synthetic proposition, no power is added to the essence of the I, but this I is as such Power. It is the ultimate Power of being in possession of all its powers and capacities. It is this ultimate Power at the core of it as the 'me'. "*Moi, ego…*"[9] This assertion by Husserl must not be taken as a mere accident of writing, nor as a tautology. It is by being a me that the *ego* is an *ego*. "*Moi, ego…*" marks the accomplishment of the process of my transcendental birth.

The *ego*, by being a me, has seized all its powers and capacities in order to exercise them from now on, freely and indefinitely – this *ego* lives and experiences as this hyper-power, which inhabits all these native capacities, all these functions, and by which the *ego* puts them into play whenever it wants. To be in possession of them is what renders it free to will their achievement. This free will is only the being-in-possession of these powers in the hyper-power of their pathetic experience and is founded upon this. We are never free with respect to whatever is outside; we are free only inside of this hyper-power, which has put us inside of each of our powers in order to exercise them. At the end of the day, the *ego* is only free at the core of it as a me, which necessarily precedes it, that is to say, ultimately of this Self, engendered in the auto-engenderment of absolute life.

But the *ego* which carries all this within it and which results from it, this *ego* lives indeed as this fundamental I Can, which Maine de Biran describes so brilliantly, and at the same time, on the foundation of this essence of its egoity, as a free will. The metaphors in which the *ego* spontaneously expresses its own condition, or what it believes naïvely to be such, are, then, significant. Interior to this power and being, in fact, only the interiority of this power to itself, the *ego* takes itself for the source of this power, its origin, the place where this power takes form,

[9] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. by Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 2013), § 44.

gathers in itself and, thus gathered in itself, springs from itself – it is, thus, the point of departure, the centre from which it acts and sets forth, from which it radiates and exercises its function. We find, in §25 of *Ideas II*, a constellation of these metaphors which all designate the *ego* as this point of departure, this source-point, this centre of effulgence, this *terminus a quo* from which everything begins and all is possible.

It is true that in these texts, as in all those that relate to the *ego*, the Husserlian interpretation is over-determined by an unquestioned and reductive conception of phenomenality, which, moreover, governs the development of European thought. Indeed, the *ego* is linked to consciousness (this link lying in the most extreme confusion), which is itself understood as intentionality in a way that this point of departure, this source-point, this centre of effulgence, this centre of function, is precisely the point of departure, the source-point, the centre of effulgence, the centre of intentionality. This superimposition of the concept of the *ego* as source-point and intentional phenomenality, can be read everywhere, for example, in this text: "In other words, all the multi-formed particularities of intentional relatedness to Objects, which here are called acts, have their necessary terminus a quo the Ego-point, from which they irradiate."[10] From the over-determination of the concept of *ego-punctum* by the presupposition of intentional and, more generally, ecstatic phenomenality – the same presupposition also followed by a metaphysics of representation – results the concept of the 'subject', which dominates modern philosophy to the point that even the very numerous critiques addressed to it in the second-half of the twentieth-century arise, without their knowledge, from the same illusory presuppositions.[11] The *ego* has become the subject, the subject of representation; the *I* re-presents me before that, to that, and in possession of that by which everything is

[10] Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1989), pp. 112.

[11] See above, cf. our work "La critique du sujet" in *Cahiers Confrontation* (Paris: 1989); English translation, "The critique of the Subject" in *Topoï* 11, 1988.

arranged [*dis-posé*] insofar as arranged before it, by it, and in possession of it. And yet the *ego* can in no way be explained by this structure of representation, even if it makes this structure possible. The proof is that the phenomenological essence upon which representation rests can be deployed without the intervention of an *ego*, as it is understood as a pure 'outside', as ek-stasis, in the absence of any subject and of any *ego*. It is only when the *ego* is put forth as subject to the principle of the deployment of the outside that the interpretation of this falls into a metaphysics of representation, which relates to the *ego*/subject all that shows in this 'outside' become simple condition of objects.

But from where comes, then, the *ego*, if not from the 'outside'? From where do we draw the concept of the subject if this is not from a metaphysics of representation, which presupposes it, on the contrary, as that which its own phenomenality – that of the outside – does not contain? Yet, it is precisely a radical phenomenological reduction, not that applied by Husserl, but that which removes intentionality and, more radically still, the ecstatic phenomenality wherein intentionality develops, the outside as such – the reduction which holds, outside the world, to the sphere of life – which delivers the *ego* to us. The reduction doesn't deliver the *ego* to us in the sense that it would give us to see the *ego*, which, as living *ego*, escapes all possible seeing, which is never visible in a world – which the Husserlian reduction only grasps in its irreal parts, in the form of idealities and potentialities, while its living concrete kernel utterly dissolves, reducing to the limit ideal of a purely conceptual 'present'. In fact, no phenomenological reduction in the sense of a process of thought is able to deliver the *ego* to us. The radical phenomenological reduction of which we speak is only possible because, as a movement of thought, it indicates another place than its own, place where the *ego* happens to itself according to the particular mode of provenance which is its own. From where comes the *ego*, if not from a phenomenological reduction?

