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Seeking the Sabbath of Life:
Figuring the Theological Self after Michel Henry

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ABSTRACT

This thesis introduces and examines the work of French philosopher Michel Henry with particular focus on his phenomenological-theological analyses of the self. Given its thematic emphasis, the thesis incorporates several interlocutors in addition to Henry: primarily Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and St. Augustine but also Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Yves Lacoste and Dominique Janicaud. Revolving around the question of the self, the thesis maintains that Henry elucidates a peculiar and ultimately problematic theory of the self—a duplicitous self bifurcated between interior and exterior fields of display. While appreciating Henry’s attempt to reconstitute the interior self in relation to God, we argue he ultimately disqualifies the utility of the exterior body in the world; to overcome this imbalance we employ key insights from St. Augustine’s “phenomenology of the self,” drawing especially on his more mature works, *De Trinitate*, *City of God* and the *Confessions*.

The first chapter offers broad context to the thesis as a whole by specifying what constitutes phenomenology as a line of inquiry, the debate surrounding the “theological turn” introduced by Dominique Janicaud in the 1990s and a constructive proposal for a rapprochement between phenomenology and theology. Chapter two determines Henry’s place in the phenomenological tradition, bringing to light his critical departure from both Heidegger and Husserl. Heidegger’s analytic of being-in-the-world discloses how human existence is co-emergent with the exterior (i.e. ecstatic) field of the world. Husserl’s focus on the intentional life of the ego suggests that consciousness is like a “lighthouse” that illuminates objects before its gaze. From Henry’s perspective, both Heidegger and Husserl advance a self shaped entirely by the exterior world and its temporal horizon. To counter the singular focus on exteriority, Henry does not deny exteriority but attends to the possibility of a site of pure interiority, secure and complete in its transcendental self-presence and thus disengaged from the exterior horizon of the world.

Chapters three and four critically elaborate Henry’s duplicitous self from a theological point of view. Interrogating Henry’s triptych on Christianity (*C’est moi la vérité*, 1996; *Incarnation, une philosophie de la chair*, 2000; and *Paroles du Christ*, 2002), we see that the self is structured a duplicity or two-sidedness. Chapter three’s main premise is that the interior ego is manifest internal to itself apart from exterior horizon of temporality. Prior to the temporal opening of the world, Henry articulates a self who appears in non-temporal or “acosmic” union with divine life. Joined together in perfect unity by a subjective structure called “auto-affection,” the interior self and God form a fully-realized “monism,” a parousaic presence that both eliminates the Creator-creature distinction and promotes escapism from the world.

Chapter four confirms this thesis with regard to Henry's richly textured considerations of the body.

Chapters five and six proceed to show a constructive way beyond Henry's duplicitous self. Over against Henry, the thesis elaborates an eschatological conception of the self we call the "porous self." Ordered by the eschatological structure of "seeking," the porous self takes as its principal interlocutor St. Augustine, however, insights from Marion, Lacoste, Husserl and Heidegger are employed. This thesis figures a self that does not split, but integrates, the interior and exterior fields of display within the absolute horizon of the *parousia* or eternal Sabbath to come. Chapter five discusses the temporal nature of faith nurtured by the eucharist and the chapter six highlights the importance of the body in view of the ecclesial, sacramental and resurrection bodies. An exercise in constructive philosophical theology, this thesis figures the self over against Henry's duplicitous self, and in so doing, integrates interiority more deeply with exteriority in a manner that accounts for (1) the temporal nature of the body in the world and (2) the eschatological distance between the self and God.

DECLARATION

I composed this thesis, the work is my own. No part of this thesis has been submitted or any other degree or qualificati

Name: _____ Date:

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Introduction

Michel Henry (1922-2002) is perhaps one of the most eclectic and prolific philosophers to appear in France following the cultural and social upheaval of World War II. Publishing a two volume tome exceeding 1,000 pages entitled simply the *L'essence de la manifestation* in 1963, and following it up with several significant cross-disciplinary studies in the course of a long career, his current popularity in France shows no signs of waning and the reception of his work in the English-speaking world is steadily advancing among theologians and philosophers. Throughout his career he declined several invitations to take up prestigious posts at the Sorbonne, opting instead to spend his entire career working quietly, and often in isolation, at the University of Montpellier in the south of France. It is no surprise, then, that his philosophical style mounts a meticulous critique of standard habits of thinking, typically forsaking the trends of the day in a bid to reach an original and formidable moment in not only the phenomenological tradition but also in the history of Western philosophical discourse and philosophy of religion, making his work a major force to reckon with both in philosophy and theology.

Henry was principally a philosopher in the phenomenological tradition, but he also incorporated important theological motifs within his work. The trajectory of Henry's thought originates with a unique and radical phenomenological articulation of transcendental life and culminates with an explicitly theological thematization of the "arch-transcendental" truth manifest in the New Testament that builds on and advances from his earlier work. Endeavouring to set phenomenology on new footing in his widely-read *L'essence de la manifestation*, and exhibiting already in that text a markedly theological sensibility, Henry consistently engaged throughout his career

with the intellectual tradition Husserl inaugurated. Not so much a phenomenologist under the spell of Husserl or Heidegger but an imaginative philosopher who privileges the conceptual organon of phenomenology, Henry treated multiple topics of study on the basis of phenomenological inquiry from the 1970s up through the 1990s. Even while penning four novels, Henry critically engaged with, and advanced debate in, topics in political theory, cultural critique, art, psychoanalysis and provided original readings of figures such as Marx, Main de Biran, Spinoza, Hegel and Husserl himself. At every stage Henry reaffirmed his commitment to ordering all intellectual inquiry by the philosophical techniques born from his critical rearticulation of the Husserlian subject, and this is dramatically punctuated in his phenomenological treatment of Christianity developed in a final trilogy from 1996 to 2002.

Adopting the code name “Kant” during the French Resistance in WW II,¹ he devoted those precarious years to understanding Kant’s powerful transcendental architectonic only to replace it with a more refined phenomenological alternative years later. Not satisfied with Kant early on, then, it was after the war he discovered the philosopher’s harvest to be had in the confrontation with Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations*. This book provoked in him *grande emotion*² and opened his eyes to the rich possibilities for renewing transcendental philosophy that lay dormant in Husserl. Recognizing that the transcendental tradition constituted a key breakthrough in the history of philosophy, Henry advanced a thesis holding within it what he thought was a much needed corrective to that tradition: the secret of pure immanence given to a subject that is “not of this world.” There is no question here that Henry’s work gave

¹ Michel Henry, *Auto-donation: entretiens et conférences* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2004), 247-48.

² Michel Henry, *Entretiens* (Paris: Editions Sulliver, 2007), 16.

philosophical expression to a concrete, historical situation in which a young man's life was consecrated, for a short time, to secretive reconnaissance missions undertaken during the underground *La Résistance Française*: the secret of life itself is manifest, not as a political and social force witnessed to in and ordered by the world, but as a living underground current within my soul. And such an underground current reveals itself as a living feeling of myself that can never become thematized as a visible object in the world. Once I institute a withdrawal from the world, interiority appears as a living auto-affection, a secretive and nocturnal (i.e. "underground") source in which there is no exteriority, no outside and no world involved, a pure subjective life that brings to light the transcendental root at the base of all experience.

Henry advances into explicitly theological terrain in his final works, where a theological distinction between the interior and exterior domains of selfhood is magnificently detailed. The structure of the transcendental self is originally theological in substance inasmuch as the integrity of interior self-awareness suffuse with itself holds another secret: that it is held together by God, and once revealed, opens up an interior self-awareness pervaded by the essence of divine life—a transcendental subject reflecting what Rudolf Bernet describes as a thickly "baroque" expression of Christian philosophical theology.³ Henry insists that the inner content of Christianity expressed in a New Testament idiom, one Christological in aesthetic and deeply Johannine in sensibility, is able to illuminate with overwhelming power the secret and invisible joy of sharing in an eternal Sonship through which God enables me to undergo myself as myself. It is this theological turn that figures the

³ Rudolf Bernet, "Christianity and Philosophy," *Continental Philosophy Review* 32 (1999): 325-42, reference on 339.

invisible manifestation of God inside me, and the conceptual difficulties to which it gives rise, that consist of the principal content to which we shall attend throughout this dissertation, albeit never in isolation from the larger context of Henry's eclectic work. We sketch, in what follows, the contextual and constructive aspects of the dissertation and then outline the prospective chapters.

Why is Henry significant for theological reflection on the self? To begin, Henry works between phenomenology and theology in such a way that they mutually engage by exchanging resources and intertwining vocabulary. To arrange philosophy and theology within a single transcendental style of reflection, as Henry does, is to unify them around thematic of the self. This is, of course, an intellectually dubious strategy. To figure the self after Henry is to situate the self within a space between philosophy and theology, and yet, this becomes space seems to move in and out of the long shadow of modernity stretching back principally to post-Kantian reflections on the transcendental "I" and secondarily to the post-Cartesian *cogito*.

Evident most emphatically in the valorisation of the subject, the philosophical tradition of modernity casts the dark cloud of egoism or solipsism over any thinker who might be seduced by its intellectual and spiritual pathos. Henry elucidates the subject's direct relation with itself, an interior experience that opens up an apodictic self-revelation of life manifest as a subjective unity at the ground of all experience. Some have accused Henry to have alighted upon, with unprecedented rigor, a sovereign, self-legislating subject, one that dictates in advance how and when the world may appear and on what conditions the other subject shall become a meaningful experience for me, not least how God may appear. This is why Michel Haar has recently compared Henry's transcendental self to a metaphysical subject

explicitly inscribed within the onto-theological trajectory originating with Descartes and proceeding up through Kant and reinforced in great detail by Husserl.⁴ There is no question Henry figures the self explicitly within a post-Kantian context, however, Henry also incorporates theological resources that prioritize the spirituality of a contemplative self before God (*coram Deo*), a Western theological concept of the self stretching back at least to St. Augustine's conspicuous turn inward in the *Confessions*. Henry is thus important for theological reflection on the self because he discusses the contemporary philosophical problem of the self in tandem with a strong theological critique of the self-subsisting, sovereign "I."

While intending to challenge a hasty condemnation of the valorisation of the sovereign subject that befalls Henry's transcendental self, this dissertation explores constructive directions the self can take after Henry. To count as a "self" in the first place, Henry insists, God must be there as that ineliminable primitive power that gives rise to "me" in my self-presence: continually born of God, I am joined to myself in and through my abiding and indestructible unity with God. This dissertation engages such key theological breakthroughs that Henry orchestrates with great imaginative force and philosophical depth—only to construct, over against Henry a self who comes to himself in a pilgrimage through the world undertaken in faith; this, too, a theological self but one thematized explicitly from an eschatological point of view. A charitable and sympathetic reading of Henry appreciates the creative manner by which a phenomenological description of the self in unity with God is given expression in his last works on Christianity. To break from Henry is not abandon the basic Christian theological economy in which he situates the self.

⁴ Michel Haar, *La philosophie française entre phénoménologie et métaphysique* (Paris: PUF, 1999), 139.

Rather, it is to challenge the narrow scope of such an economy and reaffirm in fresh and subtle ways the eschatological directionality of the self.

Henry is important for reflection on the self for another reason. He challenges and provokes his readers into rethinking the self apart from the visible disclosure of the world: I am, according to Henry, a living soul the world can neither accept nor recognize, for my display is immeasurable by the standard of the world. Consequently, the course his work proceeds down gives to theology motivation and skills for understanding more fully how God's self-revelation engenders a mystical subjective ground that is juxtaposed with the world's light, and this for Christological reasons: "Having come among his own, they did not recognize him" (John 1.11). As a strategy for thinking about the absolute, Henry's work provides an opportunity both for phenomenology and theology together to explore the interior space of the soul as it lay bare under the gaze of God as well as the "subjective feel" of the body and importance of affection and feeling as theological attunements nourished by the soul in faith.

While the literature on Henry continues apace in French-speaking literature, there is an opportunity here to bring to light resources in Henry that may contribute to the ongoing conversation taking place between phenomenology and theology and continental philosophy of religion broadly conceived as it continues to gain traction in the English-speaking world. Along with figures like Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Yves Lacoste and Jean-Louis Chrétien, Henry is a thinker whose ascension in the literature proves that he has struck a chord, that he has evoked and continues to evoke creative debate that can engender fresh thinking on traditional theological discourse.

Henry's position is not without problems, as noted above. Intended as a constructive study that does not merely conduct a survey of, or serve as commentary upon Henry, this dissertation carefully brings to light and then attempts to surpass two problems that bedevil Henry's project at its most basic level: the inability to account for the ineluctably *temporal* and *bodily* states of the self. This dissertation intends to show that his narrative of the self remains shut up inside itself and enunciates a interior disposition that is (1) self-present and without relation to the temporal streaming of the world and (2) a purely interior subjective body and without relation to the exterior objective body in the world. Hence this dissertation takes temporality and the body as entry points into the lived-structure of the eschatological self. In critical dialogue Henry this dissertation therefore attempts to explicate a theological self that does not split, but integrates, the interior and exterior domains (as spatial metaphors) from an eschatological point of view, and this to overcome an escapist mood or "non-temporal" other-worldliness to which Henry's bifurcated self is liable. The eschatological self so understood, in contrast to Henry, does not abandon the body in the temporal world but is catalyzed by, and realized in, bodily manifestations tied to a world given at creation. As placed in a world whose cosmic drama entails a temporal *telos*, a theological destiny to be fulfilled beyond itself, I am drawn by grace in my pilgrimage through such a world without terminating here and now in a religious experience in which God becomes a phenomenon present to me. The eschatological self inhabits thereupon a temporal horizon in view of the eternal, which, to situate the argument in view of the wider contemporary theological turn, lies between those projects that render God a phenomenon (Henry, Marion, etc.) and those that treat God as wholly other (Derrida, religion without religion, etc.). Such a

contribution seeks to articulate a self who seeks a God always intimate and yet elusive, neither present as a phenomenon nor distant and without relation.

Theological reflection is not carried out in a vacuum. As such, we appeal to the phenomenological depiction of the self made explicit in so many exemplary passages from the canonical mind of St. Augustine. The dissertation therefore offers a constructive phenomenological theology that at once draws on contemporary theological resources and creatively retrieves aspects of St. Augustine's inventory of the self.

As both a critical study of Henry's theological turn and a constructive exercise in philosophical theology, the dissertation is ordered thematically around the two poles that figure the self: temporality and the body. A prospective division of the book as a whole consists of three parts with two chapters each: (1) part one proceeds with contextual themes, (2) part two is exegetical in nature, spanning the entire scope of Henry's work while singling out his theological turn and (3) part three proposes a constructive way forward beyond what we perceive to be decisive conceptual problems in Henry.

Chapter outline

Chapter one begins from a purposely broad vantage point by asking: what is phenomenology? Setting up important contextual boundaries for the dissertation as a whole, this chapter characterizes phenomenology as a "style of thinking" (rather than a strict method) as well as discusses strategies for how phenomenology and theology can positively relate; which, of course, enables us to approach with greater care and depth Henry's understanding of the self. Chapter two's intent is narrower in that it

elucidates the specific phenomenological context out of which Henry's unique contribution emerges. Focusing especially on Husserl, and tangentially on Heidegger, chapter two shows just how Henry broadens the "theatre of appearing" originally assembled by those two German phenomenologists.

Part two consists of chapters three and four, both of which explicate how Henry figures the theological self in view of *temporality* and the *body*. Chapter three highlights how Henry critically attends to the temporal field of the self while chapter four spells out Henry's critique of the exterior body in the world. Both of these chapters maintain that Henry's theological turn amounts to a turn toward a *qualified monism* inasmuch as an interior, non-temporal self is privileged over against an "irreal" temporal and bodily self in the world; we name Henry's monistic self the "duplicitous self" because it splits the self irreparably between interior and exterior sites.

And, finally, part three consists of a phenomenological-theological sketch of a constructive way forward beyond Henry's duplicitous self, again taking *temporality* and the *body* as entry points into the self. To this end, we reoccupy St. Augustine's brilliant explication of time and his theological interpretation of the sacramental, ecclesial and resurrection bodies, forming single self comprised of integrated fields of experience—we name this the porous self. This is, in brief, the overarching structure of the dissertation.

Two caveats

(1) Many of our creative rearticulations of St. Augustine's insights about the self are taken up with Henry and the contemporary theological turn explicitly in

mind. While the reader can refer to footnotes to investigate further the works from which we draw in Augustine, three in particular stand out: the *Confessions*, the *City of God*, and *De Trinitate*. While some secondary sources on Augustine are engaged in the footnotes too, our main task is to profit from Augustine's own intellectual inventory on the structure of the self, thereby mining him as a resource for figuring the self after Henry. That is, our project is *not* a comparison between Michel Henry and St. Augustine, outlining Henry and St. Augustine's respective positions only to suggest that latter triumphs. The "porous self" is elaborated in an Augustinian complexion, but it is intended primarily as rebuttal to problems we raise in Henry, and thus, as a contribution to the discussion of the self transpiring between phenomenology and theology.

(2) The second caveat invokes the issue of theological method. Throughout we shall appropriate aspects of important and frequently debated theological loci in dogmatics, such as the doctrines of creation, eschatology, God and the *imago Dei*. Our constructive application of these issues (typically discussed and debated in Christian dogmatics such as Barth's *Church Dogmatics*) shall *not* enter into the important and vastly complex history of Christian doctrine and the various contemporary modifications of creation, eschatology, etc. As traditional loci within Christian dogmatics, we are not intending that our affirmation of creation or eschatology necessarily provide a new angle on their contemporary use. We are principally interested in figuring the lived dynamics of the porous self between traditional Christian theology and the contemporary philosophical interest in overcoming the post-Cartesian, modern subject. Beginning with Descartes and developed over the course of the Enlightenment up through German and French

phenomenology in the twentieth-century, the “subject” is normally understood as sovereign and self-positing, and furthermore, typically avoids theological grammar to articulate its basic structure. The great merit of Henry’s work is that he recasts the “subject” from a theological point of view without abandoning philosophical rigour. The porous self as we elucidate it after Henry is therefore intrinsically theological and thus draws on Christian theology to sharpen its complex philosophical configuration. While the self is truly accomplished within a theological space, it is also brought to light by phenomenological inquiry, and so figuring the self from the point of view of phenomenological theology treads carefully among contemporary debates about the theological doctrines themselves. We devote, for example, a portion of chapter five both to reinforcing the doctrine of creation and the *imago Dei*, and yet, we are not advancing a thesis about creation that we perceive to be novel. And, while we affirm that God is both timeless and dynamically involved in the temporal streaming of the world-horizon, and while that may be a fruitful insight about the doctrine of God for a systematic theologian, we are not offering what we perceive to be a novel thesis about the doctrine of God. The principal focus of this thesis is to examine Michel Henry’s philosophical thematization of the self from a theological point of view, which in turn, blends aspects of dogmatic theology with contemporary philosophical theology.

Part 1:
Phenomenological and Contextual Horizons

Chapter 1:

Phenomenology and Theology

The unfinished nature of phenomenology and the inchoative atmosphere which has surrounded it are not to be taken as a sign of failure, they were inevitable because phenomenology's task was to reveal the mystery the world and of reason.

–Maurice Merleau-Ponty⁵

§1. WHAT IS PHENOMENOLOGY?

We commence with three aims: (1) to highlight key features of what constitutes phenomenology as a line of inquiry, (2) to deliberate critically upon the debate about the “theological turn” in phenomenology typically associated with Dominique Janicaud and (3) to develop a constructive, if only a rather skeletal defence of the possibility of a rapprochement between phenomenology and theology. While this chapter sets the intellectual context in which Henry thought maneuvers, it also advances what can only be portrayed as preliminary moves toward a basic harmony between philosophical and theological intuitions—which shall count as an important foundational principle for later chapters that operate on the assumption that phenomenology and theology intertwine. For most of this chapter, Henry recedes to the margins, occasionally surfacing to prompt a sign that shall guide us along the path of brief but necessary consideration of the broad patterns of inquiry that give to

⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 1965) xix.

phenomenology its coherence as a specific conceptual vernacular or tradition of philosophical discourse. We reconstruct the details of the Husserlian profile of Henry's own interest in phenomenological method (and he devoted several texts to it) in chapter two. In the present chapter, however, we aim solely at the historical and intellectual movement of phenomenology, how it could be defined as a particular style of thinking with a form of discourse distinct from its predecessors without at the same time committing it to a strict scientific regiment (§1). We then examine the theological turn in contemporary phenomenology (§§2-3), after which we shall offer a précis of the overall argument of the dissertation (§4).

Is phenomenology the “rigorous science” inaugurated by Edmund Husserl at the dawn of the twentieth-century, a science that returns to “the things themselves” and the vast network of lived experiences to which that return gives rise?⁶ Or, is phenomenology a disconnected sequence of philosophical breakthroughs that follow upon, but diverge radically from, what counts as the return to “the things themselves”? Husserl correlates the return to the “things themselves” to acts of consciousness, Heidegger structures it around existential being-in-the-world, Levinas links such a return to ethical existence and Henry and Marion mark out their respective trajectories. If phenomenology, as an intellectual tradition, is pulled in several directions at once, is it nothing more than a fragmented set of philosophical trends that originate in Germany and then blossom in France? Is phenomenology nothing more than a diffuse mosaic of singular styles of philosophy that rarely

⁶ Husserl calls his readers to return straight to the things themselves when he writes, “but to judge rationally or scientifically about things signifies to conform *to the things themselves* or to go from words and opinions back to the things themselves, to consult them in their self-givenness and to set aside all prejudices alien to them.” See Husserl, *Ideas I*, 35. Claude Romano makes explicit the connection between returning to the things themselves and the affirmation of concrete, subjective experience in Husserl. See Romano, *Au coeur de la raison: la phénoménologie* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), chapter one, “le retour à l’expérience.”

converge, a field “wide open” (*eclatée*), as Dominique Janicaud has recently suggested?⁷

While phenomenology, as an intellectual tradition, is certainly diverse, this need not be a sign of failure, as the well-known Merleau-Ponty epigraph highlights (in 1945) with a poetic prescience. If we do not constrain phenomenology within rigid categories such as “strict method” or “rigorous science” then we ought not assume the presumptive opposite end of the spectrum either, i.e., that phenomenology is shapeless, a shattered montage of philosophical trends without purpose. In what follows, this section intends to show that phenomenology, as a generative intellectual tradition originating with Husserl and winding its way through a tortuous path up to the present French scene, *examines the appearing of phenomena in relation to a self (however “self” is conceived) and the ensemble of lived experiences to which that relation gives rise.*

Phenomenology, as that philosophical tradition that makes appearing the key to interpreting the self and its place in the world, is as vibrant a style of thinking today as any other contemporary philosophical tradition. Given its proliferation over the last few decades not only in continental Europe but in America as well, its fecundity as a movement lies not in a particular thinker but rather in a group of diverse thinkers unified around a single mode of inquiry—which we shall sketch in a bit more detail below. Michel Henry may overstate the extent to which phenomenology has become an intellectual force in twentieth-century philosophical discourse, but nevertheless, he highlights well the decisive place phenomenology currently occupies among other intellectual traditions born in the West.

⁷ See his brief, but provocative, book: Dominique Janicaud, *Phenomenology “Wide Open:” After the French Debate*, trans. Charles N. Cabral (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).

Phenomenology, he insists, will be to the twentieth-century what German Idealism was to the nineteenth, what empiricism was to the eighteenth, what Cartesianism was to the seventeenth, what Thomas and Scotus were to Scholasticism and what Plato and Aristotle were to antiquity.⁸ Doubtless, phenomenological inquiry was undertaken by some of the best philosophical minds of the twentieth-century, from its founder in Husserl and his protégé in Heidegger, to Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, and Henry, to name but a few. Yet, precisely because, as we shall show, it is a “style of thinking” (rather than a strict scientific procedure), phenomenology often proves difficult to define; to secure it once and for all and to domesticate it a single concept should appear as an impossible consideration. While it is no surprise that some phenomenologists such as Michel Henry and Jean-Luc Marion,⁹ not least the founder himself, endeavour to fix its boundaries with an unwavering finality and establish its methodological protocol with an unpalatable triumphalism, phenomenology’s “inchoative atmosphere” has resisted such rigid territorialism. In fact, attempts severally made at defining phenomenology have given way to internal strife, generating considerable controversy over what constitutes its basic ground rules. If it is situated as one among other great intellectual traditions of the West, and it displays enough of a unified character to be identified as a “style of thinking” (not a strict method), then it follows that phenomenology must be describable as a theoretical enterprise without at the same time assuming a territorial perspective.

⁸ See Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, trans. Scott Davidson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 1.

⁹ For their respective claims about founding phenomenology on a final principle, whether it is pure immanence (Henry) or givenness (Marion), see Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, chapter 1; and Marion, “Phenomenology of Givenness and First Philosophy,” in *In Excess: Studies in Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press), 1-29.

Over the course of this chapter it shall become clear that we think phenomenology is the study of how phenomena “appear” (i.e., manifest, reveal, show, disclose, display, phenomenalyze, etc.) to a perceiving subject. It is a philosophical strategy that, while simple on the surface, takes on highly complex questions about the nature of “phenomena” as well as the structures of perception that allow phenomena to appear. Studying how a phenomenon is given to a perceiving subject necessarily touches off fascinating inquiries into the nature the world, consciousness, temporality and the body, among other things. So whether one is investigating how an object appears or how another human appears or even how the world-horizon itself appears, phenomenology, in principle, analyzes and gives expression to how anything whatsoever may appear and thus be experienced. As Husserl maintains, anything experienceable is by right expressible.¹⁰ It is therefore our view that because phenomenological inquiry is unified as an intellectual movement around “the appearing of phenomena to a perceiving subject,” it brings to light both the genitive and dative poles of appearing: a phenomenon is always an appearing *of* something *for* someone.¹¹ This is not a gratuitous definition. To consider it a more persuasive, and perhaps less gratuitous, definition we shall therefore seek to situate it within the breadth of the phenomenological tradition itself.

Placing the correlation between the genitive and dative poles of appearing at the centre of phenomenology brings to light the basic correlation between the object pole (genitive) and the “me” pole (dative). Using categories drawn from grammar,

¹⁰ Husserl writes, “Anything ‘meant as meant,’ anything meant in the noematic sense (and, more particularly, as the noematic core,) pertaining to any act, no matter which, is *expressible by means* of ‘significations.’” See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I*, §124, 295.

¹¹ I borrow the heuristic expression “genitive and dative of appearing” from two Husserl scholars even though I do not necessarily owe how I build upon it to their overtly Husserlian orientations. See Dan Zahavi, *Self-awareness and Alterity: A Phenomenological Investigation* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 50 ff; and James G. Hart, *The Person and the Common Life: Studies in a Husserlian Social Ethics* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 9 ff.

the classification of genitive and dative poles of appearing is not intended to be understood literally. Even if a little awkward, the grammatical formula of “genitive and dative” illustrates a helpful metaphor or convention that clarifies the basic perimeter around which phenomenological inquiry circulates. The nominative is excluded, not because it is nonexistent, but rather because it is such a contested and problematic philosophical declension. The nominative “I” or “transcendental ego” is what contemporary philosophers usually associate with the Cartesian “I think” (*Ego cogito*) or Kant’s transcendental aesthetic. The strategy of placing the genitive and dative poles at the centre of phenomenology is motivated by a desire to move from the valorisation of the nominative “I” to the relation between a phenomenon and the lived-experience it evokes in “me.” Studying how something is given to me displaces the “I,” therefore, from the centre of reference and brings to light rich resources phenomenological inquiry after Husserl may hold for figuring the self outside of the post-Cartesian tendency to reify the self as a sovereign “I” that dictates “everything else.”

It is also worth noting that the emphasis on the genitive and dative poles of appearing represents a heuristic device employed over against other methodological procedures also capable of bringing to light characteristic features of phenomenology as a style of thinking. Certainly the various interpretations of the phenomenological reduction (*epoché*) initiated by Husserl and developed in various directions by, for example, Henry and Marion, could disclose fundamental structures of appearing, and thus, help one find what phenomenology as an intellectual tradition “is all about” (Eugen Fink remarks that all phenomenology must pass through the reduction).¹² The

¹² See Eugen Fink, *The Sixth Cartesian Meditation: The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of a Method*, trans. Ronald Bruzina (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 10.

notion of “intentionality,” too, is perhaps adequate to such a task. Even the weighty question of “Being” and “Existence” broached by post-Heideggerian and post-Sartrean phenomenology may suffice to account for important boundaries of phenomenology and, again, help one get to the heart of what constitutes it as a line of inquiry. While discussing all of these classifications (reduction, intentionality and Being) shall take us too far afield, the “genitive and dative poles of appearing” represents a preferable strategy in that it can aid the reader to gain a sense of what phenomenology, broadly conceived, may mean at its base. This is so because these procedures (reduction, intentionality and Being) are constantly modified, and perhaps, too elusive to be able to grant unity to what is already a radically diverse movement. Take “intentionality,” for example. Is there constitutive intentionality (Husserl) or counter-intentionality (Levinas and Marion) or non-intentionality (Henry), or all three? The category itself is highly contested. The same could be shown with regard to the reduction and to Being. Appearing can be unveiled with a range of particular procedural considerations, and yet, these considerations are normally pressed into service to unveil how something can become a “phenomenon” in view of the perceiving subject (however the phenomenologist describes the subject). It is perhaps most fruitful, and simple, then, to define phenomenology as a style of thinking that examines how phenomena come into view by passing between the two poles, how something appears (genitive pole) to “me” (dative pole).

Now, it is crucial to acknowledge that what is indicated by the term “appearing” is elusive. Phenomenological inquiry does not give only illuminations of how something appears on its own, as if an object could appear without also already appearing to someone. “Appearing” necessarily implicates both genitive and dative

poles. Appearing is a lived experience of a phenomenon. If the chair in the corner of the room is to appear to me, then it must be given to me, in the flesh, and become a lived experience for me. Never independent of the perceiving subject, something cannot appear without a subjective pole already there to receive and live through the appearance. So even though phenomenology brings to light how objects appear or even how the world-horizon appears, by virtue of the primal correlation between the genitive and dative poles, appearing cannot appear as a presentation of a phenomenon independent of a subject. Phenomenology is pre-eminently concerned with what makes the object's appearing possible in the first place, namely, the subject who receives the object, typically understood as the "self." In the phenomenological tradition, Husserl may call this subjective site of manifestation the "Ich-pol," Heidegger may call it "Dasein," Merleau-Ponty may call it the "le corps vécu" and Marion may call it "l'adonné." Phenomenology must elucidate the precise structure of the "self" involved in the correlation between the genitive and dative poles.

So far we have characterized phenomenology as that diverse intellectual tradition that focuses, at its base, on the genitive and dative poles of appearing. Despite the variations of vocabulary deployed and elaborate philosophical constructions worked out by the great thinkers of the tradition, our classification (i.e., genitive and dative) reveals the distinctive movement of the tradition from a broad point of view. And yet a more precise characterization of it is required all the while maintaining the "inchoative atmosphere" that inevitably surrounds it. While one may find the double focus on genitive and dative poles a point of unity, as a thread that ties together the phenomenological movement, it is necessary to emphasize that

phenomenology, as “a style of thinking” (not a strict method), reflects a dynamic openness. Its boundaries are in a fluctuating dialectic of expansion and contraction accompanied by frequent interruption. Phenomenology is not a closed system; quite the contrary, it reflects a living oscillation of tributaries, channels and alleyways splintering in conflicting, as well as overlapping, directions. It thus reflects a shifting intellectual movement interested in elucidating multiple phenomena rather than in limiting itself to a specialized programme or ossified routine. Phenomenology unfolds itself in a process, as an unfinished movement, as Merleau-Ponty famously contended in his preface to the *Phenomenology of Perception* (see the epigraph above). It never completes or exhausts itself in its ambition for finality. Indeed, phenomenological inquiry introduces a dynamic and supple mode of thinking—not a school of philosophy propped up by the self-defeating stasis of territorialism. Because it is style of thinking, it resembles what Levinas calls a “technique”¹³ or a finely-tuned conceptual skill learned in a tradition and put into play to unveil and then articulate how something might become a phenomenon (genitive) for me (dative).

In the name of such dynamism, the emphasis on genitive and dative poles of appearing disallows the subject-object opposition to be the point of departure. Phenomenology’s attentive sketches of the structure of appearing surmount the facile notion that my ego is like an inner sphere, a cabinet or a box, for “the perceiving of what is known is not a process of returning with one’s booty to the ‘cabinet’ of

¹³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, trans. Richard Cohen and Michael B. Smith (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), see chapter 5, “Reflections on Phenomenological ‘Technique.’”

consciousness after one has gone out and grasped it.”¹⁴ While Husserl may highlight the “purified ego” up against the bracketed “world,” he does not sever the relation between the intentional life of the ego and its ongoing immersion in the exterior world-horizon of temporal objects. Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas (and others) also refuse pitting the ego over against the world. For them, the “self” is ineluctably tied to, and implied within, the structural opening of the world. The self, in our view, therefore, is linked to the sphere of appearing opened up by the lived experience of worldly phenomena that make their impact on “me” as a dative pole in the world; and so, the dative pole is the centre around which phenomena gather like iron filings gather around a magnet’s pole. The deep integration of “exterior” phenomena in the world and “interior” subjective experience shall be taken up later and become an explicit theme at important points in various chapters. For now it is crucial to recognize that their interrelation engenders the correlation between genitive and dative poles of appearing that overcomes the subject-object opposition.

If phenomenology is to remain truly a dynamic “technique” or “style of thinking” ordered by the lived experiences resulting from the correlation between the genitive and dative poles of appearing, then one of its principal virtues lies in its remaining flexible enough to accommodate the ambiguity and mystery intrinsic to those lived experiences. The self is lived in its radical singularity as this “me,” and yet, this me that I am is not entirely translucent to my philosophical gaze. I am never fully at my disposal, as if I were an object to be instrumentalized or a thinking thing (*res cogitans*) to be reduced to a concept. Phenomenology distinguishes, in principle, between the appearing of a simple object, say a cup on a table and the living capacity

¹⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: Blackwell, 1962), 89.

to receive that cup. There is, thus, on the one hand, the appearing of objects in the world (genitive), and, on the other, the appearing of the self (dative), both joined together in a primal unity. A central task of phenomenology is to unveil the unique character of the self that is irreducible to empirical deduction or mere reflective categories of the third-person (“it”). As a lived-pole of concrete experience, I am this “me” who suffers, enjoys, and feels the burden of being this particular me as an absolute zero point of orientation. On such a view, there are no floating or abstract pains or floating hungers, nor are there floating states of love. When I fall in love, it is me who is in love and no one else. When I experience the traumas of the loss of love and the impact of intense pain, how am I to deny that it is “me” who undergoes those trials? Perhaps I may claim there are floating pains or loves until I am the one who undergoes them. To put it another way, I am never a grammatically neutered “it” as if I were a cup on a table to be duplicated by any other cup. This leads straightaway to a question: just as the cup cannot appear independently of the self who lives through it, can a self appear to itself without reference to the world of objects and other subjects “out there”?

Henry addresses this question affirmatively, arguing with all vigour that the self appears to itself in a sphere all its own, experiencing itself in its pure self-embrace before it goes out into the world. For now, we simply acknowledge that such an understanding of the self is too dualistic, bifurcating the self between interior and exterior fields of display. In contrast to Henry, this dissertation shall articulate the dative pole, this “me” that I am, as a self that exists independently of the world in a qualified sense—I am not simply given to myself as an empirical entity. In other words, we reject that I am a mosaic of impressions or sensations, and in this sense,

we can agree with Henry. I am not merely a receptacle of sense impressions, gathering myself together as “bundle” of streaming impressions as they continually arrive and trigger brain synapses.¹⁵ Rather, I am this “me” who experiences myself intimately as a singular living me. And yet, we can depart from Henry here by maintaining that such a self is not isolated from the empirical, temporal and spatial display of the world. I am ensconced, as a living me, in the temporal flow and spatial dimensions of the world (and its streaming sense impressions). The world’s visible and luminous field of display is inescapable. As mentioned above, phenomenology repudiates a kind of subject-object dualism between inner and outer (to use spatial metaphors), or the interior self over against the exterior body in the world, as if the fields were irreparably split. And while Henry’s splitting of the self between interior and exterior is no mere subject-object opposition, it nevertheless leads to a situation in which genitive and dative poles are bifurcated. It is therefore a principal goal of this dissertation to overcome that bifurcation without at the same time rejecting Henry’s excavation of the interior self and the explicit theological thematization Henry gives to that sphere. Figuring the self after Henry is to participate in the rich phenomenological discussion of the self’s lived relation to itself and to the world from a theological point of view.

I am truly “myself” when I embrace myself in the world as an image of the living God who transcends the world. But is such theological claim illicit from an explicitly phenomenological perspective? Since the widely-read publication of Dominique Janicaud’s 1991 essay, “Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie

¹⁵ James G. Hart puts it well: “The perennial temptation to think of consciousness as the brain or as a self-contained repository of mental events that projects schemas of meaning subsequent to getting stimulated from outside is rejected by phenomenology.” James G. Hart, *Who One Is: A Transcendental Phenomenology*, vol. 1 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), 102.

française,” phenomenology has been embroiled in a conflict over whether it can fruitfully engage with theological discourse and address theological questions. We shall now turn to this debate prompted by Janicaud’s sweeping and dogmatic condemnation of the theological turn.

§2. PHENOMENOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

Phenomenology, as an intellectual tradition unified around the correlation between the genitive and dative poles of appearing, is not a protective strategy designed to shelter lived-experience from theological reflection. There is no need to say with Heidegger that the expression “phenomenological theology” is a contradiction in terms (square-circle)¹⁶ or an incoherent expression without a referent (protestant mathematics).¹⁷ The question of phenomenology’s relation to theology originates, indeed, with phenomenology’s founders. Husserl addresses the question of God’s appearing directly not only by bracketing or parenthesizing God from all scientific investigation of pure consciousness¹⁸ but also by considering the possibility of religious experience in many of his unpublished manuscripts.¹⁹ Heidegger devotes not only an essay to the issue (entitled “Phenomenology and Theology”) but also utilizes religious figures such as St. Paul, St. Augustine and Kierkegaard in *Being*

¹⁶ Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, trans. William McNeil (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 53.

¹⁷ Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 20.

¹⁸ Husserl, *Ideas I*, §58, “The Transcendence, God, Excluded.”

¹⁹ For more on the idea of God in Husserl, if even adduced from a wide range of manuscripts not easily available, see Emmanuel Housset, *Husserl et l’idée de Dieu* (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 2010); and also see, Rajiv Kaushik, “Affectivity and Religious Experience: Husserl’s ‘God’ in the Unpublished manuscripts,” *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* 8 (2008): 55-71.

and Time and other works.²⁰ His later work is characterized by a turn (*Kehre*) toward the sacred (i.e., the “fourfold”), and as Dominique Janicaud writes, “Without Heidegger’s *Kehre*, there would be no theological turn.”²¹

The “theological turn” in French phenomenology taken in the 1960s and persisting down to the present day perhaps reflects one logical end to which Husserl and Heidegger’s peripheral interests in theology led. The theological turn has certainly proved a fertile ground upon which both disciplines have flourished in exciting ways together, generating a burgeoning canon of secondary literature in the English-speaking world, Germany, the Nordic countries, and of course, France.²² But there has been no lack of controversy surrounding the fellowship of phenomenology and theology. Janicaud’s well-known diagnosis and critique of whether a “phenomenological theology” counts as phenomenology at all is of paramount importance for us here. It constitutes nothing less than a major challenge which we must surmount if we want to pursue the kind of open and dynamic phenomenology we introduced above.

²⁰ See Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology,” in *Pathmarks*, trans. James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 39-62; for his footnotes on Augustine and Kierkegaard, see *Being and Time*, division one, chapter five, fn. 5 and division two, chapter four, fn.3, respectively. Also see his engagements with St. Paul and St. Augustine in Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

²¹ Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” in *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn:” The French Debate*, ed. Dominique Janicaud, et al., trans. Jeffrey Kosky (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 31.

²² Originating in Germany, see *Phänomenologie und Theologie*, eds. Thomas Söding and Klaus (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 2009); from the Nordic countries see, *Phenomenology and Religion: New Frontiers*, eds. Jonna Bornemark and Hans Ruin (Södertörn, Sweden: Södertörn University Publishers, 2010); in the English-speaking world, see *Words of Life: New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology*, eds. Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba (New York: Fordham University Press); and from central Europe, *Philosophical Concepts and Religious Metaphors: New Perspectives on Phenomenology and Theology*, ed. Christian Ciocan, special edition of *Studia Phaenomenologica* (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2009).

The great virtue of Janicaud's 1991 essay, "Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française" and his 1998 follow-up, "La phénoménologie éclatée,"²³ is that they take an unequivocal stand. There is no doubt that in these essays he detracts from such a theological turn. He undermines the very idea of founding a partnership or reciprocal alliance between phenomenology and theology. By invoking what he perceives to be phenomenology's strict naturalism as a "rigorous science," he finds the swerve toward and/or wholesale adoption of transcendence in thinkers like Levinas, Marion, Henry and Chrétien to have violated the basic ground rules of orthodox phenomenology, practitioners of which must necessarily commit to "protecting its neutrality" as a scientific discipline.²⁴

Janicaud delimits the boundary of phenomenology by giving such a boundary the rigid name of "method" He calls his own method a "minimalist phenomenology."²⁵ Welcoming of the ways in which phenomenology can be enriched and expanded (and not merely reduced to a duplication of Husserl), Janicaud recognizes that the current state of phenomenology is fragmented. He sees it as a living tradition in an ever-expanding intellectual universe, so that "the minimalist orientation claims to be nothing more than one furrow in this still open field."²⁶ And yet, he nevertheless insists that its "method" must be observed if a path of thinking is to be identified properly as phenomenological.²⁷ Not everything, according to Janicaud, is phenomenology, especially not theology. That is, the price

²³ Dominique Janicaud, *Phenomenology "Wide Open: After the French Debate*, trans. Charles N. Cabral (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).

²⁴ Janicaud, "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology," 50. For a similar, but less dogmatic, perspective, see Marlène Zarader, "Phenomenality and Transcendence," trans. Ralph Hancock, et al., in *Transcendence in Philosophy and Religion* ed., James E. Faulconer (Boomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), 106-119.

²⁵ Janicaud, *Phenomenology "Wide Open,"* chapter 5, "Toward a 'Minimalist' Phenomenology."

²⁶ Janicaud, *Phenomenology "Wide Open,"* 81.

²⁷ Janicaud, "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology," 37-8.

to be paid for introducing a theological turn is the denial of the phenomenological method altogether, “a farewell to the Husserlian ambition for rigor”²⁸ in that “phenomenological neutrality has been abandoned.”²⁹ For Janicaud, it is precisely this methodological rigor and the spirit of neutrality that characterizes the chief gain of Husserlian phenomenology. The phenomenological method, as such, must obey the constraints put in place by the relation between the world and the intentional ego. Remaining within the province of this finite relationship, in his estimation, is what gives phenomenology its coherence as a rigorous method whose purpose is neutral description of lived-experience.³⁰ Neither theism nor atheism shall reign in a minimalist phenomenology, for it suffices to be simply “non-theological.”³¹ Unsurprisingly, Janicaud completes his 1991 study with the following shibboleth. We quote it in full to absorb its impact:

We have not had any other design than to draw out these several traits and to recall an insurmountable difference: phenomenology and theology make two. To see as much and to understand it better, certainly it is not out of place here to draw attention, finally, to two thoughts equally worthy of being meditated upon in their very divergence. On the theological side, Luther: “Faith consists in giving oneself over to the hold of things we do not see.” On the phenomenological side, Goethe: “There is nothing to look for behind the phenomena; they are themselves the doctrine.”³²

Phenomenology and theology make two, so he argues. We appreciate Janicaud’s admission that phenomenology has become an open frontier of intellectual inquiry; we also acknowledge his desire articulated here to disclose firm methodological procedures in which respectable and authentically philosophical

²⁸ Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” 39.

²⁹ Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” 68.

³⁰ Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” 37.

³¹ Janicaud, *Phenomenology “Wide Open,”* 15-17.

³² Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” 103.

phenomenology can emerge within that frontier. But the either/or terms in which he pits phenomenology against theology tends to dramatize what is and has continued to be a fruitful relationship. The temptation to take a theological turn should not be conjured away as audacious as Janicaud claims.³³ For phenomenological investigation makes manifest the concrete modalities of life, and as such, its duty is to attend to the possibility of any experience, religious or otherwise. Phenomenology is to ask about the conditions for the possibility of what may appear in the sphere of experience *as* it is lived. For the Christian in particular, lived experience is shaped by the life of pilgrimage and participation in the body of Christ. Being Christian is not merely an ancillary group of experiences or momentary suspension in what is otherwise a fundamentally neutral structure of “non-theological” living. Rather, the Christian lives on the basis of faith in an embodied community of believers, and that concrete set of experiences constitutes the core of living, the source from which the Christian dwells in the horizon of the world and its visible disclosures. As such, phenomenology is not taken hostage when it veers toward theological discourse. Rather it remains true to its commitment to study human life in its lived acts in the world, whether lived by faith in the mystery of God (and incorporate theological resources) or faith in science (and incorporate natural sciences)—for no phenomenology is “faithless” and can presume to reduce life to a set of experiences laid bare by neutral, scientific observation.

To be fair, Janicaud does indicate that phenomenology is made the richer when it goes beyond Husserl, for he states, “the philosophical fecundity of a mode of thought is not, moreover, measured by the strict respect accorded its orthodoxy—

³³ Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” 86-7.

quite the contrary!”³⁴ But Janicaud goes on to claim that phenomenology must observe a specific kind of rigor, one closely aligned with modern natural science and its “minimalist” spirit, a set of assumptions not interested in the “mirage of the absolute,”³⁵ but in the rational structures of universal knowledge and the self-evident field of human experience.³⁶ This is why it is not rash to conclude that his critique of the theological turn succumbs to a protective strategy that views phenomenology and theology as discrete, tightly bound disciplines—and this despite the fact that his 1998 study admits the vast array of possibilities within the “wide open” field of phenomenology. The upshot of Janicaud’s protective strategy is not simply that it discounts a whole swathe of profound studies that work between phenomenology and theology enriching our knowledge of both, but that it also harbours a faulty assumption about the very nature of both intellectual traditions. Certainly, as we noted above, we may approach phenomenology as a “style of thinking” rather than as a strict methodological protocol to be observed under the tutelage of natural science. For if it can, in Janicaud’s mind, join the spirit of natural science, then phenomenology as a style of thinking is not as neutral as he insists. What is here not a question of neutrality but of remaining engaged with rational structures of knowledge, Janicaud’s thesis fails to acknowledge the richly rational character of Christian theology because theological discourse is always realized in a complex process of faith seeking rationality.

While we cannot go into the niceties of the theologian’s craft here (that would be a valuable task that would take at least a book length study), we can say that the dialogue between theology and philosophy has been licit for centuries. Theology has

³⁴ Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” 91.

³⁵ Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” 92.

³⁶ Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,” 94.

been involved in an ongoing conversation with philosophy, evidenced in ancient figures such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas as well as in contemporary theologians such as Rahner, Tillich, etc. Christian theology does not maintain as a rule that God “genuinely transcends human experience,” to quote George Pattison’s protective strategy outlined for theologians suspicious of phenomenology’s intruding presence.³⁷ It is not our purpose here to come from the other direction and belabour the point that theology is open to phenomenological description. It does not seem that God genuinely transcends human experience in the sense that God appears unreachable and wholly other. God appeared in intimate covenantal relation with Israel in the Hebrew Bible and considered himself nothing in the form of a man, and in that perfect self-humiliation, appeared among us as a servant on the Cross in the New Testament. God’s transcendence properly conceived (and God is transcendent) lies therefore not in God’s transcending human experience altogether (and thus the field of phenomenological investigation) but in exceeding the facile dichotomy of immanence vs. transcendence.

So how do phenomenology *and* theology relate? If the relation obtains at all it is in a manner in which the technique of phenomenology can be applied to the life of faith in order to explore both how God is “more intimate to me than I am to myself” and how I am an “enormous question to myself,” to borrow well-known lyricisms from St. Augustine. We agree with Robert Sokolowski when he remarks that phenomenology “is not meant to establish Christian belief but to be involved in its understanding.”³⁸ We agree, similarly, with Etienne Gilson that Christian philosophy is an active searching for the living God and that “our task is not so much to prove

³⁷ George Pattison, *God and Being: An Enquiry* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13.

³⁸ Robert Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence: A Study in the Theology of Disclosure* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 11.

Him as to find Him.”³⁹ Phenomenology, to express it another way, aids the theologian, not in the verification of the belief in the existence of God but in the articulation of the pilgrim’s concrete life of faith in and through the world, as it is lived in its concrete temporal and bodily manifestations.

There are two principal views that shed light on how phenomenology and theology relate, both of which have their merits but swing to either one of two extremes: phenomenology and theology coincide on the one hand, or they are *entirely* distinct but collaborative on the other. (1) Michel Henry, to whom we are most indebted, views phenomenology and theology as inextricably bound, as do we. But he declares that they operate by the exact same intelligibility, conflating the two, as if philosophy were another name for God-talk on the basis of God’s self-revelation in Christ.⁴⁰ We shall offer a fuller reading of Henry’s theological turn in chapter three (§20). (2) Jean-Luc Marion suggests that phenomenology can provide a service for theology: namely, that phenomenology could, if thoughtfully applied, function as a “relief” from what is fundamentally a metaphysically hampered theology prone to reducing God to Being (i.e., the “God of the philosophers and scholars”). Relating phenomenology and theology in this way, Marion indicates that theology can make use of phenomenological discourse to expunge theology of metaphysical trappings. But phenomenology can go no further, for it fails in the face of divine revelation based on faith, the ground upon which theologians only tread. All that phenomenology can do, from Marion’s point of view, is show theology the path free of metaphysics, offering the theologian resources to read revelation just as it is given

³⁹ Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*, trans. L.E.M. Lynch (London: Gollancz, 1961), 104.

⁴⁰ See Henry, *Incarnation*, see 361ff, “par-delà phénoménologie et théologie: l’Archi-intelligibilité johannique,”

(and thus without circumscribing God within philosophical concepts outlined in advance). But Marion presumes here, like Janicaud above, that phenomenology is without faith, and as a discipline devoted to neutral description, phenomenology cannot enter into actual explication of the life of faith, for the “God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob” is the sole property of theology, or so is the implication of Marion’s thinking. In contrast to Marion and Janicaud, our proposal of a phenomenological theology defends against this kind of strict separatism.⁴¹

Over against these two positions, Marion’s and Henry’s, we do not purport to have a finely-ground formula within which to fit phenomenology and theology, neatly dividing and ordering their relationship.⁴² We do, however, find that the mystery of life lends itself to being explored by techniques of thinking that draw on a “faith seeking understanding” paradigm, a rationality filled with wisdom and revelation. Any kind of separatism between philosophy (wisdom) and theology (revelation) that splits their unity will eventually lead to the modern phenomenon of an “autonomous philosophy,” a philosophy entirely extricated from Christian faith. According to many modern philosophy departments, philosophy as a discipline

⁴¹ See Marion, “Metaphysics and Phenomenology: A Relief for Theology,” *Critical Inquiry* 20 no.4 (1994): 572-91, reference on 590-91. Marion writes elsewhere of the radical distinction between phenomenology and theology: “If it remains the task of theology to study the names of God, it belongs to phenomenology to distinguish between the different horizons.” See Marion, “Nothing and Nothing Else,” in *The Ancients and the Moderns*, ed. R. Lilly (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 183-95, reference on 192. For a similar view, what J. Aaron Simmons calls “reconstructive separatism,” see his illuminating but ultimately flawed essay, “Continuing to Look for God in France: On the Relationship between Phenomenology and Theology,” in *Words of Life: New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology*, eds. Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 15-29.

⁴² The problematic of the relationship between philosophy and theology evokes the twentieth-century theological debate about how “nature” and “grace” relate. Is grace a superstructure imposed on top of an autonomous natural state? Or is nature always already tied to grace so that the subject naturally desires God (*desiderium natural visionis beatificae*)? Does nature (i.e., philosophy) somehow swing free from grace (i.e., theology), or are they co-emergent, integrated and mutually informing without at the same time grace enveloping nature or nature enveloping grace? Obviously a fuller treatment of this complex discussion would take us beyond the limits of our present discussion. For a helpful contemporary discussion of the issue undertaken with care and balance, see Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), chapters 1-3.

exercises autonomy, but only to the degree that, in reality, it amounts to a conversation partner for natural science. Our account avoids the modern design of autonomy, and so, phenomenology and theology do not “make two,” if we mean that they constitute two autonomous disciplines. We view them as styles of thinking or conceptual discourses unable to separate and yet unable to dissolve into a single discourse. As techniques with unique sets of skills and traditions, they both offer incentives for contemplating the elemental features of life, as it is lived. And for us, to contemplate life is not to draw protective lines between philosophy and theology, the two styles of thinking most associated with contemplating life. A phenomenological theology joins them together, bringing their lexicons and other conceptual resources into contact, affirming their mutuality without always giving due recognition to their respective intellectual properties. This “iron sharpening iron” (Proverbs 27.17) enables the life of faith to be clarified by the light reason before a God who recedes before every intellectual grasp. God is a God before whom we can worship and dance and to whom we can pray and offer praise and love with the mind (i.e., the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob) not a God who can be grasped within a concept or made present as a phenomenon.

§3. THE PROBLEM OF GOD AS PHENOMENON: A TYPOLOGY

A phenomenological theology so understood does *not* promote that God is a phenomenon. God is not a phenomenon even in a peculiar sense as Husserl thinks the world is.⁴³ But if God is not a phenomenon, then how can God be an object of

⁴³ Husserl writes, “I stand above the world which has now become for me, in a quite peculiar sense, a *phenomenon*.” See Husserl, *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 152.

inquiry at all? Put another way: because God is not a phenomenon, does God transcend the field of phenomenology altogether? We are suggesting, in this section, that phenomenology, as it engages with theology, interrogates a self who lives *toward* God's eschatological proximity through faith and participation in the body of Christ—all this while never grasping God as a concept or rendering God a phenomenon present to me. God is not rendered as a phenomenon present to consciousness, as if God were lived through and thereby endowed with objective meaning. And yet God does not elude experience altogether. To say that God is not a phenomenon is not to prevent me from living in the presence of God; being present to God, we presume, is part and parcel of what faith is about. God is mysteriously present to all things while also transcending them. To make God present to me, on the other hand, as if God were a genitive pole able to appear, and correlate, to a dative pole, is to come close to idolatry. We recall that phenomenology must open up a space wherein God remains God, wherein God is "I am who I am" (Exodus 3.14).⁴⁴ We shall articulate in later chapters how I can be present to God and how I can live *toward* God with making God present to me.

It shall serve us here to note that our position, "God is not a phenomenon," stands in contrast with current literature. To clarify the problem of God as phenomenon, we briefly outline three positions that have gained some currency in the literature. Here the problem of God as phenomenon is addressed by reactions

⁴⁴ Certainly "theophanies" remain a possibility, though it seems that the biblical theophanies appear at great turning points in salvation history, whether it is God appearing to Abraham to establish the covenant, God appearing to Moses to lead the people out of Egypt, God appearing to Isaiah to evoke Israel's return to God or God appearing to St. Paul to commission him as the Apostle to the Gentiles. But even then, God was mediated by a dream, by a burning bush and by a voice. At any rate, our point here is not to decide whether and on what terms God may make a supernatural appearance. Rather our point so understood here is that theophanies are rare and, when they do appear, are not necessarily experienced as immediate. God transcends every mode of phenomenality we might want to impose on God.

proceeding in contrasting directions: God is either an absolute phenomenon, disclosed with a revelatory power that overwhelms the subject or is internal to the subject on the one hand, or, on the other, God is no phenomenon at all, not even an eschatological proximity. To throw into relief our own position of *living toward* the eschatological proximity of God (which implies that I can be present to God even if God is *not* a phenomenon), we outline a heuristic typology of the contemporary literature.

Even though secondary sources on this issue are disparate, there are three main “types” that dominate and are cashed out in light of Husserl’s theory of intentionality. We take John Caputo’s helpful essay “Two Husserlian Revolutions”⁴⁵ as a guide to elucidate two types, one that emphasizes an empty intentional gaze (God is no phenomenon), and the other that compares God to a saturated phenomenon that floods the intentional gaze (God is an absolute phenomenon). The third type, and the one we find most fruitful, is Henry’s theory of non-intentional life, a domain in which God appears as a phenomenon beneath the bipolarity of empty and full intentions. We are certainly critical of Henry’s type but we nevertheless show the way forward must pass through him, more on this in §4 below.

As will become clearer in chapter two, Husserlian intentionality is a structure of appearing that seeks a match between the ego’s gaze and an object to fulfil that gaze. Husserl’s concept of intentionality clarifies the subjective activity of the mind as “consciousness of” or “about-ness” and purposely makes the decision to exclude

⁴⁵ John Caputo, “Derrida and Marion: Two Husserlian Revolutions.” In *Religious Experience and the End of Metaphysics*, ed. Jeffrey Bloechl (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 119-34. He constructs a similar argument in “The Hyperbolization of Phenomenology: Two Possibilities for Religion in Recent Continental Philosophy,” *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 66-93. It is to be noted that these “Husserlian revolutions” are not revolutions in the cause of Husserl but revolutions against Husserl in that they depart quite radically from Husserl.

God as a phenomenon present in consciousness. This is to say that Husserl charges the ego with the task of fixing the conditions for the possibility of experience inasmuch as it decides the conditions for an adequate correlation between the ego and object, and to maintain all scientific rigour, God is excluded. With regard to the problem of the phenomenon of God, the intentional structure so conceived is incapable of illuminating how God is manifest. This means that intentionality has not been done away with in recent literature but has been theologically modified in three distinct ways, what can be described as three “Husserlian revolutions:” Marion, Derrida and Henry. We take each in turn.

Intentionality and Excess in Jean-Luc Marion

Marion’s “Husserlian revolution” lies in expanding the conceptual boundaries of a “phenomenon” to account for those phenomena whose givenness is excessive or saturating over against the ego’s intentional power.⁴⁶ Saturation achieves, according to Marion, certainly its most dramatic form in the phenomenon of God. An exemplar of this kind of encounter is perhaps when Job undergoes the terrifying presence of God (Job 38) or when Isaiah is stunned by the impact of God’s holiness as it filled the Temple (Isaiah 6). In order to identify God with a saturated phenomenon present to me, Marion appeals to the excessive givenness of God displayed in these encounters. God modifies intentionality, opening the enclosure of the intentional subject to accommodate that which exceeds the mundane correlation between the ego and its object. God arrives unexpectedly, overwhelmingly and with too much

⁴⁶ Caputo, “Two Husserlian Revolutions,” 126-27.

intuition to be enclosed within ego's intentional aim. This excessive gift, given with a saturating impact, stuns, even dazes the ego's intentional aim, disorienting it.⁴⁷

A central insight of Husserlian phenomenology is that the ego constitutes phenomena. The ego's aim toward objects is an aim that constitutes them, securing them as objects and determining them according to their given objectivities. To account for divine revelation, Marion radically modifies the relationship between the intentional gaze and the intuition. The impact of the phenomenon of God is like an earthquake that reverses the flow of a river thereby reversing the direction of Husserlian intentionality. The ego does constitute the divine intuition but rather is constituted by the phenomenon of God, in its excessive presence. For Marion, intentionality defined by Husserl can no longer ensure the horizon of experience by which all phenomena appear, especially the horizon by which the phenomenon of God may make an appearance, however dramatic or excessive. The intentional aim of the Husserlian ego is blunted, folding back upon itself in the face of the immense pressure of the God's surplus. By way of counter-intentionality, the I is "given over to" (*l'adonné*) or submitted to the power of God's revelation.⁴⁸ God's saturating phenomenality intends me and thereby constitutes me, transforming the "I" into the gifted, the "me", the witness or the *l'adonné*: the one who receives himself from what gives itself, even if the saturated phenomenon that makes its landing accedes to experiential moments of "stupor," "amazement" and "terror."⁴⁹ In this manner, Marion reconfigures intentionality to account for the phenomenon of God as excess, saturation and plenitude—as intuition exceeds intention, reversing the ego's aim and giving way to counter-intentionality.

⁴⁷ Marion gives a sustained, if concise, analysis of saturated phenomena in his *Being Given*, 199-220.

⁴⁸ Marion, *Being Given*, book V.

⁴⁹ Marion, *In Excess*, 161.

Intentionality and Poverty in Jacques Derrida

Caputo helpfully observes that Derrida's "Husserlian revolution" proceeds in the opposite direction of Marion's and is therefore illustrative of an empty/absent intentional act.⁵⁰ According to Derrida, Husserl's "metaphysics of presence" is complicit with a theory of speech made possible by a particular understanding of intentional constitution. In consequence of its metaphysics of presence, the Husserlian intentional act set into operation by speech renders the ego fully present to itself. All speech is like a soliloquy, or a talking to oneself with the immediacy of self-presence that accompanies such a speech act. That is, speech animates the sign with its inner *Geistigkeit*, i.e., "spiritual" or mental presence, rendering the ego immediately self-present: "The signifier, animated by my breath and by the meaning-intention, is in absolute proximity to me. The living act, the life-giving act, the *Lebendigkeit*, which animates the body of the signifier and transforms it into a meaningful expression, the soul of language, seems not to separate itself from itself, from its own self-presence."⁵¹ Derrida insists that, because Husserl privileges speech, Husserlian intentionality necessarily prioritizes the ideal over the sensible, the immaterial over the material and pure identity over difference. In other words, Husserl's theory of intentionality does not participate in the economy of signs because it fails to account for the structural *différance* of signs and the specific *absence* of self-presence they explicitly underwrite.

⁵⁰ Caputo, "Two Husserlian Revolutions," 122-24.

⁵¹ Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 77.

Husserl's disavowal of signs, for Derrida, forecloses the possibility of an empty intention. A sign always points to that which is other than itself and functions to make approximate what is not fully present. Signifying what is to come, the sign never attains "presence." The empty intention whereby the ego's streaming consciousness goes unfilled is the structure peculiar to writing/signs, and Derrida's privileging of writing over speech reverses the Husserlian hierarchy of intentional presence over empty intentional acts.

An empty intention is consistent with a theory of signs because an empty intention does not accommodate immediacy. Like a sign, an empty intention is a mediator, a pointer and thus signifies phenomena. An empty intention, to be clear, is ordered by the surrogate signifier, which thereby functions as a replacement or trace of what would otherwise be completely present. Derrida describes the discourse of signification with reference to a well-known neologism he coined, *différance*. In the self-entitled essay, *différance* establishes how I experience phenomena through the grid of distinctions shaped by signs. Signs necessarily communicate an object by demonstrating its difference from every other object as well as showing that this difference "defers" throughout time by way of a chain of signifiers.⁵² Deconstructing presence from within Husserl's own intentional complex, Derrida institutes an inescapable structural difference and temporal deferral at the base of all human experience.⁵³

How might Derrida situate the problem of God as phenomenon within this intentional framework? Rather than accommodating saturated phenomena, *différance* reduces the phenomenon of God to an empty intention. Founded on the

⁵² Derrida, "Différance," in *Speech and Phenomena*, 129-60.

⁵³ Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 143-146.

differing/deferring structure of *différance*, God cannot be made present and thus subject to the model of what counts as a phenomenon that either Husserl or Marion advances. Derrida's "Husserlian Revolution" lies in the prioritization up front of an empty intentional act, and so, without fulfilment or verification, the intentional life of the ego gropes toward every phenomenon, but all the more so with regard to God.

Derrida therefore maintains that the very idea of God as phenomenon is "pseudo-problem" because there is no God at all (he appears to accept atheism even if the violence of atheism may come under the aspect of logocentrism). There is no such thing as presence, not least divine presence; God as phenomenon "promises presence given to intuition or vision..." which is the "immediacy of presence."⁵⁴ *Différance*, on the other hand, blocks the possibility of God as phenomenon—the satisfaction of intentional verification with regard to divine presence remains forever differed/deferred in a radical kind of way over against mundane intentional objects. While God is not a phenomenon, and perhaps God is nothing, perhaps just a fiction, the idea of God as deferred presence nevertheless leads the empty intentional act forward in an ethical manner. We could perhaps categorize Derrida as an atheist interested in the positive, ethical structure of religion. The eschatological structure of religion he picks out is therefore not an appropriation of the promise St. Paul makes to Christians that God will consummate history in a final historical *parousia* to come. Commending a "religion without religion,"⁵⁵ Derrida instead advances a structure of

⁵⁴ Derrida, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials." In *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, trans. Ken Frieden, 73-142. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 79.

⁵⁵ See Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 49. Taking a cue from Kant's *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*, Derrida seeks to lay bare religion by "desertifying" it, by extracting its essence and eliminating its accidents. To accomplish this, he subjects the Abrahamic religion to the process of deconstruction. All presence (i.e., theological doctrine or content) is thereby exterminated and the only kernel left is structure of religion: hospitality/justice. See, Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at

religion that hangs entirely on a deferred temporal horizon, indefinitely deferred. All presence is postponed, infinitely postponed. The structure of hope and expectation preserved by Derrida's "religion without religion" is without reference to dogmatic content of the Christian faith or institutional creedal system (religion without the religious content).

Non-Intentionality and Pure Interiority in Henry

So far we have seen that Marion conceives of God as an absolute phenomenon that overflows the prefixed and stable boundaries of Husserlian intentionality. Whereas if Derrida eliminates the possibility of presence, then *a fortiori* the problem of God as a phenomenon is undercut: two Husserlian revolutions proceeding in opposite directions. A third "Husserlian Revolution" is undertaken by Henry: a non-intentional field of manifestation in which God appears as an absolute "subjective" phenomenon.

Rather than orchestrate the theological possibility of an intentional act saturated with presence (Marion) or undercut intentional presence and fulfilment by showing the poverty of all intentional objects, not least God (Derrida), Henry outlines a non-intentional or pre-intentional field of interiority. As a concrete sub-layer or primal "underground" of self-experience, Henry highlights the possibility of immediate contact with the divine without at the same time committing himself to fit that experience within the intentional field of streaming noematic correlates. The problem of God as phenomenon is resolved for Henry in that God appears as an absolute living phenomenon constitutive of that very field of non-intentional

the Limits of Reason Alone." In *Acts of Religion*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Gil Anidjar (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 40-101.

subjectivity *prior* to intentional display where the ego is stratified with layers of fulfilment, some acts empty and some saturated. Internal to the ego's self-presence, in that "interior space" underneath empty and full intentional acts, God appears as a phenomenon, the full glory of which Henry compares to the *parousia*.⁵⁶ Henry therefore insists that God as phenomenon appears as a phenomenon present to me prior to intentional visibility. The non-intentional field of display so understood gives rise to a purely interior field of manifestation, prior to language, the physical body, the world-horizon and the intentional life of the subject.

Our threefold typology has clarified three divergent "Husserlian Revolutions" that adopt creative modifications of intentionality in an attempt to address what appears to be a chief phenomenological problem: if God is not an object, then how may God appear as phenomenon at all? God is an absolute phenomenon that defies objecthood so far as he saturates my gaze (Marion), God is no phenomenon at all, and thus no object, which breaks over me as an utter absence that leads me through a series of empty intentions toward a life made less ego-centric and more hospitable to that which is wholly other (Derrida) and, finally, God is an absolute phenomenon whose glory appears as an interior self-experience prior to intentional display of objects (Henry). Marion's theory puts into play resources to think through dramatic encounters, whether it is Paul's Damascus Road experience or the types of experience Rudolf Otto characterizes as examples of an event that evokes a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. Yet the problem with Marion's theory of saturation is that it cannot show how the life of faith is ordered in an enduring or abiding manner. The life of faith is frequently without verification and fulfilment,

⁵⁶ Henry writes, "The Parousia of the absolute shines at the base of the most simple impression of the ego." See Henry, *Incarnation*, 367.

and is, especially, without “mountaintop experiences” of excess. Our contention throughout this dissertation is that faith is a living *toward* the eschatological proximity of God whose grace is near but whose presence does not appear as a phenomenon for me. We may all be present to God, laid bare and seen exactly as we are by the divine creator and his all-seeing eye. But this hardly necessitates a mutuality of contact between Creator and creation. Without claiming the right to presume a logic of presence, as if God were present to me however dramatic or interior that presence may appear to be, this dissertation shall open out onto a living faith described as “pilgrimage in the world” until God is present to me in the *parousia*—not a blithely unreflective recapitulation of Derridean “religion without religion.”

Derrida’s phenomenological narrative, born from his early confrontation with Husserl, yields emptiness, absence and deferment, and is, admittedly, a formidable critique of “presence” similar to my own Augustinian proposal. Derrida adamantly counters the conceptual violence of those who claim God as phenomenon. More radically, he contradicts any basis for a primal pre-intentional field of presence: perhaps Derrida and Henry are antithetical at every level of their departure from Husserl. Yet Derrida’s proposal of an empty intention, and the “religion without religion” to which it gives rise, is “atheistic” in that its eschatological structure is finally bereft of any positive content; despite his protests, Derrida’s elusive “agnosticism” and his economy of *différance* simply fails on every account to aid the theologian in interpreting the life of faith (though John Caputo and his heirs may disagree). Henry, in utter contrast, avoids either intentional feature (empty or saturated) and opts for an “metaphysics of presence” of the most radical kind: an

interior space prior to intentionality wherein the feeling of myself in a primal self-presence apart from the world designates the absolute and abiding unity between my soul and God. The principal problem with Henry's economy of presence, for all of its brilliance, is not that it presumes the existence of God but that it eliminates the distinction between creature and Creator (or it is at least greatly blurred: we shall highlight this point in chapter three). Moreover, for Henry, the presence of God to me in the fully glory of the eternal *parousia* also leads, without delay, to an overrealized eschatology, a kind of Gnostic protology. Even though Henry elucidates how I am in intimate and abiding unity with God on the basis of the arch-presence of auto-affection, Henry's narrative of the subjective origin of divine presence does not permit space for the eschatological temporality of faith. Nor does it allow for the bodily participation in the ecclesial body of Christ so crucial to the everyday life of faith for the Christian of antiquity and of today. For Henry, participation in the ecclesial life is an unnecessary burden, for I am already in an acosmic, non-temporal unity with the Trinitarian glory of God—I enjoy in Christ the eternal sonship of heaven.⁵⁷ Henry's God is a God who is already fully present, shining in the majestic lustre of the *parousia*. Divine self-revelation, Henry insists, abides as always already there, inside me, in that invisible site where my life and God's life co-emerge.

Against Marion, Derrida and Henry, our discourse of a eschatological self argues that the phenomenological figure of "God" is simultaneously a living God and *not* a phenomenon. A phenomenological theology advance in what follows requires a visible word of faith professed in the body of Christ as a means of drawing near, inwardly, to God. Faith orders life as a "seeking," a pilgrimage toward God who is

⁵⁷Henry does not repudiate the theological category of "faith," but he does, however, re-describe faith as non-temporal and non-worldly. See, Henry, *I am the Truth*, 192-94.

never a phenomenon for me but whose eschatological proximity is revealed to me at a distance, as a promise to be unveiled at the dawn of the last day, the *parousia* to come.

Yet what does the order of seeking presuppose about the structure of the self? As the dative pole, I am given to myself as an *imago Dei* by my Creator, and by virtue of creation, I am drawn into intimacy with God precisely because I image God. As such, I do not first achieve myself as a nominative “I.” I am originally given to myself through the work of creation. Creation narrates how God created heaven and earth, and it is this horizon into which I am thrown through creation. Only God (I am who I am) posits himself and the world and can achieve a pure “I.” And so we turn to the figure of the “porous self” and the larger eschatological argument of the dissertation as a whole.

§4. A PRÉCIS OF THE ARGUMENT

We have been arguing that, as a style of thinking focused on describing phenomena in accord with their distinctive properties and movements, phenomenological inquiry scrutinizes appearance’s various manners of givenness, appearing appears (genitive) to me (dative) (§1). We have also elucidated the sometimes contentious, but fruitful, exchange between phenomenology and theology, and that their reciprocity determines how the self can be figured over against modernity’s tendency to reduce the self to a set neutral, finite experiences (§2). And finally, we discussed that, if we grant the theological turn within phenomenology a legitimate place in contemporary thought, we find various compelling formulations of it in current literature. Focusing on the problem of God as a phenomenon, we

showed that Marion, Derrida and Henry address the manifestation of God in interesting, but ultimately, in unsatisfying ways (§4).

Making a shift, then, from God as a phenomenon to a life of seeking a living God who is no phenomenon (pilgrimage), our proposal is in accord with the Christian theological drama that unfolds cosmically with creation, moving properly only toward its Christological fulfilment in the eschaton. In view of the problem of God as a phenomenon the structure of the self requires recourse to theology in order to clarify how I am an *imago Dei* created to seek its Creator. The thesis we are urging is that the self bears witness to the structure we shall describe in later chapters as an eschatological “porosity.” But why is the porous, eschatological self important, not least, interesting at all? To defend the claim that the logic of porosity furnishes the coordinates of the self, we counter particular interpretations of the self that advance one of two claims: one the one hand, the self is to be dissociated from God and reduced it to its appearing in the world (Heidegger and his heirs such as Derrida, Janicaud, etc.), and, on the other, the self is to be dissociated from the world and situated within a site outside of the world in communion with God (Henry, and the argument could be made in another context, Marion and Lacoste). Though we do not accept Henry’s thesis that I appear to myself and achieve myself as an interior “me” in unity with God, we nevertheless appreciate the originating proximity of God to me that can be ascribed to Henry’s position and what we shall ascribe to the doctrine of creation. I am necessarily intimate to, and open to communion with, God because God created me. Our thesis that the self is porous configures a self that is more than its appearance in the world, and yet, also situates the self firmly within the world itself.

God is not a phenomenon, but that does not prevent us from analyzing in this dissertation how God is given to me while on pilgrimage in the world. I image God thanks to creation and God is an eschatological proximity to me thanks to the coming renewal of creation. The structure of the self that this theological perspective brings to light is a porous self, who is created in the world and who cannot escape the world, and yet, who is porous to that which transcends the world. If the structure of the porous self can be maintained, then it follows that possibilities for a nuanced contemporary approach to explicating the life of faith can be opened up without making God a phenomenon present to me in a religious experience. Additionally, figuring the self in this way also overcomes two extremes: to reduce the self to the world and its physical body *or* to reduce the self to an interior union with God that seeks to escape the world. The porous self so understood is not escapist but nor can it simply realize its full identity in the present world.

The two principal features upon which the porous structure of the eschatological self trades are (1) the temporal nature of confessing faith and contemplating in hope within the world before a God who transcends the world, and (2) the bodily nature of participating in the body of Christ in the world with a view to the resurrection body to come.⁵⁸ We enrich our approach to each of these topics by incorporating theological resources drawn principally from St. Augustine.

⁵⁸ Both of these points highlight how phenomenology can elucidate the eschatological structure of selfhood. We note here that eschatology is distinct from the apocalyptic styles of theological reflection so prevalent in contemporary continental philosophy and systematic theology. One of the dangers of apocalyptic thought is that it can ossify the future tense, heralding that we are now already in possession of the “to come.” For a helpful discussion of the differences between eschatological and apocalyptic styles of theology and the dangers intrinsic to apocalypticism, see Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 38 ff. For an illuminating typology and assessment of the various inflections of apocalyptic thought ranging from Derrida and Caputo to Moltmann and Balthasar and others, see Cyril O’Regan, *Theology and the Spaces of Apocalyptic* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2009).

Our argument so far, furthermore, has insisted that phenomenology privileges a structure of appearing whereby things are given to a dative pole, to “me.” Appearing is explainable by appearings of something (genitive) to someone (dative). Yet we have also claimed that God is not a phenomenon and therefore resists the genitive category. Yet if God is manifest within the horizon of human experience, and thus is given to the dative pole, then how do we square this with the fact that God is not a phenomenon?

Our proposal of a porous self contends that I am created by God and thus made in the image of God. We appreciate here what the Fourth Lateran Council has declared about the theological truth of creation: “Between the Creator and the creature there cannot be a similarity so great that the dissimilarity is not greater.”⁵⁹ Understood as given to itself by creation, the porous self is in possession of the capacity to draw near to and enjoy intimacy with God without making God a phenomenon idolatrously present to me, giving way to a monism in which we merge together. As a unique self dissimilar to my Creator, I cannot merge with my Creator nor can I partake of the same essence. Because of this dissimilarity, or gap, between the self and God, the life of faith is simply that: a life of “seeking” for its Creator until that final presence is disclosed in the eschaton where all the saints shall see God face to face, unveiled in full glory. However great a similarity to God we display in being an *imago Dei*, there is a greater dissimilarity, at least while on pilgrimage here and now. So while I may be in the presence of God, the opposite eludes me, that is, God does not become present to me as a phenomenon that I live through or that saturates me.

⁵⁹ See canon 2 of the Fourth Lateran Council in H. J. Schroeder, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation and Commentary* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1937), 236-96.

The “porous self” is also created in the temporal streaming of the world (God created heaven and earth) and embodied locally as particular spatio-temporal body-pole geometrically situated amid other objects and body-poles; and yet, I am also inwardly porous to that which transcends the world. This means two things: (1) that my display in the temporality of the world-horizon does not constitute me in my entirety and (2) that my display as a body-object in the world-horizon is not all that my body is. There is a double-sided structure by which I am manifest, such that my exterior display is available to all as a common object of inquiry but my inner life is spiritual and porous to the eternal. And it is the eschatological seeking put into play by pilgrimage that nourishes this inner life.⁶⁰ This is a very brief précis of the argument that shall be worked out over against Henry’s proposal of the duplicitous self, which maintains that the *parousia* already appears inside me, in my non-temporal subjective body at the expense of my objective body in the world.

⁶⁰ A fuller treatment of the theological architecture of the porosity of display would have to account for its similarities with and differences from that classic theological doctrine on the Creator-creature relation, the *analogia entis*. Discussing this doctrine would, of course, take us into territory of the history of metaphysics and contemporary debates about onto-theology, which would take us afar from our task of critically introducing Henry and adopting eschatological principles to overcome Henry’s duplicity of display. For a discussion of the contested nature of the *analogia entis* (i.e., from Martin Heidegger and Karl Barth forward) as well as a defence of its contemporary relevance, see John Betz, “Beyond the Sublime: The Aesthetics of the Analogy of Being (Part One), *Modern Theology* 21 no.3 (2005): 367-411; Betz, “Beyond the Sublime: The Aesthetics of the Analogy of Being (Part Two) *Modern Theology* 22 no.1 (2006): 1-50.

Chapter 2:

Visible Display: Husserl, Heidegger and the Basic Problem of Phenomenology

Things stand out, are visible and manifest, because they are lustrous, luminous. But without the sun or some artificial light, things would not have this lightsomeness, visibility, and luminosity of things.

–James G. Hart⁶¹

§ 5. WHAT IS VISIBLE DISPLAY?

In this chapter we continue to contextualize the universe of ideas that were formative for Henry not only for his inaugural publication, but also up through his theological trilogy, which served as a concluding epilogue, a final theological turn that upon completion in 2002 bequeathed to posterity a narrative of the “interior self” in its totality. Whereas in the preceding chapter we discussed the nature of phenomenology, its relation to theology and Henry’s place in that landscape, this chapter situates Henry in view of the specific phenomenological principles under whose provenance he enunciated his own peculiar notion of self-presence: Husserl’s category of *intentionality* and Heidegger’s analytic of *being-in-the-world*. The propeadeutic importance of this chapter cannot be overemphasized given that Henry prioritizes reflection on phenomenological method, especially in view of Husserl.⁶²

⁶¹ Hart, *Who One Is vol. I*, 105.

⁶² See, for example, the several discussions of method in Henry: “the Phenomenological Method” in *Material Phenomenology*, chapter 1; “Le renversement de la phénoménologie” in *Incarnation*, part I; and “Quatre principes de la phénoménologie,” *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 1 (1991): 3-26.

As Henry's primary interlocutor, Husserl occupies a central role in this chapter. Yet Henry departs sharply from such a "teutonic" philosophical discourse, in both its Husserlian and Heideggerian forms. He does so on the basis of the key issue of the interior self's structural relation to the exteriority of the world-horizon, and thus, reference to both figures (in this and subsequent chapters) shall help clarify Henry's own position. Moreover, because Husserl and Heidegger represent a single, unified position in Henry's estimation about the nature of appearing, they are together complicit in the systematic reduction of the self to the visible display of the exterior world. In contradistinction, Henry proposes a purely interior self, a non-reflective, non-intentional self riveted to itself in pure self-presence independent from the economy of mediation, distance, separation, transcendence and exteriority of any sort. Henry's theory of the self is without light and thus occupies a nocturnal sphere of experience unique to itself, appearing to nothing other than itself, without interpolation of the visible display of the world—Henry's self is manifest as a sphere of *invisible* display, which contradicts Husserl's and Heidegger's preoccupation with *visible* display. Hence, the title of this chapter indicates that, for Henry, visible display is the basic problem of phenomenology.

Yet when one thinks of "invisible display" one is confronted with an oxymoron, at least seemingly so (Henry himself asks rhetorically: "Is not a phenomenology of the invisible a contradiction in terms?").⁶³ According to all post-Husserlian phenomenology, in order for a phenomenon to come into display it must appear, become visible and be seen. To display is to come into the light of the horizon of the world. In fact, whereas "invisible display" is ostensibly an oxymoron,

⁶³ See Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 3.

“visible display” is a tautological expression; to display is to become visible and to become visible is to display. So phenomenology in its Husserlian and Heideggerian variants declares it impossible for an invisible phenomenon to display itself without also at the same time bursting forth into the field of visibility, which both Husserl and Heidegger name simply the “world.” Yet it is precisely this mode of visible display that Henry thinks bedevils phenomenology as its basic problem. Henry seeks to overcome it by broadening the concept of “display” to include not just visible but also invisible modalities.

Before we outline the particular contours of Husserlian intentionality and Heideggerian being-in-the-world that touch off articulations of visible display, contours against which Henry rearticulates display to account for the invisible, we ask an obvious question: why is visible display a basic problem at all for Henry?

The field of visible display consisting of the horizon of the world itself is linked by Henry to the reductive philosophical principle he calls “ontological monism.”⁶⁴ Visible display, i.e., the “world,” is by nature monistic because its power is reductive, stripping display of its richly duplicitous structure, and in this stripping, designates the complete and utter exhaustion of appearing within a single field of appearance: the visible disclosure of the world. Henry contends that, for Husserl and Heidegger and their heirs, only things which appear in the exteriority of the world, in other words, can legitimately “appear” as phenomena. Precisely because it is monistic, the field of visible display conceals the invisible presence of interior life, disallowing the interior self to appear as a phenomenon. Intentionality and being-in-the-world so conceived by Henry are not neutral fields of appearing. Indeed,

⁶⁴ For more on what Henry means by “ontological monism,” see Henry, *Essence of Manifestation*, §11 especially.

together they constitute the mode of givenness of the “world” itself, a sphere of appearing that suppresses the interior core of display, covering over the invisible self-revelation of myself to myself given inside me. Accordingly, Henry argues that intentionality and being-in-the-world reflect the destructive power of the “world” because, as a mode of display, the world brings to light its exterior horizon at the expense of the invisible display of interiority. While we shall explore Husserl in greater detail below, we take the Husserlian ego for a moment here to clarify just how Henry’s notion of invisible display is *interior* and thus structurally closed to, and forever blocked from, the visible display of the “world”—and hence, why visible display disallows invisible display to count as a field of display.⁶⁵

As the agent of manifestation itself, the Husserlian ego “lights up” or illuminates objects by representing them. To represent, in German, is *vorstellen* or an act of “placing-before.” Similarly, the word object, in German, is *Gegenstand* or an act of “standing-against.” Hence the “ob-ject” is nothing other than this appearing before, or the showing of the object “standing against” a conscious ego. The state of being-there-before-me in the stream of consciousness highlights the Husserlian ego’s structural opening to the exterior, visible world. For Husserl, the intentional aim of the ego-pole looks outward, toward that which is “transcendent” to itself, what we have been calling the genitive pole; and it is this gap between the genitive and ego poles that is the luminous space of visible display.

Husserl therefore compares the power of ego’s aim to a spot-light, and it is here that the ego is not just a dative “me” but also an agent of manifestation that brings to light the world itself, a nominative “I,” an *Ichpol*. Husserl writes, “The

⁶⁵ See Henry, “Phénoménologie non intentionnelle: une tâche de la phénoménologie à venir,” in *De la phénoménologie, tome I of phénoménologie de la vie* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2003), 105-22.

object of attention, in this specific sense, lies in the cone of more or less a bright light; but it can also move into the penumbra and into the completely dark region. Though the metaphor is far from adequate to differentiate all the modes which can be fixed phenomenologically, it is still designative in so far as it indicates alterations in what appears, as what appears.”⁶⁶ Michael Purcell rightly describes the nominative-dative aspects of the Husserlian ego-pole as “somewhat like a lighthouse,” in which “consciousness would illumine the area within which objects may make their appearance....”⁶⁷ Because consciousness functions to make visible objects before its gaze, the conscious ego, structurally speaking, inclines forward as if in an ongoing state of “outside-ness” or “transcendence” beyond itself. Here the Husserlian ego, as a nominative agent of display, is alienated from itself, cast outside of itself into the interplay between the genitive and dative poles of appearing. By virtue of its function as a light-ray or spot-light, the Husserlian ego is focused on the “outside,” casting its luminous gaze outward upon the horizon of objects and other subjects. Once seen, objects are bathed in the luminosity opened up by a “distance” (or gap, mediation, separation, etc.) between the nominative *Ichpol* and its receiving (dative) that which is given to it (genitive). This gap *is* the field of visible display itself, the gap is the world. Without this distance there is no visibility and, without the visibility, there is no world.

Henry contends that once we isolate the structural distance between the genitive and dative, we at the same time lay bare the basic phenomenological presupposition driving Husserl’s thinking.⁶⁸ Husserlian visible display requires the

⁶⁶ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 224.

⁶⁷ Michael Purcell, “Beyond the Limit and Limiting the Beyond,” *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 68 (2010): 121-38, reference on 136.

⁶⁸ Henry, *Incarnation*, 47-8.

mediation of the “world” or the luminous sphere of display outside the interior self. It is therefore no surprise that the Husserlian “spot-light” solidifies a structural distance or gap between the ego and the world, a distance or gap that allows the horizon of the world to be illuminated by the ego. Correlatively, there is no pure ego, nor pure nominative “I” in Husserl. “Consciousness of...” forms the basis of the play between the ego and the non-ego, or the ego and that which it constitutes before its gaze: the world.

The opposite situation is just as true for the Husserlian ego: if there is no gap, then there is no spot-light, and thus, no visible display of the world—no appearing whatsoever. Without distance there can be no “seeing” or luminous appearing of phenomena in the field of visible display. If the ego’s aim reflects itself in a mirror, for example, it can only see its reflection by the light that shines in the gap between the ego and the image received back via the mirror’s reflection. I see myself in the mirror because my vision is mediated by a reflection, a reflection made possible by the distance between the reflection and that which is being reflected. Distance, presupposed by the ego’s aim itself, carves out a site that constitutes the space wherein the ego’s “seeing” can bring to light anything that may appear. To pursue the “mirror” metaphor further, when my eye draws closer and closer to its reflection in the mirror until finally it coincides perfectly with its reflection, then, and only then, do the genitive and dative collapse into one another and does my vision terminate. Without distance between my ego’s gaze and the mirror I cannot see my reflection: as I pull away from the mirror, my field of vision is opened up allowing my ego once again to “see” and illuminate objects before its gaze.

For Henry, the lighting of the world is the result of such a distance, i.e., mediation, outsideness, gap, transcendence, horizon, exteriority, separation, alienation. Because the Husserlian ego dwells in the crevice interposed between itself (dative) and the object (genitive), it is enabled to act as a spot-light. Understood on the basis of the distance between the genitive and dative poles of appearing, the Husserlian *Ichpol* is unquestionably of a piece with visibility, always bound up with the world. Henry describes Husserlian consciousness as the very opening-up or bringing to light of the world as such: “The ‘world’s truth’ is nothing other than this: a self-production of ‘outsideness’ as the horizon of visibility in and through which everything can become visible and thus become a ‘phenomenon’ for us.”⁶⁹ Henry names this reductive field of appearing “visible display” because it displays *la venue hors de soi*.

For Henry, the problem, then, with reducing appearing to visible display alone, to the world alone, as Husserl does, is that it unduly limits appearing. Henry’s solution to the problem of visible display is to work out in great detail a field of invisible display purely interior to the self, a nocturnal self-presence isolated from the visible display of the world. In so doing, he articulates the lineaments of an interior sphere of invisible display that challenges, and even inverts, those phenomenological articulations whose typical focus is visible display, whether it is in the form of Husserlian intentionality or Heideggerian being-in-the-world.⁷⁰ Henry’s innovation of invisible display is innovative precisely because it counters the valorisation of intentionality and being-in-the-world. Invisible display is thus “non-intentional” and “non-worldly.” By Henry’s lights, this is a fundamental expansion

⁶⁹ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 17.

⁷⁰ He explicitly characterizes his phenomenology of Incarnation as the “Le renversement de la phénoménologie.” See Henry, *Incarnation*, part one.

of the meaning of “appearing” or “displaying.” He broadens the field of appearing to account for that which is invisible, or that which has no distance, gap, alienation or mediation and therefore no luminosity or visibility—the invisible is without world. Perhaps it is an oxymoron to claim that a phenomenon can appear within a field of “invisible display,” but for Henry, whose work is characterized by a monumental effort to redraw the bounds of “display” itself, Heidegger and Husserl do not have the final say on the limits of those bounds.⁷¹

In what follows we highlight the phenomenological setting in which Henry’s nocturnal self-present subject takes shape. To do so, we outline the visible character of Husserlian intentionality in greater detail (§6) and of Heideggerian being-in-the-world (§7). We then introduce the duplicity of display whereby it is shown that Henry divides all appearing into two fields: exterior visibility and interior invisibility (§8). We then examine more closely Henry’s relationship to Husserl’s notion of the consciousness of internal time (§9). This is a critical section because it shows not only how indebted Henry is to Husserl’s notion of the “living present” but also just how radically interior Henry’s notion of invisible display is with respect to the Husserlian ego (and thus to what extent Henry departs from Husserl). We then offer more general observations about the interior self inasmuch as Henry emphasizes its purity as living (§10). Each of these sections shall lay the proper phenomenological groundwork to enable us to explore in greater depth Henry’s “theological turn” in chapters three and four.

⁷¹ I quote here Kevin Hart’s apt, if too brief, description of Henry’s critical re-fashioning of phenomenology. Hart writes that Henry’s version of phenomenology represents a type of “stretched” phenomenology, “in the sense that a limousine can be stretched – stripped, cut in two, put back together with additional material in the middle, and then refitted for greater comfort.... the extension for Henry [is] by way of expanding what counts as phenomenality.” See Hart, “Phenomenality and Christianity,” *Angelaki* 12 (2007): 37-53, reference on 41.

§6. HUSSERL AND INTENTIONALITY

It is widely agreed upon that intentionality forms the very foundation of Husserlian phenomenology. Husserl himself calls it the “principle theme of phenomenology”⁷² and the “wholly indispensable fundamental concept which is the starting point at the beginning of phenomenology.”⁷³ Derived from the Latin *intendere*, which means “to stretch out”, “to aim at” or “to direct to,” Husserl borrows the term intentionality from his mentor, Franz Brentano.⁷⁴ In fact, Brentano retrieved the term from the medieval Scholastics to explain mental phenomena as unique with respect to physical phenomena.⁷⁵ Husserl grants Brentano’s basic thesis as a legitimate starting point for thinking through the philosophical structures of consciousness. How does the mind become aware of phenomena that appear to it? Husserl writes, “Franz Brentano’s significant discovery that ‘intentionality’ is the fundamental characteristic of ‘psychic phenomena’—opened the method for a descriptive transcendental-philosophical theory of consciousness.”⁷⁶ Yet Husserl surmises that intentionality entails complex moments of mental, subjective activity for which Brentano never accounted. This is to say that he goes beyond Brentano insofar as Husserl developed *how* consciousness worked in its pure, transcendental state—as a complex meaning-scheme that endows objects with “sense” or “meaning.” This desire to elucidate the essential structures of the ego led Husserl to discover the rich and complex inner-life of transcendental intentionality. It took

⁷² Husserl, *Ideas I*, 199.

⁷³ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 202.

⁷⁴ Husserl borrowed the term from Brentano as early as *Logical Investigations*. See Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations, volume II*, 552-55.

⁷⁵ Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, trans., Antos C. Ranurello, D. B. Terrell and Linda L. McAlister (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1995), 88.

⁷⁶ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), 41.

many years for Husserl to elaborate and refine his theory of intentionality, and so, we bring to light here only its most important features with an eye to clarifying the field of visible display. In doing so, many of the most important technical terms in the Husserlian lexicon will be clarified. Terms such as *Erlebnis*, the intentional object, meaning-intention, intuition, retention and protention, and the impression—all important concepts, as we shall see in this chapter and subsequent chapters, for the inception of Henry’s phenomenology of invisible display.

Intentionality

We begin with Husserl’s initial breakthrough. Upon its release it, Husserl garnered critical acclaim and was viewed as a serious and thorough continental philosopher. Published in successive years, the two-volume *Logical Investigations* (1900-01) commenced with a sustained and exhaustive study of the problematic of intentionality and the relation between the ego and the world to which it gave concrete expression. It motivated phenomenology from its inception as a universal apriori, and he paid exacting attention to its structure from *Logical Investigations* up through his final publications; he writes, “The first breakthrough of this universal apriori of correlation between experienced object and manners of givenness (which occurred during work on my *Logical Investigations* around 1898) affected me so deeply that my whole subsequent life-work has been dominated by the task of systematically elaborating on this apriori of correlation.”⁷⁷ Particularly in Investigation V he sketches the two principal components of this universal apriori, what in the vernacular of the *Investigations* we depict as an “intentional act.”

⁷⁷ Husserl, *Crisis*, p.166, footnote.

Such “intentional acts” are conscious experiences of things. It must perforce apply to experiences that are dispositional or prejudicial. When I think about a castle, I always perceive it in the mode of “wished for,” “delighted in,” “judged about,” “pictorially represented,” “imagined,” etc. Every object immanent within consciousness is an intentional object, or an object on which I have a certain mental stance. Each and every intentional object thus represents a mental object that evokes in me an “act,” or a determinant descriptive experience of the object in question. In the second place, because I am always “directed toward” or “about” a phenomenon, all intentional experiences contain only intentional objects, that is, contents experienced by the mind’s dispositional character. All intentional objects are simply that, objects intended by the mind’s intentional powers. By the same token, I enjoy, in some cases, the experience of something totally imaginary as an object present in consciousness (i.e. round square, the god Jupiter, a mermaid, etc.), and so, all intentional objects are immanent to consciousness but are not necessarily “real” or really “in” consciousness (*reell Bewusst*), a crucial distinction Husserl takes pains to sharpen throughout his career.

To distinguish intentional objects from “real” objects in space and time, Husserl delineates the two primary layers of an intentional act: the intentional *object* and the intentional *content*. The intentional object is simply the castle as it is presented and experienced by the ego via intentionality (as we made clear above) whereas the intentional content is the actual castle, the one that is really (*reellen*) existent in space and time perceived in and through sensation, for Husserl states, “the experienced content, generally speaking, is not the perceived object.”⁷⁸ Or similarly,

⁷⁸ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. II, 565.

“we must distinguish, in relation to the intentional content taken as object of the act, between *the object as it is intended*, and the *object which is intended*.”⁷⁹ Thus there are two types of material in a conscious act: intentional objects and real (*reellen*) spatiotemporal content. But how do the spatiotemporal contents relate to the mental sphere of intentionality? In other words: how does the interior mind gain access to the transcendent, exterior object? How do the genitive and dative poles unite?

That which is really within consciousness, as a real (*reellen*) spatiotemporal object, is a non-intentional sense experience. Husserl declares as much when he says, “truly *immanent contents*, which belong to the real make-up [*reellen Bestande*] of the intentional experiences, are *not intentional*: they constitute the act, provide necessary *points d’appui* which render possible an intention, but are not themselves intended, not the objects present in the act. I do not see colour sensations but coloured things, I do not hear tone sensations but the singer’s song, etc., etc.”⁸⁰ The “real content” is thus a non-intentional empirical substance that really exists and is present within consciousness but (and this may sound counter-intuitive) remains at the same time something never “experienced” by the intentional ego. To this dilemma we now turn.

Erlebnis

For Husserl, the term “experience” reflects a technical or phenomenological meaning, one expressed by the German word *Erlebnis*, in English, “lived-experience” and in French “la vécu.”⁸¹ To experience, or live through anything is to

⁷⁹ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. II, 578.

⁸⁰ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. II, 559.

⁸¹ For more on the phenomenological difference between the two German words for experience, *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, see Pierre Keller, *Husserl and Heidegger on Human Experience* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), esp. ch.1. For a historical investigation of the term *Erlebnis* as it originated in German thought in the nineteenth-century, see Hans-Georg

encounter that thing as an intentional object, within the matrix of meanings the mind may bestow on the thing. Thus the non-intentional “stuff” (*Stoff*), in principle, cannot be experienced (this point is made much of by Henry as we shall see). We must continue to bear in mind that, for Husserl, the experienced castle remains embedded in the temporal streaming of intentional acts so that the same real (*reellen*) castle is subject to a multiplicity of perspectives. The one and same castle is experienced from several different angles, as I move around it, looking at it from the front, the back, the side, etc. Each new angle yields a new “experience” (*Erlebnis*) within the wakeful ego and its consciousness of.... The castle itself is rarely, if ever experienced, for the Husserlian ego experiences each new perspective of the castle as it appears by way of the ego’s “lighthouse.” Husserl writes of this distinction between the castle as it is and the castle as it is perceived by the ego: “The appearing of the thing (the experience) is not the thing which appears (that seems to stand before us *in propria persona*.)”⁸² Husserl therefore distinguishes the intentional object from the non-intentional content insofar as only the intentional object is experienced (*Erlebnis*) within, and constituted by, the intentional life of the ego. We are now in a position to move to a brief engagement with the concepts of intention and intuition, or form and content, the twin structures of Husserlian *Erlebnis*.

Husserl states that there must remain an “absolute distinction between *form* and *matter* of presentation...”⁸³ Herein lies the basic dualistic structure of Husserlian intentionality: form vs. matter, or ego and genitive poles of appearing respectively. It is important to maintain the strict division between thought (i.e. form) and intuition

Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised edition. trans., Joel Winsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad Publishing Corporation, 1989), 60-70.

⁸² Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. II, 538.

⁸³ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. II, 779.

(i.e. sensible or non-sensible matter), because even though they form a unity of experience, each component retains its distinct role in the intentional act. If distinct, how do these two components come together and form this unity? Husserl's transcendental subject is synthetic, but how?

At the basis of this dualism, intuition is that which provides the fulfilling material for consciousness. Intuition represents something like the raw material from which the intentional aim synthesizes objects into units of knowledge. The intentional act of the mind "lives through" (*Erlebnis*) or "experiences" this raw *Stoff*, endowing it with shape and meaning. Appropriately, then, the intentional aim is called the "meaning-intention," whereby the mind bestows meaning onto the object in question, which is called the "fulfilling intuition." The meaning-intention or sense-bestowal (*Sinngebung* where *Sinn* literally means "sense" or "meaning") sets into operation the process of constitution, the movement by which consciousness gives meaning to and synthesizes the intuition into an intelligible lived-experience, an *Erlebnis*.

We can say that intentional acts are fulfilled on two levels for Husserl: first, some intuition is always necessary, a synthesis must occur between intention (i.e. thought) and intuition (i.e. raw data) and thus genitive and dative poles are unified by the nominative agent of manifestation, the ego; and second, the intentional aim sets out the limits of what can be given in intuition; only that which matches the ego's look as it searches for content can actually be constituted by the ego. It is at this juncture that we encounter a deepening of the cognitive power of intentionality and a sharper turn towards the interiority of the nominative *Ichpol*. We witness the emergence of a constitutive phenomenology with all of its attendant conceptual

devices, the most well-known of which is the phenomenological reduction—the philosophical tool which Husserl thinks enables the philosopher to discover the sphere of pure immanence (*Eigenheitsphäre*), the pure *Ichpol* as it subsists within its own world.

Interiority

Does the visible display of the world, as an exterior horizon of objects, really stand outside of the Husserlian ego, as if the world were merely an appendage to the ego? While we shall describe it more detail in chapters three and four, we invoke the Husserlian transcendental reduction here briefly to show that, despite Husserl's claims to the opposite, the ego cannot escape the interplay between genitive and dative in the exterior world, i.e., the Husserlian *Ichpol* is never pure and worldless but always wrapped in world-engagements—a position against which Henry articulates a theory of a world-less interior self.

The Husserlian phenomenological reduction brackets or suspends the natural attitude. This entails bracketing the naïve assumption that the world exists as it is, for “in the theoretical attitude which we call the ‘*natural attitude*’ the collective horizon of possible investigations is therefore designated with *one* word: It is the *world*.”⁸⁴ The crude realism of belief in the existence of the world apart from consciousness must be eschewed according to Husserl.⁸⁵ All disciplines other than phenomenology subscribe to the naiveté of the natural attitude: all natural and cultural sciences must undergo the reduction in order to make the transition from the natural attitude to the phenomenological attitude. Even God is subject to the blow of the reduction. Both

⁸⁴ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 5.

⁸⁵ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 109-110.

the natural world and God are methodologically excluded: “We extend the phenomenological reduction to include this ‘absolute’ and ‘transcendent’ being [God]. It shall remain excluded from the new field of research which is to be provided, since this shall be a field of pure consciousness.”⁸⁶ The phenomenological attitude, in contrast to the naïve or natural attitude, stipulates that the philosopher figure consciousness as the single target of research. Husserl urges that all philosophical research, if it remain rigorous, must avail itself, “of nothing but what we can make essentially evident by observing consciousness itself in its pure immanence.”⁸⁷ Left over like residue, then, the pure ego is the only substance able to subsist after the performance of the reduction.

Consequently, the transcendental reduction returns to intentionality as its principal theme. By bracketing or parenthesizing the existence of all transcendent fields of research (especially the world), Husserl seeks to arrive at the absolute interior space of the ego’s intentional life. Because intentionality perfectly governs the transcendental subject, the intentional structure remains the, “comprehensive name for all-inclusive phenomenological structures.”⁸⁸ As the transcendental reduction opens up the field of pure consciousness, Husserl orders intentionality in a synthetic duality. Using the Aristotelian Greek appellations of *morphé* and *hyle*, he labels the intentional sense-bestowing activity (i.e. *Sinngebung*) of the mind as the “form” or *morphé* and describes the intuitional data as the “material” or *hyle*. They are entitled accordingly as “stuffless forms” (*morphé*) and “formless stuffs” (*hyle*).⁸⁹ He explicitly calls the hyletic material non-intentional data. All hyletic data reaches

⁸⁶ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 134.

⁸⁷ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 136.

⁸⁸ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 199.

⁸⁹ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 204.

the mind via sense impressions. But this impression must conform to and receive its meaning from the intentional regard of the ego in order for the ego to “live-through” (*Erlebnis*) the data.⁹⁰ The hyletic dimension (“formless stuffs”) of Husserlian intentionality will prove crucial to Henry’s own proposal of a pure hyletic phenomenology with no *morphé*—a connection we shall make explicit momentarily (§9).

For now it suffices to point out that Husserl makes the “interior” synthetic life of the ego the key to interpreting the world: “Every grounding, every showing of truth and being, goes on wholly within myself.”⁹¹ Idealism reaches its ultimate status in the swerve toward “solipsism” present in his later 1929 work *Cartesian Meditations*: “If transcendental subjectivity is the universe of possible sense, then an outside is precisely—nonsense.”⁹² Husserlian idealism is an idealism that makes use of the phenomenological reduction, and here, the reduction is concerned with highlighting how the ego constitutes all exterior entities within itself, within its *morphé-hyle* synthetic unity.⁹³ But, is transcendental constitution truly interior? And is the world “out there” really an appendage relative to the inner space of the ego?

⁹⁰ How the *morphe* constitutes the intentional object (an object originally presented to consciousness by the hyletic material) Husserl clarifies by reference to his phenomenological theory of the noesis-noema dyad. The noetic and noematic components of the intentional act are the basic components of transcendental idealism. It is here that Husserl takes an unequivocal idealist turn and phenomenology becomes the science of studying how the mind constitutes within itself the horizon of the world. The noesis is the meaning-giving aim by which the ego constitutes the intentional object. The noema represents the object as it is intended, or that specific perspective in which we see the object. Ultimately, the world-pole is the ultimate noematic correlate. See for example, Husserl, *Ideas I*, 216. Also, the concept of “noema,” given its complicated idealist hue, has become a topic of some debate in Husserl scholarship. There are, indeed, four schools of interpretation to date! See David Woodruff Smith for a summary and analysis of these four perspectives in his *Husserl* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 257 ff.

⁹¹ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 82.

⁹² Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 84.

⁹³ He pitted his own brand of idealism against previous idealist systems: “Carried out with this systematic concreteness, phenomenology is *eo ipso* ‘transcendental idealism,’ though in a fundamentally and essentially new sense. It is not a psychological idealism, and most certainly not such an idealism as sensualistic psychologism proposes, an idealism that would derive a senseful

We shall return to this question when we confront Husserl's careful explication of the consciousness of internal time, which is the "universal peculiarity of all mental processes."⁹⁴ The nominative "I" or achievement of the *Ichpol* is wrapped up in the interplay between the genitive and dative poles of appearing in the temporal streaming of the world. The Husserlian ego so understood is pervaded by the transcendent directionality of intentionality, for consciousness always proceeds to constitute that which is other than, different from and outside of consciousness, namely the "world." The reduction so conceived is therefore nothing more than a momentary suspension that clarifies how the ego is, not entirely separate from, but constitutive of the world (more on the reduction in chapters three and four). We now proceed to Heidegger and his absolute valorisation of the exterior sphere of the world as the basic structure of Dasein.

§7. HEIDEGGER AND BEING-IN-THE-WORLD

Visible display is certainly a decisive theme underwriting Heidegger's notion of *Existenz* in *Being and Time*. It is important to pass through the Heideggerian schematic of visible display in this chapter because, in so many ways, Henry's phenomenology of invisible display owes a large debt to Heideggerian phenomenology if only because the former seeks to invert the latter. By understanding with greater precision what Heidegger means by "being-in-the-world" and the field of visible display it opens up, we are at the same time gaining a more thoroughgoing picture of Henry's phenomenology. So, for example, when Henry critiques the "truth of the world" he has in mind Heidegger. When Henry

world from senseless sensuous data. Nor is it a Kantian idealism, which believes it can keep open, at least as a limiting concept, the possibility of a world of things in themselves." Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 86.

⁹⁴ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 192.

denominates the world an illusion or compares its mode of appearing to an artificial “thin film” that “de-realizes” the invisible manifestation of interiority, he has in mind Heidegger as the target of critique. In fact, he is so critical of Heidegger’s analytic of being-in-the-world that Henry compares it to a discourse on death, one that “murders life” (because it covers over the interior life).⁹⁵ Something of an “arch-nemesis” for Henry, the totality of Heidegger’s analytic of being-in-the-world is everything that Henry’s notion of life is not. We highlight here two philosophical features determinate of Dasein (i.e., being-in-the-world and temporality) that both clarify Heidegger’s notion of visible display and bring out particular advancements against which Henry develops the phenomenological possibility of invisible display.

Being-in-the-world

In *Being and Time*, the “world” corresponds to that visible field upon which Dasein comes to light in its possibility to-be as it engages other Daseins together with things “present at hand” and “ready to hand” (*Vorhanden* and *Zuhanden*).⁹⁶ As is well known, Heidegger gives the name “being-in-the-world” to the basic ontological structure of human existence (Dasein). Against Husserl, Heidegger is not concerned with analyses of the transcendental life of consciousness or of the intention–intuition unity. Heidegger suggested that the central task of phenomenology is to clarify how we exist always already *in* the world:

⁹⁵ Henry writes, “It is from the radical negation of such a mode of revelation that Heideggerian thought proceeds. If such a mode of revelation, as a self-revelation foreign to the ‘outside’ of the world, constitutes the essence of life, then its negation signifies nothing less than the impossibility of any form of life, and thus amounts to the murder of life—not accidentally but rather in principle.” Henry, *I am the Truth*, 46.

⁹⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §16.

Of course, we are sometimes assured that we are certainly not to think of the subject's 'inside' [*Innere*] and its 'inner sphere' as a sort of 'box' or 'cabinet.' But when one asks for the positive signification of this 'inside' of immanence in which knowing is proximally enclosed, or when one inquires how this 'Being inside' [*Innenseins*] which knowing possesses has its own character of Being grounded in the kind of Being which belongs to the subject, then silence reigns. And no matter how this inner sphere may get interpreted, if one does no more than ask how knowing makes its way 'out of' it and achieves 'transcendence,' it becomes evident that the knowing which presents such enigmas will remain problematical unless one has previously clarified how it is and what it is.⁹⁷

Dasein's knowing evokes straightaway the problem of having an "interior" nature up against an "exterior" horizon. Heidegger resolves this problem by insisting that there is no problem at all, that it is, in fact, a pseudo-problem. The world has already taken possession of Dasein prior to any intentional relation to an exterior object. By seeking to offer what he calls a "disclosure" (*Erschlossenheit*) of human existence that is "equi-primordial" (*gleichursprünglich*) with the world, Heidegger overcomes Husserl's preoccupation with the interior transcendental ego and the reduction that leads to pure consciousness, as if consciousness inhabits an inner spatial sphere configured like a "cabinet" or "box" (of course we have shown that Husserl does not posit an absolute interior sphere and thus Heidegger's portrayal of Husserl is not without problems, but this interpretative issue is deferred for another time). By dissolving the rigid distinction between the interior and the exterior, Heidegger privileges everyday existence in which Dasein exists concretely in the "there-ness" (*Da*) of the world.

While departing from Husserl's categories of intentionality and transcendental consciousness, Heidegger nevertheless affirms the fundamental notion

⁹⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 87.

of ek-stasis or “distance” that we already suggested animates Husserl’s conception of the ego. Dasein, by its very structure as being-in-the-world, negates more radically than does Husserlian intentional life the possibility of invisible display as a modality of appearing. As a result of its absolute and ineluctable “there-ness,” Dasein is structurally open to, and attached to, the visible world. Always open to the world, Dasein necessarily displays worldhood as an inherent property, and thus its selfhood is grounded in its visible worldhood. Dasein is indeed fundamentally topological, for, “Dasein *is* its world, existingly.”⁹⁸

Yet Heidegger never claims that the world’s horizon in which Dasein finds itself thrown must necessarily give way to a purely passive description. Dasein also opens up the world through its temporal and affective movements. As an agent of manifestation, Dasein’s existential power to question its own existence (Dasein is a being “for whom being is a question”) designates Dasein’s capacity to open up the world as such: “If no Dasein exists, no world is ‘there’ either.”⁹⁹

Further, Heidegger distinguishes human existence from animal existence and inanimate “things” precisely on this score. He declares the stone to be “worldless,” the animal to be “poor in world” and Dasein to be “world-forming,” theses which qualify Dasein as particularly aware of objects and other humans in the world such that it relates to them in a way to bring to light the world.¹⁰⁰ Dasein occupies relationships whereby particular affections/moods and temporal powers (angst, boredom, being-toward-death, etc.) impinge on its existence. Temporality and affection/mood lead Dasein to question its place in the world, to the “question

⁹⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 416.

⁹⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 417.

¹⁰⁰ Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 185.

concerning how things stand with us” inasmuch as they open up the world where possibilities are realized in a way that an animal or a stone cannot realize.¹⁰¹ The topology of being-in-the-world, however, is grounded in a primal temporal movement.

Temporality

Dasein is topological and thereby both constitutive of and constituted by the structures of the world. But what is not always discussed is the fact that the “there-ness” of the world is made possible by the primal movement of temporality. Heidegger assigns to temporality the power of exteriorization, the power to open up the horizontal field of manifestation where topology is possible. Time deploys itself with an original movement such that spatiality is always a temporal spatiality.

Temporality designates Dasein’s transitive posture, which highlights Dasein as an agent of manifestation who is capable of actively opening up the horizon-like character of the world. Thanks to temporality, Dasein distanciates itself from itself through ecstasis, an outward movement. And it is through this movement that Dasein can create a horizon; this is perhaps why Heidegger says that time resembles something like a “horizon,”¹⁰² and the world-horizon is horizontal precisely because of its temporality. Heidegger observes: “On the basis of the horizontal constitution of the ecstatic unity of temporality there belongs to that entity which is in each case its own ‘there,’ something like a world that has been disclosed.” Or, “In temporalizing itself with regard to its Being as temporality, Dasein is essentially ‘in a world’ by

¹⁰¹ Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 281.

¹⁰² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 416.

reason of the ecstatic-horizonal constitution of that of temporality.”¹⁰³ Heidegger gives ultimate priority to temporality (over and above spatiality) with respect to the structure of being-in-the-world: “Only on the basis of its ecstatic-horizonal temporality is it possible for Dasein to break into space.”¹⁰⁴ Heidegger’s thesis, in other words, is that temporality reflects a “movement,” a “going” or an “ek-static becoming” that creates a horizon-like spatiality.

It is crucial to emphasize that this movement is a temporal movement. Consider the opposite for a moment: if Dasein were purely static and immobile, that is non-temporal, then it could not move or displace itself from “here” to “there.” Without temporality, Dasein would have no sense of its own volume, directionality or the ability to discriminate among differences within its own localized continuum of sensory data. Thus, for Heidegger, temporality opens up a whole continuum in which Dasein distends itself, moves itself and opens up spatiality itself.¹⁰⁵ In this respect, Dasein is truly “world-forming.”

Moreover, the worldly nature of being-in-the-world is due to the exterior displacement of Dasein’s temporal streaming, its movement from here to there by virtue of temporal movement. Heidegger emphasizes that, “In so far as Dasein temporalizes itself, a world *is* too. In temporalizing itself with regard to its Being as temporality, Dasein *is* essentially ‘in a world,’ by reason of the ecstatic-horizonal constitution of that temporality. The world is neither present-at-hand nor ready-to-hand, but temporalizes itself in temporality.”¹⁰⁶ On the one hand, Heidegger is

¹⁰³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 417.

¹⁰⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 421.

¹⁰⁵ This is not to say that Heidegger’s philosophical understanding of space is not without problems, and is, perhaps, underdeveloped. For more on this issue, see the illuminating study, Didier Franck, *Heidegger et le problème de l’espace* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1986)

¹⁰⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 417.

certainly maintaining that temporality is there in advance along with the world, and yet, on the other, he is claiming that temporality originally endows the world with its horizon-like structure, for “temporality, as an ecstatical unity, has something like a horizon.”¹⁰⁷ There can be no world without a temporal horizon. The Heideggerian world of visible display is therefore co-emergent with the original movement of temporality. Several years after *Being and Time*, in his “Letter on Humanism” (1944), Heidegger denominates Dasein as the “*ekstatikon par excellence*,” forcefully reaffirming that the essence of human being (humanism) lies in temporal existence.¹⁰⁸

As we shall see in chapter three, Henry’s phenomenology of interiority broadens the “theatre of appearing” to account for invisible display, a non-temporal mode of appearing whose chief feature is that of “en-stasis,” an appearance fundamentally at odds with the Heidegger’s temporal “ek-stasis.” It is to be recalled that Henry does not discount the utility of visible display of the world in either of its Husserlian or Heideggerian inflections insofar as he is concerned with broadening display itself so that both visible and invisible fields can count as fields of display. How does he describe this dual aspect of display?

§8. THE DUPLICITY OF DISPLAY

After furnishing the coordinates of visible display in Husserlian intentionality and Heideggerian being-in-the-world we are in a position to introduce Henry’s critical broadening of the concept of display itself. He combines Husserl and Heidegger together as proponents of one side of display: the visible disclosure of the

¹⁰⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 416.

¹⁰⁸ Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 263.

primal “outside” of the world. To stretch the bounds of appearing beyond its visibility, Henry proposes an adjoining field of invisible display, another side. This purely interior side of display is separate from, but complementary to, the world. Because appearing reflects a double-sidedness, Henry argues that a characteristic feature of appearing is its duplicity (*la duplicité de l'apparaître*)—here meaning “two-sided.” A reflection on the body affords us some clarifying precision on such duplicitous structure. Henry writes:

Our singular body appears to us in two different ways: on the one hand as this living body whose life is my own life, inside of which I am placed, with which I coincide at the same time as I coincide with each of its powers—to see, take, move, and so on—such that they are mine and the “I Can” puts them into operation. On the other hand, it appears as body-object that the “I-Can” sees, touches feels—the same as any other object.... Everything is double, but if what is double, what is offered to us in a double aspect, is in itself one and the same reality, then one of its aspects must be merely an appearance, an image, a copy of reality, but not that reality itself—precisely, its double.¹⁰⁹

The visible world-horizon is brought to light for Henry as a field of temporal objects exterior to the ego’s self-presence. This kind of *visible* phenomenology is concerned with the appearing of phenomena—objects made manifest through intentionality, being-in-the-world and the temporal horizon. Visible display is “visible” because it illuminates those phenomena that are outside of, and thus transcendent to, the ego in and through the interplay of the genitive and dative poles of appearing. The visible phenomena of which Husserl and Heidegger bespeak in their various phenomenological analyses are cast against the background of the temporal streaming of the world. Henry condemns this side of display as a lie (here

¹⁰⁹ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 195.

duplicitous as deceptive) because it conceals what is truly living about display, its interior side. The body, for example, displays a subjective power, an invisible mode of interiority.

Let us return to the exterior world for a moment. Henry insists that the visible display of the world-horizon literally displays an illusion, a “lie” about display. The body on visible display, to return to our example above, is not the real living interior body but rather an image or copy of that interior body. The exterior “body-object” is manifest only as a “double” or a doppelganger of the ego’s real, interior body. Visible display, as a vast world-horizon spread out before the ego, perpetuates the doppelganger effect. What I see in the world is nothing other than the other’s double, not the thing itself. When I look at Peter I only see Peter’s appearance in the world not Peter himself. To express it another way, visible display is inferior because it does not, and is incapable of, attending to the thing itself, i.e., the invisible essence of the ego in its self-embrace, a homeland untouched by the alienating power of the world. For Henry, the world as a stage of manifestation never gives access to the ego’s living subjectivity in its purity. Henry’s schematic of the duplicity of display maintains unequivocally that the visible world is not where thing itself resides.

Henry does not deny or negate the world, however. Henry writes, “the world’s light is not inherently shadow: it makes things manifest in its way, exhibiting stones, water, trees, and even people as they, too, appear lit by it, as being in this world....[but] its power of making manifest is changed into an utter powerlessness to do so with respect to the Essential.”¹¹⁰ Now, Henry does not deny the objective reality of the world apart from the interior ego. His critical judgment about the world

¹¹⁰ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 87.

as a horizon of display incapable of giving access to the essential is not, in fact, the same as denying the objective reality of the world. The world, as the stage that displays visible objects and objective bodies, does not disclose the essential precisely because it masks the essential—the world must exist in order to cover over the invisible. And in its veiling of the interior self, the world shows falsehood, literally acting deceitful about what is really the thing itself. This prompts questions: *how* does visible display occupy a land of deception and betrayal? *Why* exactly does the visible structure display, if only as a foil, counter the truth of invisible display?

The world, as Henry frames it, is a façade. Its surface bears within it no depth and moreover it puts into play the order of appearing which approaches nothing but its own pure expansion as a horizon of exteriority. Similar to the absence of living depth so obviously manifest in a cadaver, the horizon of the world spreads itself out within its externality. Henry, prone to carrying out his thesis in a polemical tone, writes that: “a cadaver is just that, a body reduced to its pure externality. When we are no longer anything but something of the world, something in the world, that is indeed what we will be before being buried or cremated there.”¹¹¹ The world-horizon limits phenomenological inquiry to exterior-bodily presences in which all properties ascribed to the ego are visible features. Even the mind becomes identical to the brain and the emotions to the facial expressions and felt bodily movements. To leave unexamined the very foundations of these appearings in the world necessarily leads, Henry so insists, to the tragedy of ontological monism: the temporal streaming of the world-horizon and nothing else—exteriority and nothing else. The privileging of visible display at the expense of the invisible is the crucial reason why Henry rejects

¹¹¹ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 59.

Heidegger's emphasis on being-in-the-world as the fundamental constitution of existence. For Henry, the analytic of being-in-the-world is reductive inasmuch as it reduces existence to the world alone.

Phenomenological inquiry that cannot look beyond the visible world-horizon is a negation of the truth of duplicity, namely, that there is also an interior domain of self-experience prior to the world. Ek-static phenomenology, highlighted in Husserl and Heidegger, entails an outward thrust, a movement like emptying a box full of its content, in which the only thing that counts as a phenomenon is the box itself, the shell with no filling. Heideggerian Dasein or the Husserlian ego, are razor thin in their depth, visible displayings with a smooth surface, tightly pulled across the interior ego. Without peeling back the layer of visible display, a phenomenological move Henry says Husserl and Heidegger fail to initiate (let alone accomplish), the self in its living essence eludes phenomenological inquiry. Henry's principal achievement lies in the unveiling of this primal sublayer or "underground" of invisible display. Internal to the ego, the invisible self lives underneath every appearance of the self in the world.