The *ego* comes from its transcendental birth in life. This means: there is no arrival of the *ego* if not that by which it arrives itself in itself.

But the arrival by which the *ego* arrives in itself is that by which absolute life originally arrives in itself. In the auto-temporalization of its pathetic auto-affection, life experiences itself in its essential Ipseity as this singular Self that is the me [*moi*] to which the *ego* owes the fact of being an *ego*. Thus transpires the transcendental birth of the *ego*, and this, let us underline, in an absolute immanence which is that of life, in such a way that in such a birth as *Ur*-birth, neither the world nor being-in-the-world are at issue. One shouldn't just say here that one can conceive of purely spiritual beings, such as angels or archangels, in themselves entirely foreign to the world, one must say that this is our own case.

Insofar as the *ego* is born [*prend naissance*] in life in such a way that the latter remains in the former as its condition, a phenomenology of birth finds itself brought before its second task, which is no longer to grasp the generation of the *ego* in the process of pathetic auto-affection of absolute life and as identical to the achievement of this process, but to take, so to speak, the inverse journey. We, the living *egos*, are in the life of this *ego* which is each time ours, in our life. How does life arise in it, how does life give to it this, which it gives to itself, and which, in order to make this happen, was before it? How does that which is born relate to that which is not born? How does the living, in its transcendental birth as *Ur*-birth, refer to this non-birth, which is the auto-engenderment of absolute life?

Here we find a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, the auto-engenderment of absolute life in which the singular Self is engendered precedes the latter as its presupposition, life auto-engenders before the Self as an absolute 'before' without which no singular Self would come to life at all. On the other hand, however, this presupposition of any conceivable transcendental *ego* is also its condition, namely, this auto-affection of absolute life, which achieves itself constantly, and in the very auto-affection by which alone the *ego* is constantly engendered. If the auto-achievement of absolute life were to halt for a single moment, the *ego* would be destroyed. The coming of the *ego* into the auto-engenderment of absolute life is thus not at all an event that can be

assimilated as what we understand habitually by birth. We are not born once in order then to have to lead our own particular life. This being so, we believe it as living *egos* insofar as, given possession of each of its powers, having them from now on and putting them to work freely, each *ego* lives as this centre of initiative and action. Given possession of each of its powers and, first of all, of itself, the *ego* is such, however, only as long as absolute life doesn't cease to auto-affect within it, and this because there is only one life, one single auto-affection, the very one in which the *ego* finds itself auto-affected as this singular Self that it is. We are thus not born one day but constantly engendered in the auto-engenderment of absolute life and in it alone. That is why birth is not an event but a condition. This condition which is ours, makes of us Sons – transcendental Sons of absolute Life and not Sons of men, of those empirical mes [*moi empiriques*] which are only the objectivation of the transcendental mes [*moi transcendantaux*], which are the Sons, presupposing, the ones like the others, the auto-engenderment of absolute life in which they are each time engendered.

The question is, then: how to understand, with regards to each *ego* grasped in its transcendental birth and this way interpreted transcendentally as a Son, the relation in it of its presupposition and of its condition? For its presupposition consists in the auto-engenderment of absolute life which means for each *ego* an absolute 'before', whereas its condition – its condition of Son – implies that this auto-engenderment of life be in the *ego* as that which engenders it in each instant. How does that which is before in a barely thinkable antecedence remain, however, at the same time inside the *ego* as its condition, a condition from which it can neither undo nor cut itself? Are we not separated from what is before us? Wholly before, for the one who comes after, is it not necessarily past, is it not lost? And if this before is life, then has the one who comes after this before of life not already lost life, is he not already dead?

It is here that the brief indications given on the temporality proper to life appear decisive. Any misinterpretation concerning the 'before' which precedes our birth, that is also to say the relation of our birth to

what is itself not born, we will rule out by recalling that the auto-temporalization of absolute life is in essence in-ecstatic. Yet it is precisely as ek-stasis that contemporary phenomenology understands and defines the 'before' in its very possibility. In order for something to phenomenalise itself as a 'before', it is necessary for that or him to whom the 'before' shows itself to retrospectively relate to it as to a before it or him, in such a way that the relation to this 'before' assumes the form of a specific ek-stasis. On the 'outside' of this ek-stasis unveils, on one hand, the horizon of this before, and, inside of this horizon, that which shows itself in it as what was 'before'. Through its ecstatic nature, the horizon of the before is an horizon of irreality: irreal, at the same time, all that shows in it and which, showing in this way, is no more.

It is this double condition that the 'before' of birth eludes insofar as the process of auto-temporalization of life is a radically immanent process in which no horizon ever deploys itself. Nowhere does what is engendered relate to what engenders as to an ecstatic 'before'. How does it relate to it in such a way that what engenders is, however, a before and does not cease to be so? Any form of relation – of Logos – that does not take its possibility from ek-stasis draws it from *pathos*. Thus a feeling [*sentiment*] does not relate ecstatically to itself, but only in its transcendental affectivity and through it. The original temporality in question here is precisely that of its affectivity and of its experiencing itself, which, as well as changing constantly, does not cease. Thus, while the experience [*l'épreuve*] unfolds and that which is experienced occurs as something always experienced anew, this experienced, through its constant changing, is constantly the Self itself, as it that which experiences. The Self is an auto-movement auto-experiencing [*s'auto-éprouvant*], not ceasing to auto-experience in its very movement, in such a way that from this auto-experiencing movement nothing ever detaches itself, nothing slides outside of it, from this auto-experience [*auto-épreuve*] moving from the Self, nor, consequently, from this Self itself. This pathetic dwelling in itself of the Self is its living, stronger than any change, and rendering it possible, its consubstantial present to this living

and obtaining its essence in it – its living Present.

This living *ego*, however, takes its living only from the living of absolute life, as it only takes its auto-temporalization from that of life, from its eternal auto-engenderment. It is because in this auto-engenderment, life – which does not cease increasing by itself in its experiencing itself as moving – never leaves itself that – being carried by this life – the *ego* does not leave itself either, finding itself possible at the same time as an *ego* and as a living [*un vivant*]. The auto-temporalization of absolute life is a phenomenological material law of this life of which the analysis will show astonishing properties, two in particular. On the one hand, unlike the constantly reaffirmed irreversibility of objective time, more essentially, the ecstatic temporality by which temporalization *is* the world, the temporality of absolute life is reversible inasmuch as this temporality temporalizes itself as suffering and as joy, and that, between these fundamental phenomenological tonalities, the passage is made in both directions, in such a way that in this passage each of these two tonalities dwells in the other as its phenomenological condition and thus as its very substance. On the other hand, in this pathetic auto-temporalization of absolute life nothing irreal ever occurs but the movement of an experiencing oneself without end in the reversibility of suffering and joy. Such is the second phenomenological material law of life: in life all is real, just as all reality is held in life.

These two laws of the pathetic auto-temporalization of absolute life permit us to pinpoint further the relation of the *ego* to its absolute 'before', or to this life that engenders the *ego* in each instant. The *ego* only relates to itself in the relation to oneself of absolute life – and it is in this that this life engenders it. In other words: the *ego* only unfolds the constant experiencing itself of its living [*son vivre*] in the pathetic auto-temporalization of life. It follows:

1) Concerning the relation of the *ego* to itself, that it is in-ecstatic and pathetic, that is to say, that in it the living [*le vivre*] is omni-real, at once intact and global, and, by this condition alone, possible as a living. In-ecstatic means in particular that the living *ego* never relates to

itself in a memory or in the forgotten – but only in this absolute Forgotten [*Oubli*] which means, in principle, the impossibility of all memory, the Immemorial [*l'Immémorial*]. Memory is not a category of ipseity. The living *ego* has neither past, nor present, nor future.

2) Concerning the relation of the *ego* to life, which is our ultimate question, this relation is inscribed in the *ego* itself inasmuch as it relates to itself, as singular Self, only in the relation to oneself of absolute life. It is this 'in' which is the problem, which is birth. This 'in' is supplied by the relation of absolute life to itself, since it is the latter which, joining itself, joins the *ego* to the *ego* itself, and, by the same token, joins the *ego* to life itself, since the *ego* joins to itself only as life joins to itself. This relation to oneself, as relation to life, as relation of life to itself, obtaining its essence in the latter, is therefore at once in-ecstatic and pathetic. 'In' life the *ego* does not relate to any ecstatic 'before', but it is pathetically and in this way alone that this *ego* relates to the Before [*l'Avant*] of life. Consequently we find this *pathos* determined. It is the *pathos* of that which, experiencing itself, experiences the feeling of experience [*éprouve l'épreuve*] of itself, of absolute life, in such a way that its radical passivity towards itself is its radical passivity towards life; the radical passivity of life towards oneself becomes, in its ipseization and in the singularity of the latter, the radical passivity of the *ego* with respect to itself. This mode of passivity is the most constant feature of any life stemming from a birth, of a life such as ours. The condition of the *ego* is the pathos of its presupposition. The life of the transcendental *ego* is the phenomenology of its birth.

Translated by Andrew Sackin-Poll.

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*Pli* 28 (2017) 140-154

# The Unity of Experience

***ROLAND VASCHALDE***

The aim of this work, which is an extension of our research published in *À l'Orient de Michel Henry*,[1] is to examine a concept first - explicitly mentioned by Michel Henry in *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps*,[2] which we consider has been insufficiently underlined by commentators: the "unity of experience". We personally think it is not only a central and essential element in Henry's theoretical construction but also one of the richest in view of its possible amplification that would allow the application of material phenomenology beyond the fields included in all his published works. It will be useful open this path by referring to the philosophical context in which it appeared.