Yet Henry does not simply situate the two fields of display side by side as if they proceed collaterally without conflict, as if one consists of the "outside" shell while the other consists of the "interior" filling. The duplicity of display should not give the impression that the first field of display is visible and exterior while the other is invisible and interior, a unit lived together, each other in relative harmony. We must resist the temptation to think that Henry believes the exterior field is merely a species in kind of the interior disposition of the ego. For Henry, this picture of how the two relate is simply impossible, for such a harmonious picture undercuts the

absolute incompatibility, the radical dichotomy of the two fields. By pitting the invisible against the visible, or “interior life” against “exterior world,” the duplicity of display shapes the field of appearing by driving an impenetrable wedge between the invisible and the visible. Henry understands life’s reality to reveal itself within itself, a pure self-display within its own structure distinct from everything foreign. So what is “real” is pure in that it feels itself and nothing but itself thereby fulfilling itself. What is “irreal” or “an image” of the real appears in that field of display that illuminates that which is foreign to itself in its distance from itself, what Henry denominates as the world but shall also describe as hetero-affection (being affected by that which is different). Henry applies this logic of the duplicity of display in all rigour. The fields of auto-affection (being affected by myself with no gap between me and myself) and hetero-affection cannot intertwine or integrate since they are heterogeneous to each other. If the invisible depths of auto-affection were to become visible, even through the slightest fissure or fracture, interiority would no longer be invisible. In order to remain invisible, the modality of invisible display must maintain a strict relationship to itself apart from the visible display of the world.

The duplicity of display must, therefore, maintain itself by bifurcating itself. Cleaving me in two, the two sides of my phenomenological structure never intertwine like a double helix. Interiority is displayed prior to, and without integration with, the exterior world: “Life designates pure manifestation, always irreducible to that of the world, an original revelation that is not the revelation of another thing and does not depend on anything other, but is rather a revelation of self, that absolute self-revelation that is Life itself.”¹¹² Because the interior side of the

¹¹² Henry, *I am the Truth*, 34.

self reveals itself and nothing else, it subsists without relation to the world, and therefore, is invisible, enstatic and non-temporal. And yet this is precisely the moment when Henry not only inverts the phenomenological tradition but also where his “theological turn” comes into full view, a turn which we shall explicate in great detail in chapters three and four.

For now it is important to note that, from the point of view of Henry’s scheme of the duplicity of display, God embodies each of these negatives that characterize invisible display (invisible, enstatic and non-temporal). Henry declares that in God’s self-revelation, “there is no separation between the seeing and what is seen, between the light and what it illuminates.”¹¹³ Christianity divine self-revelation remains the unique mould of this type of auto-affection in that there is no horizon, no temporal movement of the world’s kind and no distance between God and God’s self-revelation. It is a frequent refrain in Henry that “God is that pure Revelation that reveals nothing other than itself. God reveals Himself.”¹¹⁴ Henry articulates this theological self-revelation in phenomenological terms:

The phenomenalization of phenomenality itself is a pure phenomenological matter, a substance whose whole essence is to appear—phenomenality in its actualization and in its pure phenomenological effectivity. What manifests itself is manifestation itself. What reveals itself is revelation itself; it is a revelation of revelation, a self-revelation in its original and immediate effulgence... We are in the presence of the essence that Christianity posits as the principle of everything. God is that pure Revelation that reveals nothing other than itself.¹¹⁵

Thus God’s self-revelation counters the manners of givenness of the things in the field of visible display, things in the world. In order to understand how invisible

¹¹³ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 24.

¹¹⁴ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 25.

¹¹⁵ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 25.

display is structured as pure interiority, we return once again to Husserl, and in particular, to his study of temporality.

§9. THE LIVING PRESENT

We have come to a final, but important, engagement between Henry and Husserl. We have highlighted that visible display is not neutral because it conceals invisible display (§5), that Husserl's conception of intentionality is an important and sophisticated articulation of exterior, visible display (despite its concern for interior consciousness) (§6), that Heidegger's analytic of being-in-the-world represents a radical form of visible display, an uninhibited celebration of the temporal structure of being-in-the-world (§7), and that Henry orders the field of appearing in terms of an unwavering duplicity whereby invisible display appears in its pure self-revelation in the depths of the ego in contradistinction to the body in the world, which is manifest as an "irreal" exterior object (§8). We have already penetrated Husserlian intentionality by laying bare its complicity in the work of visible display or the "outside of the world." But, does not Husserl's notion of pure consciousness and his explicit turn toward interiority present an exception to Henry's claim that Husserlian phenomenology designates a form of ontological monism? Does not the Husserlian ego seek to establish, as its fundamental reality, the pure immanence of the ego analogous to, if even identical to, Henry's proposal of interiority? Husserl's reflections on the consciousness of internal time afford the occasion to emphasize that *only* Henry's transcendental subject inhabits the field of invisible display.

Henry insists that the Husserlian reduction does not go far enough in its attempt to bracket the visible display of the world. This is to say that Henry critiques

Husserl's view of intentionality for giving the impression that it adopts a *purely* interior framework. Upon closer inspection, the reduction does nothing more than uncover the field of temporal consciousness and the "Heraclitean" flux¹¹⁶ of the world-horizon situated at the base of the ego. Henry draws the conclusion that the Husserlian ego is manifest not inside itself but exterior to itself, in a foreign land alienated from its self-embrace. Henry's penetrating critique (that Husserl's ego is not interior enough) may go against traditional readings of Husserl. Dan Zahavi aptly observes, "Whereas post-Husserlian phenomenology has generally tried to rectify what was believed to be an imbalance in Husserl's account of the relation between immanence and transcendence, namely his disregard of *exteriority*, Henry has accused Husserl of never having managed to disclose the true *interiority* of subjectivity in a sufficiently radical and pure manner."¹¹⁷ The radicality of Henry's theory of invisible display enables him to single out the fact that the Husserlian ego's exterior link trades on its temporal constitution, a connection typically overlooked in post-Husserl scholarship. Henry offers a close reading of Husserl's *Lectures on the Consciousness of Internal Time*, unearthing at the base of Husserlian intentionality the field visible display, i.e., the temporal horizontality of the world to which the ego is ineluctably attached. So even though the Husserlian ego may reflect upon itself as a spectator looking inward at its interior life, its "interior" streaming is not sufficiently pure in its interior displaying—it is always pervaded by the temporal horizon of the world.

¹¹⁶ Husserl describes temporality as a Heraclitean flux because temporality in its streaming thwarts the possibility of self-presence, as if I could remove myself from the changing data of sensible things. See Husserl, *Crisis*, 156, 177, 343.

¹¹⁷ Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity: A Phenomenological Investigation* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 87.

Henry's argument proceeds in the following manner: Husserlian intentionality is immersed in the temporal streaming of intentional correlates arriving from the world-horizon, and therefore, the Husserlian ego is incapable of withdrawing to a place self-presence, what Henry describes as interior auto-affection. Auto-affection is the immediate yet ongoing feeling of being-overwhelmed by myself as the feeling of myself crushing up against myself without recourse to anything outside myself, including the temporal horizon of the world. According to Henry, the structure of Husserlian intentionality resists the self-disclosure of auto-affection because Husserlian intentionality is intrinsically conditioned by the ceaseless flow of temporality. The Husserlian ego is endlessly moving but moving in the wrong direction while placed on conveyor belt that steadily marches from future to past in a backward motion. As always oriented, or *about* something, intentional consciousness is ineluctably attached to the temporal flow of passing and ever-new sensuous impressions. Husserl names this ongoing temporal flow relentlessly occurring within the ego's intentional life the "consciousness of internal time."¹¹⁸

To maintain its identity as this particular ego whose gaze constitutes all objects, it is well-known that the Husserlian ego is ordered by a two-fold temporal configuration of retention (reaching into the past) and protention (anticipating the future).¹¹⁹ Phenomena appear to the Husserlian ego by way of a flow, a streaming procession from the future (protention) to the present and backward therein slipping further into the depths of retentional consciousness. The retentional act of consciousness represents the holding-onto of impressions as they move backwards from the present. Holding onto the past impressions, the ego nevertheless looks

¹¹⁸ Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*, trans. John Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1991).

¹¹⁹ See for example Husserl, *Ideas I*, §§ 81-84.

forward to the present as it expects what is to arrive from the future. The retentional acts therefore illustrate a backward streaming against which the ego pushes forward, groping ahead, “like a “drunken man or like a person on a conveyor belt or an escalator in the wrong direction.”¹²⁰ In this way, Henry characterizes the continuum of retentional acts as a type of longitudinal intentionality because the ego deploys retention as a horizontal stretching that spans the entire flow of hyletic data from future to present to past.¹²¹ Like a comet’s tail, the future passes to the present which is displaced by a retention of the present, and so on, eventually sinking deeper into the past and further from the wakeful ego’s mental life.¹²²

Henry also notes that the consciousness of internal time ceaselessly shuttles between protention and retention in their temporal play, which prevents the conscious ego from achieving the presence of the present, or the living impression that Husserl says initiates the entire motion of temporality itself. The “living present” (*Leibhaftig Gegenwärtig*) is a primordial impression that “spontaneously emerges” over and again, offering one temporal object after another as they sink into the past. The “primal impression is the absolute beginning of this production, the primal source, that from which everything else is continuously produced. It does not arise as something produced but through *genesis spontanea*.”¹²³ The living present is therefore that which alone makes possible temporal objects, the stable origin from which the horizon of time emerges and through which the ego situates itself in the flow of time as it moves backward. But no matter how completely at home the ego is

¹²⁰ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 30.

¹²¹ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 28.

¹²² Husserl writes, for example, that the “now-apprehension is, as it were, the head attached to the comet’s tail of retentions relation to the earlier now-points of the motion.” See Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 32.

¹²³ Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 106.

within the temporal flow that originates from the living present, the ego itself cannot claim the living present for itself. The living present for the Husserlian ego is present as absent. The living present channels temporal objects into a prefixed flow of time, but never comes into possession of the ego.

The living present does not present itself as an object before the ego. Rather the living present consists of what Husserl describes as a limit point (*Und Gegenwart ist ein Grenzpunkt*), or the head at which the comet's tail terminates but which can never be grasped in itself. Each time I reach for the head of the comet another piece breaks off, taking me with it as it flows backward within the streaming continuum of the tail.¹²⁴ For Husserl, the ego flows along with the streaming impressions, as they recede like a "comet's tail" into the past relating to the earlier now-points of the motion.¹²⁵ Husserlian consciousness of internal time is therefore a product of the flow of time, and given that time opens up the horizon of the world, it is a product also of the exterior world-horizon itself. Henry congratulates Husserl's disclosure of the living present as a genuine philosophical breakthrough; however, he sharply criticizes Husserl for not providing the space in which the self can inhabit the living present. Henry argues that auto-affection, the pure feeling of myself present to myself is such a living present. From this original source point is born the non-temporal welling up of the primal impression—the living interiority of the self.

But is Henry's interpretation of Husserl fair (not to say accurate)? Dan Zahavi defends Husserl against Henry, showing that the difference between Henry and Husserl is minimal at best. Zahavi thinks that, for Henry, the field of invisible display inside the ego provides its own affective temporalization that resembles the

¹²⁴ Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 71; for the German see *Husserliana*, band X, 69.

¹²⁵ Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 40.

temporal dynamic of Husserlian consciousness of internal time.¹²⁶ In other words, Zahavi argues that Henry does not possess the phenomenological resources to critique Husserl given their basic affinity with respect to temporality. Zahavi could have been more measured, however, in his critique of Henry. A more attentive interpretation of Henry's reading of Husserl must acknowledge that the field of invisible display is non-temporal, self-impressional and self-present (beneath the streaming of temporality of the comet's tail). Henry writes that the living present or the impression as he conceives it is non-temporal and "this is because the impression, taken as the now, the just passed or the coming to be, does not have its place in the flow. Its original subjectivity has never belonged there; instead, it belongs entirely outside of the ek-static dimension, in the radical Elsewhere that I am."¹²⁷ This radical elsewhere is what Henry calls the living present, or that "Ur-impression" which is entirely outside the flow of temporality and thus outside the world-horizon itself. The primordial suffering-and-enjoying of myself, for Henry, that constitutes the core of the self-impression of the living present is manifest as the invisible essence of the ego.¹²⁸ The fundamental difference henceforth between Henry and Husserl becomes clear when it is acknowledged that Henry refigures the ego from a non-intentional point of view that owes its presencing to the pure impressional "now" of auto-affection while Husserl continually returns to the temporal structure of intentionality. And so while Husserl may have glimpsed the living present, he nevertheless failed to elucidate how it may bring to light the transcendental ego in its subjectivity apart

¹²⁶ Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, 89-90.

¹²⁷ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 32-33.

¹²⁸ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 32.

from the temporal flux of the world-horizon.¹²⁹ Henry's interpretation of Husserl may be suspect and open to contestation, however, what is important for us in this section is to establish how Henry articulates the living present over against Husserl (not necessarily to defend Henry's interpretation of Husserl). We turn now to a more refined description of Henry's conception of this living present that abides in each of us a pure living ego.

§10: THE PURE LIVING EGO

This section intends to discuss briefly how Henry's quest for the essence of life coincides with his desire to recover a thick description of subjectivity, and more precisely, subjectivity as an affective (rather than cognitive) event. To bring to light the "heart" (*la coeur*) as the seat of ipseity is by Henry's estimation to find life itself. My living present is not a thinking-thing or brain-synapse. Rather I am "me" by virtue of the trial of my existence, my self-anguishing, self-suffering and self-

¹²⁹ Henry goes to some lengths to show a crucial point not always noticed about Husserlian intentionality. Henry highlights that it is not the original *sensuous impression* of color, or *Empfindungsfarbe*, that fills the meaning-giving form of the Husserlian ego's aim. The impression or the *Empfindungsfarbe* corresponds, in Husserl's scheme, to an original sense impression. Husserl acknowledges it to be non-intentional, which means it is unable to conform to intentionality. Husserl himself observes: "the sensuous has in itself nothing pertaining to intentionality." See Husserl, *Ideas I*, 203. This is quoted in Henry, *Incarnation*, 70. The *Empfindungsfarbe* is not fitted as an object within intentionality itself because it adumbrates the intentional object. This means that, for Husserl, there is both a non-intentional sphere of pure sense impressions and an intentional sphere that matches the ego's aim with an object adumbrated by the sense impression. Yet Henry's purpose in pointing this out is to show that Husserl neglects to develop this insight toward a fully-fledged non-intentional theory of auto-affection, or the pure self-impression in which the impression experiences nothing but its own self-impression apart from intentional forms of retention and protention. Instead of developing this theory of the self-impression, i.e. of the pure living present of the self-impression, Husserl turns, so argues Henry, toward an idealist theory of intentionality that prioritizes the noema, or the *noematische Farbe*—the visible appearance of the impression that is able to be bestowed with meaning by the temporality of the noesis. See Henry, *Incarnation*, 69. The *noematische Farbe* is the intentional correlate that the subject's activity constitutes thereby submerging the ur-impression of *Empfindungsfarbe* into a neglected sphere primal presencing, which because it is non-intentional, is never experienced or made an object of reflection by the Husserlian ego. By neglecting the original impression Henry views Husserlian intentionality as violent (Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 14) inasmuch as Husserlian intentionality disembeds the impression from its self-presence and channels into the temporal streaming of intentional acts.

enjoying—my pathos of myself lived in immediacy with itself. This pathos flashes forth interior to the lived-experience of my own subjectivity in such a way to be invulnerable to the model of cognitive “seeing” of intentionality, and by extension, to the model of scientific study. It is a fact, Henry admits, that in the manifold of appearings that appear in the world “we see living beings.” But in this seeing we never observe or intend “their life.”¹³⁰ Life only appears internal to itself because it deploys itself by feeling itself. Its relation to itself is a self-relation without distance between its feeling and that which it feels. In life there is not streaming correlates of genitives given to a dative pole that presupposes a fracture between the genitive and dative. Instead, as living I am affected by myself in a pure self-impression, given to myself in a pure dative, as this “me” who is me by self-affection or auto-affection. The “auto-structure” of interiority is the living present.

In terse epigrammatic form, Henry insists that, above all, “subjectivity is life, this is the seriousness of existence.”¹³¹ Given that life makes itself felt in the subjective space given interior to itself, it remains difficult to know exactly how life is manifest in the horizon of objectivity situated in the surrounding world. Henry’s analyses of life move away from a biological thesis tied to the world and toward a theological articulation of the practical and lived dimension of the self that approaches just how “subjectivity is life.” Given Henry’s systemic critique of the visible display of the world and scientific discourse complicit in that visible display, interior life is *not* a metabolic or existential impulse that reacts to exterior stimuli.¹³² Nor is it a continual temporal impulse propelling the ego outside itself on the basis of

¹³⁰ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 40.

¹³¹ Henry, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 197.

¹³² This view is best expressed by Hans Jonas in his well-known existential treatment of life in *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

a desire to move into the surrounding world.¹³³ Henry ascribes to “living” a unique property that is without properties in the sense that life is pure, without difference from itself—untainted by the temporal streaming of the world-horizon that fragments the self. Interiority, as a living present invincible in its power (it cannot be split or fractured), appears as a primal or underground “me,” a pure living ego who subsists and endures apart from the temporal streaming of the Husserlian ego or Heidegger’s ecstatic Dasein. But we must resist the temptation to claim Henry regards life as an immovable thing, stationed like a rock at the bottom of a fast-flowing river. Henry’s conception of life is manifest as a self-feeling in which I take hold of myself by imploding within myself, arriving at myself in and through myself as an absolute “me.” Never able to escape myself, and thereby riveted to myself in a living present, interiority occupies within itself nevertheless a movement, a growth that does not exceed itself but continually collapsing upon itself—that is the seriousness of existence.¹³⁴

After the streaming impressions recede, according to Henry, what is left over is life, the essence of subjectivity, this living present that is never past or future. What makes me “living” is that I am a “me” identical to myself and what makes me a “me” identical to myself is that I am “living.” My being present to myself gives way to a pure self-feeling, which in turn, gives way to a ceaseless generation of my life; the living present is pure in that it crushes against itself, feels itself and pulses in and through that pathos. By virtue of its experiential pull, a living pathos arises that can

¹³³ Renaud Barbaras develops this position, more or less, in a very philosophically sophisticated manner in, *Introduction à une phénoménologie de la vie* (Paris: Vrin, 2008).

¹³⁴ In this vein, Henry writes of life: “What remains is thus not like an unchanging substance within the universal flow, like a rock at the bottom of the river; it is the historicity of the absolute, the eternal arrival of life to itself... Growth is the movement of life that is realized out in life in virtue of what it is—its own *subjectivity*.” Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 39.

never recede into the just-past as it sinks into the forgotten past of the temporal streaming of the world-horizon.

If we think of an inanimate object, it may shine in the daylight, contain moving parts and, in fact, may even process data or light up a dark room. What an inanimate thing cannot do, however, is experience itself as existing. It cannot contain an invisible living present. For Henry, a thing is a “thing” in that it is incapable of experiencing itself as particular living “me” whose vital force of existence is at stake in its very feeling of itself as living. Henry (borrowing from Heidegger) observes the deeply existential or incarnate character of the living present born within the interior self by contrasting it to a table. A table, once pushed up against a wall, even to the point of eliminating the distance between the two objects, does not “touch” or “feel” or “experience” the wall like my living body feels and suffers the impact of the wall upon contact.¹³⁵

Henry also gives to the living present a theological articulation. If the pure living present appears as the “Absolute” whose eternal arrival gives me to myself (as a dative “me”), then Henry’s interior self is struck in an unequivocal theological key. For Henry, “Life,” with a capital “L,” signifies the invisible essence of God, the living source of all that lives. Drawing heavily from the prologue of the gospel of John in which the word “Life” denotes the sphere of divine revelation, Henry deploys what he calls an “Arch-Christology,”¹³⁶ a theological affirmation of the Johannine articulation of the “Word made flesh,” in whom is the life and light of humanity (John 1.4). Henry frequently describes the living present as a pure ego, untainted by anything outside itself, and correlatively, describes divine Life as a

¹³⁵ Henry, *Incarnation*, 8. For the example of the table or chair not having the capacity to “touch” the wall on which Henry picks up, see Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 81.

¹³⁶ See his essay, “Archi-christologie” in *Phénoménologie de la vie, tome IV*, 113-29.

(hyper) power, force, strength or energy that flows within the interior reciprocity of Father and Son through the Spirit.¹³⁷ Most importantly, because it is pure too, divine Life can appear or reveal itself only within itself, and thus, cannot appear in anything foreign to itself, especially the world. Divine Life appears, as the “Word made flesh,” as a divine self-revelation identical to itself and thus inside God—without reference to visible display of the world or to a particular historical personage. Yet, this does not preclude Absolute Life from appearing within the sphere of human experience. Henry contends that it is possible for Life to appear within pure ego because both are manifest in the living present, a pure now without reference to past or future.

Life with a lower case “l” constitutes my essence as this particular “me” whose living present is carried along by Absolute Life. The living present is the pure living ego, the site wherein I experience myself feeling myself without gap or separation—with no visibility. This nocturnal living experience of myself is manifest deep within the structure of interior feeling itself. As my invisible essence, it cannot appear within the exteriority of the physical body or the temporal horizon of the world. Henry also qualifies the distinction between the two inflections of life, noting that since both “Life” and “life” share the same living present, one must not hazard a hardened distinction between them.¹³⁸

Henry quite literally adopts, moreover, the Cartesian notion of the “soul” as a philosophical antecedent to his own conception of the living present.¹³⁹ Henry’s interest in the phenomenon of life reflects, we submit, an attempt to restore the interior “soul” or spiritual dimension within a post-Galileo, post-Newtonian world

¹³⁷ See for instance, Henry, *I am the Truth*, 120, 138, 160, 169.

¹³⁸ For this distinction between Life/life see Henry, *I am the Truth*, 279 fn.1.

¹³⁹ See Henry, *Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Douglas Brick (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), especially chapters 1-3.

that gave rise to a mechanistic, scientized *Aufklärung*. Philosophical discourse gradually became parasitic on and complicit with modern science-and-technology. Henry's own critique of modern techno-scientific culture in his *La barbarie* (1987) highlights what he perceives to be the bankrupt, i.e., "barbarous," character of modern technology, natural and physical science and modern medicine. He argues here that modernity, exemplified in contemporary scientific discourse, seeks, unwittingly or not, to displace the living, interior "soul" of the human self with an empty exterior, physical body animated by nothing more than brain synapses and physiological processes.¹⁴⁰ To counter the scientific distortion of life, Henry rehabilitates a sphere of experience that is identical to itself, and therefore, a subjective living present outside the bounds of empirical verification and scientific discourse. Henry carves out a site of invisibility that can appear on its own terms, and only on its own terms—thereby impervious to the reductive methods of modern scientific discourse.

The essence of the living present inside each ego is, above all, a primal self-feeling. Moreover it is a feeling un-representable and incommunicable to anything outside of this self-experience of being "me." Language, consciousness, and temporality fail to display the life of my lived-experience because they throw "me" outside myself as a representation or image of myself in the world. Henry's phenomenological understanding of interiority is that it has a mode of givenness and a form of evidence all its own. For the pure living ego incarnates itself within itself and furnishes its own structure of manifestation apart from the luminosity of the world, temporality and intentionality. To return once again to Henry's thesis about

¹⁴⁰ Henry, *La barbarie*, la deuxième édition (Paris: Quadrige, 2008).

the “impression,” I am a living ego who is pure in that the living present dwells fully within itself, beneath the temporal horizon of the world. Henry writes:

In the impression, it is that by which there is an impression, the silent embrace in which it experiences and senses itself at each moment of its being, without ever getting rid of itself and without the gap of any distance that would ever separate itself. But does not the impression constantly change? Indeed, it does. Yet what never changes and never breaks away is what makes it an impression; this is the essence of life....what is always already there before it and what remains after it, is what is necessary for its arrival. This is not the empty form of an “I think” or the ek-static gaze of the future but the radical auto-affection of life in its phenomenological reality. Every ‘new impression’ is only one of its modalities.¹⁴¹

Each impression (*Empfindungsfarbe*) from the outside comes and goes within a temporal flow and announces novelty with each new impact; however, according to Henry, the self-impression of self-affection of the living present never comes and goes. Self-affection is perfectly self-present in that it is immanent to itself, interior to itself. As the living essence of the ego, the living present is manifest as my life that I feel crushing up against myself as I affect myself in the nocturnal depths of invisible display. Henry furthermore insists that the invisibility of auto-affection (the pure ego) cannot intertwine with the visible display of the ego’s intentional-ray, lest the pure ego be tainted and rendered impure by visibility, by light.

To offer a concrete example of the living present, Henry frequently refers to the feeling of pain. Pain is customarily understood as a “physical” sensation tied to pressure applied to local nerve endings, such as the pain in my foot that follows from a kicking a tree stump. Yet Henry highlights the interior essence of pain apart from the cause and effect mechanism of physical sensation. Pain can be immediate in that

¹⁴¹ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 38-9.

there are no gaps between the pain and the feeling of pain. If the pain is in the foot, it resides there only in the exterior display, as an empty representation of the pain in its self-disclosure. If pain is to be truly lived, then it must be experienced internal to itself as a relation to itself; namely, the pain I experience is not the pain in my foot “out there” but the pain as I immediately and invisibly experience it. Only the suffering of pain allows me to know the pain, and what is revealed in this fact of suffering is the suffering itself and nothing else. When I seek to take flight of the pain, I am pulled in by it and collapse under its weight. It imposes itself on me, as “my pain” that I feel, and I feel it without distance between the pain and my experience of it. I have never seen my pain, I have only lived it.¹⁴²

So far we have maintained that Henry’s pure ego is manifest within the living present apart from the world-horizon and its temporal streaming. We now turn directly to the divine source from which the living present is born. Rudolf Bernet notes that Henry’s phenomenology of life, “affirms from the start, and in an ‘apodictic’ fashion, that an authentic phenomenology cannot have any other object than the divine Life experiencing itself in its Ipseity and in this self-affection, giving birth to Christ and to humanity as his ‘Sons.’¹⁴³ It is the “giving birth to Christ and to humanity as his Sons” to which we now turn in chapters three and four.

¹⁴² Henry, “Phenomenology of Life,” trans. Nick Hanlon *Angelaki* 8 (2003): 97-110, reference on 102-03.

¹⁴³ Rudolf Bernet, “Philosophy and Christianity,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 32 no.3 (1999): 325.

Part 2:

The Duplicitous Self in Henry's Theological Turn

CHAPTER 3:

The Duplicitous Self

When the biblical God breathes in us the Spirit of Life which makes each one of us a living being, it is generation which is accomplished.

–Michel Henry¹⁴⁴

§11. GENERATION

We interrogate in this chapter, under the form of the expression “duplicitous self,” Henry’s theological turn.¹⁴⁵ Such “duplicity” opens up an impassable abyss between the fullness of interiority and the desolation of exteriority. Henry’s variety of the self, recast in an utterly dualistic light, is prepared to deprive itself of its outward course into the world because it is already in sure and radical possession of an inner essence that appears to itself: a site where no single aspect of the self appears outside of its own intimate haven, which is a spiritual achievement to be understood in terms of mystical inwardness. Detached from all passing contents of consciousness or any relation to an outward object, the irreducibility of the inward pole of subjectivity is “mystical” precisely because it coincides with the invisible self-disclosure of God; that is, the ontological distance between this self-present pole and God is all but eliminated. Henry’s value as a theological thinker, it should be said at this juncture, lays not so much in his retrieval of interiority as the principle of pure self-experience but in the concentrated intellectual force by which he consummates this logic. Such

¹⁴⁴ Henry, *Incarnation*, 369.

¹⁴⁵ The triptych in chronological order: *I am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity* (1996); *Incarnation: une philosophie de la chair* (2000) and *Paroles du Christ* (2002).

an economy of the self is communicated by Henry with the intensity and authority of a prophet or an apocalyptic mystic, though our contention here is not that the severity of his idiom befalls his readers as intellectually counterfeit but that it is, together with its mystical intonations, genuinely attentive to principled reason and argument precisely because it exercises a mode of inquiry that emanates from the phenomenological tradition. Hence Henry's audacious claim that phenomenology is to be condemned in its classical expression, the construal of which is best persevered by Husserl and Heidegger. The "ontological monism" (Henry's term, see chapter 2) pursued by the two Germans refers to their utter evasion of the invisible disclosure of interiority. The interior subjective sphere where I appear first to myself is a site that Henry speaks of as inescapable and irresistible, and yet, it is one that Husserl and Heidegger evade altogether. Even though, as an invisible sphere, it may appear as a mute presence that eludes the illumination of the world, it is nevertheless manifest as an overbearing tremor of affection that brings me before myself, an experience that reveals a self-embrace wherein I affect nothing but myself.

But the inmost essence of phenomenology must be overturned if the invisible disclosure of life is to enjoy admittance as a primal movement of absolute subjective power that lurks behind every form of thought and action. This is the unique achievement of the ingenious and inventive structure of "life" that Henry consecrates with the name auto-affection—that impermeable citadel of subjectivity that eliminates any notion of autonomous freedom or what Nietzsche forcibly expresses with the concept of the "Free Spirit." The invisibility of auto-affection is inextricably tied to its non-freedom, to its opposition to the freedom attached to life in the world. The ontological independence of the sphere of the invisible (i.e., its independence

from the world) is proved in the fact that it cannot attend to the possibilities opened up by the free spirit in the visible world, a Nietzschean “will to power” who is capable of negotiating within the differences of the world. By the same token, the continuum of classical phenomenology, the scope of which is manifestly prescribed by Husserl and Heidegger, consists too of a vast horizon of lived experiences attenuated by the play of the world’s finitude that, precisely because it is shut up inside the world, pretends to the freedom of visible self-legislation, which is always accomplished under the outward direction of either intentional consciousness or the existential analytic of being-in-the-world. But such a “Free Spirit” admits of no expansion beyond the world (and thus remains an ontological monism) if it is not wrenched from its gross absorption in its own self-determination in the visibility of the world. This is a violent but necessary step in the odyssey of the self, so argues Henry, if it is to achieve a critical and rigorous passage into the invisibility of interiority, and so be rescued from the nihilistic dissolution to which the post-Nietzschean self succumbs as it unfolds *only* within the metaphysical landscape of the exterior world. The truth of the self is that the invisibility of the inner life coincides with divine life, and Henry’s work is intended to represent at once a spiritual and moral recuperation of the “modern self” specifically on these theological grounds.

Cultivating a philosophical sensibility uncoupled from conventional phenomenology, Henry’s work carries out an analysis of appearing in which the invisible is set over against the visible in the most absolute of terms.¹⁴⁶ By sharply

¹⁴⁶ For example, one may read frequently passages like the following in the *Essence of Manifestation*: “Because their essences have between them nothing similar, because they rather differ in the irreducible heterogeneity of their structures, the invisible and the visible would not be able to transform themselves into one another, and no passage, no time binds them together, but they subsist

divorcing the invisible from the visible, and then, by ordering the essence of appearing solely in terms of the invisible, Henry redeems phenomenology from its unwitting and dogmatic attachment to the finitude of the world and the metaphysics of representation. By resituating phenomenology, too, within the narrative of theology and its logic of the invisible, he considers how Christ's invisible Word of manifestation may not only legitimately converse with, but also spiritually vindicate, philosophy (vindicate it from an insufficient ontological foundation based on the metaphysics of representation). Even if phenomenology so expanded—to include not one, but two spheres, namely the visible *and* invisible—may not triumph over phenomenology's classical expressions, and even if it shall not entirely supplant the ill-constituted logic of the visible, its theological dialect will nevertheless disrupt the ease and charm of an autonomous reason complacent with its own power to constitute the unity of the world.

Recall that the “modern self” amounts to a reduction of subjectivity to the visibility of the world. On the basis of the structure of representation, the ego shapes the world from a distance, making the world an object at its disposal, which is to say that the ego gives to the world its thin patina of visibility, its “light.” And such a subjective illumination will never abjure from its inordinate emphasis on distance and mediation, not least from its claims to power, sovereignty and self-sufficiency, all of which, for Henry, are nothing more than Enlightenment myths that celebrate an original and pristine state of daring self-sufficiency and power; as Nietzsche declares in that brief but formidable section in *Beyond Good and Evil*, the “Free Spirit”

apart from one another, each in the positivity of its own effectiveness. Thus it must be understood in the light of this essential structural heterogeneity, their opposition, not as an opposition between two opposed things, such as would hold in a ‘bond,’ but precisely as the opposition of that which has no bond, as an opposition in absolute difference. Henry, *Essence of Manifestation*, pp. 447-48.

embodies a self who is brutally totalizing, constitutive of the world in its every respect: “The world seen from inside, the world determined and described with respect to its ‘intelligible character’—would be just his ‘will to power’ and nothing else.”¹⁴⁷ Henry shall certainly not disagree with Nietzsche’s “phenomenological description” of the ego’s power to open up the horizon of the world. This is because Henry affirms much to be found in Heidegger’s landmark reading of Nietzsche. The metaphysics of the will to power, as Heidegger observes, is “a metaphysics of the absolute subjectivity of will to power.”¹⁴⁸ So understood, the Nietzschean discourse of the self narrates an uninhibited subjectivism that roots the world in the subject’s anarchic and primeval repetitions that reap no harvest of peace and joy and that fulfil no teleological movement. The world’s narrative of pure temporal flux is a theatre of cruelty and pain that eternally recurs (“The discipline of suffering, of *great* suffering—do you now know that only *this* discipline has created all enhancements of man so far?”¹⁴⁹) wherein the subject’s base and primitive instinctual impulses are not to be tempered by a religious faith of self-sacrifice and mercy. In Henry’s estimation, Nietzsche’s self nevertheless offers up a powerful display of a subjective life moved by affects and instinctual feeling, aspects of self-effectuation that Henry celebrates as the universal essence of subjectivity; Henry will readily acknowledge the eloquent and profound glimpse into the indestructible and absolute essence of subjectivity (i.e., auto-affection) Nietzsche develops from the *Birth of Tragedy*

¹⁴⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Marion Faber (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 36.

¹⁴⁸ Heidegger, “Nietzsche vol. IV: Nihilism,” trans. Fank A. Capussi (New York: Harper and Row 1982), p.147.

¹⁴⁹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §46; see also §229.

onward.¹⁵⁰ Yet, Nietzsche's metaphysics of the self, ultimately, expresses the nihilism and turbulence of an egoistic barbarism so advanced and therefore so entrenched in late modern conceptions of selfhood that one must understand the world to be the site where life and God come to die: the saint must, in Henry's eyes, avoid the *world* at all costs, for the world is the site of the death of God, and despite Nietzsche's hyperbolic claims about the "noble and happy" ones enjoying themselves from their own self-feeling, power and potency,¹⁵¹ the world is equally the site where the self is without God and therefore cast into the emptiness of exteriority. As Henry emphatically states, "The death of God destroys the interior possibility of man."¹⁵²

To think of the self after Henry is to consider a self in relation to God's self-revelation in Christ, as co-present with my inward disposition, albeit a site of appearing with its own style of disclosure; this gives rise to a logic of appearing that may reverse and derogate from, though in no way eliminate, the repetition of the representational subject's confidence in its "will to power" to constitute the world. Henry's project still develops a phenomenological line of inquiry but one that operates on the order of what Rudolf Bernet aptly calls a "theo-phenomenology."¹⁵³ As a strategy to think between philosophy and theology, such a mystical sojourn involves several intellectual traditions, all lying near the surface in Henry's work, which taken as allied trajectories of thought are gathered together to set out a vision cast under the canopy of the single apparatus of auto-affection, a sphere of experience that seamlessly transitions between phenomenology, patristic spirituality,

¹⁵⁰ Henry, *Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Douglas Brick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp.205ff.

¹⁵¹ See for example, Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, book I, §§3 and 10; *The Gay Science*, §179.

¹⁵² Henry, *I am the Truth*, p.265.

¹⁵³ Rudolf Bernet, "Christianity and Philosophy," 327.

medieval mysticism and biblical revelation. What emerges in Henry's view of reality is nothing short of radical, if even utterly counter-intuitive: a comprehensive reappraisal of life on the basis of divine life's invisible self-revelation intimated solely within the pure self-outpouring of God's Trinitarian life, which is tangible only beyond the world; understood in this manner, God is denotable as a self-disclosure arriving inside my soul, which lies underneath the temporal flow that constitutes the field of consciousness.

Despite its refusal to appear within the horizon of the self-legislating ego who is at the origin of the world and the universe of objects, the inward disposition of life for which Henry's enterprise advocates does in fact open up somewhere within the concrete experience of the self. This tempo of interiority is delivered within the invisible and silent cadence of a perfect self-embrace—a subjective experience of “myself” as I am in pure union with God. The disclosure of God within me is never first consigned to something else, which then may or may not appear to me only later, after God was held at bay for a while. No. Rather, God hands himself over to me and is bound at once to himself and me, and there, while continually experiencing himself, he is nothing but that living self-experience I also have of myself: I am what God is. This concrete intonation of myself within God's internal arrangement is, properly speaking, an experience of will and affection, but it is held together not by a will to power but by a divine will to life, a coming into oneself that never stops coming into oneself, the eternal coming into the plenitude of the invisible life of God. “This plenitude of life, in which life gives itself to itself as that of which it is full and overfull, is what religion originally aims for, that to which it is the

prelude.”¹⁵⁴ Articulated in terms “life,” this conception of interiority propounds an “entirely new conception of man, his definition on the basis of Life and also as constituted by it—of man as living.”¹⁵⁵ What does this entirely novel conception so premised consist in?

We suggest, in what follows, that this phenomenological grammar is translated into a theological one precisely because Henry elects to situate the pathos of auto-affection, as a living self-presence, inside the eternal presence of God, an elemental presencing that he describes as the perfect becoming of God within his Godhead, or simply: *generation*. As a primal evocation of life that occupies the arch-forms of passivity and donation, the living-present, my essence, is born from the movement of divine generation and not from myself as if I were a self-positing “I think” or “I represent” characteristic of the post-Cartesian valorisation of the constituting subject. I am to subtract myself from such an appalling acceptance of the world and the subject’s self-regard, its egoism and autonomy. I subsist, in Henry’s discourse of life, only as a negative of such an egoistic empire of self-legislation and autonomous power; I am given to myself, invisibly, by the divine life who continually gives rise to all life, and who, as the original source of my particular life, is continuous with me. My living present “consists in the interior relation to God, and exists only by it, and is explicated entirely by it.”¹⁵⁶ To be sure, there is good reason to single out the interior relation to God explicated by generation as a fundamental theological thesis, since it represents a most basic anthropological truth for Henry, and it is a view of the self that is exemplarily and supremely Christian, indeed it is a

¹⁵⁴ Henry, *Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, 244.

¹⁵⁵ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 50.

¹⁵⁶ Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 54.

“central thesis of Christianity.”¹⁵⁷ A key, perhaps *the* key, to penetrating the richness and originality of his “theological turn” lies in elucidating this unique, and sometimes exasperatingly equivocal, theo-phenomenological thematic.

We shall also thematize how the discourse of generation, for all of its absolute divisions between light and dark, inner and outer, *parousia* and the world, necessarily leads, not only to the liberation of the self from an ontological monism encapsulated by Husserl and Heidegger, but leads also to the thralldom of auto-affection; without doubt we may associate auto-affection with an imbalanced self that privileges the interior and invisible at the expense of the exterior and visible, which of course fosters a monism of its own making. This is perhaps a theological monism (with degrees of intensity) that, in its fullness and integrity, denies the world its worth bestowed on it by God at creation. The tyranny of pure self-presence is what Henry finds here over against the tyrannical discourse of the world. Henry’s monism is a subjective sphere against which Levinas, for all of his own prejudicial oddities and theological strangeness, collides in his very acknowledgment of a basic truth which is to my mind necessary to repeat here: “The return of the present to itself is the affirmation of the *I* already riveted to itself, already doubled up with a *self...*,” which “constitutes the underlying tragic element in the ego, the fact that it is riveted to its own being.”¹⁵⁸

Given that Henry’s philosophical lexicon can be “jargon-laden,” this chapter clarifies the fertile, if “tragic,” concept of generation (the process that rivets me to myself) with respect to both phenomenology and theology by paying special heed to

¹⁵⁷ Henry writes in full: “The relation of Life to the living is the central thesis of Christianity. Such a relation is called, from life’s viewpoint, generation, and from the living’s view point, birth.” See, Henry, *I am the Truth*, 51.

¹⁵⁸ Levinas, *Existence and Existents* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1978), p.79 and p.84 respectively.

the double-sided structure of the duplicitous self: its visible and invisible elements. Bearing this in mind, this chapter commences with an instructive but critical appraisal of the complex character of Henry's theory of generation as that which gives rise to, and carries along, the interior self over against the world.

"Generation," first of all, signifies for Henry the original movement through which a living self experiences itself and comes into itself. The expression "generation" forbids distance or the possibility of an "interval between" sameness and otherness, as if these two poles could be preserved within the always absolute experience I have of myself. Generation rivets me to myself because it constitutes a dynamic invariability, which ensures an endless movement toward oneself without separation from oneself, wherein one's essence as this particular "self" is born. This self-experience I have of myself attests to the generative power of givenness and *birth*, not to the self-generating or constituting power drawn from the ego's own provision. That is, generation designates, for Henry, the coming-to-be of myself in and through the only life that can auto-generate itself, the divine self. Generation or birth thereby places a caesura between my invisible self-presence in unity with God and my visible manifestation in the world. I come into myself only in that sphere of invisible self-presence, and in such a vision, I am given to myself internal to God's self-donation. And this donation is set forth in a univocal and timeless event of birth: it runs its endless course as an utterly primitive, or aboriginal, movement through which I am given over to myself as a passive self without reference to the world. Through generation I am, therefore, thrown into myself perpetually, and without such continual givenness, I would cease to be. Henry describes generation as a perpetual birth realized in an original and absolute unity with God, comprehensible

only as an invisible unity in which all discourse of distance or traversal (i.e., world) is excluded.¹⁵⁹

Moreover, for Henry, generation is a substitute for, and at odds with, the traditional theological dogma of creation. Yet defining generation as Henry conceives it is not as simple as this. To say, within this calculus of manifestation, the duplicity between invisible and visible, that my life is generated rather than created, and that generation (invisible interiority) is distinctly at odds with creation (visible world), does not necessarily clarify precisely what generation completes in its elaborate and ambitious genealogy of the self, what could be portrayed as Henry's attempted rediscovery of an autochthonous origin from which all life is born. Generation remains, to be sure, an elaborate thematization of the self precisely because it appears to include within it layers or gradations, indicative of degrees of intensity, even if that sounds impossible or incoherent—which it certainly does. Thus generation takes on various declensions based on the fusion of human (nature) and divine (grace) horizons. Parsing out the declensions nature and grace as they recede from one another is an elusive task because to unveil the distinction between myself and God with perfect clarity remains ultimately unachievable for Henry: "The singular Self that I am comes into itself only in absolute Life's coming-into-itself and carries it within itself as its never-abolished premise, as its condition."¹⁶⁰ Or better, "God engenders himself as me."¹⁶¹ Even though it may appear obviously inconceivable, and even though it asserts that I am co-substantial and thus coeval with God in the divine essence we share within that divine monad, generation as a category in Henry's analysis accounts for two declensions, differing it seems only in

¹⁵⁹ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 51, 62.

¹⁶⁰ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 104.

¹⁶¹ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 104.

intensity: *first*, the auto-generation of absolute divine life, and *second*, the generation of the human self as it is isolable within the fabric of divine life. We take each declension in order.

God's self-generation: God's self-generation, for Henry, is the everlasting Trinitarian evolution of God's inner life, which is "unoriginate" in that it is borne forth from the eternal reciprocal relation between Father and Son, whose bond of holy communion is given in and through their common gift, who is the Spirit.¹⁶² Father and Son come together in a purely interior and dynamic movement through which is disclosed the First-Living, i.e., Christ who is the "firstborn and only Son, which we will call the transcendental Arch-Son."¹⁶³ Yet Henry identifies the Father as primary here, because the Arch-Son is the "First Living in whose original and essential Ipseity the Father experiences himself."¹⁶⁴ Henry also portrays the Trinitarian generation of divine life as a phenomenon. Because of his undifferentiated simplicity, God is not a phenomenon rendered visible before the gaze of the Husserlian ego nor is it a phenomenon co-emergent with the luminosity of Heidegger's world-horizon. Rather, God as a phenomenon, who is the fullness of the divine Father who begot the Word and gave to him the gift of charity and wisdom by begetting him, which generates the love of the Holy Spirit who is the spirit of them both; and as such, God's inseparable trinity "has" no accidents but only *is* pure

¹⁶² In both *Incarnation* and *Paroles du Christ* Henry does remain Trinitarian in perspective but tends to identify Life as the manifestation of the binitarian reciprocity between Father and Son. For explicit references to the Holy Spirit, see, Henry, *Incarnation*, 245, 367, 374; *Paroles du Christ*, 108. We understand Henry to be taking here a faith-stance and faith-act opened up by intentional display to reflect about the Trinitarian structure of life. Though he never mentions the tradition or even scriptural warrant for why he describes divine life as a Trinitarian self-presence (of Father, Son and Spirit), he nevertheless describes life phenomenologically as such. Certainly this Trinitarian conception of divine life as Henry conceives it is difficult to square with Henry's insistence that life is purely immanent and takes place within that realm of pure immanence distinct from intentional display and the noetic profession of faith.

¹⁶³ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 52.

¹⁶⁴ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 57.

presence, appears in a way peculiar to himself; for God is exactly identical to his own substance, revealing nothing other than himself, and hence, always appearing as an invisible phenomenon. God never may make an appearance under the aspect of the world's light, given that the world sheds light on nothing more than a temporal surface made of the shifting shadows of mutability. For Henry, the intra-Trinitarian reciprocity of Father, Son and Spirit engenders a concentrated tonality, an invisible pathos, one of utter affective enjoyment in which God experiences and feels himself, and is therein manifest within the endless and majestic depths of his absolute self-affection of himself. Henry argues that the Father generates himself through the Son, and with this movement he emits an undistorted "black light" of joy and delight—of self-love. Here, the nocturnal glory in which the Father feels the Logos in its irradiating diffusion is formative of a *self-feeling* of himself at every point of his eternally expansive depths—reflecting a perfect coming-into-himself that involves nothing but his own unity with his Son. Nothing here may become visible, which indicates that Henry contradicts the basic assumption of the visibility of the Word; utterly *invisible* because he appears fact-to-face with the Father as they together beget their common Spirit, Christ is never visible in the world. Henry's principal leitmotif of absolute unity, one certainly reflective of the logic of the immanent Trinity, and one that belongs entirely to the mechanism of auto-affection, is the "essential kernel of Christianity."¹⁶⁵

It is for this reason that we shall want to understand more exactly what Henry means by divine auto-affection. In virtue of his very inner structure, God is manifest not as transcendent nor as a "beyond" whose ontological form is at a far remove from

¹⁶⁵ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 62, 78.

the soul's repository. Rather, God appears as abundantly present to the soul. God is not only immanent to his own likeness that is originally without shadow but is also fully present within the clandestine space in which the soul feels itself. How the soul and God are in union is a topic to be addressed in detail later in the chapter, but we hope to remind the reader here that this unity is always difficult to abstract out into separate entities in Henry. Presently, we explore the inner chamber of God, and with that, we can say *divine* auto-affection is to be understood as an immediate self-embrace enacted within his intra-Trinitarian life; through an infinite series of moments of satiety and completion, God always subsists within himself, and by reason of his own upwelling source, owes nothing to the "economic" Trinity or *ad extra* visible display of the Trinitarian persons as they might be manifest in the temporal streaming of intentionality or the horizon of being-in-the-world. The grammar of unity or immanence orders the Trinity as an inward self-effulgence which unfurls within itself without taking leave of itself. The Trinity only sees the world as but an intrusion upon the expression of its unity as the Godhead. So there is within divine generation *no* reflective Logos at play, where the Father has his image in the Son and where the Son's mirror is illumined by the spirating of the Spirit, for such a discourse of distance and traversal, for Henry, would make controvertible the category of unity, opening up the ill-conceived possibility of the economic relation of the dancing circle of divine persons in their reflection of one another. Thus such language of mediation and reflection is rejected by Henry on the basis of a strict divine "aseity:" the Father, Son and Spirit feel each other in radical immediacy, without oscillation and without *exitus* and *reditus*, and so without mediation and reflection, and finally, without visibility. Just so, the Trinitarian persons are pulled up

against each other with an invincible centripetal force, an exact coincidence that is manifest without traversing an infinite series of distances, for the life of God is inwardly complete already; God is “I am who I am,” a tautology that involves no difference or gap interposed between Father, Son and Spirit. The reciprocal movements of the Trinitarian persons are not so much set within an ineffable mystery of unity-in-difference where the immanent and economic Trinities relate, but within a supreme Tri-*unity* of simplicity and oneness.

But in Henry’s scheme the persons of the Trinity are nevertheless given marked roles—or at least it appears so. The Father, here, is primary but he is not primary in the sense of temporal autonomy, for “Life’s self-generation cannot come about without generation within itself this Son as the very mode in which this process takes place, the Son is as old as the Father, being, like him, present from the beginning.”¹⁶⁶ The Father and Son experience themselves in a full and perfect mutuality, bringing unity to its most radical expression. They draw life from each other as they share life by giving and receiving each other. They are co-dependent, co-reliant and it is a co-belonging that is, “more powerful than any conceivable unity.”¹⁶⁷ Henry writes further of the inextricable interrelatedness of the Father and the Son, as they are enclosed within sheer presence, which is undivided and thus articulable (or to the extent that it is) in terms of sheer identity: “To the extent that the revelation of the Son is the self-revelation of the Father—that the first is not possible without the second, or the second without the first—each appears in turn as the condition of the other.”¹⁶⁸ Even though the Son is eternally born, and the Spirit ceaselessly spirates and the Father subsists as the wellspring of divine generation, we

¹⁶⁶ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 57-8.

¹⁶⁷ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 67.

¹⁶⁸ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 67-8.

must contend here that the final form of Henry's Trinitarian discourse is that God is a bare and unadorned unity with no genuine distinction to be made between, and thus no real reciprocity to occur among, divine persons.

Such a Trinitarian God, Henry insists, appears as a phenomenon, and in some sense, as a surfeit of phenomenality that gives to all manifestation its hidden depth and all-embracing truth. God's unity is complete, and so refuses an arrival at self-consciousness of any kind. Henry's conception of God is in no way like Hegel's Absolute, whose (*welt*)*Geist* progresses through stages of self-realization and self-consciousness, a concept of God brought into clear view in that final section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* ("Absolute Knowing"). Here Hegel says, among other things, that God alienates and impoverishes himself in the event of kenosis, only to return to himself in the world, circulating in the fashion of a metaphysical loop that finally retains all consciousness in its fully apprehended totality.¹⁶⁹ Contrary to the movement of separation that consists of a steady realization of self-consciousness, proceeding as it does in Hegel from the infinite to the temporal indeterminacy of the world, Henry's God is unconstituted, is a phenomenon of auto-experience that ventures nowhere but within himself. On such a view, God does not even withdraw from the world because such an intentional or cognitive reflex would suggest that he is at some point capable of knowing himself in the world. God is therefore best understood, in Henry's architectonic, as that supreme principle or power which ascribes to all reality his divine essence, but incarnates himself in this fashion within himself alone. In this intra-Trinitarian manner, God is brought forth in and through his self-determination that goes forth into himself, making himself his own medium

¹⁶⁹ See, for example, G. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1979), chapter 8, "Absolute Knowing."

of self-determination. A God who gives of his incarnate bounty and abundance only to himself evokes of necessity the duplicity of display, recalling the caesura between the visible and invisible that informs at every level Henry's portrayal of the "God vs. world" distinction. The duplicity of all appearing imparts into Henry's thought the rigor of an absolute intelligibility that makes unavoidable a break with any philosophy of the world or discourse of distance, and even breaks from basic theological conceptions of Incarnation, kenosis, ecclesiology, etc. Without difference or stratification, and certainly without stages of realization, divine auto-affection makes God appear inside himself, immanent to himself; God does not conceal within himself historical chaos, nor reflective acts of cognition, nor distance of any kind. Henry's God is manifestly a totality of all that God finally is in the pure giving of himself to himself. Such immanence could be explicated in a phenomenological idiom as a pure subjective identity without reference to the world, what Henry also discusses as an utterly pure form of non-reflective self-awareness—an immediate and "acosmic" self-revelation that precedes, and happens outwith, any temporal delay or reflective "outside" of the world.¹⁷⁰

Such an absolute distinction between God and the world, or the invisible and the visible, certainly invokes the philosophical taxonomy of Heidegger's late book, *Identity and Difference* (1957). Whereas Heidegger in that book, especially the essay "the Principle of Identity," opts for an economy of difference, finitude and distance, and the ontological difference between Being and beings, Henry elects to take narrative of pure identity as his point of departure. This unity links the subject to its divine origin apart from all perception of ontological difference. In Henry's system,

¹⁷⁰ See for example, Henry, *I am the Truth*, 15, 102, 153.

then, God is manifest only within his self-embrace in his absolute subjectivity, a self-revelation that “holds it inside itself, retains it in so close an embrace that what it holds and reveals is itself.”¹⁷¹ This absolute subjectivity is what one may depict as the “strong” sense of auto-affection that belongs to God alone.¹⁷²

Human generation: We further develop here the economy of generation, extending it to encompass its “weak” portrayal of givenness, even if we are approaching here one of the more glaring moments of imprecision in his thought, a climax of convolution within the layered presence of divine auto-affection. Human generation is the second declension of generation. And Henry’s convention of generation proposes to explain, simply, the generation of the self; or more precisely: the affirmation of myself as this particular creaturely monad utterly dependent on God for my life even to be, for God’s Trinitarian life burgeons into the life of myself as a particular creature whose invisible life bears within it that very plenitude of God. Henry’s spirituality stands at a total remove from any kind of doctrine of the *vestigium trinitatis*.

Henry may tacitly affirm Barth’s condemnation of this originally Augustinian idea, which, as Barth notes, constitutes “An analogue of the Trinity, of the Trinitarian God of Christian revelation, in some creaturely reality distinct from Him, a creaturely reality which is not a form assumed by God in His revelation, but which quite apart from God’s revelation manifests in its own structure by creation a certain similarity to the structure of the trinitarian concept of God, so that it may be regarded

¹⁷¹ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 30.

¹⁷² Henry, *I am the Truth*, 106.

as an image of the Trinitarian God Himself.”¹⁷³ Of the possibility of a trace of the Trinity within the self, both Henry and Barth would adjudge to be a myth.

The “root of the doctrine of the Trinity,” for Barth, is revelation, God’s self-disclosure in Christ. There are not two roots but simply one, for if there is a second root then there is no reason why an infinite regress of roots could not forever unfold. We are not, on this view, a microcosm of the macrocosm, as if the human image is a supplementary illustration of the inner life of God. But the undeniable impression one may receive from reading Barth is that God’s self-revelation is communicated only in and through scripture, the Biblical material, since it is the “concept of revelation taken from the Bible” (there is certainly a “three-fold” form of the Word of God).¹⁷⁴ Here, Henry and Barth diverge, and radically so. Whereas Barth widens the abyss between Creator and creature, presumably maintained to protect theological language from idolatry or myth-making, Henry brings the self and God into an unbreakable unity. Henry shall derive, admittedly, so much of his own thinking from scripture, but the kind of revelation he pronounces belies any kind of simple correlation between revelation and the biblical documents. This distinction highlights that while the *vestigium trinitatis* is too radical for Barth, it is not sufficiently radical for Henry. The self-revelation of God, for Henry, is generation, the perfect and complete upwelling of divine presence within me, which represents an act in which my life is gathered up into God’s Trinity so as to share fully in his

¹⁷³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, I/1*, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1975) p.334.

¹⁷⁴ Barth, *Church Dogmatics, I/1*, p.332. For more on the three-fold form of the revelation, which finally culminates in the primacy of the Bible (in addition to preaching and Incarnation), see Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1*, §4.

glory—not by participation but in essence.¹⁷⁵ In such a vision of divine revelation, the “trace” or *vestigium* violates the gift of God bestows of himself upon the soul because it disallows the exaltation of nature fully into divine grace—so far as the world is interpolated between the gift and the recipient. Henry indicates that the God’s life communicated to me in and through generation does not leave the divine and human essences distinct; conversely for Barth the *vestigium trinitatis* does not leave them distinct enough. Barth concludes, of course, that a movement toward God such as Henry’s would appeal to a mythic imagination fully ordered to the creaturely realm, “In the last resort, at the same risk as all the rest, including the finders of the ancient *vestigial trinitatis*, we can only try to point to the fact that the root of the doctrine of the Trinity lies in revelation, and that it can lie only in this if it is not to become at once the doctrine of another and alien god, of one of the gods, the man-gods, of this aeon, if it is not to be a myth.”¹⁷⁶ But of course, all language of “creaturehood” or “finitude” or “human nature” in Henry is no longer justified, since human nature is already divine in its essence.

Even if Henry may not take into proper account the language of the Trinity and its utter difference from the creature, human generation does not invent a self-identity that originates from itself, but from something other than itself. Just so, the radicality of paradox constitutes the heart of selfhood. This is, in point of fact, inaccurate, because the concept of paradox Henry employs succumbs to incoherence—and we shall further develop this accusation of incoherence later in the chapter. At least we can glimpse, and we often do, statements in Henry that say I

¹⁷⁵ Henry states, “*Life has the same meaning for God, for Christ, and for man.* This is so because there is but a single and selfsame essence of Life, and, more radically, a single and selfsame Life.” Henry, *I am the Truth*, p.101.

¹⁷⁶ Barth, *Church Dogmatics, I/1*, p.346.

have not, “brought myself into this condition of experiencing myself. I am myself, but I myself have no part in this ‘being-myself.’”¹⁷⁷ The self-affection I have of myself takes up the theme of gift and the abiding orientation of receptivity to which such a donation leads, evident in the feeling of primitive passivity. I receive myself from one whom is not me, that is, God’s donation of his Word, but in whom I nevertheless subsist in exactly the same way he subsists because of the life we share together. Henry intends to belabour the point that I am not an “active” or spontaneously sovereign self, tragic in my decadence, whose self-indulgence prepares me to represent or disclose the unity of the world—a gesture toward an unbridled freedom so characteristically on display in the modern subject we considered above. But he equally stresses that in my essence I am not separate from God. In order to reject the modern concept of self-assertion, Henry considers how auto-affection, for all of the power of self-possession and sense of selfhood it imparts to me and for all of the intensity of subjective presence it confines within me, does not include within it a self-subsisting or self-legislating ego.

There is no such thing, in other words, as autonomy for Henry. In consequence of my passivity within the depth God’s gift and plenitude, my generation within God is the ultimate subversion of the onto-theological, self-positing subject. The onto-theological self teaches us, with a presumptuous conceit, that the religious life may take on merely an “ontic” role. Theology can only articulate a self that puts into play a harmless religious moment of diremption from what is more fundamentally a philosophical self who stands as the centre of reference

¹⁷⁷ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 107.

of the whole world (Husserl) or whose existence is always first an ontological question to be resolved in relation to the world (Heidegger).

Of course, in Henry's eyes, I receive my power to be myself not from own resources or rationality but from the origin of all subjective power: God. The power of the passivity by which I am given life draws me within myself with an invincible divine force. I am cast irrepressibly within myself, a divine movement which permits me to exercise myself as "myself" and to grasp myself inwardly. Just as God is self-present, I too am magnetized to myself in and through a non-reflective self-awareness, a subjective structure of undiluted self-presence that is proved void at every moment of the reflective capacity to distanciate me from my own essence, from my feeling of myself in perfect form. Reverberating under the impact of itself, auto-affection does not grow weary of itself; it does not finally implode on itself after one last exhale, but rather passes onto the inexhaustible life of God, allowing me thereby to share immediately in the richness of God's fullness, which engulfs my difference from God altogether—or better, it precludes any difference from obtaining in the first place. Given to me inwardly, like an invisible residue of yeast, God ferments within me, thickening out inside me without exceeding the space into which he rises up. Communicating to me the same love the Father communicates to the Son, God appears to me in a dark and inward upsurge, therein offering up to experience the yield of a passive enjoyment of the Spirit's living profusion held together with the sorrowful blessing of living ineluctably in communion with the eternal movement of divine life; in that underground night where I pervade myself thoroughly, the life of God is already there pervading me. Hence, given that my "self" is understood as a gift because it is received passively, I do not have the leisure

to refuse or assume my selfhood. I could not momentarily bracket my life and then re-engage it upon a time of my choosing. Henry describes this irrefragable call to life in pointed language that consists of the principal message of the Spirit of Christianity: “For in the irruption of life and in its wave, which moves in us and renders us both full with it and ourselves, there is no gap, nor any distance or any possibility of a response, of a yes or a no.”¹⁷⁸ In other words, I do not decide if I live—my destiny as a living subject is already set, etched in stone, for I am relentlessly hurled into life by way of divine life’s eternal self-donation.