This notion belongs to the founding and definitive theoretical approach that Michel Henry presented in his very first work, *L'essence de la manifestation*,[3] and which he called "ontological monism". This

[1] Vaschalde, R, *À l'Orient de Michel Henry* (Paris: Ed. Orizons, 2014).
[2] Michel Henry, *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps* (Paris: PUF, 1965); English translation, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, trans. by G.J. Etzkorn (The Haguw: Marinus Nijhoff, 1975) .
[3] Henry, M., *L'essence de la manifestation* (Paris: PUF, 1963) ; English translation, *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. by G.J. Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973).

expression applies to the radical criticism he unremittingly addressed to practically all the western philosophical tradition from its Greek origin to historical phenomenology established by Husserl: the fact of considering transcendence, the distanciation from the self, as the only mode of manifestation of everything, whether it belongs to the order of the world or to subjective interiority. Consequently, all knowledge is entirely reduced to a relationship opposing subject and ob-ject, which only makes possible the conditions of its own appearance and generates a series of recurrent distinctions as much in the description of the activities of our daily existence as in the history of metaphysics: inside and outside, close and far, the self and the world, etc., which are only particular forms of this first opposition.

Therefore, this form of revelation, according to the intuition that properly defines henryan thought, is precisely incapable of accounting for the particular experience that defines us as living beings. This experience resides in the capacity of immediate self-affection, that is, a relation of absolute immanence, denying any distance that would create an ontological separation, which is, moreover, literally unthinkable in the structure of ipseity of life which reveals myself in the very process of its own happening. Consequently, we have to insist on the inability of transcendence to found itself, as its movement towards the Outside cannot exist without this indivisible link to itself that ultimately constitutes it and without which the second constitution of the world would be impossible. This thesis founds the essential thesis according to which transcendence and immanence are not in a relation of strict opposition but rather in a genealogical relation. The latter making the former possible by establishing its own flesh – that is, the way it is given to itself – before any projection towards the outside that the transcendent forms of space and time realize.

In 1947 Michel Henry, still a young man, met Martin Heidegger in his house in the Black Forest accompanied by Jean Beaufret and Henri Birault. The German philosopher very concretely expounded the foundations of his thought: it is only by a habit of language, he said, that

leads us to affirm that this book "touches" the table. In reality, the book and the table have never been separated; they are both indistinctly parts of the world. As none of them have any inside, neither can they have any outside and consequently cannot be related to each other. It is quite different for my hand, which I now lay on the table. I can say it "touches" the table, this wooden surface, for even if there is obviously no physical distance between them, they are nevertheless separated by a transcendental distance which allows me to feel that the table is different from myself, like an ob-ject which stands on the uniform background of the world, thus allowing me to discover it. And what we call subjectivity is entirely based on this transcendence which opens us to the world by putting it at a distance, allowing us to percieve what appears in this founding distance that links the two elements of the classical subject-object relation on the background of their previous phenomenological opposition.

Although he was very young, Henry already possessed his own categories. He certainly admired the first part of the demonstration, but he nevertheless had his own personal conception of subjectivity. The question that interested him – *his* question, which was essential – was the following: what is this power – he said later on, this "arch-power" – that gives my hand to itself, so that it can then be in contact with something else?

This questioning can be found in Michel Henry's work and it is not surprising to find it in his analysis concerning the body – rigorously understood as a subjective body – which allows him to show to what extent a radical phenomenological approach also and primarily concerns the most directly concrete aspect of our daily existence. We will thus interrogate the theme of the senses, which stands at the centre of our relation to the world; in particular, we will interrogate the profound significance of a sentence from *Incarnation*, according to which "every sense is a sense of remoteness," later explicated:

> [A]ll our senses throw us outside, so that everything we feel is always felt outside ourselves, different from the power which

> feels it insofar as such power is that of separation, of the ekstatical openness of the world.[4]

It concerns us, more precisely, to try and define the reality of this 'remoteness' beyond the primary evidence of this formulation, which belongs to a thesis common to all major phenomenological philosophers, from Husserl to Henry himself, who consider each of our senses as a concrete modality of intentionality in the given construction of the world.

First examined in this light, this sentence apparently expresses an obvious truth: it seems, indeed, that the exercise of our senses allows us to apprehend the outside world and constantly move in it according to the sense datum we get through them. For they serve as an interface between our inner reality and an exterior one, even if it is admitted that the latter cannot be absolutely known independently from the process of its constitution. But maybe we should analyse further the relativity of this so-called exteriority to try and propose a quite different approach from that of the original thesis.