As Jeffrey Hanson notes, it is this notion of “unfreedom” with respect to living that leads Henry, “to recognize the unfreedom of my self’s constitution is tantamount to recognizing my identity with life.”¹⁷⁹ And so, Henry’s conception of the “I” is not a nominative “I” but rather assumes a dative/accusative lived-pole, a “me” to whom selfhood is given immediately and in one fell swoop from God. Henry does not intend, on this account, to destroy the correlation between the genitive and dative poles altogether. The genitive understood here consists of that which is given to me, but is something given to me without distance between it and me; there is thus no distance or gap between the genitive and dative poles. The appearing *of* life *to* me is structurally one and the same; what appears (genitive) and that to which appearing appears (dative) are brought together in pure identity, structurally isomorphic, if “weakly” identical—the same in essence even though my self-affection varies in

¹⁷⁸ Michel Henry, “Quatre principes de la phénoménologie,” 25.

¹⁷⁹ Jeffrey Hanson, “Michel Henry’s Problematic Reading of the *Sickness unto Death*,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 38 no.3 (2007): 248-60, reference on 257. It is interesting to note that Hanson exposes Henry’s problematic use of Kierkegaard precisely on this issue. It is Kierkegaard’s existentialism and prioritization of “freedom” that most distinguishes human life from divine life and thus highlights the basic ontological distinction between them, distinction Henry denies as we hope to show in this chapter.

intensity, but not in kind, from the level of purity at which the Father and Son affect each other. And yet, how can this be?

Unlike God, I do not bring myself into life, yet paradoxically, I am given to myself in the selfsame movement of the Father's auto-generation accomplished through his reciprocity with his Son and Spirit. For Henry, the achievement of "myself," or my self-experience, is identical to my singularity as this particular "me." I am this unique self borne forth from an elemental self-presencing. I crush against myself, affect myself without distance or difference between me and myself. My auto-affection, however, is carried along and made possible by divine auto-affection. The temptation to say that I achieve myself ought to be rejected up front. And yet, the temptation to say that I am given to myself from something different in essence from me must be rejected too. Here the equivocity of Henry's thought attains full maturity, exposing to view a plain incoherence. I do not receive myself, according to Henry, in and through hetero-affection, as if in the movement of coming-into-myself I am affected by something essentially different from myself. Within the space where nothing foreign affects me, there arises a visceral experiencing only of myself, being affected only by myself, prior to any possible horizon of alterity or of any world—but at the same time, such an enclosure is shut up inside the self-coherence of God who is somehow different than me (though not in essence).

The human and divine horizons merge, or so appear to fully merge, at just this point. For Henry it is Christ the Arch-Son who gives to me my life. I am, in every occasion, what Henry names the "son within the Son" insofar as my "ipseity" (i.e., self-experience) is realized within, and never without, Christ's self-realization of himself. To convey this point in familiar New Testament terms, Henry describes

this dative pole, this “me” that I am and to whom God donates life, in language drawn from the gospel of John’s famous sheep parable: “I cannot be myself except by passing through the gate of the sheepfold. I am not myself, and cannot be, except by way of life’s original Ipseity. The *pathētik* flesh of this Ipseity, in which absolute Life is joined to itself, is what joins me to myself such that I may be, and can be, this me that I am. Therefore I cannot join me to myself except through Christ, since he has joined eternal Life to itself, creating in it the first Self.”¹⁸⁰ I am given to myself, simply cast into myself, as a brute and apodictic fact, which is realized under the form of “absolute life’s” self-donation which, in calling me to live, gives me the life of Christ, who is my form.

§12. TRANSCENDENTAL REDUCTION AS “RADICAL” REDUCTION

Henry invokes here the classically “Kantian” transcendental style of philosophy as the proper method for thematizing life, and so abolishes the need to make empirical difference a chief factor upon which rests our communion with each other in our respective singularities. It is only in virtue of our relation with the Father mediated by Christ that we are able to share at all in each other’s transcendental singularity. Thus the transcendental condition for all possible life: God expressed in the form of Christ. God’s auto-generation is henceforward the primitive source from which I am born together with all that lives. One may even describe generation of the First-Son as the “form” from which I take my own form and from which every singular self take its form.

¹⁸⁰ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 115. Henry is deploying the sheepfold metaphor here from John 10 not as a truth about discipleship or ecclesial life, as if the pastor functions as the shepherd and the congregation his flock. Rather Henry uses the term sheepfold as a way to describe the essential unity between Christ’s ipseity and the ego’s. Just as the sheepfold scatters without a shepherd, so my ego (and every other ego) shall disperse without its unity being held together in Christ.

But how may we experience, according to Henry's strict framework, such a *limit* phenomenon? In this section we describe the spiritual, mystical means through which I gain access to this the form of Christ, his living present as the eternal Son. Henry's disqualification of the exterior aspect of the self in favour of the interior furnishes the coordinates of a "radical phenomenology"¹⁸¹ in the precise sense that it radicalizes Husserl's phenomenological reduction. Central to Henry's radicalization is a strategy that invests phenomenology with the resources that make possible the unveiling of the living present. Henry's strategy indicates the way forward by demanding that phenomenology eliminate altogether the idea of bracketing or suspending of the world. He is especially troubled with the power of display the world may exercise over the invisible disclosure of life. So, rather than merely bracket or suspend the world (as Husserl does), Henry's strategy seeks to undermine the world entirely, and such a theological or radical reduction purifies the interior self of all attachments to temporality, worldhood and visible structures of disclosure. This move away from Husserl is simultaneously a move toward Gnosticism on the part of Henry: undoubtedly a Gnostic impulse comes expressly into view here as the principal miscalculation that shall bedevil Henry's work from beginning to end. That is to say, because it is freighted with a Gnostic impulse, Henry's theological reduction retains within its logic a sharp refusal of the world, and conceived in this way, the steadfastness of the reduction necessarily intends to subdue the *actual* difference between life and the world. How? By splitting the self between a pure inner oasis of divinity and an outer world of illusion and death (a pertinacious breach within the self never to be reconciled), one may then wonder if the world matters at

¹⁸¹ See for instance, "La question de la vie et de la culture dans la perspective d'une phénoménologie radicale," in *Phénoménologie de la vie, tome IV* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2004), 11-29.

all in Henry, and therewith, whether any actual difference between the self and world may finally obtain. Consequent upon the calculus of duplicity, this is the Gnostic arrangement of the self that besets his analysis of interiority, or at least ominously circles, and therefore, exasperates its invisible disclosure. Before we address the question of Gnosticism more fully in Henry, we dwell first on the theological reduction as he puts it forward.

We must first acknowledge that it is Husserl who articulated the reduction as a way to parenthesize or bracket the visible world in order, not to negate the world, but to come back to it with the special lens of the transcendental attitude.¹⁸² The reduction traverses, as in the motion of a circle, the ego's movement away from, and then back to, the world. It is unsurprising, then, that Henry finds this Husserlian method, whose guiding impulse is abstraction from the world (together with its inverse, the return back), a step in the right direction; the meditating philosopher of Husserl's reduction is nevertheless not sufficiently radical for Henry with respect to the complete disqualification of the visible display of the world that a radical reduction shall necessarily summon forth. Husserl defines the reduction as an especially powerful species of the many acts of consciousness that a reflective ego can exercise, and its function is serviceable to the extent that it allows the ego to "bracket" or "parenthesize" the world as a means to find out exactly how the ego is like a residue. In each instance, the Husserlian reduction is supposed to unveil how the ego counts as a pure substance that remains after the self's recoil against the horizon of the world, after the ego looks at the world from afar. Husserl's main

¹⁸² Husserl writes in the reduction, "I am not negating this 'world' as though I were a sophist; I am not doubting its factual being as though I were a sceptic; rather I am exercising the 'phenomenological' *epoché* which also completely shuts me off from any judgment about spatiotemporal factual being." See Husserl, *Ideas I*, §32.

interest in such an application of the reduction is to dissociate the ego from its natural attitude or its dogmatic slumber about its surrounding world (*Umwelt*), as if the world were just “there” without its appearing having been originally modified and thereby constituted by an ego and its continuous perceptual powers, i.e., its ongoing “consciousness of...”¹⁸³ The world, for Husserl, is always a correlate of consciousness shaped by and synthesized within the ego’s streaming temporal experience, the immanent happening of the mind whose *cogitatio* (thinking) always has a *cogitatum* (content): hence, Husserl’s three-fold Cartesian chord of *Ego-cogito-cogitatum*.¹⁸⁴ It is certain that Husserl did *not* disqualify the world’s appearing, for the world always impinges on the ego, giving itself to the ego as an object of attention and reflection: the ego, “as intentional *it reaches out beyond the isolated subjective processes* that are to be analysed.”¹⁸⁵ So in Husserl’s transcendental reduction, the world is not annihilated but becomes “in a quite peculiar sense, a *phenomenon*.”¹⁸⁶ To this end, Husserl writes that in the reduction the stream of *cogitationes* are never evacuated from the ego’s gaze, because “we have not lost anything but rather have gained the world of absolute being which, rightly understood, contains within itself, ‘constitutes’ within itself, all worldly transcendencies.”¹⁸⁷ So, when Husserl writes that the field of absolute consciousness is the residuum left after the “annihilation of the world,” he is not saying that the world is really annihilated or somehow negated by consciousness.¹⁸⁸ Rather he states quite clearly that the metaphor of annihilation is used to illustrate the basic truth that

¹⁸³ Husserl, *Ideas I*, §47, “natural world as a correlate of consciousness.”

¹⁸⁴ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, §21.

¹⁸⁵ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p.48.

¹⁸⁶ Husserl, *Crisis*, 152.

¹⁸⁷ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 113.

¹⁸⁸ Husserl, *Ideas I*, §49, “absolute consciousness as the residuum after the annihilation of the world.”

the proper province of the phenomenological reduction is the constituting power of consciousness—that the world is not eliminated but *constituted* by consciousness.

Taken for granted, the empirical world in the natural attitude is simply and straightforwardly there and never becomes an object of inquiry. Husserl contends that the critical, transcendental attitude institutes a paradigm shift away from the natural attitude by “purifying” the ego’s naïve belief patterns and doxastic allegiances to the world. It is in and through the transcendental reduction that the ego, in its own reflective freedom, can alter its experience of the world by assuming another attitude altogether. The conversion from the natural attitude to the transcendental attitude is an “essentially changed subjective process that takes the place of the original one.”¹⁸⁹ This subjective-reflective transcendental attitude, moreover, alters my experience of the world by assuming an attitude of disinterestedness whereby the self-legislating “phenomenological Ego establishes himself as a ‘disinterested onlooker,’ above the naively interested Ego.”¹⁹⁰ This “splitting of the ego,” a consequence of the transcendental reduction, pervades my experience of the world so thoroughly that it throws open up the field of pure consciousness in which I can, without prejudice, describe the world as it is given. And in this new transcendental attitude, and in it alone, argues Husserl, I am enabled to see the world as given to me only as it is *for me*, that is, as a correlate of my meaning-endowing intentional aim.

What often goes unnoticed about Husserl’s theory of the transcendental reduction: it must be maintained, habitually and without respite, as an ongoing critical-philosophical attitude about the world. The transcendental reduction so

¹⁸⁹ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 34.

¹⁹⁰ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 35.

conceived is a way of life. In *Ideas I*, Husserl suggests that putting into play the phenomenological reduction is, initially, like deciding to convert to another worldview or pressing through a difficult and life-altering trial.¹⁹¹ In the *Crisis of European Sciences* he compares the performance of the transcendental reduction to a religious conversion, a momentous struggle that completely transforms one's outlook on the world.¹⁹² It is difficult to execute the transcendental reduction because I am so tied to the way things naturally are for me in this empirical horizon of spatiotemporal givenness. It is naïve to live in the natural attitude, so once I undergo the conversion to the transcendental attitude, I must remain under its tutelage once and for all. Husserl writes of this purified domain and the attitude it fosters, that "it is to be noted also that the present, the transcendental epoché is meant, of course, as a habitual attitude which we resolve to take up once and for all. Thus it is by no means a temporary act, which remains incidental and isolated in its various repetitions."¹⁹³ Husserl is consequently concerned, in spite of his turn toward philosophical idealism, with the ego's status as the transcendental condition for the possibility of the objective world. After all, the world-horizon indicates an accomplishment, in large part, of the ego's power to constitute inside its mental life that which it sees.

Henry welcomes Husserl's strategy of employing the transcendental reduction as a means to unveil the interior transcendental field of the self.¹⁹⁴ Henry agrees with Husserl about the basic transcendental structure of phenomenology, "insofar as it takes into consideration the givenness in which every experience is rooted. The reduction returns us to this original domain and, as Husserl notes, is

¹⁹¹ See note in Husserl, *Ideas I*, §62.

¹⁹² Husserl, *Crisis*, 137.

¹⁹³ Husserl, *Crisis*, 150.

¹⁹⁴ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 16.

transcendental.”¹⁹⁵ Yet Henry is critical of Husserl about the degree to which the wish of the reduction to purify the ego of its attachment to the world can be fully effected. While Husserl may have sought to bracket the exterior world in order to come back to the world with the transcendental attitude, Henry thinks, in contrast, that only a reduction which reduces the self to the irreducible field of its aboriginal presence, to its self-narrative or soliloquy in which its own echo is heard within itself, is worthy of the name “transcendental.”

Henry’s radical reduction celebrates a “pure” transcendental sphere that attempts explicitly to order the self toward a higher, divine end, which is secured over against Husserl’s fictive and “impure” transcendental consciousness. For Henry, the living present from which I am endlessly born is accessed once the self is purified of all exteriority or conscious reflection, this is especially so with regard to the temporal “comet’s tail” in which consciousness is embedded. Henry’s radical reduction takes me back to the invisible residue left over after the disqualification of the world and its temporal streaming. This interior site of birth is no abstract self-equivalence, but an element that vibrates under the impact of its timeless self-impression, and which stems directly from the essence of life, and thus, is truly undergone in the immanence of divine life. Henry states, in sometimes the most imperious of terms, that access to the living present is given in and through the uncontested disqualification of the world, leaving no sedimentations of the ego’s vital self-presence in the world. Henry advocates a reduction that “results from a radical reduction of every transcendence that yields the hyletic or impressional component as the underlying essence of subjectivity. Naturally, the radical reduction

¹⁹⁵ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 16.

of every transcendence can only become possible and have a sense to the extent that it can show, at the end of its proceedings, what subsists when transcendence is no longer there.”¹⁹⁶ If Henry’s radical reduction represents a reduction that opens up the truly transcendental sublayer or the theological underground of the self, then it must, in one visceral fell swoop, bring the self into unmitigated presence with itself, experiencing its divine subjective core that subsists at its limit.

By “disqualification” we indicate here Henry’s desire to move away from the world, an absolute movement that brackets it once and for all without returning to it. The radical reduction contains an unassailable rupture from the world, which, however unlikely it sounds, does not annihilate or negate the world. The world is always there, in Henry’s estimation, looming over against the interior self as a threat against the security of self-presence tied to the living present from which it continually flows forth. And so, we may be forgiven for a moment of speculation here in contending that Henry means to say that to disqualify the world one must let oneself passively detach from the world, such that the reduction constitutes a such a passive flight from the world without return. To disqualify the world in such uncompromising fashion, similarly, sanctions self-presence without reference to the cognitive, representational power of the ego to bracket the world and come back to it, as in a circle, with a renewed attitude.

Rolf Kühn’s interpretation of Henry’s radical reduction helpfully stresses that it counters Husserl’s valorisation of cognition and reflective freedom, and most of all, the power of constitution. Thinking or mental processes are powerless (*impuissante*) in their capacity to illuminate the auto-revelation of life. Kühn

¹⁹⁶ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 9.

describes Henry's unique appropriation of the reduction as a "leap" (*saut*) that proceeds from visible display to the field of invisible display. The radical reduction that Henry designs as a means of access to life, it must be emphasized, does not perpetuate the Husserlian idea of a disinterested onlooker or freely self-legislating spectator, as if I could split my ego simply because I simply decide to do so. The Husserlian transcendental reduction would, in fact, prioritize the ego's freedom to set out in the clearest terms a reduction that is soundly an accomplishment of its reflective-cognitive agency, its own power and daring to bend the world to its gaze. Henry's radical reduction, in contrast, mutes the reflective-cognitive agency of mental life in the most comprehensive sense insofar as the ego Henry's advances has, remarkably, no autonomy or scope within which it can make the world a variable of the self-legislation peculiar to the modern subject (Husserlian or otherwise). The absolute Life of God, manifest as a purely affective event reverberating inside me, gives access to life. Kühn clarifies Henry's radical departure from Husserl in this respect: "The counter-reductive leap does not only abandon the position of the apparently sovereign phenomenological *spectator*. The auto-reduction as a concrete counter-reduction also implies the radicality of a pure experiencing event as an experiential trial—said otherwise: as the 'poverty' of life which is given as nothing other than an 'intensity', known as a pure *passio* itself, without intervention of time and space with their ontic multiplicities."¹⁹⁷ What Kühn suggests here is that the radical reduction sets into operation the feeling of pure receptivity both motivated by and set into operation by the nocturnal presence of God inside me. The "leap" into life circulates within itself, proving that my desire for life is already within me as it is

¹⁹⁷ Rolf Kühn, "La contre-reduction comme 'saut' dans la Vie absolue," in *Retrouver la vie oubliée: critiques et perspectives de la philosophie de Michel Henry*, ed. Jean-Michel Longneaux, 67-80 (Namur, Belgium: Presses universitaires de Namur, 2000), 76.

given to me by God, forming me in my pure essence as this “me” generated within his absolute self-affection. Without reference to consciousness or reflective representational thought, the radical reduction must be apprehended as a *counter-reduction*. As a leap into life, it is initiated by God. Henry writes, “thinking does not permit access to life, rather it is life which achieves itself in the self, being nothing other than the original movement of life’s eternal arrival of itself.”¹⁹⁸ I leap into life, therefore, by way of a radical detachment from the field of visible display, but one that is aroused by and moved according to divine life’s eternal movement.

Because it is a “leap,” Henry’s radical reduction does not entertain degrees of reduction nor does it permit any intentional fissures or ruptures to occur since such crevices shall let in the light of the world (opening up right away a distance or difference between me and myself) through mental representational thought. In the words of Henry, there is no difficulty in nominating the radical reduction an “original auto-affection in a truly radical sense..., it is a life that achieves itself simply and permanently, as one with itself and thus before it can be affected by anything different than itself.”¹⁹⁹ By virtue of this mysterious power within us that may always lay dormant or may irrupt at any moment, the radical reduction is indeed a power that brings me back to the deep pathos of “myself” from which I am born within divine life.

This is why Meister Eckhart’s theory of detachment commands pride of place in Henry’s earliest work, *The Essence of Manifestation*.²⁰⁰ Unmistakably reminiscent

¹⁹⁸ Henry, *Incarnation*, 236.

¹⁹⁹ Henry, “Qu’est-ce que cela que nous appelons la vie?” in *Phénoménologie de la vie, tome I* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004), 39-57, reference on 50.

²⁰⁰ Henry, *Essence of Manifestation*, §§ 39-40. For those unfamiliar with Eckhart, it is both his theory of the birth of God in the soul and his theory of detachment or *Abgeschiedenheit* (i.e., detaching from the desires of the world) that Henry takes up. For secondary sources on this connection, see

of Husserl's claim that the transcendental reduction may count as a "conversion" or an entirely novel attitude, Henry's radical reduction is also a "conversion" of sorts. To detach from the world is to find God, and so, the radical reduction quite literally gives rise to a theological conversion, a second "birth" in which I passively remember—and am born again. The ego so conceived by Henry has no real or intelligible contours visible within the world's theatre and certainly does not suffer the changeability of temporality. But the exterior aspect of the ego, makes the inner ego forget its divine origin—hence the radical reduction constitutes an affective movement away from the world and toward life motivated by divine life itself. Adamant that the reduction cannot return to the world, Henry's unique synthesis of phenomenology and theology is, contrary to some of his interpreters and descendants, an unabashed theological turn; the radical reduction is a *theological* reduction. To this we now turn.

§13. RADICAL INTERIORITY AND THE THEOLOGICAL TURN

Henry illuminates the original primal limit phenomenon of all living with the theory of generation (§11) and the bringing to light of this reality arises from a radicalized phenomenological reduction that pursues a purified transcendental sphere entirely distinct from the world, giving way to a duplicitous self (§12). We are now

fn.74 in the present chapter. For Henry's discussion of Eckhart, see Henry, *Essence of Manifestation*, §§ 39-40. For those unfamiliar with Eckhart, it is both his theory of the birth of God in the soul and his theory of detachment or *Abgeschiedenheit* (i.e., detaching from the desires of the world) that Henry takes up. For more on Henry's eccentric adoption of Eckhartian themes, see, Nathalie Depraz, "Seeking a Phenomenological Metaphysics: Henry's Reference to Meister Eckhart," trans. George B. Sadler, *Continental Philosophy Review* 32 no.3 (1999): 303-24; Jean Reaidy, "La connaissance absolue et l'essence de la verite chez Maitre Eckhart et Michel Henry," in *Michel Henry's Radical Phenomenology*, eds. Rolf Kühn and Jad Hatem (Bucharest: Studia Phaenomenologica, 2009), 287-301. Gabrielle Dufour-Kowalska, "Vertus chrétiennes et science de l'absolue: Maitre Eckhart selon Michel Henry," in her book, *Michel Henry: passion et magnificence de la vie* (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 2003), 197-218

in a position to attend to the theological articulation he gives to this phenomenological residuum (i.e., the product left over after the reduction). The radical reduction so premised by Henry is necessarily a theological reduction. Yet there has been some debate about Henry's relationship to theology, to wit: has he in fact made a theological turn at all, and if so, to what degree?

Theological Turn: How Far?

Chapter one defended the theological turn in phenomenology by maintaining that phenomenology, as a style of thinking, helps to clarify how the life of faith is lived before God. Inspired by Henry's own theological turn, we sought a rapprochement between phenomenology and theology such that they collaborate in the attempt to speak rigorously about the lived aspects of faith. We avoided the right to claim that God is a phenomenon and that phenomenology can somehow garner the conceptual power to determine how God is manifest, whether invisibly or not (we develop this more fully in chapters five and six). Yet here we cover Henry's theological turn in more detail with the net effect of showing how God is an absolute phenomenon and that phenomenology and theology unite together as single conceptual approach to elucidate the structure of the living present. But there is some disagreement to what extent Henry has taken a theological turn.

Antoine Vidalin offers a suggestive perspective that characterizes Henry's work as a propaedeutic to theological reflection. The upshot of this perspective is that Vidalin assumes Henry's phenomenology of divine life is couched purely in phenomenological terms, and in its pursuit for interiority, happens upon the divine presence of the Christian God that theologians are then to take up and elaborate

upon.²⁰¹ While one may appreciate a measured and careful approach that respects disciplinary boundaries and yet highlights how phenomenology and theology may overlap in Henry, Vidalin's laudable position is ultimately inadequate with respect to Henry's deep integration of the two styles of thinking. Why must Henry's work be characterized as a "preliminary" or a *propraedeutic* practice in preparation for philosophically fashioned theology? In this sense, one must wonder why Henry's own readings of scripture, his configuration of God as a deeply personal self-revelation and his critical studies of the Incarnation and rejection of creation in favour of generation cannot also be theological data in their own right.²⁰²

For fear of losing out on his key phenomenological breakthroughs, Ruud Welten recommends an alternative strategy to reconciling phenomenology and theology in Henry. The most authentic form of pure interiority left over after the reduction, argues Welten, does *not* purport to be theological in content *per se*. To make the audacious claim that Henry's phenomenology is intrinsically theological is necessarily to relegate Henry to the role of theologian or mystic. It is more prudent, suggests Welten, to appreciate Henry's application of theology as secondary or derivative. In other words, Welten argues that theology is merely the handmaiden to phenomenology's quest to iterate the basic structures of human life in their essential articulations. Welten recommends that we approach Henry as a phenomenologist who simply seizes religious texts and the Christian tradition for their phenomenological bounty. In such a vein, Welten writes that, "the conclusion is not that the Christian life is the authentic Life, as long as we do not really understand

²⁰¹ Antoine Vidalin, *La parole de la vie: la phénoménologie de Michel Henry et l'intelligence chrétienne des Écritures* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2006), 210-17.

²⁰² One could argue that Aquinas and Augustine, for example, would not necessarily distinguish, rigorously and without fail, the disciplines of philosophy and theology.

why Henry reads the New Testament in its phenomenological structure. I hesitate to conclude overhasty that the authentic life is the life in God, because then we lose the phenomenological analyses of the immanency of the self.”²⁰³ Welten here intimates that phenomenology exemplifies a discrete discipline with expressly naturalistic boundaries (and thus cannot overlap with the domains of existence that theology may disclose). For Welten, then, Henry’s work is a model of phenomenology that ventures into the New Testament as an intellectual artifice or a thought-experiment, as a mere means to an end. Nothing more than a conduit that leads to the phenomenological structure of life, theological discourse is simply one of the many orders of manifestation (art, politics, culture, etc.) by which life gives itself. The degree to which Henry takes a theological turn is here minimized (and more so than Vidalin).

Dominique Janicaud, perhaps the most well-known commentator on the debate about the theological turn in French phenomenology, considers Henry to have taken an unambiguous and radical theological turn. But such a theological turn in Janicaud’s estimation effects a turn away from the well-defined boundaries of phenomenology and its status as a “rigorous science.”²⁰⁴ Both Janicaud and Welten presume the discipline of phenomenology to have adopted a sense of finality with protocol in place that, once violated, lead one beyond its proper bounds. Welten forecloses the possibility of a genuine theological turn in Henry while Janicaud acknowledges Henry’s theological turn may have resulted in a departure altogether

²⁰³ Ruud Welten, “Authenticity—the View from Within,” *Bijdragen, International Journal in Philosophy and Theology*, 71 (2010): 1-20, reference on 18.

²⁰⁴ See for example, Husserl, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965), 71-147.

from phenomenology²⁰⁵ (we have already overcome Janicaud's challenge by evaluation whether phenomenology is open enough to dialogue with theology. See §2 above).

A more charitable reading of Henry's theological turn is to suggest that he is a phenomenologist who is seeking to think theologically without at the same time taking leave of phenomenology. Certainly one could not claim Henry is a theologian or a trained scholar in ecclesiastical history or dogmatics. He is undoubtedly a trained phenomenologist deeply indebted to both Husserl and Heidegger as well as to the contemporary French scene that critically broadens the methodological bounds set by those two German founders. Henry's particular contribution is evident in his disclosure of the field of invisible display up against the field of exterior display, a double-sidedness that results in the duplicitous self. And further, for Henry, it is the disqualification (without annihilation) of the exterior self by means of the reduction that leads to the pure interior living present, which in turn, elicits theological discourse as a most natural dialogue partner. The reason Henry's move into theological terrain transpires as it does is that the field of invisible display is home to God as phenomenon. Hardly an abstract philosophical principle, God as a phenomenon is the living present that rises within me giving me to myself as I live at each moment. God is manifest as visceral, affective and thus concrete presence inside me. And that which gives birth to me, for Henry, represents that which stands outside of time in a genuinely self-subsistent, self-generating manner, namely God. Henry's thinking is, in its essence, greatly indebted to theology. It is only with recourse to the intelligibility of theological discourse, in other words, that Henry is

²⁰⁵ Janicaud, "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology," 70-86.

enabled to clarify the divine origin of the invisible field of disclosure that the phenomenology of life unveils. We may disagree, then, with Welten's claim that Henry implements theological discourse as merely one example among many of life's disclosures. The phenomenological substance of life is theological in its essence.

Henry therefore adopts a "theo-phenomenology" that exceeds the strict bounds of "visibility" in which Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology is enclosed. It is perhaps more accurate to describe Henry's work as a mutual meeting-point where phenomenology and theology collaborate, working in concert to elucidate the nocturnal nature of transcendental life. Without theology, phenomenology as Henry conceives it could well remain inarticulate about the actual content and origin of the transcendental sphere of life. By the same token, phenomenology installs within theology conceptual resources to thematize more exactly the experiential matrix by which divine revelation is internal to the living present.

Phenomenology and Theology: Transcendental Pursuits

Henry deeply integrates phenomenological inquiry with theological discourse for another important reason. He thinks their teleologies are coterminous: they are both reflective moments of thought constructed through discursive knowledge aimed at articulating, after the fact, the living present as it originally appears. They are both "transcendental" disciplines insofar as they take "into consideration the givenness in which every experience is rooted."²⁰⁶ Neither discipline can reveal the living present

²⁰⁶ Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 16.

of divine life self-generated within the interior depths of human life, for only divine life can achieve itself by revealing itself. Phenomenology and theology, together, are reflective disciplines that can only elaborate upon the structure of divine life after the fact (*après coup*);²⁰⁷ for the auto-revelation of divine life has always already been there from the beginning as a living present without having arrived from the future or been recalled from the past. Because both phenomenology and theology are temporal reflections on that which is non-temporal, we can say that Henry's theological turn is not merely a propeadeutic to theology proper nor is it a taking leave of phenomenology in the sense that it no longer participates in the discursive exercise of thought about the transcendental conditions of life.

Because of their common teleology Henry is enabled to join the methodological genius of phenomenology with the content of Christian revelation: they are inscribed within the same invisible field of display because they are informed by the same truth, namely the "Ur-truth" of the living present as it is born withing God. Henry writes, "it is here that the phenomenological intuitions of Life and that of Christian theology are rejoined: *in the recognition of a common presupposition which is not that of thought*. Before thought, before phenomenology and even before theology...a Revelation is at work."²⁰⁸ Henry describes this basic revelation from which I am born as "Absolute Life" (phenomenology) that is expressed exactly as the "Parousia of the Word" (theology).²⁰⁹

Henry's theo-phenomenology certainly entails a moment of "faith." Given its purpose to look for that which is not always apparent or visible, phenomenology

²⁰⁷ Henry deploys explicitly the expression, *après coup*, in the Frenchy. See Henry, "Material Phenomenology and Language (or Pathos and Language)," trans. Leonard Lawlor, *Continental Philosophy Review*, 32 (1999): 343-65, reference on 364.

²⁰⁸ Henry, *Incarnation*, 364.

²⁰⁹ Henry, *Incarnation*, 364.

ought not reject the idea that invoking faith nourished by seeking can particularize that seeking by shaping it within the Christian intellectual tradition. Henry exercises this play between phenomenology, theology and faith by appealing to Philip's question posed to Jesus in John 14.8-11. As a model for how one might integrate phenomenology with faith, Henry highlights how Philip asked Jesus to show the Father, for Philip was at pains to understand and "see" (phenomenologically) how Jesus and the Father were unified (theologically). In response, Jesus asks Philip to "believe" (have faith) that Jesus participates in the invisible essence of the Father's life. Believing in the invisible is therefore, for Henry, a movement internal to the pragmatics of the phenomenology of invisible display. Theological discourse nourished by faith aids the phenomenologist's quest to name the invisible disclosure of the living present.

Christian theology also maintains, according to Henry, that the self-revelation of God in the "Word made flesh" inscribes itself within the living presence from which I am born. This fact establishes straightaway that the theological disclosures of divine revelation are subject to phenomenological investigation. And according to Henry, the very phenomenological outworking of the Incarnation gives way to the basic truth that each of us appears in Christ as a "Son of God" generated within the "First-Son." This is, perhaps, the point at which Henry's theological turn come close to dissolving the distinction between theology and philosophy. We must recall that God is a phenomenon inasmuch as God appears as a phenomenological substance, a living present analyzable by phenomenological inquiry. Henry is quick to argue that one must not interpret the profession of faith to have made possible a phenomenological "seeing" of the living present as if it were a theoretical object to

be observed. Rather, as a living present already lived and experienced, both phenomenology and theology collaborate on the basis of faith to conceptualize and name the living present as God. Faith is the glue that unifies phenomenology and theology, giving to them the feeling of certainty, of apodicticity, that I am this “me” born from within the Word of God. I can hear through faith this donation as the noise of my birth (*le bruit de ma naissance*) as it irrupts in and through the living present and, therefore, am enabled to deploy phenomenology and theology as styles of thinking to reflect on and name the living present.²¹⁰ The theological turn in Henry is not so much a question of how far but rather a question of whether there is a difference at all between phenomenology and theology.

In Pursuit of Truth

There is one final conceptual link by which Henry joins phenomenology and theology. Guiding his book *I am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity* is the explicit invitation to rethink the idea of “truth” after Heidegger’s innovative interpretation of truth in §44 of *Being and Time*.²¹¹ Heidegger there depicts truth as an act of unconcealing/uncovering (*Aufdeckung*) or of disclosing (*Erschlossenheit*). Henry, like Heidegger, seeks for an original, primordial disclosure of truth, defined as pure unconcealedness, or “Aletheia.” The Greek word Heidegger famously deploys means both truth and un-concealing, or truth *as* un-concealing (a-letheia is literally “not-forgetting” or “not-concealing”). Further, “Aletheia” signifies that the proper conceptualization of truth is a matter of showing, manifesting or uncovering that which is hidden, lost or covered over. When something is false it is because its

²¹⁰ Henry, *Incarnation*, 371.

²¹¹ See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §44, “Dasein, Disclosedness, and Truth”

truth is covered over, hidden from the light of day: “It is the ontological condition of the possibility that assertions can be either true or false—that they may uncover or cover things up.”²¹² While Heidegger’s interpretation of truth is complex, and it is not our purpose to evaluate it here, it is important to note that Henry’s theological turn is, in large part, a commentary upon, and critical development of, Heidegger’s recognition that truth reflects a pursuit of that which is hidden.

While Henry agrees with Heidegger that the principal purpose of phenomenology is to unveil truth (i.e., truth *as* unveiling), Henry disagrees with what the actual content of that truth is. Henry thinks that §44 of *Being and Time* makes intelligible the advent of the appearing of the world according to three false “truths:” first, unconcealing is different from what is unconcealed to the point that the unconcealment consists in this difference. It seems, according to Henry, that such a difference is posited only when the unconcealment is understood as the ‘outside’ of the world. Second, because the appearing of the world differs also from what is unveiled there, the result is that the horizon of the world dispenses its light on everything regardless of its nature, which means that the world, in Heidegger’s thought, is totally indifferent to what it illumines. And third, the indifference of the appearing of the world to all that it shows refers to a still more decisive situation, to the incapacity of the world-horizon to uncover effectively that which it seeks to uncover. The appearing of the world, in other words, does not create the reality of that which it unconceals; it simply limits its power to that of a pointer by uncovering that which is already there.²¹³ Henry’s proffering of the radical reduction that

²¹² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 269.

²¹³ Henry, “Material Phenomenology and Language (or Pathos and Language),” 348-49. See also Henry, *Incarnation*, 59-61; Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 90-92.

unconceals the transcendental sphere of divine life opposes point for point each of these three Heideggerian characteristics.

The truth of life designates the living present whereby the appearing and what appears are exactly the same, so that for Henry, there is no exteriority whatsoever and thus no world-horizon or visibility involved (opposition to number one). The invisible living present opened up by the truth of life is that it is also the site where I am touched at very point of my being without difference or distance. The field of invisible display where life displays itself in its full glory is not indifferent to “me” as this particular living being as Heidegger’s world-horizon is indifferent to what it shows. Henry writes in this vein: “What is true in the world’s truth in no way depends on this truth: it is supported by it, guarded by it, loved by it, saved by it. The world’s truth—that it is to say, the world itself—never contains the justification for or the reason behind what it allows to show itself in that truth and thus allows ‘to be’—inasmuch as to be is to be shown” (opposition to number two).²¹⁴ And third, the site of radical interiority is tantamount to the site of divine life precisely because it auto-generates itself in its eternal coming-into-itself. Henry’s discovery of the “truth of life” is an absolute and irrefutable fact of existence because it self-verifies itself by way of *self*-revelation. What is revealed and the revelation is exactly the same so that the truth of life provides its own content and thus its own structure of appearing. Divine life is a sphere of truth that has a reality that cannot be governed, verified or adjudicated outside of its own domain of experience (opposition to number three).

Taken together, these three oppositions to Heidegger are reason enough to conclude that Henry takes an unequivocal theological turn without also taking leave

²¹⁴ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 16.

of phenomenology as a method that seeks for truth. Henry states the “truth as revelation” with respect to divine life this way: “With this idea of a pure Revelation—of a revelation whose phenomenality is the phenomenalization of phenomenality itself, of an absolute self-revelation that dispenses with whatever is other than its own phenomenological substance—we are in the presence of the essence that Christianity posits as the principle of everything. *God is that pure Revelation that reveals nothing other than itself.* God reveals Himself. The Revelation of God is his self-revelation.”²¹⁵ And it is in just such a self-revelation that God appears through affectivity, that immediate feeling of myself in which I crush against myself prior to the temporal streaming of visible display. The primitive and original type of self-awareness that is verified according to its own revelatory power through Christ constitutes the basis upon which the “truth” or certainty of my ipseity is built. Phenomenology makes intelligible the interior structure of appearing and theological discourse develops this structure in view of God’s self-appearing in Christ. Rolf Kühn writes that the self verifies itself within itself from both a phenomenological and theological point of view. I feel myself in pure auto-affection as this “me” and yet this is the living present from which I born as Son of God within the “First-Son.” The living present is a concrete Christ-affection. Kühn writes that for Henry, “the ‘nomination’ of Christ for this work is not an ideal, moral or ideological assurance, it is a *work of unification*, which never proceeds outside the self, as life affects itself absolutely, without leaving its own sphere.... it is the realization of my “true” life in its objectification as it is anchored in this lived

²¹⁵ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 25.

apodicticity.”²¹⁶ We see here that Henry’s strategy is to secure truth in its purest apodictic form, that is, my self-appearing through auto-affection within the arch-revelation of Christ.

And where does God’s self-revelation appear? In its absolute disqualification of the world (without annihilating the world), the radical reduction uncovers or unconceals an arch-truth, a ground-level self-experience of the ego wherein God’s presence appears. So while Henry will admit, for obvious reasons, that world discloses things in their visibility, he claims, nevertheless, that the world cannot disclose what is “true” about human reality. Understood on the basis of the duplicitous self, only God’s self-revelation within the acosmic sphere of divine auto-affection in its ongoing donation of life inside me can secure what is true about, or essential to, my life. God’s appearing as a theological truth is therefore incontestable because God is self-verifying in and through the phenomenological structure of auto-affection. It is the seeking after this arch-intelligibility in faith that unifies phenomenology and theology.

But because the power of the visible display of the exterior world conceals the truth of interiority, the absolute generation of the living present inside me can be, and usually is, forgotten by me. My “second birth” in which I remember my original state as a Son of God eternally born of Christ is put into play by the radical reduction and takes on what Jad Hatem calls a “mystical tonality.”²¹⁷ As such, the interior shape given to the living present unveiled by the reduction yields a mystical

²¹⁶ Rolf Kühn, “L’*passage absolu: de l’affectivité comme la seule certitude possible,*” in *Michel Henry, l’épreuve de la vie*, eds. Alain David et de Jean Greisch (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 141-67, references on 163-64.

²¹⁷ Jad Hatem, “La tonalité mystique de la second naissance,” *Retrouver la vie oubliée: critiques et perspectives de la philosophie de Michel Henry*, ed. Jean-Michel Longneaux, (Namur, Belgium: Presses universitaires de Namur, 2000), 166-82.

spirituality that, despite the particular spiritual exercise, finds the truth of myself upon the sure foundation of the unbreakable union continually secured and generated between my living present and God's living present.

This leads to a third and related point: the reduction is a *theological* turn is because the radical reduction precipitates a detachment from the world, which can be interpreted as a form of Christian mystical practice or even ascetical detachment.²¹⁸ Such a theological reduction participates in a style of spirituality akin to the “dark night of the soul” (and there certainly have been comparisons between Henry and St. John of the Cross).²¹⁹ Henry will formulate this inward turn in his own language: “God engenders himself as me, and also, God engenders me as himself, so in effect, because this is his life which is becoming mine, my life is nothing more than his: I am deified, according to the Christian concept of salvation.”²²⁰ Henry similarly deploys, as we have noted above, Eckhart, too, in this sense: “It is the absolute who, in the accomplishment of his task, constitutes the essence of the soul, the essence which as such is not different from this work, or as Eckhart says, from the operation

²¹⁸ In fact, Henry argues it is the extreme humility (i.e. Eckhart's detachment) that the self must practice in the hope of provoking a disclosure of that original self-revelation of Life within the inner-self. Christ models the pragmatics of detachment through his extreme humility as a Son who displays perfect obedience to the Father. Henry quotes John 7.17, which declares that, “If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking of my own authority.” Henry notes that this statement illustrates, “the phenomenon of religious experience, experience indisputably had by all humans to whom it is given. And this experience arrives each time that one hears the Word and abandons himself to it, and does the will of God.” Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 153.

²¹⁹ For secondary sources which elucidate the “night” of auto-affection with an eye to the dark night of the soul, see Alain Cugno, “Jean de la Croix avec Michel Henry.” In *Michel Henry, l'épreuve de la vie: actes du colloque de Cerisy 1996*, eds. Alain David and Jean Greisch (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 439-52; Ruud, Welten, “The night in John of the Cross and Michel Henry,” *Studies in Spirituality* 13 (2003): 213-33.

²²⁰ Given the programmatic nature of the text, we replicate it here in French: “Parce que ‘Dieu s’engendre comme moi-même’ et que, alors, ‘Dieu m’engendre comme lui-même,’ alors, en effet, parce que c’est sa vie qui est devenue la mienne, ma vie n’est plus rien d’autre que la sienne: je suis déifié, selon le concept chrétien du salut.” Henry, *Incarnation*, 372.

of God.”²²¹ It is the “soul” or the interior life understood in this way that orients one away from the luminosity of the world to the nocturnal of pure invisibility, the nighttime when phenomenology and theology meet.

§14. HENRY’S ABANDONMENT OF THE *CREĀTA IMAGO DEI*

We have described Henry’s notion of “generation” as the non-temporal source-point of life, the living present from which I am endlessly born in God (*naissance intemporelle*) without reference to the exterior world (§11-12).²²² We also mentioned, in passing, that generation is a reconstitution of human life’s origin insofar as it rejects the doctrine of creation and thus the *imago Dei*. In §45 of his book, *Incarnation: une philosophie de la chair*, Henry takes a foray into the creation story of Genesis in order to confront and overcome the challenge it presents to his theo-phenomenology. In doing so, he attempts to demonstrate why humans are not created in God’s image. For Henry, life is always already generated, eternally, within divine life *ad intra*. I receive my essence as a living being from my unity with God, not from being created in the image of God. Creation, in principle, ruptures my primal union with God. Instead of coming into life continually prior to all temporal movement, creation throws me outside of my non-temporal birth into the temporal horizon of the world. Because creation presents to us the picture of “rupture,” precisely in its casting me out from the living present into the temporal play of the world, Henry contends that creation alienates me from divine life, and despite its theological weight as a dogma, it must be rejected:

²²¹ Henry, *Essence of Manifestation*, 310.

²²² Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 131.

To come into life as a transcendental self, living and experiencing oneself in one's flesh in the manner in which all flesh experiences itself, is to be born. To be born, therefore, does not signify, as sometimes one naively imagines, coming into the world under the form of a body-object, because in such a case there would never be any living individuals. Nothing more than the appearing of a thing, a mundane body subject to the laws of the world, defining its phenomenological properties—its spatiality, its temporality, its relations of causality with other bodies—by reference to the appearing of the world.²²³

How does Henry overcome the problem creation poses to his theory of generation? Henry renders creation obsolete by displacing it with the idea of generation. This is why Henry writes that once human life is “cleared of all ideas of exteriority, exteriorization, of objectivation—of the world—the concept of creation signifies now generation, generation in the auto-generation of absolute Life which happens to the self in its coming into life as it continually comes into itself.”²²⁴ Yet Henry's negative evaluation of the doctrine of creation necessarily gives way to a sustained reappraisal of the doctrine of the *imago Dei* as well. For him, the *imago Dei* is a configuration maintained by a structural gap (*l'ecart*), for the image must be at a distance from that which it is imaging. The chief movement of “imaging” is indeed defined by, and ordered to, the power of visible display (and is thus isomorphic with “outside” of creation). Visible display attests to the privileging of opposition, distance, exteriority, transcendence and temporality, all of which alienate me from my ongoing non-temporal living present. In Henry's estimation, the *imago Dei* is complicit in the destructive work of visible display in that it conceals the field

²²³ Henry, *Incarnation*, 178.

²²⁴ Given the programmatic nature of the text, we repeat it here in French: “Débarrassé des idées d'extériorité, d'extériorisation, d'objectivation—de monde—, le concept de création signifie maintenant generation, generation dans l'auto-génération de la Vie absolue de ce qui n'advient à soi que dans sa venue en elle et pour autant qu'elle ne cesse de venire en lui.” Henry, *Incarnation*, 263.

of invisible display. Henry's critical engagement with the biblical text, as we shall see, highlights his theological commitment to a doctrine of generation that overcomes such alienation.

Generation thus provides a forceful counterpoint to the *imago Dei*. Articulated from a theological point of view, Henry states that the Incarnation of the Arch-Son mobilizes all human life together in an invisible spiritual union between the interior auto-affection and the inner-life of the Trinity. By situating the living present within the interior reciprocity between Father, Son and Spirit and its auto-donation, Henry can refigure human auto-affection as coincident with divine auto-affection in order to close any gaps, and in so doing, re-read Genesis afresh: "When the biblical God breathes in us the Spirit of Life which makes each one of us a living being, it is generation which is accomplished."²²⁵

Henry states it is naïve to believe that the Genesis narrative addresses the question of the historical origin of the world and humans. The historical authenticity of the creation narrative remains suspect given what Henry perceives to be its bizarre situational details: Adam was created as a twenty year old man; Cain, the son of the first humans Adam and Eve, roamed the earth only to encounter a hostile group of other people that have clearly existed for some time; the stars, the water, animals, vegetation, living species and human beings were created all in successive stages; to conclude the narrative God sits down to rest as if God were enfeebled by finitude.²²⁶ Even more important, however, Henry emphasizes that this creation narrative does not point to anything "outside" of God, especially the visible disclosure of the world. Despite the temptation to think that the Genesis creation story outlines the creation of

²²⁵ Henry, *Incarnation*, 369.

²²⁶ Henry, *Incarnation*, 323-24. Henry repeats in part this critique of Genesis in his subsequent work, Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 107-110.

the world, Henry argues that it cannot. He reminds us that the world is subject to an illusion, a lie. For Henry, the world extends itself as a shell-like structure (i.e. cadaver), one that breaks upon me as nothing more than a copy of reality, a doppelganger of what is otherwise the thing itself. Scripture as the revelation of divine life therefore does not describe the origin of the world any more than it can give license to break the ninth commandment.

Henry's appeal to generation over against creation explicitly accommodates a transcendental method of reading Scripture. He insists that the Genesis text does not concern itself with historical artifacts, narrative history or objective events but rather pure, archetypal "forms" of trans-historical, transcendental import. Highlighting this idiosyncratic approach to scripture, Henry writes that, "if we want to understand the Bible as a transcendental text indifferent to the historical factuality of men, we have to compare it to other transcendental books we have at our disposal."²²⁷ For Henry, Adam is not the first historical person but rather the archetype of all humans, like Kant's transcendental ego. Yet Adam is different from Kant's transcendental ego insofar as Adam represents all those who are involved in and made subject to God's self-revelation through the work of generation (not creation).²²⁸ Thus, for Henry, humans are certainly *not* created in any worldly, exterior sense: "Man was never created, he never came into the world."²²⁹ The negation of the doctrine of creation leads, without delay, to the negation of the *imago Dei*: "Man is not an image, because in fact images exist only in the world, against the background of this original putting into-image that is the horizon of the world in its ek-static

²²⁷ Henry, *Incarnation*, 325.

²²⁸ Henry, *Incarnation*, 324.

²²⁹ Henry, *Incarnation*, 327.

phenomenalization.”²³⁰ To combat the doctrines of creation and the *imago Dei*, Henry holds to the truth of the prologue of John that declares “Word made flesh” is in union with which it is joined in the Incarnation. This is, Henry substitutes Johannine generation for Pentateuchal creation as the phenomenological-theological paradigm of the origin of human life.

To accomplish this hermeneutical move, Henry filters Genesis through the grid of the prologue of the gospel of John. The gospel of John, “allows us,” he claims, “to understand the unity of the transcendental vision of the Scriptures.”²³¹ Because of its ultimate transcendental rank, “the Prologue constitutes the revelation of the essential truth buried in Genesis.”²³² This essential truth is that the Word became flesh and lived among us in order to remind us that we are and always have been born of God. Humans are “not born of blood or man but of God” (John 1.13), so observes Henry. God generates the human self as a Son of God in and through the Incarnation, or, as Henry highlights it in his typically Johannine voice:

The generation of man in the Word replicates the generation of the Word in God as his auto-revelation. This homogeneity between the generation of the Word and of man explains why when the Word became incarnated to become man, it was not in the world to which he came, it was in flesh, ‘his own flesh’—among those who were generated in Him and who always belong to him.²³³

As a human being whose essence inhabits divine life itself, the pure living ego as Henry conceives it is acosmically occupied in the inner-working of God’s auto-generation. Divine life eternally self-generates itself within its own interior reciprocal

²³⁰ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 103.

²³¹ Henry, *Incarnation*, 328.

²³² Henry, *Incarnation*, 323.

²³³ Henry, *Incarnation*, 328.

movements between Father, Son and Spirit.²³⁴ Nothing here is created, after all, God's life has always been there, and Christ's Incarnation is acosmic ("Before Abraham was, I am" John 8.58, a favourite New Testament text for Henry). Christ signifies the Arch-Son co-engendered within the very self-movement of God's coming-into-itself.²³⁵ So integrated is human generation with Christ's self-generation that Henry adopts the theological factum of deification whereby, to quote from Eckhart again, God "engenders (i.e. generates) me as himself."²³⁶ On the basis of God's eternal donation of life and by virtue of my birth through this donation, I participate immediately in the Triune life of God.

Henry draws a sharp distinction, then, between two modes of explaining human origins, and hence, two "truths" that correspond to the two spheres of the duplicitous self: the world's truth (exteriority) and Christianity's truth (interiority). The world appears as exteriority, illuminating all which is made visible by the power of distance, outside-ness, transcendence, alienation, temporality—in short, hetero-affectation. The world explains the origin of humanity in terms of creation, which indicates the very structural opening to that which is outside of divine life. To be created in the *image* of God leads to a separation between God and the creature, an ontological and temporal distance lodged at the very base of the creature's imaging of God. For an image, maintains Henry, is only a representation of the thing it images; by its very structure it presupposes a distance and alienation from that which it images. This distance between the creature and its divine source thereby strips the

²³⁴ Henry writes: "In fact, life does not create content at all; the content of life is uncreated." See Henry, *I am the Truth*, 106. Henry also turns frequently to the John 8.58 quote about Christ's eternity, "Before Abraham was, I am," as proof that our birth in Christ is non-temporal. See Henry, *I am the Truth*, 99, 111, 118, 124, 129, for example.

²³⁵ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 104-5.

²³⁶ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 105.

creature of its own subjectivity and its living substance thereby stripping “me” of my living present. According to Henry’s interpretation of Christianity, God does not create the human creature because to be created is to be posed outside of God as an image of God. The true ego, the pure living ego born in the living present, in contrast, finds itself generated within the very Life of God without distance or gaps between the two.²³⁷

While we appreciate here the unity between the ego and God that Henry underlines, we are not uncritical. For all of Henry’s brilliance, his theory of the duplicitous self leads to a monism, an absolute absorption of myself within God. We shall insist in the remainder of this chapter that Henry’s repudiation of creation and exteriority implicates him in a disastrous theological monism that neglects to account for the individuality of my “me-pole” as well as the possibility to realize myself in the world. We shall rehabilitate creation and the *imago Dei* from constructive point of view both in chapters five and six as a way to overcome Henry’s duplicitous self.

§15. THE PARADOX OF INDIVIDUATION

We have seen that Henry suggests that my singularity as one who feels myself crush against myself in pure immediacy without recourse to anything outside myself is nothing other than a relative moment in Life’s absolute auto-affection generated through Christ (§11). The truth of generation is revealed as an ineluctable arch-truth of my life, a revelation brought to light by way of a radical reduction or disqualification of the world-horizon (§12). Portrayed as a theological turn toward

²³⁷ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 103.

interiority (§13), the truth of generation is also the disqualification of the doctrine of creation because creation interposes a gap between human life and God (i.e., *imago Dei*) (§14). The radicality of Henry’s critique lies in his interest to construct positively “an entirely new conception of man.”²³⁸ And this entirely new conception of human life yields an entirely new conception of human origins—generation structured in accord with the duplicity of display. Because generation is transcendental and non-temporal, the doctrine of generation contends that each human ego is both uniquely a “me” and a relative “moment” internal to Christ’s auto-generative coming into Life *apart* from the visible temporal streaming of the world-horizon. My auto-affection, as an acosmic living present (outside the streaming from future to past), is singularized according to the selfsame process that singularizes every other living ego.

Yet, how is it that I am uniquely “myself” (up against all of “you”), as Henry claims, if we all acquire our individuation from the selfsame acosmic birth? Does this not pose an obvious philosophical problem about individuation?²³⁹ Given that the structure of auto-affection is that it is a feeling of nothing but my own feeling in radical immediacy without reference to anything foreign—how can I be my own singular self when Christ is the universal inner possibility of any singularity whatsoever? How does Henry address this tension?

²³⁸ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 50.

²³⁹ Lilian Alweiss raises a similar point in a recent article on Henry. She emphasizes the need for the experience of the world-horizon and its multiplicities of otherness in order for individuation (my sense of mineness) to emerge at all. However, she is too quick to conclude that Henry does not possess a theory of inter-subjectivity and her analysis that Henry is solipsistic is simply overstated. See her, “The Bifurcated Subject,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17 no.3 (2009): 415-34. For more on Henry’s theory of inter-subjectivity, see chapter 6 in this dissertation.

Henry resolves this tension by recourse to the notion of paradox.²⁴⁰ For Henry, Christ is *my transcendental life*, that is, the absolute condition for the possibility of my living. A central thesis of Henry's interpretation of Christianity is that Christ embodies the universal, non-temporal substance from which each ego, in its capacity to live as a singular ego, draws that capacity to live—from its ongoing filiality as a Son within the First-Living Son. Christ is the shepherd whose absolute transcendental ego is figured in the shape of a universal gate under which the sheepfold passes and acquires identities, their respective *ipseities*. Henry writes in a stunning passage drawn from the sheepfold parable of John 10:

But the gate of the sheepfold, which according to this strange parable provides access to the place where the sheep graze—thus founding the transcendental Ipseity from which each me, being connected to itself and growing in itself, draws the possibility of being a me—this gate provides access to all transcendental me's, not to only one of them, to the one I am myself. Christ is not within me solely as the force that, crushing me against myself, ceaselessly makes me a me. Each me comes into itself only in this way, in the formidable power of this embrace in which it continually self-affects itself. This is why the gate opens onto all living things: access to each of them is possible only through Christ.²⁴¹

Each transcendental self is co-substantial, immediately unified with each other on the basis of their common substance, namely Christ living inside each of us giving to us the selfsame life. It is the word of God, Christ, in whom all things live, that gives to each of us life (dative/accusative pole in Henry). Christ is manifest as the all-

²⁴⁰ Certainly the concept of “paradox” is not easy to elucidate once for all. There are variations of the idea made so popular by Kierkegaard that make sure to complicate the definition of paradox as a facile pitting of opposites against each other. However, paradox in Henry, so we shall briefly show in this chapter, functions like a *deus ex machina* that explains how opposing and inharmonious fields of display can “somehow” relate without confusing their respective provenances. In other words, Henry's deployment of the concept is rather facile, or at the very least, leads the reader to wonder what other function it could serve if not a simple *deus ex machina*.

²⁴¹ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 116.

unifying Word. Each ipseity is derived from a common source from which it originates in its particularity. The Trinitarian God, Henry frequently notes, is the real living God who lives in each living self, and without whom, each self would not live and to which each living self testifies to in its living.²⁴²

Henry argues that this theory of the duplicitous self renders possible my living present as this unique “me.” He suggests that I am manifest in my self-aware selfness through my ongoing self-experiencing of myself without reference to anything outside myself. But again, I am not self-positing in that I do not bring myself into life thereby self-individualizing or self-positing myself as this “me.” To this end, Henry writes clearly, “ultimately there is only one self-affection, that of absolute Life, because the self-affection in which the ego is given to itself is only absolute Life’s self-affection, which gives the ego to itself by giving life to itself.”²⁴³ I experience myself as this particular “me” but only as passively given to myself from that absolute origin of life itself, God.

Henry recognizes this paradox, namely that I am a singular “me” experienced without reference to any outside, and yet, I am given to myself by that which is not me, and from which all life is born. Henry affirms this truth as a central thesis of Christianity, “expressed in the great Christian paradoxes.”²⁴⁴ In quoting the popular proposition in the gospels that whoever wants to save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life will save it (Matt 10.39; Luke 9.24; John 12.25), Henry underwrites his own theory of the paradox of individuation with this theological truth. This paradox, that I am myself only by way of something that is not myself, is a critique of the sovereign and autonomous ego that has persisted as a hallmark of modernity at least

²⁴² Henry, *Incarnation*, 245.

²⁴³ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 210.

²⁴⁴ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 210.

since Kant. Only once we recognize, asserts Henry, the reality of generation do we realize we cannot escape our identity as “sons of God.” So when I feel myself in suffering myself as this particular, singular self, “the self-giveness of these sentiments, of this ego, of this Self, and of this Ipseity that is their basis, is that of absolute Life giving itself to itself in the original Ipseity of the Arch-Son.”²⁴⁵ This paradox is an explicit result of Henry’s substitution of generation for creation; for in generation, no gap or separation is interposed between myself and God, which means, of course, that generation must make room for distinct ipseities by way of a sequence of paradoxes.

In an illuminating essay, “Phénoménologie de la naissance,” Henry develops this paradox in relation to Husserl’s theory of the transcendental ego.²⁴⁶ Henry cites §44 of Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations* in which the transcendental reduction enables access to my primordial “sphere of ownness” (*Eigenheitsphäre*). In this sphere the ego lives, argues Husserl, in its concrete “I myself” as a monad. Husserl’s transcendental ego employs the “I-Can” in which the ego goes outside of its *Eigenheitsphäre* toward the world in order to constitute that which is the non-ego (for more on the “I-Can,” see chapter six, §24 in this dissertation). Husserl writes, “what is specifically peculiar to me as an ego, my concrete being as a monad, purely in myself and for myself with an exclusive ownness, includes my every intentionality and therefore, in particular, the intentionality directed to what is other.”²⁴⁷ The sphere of ownness that Husserl discloses through the transcendental attitude designates a sphere in which the luminosity of the world is brought about thanks to the work of intentionality (§6 above). The sphere of ownness so premised by Husserl is,

²⁴⁵ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 212.

²⁴⁶ Henry, “Phénoménologie de la naissance,” in *Phénoménologie de la vie, tome I*, 123-42.

²⁴⁷ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 94.

however, what Henry's phenomenology of generation does not reject outright, but rather, radicalizes inasmuch as generation presents a picture of a pure, and hence, a nocturnal sphere of ownness. Generation moves me from the intentional sphere of ownness to a pure site of acosmic birth within the First-Living Son. Henry describes the ego's pure self-suffering of itself within itself in absolute immediacy (i.e., the "I myself" monad) without recourse to intentionality or the world-horizon. Thus Henry observes that out of the two fields of display constitutive of the duplicitous self, the interior or "'I myself...'" marks the achievement of the process of my transcendental birth."²⁴⁸ This means that I draw myself from my birth prior to my ejection onto the world whereas the Husserlian ego is self-reflexive and presupposes that the terminus of the ego or the *ego-punctum* lies in the ego's constitution of that which is outside its monadic sphere, namely the world.

One reason why Henry departs from the Husserlian ego is that the Husserlian ego develops that which has been present in European philosophy since Descartes: the sovereign "subject" or the self-positing, self-confident ego.²⁴⁹ The only way to overcome Husserl's self-positing representational subject (in which the ego's constitution of the world is its own *ego-punctum*) is to put into play a radical reduction. Returning to the living present apart from the intentional life of the ego, Henry's radical reduction unveils the truth of radical passivity. The living present is home to the "I myself" in its pure self-presence prior to the outside of the world-horizon. The condition for the possibility of the Husserlian transcendental ego, to put it differently, is my passive reception of divine life's ongoing donation inside me. I

²⁴⁸ Henry, "Phénoménologie de la naissance," 135.

²⁴⁹ Henry, "Phénoménologie de la naissance," 136-37.

do not constitute that which is outside me (as in Husserl), rather I am constituted by that which is inside me.

I am therefore not a “Son of humanity” but a “Son of God” born from within the ipseity of God with no distance between myself and God; and, moreover, every other self is also born of God in its singularity in and through the selfsame movement. But does this not give rise to a kind of interiorized monism that forecloses the possibility of singularity, and therefore, of any individuality whatsoever? Is my life in its singularity nothing other than one of many lives blended together with God’s life in an absolute monism that appears in contradistinction to the exterior field of visible display? Or is the duplicitous self complicit in a radical dualism, a splitting of the self between, on the one hand, its interior domain in which it is continually born, and, on the other, its exterior domain in which it is nothing more than a duplicate of the thing itself?

§16. MONISM (OR GNOSTIC DUALISM?)

Undoubtedly, one may raise questions about whether Henry’s duplicitous self evokes the spectres of monism (reality is pure interior life with no individuality) or radical dualism, what some may call a variant of Gnostic dualism (the self split between pure life and an exterior illusory world). Determining the precise relation in Henry’s thought between interiority and exteriority or between the invisible and visible accedes to difficulties and ambiguities. While my essence is incorporated within divine life, Henry nevertheless links the interior essence to its visible, exterior display in its bodily and temporal manifestations. Henry does not deny the existence of the world, its temporal horizon and the ego’s bodily place in that luminous space.

A serious problem nevertheless persists at just this juncture, namely: how is it possible to attend positively to the bodily and temporal dwelling in the visible world? This problem exposes to view, above all, Henry's tendency to overcompensate in his effort to critique the long-standing philosophical predisposition toward the visible display of the world-horizon, a predisposition diffuse in post-Cartesian philosophy and post-Husserlian phenomenology. The doctrine of generation brings Henry to the brink of a kind of monism that delimits reality to one absolute sphere in isolation from the visible world.

Henry's tendentious account of pure interiority also evokes, simultaneously, the spectre of dualism: interior life contains the truth alone and the exterior display of the world is merely a copy of that reality. *Life* is pure non-temporal auto-affection in which I feel myself perfectly and without deviation in the depths of that feeling and the *world* is a temporal field of display that throws me outside of my immediate embrace into the flow of time, fragmenting me in the illusory flux of world engagements. The two fields of display—the interior and the exterior—are, as Henry frequently instructs his readers, absolutely heterogeneous to each other. Henry states it starkly: “Life designates pure manifestation, always irreducible to that of the world, an original revelation that is not the revelation of another thing and does not depend on anything other, but is rather a revelation of self, that absolute self-revelation that is Life itself.”²⁵⁰ Henry argues that interiority, to be truly interior, must exclude exteriority.²⁵¹ In point of fact, we recall that they are quite literally two types of appearing (e.g., see the “duplicity of display” above in §8). Henry advances a theo-phenomenology that, without hesitation and with all rigour, splits me into two

²⁵⁰ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 34.

²⁵¹ Henry, *Essence of Manifestation*, 281.

spheres: a duplicitous self constitutive of a pure, real self *over against* an exterior unreal copy of the self in the world.

We out not forget that Henry's position is deeply troubled with the "ontological monism" he attributes to Heidegger and Husserl, both of whom focus exclusively on the visible display of the world. To overcome such an injurious monism, Henry reconstitutes the field of display to account for two fields of display. In so doing, however, does Henry not overcompensate and subscribe to an ontological monism of his own making? Certainly the duplicity of display forms a duality between interior life and exterior world, however, in this section we shall claim that Henry's theory of invisible display promotes a monism to the extent that it disqualifies the world entirely, leaving the final word about the nature of "reality" and "life" to be explicated the interior field of display alone.

But what kind of monism does Henry advance? It is necessary to acknowledge that the "radical reduction" Henry deploys to disqualify the world is not tantamount to the annihilation of the world. Henry is clear that the radical reduction simply exposes the world for what it is. The radical reduction, we recall, highlights that the world is the field of visible display that conjures away the invisible. Henry regards the radical reduction, in other words, as a "leading back to" (*reconduction*) or an unveiling of that invisible presence of life hidden behind every modality of visible display. And in order to gain access to that interior sphere, I must radically disqualify the world by purifying my illusion that that the world is a site of life, i.e., the illusion that I am able to realize my life apart from life, as if life could be realized outside of life, that is, in the world. As such, Henry's duplicitous self

yields to a radical monism, *but one that neither annihilates nor denies the existence of the world.*

Henry's duplicitous self is susceptible, therefore, to a *qualified monism* in the sense that it prioritizes the interior non-temporal at the expense of the exterior temporal field of the world. When Henry says that the exterior world is "irreal" he is not claiming that it does not exist or that it is something like a figment of one's imagination. Henry utilizes the term "irreal" (*iréel*) simply to convey that the world does not possess the capacity to illuminate that which is living.²⁵² And so when Henry compares the world to an "optical illusion" he is not implying that the world does not exist as an actual horizon of display. Falling prey to an optical illusion does not mean the same as undergoing a hallucination or being fooled by a hologram. For example, just because there is a scenario in which two lines seem to be different in size (but in reality are the exact same length), does not thereby entail the conclusion that the two lines are non-existent. So, by calling the "man in the world an optical illusion,"²⁵³ Henry is suggesting that the exterior world dissimulates the ego's gaze away from what is essential about its own life as well as the life of other egos (*not* that the world is a hologram or a product of a hallucination). The ego as Henry conceives it is a duplicity: bifurcated between the pure presence of myself (reality) and the exterior copy of myself in the world (irreality). Only the non-temporal sphere of generation is *real* while my objective body and my temporal streaming in the world is *irreal* inasmuch as it is a copy of the thing itself.

²⁵² For a sample of the several appearing of the word "irreal" or "unreal" in Henry's work, see Henry, *Essence of Manifestation*, 143ff. and §67, "Real and Unreal Affectivity"; Henry, *Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, 77-8; Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 17, 116-17 ; and Henry, *Incarnation*, 308.

²⁵³ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 124.

Furthermore, the temporal horizon of the world is not merely unreal; it is also destructive in that it de-realizes my life. Henry, to return once again to Husserl, associates the ego's temporal streaming of consciousness and its intentional regard with this very destructive power: "That which produces intentionality is not the immediate donation of the thing: it is rather the signification to which is given immediately to the thing. But all signification is an unreality, an object-of-thought—a 'noematic unreality.'"²⁵⁴ In even starker terms, Henry writes, "This is phenomenality, that of the world, as we have seen, makes unreal a priori everything it makes visible, making it visible only in the act by which, posing it outside itself [via consciousness], it empties it of reality."²⁵⁵ And, "the world comes to exist by appearing as such—the temporality of this world..."²⁵⁶ By effectually throwing me outside myself, the temporal streaming of consciousness opens up the field of visible display of the world, which in turn, alienates me from my reality.

Even Henry's distinctions between weak and strong senses of auto-affection (§11) fail to distinguish between temporal and non-temporal orders of manifestation. The identity between the human life and divine life is structurally identical in that they share the same non-temporal essence: "This is the meaning of the thesis that 'God created man in his image:' that he gave man his own essence."²⁵⁷ Henry claims that generation poses no gap or temporal distance between the ego and God and that the ego's relation to God is therefore immediate, pure and effectual. While Christ is the "First Son" or "Arch-Son" and the ego is a "Son of God," there is, once more, no temporal separation, and in this sense, nothing in that distinction that undermines my

²⁵⁴ Henry, *Incarnation*, 69.

²⁵⁵ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 146.

²⁵⁶ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 64.

²⁵⁷ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 103.

argument that Henry is a non-temporal monist. It is in this qualified sense that we claim Henry's duplicitous self presupposes monism. Despite the fact that there has been some debate as to what extent Henry may be identified as a Gnostic dualist, it is plausible to connect the monism we have suggested here with a kind of Gnostic dualism.

Jad Hatem is perhaps the most well-known critic to have isolated in Henry's theological turn a tendency toward Gnostic dualism. Hatem has published a book that outlines Valentinian Gnostic dualism as a framework by which to interrogate Henry's duplicitous self. While it is not the purpose here to outline Gnosticism(s) as a point of comparison with Henry, Hatem's work is nevertheless analogous to the conclusion we have drawn about Henry's monism. Hatem is quick to highlight Henry's proximity to Gnosticism as well as pantheism when he writes that Henry structures the human ego by divine life, as two ipseities that "are irreducible in Henry, a fact that does not save him from pantheism which maintains the identity of the nature of human life with divine life, homoousia, a fact for which Clement of Alexandria reproached the Gnostics."²⁵⁸ Hatem's impulse to compare Henry to Gnosticism is well-founded, and the kind of Gnostic dualism to which Hatem limits himself (i.e. Valentinian) is, as far as we can discern, similar to the kind of non-temporal monism with which we have associated Henry's duplicitous self.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Jad Hatem, *Le sauveur et les viscères de l'être: sur le gnosticisme et Michel Henry* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 82.

²⁵⁹ In a short essay, Paul Clavier has suggested that *Paroles du Christ* expresses a "Gnostic turn" (*virage gnostique*) given that Henry both disqualifies the doctrine of creation and insists that the appearing of God can never take place the exterior world. While this Gnostic dualism may apply to Henry's theory of language, it is my view that a carnal monism of the sort we have already described best typifies Henry's disqualification of the world and language. We prefer here, in other words, the terminology of monism over and above Gnostic dualism because Gnosticism is difficult to define with precision and because the concept of dualism is associated with a kind of Cartesian dualism that suggests both interior soul and exterior body, while distinct, are mutually integrated as two kinds of "substances." See Clavier's illuminating essay, "Un tournant gnostique de la

Kevin Hart also comments on Henry's Gnostic tendencies from a theological point of view. The emphasis on the *parousia* of life, argues Hart, tends toward a Gnostic dualism insofar as Henry adopts an eschatology that is at once over-realized (full presence of divine life inside the ego) and under-realized (complete absence of divine life in the world). In such an over-realized eschatology, whereby God's *parousia* appears internal to Godself, God appears also within the interior field of myself. This leads Henry to reduce the Cross, Resurrection, the Sacraments and the Kingdom to secondary status, or worse, to events with no decisive relation to divine life at all. As such, they remain conspicuously unimportant to Henry's non-temporal monism.²⁶⁰ Yet fundamental to the economy of Henry's duplicitous self is that there is only one auto-affection and therefore one life, a circumscription of reality within one non-temporal field of display that promotes an ontological monism.²⁶¹

While Hatem and Hart may often resort to a polemical tone, they are nonetheless right to confront what is, if not explicit, at least a latent, monism that attributes, on the one hand, reality to interiority, and, on the other, irreality to the world on the other. As such, it is not unfair to argue that Henry has reduced the self in its living ipseity, in its individuation, to an invisible, acosmic substance that fails to incorporate the field of visible display constitutive of the temporal world-horizon.

phénoménologie française? à propos des *Paroles du Christ* de Michel Henry," *Revue thomiste* 105, no.2 (2005): 307-15.

²⁶⁰ Kevin Hart, "'Without World': Eschatology in Michel Henry," in *Phenomenology and Eschatology: Not Yet in the Now: Phenomenology and Eschatology*, ed. Neal DeRoo and John P. Manoussakis, 167-92 (London: Ashgate, 2009), 167-92, reference on 183-4. On several occasions Henry mentions that the *parousia* is equal to the self-revelation of Life in human auto-affection. In this way, he risks endorsing a theological variant of over-realized eschatology—a theme in Henry we shall explore in greater detail in chapter 6. See for example, Henry, *Incarnation*, 367, 372-73; *Essence of Manifestation*, §§ 17-18.

²⁶¹ For lines of critique directed at Henry to which my view here is sympathetic, see Jean-Francois Lavigne, "The Paradox and Limits of Michel Henry's Concept of Transcendence," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17 no.3 (2009): 377-88; and Sebastien Laoureux, "Hyper-transcendentalism and Intentionality: On the Specificity of the 'Transcendental' in Material Phenomenology," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17 no.3 (2009): 389-400.

The field of visible display, i.e., the temporal horizon of the world and the objective body's spatial polarity, affirms the radically embodied way each of us identifies ourselves as spatially and temporally distinct from one another. Henry himself even indicates, and is in consequence forced to indicate, that upon encountering the other we do so only by way of mediation through the exterior body. So while Henry may say that the world de-realizes me or that the visible, objective body appears as an "optical illusion" he, nonetheless, says that "the most ordinary experience shows the contrary. Consider the objective bodies of other people. If, in our eyes, their bodies contrast with the inert bodies of the material universe, it is because we perceive them as inhabited by a flesh [an interior life]."²⁶² Henry states that the world has the power to manifest things but not the power to manifest what is *essential* or *real* about their appearing as they appear to a perceiving subject.²⁶³ This does not mean that the world does not exist on its own, but rather that its power of manifestation can never arrive at the thing-itself, only life can give itself (i.e., or auto-donation), giving the thing itself therein.

§17. TOWARD A POROUS SELF

In this final section we point toward part three's proposal of the porosity of the eschatological self over against Henry's duplicitous self. We set out here the contours of the porous self who is at once temporal, bodily and worldly and yet porous to that which is non-temporal and not of this world, a God who is to come. To reaffirm the temporal nature of the ego is to return, of necessity, to the doctrines of creation and the *imago Dei*, and moreover, to a self that surmounts a non-temporal

²⁶² Henry, *Incarnation*, 217.

²⁶³ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 87.

monism. While Henry's duplicitous self is theologically fecund and takes seriously the unity between human life and divine life, it nevertheless proceeds to posit an unreserved monism, furnishing the coordinates of an absolute duplicity that sets up a strict distinction between God and world but unduly blurs the distinction between creature and Creator.

Our proposal therefore introduces what we call here the "porosity of display" in contradistinction to Henry's principle of the "duplicity of display." Whereas Henry splits the self into two irreconcilable fields of display, cleaving it between a non-temporal and temporal domain, we propose a site that negotiates between them without cleaving them in two. While the porous self is certainly temporal and able to open up the light of the world through the temporal streaming of reflective consciousness (retention and protention), the porous self is not merely temporal. The porous self so understood is porous to the pure presence of the present, the divine aseity that does not recede into the past or anticipate the impact of the future. The living present to which Henry devotes his project may be accessible only through a theological turn inward after the performance of the radical reduction. In our proposal, however, the living present is never attainable, even if it embodies divine presence and is thus my object of love. The living present is that which the temporal creature lacks because it is a temporal creature, not born of, but created by God.²⁶⁴

The porous self also affirms the impossibility of the theory of auto-affection as a pure, non-temporal transcendental sphere in absolute union with divine life, entirely invisible to, and isolated from, the appearing of the temporal streaming of

²⁶⁴ It is not purpose in this dissertation to describe the doctrine of creation in any great detail but rather use it as a premise that prescribes a gap or distance between the Creator and creature, one that counters Henry's doctrine of generation. While exploring the niceties of creation shall takes us afar from our project, it is a necessary premise upon which the porous self is developed as a line of inquiry about temporality, the world and the Creator-creature distinction.

the world-horizon. While we work out this paradigm shift with the help of theological and philosophical resources drawn from St. Augustine's reflections on the nature of time, our proposal figures the self in such a way that its contemplative desire for God assumes an interior shape but does not abide absolutely in an interior sphere heterogeneous to the exterior. We thereby repudiate Henry's strict division between interior and exterior, between invisible and visible and the duplicity of display that sustains that rift. We suggest that neither interior nor exterior fields are accessible in isolation, as if there was a sphere of the "world" standing alone without already implying that the world points beyond itself, eschatologically. And likewise, there is no pure self-presence of the ego entirely within itself and without relation to the exterior field "out there," as if the interiority of the ego were a pure site of divine life in sole possession of itself.

The corollary to this chapter is chapter five in which we discuss the eschatological temporality of faith enjoyed by the porous self. For we need faith only now, prior to the moment we see God in the *parousia*. I need faith now to sustain belief in that which I cannot see until the *parousia*. Thus faith, according to St. Augustine, "will not always exist, because it will certainly no longer exist when this sojourn abroad comes to an end in which we are living away from the Lord so that we have to walk by faith, and when the sight by we shall see face to face takes its place."²⁶⁵ Our proposal of a porous self will be put into action in chapters five and six whereby the life of faith is analyzable by phenomenological tools not in the hope that God should be proved or verified as a phenomenon but that God should be found as that which I seek after in my pilgrimage in the world from an eschatological point

²⁶⁵ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 14, 4. We shall refer to this text as *De trin* in all subsequent citations. We shall make use of Edmund Hill's translation in all subsequent citations, see *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1990).

of view. It is chapters five and six, then, that we commence with a phenomenological description of the life of pilgrimage, both in its temporal (chapter five) and bodily manifestations (chapter six). Before we proceed to the porosity of display, we must pass through a final engagement with Henry, his phenomenology of flesh.

Chapter 4:

Flesh and the Duplicitous Body

We are robustly there in our bodies, yet vulnerably there, because the body reveals and conceals, communicates and betrays, what we are in the intimacy of innerness.

–William Desmond²⁶⁶

§18. CONCRETE EXISTENCE

In the previous chapter we outlined the theological architecture of Henry's proposal of the duplicitous self. We showed that he contends that my ipseity as this particular "me" is eternally generated and is thereby manifest in and through God's auto-generation as it appears *prior* to the visible display of the world. Split irrevocably between two fields of display, the self is figured in its essence on the basis of an interior union with God: as such, the interior self is not self-constituted, self-positing or temporally contingent (§11). We also learned that access to the sphere of generation is opened up by Henry's application of the "radical" reduction (§12). Because the radical reduction constitutes a complete disqualification of the exterior world-horizon without return (and thus signals a departure from the Husserlian reduction which seeks to come back to the world after bracketing it), it gives way to a transcendental-theological turn inward (§13). We next highlighted that the doctrine of creation and the *imago Dei* in Genesis chapter 1 affirms the necessity of the visible

²⁶⁶ William Desmond, *Being and the Between* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 108.

display of the world-horizon by positing a gap between the ego and God, which is reason enough for both the doctrines of creation and the *imago Dei* to come under the blow of Henry's radical reduction. This underlines, once again, that his theory of generation induces a complete disqualification of the world (§14). We then showed how Henry's theory of generation evokes the problem of individuation (§15) and how his proposal of the duplicitous self necessarily evokes the spectre of a *non-temporal* monism (§16). And finally, we charted a few suggestions about how to overcome Henry's duplicitous self by sketching the "porous self" on eschatological pilgrimage (§17).

In the previous chapter we also highlighted that the ego's acosmic, i.e., non-temporal, origin is ordered by a pure form of appearing, that of invisible display. Conforming to itself, the interior self's living essence is realized internal to itself and it thereby appears without relation to any "outside" or exterior world-horizon. Appearing in the way in which it gives itself, and in the accomplishment of its self-manifestation, my being-generated within the First-Living (Christ) is immediate and therefore opposed to the luminosity of the world put into play by temporal exteriority and the gap between the genitive and dative poles of appearing. This invisible site of display in which I am born, in which I feel nothing foreign to myself, designates the venue of concrete affectivity in its radical passivity (where genitive and dative poles unite in a primal displaying inside God). For I am given to myself as this "me" thanks to the work of generation in which I arrive at myself in the same movement by which God arrives at Godself.

One is immediately struck by the seemingly disembodied character of Henry's duplicitous self as we have described it thus far: how does generation

actually take effect or embody itself, if ever? Does Henry ever broach the question of embodiment, flesh and the element of concrete experience? Does not Henry entitle his own phenomenology a “material” phenomenology? And yet, it would seem that his theory of generation and the invisible monism to which it gives rise would defy, or at least, minimize concrete embodiment.

It is at this juncture that one may be tempted to level the charge of “worldlessness” against Henry’s notion of the duplicitous self as some have done—as if the transcendental articulation of interiority is tantamount to a disembodied abstraction.²⁶⁷ Certainly Hegel’s well-known portrait of the “beautiful soul” comes to mind as ostensibly disclosive of Henry’s unyielding *démarche* toward invisible interiority. The “beautiful soul,” as Hegel describes it, hides itself from the world of visible display and delves inward, abstracting its self-consciousness from the concrete reality and dialectical tensions of world events, for “it flees from contact with the actual world...”²⁶⁸ Hegel emphatically condemns this type of self-consciousness as vapid and worldless inasmuch as the purity of its self-enclosure folds in upon itself: “Its light dies away within it, and it vanished like a shapeless vapour that dissolves into thin air.”²⁶⁹ Unable to self-externalize itself into the ceaselessly moving horizon of the world, the soul becomes an “unhappy consciousness,” collapsing upon itself, falling prey to the illusion that it possess concrete self-presence. We only use Hegel’s metaphor of the “beautiful soul” as a device here to illustrate how Henry’s theory of the duplicitous self *could* be

²⁶⁷ See for example, Jean Racette, “Michel Henry’s Philosophy of the Body,” *Philosophy Today* 13 no.2 (1969): 83-93; Dan Zahavi, “Subjectivity and Immanence in Michel Henry,” in *Subjectivity and Transcendence*, eds. A. Gron, A. Damgaard and I. Overgaard (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 133-47; Antonio Calcagno, “The Incarnation, Michel Henry and the Possibility of Husserlian-inspired Transcendental Life,” *Heythrop Journal* 45 (2004): 290-304.

²⁶⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 400.

²⁶⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 400.

misunderstood. This chapter contends²⁷⁰ that Henry's duplicitous self is not complicit with an escapism of the sort that disassociates the ego from its concrete existence only to lose itself in the "vapour that dissolves into thin air." Certainly Henry endeavours to escape the appearing of the world but he does not also desire to escape the element of the concrete. As we shall presently see, Henry thematizes the duplicitous self explicitly in view of its duplicitous body, a body split between flesh (*la chair*) and body (*la corps*). Henry intends flesh to fit a particular setting of concrete interiority, a subjective style of givenness from which I receive myself by feeling myself immediately. My flesh is my ipseity, this "me" that I am and from which I take hold of myself as a zero-point of bodily orientation. Concretely experienced and intransitively given, my flesh grips me as I feel myself rise within me and reverberate under the impact of its self-experience *independent of my body on visible display within the world-horizon*.

But what kind of corporeality does this transcendental flesh specify? This subjective disclosure, while we shall explicate it in greater detail below, is manifest in what is known in phenomenology as the subjective or lived-body—which is situated in tension with its corollary, the objective body on visible display. The subjective body's problems notwithstanding, Henry's theory of the subjective body is therefore not a "beautiful soul" insofar as it reflects just the opposite: a self-suffering, self-enjoying flesh that concretely bears its own burden of being this unique "me."

With this prelude, we enter into constructive dialogue with Henry's distinction between flesh (*la chair*) and body (*la corps*) for the remainder of this chapter. We shall see Henry claims that while the source-point of the ego lies in the

²⁷⁰ Key elements of this chapter are published in, Joseph Rivera, "Corpus Mysticum and Religious Experience: Henry, Lacoste, Marion," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (online early view, forthcoming soon).

invisible site of eternal generation, that source-point is not located beyond or outside me. The eternal arrival of God engenders my flesh. This distinctly religious sphere of experience is a lived-experience qualified by its dynamic interiority whereby the divine presence is *felt* or *lived* inside the intimate space of the subjective flesh, or the heart.²⁷¹ Hence, the order of manifestation by which flesh displays itself is not cognitive/thinking/mind/consciousness. Nor is it a matter of physical embodiment/kinaesthetics. The flesh/heart, for Henry, appears as a feeling of pure self-affectivity grounded in the ego's immediate disclosure of itself to itself. As a domain of lived carnality, flesh flashes forth in its living fulguration by way of an interior deployment and is thus regulated according to its own movement and without interference from the exterior body on visible display. We name Henry's proposal of concrete existence the "duplicitous body" in that the ego is split between an interior flesh and an exterior body.

. In what follows we shall also see just how flesh is intrinsically theological in composition. In a recent interview Henry describes his work on the Incarnation as tantamount to a phenomenological archaeology, a leading back to the transcendental venue where flesh appears in its essence (*eidos*). Once unearthed, flesh flashes forth as a pure incandescent matter (*matière incandescente*),²⁷² appearing as an inner substance given as *self-given*. As a pathos manifest in an original self-impression immersed in its self-possession, flesh is holy in that its lustre is pristinely divine, without distance from its divine source and therefore within flesh appears "not merely traces of life but absolute life."²⁷³ The phenomenological archaeology of flesh necessarily puts into play a theological articulation in which human flesh and

²⁷¹ See for example, Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 118.

²⁷² Henry, *Incarnation*, 39 and 47.

²⁷³ Michel Henry, *Entretiens* (Paris: Sulliver, 2007), 122.

divine flesh co-appear. Christ, who is the “Word made flesh,” transcends the appearing of objects in the world and even the world-horizon itself, but this does not mean that Christ’s *pathētik* flesh is distinct from or of a different order of display than human flesh: “In the depths of its night, our flesh is God.”²⁷⁴ Henry’s Christology suggests that while it may not be obvious from the body’s exterior display in the world, the inner possibility of all bodily acts or appearings in the world is based upon an interior union with Christ’s flesh, so that “there is a single and selfsame life... and it has the same meaning for God, for Christ and for man.”²⁷⁵ Henry’s phenomenology of flesh therefore maintains that all flesh is divine in that it enjoys immediate union with the living power of Christ incarnate. That is, the phenomenological study of the flesh, for Henry, is not merely phenomenological but also opens up access to the original theological unity between “my flesh” and the “Word made flesh.” We shall expand on such theological aspects of the duplicitous body in §§21-3 below.

We proceed presently to Henry’s debt both to Main de Biran’s notion of interior movement/effort and Edmund Husserl’s theory of kinaesthetic embodiment (§§19-20). Following upon these engagements, and by virtue of the theological turn we outlined in chapter three, we describe Henry’s phenomenological theology of the “Word made flesh” as it functions to incarnate the interior aspect of the duplicitous body (§21). Even though Henry’s proposal entails a duplicitous body, it is not a dualism, but a monism, that underpins his thinking. To substantiate further our claim that Henry’s theological conception of the duplicitous body is susceptible to a monism, we examine his peculiar interpretation of language in his final, if brief,

²⁷⁴ Henry, *Incarnation*, 373.

²⁷⁵ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 101.

work, *Paroles du Christ* (2002). We pay heed here to how he analyzes the manner by which the divine “Word” self-communicates itself by imposing itself within the my living present, engendering a space within me in which the Word is heard as an incarnate presence entirely apart from my linguistic utterances heard in the visible world-horizon (§22). We then highlight, as we did in chapter three, how Henry advances a radicalized transcendental reduction; yet here we introduce the way in which it disqualifies the exterior body in order to open up access to the interior flesh (§23). Finally, we sketch a way to surmount the pitfalls of Henry’s duplicitous body. We name this alternative the “porous body” in which flesh and body are co-constitutive and porous to each other so that both invisible and visible fields of display contribute to concrete existence before God (§24). The porous body will be worked out more fully in chapter six in light of the social, sacramental and resurrection bodies.

§20. I AM MY BODY: FEELING MY MOVEMENT

Henry wrote his first book on the purely philosophical nature of incarnation. Pursuing these lines of inquiry in the late 1940s and early 50s, he published it in a book-length study entitled *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body* in 1965.²⁷⁶ In that work he adopts important facets of the work of Main de Biran (an early nineteenth-century French critic of empiricism) to show that the subjective nature of the body reflects the essence of concrete existence as a distinct field of experience up against the objective body-thing on display in the world. Already in 1965, Henry

²⁷⁶ This text was originally intended to be another section of the already massive *L’essence de la manifestation*, however, for the sake of keeping that text to a manageable size Henry published his book on the body as a separate text altogether. For more on this, see Henry, “Phénoménologie de la chair: philosophie, théologie, exégèse, Réponses,” in *Phénoménologie et christianisme chez Michel Henry: Les derniers écrits de Michel Henry en débat*, ed. Philippe Capelle (Paris: Cerf, 2004), 150.

notes, we see two bodies, *la chair* and *la corps*, which gives rise to the fact that the “‘duplicity of appearing’ is at work insofar that the body as a phenomenon is given in two different ways.”²⁷⁷ There is, on the one hand, the interior, subjective body to which Henry lays claim absolutely, and, on the other, the objective, exterior body to which the empiricists lay claim absolutely.

The interior essence of the duplicitous body so understood by Henry is shaped by the immediacy of movement, effort and feeling within the interiority of the ego itself—what Henry calls after de Biran the sphere of “absolute immanence.” The Biranian breakthrough of the identification of the body with the ego’s inner effort was, in Henry’s estimation, the crucial conceptual key to recovering a thickly subjective and transcendental theory of the body.²⁷⁸ He also insists that the Biranian philosophy of the body, while often neglected, represents an unrivalled contribution to philosophical reflection on the topic. Contending that modern philosophy stretching from Descartes to Merleau-Ponty has failed to account for the subjective nature of the body, Henry is especially critical of Kant on this score.²⁷⁹ Kant himself, the transcendental thinker par excellence, whose work personifies for many the high point of modern subjectivity, failed to substantiate how the ego intrinsically comports itself with the body. To be sure, we read Kant here for a moment in light of Henry, not because Henry is a reliable guide to Kant but because his treatment of Kant sheds light on Henry’s duplicitous body.

²⁷⁷ Henry, “Phénoménologie de la chair,” 150.

²⁷⁸ Henry draws mostly from de Biran’s early nineteenth-century work, *Essai sur les fondements de la psychologie*.

²⁷⁹ Henry also writes extensively about the profound proto-phenomenological resources one can find on the ontology of the self as it feels itself in immediate contact in Descartes’ late work, *The Passions of the Soul*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. I*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985) §26. For more on Henry’s critical appropriation of Descartes, see *Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, chapters 1-3 and *Incarnation*, §§11-15

Turning for a brief moment to Kant, then, we recognize that Henry argues against Kant by claiming that the bodily sphere always already encroaches upon and modifies the life of ego. In Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* the impact of the body upon the transcendental reality of the ego is minimized. The Kantian ego reflects a disembodied "form" or "receptacle" fitted to objectify sensible intuition. "The subjectivity of the subject," writes Henry, "in the philosophy of the subject is the objectivity of the object. The proof is that Kant's analysis of the structure of this subject is nothing other than the analysis of the structure of objectivity (space, time, causality, etc.)."²⁸⁰ The Kantian ego so described here is highly abstract and subjectively impoverished in that it simulates itself as nothing more than a formalized receptacle for sensible, empirical data. Kant himself expressed the structure of the transcendental aesthetic in such starkly disembodied language when he wrote, "but if one considers that this nature is nothing in itself but a sum of appearances, hence not a thing in itself but merely a multitude of representations of the mind, then one will not be astonished to see that unity on account of which alone it can be called the object of all possible experience, i.e., nature, solely in the radical faculty of all our cognition, namely transcendental apperception."²⁸¹ All objects of experience for Kant are representations in the mind, and the "sum of appearances," are ordered to and synthesized by the mind's apriori apperceptive ground as a subjective, cognitive faculty, which is analogous to a universal (transcendental) setting or law to which sense data must conform. The "standing and lasting I of pure apperception,"²⁸² writes Kant, is a "pure, original, unchanging consciousness."²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Henry, "The Critique of the Subject," trans. Peter T. Connor *Topoi* 7 (1988): 147-53, reference on 148.

²⁸¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 114.

²⁸² Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 123.

This unchanging Kantian “I” provides an absolute ground, a set of pure concepts which operate in accord with universal laws and determine apperception without due recognition of the body. With the exception of Main de Biran’s work, Henry postulates that there remains in the history of philosophy no clearly articulated discourse on the ego, Kant or otherwise, that answers head-on its relation to the body.

What, then, is the “body” for Henry and how does it render intelligible the subjectivity of the subject in its concrete disclosure? The structure of the body, in Henry’s view, is tied radically to the ego. I do not possess a body nor is my body the vehicle through which my ego is mediated to the world, as if my “I” were an abstraction, a disembodied set of apperceptive concepts. Rather, for Henry, “I am my body.”²⁸⁴ This conception of the body highlights the ego’s internal and immediate feeling of its own movement. Clearly indebted to de Biran’s theory of the body, Henry writes “my body is not a mountain which I see...I never see my body from the outside because *I am never outside my body...*”²⁸⁵ To be an ego is to be a body. And to be a body is to be an ego who feels, suffers, enjoys, needs, desires and moves in immediate relation with itself.

According to Henry, the way the body appears to me is by way of my own perspective. If a body appears in the third-person perspective it may appear as a cadaver or a destitute “it,” “thing” or “object”—no different than a stone or any other empirical object in the world of visible display, no different than a mountain I see. However, from the first-person perspective, my body is manifest as immediate inasmuch as my body is my ego and my ego is my body. My body, in Henry’s

²⁸³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 107.

²⁸⁴ Henry, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, 196.

²⁸⁵ Henry, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, 119.

estimation, is “mine” in that it is constitutive of my primordial sphere of “ownness,” a zero-point of bodily orientation. That Henry invokes a Biranian style of non-empiricism could hardly be more clear at this juncture. Just as de Biran opposed empiricism, Henry rejects the thesis that ascribes to the body an instrumental function and an empirical status as a “thing.” Empiricist may argue that the body appears as a thing whose parts are circumscribed by the displacement of its members, say my hand as it passes over a book; this hand-movement exhibits an exterior movement, an empiricist may suggest, that permits me to delimit my physical contours and establish my localized sensations as a finite object. For Henry, this position, codified in thinkers such as Locke, Hume and Condillac, designates the barbarous turn toward a “medicalized” scientific body nourished by a reductive materialism that tends to relegate the body to a mosaic of sense impressions mediated by nerves and muscular stimuli. The body so premised is reduced to a cadaver or “thing” in the world, lifeless and without subjectivity. The pure living ego Henry opposes to biological, empirical, scientific and natural elaborations of the body, all of which are complicit in the field of visible display (§5 above) at the expense of the invisible.

For Henry, and in contrast to the empiricist school, “my” body arises from the generative power within my ego as it is given to me by the very invisible carnality of an interior flesh. Installed inside my ego, flesh bears within it the pressure of self-affection. I feel myself riveted to myself and drawn within myself by way of an interior undertow stronger and more original than the wave that seems to result, but which, in fact, forces itself on me, sucking me in by it and within itself—within the

sphere of absolute auto-affection.²⁸⁶ Henry's duplicitous body therefore does not deny the objective, empirical body; rather it repositions the subjective nature of the body, i.e., "I am my body," entirely within its own sphere, internal to itself.

Henry therefore follows de Biran in the quest for the "subjective body."²⁸⁷ This subjective body by which I feel myself in my own effort brings to light the sphere of absolute immanence. This is, more particularly, a sphere of pure life that ascribes to the ego-body a mode of givenness distinct from the sphere of the objective, physical body of motor sensation. The subjective aspect of the duplicitous body, consequently, possess a style of verification all its own, one that supplies its own sphere of manifestation, a self-having or self-manifesting grounded in its relation to itself. It is a sphere so interior to itself, for Henry, that it is even distinct from the intimate pre-reflective feeling of my own local movement commonly identified as kinaesthetic locomotion. Henry is careful to acknowledge the importance of kinaesthetics as a field of study that illuminates the nature of the objective, empirical body, especially with regard to the sense of touch/tactility. Yet the study of kinaesthetics can only highlight the shape and nature of the empirical body (i.e., the exterior domain of the duplicitous body). The subjective body, because it is entirely interior to itself and thus subsisting within itself in the sphere of absolute immanence, owes nothing to the visible display of the world or physical sensation. The subjective body, Henry insists, is the "original" or "real" body, the pure and primordial feeling of myself in the primitive field of invisible display sealed off from the display of the world, including kinaesthetic locomotion.

²⁸⁶ I borrow the "undertow" metaphor from Marion's vivid description of auto-affection. See, Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 114.

²⁸⁷ See Henry, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, chapter 2 entitled "the Subjective Body."

But this original body ostensibly constitutes the ontological basement upon which the empirical, constituted body is enabled to move in the world. Auto-affection is the condition for the possibility of hetero-affection. Henry describes this transcendental structure of the duplicitous body: “The movement of the hand is known without being apprehended in the world, it presents itself to us immediately in the *internal transcendental experience which is one with the very being of this movement*. Because it is not constituted, because it is a transcendental experience, the movement of the hand has nothing to do with a displacement in objective space... the original and real movement is a subjective movement.”²⁸⁸ Even though I sense objects in the world and I move throughout space and time, my “sensations are only abstractions because in fact they are always constituted by a power to which subjective movement is immanent.”²⁸⁹ In light of this transcendental relation, we pose the following question: how does the subjective body serve as the transcendental or living condition for the objective body? If the subjective body belongs to a sphere of pure immanence (i.e., interiority) absolutely heterogeneous to the objective body of the world (i.e. exteriority), how do the two “bodies” meet, if ever (we address this problematic in the next section)? Here, we acknowledge how close Henry is to the spectre of Cartesian dualism, or worse, Gnostic dualism, which endows the subjective body with reality and the objective body with “irreality” (reminiscent of the monism we attributed to Henry in chapter 3). The obvious difficulty Henry finds himself in here has to do with the problem of relating the subjective and objective bodies. We shall appeal below to this tension as a central

²⁸⁸ Henry, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, 59.

²⁸⁹ Henry, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, 83.

problem, perhaps as an aspect of his phenomenology not fully refined, and thus highlight how the subjective and objective bodies call for integration.

For our purpose here, it is important to clarify that the subjective body as Henry conceives it represents the site of pure, concrete interiority, a self-referencing in which the ego is the centre of reference for all movement, feeling, communicating and perceiving. Because of this, the subjective body is manifest neither as a stagnant or impassable body nor as a body that remains in one place, like a rock at the bottom of a river. Though non-temporal, the ego's self-referencing as it moves within the subjective body is dynamically immersed within its own pathos of auto-affection as it feels itself crushing up against itself, increasing in its ongoing effort to feel and move. "I am my body" as I increase, grow and expand in and through the nocturnal depths of my lived-body itself, subjectively experienced in the living present. And while Henry has yet to deploy the terminology of "flesh" we shall see that he learns to discuss the body in terms of the flesh vs. body distinction after giving greater attention both to Husserl's hyletic phenomenology and the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. We take each in turn.

§20. RADICALIZING HUSSERL'S *LEIB*

Henry's use of the word "flesh" is derived, in part, from his direct encounter with Husserl in the 1980 and 90s.²⁹⁰ Even though we have already touched on his confrontation with Husserl in previous chapters, we introduce here Henry's departure from Husserl with particular reference to the study of the flesh/body, or what Husserl nominates as the *Leibkörper*.²⁹¹ And, even though it remains to be iterated in a theological style of phenomenology, Henry shall employ a Husserlian variation of flesh that will persist until the end of his career. Beginning with *Material Phenomenology* (1990) and proceeding up through his theological turn, Henry follows Husserl because Henry maintains that flesh designates the interior site of intimate contact with oneself, i.e., a phenomenological field of display internal to the ego. In years subsequent to *Material Phenomenology*, Henry shall turn to theology to analyze how human flesh is joined to the "Word made flesh." Understood in a theological idiom, the ego's flesh originates within the revelation of God in Christ's taking flesh. But before we interrogate Henry's theological approach, we elucidate in this section his rearticulation of the Husserlian flesh-body or lived-body, or in German, *Leibkörper*.

Husserl's systematic exposition of the complex correlation between *Leib* and *Körper* appears in his lesser-known work, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology, Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution* (or *Ideas II*). It is here that Husserl accentuates the role of the body in the ego's

²⁹⁰ The whole of Henry's book, *Material Phenomenology* (1990) is devoted to a close but critical reading of Husserl's "hylletic" phenomenology.

²⁹¹ As far as I can glean, the use of the term "flesh" first begin with Henry's confrontation with Nietzsche in his 1983 work, *Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*. Henry deploys the term with greater regularity after his critical reading of Husserl in *Material Phenomenology* and his appropriation of the gospel of John in the late 1990s.

constitution of the world-horizon. Curiously, while not as widely read as many of Husserl's other works, *Ideas II* has exercised enormous influence within the phenomenological tradition and was cited as key resource for Maurice Merleau-Ponty's now classic *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). As one commentator has put it, "there is almost an inverse proportion between the influence that Husserl's *Ideas II* exercised on important philosophical developments in this century and the attention it has received in secondary literature."²⁹² *Ideas II* has certainly been instrumental in Henry's own study of the body, and we now turn to sketch its major features.

A basic question emerges early on in *Ideas II* that informs the book's explication of the body throughout: namely, how does the ego constitute material objects, for example, that arm-chair in front of me, as it is given to my subjective sphere of consciousness? Husserl limits the appearance of objective things within the ego's streaming lived experience or flesh, or *Leib*. For Husserl, "flesh is the medium of all perception; it is the organ of perception and is necessarily involved in all perception" [zunächst ist der Leib das Mittel aller Wahrnehmung, er ist das Wahrnehmungsorgan, er ist bei aller Wahrnehmung notwendig dabei].²⁹³ This means that the *Leib*, as the subjective body, shapes the immediate context by which the ego perceives all objects so that the arm-chair "out there" can become meaningful for the

²⁹² Thomas Nenon, "Introduction," in *Issues in Husserl's Ideas II*, eds. Thomas Nenon and Lester Embree (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), ix.

²⁹³ Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book, Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 61. We shall refer to this work as *Ideas II* in subsequent citations. We shall engage some in the German edition of this text given the profoundly difficult semantic problem of translating the distinction between *Leib* and *Körper* into English. For the German text, see Husserl, Husserliana series, Band IV, 56. We shall refer to the German text as *Ideen II*, band IV in subsequent citations.

“ego-pole” in its absolute here.²⁹⁴ Husserl’s *Leib* imposes itself upon the ego as an absolute venue of perception, united together, the ego-*Leib* is therefore where things out there are “incarnated” within my subjective sphere, as I live through them. Husserl calls the *Leib* the “zero point” of orientation (*Nullpunkt*), the zone from of which the ego proximately grasps and thus objectifies things “out there.”²⁹⁵

Modified within the intention-intuition unity, all objects appear as subjective-relative in Husserl’s theory of incarnation. Objects and even other subjective egos are “there” relative to my “absolute here.” Husserl devotes considerable space in *Ideas II* to highlighting how the *Leib* is related via the exterior body (*Körper*) to that which is “over there.”²⁹⁶ I can never be anything other than “here,” that is, my absolute and abiding place as this ego-body which is localized in this particular region of objective time and space by virtue of the spatial components of the *Körper*. If the horizon of empirical objects and other egos is relative to my “absolute here,” then how am I to experience the non-ego “over there”? Put differently: how does Husserl unify into a single experience my enduring sense of “flesh” (*Leib*) as this ego-pole lived through its exterior “body” (*Körper*) as it comes into contact with objects “over there”?

It is clear that Husserl disallows any unified experience or pure self-presence whatsoever to occur within the *Leib*. Because it is structurally discontinuous with itself, the *Leib* relates to its exterior body. Affected by the “outside,” and thus, affected by its *Körper*, the *Leib* is structurally open to, and thereby integrated with, its exterior body in its ongoing contact with objects “over there.” We may say that Husserl structures the body according to two distinct, though integrated, fields of

²⁹⁴ See Husserl, *Ideas II*, §22, “Das reine Ich als Ichpol.”

²⁹⁵ Husserl, *Ideas II*, 61.

²⁹⁶ For more on the absolute here of my *Leib*, see §§44-46 in Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations*. Also see Franck, *Chair et corps: sur la phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1981), chapter 13 entitled “l’ici et le là.”

display, (1) a subjective body and an (2) objective body, or *Leib* and *Körper*. There is, to be sure, one body in Husserl, a *Leibkörper*, and yet one body with two distinct modes of givenness. The *Leib* is how the body is *self-given*, how I am non-reflectively self-aware that this body that is moving is my body and not just another spatial thing or object, whereas the *Körper* is the objective or “thingly” body on visible display in the world.

The difficult task of elucidating the sometimes obscure phenomenological investigations of *Leibkörper* in Husserl’s texts is only exacerbated by the contentious state of post-Husserl scholarship on the topic. Perhaps the best exegetical work to which one can turn for interpretive help on this particular issue is Didier Franck’s widely-read monograph, *Chair et corps: sur la phénoménologie de Husserl* (1981).²⁹⁷ Franck’s valuable book conveys the essential contours and problems in Husserl’s phenomenology of *Leibkörper*, looking to not only the standard Husserlian texts but to many sources in the Husserl archives as well. His close study of the Husserlian *Leibkörper* yields two overall points worth mentioning here.

First, the *Leib* interlaces with its *Körper* in order to open up the *Leib* to the world-horizon, making *Leib* the primary place of incarnation. For Franck, flesh signifies that original site that receives (dative) that which is given (genitive). Flesh is the “medium of the intentional regard” and the original sphere of all experience.²⁹⁸ Interpreting Husserlian phenomenology as essentially a “hyletic” (i.e., matter) phenomenology concerned with how matter is constituted by the “morphe” (i.e.,

²⁹⁷ We consult Franck because his text on Husserl is superior to any English literature on Husserl’s theory of the lived-body. Donn Welton’s explication of the lived-body rightly notes that it has received little direct analysis in English. See Welton, “Soft, Smooth Hands: Husserl’s Phenomenology of the Lived-body,” in *The Body: Contemporary and Classic Readings*, ed. Donn Welton (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 38-56, for reference see 39.

²⁹⁸ Franck, *Chair et corps*, 24.

form) of the intentional regard, Franck raises the important issue of the structural accomplishment of incarnation itself: how is the “hyle” rendered incarnate within consciousness by the cognitive power of the “morphe”? Franck maintains Husserl’s theory of incarnation, structurally speaking, represents an ongoing and complexly synthetic act of “crossing” or “interlacing” (what Franck denotes with the French terms *transverse* or *entrelacs*). Understood in this manner, flesh and body cross against one another giving rise to an experiential tapestry, a single *Leibkörper*, but a *Leibkörper* that also maintains the distinct properties of *Leib* and *Körper*.²⁹⁹ Husserl thematizes this act of crossing when he writes that concrete experience “depends on the Body [*Leib*] and on what is proper to the psyche, what it is that, as world, stands over and against the subject.”³⁰⁰ So while the flesh is distinct from the body, the flesh nevertheless comes into contact with objects “over there” by way of crossing with the body in the body’s ongoing immersion in the world. Husserl shall frequently describe the crossing as the ego-*Leib*’s position “over and against” (*gegenüber*) the world: “It is now evident and beyond discussion that what is most proper to the Ego is something experienced in or at the Body [das eigentlich Ichliche im oder am Leibe Erfahrenes sei...] in the manner of a constituted stratum within a constituted Objectivity. Each such Objectivity and stratum indeed belongs on the side of the not-Ego, the over-and-against, which has sense *only* as the over-and-against of an Ego.”³⁰¹ So the *Leib* as the subjective body is unified with the *Körper*, as a single *Leibkörper*, and yet the *Leib* is distinct from the *Körper* in that the *Leib* crosses with the *Körper* in the latter’s contact with the exterior objects and other subjects in the world.

²⁹⁹ Franck, *Chair et corps*, 94.

³⁰⁰ Husserl, *Ideas II*, 80.

³⁰¹ Husserl, *Ideas II*, 331; *Ideen II*, band IV, .318.

Even as the “world stands over and against the subject,” Husserl’s *Leibkörper* illustrates the basic principle of constitution: “transcendence in immanence.” *As the ego-pole stands over against the Körper in the world, the ego-pole constitutes the world in that very act within its sphere of immanence.* This is a universal law, argues Franck, that demonstrates that the flesh/body distinction is founded ultimately upon the “incarnation” of things transcendent to the ego within its sphere of ownness (*Eigenheitsphäre*).³⁰²

We have observed that the interior subjective layer of “flesh” incorporates the “body,” in Franck’s estimation, by way of continual crossing or interlacing with the body in its immersion in the objective, spatio-temporal world—giving rise to a single *Leibkörper*. Flesh and body, for Husserl, are therefore never separate or autonomous species, absolutely heterogeneous to each other (as they are in Henry, see §21 below). Despite the fact that tensive nature of the interlacing may give way to friction, flesh and body in Husserl are in absolute solidarity, in a symbiotic tension whereby each induces the other giving rise to a psychosomatic unity, a kinaesthetic *Leibkörper*. Franck puts this unity succinctly: “The first thing to clarify is that the sphere of ownness, centred on my flesh, crossed by the flesh/body difference, is not homogeneous. We have shown that no synthesis given to a body is possible without the correlative system of dispositions of my flesh (tactile movements, eye movements, etc.)....”³⁰³ In other words, the *Leib* is always enplaced in a *Körper* and a *Körper* is always distinguished from but nonetheless subjectively moved by the

³⁰² Franck, *Chair et corps*, 61.

³⁰³ Franck, *Chair et corps*, 94-5.

power of an interior *Leib*, and together they constitute a crossed phenomenon, a *Leibkörper*³⁰⁴.

We are now in position to bring to light the second important characteristic of Husserl's *Leibkörper* that Franck highlights: the temporal constitution of the *Leibkörper*. Franck insists that it is by virtue of the flesh's temporality that the *Leibkörper* can have an experience of anything at all.³⁰⁵ Franck contends that Husserlian *Leib* unifies the temporal flux in which both *Leib* and *Körper* exist as single *Leibkörper*. But this unifying power presupposes a structural openness, a gap which opens the flesh to the temporal streaming of objects arriving from "out there."³⁰⁶ Franck insists that while Husserl rejects empirical sensualism characteristic of objective scientific discourse, Franck does not think, however, that Husserl rejects sensualism in general. Qualified thusly, Husserlian *Leib* assumes a unique kind of sensualism, an interior temporal form reinforced up against itself as it is affected by that which stands against it through the *Körper*. Though the flesh is not empirical, it is nevertheless temporal and subject to the visible display of the world mediated by the *Körper*. As Franck notes, flesh "is always being given in the temporal flux, for without it the *hyle* could never be 'incarnated.'"³⁰⁷ This is why Franck states directly that, "my flesh crosses continually and integrally with time... flesh constitutes time..."³⁰⁸ But, the way in which the flesh temporalizes time is through its bodily relation with otherness, especially the other ego (what Husserl names the alter-ego). In this respect, Franck writes of Husserlian *Leib*: "my flesh—the milieu of all

³⁰⁴ In fact, Franck shall insist that it is the flesh that is responsible for unifying the movements and impressions received by way of the empirical body. See Franck, *Chair et corps*, 45.

³⁰⁵ Franck, *Chair et corps*, 154, 177, 188, 193

³⁰⁶ This is also the basic thesis lucidly articulated in Dan Zahavi's excellent book, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, especially chapters 6-7.

³⁰⁷ Franck, *Chair et corps*, 190.

³⁰⁸ Franck, *Chair et corps*, 190.

givenness, is not thinkable in isolation, outside of its interlacing with the other, its relating to other fleshed.”³⁰⁹ My *Leib*, as this absolute here or zero-point, is unified with my *Körper*, because *Leib* at its core is fractured by temporal difference and thus affected by other bodies “over there.” Never self-present and self-enclosed, the Husserlian *Leibkörper* experiences itself together with that which is different than itself in one fell swoop, for as Franck writes that for the *Leibkörper*, “auto-affection is immediately a hetero-affection.”³¹⁰ Franck shall argue that the Husserlian *Leibkörper* is not purely self-impressional (i.e., auto-affection) but is always already fractured by that which is other thanks to the work of temporality.

The Husserlian body is therefore open to otherness because it is pervaded by the presence of the other through the bodily medium of temporal difference. And it is by way of this crossing or “interlacing” that time emerges in the first place. Franck’s thesis is that “the interlacing here is a form of association and, more specifically, a form of association between the present and the non-present, without which the other would not be able to appear in my [temporal] flux of lived-experiences.”³¹¹ The very origin of temporality and the streaming of exterior objects is manifest in and through the *Leib*’s exposure to the world-horizon mediated by the *Körper*. Husserlian *Leib*, vulnerable to the flow of sensations accommodated by the *Körper*, is ineluctably drawn toward alterity, or the non-ego. The *Leibkörper* as “absolute here” is a subjective point of orientation fractured by temporality and thus open to other egos and objects in the exterior world “over there.”

Henry’s radicalization of Husserlian *Leib* proceeds to eliminate the phenomenological utility of the *Körper*. Henry’s particular adaption of *Leib* is born

³⁰⁹ Franck, *Chair et corps*, 193.

³¹⁰ Franck, *Chair et corps*, 192.

³¹¹ Franck, *Chair et corps*, 156.

of the conviction that auto-affection clarifies the transcendental essence and therefore the living vitality of *Leib*. To proceed to the “essence” or “pure form” of flesh, Henry departs from Husserlian *Leib* by directing it further into the depths of interiority, toward the living present, a sphere stabilized by its self-presence, where there is no fracture opened by temporality and hetero-affection. By penetrating into the nocturnal depths of pure interiority, Henry resituates the *Leib*'s essence upon a lived substructure situated beneath consciousness and thus beneath the genitive and dative poles made possible by the Husserlian *Leibkörper*'s structural interlacing with objects and other egos in the world.

For Henry, the interiority of *Leib* necessarily evokes that which is prior to temporality, namely the pure living present without reference to the temporal streaming of the world (future to past). Further, such a living present proceeds straightaway to a theological articulation. Henry's critical departure of Husserl's language of *Leib* is thus informed by a phenomenology of invisible display that establishes absolute auto-affection as the ego's primal self-experience of itself. And so while critics of Husserl usually seek to rectify what they perceive to be an overly interior egology, Henry presses Husserlian interiority further into the inner “underground” of the living present from which *Leib* is born in and through God.

For Henry, this substance or matter is a self-impression, a literal feeling of my own impression of myself. The self-impressional flesh actualizes the materiality of myself as I feel myself in absolute immediacy, the “impressionable now” whose impact lands before the streaming retentional and protentional acts take over. Because Husserl reduces flesh to a temporal interlacing with otherness, Henry thinks that Husserl necessarily aborts *Leib* to a sphere outside itself, casting *Leib* into the

multiplicities of world-engagements and thus breaking *Leib* apart into endless fragmentation and flux. To adopt Husserl's *Leib*, as it is conceived within the temporal flow retention and protention, would inescapably lead, in Henry's estimation, to the exterior movement of self-alienation. Henry's theory of the self-impression corrects this alienation by turning *Leib* back upon itself.

But do *Leib* and *Körper* relate at all in Henry's schematic? Henry acknowledges that both flesh and body exist and constitute the dual manner by which concrete existence appears; and while he insists that the pure ego-flesh (radicalized *Leib*) is the pure essence of my life in its concrete living present, Henry cannot deny the importance of the objective body (*Körper*) as the exterior reality that draws me outside myself into the world. How, then, do they relate in Henry's scheme?

Flesh appears as the very self-suffering of being alive, a self-impression not subject to the change, movement and temporal streaming of the exterior *Körper*. But the exterior *Körper*, Henry indicates clearly, is the site by which I see the other body, the other perceiving subject who is in possession of interior flesh. Thus, "consider the objective body of the other. If it differs from other inert bodies in the material universe, it is because we perceive it as inhabited by a flesh.... The body of the other, despite its objectivity, offers itself to me as a living body."³¹² Like Husserl, Henry claims that the flesh and body form a kind of unity with two manners of givenness, a *Leibkörper*.³¹³ And Henry acknowledges that we observe this *Leibkörper* phenomenologically by looking to the exterior body, to the eyes by which we see, hears by which hear, bodily members by which we are mobile and move about freely. Henry does not deny such a body's practical possibilities are realized and thus

³¹² Henry, *Incarnation*, 218-19.

³¹³ Henry, *Incarnation*, 285.

seen in the world. But, in diverging from Husserl, Henry states “the reality of such a body is returned to our living flesh whereby all of its real operations—of seeing, of moving, etc.—belong to the sphere of absolute immanence of transcendental life; as such, this flesh is invisible.”³¹⁴ To phrase it another way, the body appears, for Henry, as both a unity and a duplicity. How?

The principle of the duplicity of display informs how the body is a duplicitous body, how it *est à double face*. This is to say that it appears in Henry’s schematic as an exterior body with empirical properties and an ensemble of sense impressions which are visibly localized within its bodily continuum (*Körper*). It also appears as an interior self-impression impermeable to the impressions that arrive from the “outside,” a flesh (*Leib*).³¹⁵ The two fields of display, as it should be obvious by now, are situated in an absolute tension. The former is visible, the latter invisible, the former constituted, the latter unconstituted, the former irreal and the latter real. Yet if Henry claims that the former (exterior body) carries within it the latter (interior flesh), then how do these irreconcilable spheres meet? How can the invisible animate the visible without bypassing the absolute barrier that separates them?

Henry explains the mysterious relation, not by way of interlacing, but by way of “paradox.” The paradoxical synthesis of flesh and body is tantamount to the synthesis of soul and body through the spirit, a spirit which Henry also calls our original, primal transcendental life: “the synthesis between the “spirit” (transcendental life) and our objective body is paradoxical.”³¹⁶ Yet it is only the flesh (spiritual reality of transcendental life) that is real, living and the ground for my

³¹⁴ Henry, *Incarnation*, 285.

³¹⁵ Henry, *Incarnation*, 233, for example.

³¹⁶ Henry, *Incarnation*, 283.

bodily movements in the world. Thus, Henry shall say, “the eye never sees. Only our flesh, or our “soul” as Descartes says, sees.”³¹⁷ Why does only the flesh/soul/spirit see? Why does the interior life see and not the objective body on visible display see? It is because “a real and living flesh which is only revealed in the auto-impressionality of life, and thus never in the outside of the world.”³¹⁸ Even though the flesh and body come together to form a single *Leibkörper*, Henry relegates the body to an unreal or non-living venue. The body cannot see because Henry refuses the body participation in the interior life. Henry describes this paradox with representational imagery as well: the body is nothing other than a “double” or “exterior representation” of my invisible flesh.³¹⁹

Henry’s eccentric proposal of a single *Leibkörper* translates fluidly into a theological grammar. The advantage of Henry’s theological rearticulation of Husserlian *Leib* is that it renders intelligible how immediate contact with the divine is possible as an internal movement of God’s self-disclosure in Christ, who is a flesh, the “Word made flesh.”

§21. THEOLOGICAL FLESH WITHOUT BODY?

In a 2001 colloquium at the l’Institute catholique de Paris, an event organized as *un hommage à Henry’s last works on Christianity*, Emmanuel Falque delivered a paper on Henry’s theory of incarnation with a laconic but pithy title, “Y a-t-il une chair sans corps?”³²⁰ Even though we shall engage briefly with Falque’s

³¹⁷ Henry, *Incarnation*, 287.

³¹⁸ Henry, *Incarnation*, 310.

³¹⁹ Henry, *Incarnation*, 252.

³²⁰ Emmanuel Falque, “Y a-t-il une chair sans corps?” in *Phénoménologie et christianisme chez Michel Henry: Les derniers écrits de Michel Henry en débat*, ed. Philippe Capelle (Paris: Cerf, 2004), 95-133.

interrogation of Henry below, it is important to note here the utility of Falque's title as a powerfully concise question, that once posed, brings into focus a central problem internal to Henry's thinking. Such a question is perfectly appropriate with regard to Henry's privileging of the subjective body over against the objective body. Is there a *Leib* without a *Körper*? Can Henry truly account for the dignity and importance of the exterior body (*Körper*) on visible display in the world-horizon without at the same time contradicting his claim that the flesh of absolute interiority (*Leib*) is the univocal site of reality? Consistent with our argument in chapter three, we find that Henry's proposal of incarnation reduces human flesh to a non-temporal monism or what Falque describes as a "carnal monism." Here, the interior flesh bears within it the *parousia* of (divine) life whereas the exterior, visible body remains without life and remains unreal.