If we consider as reliable Henry's theses of the genealogy of the forms of manifestation and that of the unity of experience, including their most ultimate consequences, then we may be led to a radical correction of the our earlier expression and maintain now, on the contrary, that "no sense is a sense of remoteness"! Let us specify this thought by considering more precisely possible misinterpretations made of his criticism of ontological monism and his strong affirmation of a dualism, successively qualified as ontological, then phenomenological. Henry's correction is decisive insofar it definitely recalls the unsurpassable event of the unity of the experience, which is clearly expressed in the following passage:

> Ontological dualism does not install a kind of scission in the heart of the being, under the form of separation of the self and things, of subjectivity and the universe […] it is, on the contrary […] what brings to life for us the *proximity* of things

[4] Henry, M., *Incarnation: Une philosophie de la chair* (Paris : Ed. du Seuil, 2000), pp. 160-161.

> within an *absolute proximity*. The idea of duality has a very special value when it intervenes to characterise the ultimate structures of *being*; it no longer means […] a duality of two terms […] but rather the absence of any duality, for it makes the experience possible, as experience is always unity […] which is the unity of life and of the transcendent being.[5]

On the basis of these affirmations and of the examination of the very experience they invite us to make, we are allowed to justify our apparently heretical proposition that in fact finds its foundation in a strictly phenomenological reading of the reality of our experience. For instance, let us consider the fact of hearing from inside my room, the song of a bird coming from the 'distant' forest. As an exact confirmation of Henry's analysis, which we have just quoted, this event, far from being an experience of separation is, on the contrary, an experience which belongs to the unity and inseparability between myself and this song, of which the mind, relying upon the structure of transcendent representation, claims that it comes to us from elsewhere. The fundamental category of the unity of the experience thus surpasses in the same moment through which it poses it, the perfectly scandalous oxymoron, from the perspective of reason, of a distance which brings nearer – of a separation which brings back to the centre of every possible manifestation – where this is always and already resolved in an ontological proximity which is rather definitively an irreducible inseparability.

Thus, in an extraordinary *volte face*, we must maintain that it is monism which demands to establish a separation within our comprehension of the being, whereas, if it is well understood, owing to what the category of the unity of the experience tells us, phenomenological dualism is, on the contrary, the only approach capable of founding a philosophical theory in agreement with the data given by experience such as we live them within the immanent feeling from which they cannot be separated. And what is true of the spatial dimension of givenness must also apply to its temporal dimension as far as they share

[5] Henry, M., *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps*, pp. 161-162 (my emphasis)

the same ekstatic structure of revelation. After attending a seminar where Henry had the opportunity to speak with Jean-Pierre Changeux, who was then at the top of his reputation after the publication of *L'homme neuronal*,[6] he told us that he could not make him understand his own transcendental comprehension of temporality. For the neurobiologist, temporality originates in topological distanciations and biochemical alteration in the relation between neuronal networks, which account for gap between recent and older memories. This is in fact a naïve yet sophisticated version of ontological monism, which attributes only to spatiality the power of founding the sudden occurrence of the phenomenological properties of any revelation, for example, temporality as such. How to understand, then, that memory is such only as past that is present – without which we would have only a pure and simple disappearance – and that this implies the perennity of a non-temporal presence upon the foundation of which modifications or eventual distortions may or may not occur? This absolute *nunc* – as there is an absolute *hic* for space – has a name: it is the self of life thought in the radicality of its founding character as the unifying principle of experience. In the same way as I cannot be separated from the world, I certainly cannot be separated from myself in a situation of forgetfulness, which would also be a loss of myself, a separation from myself.[7] Forgetting or remembering myself is only possible on the same foundation of a presence that inhabits them without fail.

The evocation of the subjective nature of self-affected flesh made by Michel Henry may constitute a way of insisting upon the concrete reality that characterizes all his analyses, the abstraction of which is only

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[6] Jean-Pierre Changeux, *L'homme neuronal* (Paris: Fayard, 1983) ; English translation, *Neuronal Man : The Biology of Mind*, trans. by Laurence Garey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[7] We have tried to apply these theses to Alzheimer's disease in an article "Oubli de soi, oubli de la vie: approche phénoménologique de la maladie d'Alzheimer'", in *A felicidade na fenomenologia da vida: colóquio internacional Michel Henry*, (Centro de filosofia da Universidade de Lisboa, 2006); German translation: 'Selbstvergessen und vergessen(d)es Leben : eine phänomenologische Betrachtung der Alzheimerkrankheit', Psycho-Logik, 3, (2008).