Given the deeply theological, even mystical character (see §33 for more on the mystical body of Christ in Henry) of Henry's interpretation of flesh, an obvious question ensues: what *exactly* does Henry mean by the term "flesh" (*Leib*) from a theological point of view? More specifically, how is Christ's flesh the transcendental condition for human flesh?³²¹ These questions strike at the heart of Henry's theological project that feeds into his radical separation between invisible and visible display, between flesh and body. In elucidating the theological setting of *Leib*, Henry isolates what he perceives to be an inescapable fact: that phenomenology and theology share a common vocabulary about *l'être-chair* or *l'existence dans la chair*. Phenomenology studies appearing itself, or "in its substantive form: donation, monstration, phenomenalization, unveiling, disclosure, apparition, manifestation,

³²¹ Henry explicitly states that the basic question of divine incarnation set out in John 1.14 motivated his entire undertaking in *Incarnation: une philosophie de la chair*. See Henry, *Incarnation*, 30.

revelation. It cannot go unnoticed that these key words of the discipline of phenomenology are, in large measure, those of religion—or theology.”³²² It is thus no surprise that Henry’s “theological turn” focuses on the Christian explication of God’s self-revelation (*manifestation, disclosure, etc.*) in Christ. What then naturally follows is that Henry determines, and in fact, delimits the phenomenological study of the Incarnation as it relates to human flesh by asking: how does the “Word made flesh” appear to us in flesh? If the Incarnate manifestation of Christ is God’s self-manifestation par excellence, then it is crucial that one clarify the style of givenness by which the “Word made flesh” *appears* as flesh.

Christ assumes flesh, for Henry, and appears as an appearing *of* divine flesh *to* human flesh, yet these genitives (appearings of) and the dative poles (that to which the appearings appear) are not to be taken as structurally dissimilar but as one and the same. The genitive and dative poles of appearing, as we made clear in chapter one, presuppose a gap or distance between the appearing and the dative to which the appearing is rendered manifest. As will become instructive for us momentarily, Christ’s incarnation (taking flesh) and our incarnation (taking flesh) are one and the same revelation of flesh in Henry’s scheme. The genitive and dative come together in an original unity whereby the appearing *of* Christ *to* human existence is a singular manifestation without gap or difference.

To elucidate the *l’être-chair* Henry invokes the principle of the “duplicity of display/appearing” as the point of departure. This principle highlights the phenomenological duality Henry imposes on all appearing, a principle discussed at length already in chapter one (§8). Given its programmatic status, the principle of the

³²² Henry, *Incarnation*, 37.

duplicity of appearing orders the manifestation of all phenomena in such a way that they conform to one of two spheres of display: either an invisible appearance of pure auto-affection (i.e. no fracture between genitive and dative) or a visible display of hetero-affection (i.e., gap between genitive and dative). This duplicity of displaying/appearing adjudicates the basic contrast between the pure ego *and* the world, or between living present *and* the temporal horizon, or between subjective flesh *and* objective body. Henry addresses the question of the appearing of “Word made flesh” according to the strict duplicity between flesh and body or *chair* and *corps*, or *Leib* and *Körper*.

It is not insignificant to note that in order to bring to light the nature of flesh (*Leib*) Henry commences with the prologue to the gospel of John, a powerfully poetic text which ascribes to Christ an incarnation of “taking-flesh,” not of “taking-body.” For the gospel of John, “does not say that the Word had taken a body....”, rather, “it says that the Word was made flesh and thus it is a question of *flesh* and not *body*.”³²³ Henry continues, “for it is not a question thus of ‘form,’ of ‘aspect,’ or of ‘guise,’ but of reality. In itself, in its essence and reality it is the Word, and as the Word, it is that of the Word made flesh.”³²⁴ Turning our attention away from the objective, historical body of Jesus of Nazareth manifest within the world-horizon, Henry maintains that the Incarnation is acosmic, that is, invisible and without world. As such, Henry insists that the visible body (*Körper*) of Jesus of Nazareth does not tell us anything about the essence of the “Word made flesh.” If the historical body on visible display were the site of the real Incarnation, Henry asks, why did so many not recognize him as a divine manifestation? Did not many in first-century Palestine

³²³ Henry, *Incarnation*, 26.

³²⁴ Henry, *Incarnation*, 27.

mistake his identity, claiming he was nothing more than an ordinary human being, a bandit, a prophet, a revolutionary? Henry states it this way: “If the Word of God comes to dwell with humanity under the guise of the objective body, the Word’s journey would take place in such a way that Christ would remain entirely incognito (and insurmountably so).”³²⁵ In other words, what is essential about the “Word made flesh” is not the body on visible display in the temporality of the world (founded on the distance between genitive and dative of appearing) but rather his flesh, or his concrete self-display which assumes a manner of givenness with a unique style of verification all its own and thus one that cannot be mistaken—one in which what appears and the appearance are co-original and thus identical, a self-impressional appearing (*Leib*). Understood, then, on the basis of the duplicity of display, Henry disrobes Christ’s body, peeling it back so as to discover its pure interior essence. Christ’s Incarnate reality appears in the field of invisible display cut off from visible display, physical embodiment and temporality.

Henry does not deny that Christ, as a historical personage, assumed a physical, objective body disclosed within time and space. But, the luminous display of the world under which the visible body appears is simply disqualified by Henry. That is, the body as fractured by the genitive and dative of appearing in the flow of time does not count as a form of divine revelation. It cannot. The “Word made flesh” generates its flesh through feeling itself in radical immediacy (i.e., auto-affection), as it crushes against itself within its own interior reciprocity among Father, Son and Spirit. Christ’s flesh, as pure *Leib*, thus dwells within its own space, sealed within the Trinity given that the “relation of life to living occurs inside God himself.”³²⁶

³²⁵ Henry, *Incarnation*, 26 and 368.

³²⁶ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 51. Also see Henry, *Incarnation*, 27.

Christ's incarnate reality appears in the field of invisible display cut off from visible display, physical embodiment and temporality—certainly a theological radicalization of the Husserlian *Leibkörper*, an integrated unity which Henry bifurcates into two irreconcilable fields incapable of harmony (and thus giving rise to a duplicitous body).

Might such a phenomenology of flesh cast the dark cloud of heresy over Henry, invoking the spectres of Docetism or Apollinarianism whose teachings ascribe to Christ's earthly body the status of illusion while privileging the interior spiritual core? It seems difficult to deny that Henry's duplicitous body gravitates toward the grievous imbalance of these early church Christological heresies.³²⁷ Henry's preoccupation with the essence (*eidōs*) of Christ's flesh at the expense of its appearing as appearances *of* a body *to* other bodies in the visible display of the world is symptomatic of the kind of absolute dualism/duplicity upon which these heresies trade. Adopting a monism of the kind we outlined in chapter three (§16), Henry advances a non-temporal monism that reduces reality to the acosmic flesh of Christ.

Despite that on Henry's view it is incapable of conforming to the alien structures of the world, the Incarnation does not exclude human flesh. We recall that even though Henry's theory of flesh signifies the lived domain of immediate self-awareness, my concrete feeling of my own effort, movement and suffering/joy of being this me that I am, it is nevertheless the same venue in which Christ's flesh appears. Henry writes:

³²⁷ Henry, *Incarnation*, §24. Henry explicitly disagrees with, for example, Tertullien's (anti-Gnostic) insistence that Christ's flesh necessarily includes an objective material component. Henry takes aim specifically at Tertullien's work, *De Carni Christi*. See the French translation to which Henry referred, *La Chair du Christ*, trans. Jean-Pierre Mahé (Paris: Cerf, 1975).

I am not myself, and cannot be, except by way of Life's original ipseity. The pathetic flesh of this ipseity, in which Life is joined to itself, is what joins me to myself such that I may be, and can be, this me that I am. Therefore, I cannot join me to myself except through Christ, since he has joined eternal Life to itself, creating in it the first Self. The relation to self that makes any me a me is what makes that me possible; in philosophical language, it is its transcendental condition....Christ is the transcendental condition of these transcendental me's.³²⁸

To phrase it differently, in the pure embrace of my auto-affection I am given to myself by Christ's incarnate auto-affection. Christ's flesh replicates itself in my flesh, generating and carrying along my own self-suffering of feeling myself as I crush against myself; Christ's Incarnation, in short, makes possible my own taking flesh.

But does this not pose an obvious theological problem? Given that the very structure of auto-affection is that it is a feeling of nothing but my own feeling in radical immediacy without reference to anything foreign, how can Christ be the inner possibility of this feeling? How is it that when I feel myself, and nothing but my own flesh, that I am also in contact with Christ's flesh? Is not inserting Christ's flesh within my own self-affective flesh a violation of the nature of self-affection as a self-enclosed event of feeling in which I feel nothing but my own singularity? Does not feeling Christ's flesh within my own flesh introduce an element of hetero-affection within the impenetrable sphere of auto-affection? How does Henry address this profound problem from a theological point of view?

The unity between Christ and each human self forms an interior unity wherein the living present is carried along by Christ's generative donation of life. Henry writes, "no living is living, that is, self-affecting, other than in the process of

³²⁸ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 115.

the self-affection of absolute Life.”³²⁹ God’s essence manifested in the first-living self of Christ and my own essence of being this “self” are not foreign to each other. There is only one life and thus one absolute auto-affection that actuates all living. Henry’s conception of divine life necessarily leads to the conclusion that my own self-affection is a relative moment of divine life’s own absolute self-affection. So, when I feel myself in radical immediacy I am at the same time, whether I acknowledge it or not, feeling Christ’s own flesh—Henry claims, “my flesh, my living flesh, is Christ’s.”³³⁰ May we also conclude that Henry’s theological reflections on *Leibkörper* gives way to an irreparable rift between *Leib* and *Körper*?

Perhaps the most involved appraisal of Henry’s study of the flesh-body distinction is Emmanuel Falque’s lengthy essay mentioned in the opening of this section. Falque advances, in the main, what we perceive here to be an appropriate critique of Henry. Labelling Henry a “carnal monist,”³³¹ Falque raises two points worth mentioning here. First, Falque rightly argues that Henry is confronted with the problem of physical incorporation or visible embodiment. Falque notes that Henry’s theory of flesh is disembodied (*la chair désincorporée*) in that Henry does not think, phenomenologically, how my interior ipseity is truly lived in concert with my spatial body manifest in the ordinary spatio-temporal horizon of the world. Falque notes that Henry even affirms the unity of flesh and body by appropriating the expression *Leibkörper* on four occasions.³³² Falque also notes that Henry highlights the need to resolve this tension between the two modes of givenness when Henry says “the

³²⁹ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 110.

³³⁰ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 116.

³³¹ Falque, “Y a-t-il une chair sans corp?” 125.

³³² Henry, *Incarnation*, 235, 285, 341, 365.

relation of the flesh to the body is thus an inescapable question.”³³³ Falque observes that Henry, nevertheless, fails to address clearly how flesh and body relate.

The second point Falque brings to the fore is a theological one. He suggests that Henry’s carnal monism renders problematic the bodily nature of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. For, “the duplicity of the thingly body and of the intentional flesh (*Körper-Leib*),” writes Falque, “is in effect entirely absorbed in the impressional flesh.”³³⁴ Thus the reason Falque argues that Henry does not address the question of how flesh and body relate is that flesh and body do not relate at all in Henry. The *Körper* is absorbed into the *Leib*, or so argues Falque. The impressional flesh, acosmic and non-temporal, is the flesh of Christ and the point of unity between human flesh (*Leib*) and divine flesh (*Christ-Leib*). Describing Henry’s tendency to absorb human flesh within divine flesh as a “theological corporeality” (*l’incorporation théologique*), Falque proclaims that such a theological interpretation of *Leib* is more Gnostic in tone than Christian. In contrast to Henry’s emphasis on interior flesh, Falque seeks to connect the Incarnation to the affirmation of ordinary human life in the world. Christ’s self-disclosure happens, Falque reminds us, in simple ordinary life. Christ appeared with blood running through his veins, and sweat on his brow. By highlighting the humble state of Christ’s incarnate body, Falque complicates Henry’s theological interpretation of the Incarnation. Does Henry dismiss the Pauline doctrine of kenosis? Does not the Pauline hymn of Philippians 2 presuppose the radical difference between God and humanity thereby affirming the humility explicit in the act of God taking flesh?³³⁵

³³³ Henry, *Incarnation*, 179.

³³⁴ Falque, “Y a-t-il une chair sans corps?” 125.

³³⁵ Falque, “Y a-t-il une chair sans corps?” 127-29.

While we affirm Falque's thesis that Henry is a carnal monist, we must qualify Falque's thesis slightly. Falque is perhaps overstating his claim when he asserts that Henry absorbs the exterior *Körper* into the ego's invisible *Leib*. The carnal monism that Falque accuses Henry of having adopted calls for qualification in light of Henry's theory of the duplicitous body, a body split between *Leib* and *Körper*. To be sure, Henry does not reject the existence of the exterior body on visible display as Falque would have us believe. Much of *Incarnation: une philosophie de la chair* focuses on the particular failures of the visible body to display that which is most real about concrete life. So we agree with Falque that it is correct to suspect Henry's flesh appears on its own and is independent of the body's appearing. If flesh is *without* a body in this sense, it is not certain that the body is absorbed within the flesh as Falque maintains. Henry claims that the flesh is simply the *ratio cognoscendi*, or the reason for the body's movement and living expressions.³³⁶ So, despite the body's incapacity to reveal the interior life of divine flesh in its full glory, the body as an object of visible display is always there, leading me in my existence in the temporal world-horizon. Henry affirms as much: "My flesh is not simply the principle of the constitution of my proper objective body, it is concealed in it as its invisible substance. Such is the strange condition of this object that we call our body: it is not simply reduced to its visible species; rather it is its invisible disclosure that is its reality."³³⁷

Henry shall also insist throughout *Incarnation: une philosophie de la chair* that the body on visible display imposes itself on the flesh, exercising the power of de-realization over flesh. The objective, visible body throws the real, living

³³⁶ Henry, "Phénoménologie de la chair," 178.

³³⁷ Henry, *Incarnation*, 221.

impression of flesh into the temporal flux of the world (Henry writes, “the derealisation of the flesh happens in and by the appearing of the world”).³³⁸ But again, this supposes that the existence of the exterior body is always there, if even as threat. If the exterior, objective body were absorbed into the impressional flesh of Christ, as Falque would have us believe, then Henry’s *Leibkörper* would not pay heed at all to the de-realizing power of the *Körper*. The fact remains that the exterior, objective body figures in Henry’s vocabulary as a powerful reality by which we exist in the world (it is not merely an empty shell, *coquille vide*)³³⁹ but also by which the visible appearing of the world can conceal or de-realize the invisible life. And finally, it is necessary to affirm that both *Leib* and *Körper* are components of the body in Henry, for it is only with the friction between them that Henry is forced to conclude that they relate paradoxically. If there were no body (or if it were absorbed within the flesh), then there would be no need to describe the relation of flesh and body as a paradox.³⁴⁰ It is therefore in this qualified sense that we affirm Falque in ascribing the title of “carnal monist” to Henry.

By now it may be obvious that we are suggesting that Henry’s unique appropriation of *Leib* advances a theological truth about the ego’s unity with Christ. Flesh is manifest as a lived-experience, arriving as a pure feeling of Christ touching my ipseity at every point of my being. For Henry, my *auto-affection is a Christ-affection*. Yet, does this not violate the pure, singularity of auto-affection as indicated above? For Henry, inserting Christ as the source and ongoing possibility of my own auto-affection is *not* introducing an element of hetero-affection. Rather, Christ’s flesh and my own flesh are isomorphic, structurally enclosed, and hence, within the

³³⁸ Henry, *Incarnation*, 219.

³³⁹ Henry, *Incarnation*, 218.

³⁴⁰ Where he describes the flesh and body paradox, see Henry, *Incarnation*, 282-83 for example.

selfsame absolute auto-affection. To feel myself in radical immediacy without reference to anything outside myself is therefore not to exclude Christ's flesh: "In my flesh I am given to myself, but I am not my own flesh. My flesh, my living flesh, is Christ's."³⁴¹ Henry's carnal monism is therefore monistic in that it isolates all of reality within the flesh of Christ, including my flesh.

Henryian *Leib*, as Christ-affection, as a theological flesh, in principle, excludes the temporality of consciousness, ecstatic physical embodiment or spatial movement. Divine Life as embodied in my invisible "flesh" displays a mode of givenness and a form of evidence all its own. It manifests itself in the style of auto-reference, giving itself according to itself as a phenomenon heterogeneous to the luminous display of the exterior "world." The appearance of the Incarnation therefore determines ipseity as a flesh without a body, a theological *Leib* without a *Körper*.

§22. *PAROLES DU CHRIST: THE LANGUAGE OF LIFE*

We have seen that Henry radicalizes Husserl's *Leib* so that the interior *Leib* (subjective body) is distinct from and purified of the exterior *Körper* (objective body) (§20). *Leib* is subsequently framed by Henry within a theological context so that my *Leib* and the "Word made flesh" are co-incarnated. My *Leib* is the venue of divine life and my *Körper* the exterior site incapable of accommodating the disclosure of divine life—rendering it a duplicitous body split between two irreconcilable fields of display (§21). Christ's Incarnation so understood here conforms to Henry's theological monism in which God's self-revelation in the flesh

³⁴¹ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 116.

is acosmic and without world, a peculiar monism we described as a “carnal monism.” We now turn to his last work, *Paroles du Christ* (2002),³⁴² a text which designates the “Word of God” as a mode of divine self-communication that incarnates itself within human flesh.

The over-arching theme of *Paroles du Christ* is that the divine word manifest in Christ speaks as a universal word inside us thereby bringing to light the voice of God as an audible voice. Yet this voice we hear is of an entirely different language. As a divine language, the “language of life” is incarnate prior to the words we speak in the world. Accomplished as a concrete donation, I cannot but help hear the voice of God within me, and yet it is a word that refuses to be heard in the visible display of the world (i.e., by empirical ears). The language of life therefore stands in opposition to the language of the world. In this section we establish that, while Henry’s theory of language accounts for both fields of display, it, too, is susceptible to a “carnal monism” that captures the central misgiving of the duplicitous body.

Henry unearths the language of life within the New Testament scriptures, and *Paroles du Christ* cites the gospels in abundance, especially the sayings of Christ himself (*ipsissima verba*) recorded both in the gospel of John and the synoptics. Characterized by Jean Greisch as a philosophical *lectio divina*,³⁴³ Henry’s final work resembles more of a meditation on the New Testament than a philosophical treatise. So, rather than attending to implicit semiotic tropes or rhetorical devices embedded in the New Testament, Henry seeks to read these documents as a transcendental

³⁴² For a brief, but helpful, chapter by chapter summary of *Paroles du Christ*, see P. Piret, S.J., “Michel Henry: *Paroles du Christ* à propos d’un ouvrage récent,” *Nouvelle revue théologique* 125 (2003): 115-21.

³⁴³ Jean Greisch, “*Paroles du Christ*: un testament philosophique,” in *Phénoménologie et christianisme chez Michel Henry: Les derniers écrits de Michel Henry en débat*, ed. Philippe Capelle (Paris: Cerf, 2004), 194.

Word or as a set of texts which communicate the unshakeable and immediate presence of divine revelation, as it is lived in its concrete intensity. Refraining, too, from the historical-critical method and the self-referential narrative and symbolic character of the New Testament documents, he appeals to the unique capacity of the phenomenological-transcendental method to proceed straight “to the things themselves,” as they are given to “me” *in propria persona*, i.e., with no distance between the genitive and dative or no difference between the word and its referent (Husserl of course does not mean *in propria persona* in this way). Henry indeed states that the phenomenology of invisible display removes the need for literary-critical or hermeneutical, reflective methods altogether. Especially grounded in the Johannine voice of theological discourse in which, “there are no metaphors,” Henry’s transcendental approach purifies the text of historical and linguistic distinctions, lest phenomenology should “give way to hermeneutics and commentaries, or rather, to endless hypotheses.”³⁴⁴ Critical of the literary-critical, hermeneutical and narrative methods that preoccupy so much contemporary philosophy and theology,³⁴⁵ Henry nevertheless proposes an approach (a hermeneutic?) that opens up access to the concrete word of life.

The language of life is laid bare in its stark essence by a carefully articulated phenomenology of the invisible that reads off the scripture as sacred word, “which turns away from itself and indicates the site where another word speaks. It is only the Word of Life in me.”³⁴⁶ Unique in content and style, Henry’s theory of language therefore privileges the interior sphere of the living present which effectively grows

³⁴⁴ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 225.

³⁴⁵ These are types of exegesis he polemically characterizes as pseudo-historical, positivistic and atheistic. See, Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 11.

³⁴⁶ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 230-31.

out of his phenomenology of *Leib* in its Christological disclosure (and once again confirms the radicality of his theory of the duplicitous body).

The “Word made flesh” of the prologue of John appears as an actual word, a divine speech disclosive of its own language entirely at odds with the language of the world. In Henry’s estimation, Christ’s word calls me so that I hear it speak in me without distance between my experience of the word and the call of the word itself. Hearing the voice of Christ is regulated not by my empirical ears, in other words, but by Christ’s auto-revelation inside my living present. I am enabled to hear the word of God because I am incarnated by that very word. The word of God is “inscribed in my non-temporal birth, in this venue each is a revelation to itself in the auto-revelation of life. That which is born of life hears the Word of life.”³⁴⁷ Since I am born of God, my original condition lies in my status as a Son of God.

The structure of language, recast here in view of the duplicitous body, is redefined altogether. Because of the ego’s denomination as a son of God, the ego expresses itself in two languages: on the one hand, the “language of the world” contaminated by imagination, reflective display and temporal flux that interposes a gap between the sign and the signified (*Körper*), and, on the other, the “language of life” carried along in its concrete immediacy by the interior auto-donation of absolute divine life (*Leib*). As Jean-Nicolas Revas reminds us, Henry’s “material phenomenology is not first another phenomenology of language, but rather a phenomenology of another language.”³⁴⁸ And it is that “other language” to which we now turn.

³⁴⁷ Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 129.

³⁴⁸ Jean-Nicolas Revas, “Langage du Monde, Langage de la vie: La Duplicité de l’apparaître et la question du langage dans la phénoménologie matérielle de Michel Henry” in *Le langage et ses phénomènes*, eds. Yves Mayzaud et Gregoir Jean (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2007), 131. Henry puts the

In an illuminating essay, “Material Phenomenology and Language,” Henry maintains that we can best glimpse the structure of the “language of the world” by pitting against the structure of language in Heidegger’s work *On the Way to Language*. Spoken at a distance, the empirical language by which I communicate outside myself through physical phonemes functions to throw me outside myself by alienating me from the referent the phoneme signifies. Ordered by the field of visible display and its temporal distanciation of genitive and dative poles of appearing (appearings *of* words *to* others), the language of the world as Heidegger understands it is such that it opens the world itself, endowing the perceiving subject with the capacity to put his ego at distance from the world and illuminate the “outside” of the world itself. Correlatively, Heidegger writes, “the essential being of language is Saying as Showing;”³⁴⁹ or to “‘Say’ means to show, to let appear, to let be seen and heard.”³⁵⁰ Heidegger thereby links language to the opening of the world itself: “To say means to show, to make appear, the lighting-concealing-releasing offer of world.”³⁵¹ And further acknowledging the primal power of language to cast the ego into the exterior field of visible display, Heidegger writes that, “the word ... is no longer just a name-giving grasp reaching for what is present and already portrayed, it is not only a means of portraying what lies before us. On the contrary, the word first

difference between the language of life and the language of the world starkly in the following statement: “There exists another Word besides that which, composed of linguistic terms, forms the substance of the Scriptures. This other Word differs by nature from all human words; it includes neither linguistic terms nor significations, neither signifier nor signified; it does not have a reference; it does not come from a speaker properly speaking; and it is not addressed to some interlocutor, to anyone, whoever he might be, who would exist before it—before it has spoken. It is this other word that tells us that the word delivered in the Scriptures is of divine provenance And it is this other Word, telling us that the evangelic word is of divine origin, that alone is the Word of God.” See Henry, “Speech and Religion: The Word of God” in *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”*: *The French Debate*, ed., Dominique Janicaud, trans., Jeffrey Kosky. New York: Fordham University Press, 2000, 217-42, reference on 218-19.

³⁴⁹ Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971), 123.

³⁵⁰ Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 122.

³⁵¹ Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 107.

bestows presence, that is, Being in which things appear as beings.”³⁵² It is well-known that Heidegger ennobled language as the “house of Being”³⁵³ as that mechanism through which the world flashes forth in its luminous presence.

It is no surprise that Henry critiques Heidegger for portraying language as that speech act which supposes a distance between the sign and referent. Thus “it seems to us,” writes Henry, “that such a difference is posited only when the originary truth is understood as the ‘outside of itself’ of the world.”³⁵⁴ The disastrous effect of distance, with particular reference to the structure of language, lies in the fact that it leads to a hermeneutical “play,” or language’s original incapacity to communicate with absolute certainty that of which it speaks. Henry maintains that language of the world can, and often does, qualify the same reality with opposing signs rendering the language of the world ambiguous, deceitful, and even frequently counterfeit. Do not all of us speak out of both sides of our mouth? Henry notes that the impotence of language is captured best in the expression that states we use the tongue deceitfully, for “with it we bless the Lord and the Father and with it we curse men who are made in the image of God. From the same mouth come blessings and curses” (James 3, 9-10). For Henry, the impotence of the language of the world is that it *cannot* discriminate between the “play” of two words which are able to count for the same reality. It is possible that one can at the same time bless and curse that which is the same (i.e., God) because language cannot penetrate and predicate absolutely the reality of which it speaks. Cast in the flow of temporal distancing, the language of the world names that which recedes from its presence, and in doing so, opens up a

³⁵² Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 146.

³⁵³ Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 21-22.

³⁵⁴ Henry, “Material Phenomenology and Language,” 348.

field of distance between sign and reference (*différance?*).³⁵⁵ This distance puts into action the hermeneutic “play” of the language of the world,³⁵⁶ which in turn, prohibits the word from securing absolutely the meaning of its referent.³⁵⁷

In contrast, then, the language of life Henry advances bursts forth in the secret of the human heart, in an interior word of pure presence (no distancing, no gap between the genitive and dative of appearing). By way of an interior divine self-revelation, the Incarnation of the word and its referent coincide inside me, with no difference. Such an overlap enables the Word of life to speak immediately and without distance between its call and that which it is calling—thus securing its meaning with absolute certainty. Henry writes of the peculiar power of the language of life: “The other call, the call of life, lies beyond any call, for it does not put forth the proposition of whether to live or not live. Rather life already throws us into life itself, crushing us against it and ourselves, in the suffering and enjoyment of this invincible pathos. The call has already been living in us the moment we hear it, its listening is nothing other than the noise of life, or its rustling in us, the embrace in which it gives itself to itself and give us to ourselves in the self-same donation.”³⁵⁸ Truly concrete inasmuch as it is immediately lived and experienced, the language of life is nothing other than the Word of Life or the “Word made flesh” incarnating its divine speech within me (with no distance between sign and reference and thus no

³⁵⁵ One may wonder why Henry does not set up Derrida, rather than Heidegger, as the target of critique with respect to language. Certainly Derrida’s neologism *différance* most resembles what Henry means to critique. Henry was certainly aware of Derrida’s work and does mention in passing this key neologism, however, Henry never confronts directly how Derrida’s theory of language/writing may threaten his theory of language as pure presence. For Henry’s brief reference to Derrida, see Henry, *Incarnation*, 75.

³⁵⁶ See Paul Ricoeur’s essay on distancing for a classic defence of how distance is necessary for hermeneutic play at all. Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutical Function of Distancing,” *Philosophy Today* 17 no.2 (1973): 129-41.

³⁵⁷ Henry, “Material Phenomenology and Language,” 349-50.

³⁵⁸ Henry, “Quatre Principe de la phénoménologie,” 25.

hermeneutic “play”). Yet Henry’s re-ordering of language implies the re-ordering of the human condition itself.

Set into operation by divine Incarnation in Christ as he is generated within absolute divine life, human nature’s original condition is divine, for Henry writes, “the appellation of the Son of God awarded to us by the gospels is not a metaphor, rather it is our real condition.... It is an original condition that has been denatured, forgotten but never abolished.”³⁵⁹ In *Paroles du Christ*, Henry delineates the unique genealogy of divine life in which all of us participate. Substituting a divine genealogy for a natural genealogy, he advances the thesis that it is “natural” for me to hear the word of God within me precisely because my genealogy is divine and not worldly or biological. Henry insists that even though we have a biological mother, father and siblings, our real genealogy leads back to a divine origin, to the living present in which I am born. My life “is accomplished in the substitution of the divine genealogy of humanity for its natural genealogy. Such is the content of the words of Christ inasmuch as it indicates to humanity the reality of their true condition.”³⁶⁰ Christ’s word is lived within me, heard as a silent call only because it is lived in the depths of my heart, on the basis of my identity as a Son of God, my true condition. The language of life speaks a more original word, one prior to the speech-acts of the language of the world and the hermeneutical play they presuppose.

Henry contends, furthermore, that the arch-intelligibility of divine life manifest in the “Word made flesh” is the decisive theme of the prologue to the gospel of John. Understanding the famous prologue as the locus of the language of life in which the *Logos* is the revelation of God to humanity, Henry maintains that

³⁵⁹ Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 46.

³⁶⁰ Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 58.

the Word of God is a distinct language accomplished by way of its unique action. There is no difference between sign and signified, and hence, no difference between word and action either. For the Word of God accomplishes that which it speaks, incarnating itself without delay, showing itself immediately in its truth as the absolute auto-donation of life unaware of the difference presupposed by the language of the world.³⁶¹ Henry will couch this truth often in Johannine terms: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1. 1, 4).³⁶² It is human nature to hear the word of Christ because in him is the life constitutive of our life. On this ground Henry concludes that “hearing the word is thus co-substantial with human nature.”³⁶³ Henry writes, moreover, that, “there is no longer an abyss separating the word of Christ and the word which speaks in us. They are one and the same life. It is this by way of this native predestination that each of us can hear this Word. We see this in the founding text of St. Paul in Romans 8.29 whereby he says we are ‘called.’ Called by a word...”³⁶⁴ I hear both myself and the Word as I suffer myself and I am revealed to myself as I experience myself, an accomplishment of the auto-revelation of absolute life in its Word, in its irresistible “call” to live.

Henry grounds the capacity to hear the voice of God in our identity as Sons of God. He writes that the scriptures “say that we are Sons, that we have been given to ourselves, in this Self that we are forever, in the process through which absolute life is given to itself in its Word. They say the truth of what the meanings foreign to reality would not be able to establish. *But there in what they say is what we are.* Thus

³⁶¹ Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 135.

³⁶² Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 94.

³⁶³ Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 146.

³⁶⁴ Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 130.

we hear it, so to speak, twice and we can understand it. We hear the speech of the Scriptures inasmuch as what the words which institutes us in Life self-hears itself in us.”³⁶⁵ There is, simply put, no hermeneutical space in Henry’s theory of language, for the word of life supplies its own language, self-verifying and self-interpreting—for the Word of God hears itself through us!

We return to Henry’s claim that the reality of Christ is an incarnate reality which splits the body into a duplicitous body. It is crucial to note here that hearing the voice of God inside reflects an achievement of the subjective body alone, the theological *Leib*. The ego hears it within its self-presencing self-affection prior to the reflective temporal display of consciousness or the exterior tactility of the objective body. The language of life communicates itself secretly to the heart, for it is there in the mystical presence of the *Leib* that, Henry observes, the eye by which I see myself and the eye by which God sees the secrets of my heart are the selfsame eye.³⁶⁶

Hearing the voice of God, however, is not tantamount to a divine epiphany like we see in Mary and the angel, Moses and the burning bush or Abraham and the hand of God. Christina Gschwandtner mistakes Henry’s insistence that we can hear the voice of God as a claim that we can undergo a mystical vision or intense feeling of ecstasy confirmed by a distinctive, yet audible voice. The word of God I hear as co-emergent with my birth as a Son of God is not, as Gschwandtner argues, an experience of interior feelings or inner sensations, like heart palpitations or the feeling of warmth.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ Henry, “Material Phenomenology and Language,” 361.

³⁶⁶ Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 130.

³⁶⁷ Christina Gschwandtner, “Can We Hear the Voice of God? Michel Henry and the *Words of Christ*,” in *Words of Life: New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology*, 147-57.

Gschwandtner rightly notes that an excess of affective satisfaction not only can lead to haughty eyes, placing one squarely in the jaws of (self)deception and (self)deceit. Appearances that appear in the luminosity of the world can be deceiving. Perhaps it is an idol that one feels, and she writes, for “emotions maybe more than anything require interpretation.”³⁶⁸ Perhaps the fascination tied to an experience of a *mysterium tremendum* is due to the subterfuge of Satan or to my own erratic psychological state and not to an authentic encounter with God like Job or Isaiah had or like Paul had on the road to Damascus. The vague, unreliable character of sensible emotions requires the application of “hermeneutics of suspicion” with respect to the nature of the religious experience. It seems to us that Gschwandtner is counselling the Christian beholden to Henry’s emphasis on affection to test the spirits, to practice spiritual discernment, to separate the wheat from the chaff. Yet Henry does not propose that interior life is subject to hermeneutics at all because the purity of the *Leib*, where the Word incarnate speaks, is distinct from my *Körper*. The type of mystical experience of which Gschwandtner speaks is sensible, bodily and thus complicit with the field of visible display, the *Körper*.

The radicality of Henry’s thinking is thrown into sharp relief here. It is because he designates the field of invisible display as isomorphic with the Word of God that hearing that primal locution is not a sensible, audible word. As a primal domain of invisible disclosure, the language of life is not subject to hermeneutics precisely because hermeneutics can only interpret that which becomes visible, luminous and thus subject to the play of the language of the world. Unable to appear in the world and thus unable to be verified by the language of the world, Henry

³⁶⁸ Gschwandtner, “Can We Hear the Voice of God?” 155.

writes of the primal appearing of the “Word made flesh” up against the appearing of the world: “Unfortunately, there is no possible evidence of transcendental subjectivity because in the divergence of an Outside, in the language of the world, all life vanishes. Material phenomenology comes *après coup*, after the fact, to meditate on life.”³⁶⁹ In other words, the language of life is a reality all its own that defies all visible display.

Henry’s conception of the “language of life” therefore avoids the danger of domesticating God within consciousness, a danger Gschwandtner mistakenly attributes to him. Henry does not conceive of God as if God were a numinous object of my intentional aim or the direct cause of sensible, exterior ecstasies (like a flutter of the heart or a creaturely feeling).³⁷⁰ Hearing the voice of God in Henry’s theory of the language plays by the rule of invisible display where the appearing of divine speech is co-emergent with the immediate feeling of my own subjectivity apart from the visible field of appearing opened up by the language of the world. Even though auto-affection displays a concrete sphere of feeling, it is radically distinct from the field of “visible” empirical sensation, or physical emotional stimulation/response.³⁷¹ Simply put, the “Word made flesh” appears in the *Leib* to which it gives birth. It is the site of auto-affection, the place of self-suffering of being a self, this unique,

³⁶⁹ Henry, “Material Phenomenology and Language,” 364.

³⁷⁰ In view of Jean-Yves Lacoste’s suspicion that the presence of God indicated by traditional conceptions of religious experience may lead to idolatry, Henry’s theory of auto-affection advances the possibility of concrete, affective experience of the divine that is not vulnerable to being confused with other forms of emotion and or images in the field of visible display thereby avoiding the charges of idolatry associated with those traditional theories. As a sphere all its own, Henry’s domain of auto-affection self-verifies itself by experiencing nothing but itself as it is that sphere in which God appears in fullness. According to Henry, religious experience is manifest interior to myself, and there God generates me by giving me to myself at the same time that I feel myself. In other words, auto-affection is the experiential pole of Christian spirituality which bespeaks a theology from below because it is Incarnational. For more on Lacoste’s brilliant critique of religious experience, See Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*, trans. Mark Raferty-Skehan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

³⁷¹ For more on the structural difference between sensation and affection (i.e., hetero-affection and auto-affection), see Henry, *Essence of Manifestation*, §§ 54-56.

singular self from which I cannot escape nor experience as “out there.” An interior, invisible mode of manifestation, auto-affective feeling, incarnated as the language of life, is concrete precisely because it is the most intimate experience I can have of myself as this “me.” Because my appearing in the world, according to Henry, throws me outside myself by alienating me from myself in this difference, we can conclude sensible affections, given their visible, bodily character, are not identical with the language of life. The phenomenon of the inner word whereby I hear the voice of God inside me, for Henry, is a structural soliloquy, that is, purely self-present. It appears in the invisible field of display prior to visible modalities of display such as intentional reflection, being-in-the-world or sensible affections or visions of any sort. This duplicitous body split between two languages is confirmed by recourse to Henry’s radical reduction, to which now turn.

§23. BRACKETING THE AUTONOMOUS “I-CAN”: ACCESSING MY FLESH

Is it not obvious that when I lift a weight that I am, in fact, the one lifting the weight? Is it not also obvious that when I seize an object or reel in a fish that it is not my own strength doing the seizing and reeling, and that I am usually pre-reflectively self-aware of those bodily actions without necessarily reflecting on them as my own? When I spontaneously reach for the cigar on the table “without any further ado” (as Husserl is wont to say), is it not self-evident that I am the one who freely moves to take hold of it despite the fact that this movement recedes from thematic display and initially eludes representational consciousness? Husserl’s theory of the “I-Can” describes these bodily scenarios as practical possibilities (*Möglichkeiten*) or actions/movements and thus as original willings of my subjective lived-body (*Leib*)

in functional tandem with my exterior, physical body (*Körper*). In this section we interrogate the way in which Henry at once adopts and modifies (modifies via the blow of the radical reduction) Husserl's phenomenological description of the bodily aspects of the "I-Can."

This section, moreover, completes what we have argued thus far both in chapter three and in this chapter. We have seen in the preceding section that Henry's theory of language leads to a pure presencing of the divine Word inside my self-presencing, pitting the peculiar incarnation of the invisible language of life against the language of the world (§22). We have also seen that because my (theological) flesh is born from the selfsame flesh of divine Incarnation, i.e., the First-Son Christ, my flesh is not my own but born of Christ's. I am therefore joined to myself, not through myself as I am displayed in the world, but through Christ's acosmic incarnation (§21). Both of these points portray Henry's conception of flesh/language in its pure self-impressional ipseity, an interior mode of invisible display without reference to the "outside" of the language of the world or the temporal streaming of the exterior *Körper*. In light of this observation we have concluded that Henry's descriptions of both flesh and language accommodate a duplicitous body that gives way to a carnal monism. In this section we extend this thesis by highlighting how Henry disqualifies the ego's practical bodily achievements in the field of visible display. In particular, Henry highlights that the radical reduction disqualifies the autonomous, visible "I-Can" in order to open up access to the invisible, interior site of flesh. It is here that we consider what means of access to that interior sphere Henry proposes his readers deploy and thus how it is that, as a body in the world, I

can actually experience my original living present born in and through the “coming of Life into itself in the Self of the Arch-Son.”³⁷²

Henry takes his point of departure from Husserl’s rich descriptions in *Ideas II* of the *Leibkörper’s* “I-Can.” Husserl thematizes the I-Can in order to make intelligible how the body puts into action its own practical movement *in the world* and realizes its possibilities there. To render intelligible the body’s practical capacities, Husserl isolates a basic subjective unity that ties together that primal capacity, the “ego’s unity as a system” or the “I-Can” (*Ich Kann*).³⁷³ A unique faculty which gathers together my bodily experiences into a rule-governed, though spontaneously lived pattern, the I-Can is continually realized “not as an empty ability but [as] a positive potentiality, which may now happen to be actualized but which is always in readiness to pass into activity.”³⁷⁴ While this unified system to which Husserl refers is a practical, spontaneously lived system played out in the ego’s wakeful stream of consciousness, it is also highly regulated by exterior stimuli. In other words, the ego is free to choose, often spontaneously, to go for a walk, to reach for the TV remote, to eat everyday at noon, to speak loudly or softly, etc., but it is only so as it develops tendencies or habits over time in connection to its surrounding cultural/temporal milieu.

Certainly Husserl claims that the embodied ego is an expression of the I-Can because the I-Can is most fundamentally the seat of free movement in possession of its liberties/capacities to move and act (*Der Leib als Träger freier Bewegung*).³⁷⁵ And certainly the “I-Can” therefore represents for Husserl a distinctive feature that

³⁷² Henry, *I am the Truth*, 138.

³⁷³ Husserl, *Ideas II*, 266.

³⁷⁴ Husserl, *Ideas II*, 267.

³⁷⁵ Husserl, *Ideen II*, band IV, 151.

sets the *Leibkörper* apart from all other material things. But, the I-Can is also a product of its surroundings. Thus the body as organ, as an agent of touching, is always aware of itself in its awareness of the world, the touched. The body on visible display together with its stratum of localized sensations is an organ of the will, and is thus moveable immediately and spontaneously by the ego, by the *Ich Kann*, with the full range of its *Leibkörper* at its disposal, but it is so only up against the backdrop of the world.³⁷⁶

Because it is actualized up against the backdrop of the world, the I-Can is spontaneous only by virtue of a particular habit of doing. Habit indicates a mode of regular living or what Husserl calls a typical character (*typischen Charakter*).³⁷⁷ The I-Can functions not *in abstracto* but is pronounced in multiple corporeal experiences played out in the field of everyday life. Formative of the ego's moral and aesthetic character, the I-Can moves pre-reflectively according to this typicality, so that "one can to a certain extent expect how a man will behave in a given case if one has correctly apperceived him in his person, in his style."³⁷⁸ Built up over a lifetime, the ego's I-Can singularizes itself, takes positions, engages and influences, as well as comes under the influence of, other egos, and most of all, learns a specific disposition shaped and acquired by those confrontations in the world. Such habits accrue as the ego develops a character of style, and one day, without further ado, it engages in (for example) "the habit of drinking a glass of wine in the evening."³⁷⁹ Husserl names this kind of bodily comportment deployed by the power of the I-Can a "position-taking" act, a bodily act that is distinct from the mode of intentionality by

³⁷⁶ Husserl, *Ideas II*, §38.

³⁷⁷ Husserl, *Ideen II*, band IV, 271.

³⁷⁸ Husserl, *Ideas II*, 283.

³⁷⁹ Husserl, *Ideas II*, 289.

which we become conscious of objects: “Therefore we distinguish between consciousness of objects and position-taking, comportment toward the objects.”³⁸⁰ The result of this distinction is that the I-Can is set against a complex nexus of backgrounds (upon backgrounds) that forms the ego’s habits, which in turn, regulate its spontaneous and free I-Can. So while I may reflect, with focused attention on a particular object, I also freely comport myself to the world by way of a process of “position-taking” as my subjective *Leib* coordinates the movement of the *Körper* in the context of cultural and kinaesthetic rules learned over time.

The I-Can, furthermore, provides its own point of unity, its own *terminus quo* in that its self-moving autonomy is focused upon the ego’s primal capacity as an I-Can. As a system that develops over time, Husserl articulates a bodily self grounded in the ego’s power to accumulate experiences that shape its bodily disposition into an identifiable “style,” so that I know “the nexus of lived experiences of a person is not a mere bundle of lived experiences or a mere ‘stream’ of consciousness in which the lived experiences flow away. Instead, every lived experience is a lived experience of an Ego, of an Ego that does not itself flow away in a stream as its lived experiences do.”³⁸¹ The ego, as I-Can, is the “centre of a surrounding world,”³⁸² and relates to its world by the variations of acting, moving, evaluating, grasping, striving; in the process relating to the world through various embodied acts, the world becomes “on hand” for the ego-as-focal-point.

³⁸⁰ Husserl, *Ideas II*, 291. More an excellent elaboration of what Husserl means by “position-taking” acts, see James G. Hart, *The Person and the Common Life*, chapter 2, “The Adventure of Being a Person.”

³⁸¹ Husserl, *Ideas II*, 290.

³⁸² For more on the ego as the centre of the surrounding world whereby the world is an objective entity relative to the constituting transcendental ego, see Husserl, *Ideas II*, §50, “The person as centre of a surrounding world.”

Following upon these analyses in Husserl's *Ideas II*, Henry indeed identifies the subjective body, i.e., flesh, as co-original with the I-Can. The I-Can so understood by Henry discloses an original power through which the ego as "myself" emerges. It is a primitive entering into possession of my ispeity, and thus, for Henry, "'I' means 'I Can.' The proposition 'I Can' does not bring any particular property to the essence of 'I' but simply defines it."³⁸³ What precisely defines one's flesh is the fact of being in possession of such powers and having them at one's disposal. Henry describes and elucidates the original primal self-presence of the I-Can in terms of "affection," "feeling," "suffering," "undergoing"—a semantic range similar to Husserl's deployment of the term "will" or practical possibilities.

Thus far Henry and Husserl are in concord about the nature of the I-Can. Yet, in Henry's schematic, there is no distance between the pain and the experience of it, no distance between the primal feeling/sensing and the felt/sensed. James G. Hart describes Henry's portrayal of how the ego and the powers it can exercise coincide within my living present, thus becoming the point at which Henry and Husserl diverge: "The theme of affection and self-affectings is perhaps dramatically emphasized when Henry insists on self-affecting as flesh. Feeling, touching, etc., is always a feeling oneself feeling, always a fleeing of this capacity, the I-can"³⁸⁴ What Hart brings out here is that Henry's conception of the I-Can is "dramatically emphasized" insofar as it combines the ego's self-affecting as a practical self-referencing point without the world, without the habit or "style" to which Husserl refers nor to the autonomy which Husserl valorises as central to the I-Can (the ego is its own *terminus quo*).

³⁸³ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 136.

³⁸⁴ James G. Hart, "Michel Henry's Phenomenological Theology of Life: A Husserlian Reading of *C'est le moi, la vérité*," *Husserl Studies* 15 (1999): 183-230, reference on 186.

Consequently, Henry disqualifies Husserl's autonomous, stylized I-Can. Henry does so because his understanding of the I-Can is that the I-Can is not learned over time (i.e., style or character) nor is it autonomous. Rather Henry understands the I-Can as entirely submissive, derived and at the disposal of divine life.³⁸⁵ James G. Hart, again, describes it aptly: "But I, as the I of capacities, the I of "I can," and eventually the I of acts and responsibilities, have not brought myself into this condition of experiencing or undergoing myself. I witness or suffer pre-reflectively myself's ongoing emergent self-manifestation through self-affectations without being the source of this manifestation. I am given to myself without this donation depending on me in any way. Thus my self-affecting is only through the absolute Life effecting a self-affecting in me."³⁸⁶ Henry's phenomenological study of the body is an unequivocal condemnation of the self-positing Husserlian ego manifest in its self-luminosity of the I-Can's capacity to dictate the movements of the *Leibkörper*. While Henry appropriates the primal capacity of the I-Can to put into play ipseity, he also calls into question the way Husserl grounds the ego in itself, in its autonomy as an I-Can, which is both the centre, and the product, of its surrounding world. This is exactly why Henry shall write that, "the effectiveness of

³⁸⁵ Once again, there is a scriptural logic driving Henry's work, especially inflected in a Johannine voice. For example that the I-Can is describes in the gospel of John: "This is what is said in an abrupt way in New Testament texts, and specifically by Christ himself, the First Self of whom we have just spoken: "apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15.5). The blinding significance here is that possibility of any conceivable power is presented not as residing in a greater power, an infinite power like that of an all-powerful Being. This totally leaves out the decisive intuition of Christianity, which John starkly reaffirms. The source of all power consists in the Self of the Arch-Son, that is, the original Ipseity of absolute life. It is only the coming into itself of any power whatsoever that allows this power to unit with the self and to act—a coming itself that is the coming of the me into itself, that is, the coming of Life into itself in the Self of the Arch-Son." Henry, *I am the Truth*, 137.

³⁸⁶ Hart, "Michel Henry's Phenomenological Theology of Life," 206.

this I-can/I-am overrides the fact that this living I can, this living I am, has come about only thanks to the endless work of Life in it.”³⁸⁷

In order to overcome the obstacle to achieving the living present posed by the Husserlian I-Can, Henry expands the meaning of the I-Can to signify a duplicity of functions, one illusory and one real. In §35 of *Incarnation: une philosophie de la chair*, Henry outlines this ambiguity latent in the I-Can and its bodily acts and practical movements. He maintains that the primitive duality of the I-Can can lead us to think that Husserl’s I-Can is the only modality able to describe and comprehend the subjective “will” at the base of our bodily presencings in the world-horizon. Yet, Henry insists, it is precisely the “illusory” operation of Husserl’s I-Can that always lurks just around the corner of every bodily act, thereby rendering me captive to my world-engagements and habits. In fact, Husserl’s I-Can, if not modified, shall give way to a “transcendental illusion” inasmuch as it conceals the ongoing givenness of the I-Can within the auto-donation of divine life. The Husserlian I-Can frequently disengages us from divine life by delusion or casuistry, argues Henry. The Husserlian I-Can, because it is accrued over time in the luminosity of the world, puts into play a deception that may dupe the ego into thinking that it (and it alone) is the source and foundation of its bodily powers and capacities realized in the world. The “real” (i.e., not illusory) I-Can Henry proposes is a pure I-Can of Christ, the I-Can as a practical possibility co-substantial with absolute Life’s achievements. A lengthy description of this union elucidates the dual character of the I-Can:

The liberty [of the I-Can] is the feeling of the power of the Self to put itself to work through each of its powers that belong to its flesh. Now this original power which inhabits and renders possible all concrete

³⁸⁷ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 141.

power is not adventitious, an ideal separation of the Self from itself: it is the way in which the Self arrives in its own flesh, it is generated in this venue at same time it arrives here, it and this Self are consubstantial. An “I can” consubstantial with this carnal and living Self, installed in its own power, free to deploy itself—also incontestable in its power and it is liberty to which this Self and this particular flesh belong. ‘If you knew the gift of God’ (John 4.10): the donation of Life each living self is a donation of its Self, of its flesh and its power. It is not a pseudo-donation, an illusory power.³⁸⁸

Henry is claiming, in no uncertain terms, that the ego’s I-Can and the self-revelation of divine life in the ego’s flesh are consubstantial. Divine life as it effects my I-Can is absolutely real and concrete in its donation (not a pseudo-donation). My I-Can is derived, given to me and thus generated within the absolute power of divine life’s auto-Incarnation through the First-Living Son (i.e., Christ).

Yet I often forget, insists Henry, that my I-Can and the liberty, autonomy, movement, capacity, singularity, and practical power which attends the I-Can is given to me in the immanence of absolute Life. Anthony Steinbock has observed how important the doctrine of “forgetting” is to Henry’s proposal of a duplicitous body. Steinbock observes that it is the pervasive pull of the Husserlian I-Can and its idolatrous end to which it leads (I-Can as autonomous and worldly) that causes Henry to render problematic the Husserlian I-Can in the first place. Henry argues, to be sure, that the Husserlian I-Can is so problematic that it causes the I-Can to “forget” its origin in divine life, leading the I-Can to attribute its powers to itself, as if it were autonomous. To overcome this forgetting, the ego must remember that its I-Can is an accomplishment of divine life. To remember that the reality of the I-Can lies in its consubstantiality with divine life is not to move the I-Can into a novel state,

³⁸⁸ Henry, *Incarnation*, 263.

but to remember its original state and to recognize what has always been the truth about the source of its powers. How does this remembering come about?

To submit the Husserlian I-Can to the blow of the radical reduction is to remember that divine life is the place in which I am born as myself and thus to reverse the idolatry of substituting my I-Can for God. What is interesting about Henry's design to disqualify the autonomous I-Can is that it amounts to nothing more than a direct reversal of it. In other words, Henry proposes that we forget the autonomous I-Can as a concrete means of remembering that the I-Can is actually a product of my being a Son of God. Forgetting the autonomous I-Can reflects a concrete and practical spiritual practice. As Steinbock notes, once again, through this forgetting of the Husserlian I-Can, "one forgets oneself, loses one's self as mundane human being and through this forgetfulness gains myself as the Son of God in the Son."³⁸⁹ But *how* does one forget the autonomous, Husserlian I-Can in pursuit of the authentic disclosure of invisible life within?

Henry suggests that it is only by practicing (praxis) an ascetic lifestyle that one disqualifies the autonomous, Husserlian I-Can. In particular, the radical reduction is undertaken by doing acts of mercy, engendering peace and repudiating natural or "worldly" relations aroused by rivalry, violence, envy, hate, deception and falsehood. By breaking, absolutely, with these products the autonomous I-Can inevitable yields, Henry brings to light the I-Can's original condition as born in absolute Life's perfect and eternal capacities. "Voilà," writes Henry, "that which stems from these relations lose their power in the paradoxical word of Christ that demands that you love those who do you evil. Only this can break the cycle of

³⁸⁹ Anthony Steinbock, "The Problem of Forgetfulness in Michel Henry," 291.

vengeance and hatred.”³⁹⁰ The cycle of the Husserlian I-Can is therefore broken only by way of doing acts of mercy—of moving away from autonomy and habits accrued in the world toward complete dependence on God.

Stressing that the disqualification of the Husserlian I-Can is necessarily the same as forgetting it, Henry is at the same stressing that acts of mercy are the essence of any I-Can. He writes: “Only the work of mercy practices the forgetting of the self in which, all interest or the Self (right down to the idea of what we call a self or a me), now removed, no obstacle is now pose to the unfurling of life in this Self extended to its original essence.”³⁹¹ So while Henry brackets the autonomous I-Can by disqualifying it (i.e., by forgetting it), he nevertheless *modifies* rather than eradicates Husserl’s I-Can. In other words, the ego possesses its bodily powers/capacities and wields them freely and spontaneously through a primal I-Can. However, the ego must always realize, in Henry’s estimation, its I-Can is a gift, for there “is no ‘I Can’ except in life.”³⁹² The power proper to the I-Can as Henry conceives it materializes within the power of Christ’s life manifest in the acosmic “Word made flesh.” Henry can thus conclude that, “in the works of mercy a decisive transmutation takes place by which the ego’s power is extended to the hyper-power of absolute Life in which it is given to itself.”³⁹³ While Henry shall call this the “Christian ethic”³⁹⁴ it is nonetheless an invisible ethic, an invisible doing whereby God acts through us to bring about the self-revelation of the original I-Can in and through the interior self. Never to appear as an act *of* mercy done *to* another, i.e., the genitive and dative structure, the mercy to which Henry refers is an invisible mercy

³⁹⁰ Henry, *Paroles du Christ*, 72.

³⁹¹ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 170.

³⁹² Henry, *I am the Truth*, 170.

³⁹³ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 169.

³⁹⁴ See chapter 10 of *I am the Truth*, “The Christian Ethic.”

that abides in all acts as their source and power but is such that it can never be manifest in the world.

It is important to emphasize here that the I-Can as Henry elucidates it is not solipsistic. It is inter-subjective, immersed in the original common birth through which all life comes into itself as a living I-Can. While I can never know the other's life by traversing across the visible display of the world (no life in *Körper*), I can co-live with the other ego by virtue of our common power and capacity to live, our common *terminus quo* by which each of us have been endowed with an I-Can (life in *Leib* alone). Jean Leclercq writes of Henry's I-Can as *Leib*, "our flesh is not autonomous, for it is in the arch-passivity of absolute Life that each flesh finds its potentialities, all of its 'phenomenological properties', but also its 'capacities to be joined with the flesh of the other.' It is thus in life that the elaboration of an original communion with the other is possible...."³⁹⁵ Henry's theory of flesh advances a theological variant of the Husserlian I-Can, one which follows upon the radical reduction Henry deployed over against Husserl (§12). Yet this radical reduction or absolute disqualification of Husserl's I-Can simply confirms Henry's tendency to adopt, whether wittingly or not, a carnal monism that privileges interior *Leib* at the expense of the exterior *Körper*. While one can appreciate Henry's return to the interior origin of bodily powers and movement and its subjective "feel," we affirm what James G. Hart has noted about Henry's I-Can—that it cannot render intelligible how the I-Can can come into contact with the It-Can, or the objective, empirical horizon in which the *Körper* activates its bodily powers and potentialities.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵Jean Leclercq, "La provenance de la chair: Le souci henryen de la contingence," in *Michel Henry's Radical Phenomenology*, eds. Jad Hatem and Rolf Kühn (Bucharest: Studia Phaenomenologica, 2009), 310.

³⁹⁶Hart, "Michel Henry's Phenomenological Theology of Life," 188 and 219, fn.12

§24. TOWARD A POROUS BODY

We are now in a position to introduce briefly a proposal that overcomes Henry's carnal monism without taking leave of Henry's return to the interior flesh characteristic of the subjective body. We have argued that Henry's *Leibkörper* accedes to a duplicitous body. Articulated in contrast to Henry's duplicitous body, we propose a modality of embodiment that does not pit the *Leib* against *Körper* in antithetical relation, as if there were an abyss between the interior and exterior spheres of bodily display. Rather, a genuine *Leibkörper*, a genuine unity of the two spheres that respects their difference is in order. The *Leibkörper* that we shall elucidate in chapter six is neither a psycho-somatic unity as in Husserl nor a duplicitous body as in Henry. In contrast to both of these phenomenological bodies, our proposal of a porous body illuminates an interior spiritual body interiorly in relation to the exterior body and thus does justice to the inherent dignity and power of that exterior body as created by God. Hence we describe this porous body as a theological *Leibkörper*. We elaborate this concept in greater detail in chapter six in conversation with both Henry and St. Augustine.

The ambiguity of the porous body lies in the fact that it is not pure. On the one hand, it is not purely self-present to itself. It is not in perfect unity with the "Word made flesh." It cannot claim a secure, invincible self-revelation such that Henry's *Leib* calls for. On the other hand, the porous body is also not purely exterior, a mere objective body-thing present in the visible display of the world. Thus, irreducible to reductive materialism or empiricism, the porous body is not less than motor movements, kinaesthetic configurations and physiological brain synapses, but

is much more. Situated within an eschatological destiny, the porous body is porous to God. In this way we go against both Husserl's reductive materialism and Henry's monism. While Henry will claim the right to say "in the depths of the night my flesh is God," our proposal shall echo St. Augustine in declaring that, in my inner-depths, I am close to, but ultimately distinct from God, and it is only on that final day that my bodily presence shall confront the full glory of the *parousia*.

Part 3:
Toward the Porous Self

Chapter 5:

Between Time and Eternity

The first person who sensed profoundly the enormous difficulties inherent in this analysis, and who struggled with it almost to despair, was Augustine. Even today, anyone occupied with the problem of time must still study...the *Confessions* thoroughly.

–Edmund Husserl³⁹⁷

§25. PHENOMENOLOGY AND AUGUSTINE

With this chapter we embark upon part three, the final part of the thesis that extends and develops in a constructive direction the critical, descriptive work of Michel Henry's phenomenology undertaken in parts one and two.³⁹⁸ Part one highlighted the Husserlian and Heideggerian context out of which Henry's phenomenology of divine life emerges and takes shape. Part 2 introduced Henry's later work on Christianity, tracing out many of the theological themes he takes up in order to elucidate the duplicitous self and duplicitous body. Part 3 now turns toward the constructive component of the project that elicits St. Augustine as a theological resource both to engage key breakthroughs and address conceptual problems in Henry.³⁹⁹ To this end, we propose the figure of the "porous self" as a temporal

³⁹⁷ Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 3.

³⁹⁸ The majority of this chapter is published in the following article: Joseph Rivera, "Figuring the Porous Self: St. Augustine and the Phenomenology of Temporality," *Modern Theology* (forthcoming).

³⁹⁹ As will become obvious in the course of this chapter, the key *breakthrough* Henry advances is that of the interior self that is not reduced to the visible display of the world. The main *conceptual problem* is that this interior self is entirely buffered to the display of the world thereby splitting the

structure that integrates interior and exterior fields of display in an explicit bid to overcome Henry's duplicitous self and the non-temporal monism it engenders. But why use Augustine in particular as a resource to reveal the porous self over against Henry's duplicitous self? We can outline four principal reasons.

Augustine is, first of all, that patristic thinker labelled by some as the genius responsible for bequeathing to the Western intellectual tradition the very idea of an "interior self."⁴⁰⁰ Augustine's articulation of an "interior self" therefore renders him an ideal interlocutor in our critical dialogue with Henry's espousal of radical interiority. A second reason we elect to engage Augustine as a resource up against Henry is that much of Augustine's mature work is occupied with the contours of the interior dimension of the self and its concrete relation to the eternal substance of divine life—a relation to which he attributes passion, desire, affection and a sense of urgency manifest in the deep layers of self-awareness. Reminiscent of Henry's insistence that the invisible disclosure of the self forms an aspect of God's self-presence, Augustine writes that God is not only beyond all things but is mysteriously internal to all things: "This is because by his immutable and surpassing power, not in any local or spatial sense, he is both interior to everything, because *in him are all things* (Rom 11.36), and exterior to every single thing because he is above all things."⁴⁰¹ For both Henry and Augustine, the self is inwardly sustained by divine life, once again establishing that Augustine represents an ideal candidate to use a theological resource in this project.

ego between a real interior life and an irreal copy in the exterior world. While Henry's articulation of interiority is to be appreciated, its conceptual imbalance needs to be addressed.

⁴⁰⁰ Some scholars claim he invented the inner self. For example, see Philip Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002) and Bertand Vergely, *Saint Augustin ou La découverte de l'homme intérieur* (Toulouse: Les essentiels Milan, 2005).

⁴⁰¹ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 8.26.48. We consult the Edmund Hill translation of all three works Augustine wrote on Genesis, which are combined into one book. See Augustine, *On Genesis*, trans., Edmund Hill and Matthew O'Connell (New York: New City Press, 2002).

Third, one can certainly read Augustine as a theologian whose interests are also philosophical, or even, proto-phenomenological. Augustine is perhaps what John Caputo calls a saint who evokes a “passionate phenomenology *avant la lettre* of the temporality of the heart’s restless love of God.”⁴⁰² Devoted to the pastoral and experiential dimension of the believer’s divine calling to sanctification and discipleship, Augustine does not view theology and philosophy as mutually exclusive. Modulated in a Neo-Platonic accent, Augustine’s philosophical theology attends to both the interior and exterior sites of heartfelt faith, a faith in God who is immanent to, but ultimately distinct from, the essence of the temporal experience of creaturhood. Reminiscent of Henry, a characteristic feature of Augustine’s work is that it is both philosophical and theological in tone, and perhaps in the words of Jean-Luc Marion, “l’aporia de Saint Augustin” lies in how one is to approach him.⁴⁰³ As a philosopher? As a theologian? Marion notes that it is highly reductive to split the conceptual tie that joins philosophy and theology in Augustine’s oeuvre.⁴⁰⁴ The apt words of Etienne Gilson underline this aporia: “We are never quite certain whether Augustine is speaking as a theologian or a philosopher.”⁴⁰⁵ Augustine’s work is philosophically and theologically fertile without insisting on breach of their communion, which renders him an ideal interlocutor to dialogue with Henry’s “theo-phenomenology.”

A final reason why we highlight Augustine up against Henry is that Henry deploys insights about the self’s relation to God gleaned from Augustine himself.

⁴⁰² John Caputo, “Introduction: the Postmodern Augustine,” 1-18. In *Augustine and Postmodernism: Confessions and Circumfession*, eds., John Caputo and Michael Scanlon (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 3.

⁴⁰³ Jean-Luca Marion, *Au lieu de soi: L’approche de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008), §1, “L’Aporie de Saint Augustin.”

⁴⁰⁴ Marion, *Au lieu de soi: L’approche de Saint Augustin*, 25-27.

⁴⁰⁵ Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L. E. M. Lynch (London: Victor Gollancz, 1961), 236.

Henry's theory of the self adopts aspects of Augustine's work and thus offers us an entry point into Augustine. We owe our interpretation of Augustine to Henry's peculiar, though problematic, appropriation of him. Henry renders Augustine in a contemporary idiom, inflecting the Bishop's voice through the current debates regarding the "theological turn" in phenomenology. Utilizing, then, the vocabulary of the phenomenological tradition, especially as Henry conceives it, we, too, take Augustine as a conversation partner for pursuing the elemental structures of theological self on pilgrimage.

We are not without precedent in granting Augustine a privileged voice when speaking to the phenomenological aspects of the self. As the only theologian noted in Husserl's *Lectures on the Consciousness of Internal Time*, Husserl also takes Augustine's search for the interior self as paradigmatic for his own mature Cartesian quest for pure consciousness in his now classic text, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* (1929).⁴⁰⁶ It is well-known that Heidegger derived not only his emphatic turn toward existential temporality from Augustine but also key philosophical concepts such as "care" (*Sorge*) "anxiety" (*Angst*) and "mood" (*Befindlichkeit*) from book X in the *Confessions*.⁴⁰⁷ Also, in recent years, not only has Jacques Derrida's confrontation with Augustine in the 1990s been well-documented but also Jean-Louis Chrétien (2002) and Jean-Luc Marion (2008) have

⁴⁰⁶ Husserl writes in the last page of the book: "I must lose the world by epoché, in order to regain it by a universal self-examination. "Noli foras ire," says Augustine, "in te redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas." See Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 157.

⁴⁰⁷ See Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 115 ff. Also see the following secondary sources: *The Influence of Augustine on Heidegger: The Emergence of an Augustinian Phenomenology*, ed., Craig J. De Paulo (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon Press, 2006); *Heidegger et la question de la Dieu*, eds., Richard Kearney and Joseph O'Leary, 2nd edition (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2009).

published monographs on Augustine's thought.⁴⁰⁸ Certainly Augustine is a prominent figure in the phenomenological tradition, and this is doubtlessly due to the thickly textured discussions of the particularities of self-awareness, temporality and desire that saturate his *oeuvre*, and especially, his *Confessions* and *De Trinitate*.

By incorporating Augustinian insights within the contemporary theological turn in phenomenology, we are not overly occupied with the “historical” Augustine or the early Augustine in relation to the mature Augustine. Nor are we concerned with peeling back the layers of the history of Augustine reception in order to discover the “authentic” Augustine (whoever that may be) or to discover what he “really said.” While these remain important scholarly explorations in their own right and perhaps define the task of the historian or historical theologian, we situate Augustine in the borderland between phenomenology and theology. If one desires to work in that contemporary interdisciplinary site between phenomenology and theology, one could do no better than solicit Augustine in this academic pursuit—for the two styles of thinking can be forged into the closest possible unity once converged on his sensitive analyses of the self. And because my entry point into Augustine is Henry, the Augustine we invoke is a phenomenological-theological Augustine elucidates the life of faith lived *toward* God without ever making God a phenomenon present to my interior life (§3).

Our constructive application of Augustine, while not always consistent with the regnant Augustinianisms, testifies to the malleable nature of Augustine's thought and thus the fecundity of his legacy to resist domestication by any one discipline or

⁴⁰⁸ Jacques Derrida, “Circumfession” in *Jacques Derrida*. See also the interviews with Derrida in *Augustine and Postmodernism*. Marion, *Au lieu de soi: L'approche de Saint Augustin* and Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Saint Augustin et les actes de parole* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002).

trend. Eric Gregory judiciously observes, “Augustine’s texts, in all of their unsystematic glory, can be pressed into service by all sorts of projects...part of Augustine’s genius lies in the fact that by reading him we often come to read ourselves and wish for another Augustine.”⁴⁰⁹ Central to Augustine’s enduring popularity and thus, in part, to his interdisciplinary plasticity, is the fact that his work lends itself to a variety of interests which invite a variety of Augustinianisms to take shape.⁴¹⁰

The porous self inspired by Augustine intends to correct an imbalance in Henry. This chapter contends that while Augustine’s doctrine of the *imago Dei*

⁴⁰⁹ Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: an Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 6.

⁴¹⁰ There are currently two camps that dominate the scholarship concerned with the question of the self in Augustine. First, there are those philosophers, theologians and historians who are highly critical of what they perceive to be an Augustinian self that minimizes the world and the physical body in favour of an inward descent into the soul (and into escapism). This camp classifies the Augustinian self as individualistic, non-worldly and ultimately as a key step in the direction toward the fateful though ultimately uncongenial trappings of the modern self: namely, the self-subsisting subjectivism of Cartesianism. Perhaps Charles Taylor’s influential reading of Augustine in his celebrated *Sources of the Self* is emblematic of this type of approach in that he links the Augustinian self to a radically self-reflexive, first-person standpoint. See Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 133. For others who support this camp, see Gareth Matthews, “The Inner Man,” *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 4 no.2 (1967): 166-72; *Thought’s Ego in Augustine and Descartes*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), esp. Chapter 3. Also, Phillip Cary, *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self* (see fn.3 above); See also Robert J. O’Connell, *Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine’s Later Works* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987).

However, there are those who rightly oppose this interpretation of Augustine. These scholars favour an interpretation that attends to the radically exterior and worldly dimensions of the Bishop’s theory of selfhood. To that end, Charles Mathewes proposes a “worldly Augustinianism” (see the title of his article below) and Milbank acknowledges that we may think one might find in Augustine a solipsistic interiority, “yet in truth the reverse is the case... Hence not interiority but radical exteriorization is implied” (465). Jean-Luc Marion suggests that the Augustinian self comes about by way of an original alterity such that I “become myself *by* another...I cannot give me to myself from myself: the given thus reduces to the absolute and irrefutable suffering of the exteriority of the place of selfhood” (384). Yet it is our contention throughout this chapter that perhaps this approach to Augustine, while a helpful corrective, swings to the other extreme, that is, it neglects the sphere of interiority Augustine so privileges. See the following sources: Jean-Luc Marion, *Au lie de soi: l’approche de Saint Augustin*; John Milbank, “Sacred Triads: Augustine and the Indo-European Soul,” *Modern Theology* 13 no.4 (1997): 451-74. Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, chapters 2-3; Mathewes, “A Worldly Augustinianism: Augustine’s Sacramental Vision of Creation,” *Augustinian Studies*, 41 no.1 (2010): 333-48; Susan Menkel, “Augustine’s ‘I’: The Knowing Subject and the Self,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 2 no.3 (1994): 291-324; Lewis Ayres, “The Discipline of Self-knowledge in Augustine’s *De trinitate* Book X,” in *The Passionate Intellect: Essays on the Transformation of Classical Traditions*, ed., Lewis Ayres (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 1995).

presents a variant of an “interior self” it is nevertheless a more balanced structure of selfhood than Henry’s duplicitous self. The porous self accounts for both the interior and exterior fields of display, affirming them both as meaningful realities for human life, a structure that overcomes Henry’s absolute bifurcation of the self into “real” and “irreal” spheres. Our proposal, furthermore, insists that the interior field of display does make God a phenomenon involved in my interior coming-to-be, which necessarily leads to a non-temporal monism of the sort we ascribed to Henry in part two. This chapter affirms Augustine’s basic Creator-creature distinction that follows from his doctrine of the *imago Dei*: “that image of God was not made in any sense equal, being created by him, not born of him; so to make the point he is image in such a way as to be ‘to the image;’ that is, he is not equated in perfect parity with God, but approaches him in a certain similarity.”⁴¹¹ Consistent with its creaturehood, the self is manifest most basically as an *imago Dei* and thereby distinct from the God in whose image it is made.

The gap between God and that which images God is a temporal gap. I therefore seek God without making God a phenomenon, present to myself in a non-temporal union. The gap between God and the *imago Dei* is consistent with the doctrine of creation, which maintains that creatures are created in the temporal horizon of the world, extrinsic to God. Yet, cast into the temporal horizon of the world, the *imago Dei* is not abandoned there, as if alienated from God. Precisely because it is created in the image of God, the *imago Dei* is fractured to its Creator. How else could I image God if I were utterly separate from God? As a *creāta imago Dei*, I am created in the world and yet porous to God who is not of this world. But

⁴¹¹ Augustine, *De trin*, 7, 12.

how is the site of porosity to be located and how is it to be lived? How is porosity of the self practically realized as a form of spirituality without making God a phenomenon, freezing God as present to me inwardly (as in Henry)?

The site of porosity, we argue, is interior in that it appears internal to my “non-reflective self-awareness.” Non-reflective self-awareness appears as an interior “space” wherein I am aware of myself as this “me” while remaining integrated with my reflective capacities realized in the temporal flow of the world-horizon. If Henry splits the self between interior and exterior fields, we highlight the possibility of a unified self with two modes of givenness, one non-reflective and the other reflective. So understood, the porous self is not split between two irreparable fields of display but is structured by a double-entry that holds them together without confusing them: the temporal streaming of the world-horizon in which I realize my possibilities through intentional acts and world-engagements (exterior entry) unified with a non-reflective inner space that is fractured to the eternal presence of God (interior entry).⁴¹² The porosity of display understood in this way maintains that the self’s temporal streaming is fractured, and thus, in and through that fracture, is porous to that which transcends time. It also contends that reflective intentional acts and bodily world-engagements can be deployed theologically to unclog my interior pores to God, engendering a style of spirituality aimed at professing faith in and through the body of Christ in the world-horizon (avoiding escapism and solipsism) while never rendering God a phenomenon present to me. Before the phenomenological and

⁴¹² The porosity to the non-temporal is *not* an “intertwining” or chiasm of the temporal and non-temporal—a metaphor Merleau-Ponty coined in his work, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans., Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), chapter 4. As we shall see, the porosity of display reflects a dynamic “between,” an interval operating amid both the temporal and non-temporal without collapsing them into each other, intertwining them or splitting them absolutely.

theological structure of the porous self is elucidated with the help of Augustine, we confront Henry's problematic reading of Augustine as an entree into Augustine himself.

§26. HENRY'S PROBLEMATIC READING OF AUGUSTINE

The phenomenological tradition has developed a precise grammar with which to articulate the characteristic features of consciousness, perception, worldhood, temporality, etc. Henry has orchestrated an array of phenomenological breakthroughs regarding the interior unity with God in particular, a connection we detailed in chapters three and four; and Henry enlists Augustine as a resource to sharpen and reinforce the theological intelligibility of such a phenomenological site of unity. Henry's principle of the "duplicity of display" thus gives to Augustine's theological reflections on the self a sharp philosophical point of clarity about its structure. Yet it is this unity between the interior self and God couched in terms of the duplicity of display that Henry sees in Augustine that this chapter intends to challenge.

With the principle of the duplicity of display Henry sets into operation a strict division between interior and exterior. We recall, the duplicity of display highlights the two distinct styles of givenness by which phenomena appear: the invisible self-revelation of divine life inside me (auto-affection) and the visible phenomena objectified in the temporal streaming of the world (hetero-affection). As we have seen, for Henry there is no intertwining or combining of the spheres, nor is there an interval between—for a phenomenon cannot maintain a relation to interior and exterior fields without also splitting itself into two irreconcilable fields of display. And further, Henry insists that only the invisible field of auto-affection can

characterize the way in which God's self-revelation in Christ actualizes itself to the explicit exclusion of the exterior structures of visibility. The temporal streaming of the world-horizon (as the exterior sphere) cannot accommodate that which is non-temporal and non-worldly, which by necessity, excludes the phenomenon of God. The principle of the duplicity of display notwithstanding, Henry is not a dualist but rather a monist, a thesis we outlined in part two. Only one mode of appearing contains "divine revelation" in which divine life gives itself, and in the selfsame donation gives "me" to myself, without recourse to anything outside that sphere of givenness. To go out into the world exposes the non-temporal to the temporal—a patent impossibility for Henry.

We also highlighted in part two that, for Henry, my interior life is not foreign to God but of the selfsame eternal essence. Thus access to divine life comes by way of a radical reduction whereby I leave my involvement in the world, consciousness and the physical body in a quest without return to the pure interiority of auto-affection—my concrete "flesh" in which I feel (pathos) myself in immediate relation to divine life without distance or difference. In chapter four, we showed how Henry insists that the essence of the body owes nothing whatsoever to the visible display of the exterior body in the world and its kinaesthetic "I-Can." Henry disqualifies that bodily aspect and opts to reposition the essence of the body within the self's interior self-display, a "flesh" continually born within the eternal "Word made flesh."

This section brings to light Henry's problematic reading of Augustine with respect to the non-temporal monism in which he implicates Augustine (we address the issue of the body in chapter six). Henry devotes a portion of *Incarnation: une a philosophie de la chair* to a phenomenological analysis of Augustine's doctrine of

salvation.⁴¹³ In this section, Henry distributes the self across the two spheres of appearing without at the same time rendering the conditions for the possibility of salvation in both of them. Predictably, Henry argues that salvation is wrought entirely within the interior life of the ego, its non-temporal union with Christ, and it is precisely on this point of unity between the self and God that Henry enlists Augustine's Christology as an exemplar.

To do so he adduces number 108 of Augustine's tractates on the Gospel of John (John 17.14-19) to clarify how Augustine's theory of the self accords with the non-temporal monism Henry advances. In this biblical passage, Christ tells the disciples that he sanctifies himself for them, that he "sanctifies them in truth... and for their sake I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth" (John 17.17 and 17.19). In his commentary on this passage in tractate 108, Augustine draws out a rich mystical connection between Christ and his disciples: "they themselves too are myself, as it benefited me in myself, because I am man apart from them, 'and do I sanctify myself,' that is, I sanctify them in myself as though I am sanctifying myself, because in me they themselves, too, are myself."⁴¹⁴ Again, Augustine strikes a mystical note when he observes that I undergo the event of redemption from sinner to saint through my intimate identification with Christ, for Christ, "sanctifies himself in himself, that is, himself as man in himself as Word, because the one Christ is Word and man, sanctifying the man in the Word."⁴¹⁵ Certainly in consequence of Augustine's reading of John 17, one can understand how Henry appropriates Augustine's unification of Christ's "myself" with the disciple's "myself" as an

⁴¹³ Henry, *Incarnation*, §46.

⁴¹⁴ Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 55-111, trans., John Rettig (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 108.5.2.

⁴¹⁵ Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 108.5.2.

exemplar of the duplicitous self. By rigorously applying the principle of the duplicity of display, Henry interprets Augustine to adopt a radical phenomenological position: that the ego's integrity as a living ego is manifest by virtue of its unity with Christ's pure ego made possible through auto-affection. For Henry, the ego Augustine describes here trades on theological claims made about the disciples sharing immediately in Christ's sanctifying power.⁴¹⁶

Even though Henry's principle of the duplicity of display adds philosophical precision to how one may frame Augustine's theological interpretation of the self, Henry exacts great conceptual violence upon Augustine's thinking on the matter. By imposing the duplicitous self on Augustine, Henry fails to account for the fact that Augustine's notion of the self is realized in the context of his discussions of (1) the temporality of the world and (2) the gap between God and creature that the *imago Dei* presupposes; each of which enables the porous self to repudiate the idiosyncratic notion of deification that Henry attributes to the duplicitous self.⁴¹⁷

We argue below that the porous self is a temporal *imago Dei* by virtue of the gap creation interposes between the self and God. The porous self is therefore created (not generated) and extrinsic to God who "is the Creator of all time."⁴¹⁸ Indeed, the temporality of the porous self constitutes its structural dissimilarity to God, for "time itself is something created and thus itself also has a beginning, and is

⁴¹⁶ Henry, *Incarnation*, 338.

⁴¹⁷ While there are others who link Augustine to the doctrine of deification, Henry's problematic appropriation of the Augustinian self betrays a highly selective reading of Augustine's *oeuvre*. Henry's problematic reading of Augustine leads to the identification of the Augustinian self with a radicalized notion of deification that collapses the ontological distinction between the ego and God into the sphere of non-temporal auto-affection. For a more refined account of Augustine and deification, see David Meconi, "Becoming Gods by Becoming God's: Augustine's Mystagogy of Identification," *Augustinian Studies* 39 no.1 (2008): 61-74. See footnote no.40 in this article for a substantial bibliography of Augustine and deification.

⁴¹⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11, 30, 40. Throughout I make use of the Henry Chadwick translation *Confessions* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1991).

not co-eternal with the creator.”⁴¹⁹ Henry’s duplicitous self eradicates the Creator-creature distinction that demarcates an essential temporal boundary, and it is the temporal boundary we are reincorporating that liberates selfhood from the chains of non-temporal monism. As the source of all life, God is, we admit, intimately involved with all of creation: “all things were made through him in such a way that whatever has been made in this world was in him life.”⁴²⁰ Our proposal acknowledges that God can even be described as “my life,”⁴²¹ “life of my life” (*vita vitae*)⁴²² and “life of my soul.”⁴²³ Yet God is also always self-present in God’s eternal self-repose and is thus distinct from the temporal creatures and temporal world he fashioned: God “whose repose is outside time”⁴²⁴ is the *creator et ordinator temporum*, the creator and ordainer of time in which we dwell.⁴²⁵

Our proposal of a porous self illuminates how God’s life is the ongoing source-point of the porous self while maintaining that God is never a phenomenon present to me because God is always temporally distinct from me. Augustine, in a well-known critical move against the Manicheans, states emphatically that the temporal distinction necessarily gives way to an ontological distinction that makes the human soul ontologically distinct from God, a distinction that follows from the doctrine of creation.⁴²⁶ Oliver O’Donovan highlights that the Creator-creature distinction remains a

⁴¹⁹ Augustine, *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, 1, 8. Also see *Confessions* 11, 14, 17; *City of God*, 12.15. Throughout I make use of the R. W. Dyson translation of *The City of God Against the Pagans* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴²⁰ Augustine, *De trin*, 4, 3.

⁴²¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 1, 4, 4.

⁴²² Augustine, *Confessions*, 7, 2, 1.

⁴²³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 3, 6, 10.

⁴²⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, 13, 37, 52. I quote it here in full: “But you, Lord are always working and always at rest. Your seeing is not in time, your movement is not in time, and your rest is not in time. Yet your acting causes us to see things in time, time itself, and the repose which is outside time.”

⁴²⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 11, 6; 12, 25.

⁴²⁶ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 7, 11, 17. For more on the doctrine of creation in Augustine, see Marion, *Au lieu de soi: L’approche de Saint Augustine*, chapitre VI, “La création du soi.” For a contemporary argument in favour of creation ex nihilo explicitly over against recent

basic principle by which Augustine pits himself against paganism(s) such as Manicheanism, but also the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus: “In the phrase, *transcenden et te ipsum* [transcend even yourself], we see what the unambiguous theism of Christianity has made of the Plotinian ecstasies. Any suggestion that the soul is itself an extension of the divinity has to be undercut.”⁴²⁷ In light of this basic Creator-creature distinction, one cannot but point to the stark difference between Henry’s (perhaps Manichaeic?) interpretation of Augustine and the porous self this chapter shall bring to light with help of Augustine. To the porosity of the *imago Dei* we now turn.

§27. THE IMAGO DEI

God, whose repose is outside of time, is nevertheless the *creator et ordinator temporum* and therefore intimately involved in the temporal horizon of creation, especially the crowning achievement of creation, the living *imago Dei* (§26). But how is the *imago Dei*’s relation to God conceptualized in view of such a temporal distinction? How does a temporal creature image that which is outside of time? Augustine’s discussion of temporality in books 10 and 11 of the *Confessions* remain landmark philosophical explorations of the nature and function of time and have decidedly shaped the Western notions of “self.” While we shall attend to those important insights throughout, a fuller portrait of the temporality of the porous self as *imago Dei* shall emerge if that account is complemented by another landmark text, *De Trinitate*. In this work he defines the self’s natural affinity for the eternal in context of its identity as the crowning achievement of creation, its status as *imago*

retrievals of emanation or generation theories, or process theologies which clearly deny creation ex nihilo, see Brian Robinette, “The Difference Nothing Makes: *Creatio ex nihilo*, Resurrection, and Divine Gratuity,” *Theological Studies* 72 (2011): 525-57.

⁴²⁷ Oliver O’Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in Saint Augustine*, reprint edition (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 73.

Dei: the self, “cannot achieve so great a good except by being his image.”⁴²⁸ And there, “is such potency in this image of God that it is capable of cleaving to him whose image it is.”⁴²⁹ It is especially in *De Trinitate* that Augustine highlights the peculiar structure of the *imago Dei* as both interior and exterior. We shall describe the two-sided structure as the “double entry” of the porosity of display. Situated between the entries to time and eternity, the *imago Dei* does not merely represent a position I take up but is my zero-point of orientation. In other words, the *imago Dei* in its porosity is essentially who I am as this “me,” this dative pole given to myself through creation. It is here that our own interpretation of the self as “porous” complicates Henry’s duplicitous self.

We have said that the porous self reflects God, and in that reflecting, assumes the status as the *imago Dei*. Henry critiques the very logic of “imaging,” however. He contends that it is, not a living, but a “dead” activity precisely because it “reflects.” If one were to look through Henry’s finely-ground lens of the principle of the duplicity of display, one shall conclude that the temporal streaming of the world-horizon sets into operation this artificial power of imaging. In other words, for Henry, nothing in the world appears as it really is. The temporal flux of the world throws phenomena outside of themselves into a sphere different from themselves, opening up a gap between phenomena as they appear in themselves and as they appear in the world. Thus the so-called truth of the world is such that phenomena are “being given outside themselves, being deprived of themselves, being emptied of themselves in their very appearing, never giving their own reality but only the image of that reality that annihilates itself in the moment they are given. They are given in such a way that

⁴²⁸ Augustine, *De trin*, 14, 11.

⁴²⁹ Augustine, *De trin*, 14, 20.

their appearance is also their disappearance, the incessant annihilation of their reality in the image of it.”⁴³⁰ Henry argues that the “self in the world” appears as an objective correlate which “images” or “mirrors” the self’s real interior presence. Consequently, the self on visible display in the world is an optical reflection or exterior image and thus “dead” insofar as it is not the thing itself. The living kernel of the duplicitous self lies in its immediate feeling of itself with no gap between that feeling and itself.

Henry also contends that the lifeless affair of imaging resembles the formidable but deplorable philosophical structure of consciousness known as “representation.” Made popular in German, the term is *vorstellen*, quite literally “standing before,” a posture that defines the ontological status of the “I” with respect to that of which it is conscious. I “represent” objects to myself by putting them at a distance from myself. Cognitive reflection accords to representation pride of place when it comes to not only awareness of objects but also to self-awareness. The logic of the notion that “I am only insofar as I represent” is therefore a lifeless logic according to Henry precisely because it reflects the destructive logic of imaging: “It would be the same for the ‘I’ of the ‘I represent’ as it is for the tree that is said to reflect itself in the river and the reflection that the river returns. As if the fact of the image being posed before the tree and of its returning to the tree were enough to make the tree an ego; as if a reflexive pronoun were sufficient to cause the emergence of that ego’s ipseity whenever it was required.”⁴³¹ For Henry, his critique of the self-reflexive power of the ego applies equally to the *imago Dei*. The distance or gap between God and the image of God alienates the two parties involved. But is

⁴³⁰ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 19.

⁴³¹ Michel Henry, *Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, 80.

Henry right to claim that the *imago Dei* is nothing other than a mirror reflection of God, as if the human ego is the “representation” of God that God receives back after looking into a lake?

As we saw in part two, Henry’s duplicitous is susceptible to a kind of qualified monism in which the reality of the self is interior and non-temporal to the exclusion of the exterior self in the temporal and bodily horizon of the world. Further, it is, as we argued, a theological monism in that this interior reality of the ego is unified without temporal distance with Christ’s flesh. To interpose a gap between my flesh and the “Word made flesh,” as the *imago Dei* accomplishes, is to throw me outside of life altogether, according to Henry. To “image” God is insufficient, Henry insists, and this is because life must receive its capacity to live immediately from God. Henry condemns the *imago Dei* explicitly on these grounds. He writes: “is not an image, because in fact images exist only in the world, against the background of this original putting-into-image [*doneé-en-image*] that is the horizon of the world in its ek-static phenomenalization. If man were an image, if he were created in the way that the world was created, he would no longer be the ‘image’ of God and carry in him the same essence, the essence of Life: he would no longer be, and could no longer be, a living.”⁴³² Again we ask: does Henry here not display a facile understanding of the *imago Dei*? Is the *imago Dei* nothing other than a putting-into-image or reflection of God as if God were looking into a mirror or a calm lake?

Our proposal is not constructed on the premise that the *imago Dei* is complicit in a type of mirroring power. I am not simply a faint image of the divine. Nor do we

⁴³² Henry, *I am the Truth*, 103. Also see Henry, *Incarnation*, 115-20.

argue that the *imago Dei* is tantamount to the God's conscious representational power to throw phenomena before God's gaze so as to reflect on them at a distance. The *imago Dei* is tantamount to the porosity that exceeds the mere reflecting capacity of a mirror inasmuch as the porosity is a non-reflective interior word, a self-proximity held together by its interior fracture or fissure to God. This is to say that without a fracture within temporality to the non-temporal presence of God, the porous self is subject to Henry's critique that the *imago Dei* is forever alienated from God. Without the structural porosity we are advancing, the ceaseless streaming of temporality leads to an egregious destination, the abyss of nothingness: "Indeed we cannot truly say that time exists except in the sense that it tends towards non-existence."⁴³³ So while the porous self is a *homo temporalis* oscillating between past and future, it is also porous to that which is present to itself in the presence of the present: namely, God. Remaining temporally distinct from God and thereby never able to make God a phenomenon present to me, the porous self is nevertheless porous to God because it images God, which unveils how it is possible that I contain the mysterious capacity "by which even the eternal and unchanging nature can be recalled, beheld and desired—it is recalled by memory, beheld by intelligence, embraced by love—[it] has thereby found the image of that supreme trinity."⁴³⁴ Yet how do we describe the double entry of the porosity of display as between time and eternity? If the *imago Dei* is not separated by an impenetrable gap and is not simply a reflection of the divine, then how is it structured?

⁴³³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11, 14, 17. Emilie Zum Brunn argues that much of Augustine's ontology is structured according to the poles of being and nothingness, in which the former is God and the latter signals one's bodily existence in the temporal horizon of the world. See her *Saint Augustine: Being and Nothingness*, trans. Ruth Namad (New York: Paragon House, 1988), especially chapter 3, "The Fall Towards Impossible Nothingness."

⁴³⁴ Augustine, *De trin*, 15, 39.

§29. THE *HOMO TEMPORALIS* AND THE ETERNAL: THE DOUBLE ENTRY

We describe the *imago Dei* on the basis of a “double entry:” its temporal appearances in the world-horizon (exterior entry) joined to its interior, non-reflective self-awareness fractured to that which is outside of time (interior entry). Couched in these terms, the *imago Dei* is porous rather than duplicitous because the porous self realizes its identity before God (without making God a phenomenon present inside me) by making use of temporal world-engagements, bodily acts and intentional displays. But before we phenomenologically analyze the nature of such temporal world-engagements, bodily acts and intentional displays from an eschatological point of view, we must outline how the structure of the porous self avoids up front the temptation to be reduced to the world-horizon alone. Because the porous self is an *imago Dei* it puts into play a deeply spiritual way of life that appreciates the inward journey to a God who transcends the world-horizon. The possibility of such a spiritual quest, however, is based on a peculiar structure, a porosity of display ordered by a double-entry, one exterior in which I am amid others in a temporal world, and one interior that fractures me to God. We take the exterior entry first.

We associate the exterior entry with the temporal streaming of the self, i.e., the *distentio animi*. This capacity highlights the human animus’ distention through the past (*memoria*) as it anticipates or leans into the future (*expectatio*), a double movement which marks with precision a basic feature of the porous self: its inescapable immersion in temporal streaming of the exterior world.⁴³⁵ That the

⁴³⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11, 29, 39-41. For a helpful though brief exposition of the ek-static constitution of the Augustinian self (especially with regard to the *Confessions*), see James K.A. Smith, “Confessions of an Existentialist: Reading Augustine After Heidegger, Part I,” *Modern Theology* 18 no.2 (2001): 273-82.

porous self experiences itself in a state of *distentio* is not a metaphor, but rather figures in our vocabulary as a name for life itself, as the imposition of a concrete awareness of being this “me” burdened with constant change in a horizon of objects, other subjects and linguistic meaning-schemes caught in the interplay between future and past.⁴³⁶ The porous self cannot help but remain subject to the variation, change and multiplicity of the temporal flow of the world, and this ongoing flow can be painful, burdensome and heavy.⁴³⁷ Temporality, “my life,” i.e., *ecce distentio est vita mea*,⁴³⁸ constitutes me all the way down, penetrating and pervading all of my intentional acts and world-engagements. It is an aspect of the porous self that, in an oft-quoted lyric, leads me “to become for myself a soil which is a cause of difficulty and much sweat.”⁴³⁹

Its temporal dispersal, moreover, orients it away from itself. That is, as this me given as a dative pole in and through creation, I dwell in the world-horizon always already “outside” myself, exterior to pure self-presence. I cannot escape the temporal streaming from future to past as it sinks into the depths of memory on toward nothingness. Defined as *distentio animi* the porous self therefore remains always at a basic distance from itself, harbouring an internal temporal gap.

The reason the exterior entry appears in the temporal streaming of the world-horizon is that temporality is dispossessed of the “present moment.” Temporality appears as a strenuous flow to me because I cannot achieve presence, the living self-

⁴³⁶ We disagree with O’Donnell when he writes that Augustine’s, “famous description of time as *distentio animi* cannot be a definition, but is, rather, a metaphor...” See J.J. O’Donnell, *Confessions, vol. 3: A Commentary on Books 8-13* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992), 289.

⁴³⁷ Augustine wrote, “When I shall have adhered (Ps. 72.28) to you with the whole of myself, I shall never have ‘pain and toil’ (Ps. 89.10), and my entire life will be full of you. You lift up the person whom you fill. But for the present [time on earth], because I am not full of you, I am a burden to myself.” Augustine, *Confessions*, 10, 28, 39.

⁴³⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11, 29, 39.

⁴³⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 10, 16, 25.

impression that is outside of time. The present eludes me in that temporality is temporalized because it does not incorporate the present, for the present impression is uniquely non-temporal, i.e., self-present. Temporality “flies so quickly from future into past that the present is an interval with no duration.”⁴⁴⁰ This “present has no extension.”⁴⁴¹ Without the present, the self is carried along by time in either the backward direction of memory or the forward motion of expectation. The porous self temporalizes itself in and through movement. It temporalizes itself, in other words, not in spite of, but by virtue of the absence of the present: “If the present were always present, it would not pass into the past: it would not be time but eternity.”⁴⁴² Thanks to the absence of the present, I am not self-present reposing upon myself without difference or distance. Unlike Henry’s self-present interior self, the porous self is delayed by time, always too late to arrive at itself in the present. Before I can embrace myself in pure immediacy and set within myself, like concrete sets and stiffens by binding its aggregate parts together, I am taken away from myself by the (strenuous) flow of time. The temporal flow in which I am immersed determines me in my creaturehood. Temporality imposes itself on me prior to judgment or reflection, for temporality is a brute fact and thus, “I know myself to be conditioned by time...”⁴⁴³ I am always already thrown into time without delay, already found there in that exterior field of display, as an apodictic fact of creation itself—a *fait accompli*.

The porous self is irrepressibly temporal, a factum, thanks to creation. The creation of time is co-emergent with the creation of the world and myself within it.

⁴⁴⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11, 15, 20.

⁴⁴¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11, 21, 27.

⁴⁴² Augustine, *Confessions*, 11,14, 17.

⁴⁴³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11, 25, 32.

To be in the world is to be in time and vice versa: “Beyond doubt, then, the world was made not in time, but simultaneously with time.”⁴⁴⁴ As a consequence God, “made time itself. Time could not elapse before you made time. But if time did not exist before heaven and earth, why do people ask what you were then doing? There was no ‘then’ when there was no time.”⁴⁴⁵ Indeed, “Time itself is something created and thus itself also has a beginning, and is not co-eternal with the creator.”⁴⁴⁶ In the apt words of Jean-Luc Marion, “The double event of creation sets me within the emergence [*advenir*] of time itself. The event which takes itself from the *mens* and on which imposes the *distentio* consists in the event of time, of *tempus creatum*. This event is absolute and without condition is named not only an event, but a coming of an event—the coming of time itself.”⁴⁴⁷ As created and thereby intrinsically ensconced in time, the porous self remains at a distance from itself within the exterior horizon of temporality, in the ceaseless arrival of time.

But the porous self remains at a distance, too, not just from itself but from God, a distance made, *a fortiori*, more radical by God’s eternity. Because the porous self is given to itself as a finite creature whose existence is primordially tied to the temporal streaming of the world-horizon as a *fait accompli*, to escape the world is never an option. To be outside pure self-presence and thus “outside myself” (i.e., ek-stasis, or standing out from) in the world is my state, which means I am immersed in time and distinct from God. Moreover, the reason I cannot achieve self-presence in the present is that only God is purely present: an eternal and unchanging self-presence without past or future. God is God’s eternity: “Eternity is the very

⁴⁴⁴ Augustine, *City of God*, 11, 6.

⁴⁴⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11, 13, 15.

⁴⁴⁶ Augustine, *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, 1, 8. Also see *Confessions* 11, 14, 17; *City of God*, 12.15.

⁴⁴⁷ Marion, *Au lieu de soi: L’approche de Saint Augustin*, 304.

substance of God, which has nothing changeable; there nothing is past, as if it were no longer: nothing is future, as if it existed not as yet. There is nothing there but, Is.”⁴⁴⁸ In praising God, the porous self has no right to domesticate God within the temporality of creation, and so, exempt of time, God dwells “in the sublimity of an eternity which is always in the *present*, you are before all things past and transcend all things future, because they are still to come, and when they have come they are past.”⁴⁴⁹ God is manifest as self-present, with no internal gap and no fracture between genitive and dative poles. Always present, in “constant eternity,”⁴⁵⁰ God is timeless, unchanging and thus “cannot be measured by the standard of things visible, changeable, mortal and deficient.”⁴⁵¹ If the porous self could achieve self-presence in the present (i.e., close its temporal gap), then it would surely, like Henry’s duplicitous self, accomplish a duplicity, a pure interior self wherein God is present as a phenomenon cleaved from its outward “representation.” We insist once again here that the factum of temporality guarantees the temporal distinction between myself and my proximity to myself as well as between me and my proximity to God—a fact that guarantees God is never a phenomenon present to me but always just beyond me.

This yields to the second entry: the interior fracture to the eternal. The porosity of display maintains that, while I appear in the exterior horizon of the temporal streaming of the world, I am inwardly self-aware, and through this entry to myself I am fractured to the eternal presence of God. Yet, this interior entry is not

⁴⁴⁸ Augustine, *Exposition on the Psalms*, 102, 24. We utilize the translation in the ante-Nicene Library of Fathers series. See *Exposition of the Book of Psalms*, 6 vols., Psalms 1-150, trans. members of the English Church (Oxford, UK: John Henry Parker, 1847-57).

⁴⁴⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11, 8, 16. (emphasis mine)

⁴⁵⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11, 11,13.

⁴⁵¹ Augustine, *De trin*, 5, 2.

purely “interior” as if it were independent of the interplay between past and future. Rather, my interior entry is “interior” in the sense that I appear to myself there prior to language and intentionality as well as the objective aspect of my visible body. So, while the porous self is interior, it remains nonetheless within the temporal streaming of exteriority. This is tantamount to saying that the porous self is porous to that with which it does not share an essence. As this “me” given to myself by God, I image God but I do so from a temporal gulf lodged between us: “This image made to the image of God is not equal and co-eternal with him whose image it is.”⁴⁵² We shall devote the next section (§29) to developing this uniquely interior self-awareness wherein I am fractured to God.

We may first offer a précis of the double-entry at this juncture. Created and given to myself within the temporal streaming of the world-horizon, I appear in the exterior entry always at a distance from myself as this dative pole and, too, at distance from God. I cannot leave the world, because as created there, my temporality pervades me entirely, it is a *fait accompli*. But as the *imago Dei*, I am inwardly porous to God through an interior entry, since I am not isolated from that which I image. In spite of my exterior state situated within the temporal streaming of the world, my proper object of love and worship is God: “To put it in a word, let it worship the uncreated God by whom it was created with a capacity for him and able to share in him.”⁴⁵³ But the capacity to contemplate the eternal raises the obvious question: how can the porous self, created in time and subject to the *distentio* of the past and future, image a God who is outside of time and who is perfectly full in God’s self-presence? Does the temporal distinction the *imago Dei* presupposes pose

⁴⁵² Augustine, *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, 16, 61.

⁴⁵³ Augustine, *De trin*, 14, 15.

an impossible abyss between the pure actuality of God and my temporal contingency? And if so, does this abyss not frustrate the very ground of possibility for the *imago Dei* to image that which it has been created to image? How can the *imago Dei* become incandescent, shining as a created icon illuminated by God's glorious eternal light if the *imago Dei* dwells in a temporal streaming absolutely incommensurable with the invisible eternal glory of God?

Our proposal of the double-entry overcomes this problematic by acknowledging that God endows me with an interior porosity that undercuts up front the notion that there is an absolute temporal gulf between myself and God. Through this interior entry, God's self-presence remains at once inviolable, and yet, proximate to me. The porous self achieves its ipseity in the tension between the temporality of the world-horizon and the opening to the timeless essence of God, a double-entry that orders the two fields of display not in "either/or" terms. Time and eternity are not opposed to one another, as if they are absolutely heterogeneous to one other in an interminable war of absolute grammars (and therefore giving way to a duplicitous self). Understood to be between the two fields, the porous self arrives at itself in a temporal world-horizon created by God, which because it is created as gift and called good by God, is a temporal streaming that harbours within its temporal economy an opening to God whose timeless self-donation is "more intimate to me than I am to myself."⁴⁵⁴ Our proposal so articulated here acknowledges my creaturehood but simultaneously refuses to reduce me to the field of temporal display alone. I am more than my appearance in the world (though certainly not less).

⁴⁵⁴ Augustine, *Confessions* 3, 6, 11. Also 10, 27, 38.

Indeed, the porosity of display as we propose it here unequivocally deconstructs any attempt to reduce selfhood to the temporal world-horizon alone. Subject to the temporal streaming of the world-horizon and its luminous appearings of things to me (genitive and dative), the porous self can draw near inwardly to the constancy of God. But I draw near to God not in manner that God's plenitude is manifest inside my temporal streaming, whether as a divine object of display in consciousness or as an object of bodily arousal—God is never a phenomenon present to me. Rather, the porous self is porous to the eternal by virtue of the distance or gap between time and eternity. But it is through its seeking after God across this fractured gap without at the same time being able to bridge it that constitutes the power of the interior entry to be lived as a spiritual seeking, or “pilgrimage.” So while the interior entry to the eternal can be clogged, I am nevertheless this me because I am given to myself by a God in whose image I was made. The temporal display of the world is a field of display created by a God who finally is not disentangled from creation (as if God were a Deist or a *causa sui*) but who is “both interior to everything, because *in him are all things* (Rom 11.36), and exterior to every single thing because he is above all things.”⁴⁵⁵

It remains for us to clarify with greater phenomenological care how this interior entry, as a non-reflective site of manifestation, is describable. How is the interior intimacy with God to be, after all, a phenomenologically observable field of experience? To refine the structure of the double entry, we must proceed to show how the inner entry is manifest, how it is a site in which I appear most intimately to myself *and* open myself to the eternal *Verbum*.

⁴⁵⁵ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 8.26.48.

§29. *VERBUM INTIMUM* AND THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESENT

How can a temporal creature image that which transcends time? The resolution to this ostensible problem lies in what we described as the double-entry (§28), a structure made possible in virtue of its status as *creāta imago Dei* (§27). The particular structure of the double-entry accommodates both interior and exterior fields, and in this section we probe the prospective interior field of display. The porous self in its interior display also mounts here a strong critique of pure interiority by vanquishing the strict either/or paradigm that defines Henry's duplicitous self. Alternatively, the interior field of display we are proposing, inhabited by the *verbum intimum*, an inner word by which the porous self opens onto God, instantiates itself in the temporal streaming of the visible world. Inescapably temporal, and thereby quarantined from the presence of pure interiority, the *verbum intimum* functions nevertheless as a non-reflective "inner" word by which I know and love myself in the temporal streaming of the world-horizon. To show just how this non-reflective word is "inner" without collapsing into a domain of pure interiority is the task of this section.

The *verbum intimum* is, hence, much more than an interior non-reflective self-awareness. It designates the site of porosity to God inasmuch as it is not abandoned to temporal streaming alone. As the *imago Dei* itself, the non-reflective word is porous to the Word of God. As will be instructive for us momentarily, it is important to note here that it is in and through this inner word that the porous self unclogs its entry to the eternal, putting into play a spirituality of seeking. To pursue that which transcends time, I receive myself inwardly by grace only to unclog my pores *not* by lurching further outward into the temporal horizon of the world willy

nilly but rather by setting firmly within myself. But this setting firmly within myself lays the proper groundwork for an outward movement to be set into motion, a purposeful temporal movement impelled by faith in both the past (*memoria*) and future (*epektasis*) directions that proceed upward, curving toward the present (§§30-1 below). In this section we take one step behind the spirituality of seeking and its attendant temporal movements to show that they originate first in an inner word.

Non-reflective Self-Awareness

When discussing the non-reflective articulation of the “inner” word by which I am self-aware, the correlation between genitive and dative poles of appearing we introduced in chapter one remains intact. But the genitive and dative aspects are resituated together within the self. Normally the genitive is an object, like a chair, that appears to me as the dative. With regard to the structure of the inner word, the appearing of something (genitive) for me (dative) come together in the closest possible unity within me, converging upon me without coinciding (as they do in Henry). I appear to myself intimately, so that the genitive (appearing of something) and the dative (appearing to) together are a unity within me prior to reflective display, whereas in reflective display there is a sharp separation between the object given and the lived-experience of that object. The non-reflective word inside me is structured by the genitive and dative, yet their integration is maximal to the point before dissolving into each other. I appear (genitive) to myself (dative) without collapsing the genitive and dative together into an original self-presence.

The porosity of display is set thus held together by an interior word, a *verbum intimum* (*verbum verum nostrum intimum*).⁴⁵⁶ This inner word, to re-emphasize, is the site in which my pores are opened to the presence of God without making God present to me as a phenomenon. Yet this *verbum intimum* is also that ongoing word constitutive of the porous self's self-awareness as a singular "me." The porous self approximates itself in its self-aware self-displaying most intimately by way of the same interior word through which its porosity to God is opened. Yet how do we describe this interior field of display as a non-reflective "interior" site? The *verbum intimum* joins me to myself in and through self-knowledge and self-love:

The mind loving is in love, and the love is in the knowledge of the lover, and the knowledge is in the mind knowing. They are each in the other two, because the mind which knows and loves itself is in its love and knowledge, and the love of the mind loving and knowing itself is in the mind and its knowledge, and the knowledge of the mind knowing and the loving itself is in the mind and its love, because it loves itself knowing and knows itself loving.... love and knowledge are together in the mind which loves and knows itself.⁴⁵⁷

The *verbum intimum* conceived in this way speaks to me intimately inasmuch as I find myself there, in that self-revelation of myself expressed as a word, "and since it loves knowledge and knows love, the word is in the love and the love in the word and both in the lover and the utterer."⁴⁵⁸ And, "the kind of word then that we are now wishing to distinguish and propose is 'knowledge with love' [cum amore notitia]."⁴⁵⁹

But what kind of word is this *verbum intimum* uttered in the heart as "knowledge

⁴⁵⁶ For the latin version of *De Trinitate* we consult the Bibliothèque Augustinienne. See *La Trinité (livres VIII-XV)*, vol. 16, trans. P. Agaësse, S. J., (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1955), 494. We shall refer to this as *BA* in all subsequent citations. We refer the reader to some of the latin expressions given that the structure of the non-reflective self as it subsists apart from reflection and language call for precise terms.

⁴⁵⁷ Augustine, *De trin*, 9, 8.

⁴⁵⁸ Augustine, *De trin*, 9, 15.

⁴⁵⁹ Augustine, *De trin*, 9, 15. For latin, See *BA*, 102

with love” that brings the porous self proximate to itself? Is this *verbum intimum* a word spoken to others formed with syllables and sounds? Is it a mental word seen by the mind’s eye before I speak? Is it something altogether different? We are given a clue in what follows:

And so we must come to that word of man, the word of a rational animal, the word of the *image of God*, which is not born of God but made by God, the word which is neither uttered in sound nor thought of in the likeness of sound, which necessarily belongs to some language, but which precedes all the signs that signify it and is begotten of the knowledge abiding in the consciousness, when this knowledge is uttered inwardly just exactly as it is. When it is uttered vocally or by some bodily sign, it is not uttered just exactly as it is, but as it can be seen or heard through the body.⁴⁶⁰

The *verbum intimum* is a primal word spoken to myself from within myself, my self-identifying word, “before any sound, before any thought of sound [*verbum ante omnem sonum, ante omnem cogitationem soni*].”⁴⁶¹ Quite literally, the *verbum intimum* delivers me to myself by way of an interior self-awareness, a self-proximity realized through a pre-linguistic, non-reflective word. This non-reflective word carries within it both the self-awareness of myself and my presence in the world as this particular “me” whose actions are mine and whose thoughts are mine. It is non-reflective in the sense that I know and love myself as a “me” who is alive as this particular self prior to consciously reflecting on it, even before all thinking of the sound of the word (*ante omnem cogitationem soni*).

The *verbum intimum* is manifest, moreover, as a self-awareness that is distinct from introspection or searching for myself, for “it is one thing not to know oneself, another not to think about oneself.”⁴⁶² This certainly highlights that the

⁴⁶⁰ Augustine, *De Trin*, 15, 20.

⁴⁶¹ Augustine, *De Trin*, 15, 22. For the latin, see *BA*, 484.

⁴⁶² Augustine, *De Trin*, 10, 7.

verbum intimum is manifest as a streaming self-awareness, not as a phenomenon unveiled by reflective searching or an act of introspection. I cannot find the *verbum intimum* by playing the role of a spectator looking inward (à la Husserl's phenomenological reduction). The inner word functions not as a style of inner perception or introspection in which I speak to myself or interrogate myself by (as one contemporary philosopher describes it), "taking a (non-optical) 'look' at what is passing his mind... He can reflectively or introspectively watch, without any bodily organ of sense, the current episodes of his inner life."⁴⁶³ The inner word is intimate not because it is a "Ghost in the machine" subject to the power of reflective self-observation but because it is non-reflective. That is, it is prior to linguistic phonemes or the reflective power of an ego to observe itself through introspection. The porous self through its inner word, "does not have to look for itself as if it were not available to itself."⁴⁶⁴ To be sure, the *verbum intimum* appears as an ongoing streaming self-awareness that never leaves the temporal streaming of the porous self created and given to itself by God. Internal and personal to itself, this word is given inwardly in the sense that it reflects a self-proximity, one that "is quite interior to itself [interior est enim ipsa]."⁴⁶⁵ As such, the porous self does not intermittently know itself but is always already aware of itself given that "there was never a time when the mind did not love itself, when it did not know itself."⁴⁶⁶ Even when it is looking for itself, it is always already self-aware, it "knows itself even when it is looking for itself."⁴⁶⁷

Yet in the block excerpt immediately above, the self-proximate *verbum intimum* appears as a word "which precedes all the signs that signify it and is

⁴⁶³ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 4.

⁴⁶⁴ Augustine, *De trin*, 10, 10.

⁴⁶⁵ Augustine, *De trin*, 10,11. For latin, *BA*, 142.

⁴⁶⁶ Augustine, *De trin*, 10, 11.

⁴⁶⁷ Augustine, *De trin*, 10, 16.

begotten of the knowledge abiding in the consciousness, when this knowledge is uttered inwardly just exactly as it is.” The porous self knows itself in its streaming non-reflective self-awareness through a self-knowledge/self-love “utter inwardly just exactly as it is.” Does this not raise the spectre of pure self-presence? So, when the porous self is told to “know thyself,” is it able to know itself for “no other reason than that it is present to itself?”⁴⁶⁸ Is its self-presence no different than Henry’s theory of pure auto-affection in which the ego coincides exactly with itself in pure interiority?

We recall here Henry’s theory of auto-affection is a pure self-awareness manifest without reference to anything outside itself (and thus vulnerable to a non-temporal monism). Yet the porous self we have articulated thus far displays an inner word “uttered just exactly as it is” in the sense that it describes a streaming displaying of the self in its interior domain, intimate and proximate to itself—not self-present. The interior domain of the porous self therefore resides always in the exterior temporal field of the world, the streaming *distentio*. The porous self, even in its non-reflective *verbum*, cannot escape its temporal condition and thus cannot coincide with itself without also appearing as a creature in submission to the temporal fragmentation of the world (i.e., strenuous play between future and past). When the *verbum intimum*, “knows itself and loves itself, it does not know and love something unchangeable.”⁴⁶⁹ If it is not self-present, then how does the *verbum intimum* surmount self-presence without succumbing to a pernicious temporal fragmentation?

⁴⁶⁸ Augustine, *De trin*, 10, 12.

⁴⁶⁹ Augustine, *De trin*, 9, 9.

The *verbum intimum* arrives at itself continually with reference to itself, and so, overcomes the absolute fragmentation of temporality—but it does not escape the “changeability” of temporality. So unlike Henry’s theory of self-presence realized in and through a living present (that is non-temporal), the porous self is proximate to itself through a temporal non-reflective self-awareness fractured to the living present. As both self-proximate and temporal, the *verbum intimum* avoids both spectres of *self-presence* and *fragmentation*. am not self-present, however, I am not therefore resigned to being a “bundle of temporal impressions” or an optical illusion forever alienated from myself through the temporal streaming of the world. Held together by an inner word, I enjoy a non-reflective self-knowledge and self-love of myself that nevertheless remains in the flow of time. In light of the title of this section, we are maintaining that the *verbum intimum* is without the living present inasmuch as it is not self-present, a phenomenological fact we already established by portraying temporality as a *fait accompli*.

We thus come upon the triadic disclosure of the interior shape of the *verbum intimum*: memory-knowledge-love that brings to light how I am both temporal and intimate to myself. It is in the temporal streaming of memory that self-knowledge and self-love appear, for “I find my understanding and my love in my memory, where it is I who understand, I who love.”⁴⁷⁰ While I am a singular “me,” I incorporate three actions in a unity so that when I am loving I am also knowing and remembering. Similarly, when I am knowing, I am also loving and remembering, and etc. Accordingly, the porous self puts into play a temporal self-awareness anchored in the memory, as if the it reaches for itself in a constant backwards motion, seeking

⁴⁷⁰ Augustine, *De trin*, 15, 42.

to catch up to the present (while never grasping the present). Certainly, the temporal ecstasy of expectation, the leaning forward into the future, is constitutive of the porous self. Ineluctably conditioned by memory, the future is, however, a modality of the memory—“it is not foresight that instructs us how to foresee, but memory.”⁴⁷¹ Even though the porous self is a *distentio* dispersed into future and past ecstasies, it is only thanks to memory that the self-proximity of the *verbum intimum* can be materialized (yet, the future, and especially the expectation rooted in the *parousia*, can be deployed as a means of unclogging the ego’s pores, see §30 below). It is this peculiar triad of knowing-loving-remembering that constitutes the non-reflective self-proximity of myself to myself that is neither *purely* present nor injuriously and ceaselessly fractured by the flux of time.

An (In)visible Word

Given that it submits to the temporal streaming of the world-horizon, is the *verbum intimum* necessarily in plain sight, visible in the world? We have suggested that the temporal streaming of the *verbum intimum* disallows it from collapsing in on itself, falling prey to the pure interiority of the living present. As such, the porous self’s temporal streaming is of a piece with the opening of the visible world. But this seems inconsistent with the non-reflective character of the *verbum intimum*. If its self-proximity and self-intimacy is temporal but undetectable on the body and

⁴⁷¹ Augustine proposes an interesting example that illustrates how memory is the foundation of expectation: “You can experience what I mean in speeches or songs which we render word for word by memory; clearly, unless we foresaw in thought what was to follow, we would not say it. And yet it is not foresight that instructs how to foresee, but memory. Until we finish what we are reciting or singing, we have uttered nothing which we have not foreseen. And yet when those who are very good at reciting many things of this sort are not usually admired for their foresight but for their memory.” See Augustine, *De trin*, 15, 13.

inexpressible by linguistic speech acts, how can it also appear as a phenomenon within the luminous space of the world?

The *verbum intimum* assumes an “interior” shape. As a self-awareness prior to language, the physical body and the complete visibility of the world, the *verbum intimum* is given with a style of verification unique to its (in)visibility. In phenomenological terms, the *verbum intimum* is situated between auto-affection and hetero-affection, an impure site where neither the pure presence of auto-affection (invisible) nor the pure difference of hetero-affection (visible) predominates. Though I cannot escape the temporal order of the world, and thus always remain “myself” within the backdrop of hetero-affection and temporal difference (“I know myself to be conditioned by time”), my *verbum intimum* is not entirely visible in the world. This is to say that the *verbum intimum* displays a temporality that implies the eternal. Indeed, the porous self’s *distentio* through the past and future implies it is missing that which it cannot experience, the living present of eternity, a simultaneity with no reference to past or future. In this sense, and even if shrouded in ambiguity, the *verbum intimum* by which I am self-aware and thus proximate to myself appears as an (in)visible phenomenon.

One way to clarify the peculiar nature of the (in)visible phenomenon of non-reflective self-awareness is to discuss the interrelation of the reflective and non-reflective modalities of awareness. The *verbum intimum* appears non-reflectively and resists appearing within the reflective “lighthouse” of consciousness that purports to render visible all that may come into its purview (see Husserl chapter two). Yet because the porous self “knows itself even when it is looking for itself,”⁴⁷² its

⁴⁷² Augustine, *De trin*, 10, 16.

reflective power as a “lighthouse” is always accompanied by a non-reflective knowledge, love and memory of itself. For the porous self, reflective consciousness is accompanied by a primal *verbum intimum* that is manifest beneath reflective consciousness and linguistic performance. How exactly the non-reflective and reflective states relate to one another is not necessarily important for our purposes here. What is important is that the non-reflective inner word is not visible in the same way a visible word is in its display of the reflective “lighthouse.” And correlatively, the non-reflective inner word is not enclosed upon itself within the pure domain of invisible display as in Henry’s duplicitous self. Rather, the porous self, always visible in the world and its temporal streaming, finds itself intimately self-aware through an inner word that, because it does not appear in the field of reflective display, is (in)visible.

Interior Porosity

The theological property of the *verbum intimum* is its porosity to the eternal. Its interiority is not distinct from the field of visible display yet it nevertheless points to that which is invisible and not of this world: it displays a likeness to the invisible Word, and it is the “Word of God we are now seeking to see, however imperfectly, through this likeness.”⁴⁷³ It has been established that the *verbum intimum* indicates a phenomenon lived interior to the self while not bifurcating the self between irreparable “interior” and “exterior” domains. Yet, as we shall see in the subsequent sections of this chapter (§§ 30-1), the *verbum intimum* is distinct from the reflective “lighthouse” in that the *verbum intimum* is porous to the living present of God. Like

⁴⁷³ Augustine, *De trin*, 15, 20.

an aperture to the eternal, the *verbum intimum* pulls the ego toward the divine Word, toward a vision of the divine Word in whose image it is made. Thus, “if you wish to arrive at some kind of likeness of the Word of God, however unlike it may be in many ways, do not look at that word of ours which sounds in the ears, neither when it is uttered vocally nor when it is thought of silently... we must go beyond all these and come to that word of man through whose likeness of a sort the Word of God may somehow or other be seen in an enigma.”⁴⁷⁴ This is to say that my selfhood as this particular “me” appears in that (in)visible word that, as a temporal phenomenon, is uniquely porous to the eternal (and is thus a word between the temporal world and the living present).

And so while the peculiar property of the *verbum intimum* is that it is porous to the living present, we insist once again that it is *not* born from within the living present. To express it another way, I share in temporality (*homo temporalis*), and as a created self with perceptible temporal qualities, I am phenomenologically observable. The enigma of the double entry emerges at this juncture insofar as the interior porosity to the present cannot be brought fully to light but neither can it be divorced from the reflective lighthouse. There is no abyss separating the non-reflective (interior) and reflective (exterior) fields of display. The porosity of display therefore opens up a space in which the interior word, as a non-reflective phenomenon fractured to the present, is also immersed in the temporal flow of the world. As such, the *verbum intimum* is able to be rendered visible in the world through reflective intentional acts (we intend to show how this is so in the next two sections).

⁴⁷⁴ Augustine, *De trin*, 15, 20.

In summary, the *verbum intimum* is a word that is made in the likeness of the Word of God, the “Word made flesh” whose self-presence is purely self-present, perfect, simple and unchanging. This divine Word, because it is “neither formless nor formed in its eternal and unchangeable substance,”⁴⁷⁵ transcends the human word. The divine Word, because it is co-eternal with the Father and of the same substance in its pure simplicity, transcends all of creation. The two words, one human and one divine, are indeed alike, “such a word of ours then we have found to be somehow or other like that one,”⁴⁷⁶ but we should insist on “how great the dissimilarity is in whatever similarity there may be.”⁴⁷⁷ It is as if, through this *verbum intimum*, the porous self looks at God through a glass darkly in an enigma. I cannot overcome my temporal distance, as if I could leap into the presence of divine co-substantiality: “Our true and innermost word is only uttered by our thinking, only God can be understood to have an everlasting Word co-eternal with himself.”⁴⁷⁸ Whereas Henry’s proposal of the language of life internal to my pure living present is co-substantial with Christ thereby making God a phenomenon present to me in isolation from the language of the world (§22), our proposal does not bifurcate the self between two languages. I have one language with two styles of givenness, one non-reflective and the other reflective. So, the *imago Dei*, this “me” as porous to God, is not God inasmuch as I harbour a word that images the Word of God.

⁴⁷⁵ Augustine, *De trin*, 15, 26.

⁴⁷⁶ Augustine, *De trin*, 15, 24.

⁴⁷⁷ Augustine, *De trin*, 15, 39.

⁴⁷⁸ Augustine, *De trin*, 15, 25.