apparent. Such is the case with the importance of the idea of "*body-propriation*" which appears, for instance, in *La barbarie*,[8] which we will consider as an avatar of the analyses of *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps* that we have just quoted. Then of Marx's theses on the non-existence of brute nature, which is always transformed by the laborious activity of human generations which have been active not to interpret the world but to transform it in view of their own survival. For this is basically the true meaning of Marx's XIth thesis on Feuerbach[9] that states "philosophers have only interpreted the world," whereas "what matters is to transform it." What is presented here is not a revolutionary project that should be realized but rather the expression of a meta-historical truth that has its source in the phenomenological structure constitutive of individual living beings. Such a transformation must not be understood first as a political injunction but as a pure and simple phenomenological reading of the reality of the history of humans who are permanently involved in a transformative praxis of reality founded on the exercise of the powers of a subjective body tormented by vital and imperious needs and desires. In the effort made to answer these desires and satisfy their demands, each individual has always marked the world with his stamp through his work, which is, before being a particular cog within a larger economic universe, first and essentially the practical expression of his corporeal subjectivity. So that, as it had already been shown by the reexamination of the theme of transcendental deduction of the categories elaborated by Maine de Biran[10], what seems to be objective determinations of the outside world as such appears in reality to borrow their true meaning from the subjective life, which traverses the categories in a manner as powerful as unperceived. This rock is heavy only through the effort made by arms that try to move it and this weight cannot possibly exist anywhere else, for example, in an 'objective' characteristic that a technical device – a scale – could register to prove it. "Because in my flesh I am the life of my

[8] Henry, M., *La barbarie* (Paris: Grasset, 1987 ; PUF, 2001) ; English translation, *Barbarism*, trans. by Scott Davidson (New York : Continuum international, 2012)
[9] Karl Marx, *L'idéologie allemande*, (Paris: Édition sociales, 1970), p. 142.
[10] Henry, M., *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps*, pp. 39-41.

organic body, I am also the world. It is in this original and radical sense that the world is the-world-of-life, a *lebenswelt*."[11]

In a kind of repetition of the genealogy of the structures of revelation, which already established the primacy of immanence over a transcendence that it made possible, we can see now the constitution of the world originating in a practical subjectivity without which it would be nothing but an abstract entity deprived of a self and reduced to the mere description that a series of mathematical algorithms could make. Contrary to what is constantly presented to us as the evidence of 'common sense' and the dominant discourse of modern techno-science, this purely exterior world, which only accessible through the use of more and more sophisticated devices, is in fact the most obscure, the most susceptible to engender doubt as well as questioning, and the least immediately known. The radically phenomenological husserlian thesis arguing that the Earth does not move is adopted by Henry, who repeats it in a detailed manner in *La barbarie*, of which it is the cardinal figure. There really are two orders of truth which are opposed and absolutely irreconcilable: (1) the truth of life, the only valid one, for it is the only one of which we have the immediate and undeniable experience – for instance that the earth is motionless – and (2) the purely abstract truth of science which at heart does not concern us at all as living beings – the earth is this celestial body which rotates about its axis and about the sun at an approximate speed of 30 km per second. The former constitutes actual reality, the latter, founded in and by transcendent vision, which traverses it, establishes irreality as such and the appearance of exteriority from which it is inseparable. This is radically expressed by the decisive henryan thesis of the "double givenness" already present in his analyses in *Marx* dedicated to the status of representations and, again, confirmed in the later *Phénomenologie matérielle.*[12] This is why we must quote at length the first of those occurences concerning the problematic of impression and its resolute opposition to the husserlian thesis and which sounds like a synthetic recapitulation of the themes we have been exploring from the

[11] Henry, M., *Incarnation*, p. 216.
[12] Henry, M., *Phénomenologie matérielle* (Paris : Gallimard, 1976).

start:

> Everything is transcendent, but transcendence is first of all, in itself, non-transcendent. All that is given to us, in a way, is given twice. The first giving is mysterious […] It is a certain giving and a certain datum so that, here, the mode of giving is itself what is given; affectivity is equally the mode of giving of the impression and its impressional content – trancendental in a radical and autonomous sense. And this first datum, always already given and presupposed, is given a second time in the intentionality and by itself, as a *transcendent and unreal thing, as its opposite*. Transcendental, that is to say intentional, phenomenology is thoroughly reduced to the description of this second giving in the analysis of its essential modes and of the various types of noeses and the corresponding noemata. But it has left aside the first giving that it constantly presupposes.[13]

The first giving is a presentation, where 'presentation' means that something is held in presence. The second one is a re-presentation which occurs under the form of a representation understood as mere representation, that is to say, the replacement of reality by its mental translation that is affected by the transcendent characteristics, which are inherent to it: irrreality, distancing and objectivation. If we take again the particular example of a heard song, then the second giving will almost immediately cover the first one under multiple given levels of meaning and explication: this sound is, more precisely, a bird's song, this bird is a nightingale, and this nightingale is more precisely perched in one of these trees I perceive from my window, etc. But what can we say, then, about the first giving and must we consider it as a rudimentary and literally in-significant stratum or even as a pure construction of the mind?

This way of considering the issue commonly advanced by the various kinds of intentional theory is founded upon a double abstraction in the form of double forgetting. As we have already underlined, what is

[13] Ibid, p. 26 (my emphasis).

initially given is not the distinct existence of some individualised sound that occupies a point in the temporal flux and which will only take its true meaning only in relation to other past or future elements. Not this sound, then that one, then yet another one, but rather the whole of an experience already complete in itself; not this discrete sound but a 'hearing-a-sound'. An experience that we have qualified as unified and where we find indissociably united in the same presence that *re*-presentation will ultimately and secondarily separate into the description of a subject hearing a supposedly distant song. In the experience itself, there is, precisely, never any distance. This bird's song 'coming from' this little wood is no further from me than the sound of my pen on the paper that registers this sentence. And the sound of this pen itself is never separated / separable from the experience that I have of it, or rather, that I am. I never need, at any moment, to leave myself in order to meet, afterwards, a world that would be exterior.

Exteriority is a secondary and not founding characteristic that occurs only as the indice of a fall, which makes us pass from the fullness of presence into the irreality infinite dispersion of mundane representations. And this fall is inevitable. It is not the result of any empirical attitude. This is why going out of the garden of Eden is not the consequence of any kind of sin but the sin itself or, to be even more precise, the belief in the reality of this sin, whereas it is much more an essential necessity inscribed in the very structure of the two forms of manifestation which are those of being and stand both in a genealogical relation of foundation: immanence and transcendence. Thus, this fall is not really a fall, for the exteriority of this ek-stasis where we believe the substance of reality was lost, is Unreality as such, the fundamental illusion well denounced by the enigmatic and profound formula at the heart of buddhist thought according to which "form is emptiness and emptiness is form."[14] We cannot, at any moment, lose ourselves or lose 'the world', because Presence never ceases being Presence and no separation can occur within it in any other way than in the purely illusory form of exteriority

[14] Tanahashi, Kazuaki. *The Heart Sutra: A Comprehensive Guide to the Classic of Mahayana Buddhism* (Shambhala Publications: Colorado, 2015).

produced by transcendence. How could we be separated from being, even for a single moment, without collapsing into an absolute nothingness from which we could only come back by some magical operation? This is impossible and is contradicted by the unbreakable character of the self-affection that makes life what it is and founds its ipseity, which, prior to the fragile, uncertain, and impermanent expression of this in the psychological ego, is impossible to undo.

The fact this primary giving is thus, on the contrary, the most real of any reality, that is, a full Presence at the heart of every presence, gives its particular sense to the name Henry finally adopted to express his own thought. His philosophy is unquestionably a 'material phenomenology' because what it has to examine as its primordial and privileged 'object' is not the obscurity of an empty form expecting from outside a filling up providing content and sense, but the very fullness of what we feel in the unitary experience in which everything and ourselves appear indissolubly present. Consequently, it stands apart from all the thoughts that he considered as 'speculative', which certainly was for him the most debilitating reproach. And the reference to the category of the unity of experience has seemed to us particularly relevant both as an example of this concrete character and as a criterion for differentiating this from abstract philosophies forgetful of their roots in living experience. Now we still may have to question ourselves about the theme of the constitution of the world in order to answer some possible objections and questions.

As the world is a constituted reality, we may have to raise questions about what 'authority' elaborates this constitution and about the way this elaboration proceeds: does not a reference to this constitution contradict the affirmed unity of reality? Would not such a reference be a way of subrepticiously reintroducing a purely idealistic or even metaphysical element, like the classical *subjectum*, into phenomenological analysis? Is this not all the more so if we have a critical look at the terminology sometimes used to deal with this instance, such as 'absolute', 'eternal', 'infinite'? As legitimate as these questions may appear, all these objections are based on a superficial reading of the henryan thesis upon

which is cast the shadow of an interpretation still marked by the dominance of the ontico-ontological approach and its related dualism. We will first answer the last of these remarks.

When they are used to describe the essence of concrete subjectivity the words 'absolute', 'eternity', and 'infinitude',[15] are not at all meant to designate anything beyond experience – nor in any way to attribute any metaphysical significance to this is properly and rigorously impossible; rather, their function is to constantly remind us, endlessly tempted by the illusion of the outside reality of the world, that this founding instance does not belong in any way to those categories such as, for example, to the quantifiable dimensions of space and time that structure the deployment of the world. These terms are used to try and express, as much as possible, an order of reality inaccessible to any discourse about worldly things, which must necessarily use the transcendent categories that make them possible. The sense of these terms is strictly phenomenological; they designate the way in which life constantly feels itself in a mode of absolute presence, which does not know ecstatic temporality.

But what, then, do we mean by these necessarily metaphorical adjectives? What is this naturing instance that would be constantly at work in what is natured without ever being assimilated to it, so that it would be right to affirm that this subjective praxis is simultaneously present in the world without belonging to the world nor finding its origin there?

A spontaneous and naïvely critical answer – are we not, indeed, the heirs of the masters of suspicion (Marx, Nietzsche, Freud)? – will attribute to such expressions no other value than that of a mere hypostasis, and, on the contrary, insist on the obviously finite character of this constitutive reality. Indeed, such an answer only discovers a particular aspect of the world, such and such object, or even a part of an object, in direct relation to the attention exercised by one or more of our

[15] These adjectives are recurrent in *L'essence de la manifestation*, op. cit. to define the qualities of original subjectivity.

senses, which is itself, moreover, more or less affected by the integrity or non-integrity of its 'physical' support. Does not the degradation of the body due to illness or old age engender as immediately as obviously a concomitant restriction of our worldly horizon and of the clarity of its content? This remark seems to be indisputable if we limit the field of study to empirical and worldly matters and attribute no significance to the transcendental instance, that is to say, precisely, not to take seriously the analysis establishing the above thesis of the constitution of reality. Considering the concrete experience that is the effective praxis of this naturing power, it leads to an inextricable confusion of two orders of reality, for example, our eye and our sight. As an organ and part of the objective body – examined by the ophtalmologist and dissected by the pathologist – our eye occupies a very restricted place in the physical universe. It is limited by its shape and can suffer from serious deficiencies that may lead to its complete extinction. Our sight, on the contrary, escapes such restraints. Our vision never has any peripheral border as a replica of the limits of the organ whose function is to produce it. Vision has nothing in common with the remarkably modest aspect of our eye; it is, in principle, potentially unlimited. Any limit of the eye may be, quantitatively speaking, diminished or lost as well as restored or increased as long as operations or adequate technical devices intervene to correct changes or deficiencies of the physical organ. A surgical intervention, for example, or the use of a microscope or a telescope, modifies the extension of the effective field of our eye, but they neither create nor affect our power of vision as such. Vision remains what it is throughout any changes occurring in its function and the empirical fluctuations of its existence.

We have just said that our vision is 'potentially' unlimited. This reference to the concept of potentiality that Michel Henry used as the very title of the conclusion of his great work *Généalogie de la psychanalyse*[16] is meant to indicate precisely how such transcendental

[16] Henry, M., *Généalogie de la psychanalyse* (Paris: PUF, 1985); English translation, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Douglas Brick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

power, which is in reality a particular mode of pure consciousness, cannot be restricted to a description that borrows its terminology applied to worldly forms. Insofar as phenomenological matter, it constitutes the self-affective impressional foundation of our lives upon and by which is revealed, under the multiple and changing forms that it assumes without cease, all the worldly manifestations that our senses and our mental life give to us under the auspices of time and space that we have naïvely taken at their face value, that is to say, as the totality of reality itself. What is thereby forgotten is the 'lost beginning' – the very subtitle of Henry's book we have just mentioned – that is nothing less than the primordial Emptiness that can give form to every phenomenon without ever getting lost in them. This subjectivity as a precondition to the birth of the ego, that nothing can coerce, which is not pure emptiness understood in a common sense, but the unbreakable phenomenological self-affection as the very surge of Appearance as such which, thus, conditions every future appearance.[17] This original phenomenality that Henry calls 'life' and Buddhism, according to its various traditions, calls 'pure conscience' or 'primary emptiness' is, by its very nature, an absolute vastness, because, without ever been diminished, it accepts in itself all that occurs to the being understood as Appearance. By nature it is absolute love and compassion as it is pure Welcome, which endlessly donates itself in the unknown of its givenness, so that we can see the innumerable multitude of sensible appearances and mental events that monopolize our attention projected on the screen of the worldly horizon. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, let us underline that this phenomenological approach totally forbids a mistake too often made, which touches as much upon Henry's thought as upon Buddhism. This potentiality, this vacuity, does not designate a void, an absence, but, on the contrary, the perfect plenitude of life as impressional matter, which, in principle, escapes from the finitude of objectification and from intentional

[17] It would be relevant, in the light of these data, to read again the various types of the maternal archetype present in most major spiritual traditions under different names: the Shekina, Mary, the androgynous or feminine aspects of Avalokiteshvara.

regard, that is, the immanence of this non-worldly content of subjectivity.

After these analyses, what could first seem to be an irresolvable dilemma between the monistic and dualistic options understood as opposed approaches to the interpretation of reality could be, instead, subsumed in this phenomenologically ultimate category of the unity of experience. We have shown this in the presentation of the essential henryan thesis of double givenness, which very likely gives its full signification to the title of 'material phenomenology' Henry chose to designate the whole of his work. Indeed, it allows us to understand how everything is given to us in one and the same life that is absolute Appearance in which everything that appears can occur. This even applies to ek-stasis itself as the form of unrealisation, according to which life represents itself under the semblance of a distance that is never anything but an experience of thought always and already denied by our presence, which is very much our 'presence-to-the-world' without any distance between the two terms. In other words, that no exteriority – this distant forest from which a nightingale's repeated call reaches our ears – ever occurs except upon the prior background of the absolute proximity that constitutes the very hearing of this bird song. A hearing that is impossible to dissociate from the experience we have of it in the form of an inner experience thus named as "a bird's song" in order to distinguish it from other modes of consciousness, where each and every one of them expresses so many concrete forms taken by this impressional matter that is the flesh of our lives.

Translated by Robert Palacin