§30. BEING-IN-THE-WORLD AND *EPEKTASIS*

So far we have seen that the *imago Dei* is distinct from God because God created me (*creāta imago Dei*) within the temporal streaming as a *fait accompli* (§27); that despite my temporal streaming, I am endowed with an entry to the eternal in virtue of the self's two-sided structure, the double-entry: one exterior in the world-horizon, the other interior fractured to the eternal (§28); that my interior entry appears a non-reflective word fractured to the eternal and thus not subject to the same protocol of appearing of visible phenomena (i.e., without reference to linguistic utterance, the body, and reflective thought) (§29). Yet because the porous self is thrown into the field of visible display through the work of creation, the *verbum intimum* is not purely interior, as if divorced from the reflective intentional acts, linguistic utterances and bodily presences that appear in the temporal horizon of the world. In this section we elucidate how the linguistic-reflective performance of faith, as a profession of faith in God, brings to light the non-reflective word. With this in view, we examine faith's futurity, the implementation of an eschatological desire, or *epektasis*. Whereas Henry seeks to disqualify the temporal field of visible display altogether, we are interested in a theological reorientation of temporality.

Before we elucidate *epektasis*, a brief word is in order about how the temporality of faith affects the temporal streaming of the porous self. It is only in virtue of the purging power of faith that the interior pores can be "unclogged," opening onto the eternal. The temporality of faith is not simply added onto our original temporal condition. The temporality of faith is not like an elastic element stretched over the surface of what is originally a closed system of finite time. If that were the case, then we could simply disqualify or escape the temporal order, leaving

it to its finitude (like Henry does). Our proposal maintains that faith penetrates the fabric of time itself, transforming its character by distending it, by re-opening its porosity to a God who created time as originally good. For the porous self, then, faith carries its own living form of temporality, both past and future tenses. Leading toward that which is not in this world, faith is situated in the interval of “incommensurability” posed between the temporal and the eternal. Situated just so, faith is regulated by an immeasurable difference (without positing a gulf) between our temporal fragmentation and God’s pure simplicity and eternal presence. But it is not an absolute incommensurability. Faith, calibrated by its temporal economy, professes a God who is to come, and a God before whom we shall, at the final day, sit face to face. Before that eternal Sabbath, faith is given as gift of grace, as a contingent reality to sustain our seeking and, in fact, expresses itself as radically finite in its groping amid the horizon of the world wherein its utility as a temporal mode is evident. By seeking God through the contingent word of faith, the non-reflective word becomes visible as an image of that eternal Word. Faith, then, is an unveiling of the self before God lead by the Spirit toward its terminus point where the porous self shall be unveiled completely before God, a self who shall proceed to “rest in you for the Sabbath of eternal life.”⁴⁷⁹ Faith carries me forward (*extensio*) while I am a pilgrim on this earth but expires when the aim of its gaze is fulfilled, when the eye of faith sees God face-to-face: “there will no longer be any faith by which things that are not seen are believed, but sight by which things that were believed are seen.”⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 13, 36, 51.

⁴⁸⁰ Augustine, *De trin*, 14, 4.

Always linked to the temporal horizon of the world while on pilgrimage, faith does not lead to escapism or disqualify the temporal horizon. Rather, faith radicalizes the Heideggerian future temporal ecstasy (“being-toward-death”) by stretching that temporal ecstasy toward the final destination of the saints. *Epektasis*, the Greek term that Paul used in Philippians 3.13-14 (“Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward [*epekteinomenos*] to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”) is an act of seeking for a God who is to come. Faith in a “Sabbath to come” is a Christian temporal act which temporalizes the self in view of an absolute future to come. It is appropriate that we identify the future ecstasy as a “seeking,” for *epektasis* signifies that the temporality of faith is a straining forward to what lies ahead, to what shall appear in that final day.⁴⁸¹ It is described here eloquently:

The Son of man who is mediator between you the One and us the many, who live in a multiplicity of distractions by many things; so ‘I might apprehend him in whom also I am apprehended’ (Phil. 3.12-14), and leaving behind the old days I might be gathered to follow the One, ‘forgetting the past’ and moving not towards those future things which are transitory but to ‘things which are before’ me, not stretched out in distraction but extended in reach, not by being pulled apart but by concentration. So, I ‘pursue the prize of the high calling’ where I ‘may hear the voice of praise’ and ‘contemplate your delight’ (Ps. 25. 7; 26.4) which neither comes nor goes.⁴⁸²

Our proposal that faith incorporates futurity within a theological setting is an explicit critique of the finitude of Heidegger’s being-toward-death. Charles Taylor

⁴⁸¹ While not incompatible with the classically Cappadocian view of *epektasis* as an eternal and thus perpetual growth in union with God, our view of *epektasis* here frames the life of seeking in and through the world without necessarily leading to union in this life. For more on the Cappadocian discourse on *epektasis* see Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, trans., Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

⁴⁸² Augustine, *Confessions*, 11, 29, 39.

has recently suggested that one crucial facet of human life which explains the secularity of our contemporary age lies in the gradual transformation of how we understand time. Secular time constitutes an interpretive grid that constrains us to experience time as radically finite and levelled, that is: purely horizontal in the world. Taylor suggests that secular time necessarily leads to the homogenization of the temporal movements. All time is the same and all time conforms to and is ordered by the finitude of the world. Industrialization, technology, science and the steady detaching of the self from God gave way over the last few centuries to a temporal framework in which “my” singular temporal flow finds its meaning only within the wider, mundane flow of objective world time; each “moment” is regulated to repeat itself by the mechanized consistency and perfect continuity of a finely tuned clock. A generic or “vulgar” world time sets the boundaries of life itself, secularizing the temporal dynamics of faith in a God who transcends time.⁴⁸³ Taylor rightly acknowledges that Heidegger’s analytic of being-in-the-world is profoundly original in its retrieval of an “existential” sense of temporality which places an accent on the future.⁴⁸⁴

Heideggerian time consists not of a successive trail of punctual moments regulated by a clock (*chronos*) but of a dynamic set of projections in light of one’s future death, an experience of time that “possibilizes” one’s existence anew each moment (*kairos*).⁴⁸⁵ We recall from chapter one (§7) that Heidegger reverses the self-world temporal relationship of secular time: my individual temporal existence governs and, in fact, regulates my experience of the world (i.e., Dasein is world-

⁴⁸³ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 55-61 and 195-200.

⁴⁸⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 798, n.45.

⁴⁸⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §45, for example.

forming). No longer does a generic world time determine my existence and my selfhood (homogenizing me). But Heidegger's conception of being-in-the-world reworks temporality without reference to the theological roots it utilizes. Even though Heidegger's being-toward-death may illustrate a helpful corrective to the monotony of *chronos*, being-toward-death does not avoid its emphatically secular tenor. At that very least, Heideggerian time appears buffered to and disengaged from (or clogged to) the eternal.⁴⁸⁶ Certainly, by privileging the future plane, Heidegger opens up a valuable space of expectation, possibility and "destiny." Yet his notion of being-toward-death is radically finite, theologically inauthentic and thus "secular" in that it is grounded in the finitude of temporality and the coming termination of death. How does a theological critique of being-in-the-world shape, and in fact, transform the plane of time from secular expectation of a future inscribed in the world (death) to a theological expectation (*epektasis*) of an absolute future outside of death? While Henry's solution was to escape temporality altogether, bifurcating the self between non-temporal and temporal fields of display, our proposal reincorporates time within an eschatological framework.

Through faith I do not escape this world but dwell within it hopefully.⁴⁸⁷

Because it is a subjective temporality ("faith itself is temporal and finds a temporal

⁴⁸⁶ Perhaps the most perceptive and incisive contemporary theological critic of Heidegger is Jean-Yves Lacoste. Much of his work highlights the secular assumptions that drive Heidegger's analytic of being-in-the-world thereby highlighting that while the theologian may appreciate Heidegger's retrieval of dynamic temporality (*Kairos*), the theologian must ultimately subvert and thus go beyond it. While I do not comply with all of Lacoste's theological critiques of being-in-the-world, I do appreciate his phenomenological-theological interest in striking a *détente* between sacred temporality and Heideggerian temporality. For more on Lacoste on this score, see the following works: Lacoste, *Note sur la temps: essai sur la raisons de la mémoire et de l'espérance* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990); and Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*.

⁴⁸⁷ Henry predictably rearticulates faith in *non-intentional* and thus non-temporal terms. See Henry, *I am the Truth*, 192-96.

dwelling in the hearts of believers”)⁴⁸⁸ we seek for God by reference to the mood of hope (not angst), a hopeful posture, or *distentio* toward the City of God to come. As John Cavadini states, “Faith is thus revealed not merely as a propaedeutic to vision, but as a redirection of the noetic regard to a decidedly un-noetic realm, and ‘understanding’ becomes the position of the self constituted by a growth wholly defined in that realm—it becomes that is a ‘seeking.’”⁴⁸⁹ And it is this seeking in hope through faith that culminates in the “perpetual Sabbath” of the City of God.⁴⁹⁰

A *distentio* without reference to the temporality of faith is secular, nothing more than being-toward-death. However, to radicalize the *distentio* beyond the limits of being-in-the-world is not to eradicate *distentio* altogether. To radicalize my *distentio* does not eradicate such a temporal movement but stretches it to its maximal degree, “distending” the *distentio* toward its eternal “terminus.” Faith, which engenders the existential mood of hope, redeems secular time by breaking open temporality itself to that which transcends time. To sanctify and redeem the *distentio* does not eliminate temporality; for a profession of faith stretches the porous self’s future possibilities to-be toward a future beyond death and angst⁴⁹¹ to that absolute *parousia* where it shall see God face-to-face. This theological radicalization of the *distentio* framed by the *parousia* accords with Marion’s helpful judgment that *distentio* is transformed by faith into *extensio* toward God—my distracted state (*distentio*) translates into an existential attraction to God as I extend my temporal

⁴⁸⁸ Augustine, *De trin*, 14, 3.

⁴⁸⁹ John Cavadini, “The Structure and Intention of Augustine’s *De trinitate*,” *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 103-23. See p.7.

⁴⁹⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 30.

⁴⁹¹ Heidegger writes that “being-toward-death is essentially angst.” Thus the primordial mood of angst discloses our deepest existential potentiality of realizing our authentic being-in-the-world up against our limit experience of death. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 245.

destiny toward the eschaton (*extensio*).⁴⁹² The theological radicalization of time *extends* temporal existence forward, unclogging its temporal ecstasy to the absolute destiny to come.

The porous self so understood harbours a theological critique of Heidegger's preoccupation with the future temporal plane, i.e., being-toward-death, in a way that does not simply disqualify it or invert it as Henry's position tends to do.⁴⁹³ While Heidegger finds existential authenticity on the "possibility of impossibility" by which I (anxiously) create myself through my possibilities (do not rest on your laurels, but push forward!),⁴⁹⁴ the *imago Dei* repaired through faith both remembers the divine who can make it happy and strains impatiently (in hope) toward that absolute future in which faith is consummated and made happy in the full presence of God (*parousia*).⁴⁹⁵ While we wait in hope, we dwell in the future tense, in *epektasis*. It is though the porous self is looking at God while *in* this world through a glass darkly and in an enigma.⁴⁹⁶ My existential impatience, even restlessness, for the *parousia* is beaten back as I try to glimpse through faith the divine plenitude of Father and Son bonded by the love of the Spirit in their co-eternal aseity. Even the perfected *imago Dei* consists of a feeling of "absolute inadequacy."⁴⁹⁷ This side of the eschaton, I remain temporal if even aware of myself as a "self" only because it is

⁴⁹² Marion, *Au lieu de soi: L'approche de Saint Augustin*, 310.

⁴⁹³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §53, "Existential Project of an Authentic Being-toward-Death."

⁴⁹⁴ Heidegger calls death, "is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein." See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 232.

⁴⁹⁵ For more on Augustine's view of the temporality of eschatological expectation, see G. J. P. O'Daly, "Time as Distension and St. Augustine's Exegesis of Phil 3.12-14," *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes*, 23 (1977): 265-71; R. A. Markus, "Alienatio: Philosophy and Eschatology in the Development of an Augustinian Idea." In *Studia Patristica*, 9, ed., F.L. Cross, vol.3 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), 431-50.

⁴⁹⁶ Augustine often quotes Paul's phrase from 1 Corinthians 13.12: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."

⁴⁹⁷ Augustine, *De trin*, the title of book 15. The title that Edmund Hill gives to book XV is "the Absolute Inadequacy of the Perfected Image."

seeking that which it cannot fully grasp: the eternal *Verbum*.⁴⁹⁸ To complete the temporality of faith we must explicate its backward directionality, its *memoria*. It is here that a fuller theological treatment of temporality can be realized and here, by engaging with Husserl, that pilgrimage can be understood in both its past and future directionalities.

§31. *MEMORIA*: A CONTEMPLATIVE INTENTIONALITY

We sketch the final stage in the temporal pilgrimage to the eternal. We turn to a theological radicalization of Husserlian consciousness of internal-time, a mode of temporality which emphasizes the power of memory, i.e., retentive consciousness. To do so, we proceed from several facts already established: that my ek-static, temporal constitution is inescapable, a *fait accompli* (§27); that despite this temporal existence, I have been created with a double entry (§28); and that my entry to the eternal is a non-reflective word interior to me (§29). And finally, in the previous section we noted that the temporality of faith renders visible this inner word by *distending* my future beyond (without escaping) the temporal limit of being-toward-death (§30). We highlight here the temporal limits of Husserlian retentive consciousness as a boundary through which the porous self's *memoria* travels on its way toward the eternal. We recall once again that our proposal constitutes a counter-move against Henry's insistence that the self's relation to God is non-temporal. Henry's duplicitous self, moreover, is especially critical of memory. He writes that life in its pure self-presence, "is always present to itself, its memory without diversion, without thought, without a past, without memory—in its immemorial

⁴⁹⁸ Augustine, *De trin*, 13, 3; 15, 18; 15, 50.

memory. It is my flesh that is indivisible... it lies in the parousia of my flesh.”⁴⁹⁹ Our proposal of a contemplative intentionality takes aim against this kind of “living present” in which memory is disqualified altogether.

A redeemed *memoria* we are advocating in this section enacts a looking inward which gives way to an ascent, an inward pilgrimage inscribed within my non-reflective word. We have seen that memory is of profound importance to not only the porous self’s non-reflective self-awareness but also to the interior awareness of God (without making God a phenomenon present to me).⁵⁰⁰ The temporal streaming of memory forms that special place wherein God draws near but whose presence as a living present is never grasped within that temporal flow. Hence, the *verbum intimum* contains an irrepressible memory of the immemorial. I am a fractured through *memoria* to the eternal call to desire the God in whose image I was made: “Where in my consciousness, Lord, do you dwell? What kind of sanctuary have you built for yourself? You conferred this honour on my *memory* that you should dwell in it...But you remain immutable above all things, and yet have deigned to dwell in my memory since the time I learnt about you.”⁵⁰¹ My memory is porous to that which is not of this world, which is to say that I cannot, in principle, completely forget God (though I may repress that memory). Robert O’Connell observes that the *imago Dei* cannot have, “forgotten God completely. For if that were the case... No ‘reminder’ could ever succeed in awakening that lost memory.”⁵⁰² This primordial memory of the

⁴⁹⁹ Henry, *Incarnation*, 206-07.

⁵⁰⁰ Augustine wrote, for example, of the irrepressible holding-power of the memory with regard to my first-person self-awareness: “I cannot call myself myself apart from [memory].” *Confessions*, 10, 16, 25.

⁵⁰¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 10, 24, 36.

⁵⁰² O’Connell, *Origin of the Soul in Augustine’s Later Works*, 267. See Augustine, *Confessions*, 10, 19, 28.

immemorial supervenes on the reawakening or remembering of this origin, a contemplative style of intentionality ordered by the temporality of faith.

To enjoy the memory of creation, a particular type of intentionality is to be performed with “every ounce and particle of one’s life.”⁵⁰³ Just as my pores remain clogged when I am limited to the future horizon of being-in-the-world, similarly, they are clogged when fully matched to the strict phenomenological design of the temporal streaming of Husserl’s retentive consciousness. We must, to be sure, set our theological proposal of *memoria* within the horizon of Husserl’s consciousness of internal time, only to rupture its formalism by reworking temporality from an eschatological point of view. Though we have touched on retention in Husserl already, especially in light of how Henry critically appropriates the “living present” predicated on the duplicity of display (§9), we shall propose here the way in which the temporal streaming of retention can be submitted to theological modification without at the same time taking flight from temporality and our creaturehood.

Husserl claims the ego desires and craves fulfilment of objects so that it can manifest them as phenomena to consciousness.⁵⁰⁴ When it does fulfil that craving, the Husserlian ego phenomenizes objects into phenomenality by way of retentive modification. In other words, the ego moves outward into the temporal horizon of the world in order to synthesize (or constitute) temporal objects into a unity of experience, what we called an intentional constitution (§6). This intentional constitution necessarily occurs, moreover, within the flow of the consciousness of internal time. The Husserlian ego experiences the impact of the objects in a temporal flow that

⁵⁰³ Augustine, *De trin.*, 15, 39.

⁵⁰⁴ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. II, 779 and 726.

moves like a “comet’s tail”⁵⁰⁵ receding into the depths of the memory. One impression after another makes its impact that creates an ongoing temporal continuum, a continuum that is rooted in the ego itself because the ego is always the “referential centre of the whole surrounding world.”⁵⁰⁶ While Husserl does account for the future (protention) the present (the primal impression) and the past (retention) ecstasies, he confers the special privilege of holding consciousness together on the longitudinal expanse of retention. Consequently, he calls retentional consciousness a “unique kind of intentionality.”⁵⁰⁷ Take a melody for example. The melody gives itself point by point as the notes impact the ego. From the “perceived” note (not the note itself in the present), the tone is held in the memory and “holds onto” the elapsed tones themselves. In so doing, the retentional consciousness “progressively brings about the unity of the consciousness that is related to the unitary temporal object, to the melody.”⁵⁰⁸ In virtue of its longitudinal expanse and maximal unifying power, Husserl gives to retention the perceptual integrity required for constitution at all, for “retention constitutes the living horizon of the now.”⁵⁰⁹ Calling retention a “horizontal intentionality,” he claims that it unifies, by holding together in the closest possible unity, the conscious experience of time so that the flow of temporality is stretched, gradually and linearly, without rupture, from the primal impression to the retention, to the retention of the retention backward until it fades.⁵¹⁰ On such an account, the temporal flow proceeds from the present toward nothingness in a

⁵⁰⁵ Husserl employs the comet’s tail metaphor frequently to describe the way in which the present relates to the past. We covered this in some depth already in §10 above. For more on the comet’s tail metaphor, see *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 32.

⁵⁰⁶ Husserl, *Thing and Space: Lectures of 1907*, trans., Richard Rojcewicz (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1997), 69.

⁵⁰⁷ Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 33.

⁵⁰⁸ Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 40.

⁵⁰⁹ Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 45.

⁵¹⁰ Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 85.

sustained, prefixed and compact horizontal flow, for the present “continually dies” away as it recedes carefully within the strict and stable boundaries of the subject’s memory, as if such boundaries represent banks enclosing and guiding the flow of a steady continuum (*stetiges Kontinuum*).⁵¹¹ Held together ultimately by this retentional form, Husserlian intentionality limits phenomena to their objectification in retention as they pass from the present into retentional modification onward as they sink into the depths of nothingness.

A contemplative intentionality theologically radicalizes the Husserlian retentional acts by referring them back to that which cannot die away or fade from memory, and thus, to that which spills over the strict boundaries of the retentional form. The contemplative *memoria* reaches back to the origin, to creation itself, but also to the beginning of faith, the in-breaking of God into history that complicates the linear and horizontal structure of the temporal flow: Christ’s death and resurrection. The *memoria* par excellence of the Christ event is the eucharist, a ritual that celebrates Christ’s body and blood by continually memorializing them (through bread and wine) in expectation for what is to come: “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor. 11. 27). Insofar as Husserl requires that retentional consciousness to “phenomenalize” the datum in question by rendering the intentional aim fulfilled by a temporal object, the contemplative style of intentionality violates this principle of phenomenality. My *memoria* remains empty in that I cannot retrieve my creation or the body and blood of Christ through retention and thus fit God inside my retentional continuum, enclosing God within my temporal flow as a phenomenon present to me. We must

⁵¹¹ Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, 105, 119. For German, see *Husserliana*, band X, 115.

continue to be mindful that God is not a phenomenon (§3). The porous self who contemplates God *cannot* achieve intentional fulfilment precisely because God's repose exceeds the temporal horizon, the integrity of which is only maintained within the prefixed and stable boundaries that unifies all temporal experience, boundaries that set up in advance the condition for the possibility of intentional fulfilment. To profess faith in God is to therefore to suffer (to suffer here is linked to the impatience of waiting for and hastening that which will someday arrive) an empty intention (not merely poorly filled but entirely empty) that disrupts the continuous monotony of an endless temporal continuum operating strictly from its own resources. As empty, the contemplative retention requires faith (the "evidence of things not seen"). But this emptiness is nourished by a faith that elicits the eternal, drawing near to God by curving upward transfiguring retention from an eschatological vantage point, moving no longer in the backward direction but toward the present—without making God present to me.

The Curvature of Memory

The first thing to say about the curvature of *memoria* is that, in decisive contrast to Husserlian retentionality, it does not allow the memory of God to recede into nothingness, continually dying away "like a comet's tail." Always there, in the pure presencing of the present, God is nevertheless active in that God extends grace to those who profess faith, drawing them to the present. Disrupting the horizontal and chronological temporal flow, God's presence evokes a contemplative desire enabling me to modify temporality itself, unclogging it, breaking open its apparent uniform state as a "closed system." By way of an inward descent that takes a turn upward to

God's eternity, the contemplative retention manipulates the temporal flow as it moves backward, in one fell swoop, and by grace, moving from stable finitude to a transcendent rupture upward. Just so, contemplative intentionality verifies itself by providing its own theological fulfilment, a fulfilment which is outside the world and beyond time. Moving backward to that immemorial, and thus modified by contemplation, the retention does not stream in continuity with the sinking away of other temporal objects into the depths of memory but bends upward, sharply, by way of a curvature. Bending upward, the *memoria* curves forward because the *memoria* is ineluctably drawn forward to the consummation of time itself, the future *parousia*.

The eucharist, we recall, declares both *memoria* and *epektasis* in one breath: "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11. 27). We affirm what Michael Purcell describes as the double temporality of the Eucharist: "The structure of the eucharist which is an essentially temporal event undertaken in the present as an attempt to memorialise an immemorial past, and which attempt at memorialising gives a future yet to come."⁵¹² The temporal levity of eucharistic *memoria* is such, therefore, that it rises upward, breaking from the linear flow, only to curve toward the expectation of *parousia*. Gathering together both backward and forward ecstasies into an interlocking mutuality, and made concrete and effective through contemplation, the porous self opens onto both *memoria* and *epektasis* at once as the self "seeks" in and through time, and yet over against the horizontal flow of time, the God who transcends time.

Certainly we can highlight the corporate and embodied aspects of the eucharist that Purcell highlights in his proposal of a "Eucharistic subjectivity"⁵¹³ and

⁵¹² Michael Purcell, *Levinas and Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 157.

⁵¹³ Purcell, *Levinas and Theology*, 156.

that David Ford maintains in the analysis of a “Eucharistic self.”⁵¹⁴ The eucharistic event is not a solipsistic event, certainly. We present the phenomenological intelligibility of the bodily/corporate aspects of the eucharist in chapter six (§34). We intend here merely to align the self as a dative pole along the temporal axis peculiar to the eucharistic *memoria*, which is given in view of a double movement. For, “to proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes,” implies both memory and expectation, and thus an empty retention is met with an empty protention. These two temporal movements join together in a collateral drama that forms a single curvature upward without making God present as a phenomenon. How may we describe this temporal curvature phenomenologically?

To contemplate the eternal through *memoria* is to uncover a double intentional movement that converges on God without domesticating God as a phenomenon, without making God an idolatrous correlate designed to fit within the horizontal integrity of prefixed retentional and protentional acts. Even though the contemplative intentionality remains empty in both past and future directions, its emptiness is not without theological import here: by faith the *memoria* seeks its origin in creation (past) and *epektasis* desires its destiny in the new creation (future), both of which spill over and thus elude the stable horizon of the temporal form. The empty intentional aim deploys faith in order, not to fulfil the aim, but to lead it toward the present where its origin and destiny become interchangeable. In so doing, a contemplative intentionality distends the intentional regard backwards and forwards, simultaneously, lifting me upward beyond the interplay between past and future as I look inward toward the eternal. Past and future streams converge in

⁵¹⁴ David Ford, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), see chapter six, “‘Do This’: A Eucharistic Self.”

contemplation so that the retention bends upward and proceeds upstream toward the present and the protention bends upward and accelerates downstream toward the present, where they complement one another in their respective gazes, unfulfilled and yet remembering and expecting in a single eschatological curvature. The retentional streaming looks to the origin and the future streaming searches in anticipation for the redemption of that lost origin, and they culminate in the selfsame quest for redemption, so that beginning (retention) and the destiny of life (protention) become a single collateral telos moved toward the end goal of creation, interlocking as they bend toward the eternal presence of God. The original Sabbath present in Genesis 1 shall become, and already is, the eternal Sabbath of the *parousia* proleptically manifest as a rupture within the relentless flow of time.

Understood by way of this single curvature, the two streaming ecstasies open onto the porosity of the present without collapsing into the present and without confusing their respective temporal directionalities. Access to the “living present” in its pure timelessness is not enjoyed or made present (as in Henry). The curvature orders life, in its temporal intervals of flow and rupture, of mundane continuity and eschatological elevation, as a “seeking” anchored in the *memoria*. Propelled upward, thereby lifting the temporal streaming of *epektasis* upward, contemplation does not escape temporality but breaks open its enclosure of contingency. Contemplation orients temporality away from the apparent nullity to which it leads and resets its course toward its proper telos, the coming renewal of creation to be inaugurated by Christ. Retentional consciousness so understood bends forward as it arches toward the protention which likewise bends backward, a double movement lifting me as I ascend to the present. To the extent that I seek the present I affirm a supremely rich

finality for time in claiming for it the Sabbath to come. Even though Husserl insists that intentional fulfilment is the essential feature of retentive perception,⁵¹⁵ it is not so with regard to spiritual perception nourished by contemplation and sustained by grace. Spiritual perception exhausts intentionality in that it moves away from the temporal movements of retention and protention toward their convergence in the present.

Yet because faith is a temporal movement employed by perceptual acts, and however close I may come to glimpsing the present, I never experience what could be considered an over-realized unity within the interior space of the living present. For this would be to submit to an over-realized escapism of the sort decisively on display in Henry, where the self inhabits the enduring fullness of the eternal, a self-repose independent of past and future. We ought not forget that the curvature of *memoria* cannot escape the temporal streaming, both chronological continuity and liturgical/eucharistic discontinuity. This is perhaps why the body and blood of Christ is recreated in its eucharistic form, over and again until Christ comes. The call to repetition is an explicit acknowledgement that the eucharist must be repeated *in time* because it cannot accomplish fully what it seeks; it cannot claim for itself the glory of the present (*parousia*, literally translated as “presence”). The most we can do now is yield to God through contemplation, which in no way denies our irrefutable temporal condition, and which deploys *memoria* as a theological means of delaying/hastening time. And while the eucharist is the “time of God” par excellence, the contemplative style of intentionality is not merely a ritual or an act of prayer but

⁵¹⁵ See for example, Husserl, *Thing and Space*, §4.

rather a way of habitually rendering the *imago Dei* porous to its Creator who transcends time—it is pilgrimage.

A contemplative intentionality puts into play an ongoing remembering that is more but not less than prayer, liturgical praxis or vigil. In the words of Kevin Hart, “contemplation may bring me closer to God if I understand how I am living but it is not structured as a living relation with God. It is an attitude, not prayer.”⁵¹⁶ Stretched in both directions without fulfilment and drawn together into a single curvature, the porous self inhabits a contemplative attitude of wisdom, which yields to the fracture of time itself. Why? Contemplation breaks from the stability and monotony of the temporal flow (contra Husserl), unclogging time, making manifest its originally permeable structure. But in such a theological departure from Husserl, contemplation does not lead the self to become absorbed into the living present (contra Henry). On the basis of the porosity of display, a contemplative word of faith makes visible the non-reflective word inside me, opening that interior aperture to the joy of intimacy with God’s presence whose presence is present in the pure co-substantiality of Father, Son and Spirit, a simple aseity pure in its co-presence and thus always beyond my contemplative gaze. As an expression of wisdom, contemplation is a gaze directed toward the supreme Trinity “on which you are not yet capable of fixing your eyes.”⁵¹⁷ Without fulfilment, then, we intend to characterize contemplation as an intentionality of “seeking” or pilgrimage undertaken in faith and sacrament for a God before whom I shall sit “face to face” in the *parousia* to come.

⁵¹⁶ Kevin Hart, “Contemplation—Beyond and Behind.” *Sophia* 48 (2009): 435-59, for reference, see 456.

⁵¹⁷ Augustine, *De trin*, 15, 50.

Chapter 6:

Between Flesh and Body

In rendering itself visible, the body does not render itself alone visible, but allows to come into the light of the world the invisible soul that, in vivifying the body, is its perpetual origin, without which it would show nothing.

–Jean-Louis Chrétien⁵¹⁸

§32. THE PHENOMENON OF THE BODY

In this final chapter we sketch a phenomenology of the porous body that invokes the Husserlian grammar of *Leibkörper*. This configures the body with two styles of givenness that Henry radicalizes into an absolute duality, interior (*Leib*) over against exterior (*Körper*) (see chapter four). To overcome Henry's privileging of *Leib* at the expense of *Körper* that trades on the dangerous monism to which the duplicitous body inevitably leads, this chapter develops the porosity of display as a line of inquiry that positively evaluates both interior and exterior fields of display, both *Leib* and *Körper*, by figuring them together as two modes of givenness manifest in a single body. Given that phenomenology and theology intertwine, the porous body is brought to light with resources drawn from both disciplines. To that end, this chapter intends to describe the phenomenological relation between *Leib* and *Körper*

⁵¹⁸ Jean-Louis Chrétien, *La voix nue: phénoménologie de la promesse* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1990), 13

explicitly from an eschatological point of view, i.e., the temporality of the resurrection body.

It would seem impossible to describe a porous body tied to the resurrection body as a phenomenon situated between the phenomena of flesh (*Leib*) and body (*Körper*) as Henry conceives them. For Henry, flesh and body are not only radically separate but are also antipodal, in absolute opposition, and are kept apart by a non-temporal monism and over-realized eschatology. Yet, as we discussed in chapter four, Henry resolves the dilemma of how to interrelate the invisible flesh with the visible body with recourse to the notion of “paradox.” He concedes that a paradoxical synthesis is the only means by which subjective flesh (already realized in the *parousia*) can come into contact with the objective body in the world (that has already passed away).⁵¹⁹ In order to avoid adopting a duplicitous body that privileges interiority at the expense of exteriority, a position that untenable for the reasons outlined above, this chapter proposes a porous body whose temporal and bodily display in the world-horizon is in eschatological tension with that which is outside of the world, namely the resurrection body sitting face to face before God’s *parousiaic* presence. Adopting the porous body is a counter-move against Henry in that it allows for both (1) a deeper integration of flesh (interior *Leib*) and body (exterior *Körper*) and (2) a temporal articulation of the body, i.e., its unfinished nature. The porous body therefore accords to both flesh and body the dignity and value of all creation and the eschatological destiny for which all creation groans.

To determine the complex phenomenological shape of the porous body we continue to focus on Augustine. Interestingly, not unlike Henry, Augustine framed

⁵¹⁹ Henry, *Incarnation*, 282-83.

his reflections on the body by distinguishing between “outer” and “inner” as spatial metaphors able to bring to light key features of the double givenness of the single body (*unum exterius alterum interius*). He certainly viewed the “flesh” (i.e., the soul or the subjective animating principle) and the “body” as distinct spheres of givenness. At the same time, Augustine’s distinction is not an absolute or impenetrable demarcation, splitting the body, cleaving it in two.⁵²⁰ While distinct but not autonomous spheres, flesh and body are porous to each other in their differential unity as two modes of givenness exhibited in and through a single temporal body, the destiny of which lies in its eschatological perfection. Flesh and body, in that final day, shall appear harmoniously as not only a single body harmoniously integrated within itself, but more radically, as a single mode of givenness. As such, in that final day, my body *shall* appear spiritually and my spirit *shall* appear bodily, brought together in an absolute givenness: singular, unique, fully integrated and “at home” with itself, and, given to itself, from within the selfsame horizon, simultaneously as spiritual body or bodily spirit.

This side of death, we can, therefore, place the accent on the future “tense” of the porous body, captured in summary form by the expression “I will be my body,” which is a theological materialism aimed at overcoming Henry’s thesis that “I am my

⁵²⁰ It is noteworthy to point out the similarity between Augustine’s “soul-body” distinction and Henry’s “flesh-body” distinction, which of course, goes some way in establishing common ground between Henry and Augustine with regard to the body as consisting of “soul” and “body.” Henry insists his doctrine of flesh is much like Descartes’ theory of the soul. Henry writes that it is not our physical eyes that see but, “our flesh, our ‘soul’ says Descartes, is what sees.” See Henry, *Incarnation*, 287. For more on Henry’s appropriation of the Cartesian soul, see Henry, “Does the Concept of the Soul mean Anything?” trans. Girard Etzkorn *Philosophy Today* 13 no.2 (1969): 94-114. The point to take away here is not about the mechanics of sight but about the fact that Henry compares his conception of flesh to the Cartesian soul. Moreover, his flesh-body distinction, as we highlighted in chapter four, is derived from Husserl and Husserl compared the flesh to an interior “soul” (*Seel*) as well, see Husserl, *Ideas II*, part 2, chapter 2, “The constitution of the reality of the soul.” So while we shall adduce quotes below from Augustine that discuss the soul-body relation, we are using it at the very least as a point of dialogue and comparison with Henry flesh-body distinction.

body,” which succumbs to a “tense-less” living present (see §20 above).⁵²¹ This is no way denies that I *am* my body, and yet, in my bodily acts and presences, I am not fully present, nor do I subsist in perfect simultaneity inwardly—for corporeality theologically understood is communicated through a becoming, an arrival and thus a longing for a completion of what is now incomplete. “I am my body” is founded on an prior theological truth, “I will be my body.”⁵²²

We define some basic terms here in preparation for the constructive analysis of the porous body. The porous body, first of all, is situated neither in the pure form of flesh (interior lived-experience) nor in the pure spatial locality of the body (exterior empirical object), but in an impure “between.” As such, the porous body displays two bodily modes of givenness: (1) an interior state qualified by a living singularity, as this subjective “me” (*Leib*), and (2) an exterior state demonstrably subject to empirical laws such as temporality, spatiality, weakness of constitution, etc. (*Körper*). Such a *Leibkörper* consists of two modes of givenness that are distinct but complementary. From an eschatological vantage point, this chapter intends to consider a “single body with a two modes of givenness” as it may become unified with other bodies in the community of the mystical body of Christ.

⁵²¹ I borrow the eschatological expression “I will be my body” from Brian Robinette’s fascinating phenomenological-theological study of the resurrection body. See Brian Robinette, *Grammars of Resurrection: A Christian Theology of Presence and Absence* (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2009), chapter 4 “I will be My Body.”

⁵²² We note here, without entering into the debate between apophatic and kataphatic theology, that Graham Ward’s conclusion that the body is “apophatic” is richly suggestive and helps sharpen what we may mean by a body inclined toward the future, the expression “I will be my body.” I cannot know, in my present state, what my body is like in its complete actuality, at least, not yet. So all phenomenological or theological analyses of not only Christ’s body but our body as well remain themselves suggestive; hence we are to remain mindful of the “unsayable” quality intrinsic to our present body. For more on the apophatic nature of the body, see Graham Ward, *Politics of Discipleship: Becoming a Postmaterial Citizen* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), chapter 6, “The Metaphysics of the Body.”

Bringing to light such a body proceeds down a particular path. On our way, then, to making positive statements about the resurrection body and perpetual Sabbath of the social body of Christ, we proceed with a strategy that, in brief, consists of five moves: first we summarize Henry's problematic phenomenology of body as it relates not only to the duplicitous body but also to the social body of Christ (§33); the phenomenological structure of the *Leibkörper* is elucidated in a manner that overcomes the problems outlined in Henry (§34). The temporality of the body, i.e., its unfinished nature, is clarified by its telos, the resurrection body (§35). In order to make the resurrection body the key object of hope for the Christian life, it must be professed within and sacramentally nourished by the social space of the body of Christ (§36). And, finally, professing hope in the resurrection body involves a climactic bodily blessing that shall enable the saints together to "see" God face to face on that final day, a blessing Christians yearn for with eschatological impatience (§37).

§33. MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST IN HENRY

In order to discuss with phenomenological precision the unveiling of the bodily self before God framed in its eschatological tense, we must first pass through how Henry thematizes the "mystical body of Christ" in *Incarnation: une philosophie de la chair*.⁵²³ Entitling the penultimate section of the book "La relation à autrui selon le christianisme: le corps mystique du Christ," Henry accords great organizing power to the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ as a theological category that

⁵²³ Henry, *Incarnation*, 350-59.

draws together the essential aspects of human flesh as it arises in and through the “Word made flesh.”

We have introduced Henry’s strict bifurcation of the duplicitous body (see chapter 4 for a fuller account); yet this radical duplicity of display is struck in a new Christological key in his exposition of the mystical body of Christ. It is a theological category that ties together not only how my individual flesh relates to Christ’s flesh but how all flesh relates together in the eternal Word. We have been careful to note that for Henry the “flesh” gives itself as a sphere of pure interiority with an order of display radically distinct from and opposed to the display of the world; we have called this subjective pole a pure *Leib* (§21-22). The mystical body of Christ therefore unites, not all bodies, but all “flesh” within Christ’s singular acosmic flesh. How, then, does Henry incorporate a theory of intersubjectivity (i.e., *la relation à autrui*) if it is only by way of an interior pathway that we can relate to the other? How does my interior site of flesh enter into the other’s interior site of flesh without first traversing across the exterior dimension of the world-horizon (outside myself) where the other’s body appears?

Henry indeed sidesteps the need to address the question of traversing across temporal and spatial distance to the other body by unifying my experience with the other within a universal sphere of acosmic flesh. This acosmic sphere accommodates not only my ongoing eternal birth or arrival of myself to myself, but it also contains every other self’s eternal arrival, as we are all generated/birthed within the “Word made flesh.” A social body of all humans within Christ’s flesh appears in the fullness of God’s interior reciprocity among Father and Son and Spirit prior to the appearances

of the body in the world, i.e., prior to my ejection onto the temporal horizon of the world with the appearances of my body (genitive) to other bodies (dative).

This theological articulation of the relation to the other is for Henry Christological in substance. Christ represents as the absolute transcendental principle for all being-with (*être-avec*), or what Henry also calls the original essence of all community; the condition for the possibility of relating to the other is founded on the basis of Christ's donation of life to all who are living. This original donation designates what we have described as an invisible "transcendental birth" or "non-temporal generation" from which I am continually born (see §11). This is a birth in which I am gathered together in unity with myself and every other self, and by virtue of this in-gathering, converge with the other as we co-emerge within God's ongoing emergence in the "Word made flesh." All community in consequence of the acosmic essence of community takes place in a transhistorical, eternal birth that is common to all because all enjoy a birth in Christ in order to live at all.⁵²⁴ Hence, for Henry, as this "me" who is eternally thrown into life (dative/accusative), I relate to the other inside the selfsame eternal arrival into life. Before my ejection into the temporal world, before conscious reflection and before any ethnic, economic, social or even sexual difference is manifest, I experience the other.⁵²⁵ In spite of basic sexual difference, Henry maintains we find a common point unity in our common source of life from which we are all continually "being given to ourselves in the auto-donation

⁵²⁴ Henry writes of this transcendental community: "It thus does experience the other in itself but on this basis, in terms of the other's own experience of this basis. Both the self and the other have a basis in this experience. But neither the self nor the other represents it to themselves. The community is a subterranean affective layer. Each one drinks the same water from this source and this wellspring, which it itself is." See Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 133.

⁵²⁵ Henry, *Incarnation*, 355-56.

of absolute Life [i.e., Christ].”⁵²⁶ The singularity of each self, we argued in chapter four, is problematic for Henry in that the essence of “me” and the essence of “you” coincide in the selfsame eternal arrival, a monism which does not attend to the temporal and spatial distinctions between “me” in my ipseity and “you” in your ipseity (§15).

For Henry, then, the relation to the other in her singularity is entirely acosmic and invisible. That is, the being-in-common of duplicitous bodies is wholly transcendentalized within Christ’s pure *Leib* without reference to his historical *Körper*. The theological consequence of such a monistic relation to the other is radical: each transcendental self, each embodied “me,” is co-substantial, immediately unified and drawn together with one another in their interior flesh on the basis of their common substance, namely Christ’s flesh:

Thus each transcendental living self is in the Word before being with itself, and in this Word it is with the other before the other is given to itself. And the other is in this same situation of being in the Word before being with itself or with me – because it is in the Word in which it is both with itself and with me—in which I am myself with the other and myself with the Word. It is notable that each transcendental self is being-with the other in the place where it is given to itself, and it is with the other before all exterior determination – even before being male or female”⁵²⁷

Each “me” in its unique singularity is born from not just a common source but in and through the selfsame movement of life, a principal reason why we insisted that Henry’s duplicitous body reduces to a non-temporal monism in which all singularity dissolves into the singularity of absolute life (see §16 above).

⁵²⁶ Henry, *Incarnation*, 356.

⁵²⁷ Henry, *Incarnation*, 356.

Another theological consequence of Henry's variant of the mystical body is that it excludes the possibility of the resurrection body to come. Because our common birth is without world it is also without time, in an absolute "living present." That we always remain in the eternal present of Christ's flesh as it arrives within itself is, for Henry, proof that we do not exist within an eschatological horizon. Henry puts it starkly: "In its 'now' and its 'reality'.... we do not want nor will we ever want or take hold of any future."⁵²⁸ For the essence of life is other-than-the-world (*Autre-que-le-monde*), a radical-elsewhere (*Ailleurs radical*) wherein the "glory" of absolute flesh emerges in and through my living present.⁵²⁹ The immemorial structure of all flesh, divine and human, is retained in such a close self-embrace that no gap, distance, temporal delays, and thus memory or expectation is possible: "Thus my flesh is indestructible and impenetrable [*indéchirable*]... and it is in the *parousia* of my flesh where it is achieved."⁵³⁰ By grounding the self-revelation of Christ's presence as the *parousia* in the interior and invisible display of my living present, Henry hazards a fully realized eschatology. If this is the case, then it follows that I am always already in the full presence of Christ together with all the saints in the living present that presses on me at each and every moment, underneath the interplay between past and future. Such is the over-realized eschatology that is at the foundation of the duplicitous body. As Kevin Hart observes, if the arrival and full impact of the *parousia* gives rise to all flesh, then it "means that the world has already passed. So [Henry's] eschatology is at once over-realized (it has always and already happened) and under-realized (it has no decisive relation to Christ's

⁵²⁸ Henry, *Incarnation*, 91.

⁵²⁹ Henry, *Incarnation*, 338.

⁵³⁰ Henry, *Incarnation*, 208.

Resurrection and to Pentecost).”⁵³¹ To speak of Henry’s eschatology is therefore to speak of Christ’s presence in the flesh as “already” realized, precisely, as a living present. And this renders explicit the over-realized eschatology that maintains the duplicity of appearing between the flesh (*parousia*) manifest in contradistinction to the temporal body (already passed away).

Naturally, Henry’s interpretation of the mystical body of Christ does not lend itself to the traditional or standard interpretation as a communal body of church life (which also includes the sacramental body received together in liturgical rights).⁵³² Rather, for Henry, the mystical body of Christ, because it subsists outside of, and does not intertwine with, the temporal streaming of the world-horizon, is given within the invisible sphere of my living present as a concrete flesh. There is no Christ revealing himself (genitive) to me in the flesh (dative) in a manner that splits the genitive and dative. The appearing of something to someone appears as an original unity for Henry: my appearing in the flesh is co-given with the self-revelation of the “Word made flesh.” Christ irrupts within me giving “me” to myself in one and the same movement—a movement brought about by an impression in which I feel myself feeling, a lived immediacy manifest inside me before my body-object can take its various positions within the temporal streaming of the world. The mystical body of Christ is therefore manifest as a primitive pathos (a primitive Word) in the secret and nocturnal depths of my self-feeling without mediation in and through the temporality of the world-horizon; and it is there, in the nocturnal pathos, that I am in an original union with the other and the other with me.

⁵³¹Kevin Hart, “‘Without world’: Eschatology in Michel Henry,” 183.

⁵³²For more on the historical development of the concept of “mystical body” with regard to both the institutional church and the eucharist, see Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: the Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. Gemma Simmonds and Richard Price (London: SCM Press, 2006).

The eternal Word, for Henry, is neither communicated in a linguistic form nor in a conscious representational thought. Rather it appears as a primal revelation expressed in self-feeling that rivets me to myself before I can even reflect, speak or engage the world with my bodily senses. Such a primitive word does not correlate to a concept or appear in the linguistic exchange between perceiving subjects in the world. Such a primitive word appears as an eternal call that I cannot help but hear, and “its listening is nothing other than the noise of life, or its rustling in us as the embrace in which it gives itself to itself and gives us to ourselves in the self-same donation.”⁵³³ Joined together with the other members of the mystical body in and through this primitive donation, the feeling of “myself” that I continually undergo as myself and that you continually undergo as yourself, whether we realize it or not, constitutes a mystical experience within an acosmic sphere given according to its own acosmic deployment. This mystical body of Christ is therefore a concrete flesh manifest as an ongoing impressional affection among living flesh undulating internal to each other as they form the collective “tissue” of Christ’s body. An extended quote from Henry highlights this imaginative, if strange, interpretation of the divine community:

And so the mystical body of Christ grows and increases itself indefinitely through each of its members who are sanctified in the flesh of Christ. In this potentially indefinite extension, the mystical body of Christ is construed as the “common person of humanity” and “this is why he is called the New Adam.” This edification does not proceed by an accumulation of elements, as “stones” added together like an edifice constructed by hands of humans, but rather they are in Christ. It is because each is in the Word that the erection of each transcendental self, given to itself in the Word, is one with the Word. It discovers itself there, in the same moment given to itself in the same unique Life of the same unique Self in which all

⁵³³ Henry, “Quatre principes de la phénoménologie,” 25.

other Selves are given to themselves. And so each is one with all other others in Christ and, because Christ is not divisible—being the unique Life in which the power of life dwells—they are not separated, but rather the inverse: one in Him and with Him, they are identically in Him, one with each other all equally in Him.⁵³⁴

It is helpful to re-inscribe this extended statement of the acosmic mystical body of Christ within the structure of Henry's duplicitous body. This radical unity that each of us possesses with one another on the basis of Christ's "taking flesh" cannot be realized through bodily acts in the visible display of the world. Simply put, the mystical body of Christ is not a process of the coming together of bodies in a visible, social gathering; rather it reflects that which has "already" taken place in Christ's in the living present, within the acosmic universal flesh. This is why Henry writes, "Before thought, before the opening of the world and the deployment of its intelligibility, there fulgurates the arch-intelligibility of absolute Life, the Parousia of the Word through whom it achieves itself."⁵³⁵

The principle of the duplicity of display and the duplicitous body to which it gives rise introduces three problems we must overcome in the following reflections: (1) the bifurcation of the body into two irreconcilable halves, between, on the one hand, an auto-affective flesh (pure *Leib*), and, on the other, an irreal, objective body in the world (impure *Körper*). (2) The non-temporal monism that privileges the interior flesh at the expense of the body in the world sustained by an over-realized eschatology (flesh is the realization of the *parousia*). (3) And the interior entryway to the other, an eccentric view of "la relation à autrui" that furnishes the coordinates of an "acosmic" social body not of this world (*Autre-que-le-monde*).

⁵³⁴ Henry, *Incarnation*, 358.

⁵³⁵ Henry, *Incarnation*, 364.

To overcome these three problems, we highlight a phenomenology of the body that integrates flesh and body within a single body (*Leibkörper*) that is shaped by the both the social institution/sacrament of the body of Christ now and the resurrection body to come. I am between flesh and body, which means I am a both interior and exterior, a double givenness arising in and through a single body. The absolute disclosure of God's presence in its concrete givenness is deferred to the future resurrection where the gap between flesh and body is closed and where am I given to myself as a wholly integrated. In that final day, I will still be a body, see with eyes and have "hair and nails," be in possession of a "healthy silhouette in the prime of life,"⁵³⁶ and maintain my sexuality;⁵³⁷ even the martyrs will "display their scars;"⁵³⁸ yet all the saints shall assume an incorruptible and eternal flesh that enables them to see God face to face. Until that day, we dwell between flesh and body, in a frail and mortal state configured by the porosity of display, with two modes of givenness in a single body, and to that bodily state we now turn.

§34. THE POROUS BODY

This section makes explicit what is typically implicit in the body's most basic movements: the inmost phenomenological structure operative at both the subjective and objective levels experience. How does my flesh take on a body in the world, cohering with it as a unit? How do flesh and body appear together in the field of visible display as single body without pitting interior against exterior (that cultivates a radical duplicity)?

⁵³⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 12.

⁵³⁷ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 17.

⁵³⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 19.

We have seen that Henry's duplicitous body displays a strict duality so far as it maintains an absolute line of division between flesh (*Leib*) and body (*Körper*). This section attends to the manner in which flesh and body interrelate, as co-given aspects of experience, always realized together within a single body. Framed in this way, the flesh appears as an interior dynamic movement (*Leib*), while the body appears as a visible spatio-temporal body-pole susceptible to resistance, and is thus always placed "over against" other body-poles and object-poles in the world-horizon (*Körper*). Describable on the basis of porosity, the distinction between flesh and body is *not* absolute. Whatever the nature of the porous distinction between flesh and body, the two modes of givenness are inextricably bound within a single body.

How is the porous body brought to light phenomenologically? The porous body makes itself felt within a space between flesh and body, where I receive myself as this interior subjective "me" (*Leib*) in and through a body-pole visibly manifest in the world (*Körper*). A porous body dwells in the play between the two modes of givenness, the distinction between *Leib* and *Körper*. The porous body in consequence of the space between does not draw a clean mark between flesh and body. In fact, the subjective flesh and the objective body frequently confront one another, and in their co-givenness within a single body, yield to conflict and tension resulting in sin, frailty, fatigue and mortality. Existing in this precarious space between, it follows that I am flesh but not pure flesh. I am porous to the body in the world. It also follows that I am a body but not pure body. I am porous to the interior flesh. I am between them, in that porous gap that separates them, a gap which exposes me in my subjective body to the dangers and forces of sin and death which the objective body undergoes in the world-horizon.

This side of the eschaton the flesh and body exhibit distinct, if integrated, manners of givenness. As an embodied pilgrim in the world, my flesh is interior, subjective and living. It is “more excellent than the nature of the body: it surpasses it by far, it is a thing spiritual, incorporeal, akin to the substance of God. It is somewhat invisible, it rules the body, moves the limbs, guides the sense, prepares thoughts, puts forth actions, takes in images of countless things.”⁵³⁹ But in what way is the subjective “interior” flesh given in a manner different from the objective “exterior” body? We must pursue this question in greater detail if our argument is to achieve any level of rigour.

If the porous body is not the duplicitous body, then how does the porous body maintain an interior/exterior distinction within a single body? Because the distinction is neither a juxtaposition nor a strict duplicity, the interior flesh is fractured to the exterior body thereby opening up communication between them. Indeed, the flesh is given to itself not in pure auto-affection, as if it could arrive at its own materiality purely by feeling itself crush against itself. Rather the interior flesh arrives at itself by virtue of its temporal displacement, that is, by virtue of its disjointed arrangement with the body. Flesh materializes itself in and through dislocation from itself, transmitting itself outward, into the polarity of the exterior body. The temporal fracture, as we saw in chapter five, dislocates the flesh from “self-presence” or “self-impressionality” or “immediacy.” Simply put, flesh arrives at itself by way of mediation. Dynamically extended in and through the exterior body, the flesh is typically situated in continuity with the temporal movements of the exterior body. Flesh is thereby fractured to the temporality of the body, which in turn, creates a

⁵³⁹ Augustine, *Expositions of the Book of Psalms*, 6 vols. Psalms 1-150, trans. H.M. Wilkins, (Oxford, UK: John Henry Parker, 1853), 146, 4.

dynamic space of mutual communication. On the one hand, flesh reveals itself to itself in and through the body, and, on the other, the body discloses itself as living body endowed with abiding subjective powers and personal identity: two modes of givenness deeply integrated within a single body, a single *Leibkörper*.

Because the flesh is given as an “impure” interiority, flesh is not locked within itself and thus isolated from the body’s exposure to the world-horizon. Flesh is ineluctably given as a temporal phenomenon. As such, it moves dynamically through the body as a whole. Flesh is therefore not manifest as a timeless “inner spark” imprisoned within the body. Nor is it located in the mind as an immovable inner intellectual “theatre.” Rather, the flesh, “is whole in the whole and whole also in any part of the body. Thus when something happens even in some tiny little part of the body that the soul is aware of, the whole soul is aware of it because it does not escape the whole soul even though it does not happen in the whole body.”⁵⁴⁰ That is, interior flesh, as a subjective mode of givenness, exercises a temporality attuned to the exterior body’s temporality enabling interior flesh to incorporate itself within the exterior body’s perceptual wholeness—the flesh is the body’s living self-expression manifest in acts of grasping, communicating, perceiving, touching, even feeling and suffering, etc. The flesh pulls the exterior body within itself, a complete incorporation that gives to the body-pole in its entirety a capacity for life, an ability to live through phenomena and experience them in their concrete givenness. Never isolated within a specific bodily cavity or cognitive capability, flesh is present to my bodily appendages as a living subjectivity (*Leib*) in precisely the same depth and texture to my eyes or waist or index finger. Opening onto my body as a whole, flesh

⁵⁴⁰ Augustine, *De trin*, 6,8.

renders the entire volume of this particular body-pole suffuse with subjective power. The subjective properties of the flesh are expressed in and through the body all at once in a temporal unity.

Yet the link between flesh and body becomes difficult to articulate when flesh is characterized as temporal but not properly spatial. If flesh cannot be localized neither can it be objectively measured or quantified. My flesh is not five feet seven inches tall with a particular weight and volume of an amateur wrestler. To express it differently, we could suggest that the flesh, from the point of view of the porous body, is given in an immaterial “space” that cannot be spatialized—and thus displays a sphere of givenness incongruous with the spatial polarity of the body. On this view, one could claim that flesh cannot be measured, weighed or circumscribed within geometrical dimensions, the manners of givenness associated with the exterior body. The benefit of describing the flesh in this way is that it refrains from reducing flesh to a psychological faculty, or to an ego-seat embodied through brain synapses, intentional acts and motor movements, i.e., a psychosomatic unity (a phenomenological variant is Husserl’s *Leibkörper*). So, if we eradicate the prefixed spatial givenness of the flesh altogether, then we avoid psychosomatic materialism—we avoid reducing flesh to the software that attends to the body’s hardware.

But could we describe the flesh as a non-geometric phenomenon without relation to spatiality at all? One could claim that flesh is “subject to movement only through time and not through place, while moving the body through both time and place.”⁵⁴¹ Or, “There is a nature mutable in space and time, namely body. And there is a nature which is not at all mutable in space, but only in time in which it is also

⁵⁴¹ Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 8, 20, 39. See also *De trin*, 6.8.

mutable, namely soul.”⁵⁴² But statements like these convey the misguided notion that flesh, as an invisible, non-geometric phenomenon, appears in the temporal streaming of the world-horizon without also appearing within the spatial continuum and bodily localizations/polarizations put into play by the manners of givenness of the objective body. Advancing a thesis like this is a move in the direction of an either/or paradigm, splitting the properties of the flesh and body that gives way to a pernicious dualism that plagues the duplicitous body. The porous body for which we are advocating, in contrast, underlines the possibility of greater continuity between flesh and body. Yet this does not mean that flesh and body are given in exactly the same way with respect to temporality and spatiality. The flesh, insofar as it is localized and thus present to the body throughout, displays a “spatial plasticity.”

Such spatial plasticity is especially evident in the act of introspection whereby the flesh, as the centre of the body’s living capacities, can enact a reflexive curvature or bending-back in which it “is drawn back to itself not through an interval of space, but by a kind of non-bodily turning round.”⁵⁴³ Thus not limited by the rigid spatial givenness of the exterior body, the flesh, in its temporal capacities of memory, presencing and expectation, assumes a spatial plasticity which pervades the localized body in its rigid and monadic polarity as an objective body-pole in the world. In this manner, flesh holds the body within itself, unifying the *self-as-body* just as the body changes positions in space, utters linguistic speech acts or enjoys/suffers bodily contact with other objects in the world.⁵⁴⁴ Understood on the

⁵⁴² Augustine, *Letters 1-99*, trans. Roland Teske, ed. John E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press, 2001), letter 82.

⁵⁴³ Augustine, *De trin*, 14, 8.

⁵⁴⁴ Augustine wrote the following crucial passage regarding the fundamental link between interiority and exteriority: “It is simply impossible for anyone to think about a colour or a shape he has never seen, a sound he has never heard, a flavour he has never tasted, a smell he has never smelled, or a

basis of this dynamic interior/exterior unity, I do not have a porous body or deploy it as an organ of my will, rather “I am my body” incarnated as this body-pole in the temporal streaming of the world-horizon. One must remain apprehensive of the temptation to reduce the textured phrase “I am my body” to a self-presencing subjective pole, living in relation to nothing but itself, as an absolute self-affection dramatically realized in Henry’s explication of *la chair*.

But how exactly is the flesh incorporated within the body if each maintains a distinct form of givenness? How are flesh and body joined together as a single porous body? We have described the unity so far in this way: flesh is temporal and spatial but not spatial in the same way the body is spatial. Can we phenomenologically analyze with greater precision how such a unity between flesh and body can occur? Flesh is manifest by way of an interior living subjectivity that gathers together the objective body-pole around itself. On our view, the flesh, in its temporal streaming and spatial plasticity, inhabits the body while maintaining a distance from the body’s rigid objective localization and geometric composition as an immovable absolute zero point of orientation. We shall, in §36 below, expose to view in sharper terms and theologically reflect on the distinction between, on the one hand, the living dynamism of the flesh, and, on the other, the body’s formal objectivity as a body-pole. But perhaps the first thing to observe, and make phenomenologically tenable, is the unity of flesh and body: both forms of givenness joined in one body gives way to a unique corporeality whereby the flesh feels the impact of the body while the body is subject to, and an expression of, the vital capacities of the flesh.

feel of a body he has never felt. But the reason why one can think about anything bodily unless he has sensed it is that no one remembers anything bodily unless he has sensed it. So the limits of thinking are set by the memory just as the limits of sensing are set by bodies.” See *De trin*, 11, 14.

To shed further light on the porosity of display that elucidates the elemental unity of flesh and body in one *Leibkörper*, we turn to what is perhaps a universal example of such a unity: pain. The phenomenon of pain illuminates with great clarity the porosity between flesh and body (without making overly rigid distinctions). While contemporary science or empiricism may inform us that pain originates from, and resides in, the exterior body-pole, the sensation of pain, “really pertains to the soul.”⁵⁴⁵ More particularly, “for it is the soul, not the body, which feels pain, even when the pain arises in the body; for the soul feels pain at the place where the body is injured.”⁵⁴⁶ That is, while it may be extreme to say that only the living flesh feels the pain and not the body, it is plausible to maintain that the flesh is the principal sufferer of pain. The body occupies the proximate site of the impact, and so the body is where pain makes its definitive landing, for just as “the feeling and life of the body comes from the soul, so also do we speak of bodies suffering pain, though no pain can exist in the body apart from the soul.”⁵⁴⁷ Our proposal of a phenomenology of a single body with two forms of givenness therefore suggests that the body cannot suffer without the lived-experience of the flesh feeling the pain itself, for the flesh is the “body’s life.”⁵⁴⁸ And just as pain, say the hammer slipping and pounding my finger, designates an effectual bodily sensation that evokes feeling in the finger, so also does this pain establish the most primal fact of all, that the flesh is given as the living principle that pervades the body at every point, for “everything which suffers a pain is alive, and that pain can be present only in a living creature.”⁵⁴⁹ Such an account of pain may help show how the distinction between the two forms of

⁵⁴⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 21, 3.

⁵⁴⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, 21, 3.

⁵⁴⁷ Augustine, *City of God*, 21, 3.

⁵⁴⁸ Augustine, *De trin*, 4, 3.

⁵⁴⁹ Augustine, *City of God*, 21, 3.

givenness is minimized. On the account we are defending, a strict duality is minimized once we realize the interior flesh is the living capacity that is mediated in and through the exterior body. The flesh is immediately provoked by impact the body suffers when, for example, climbing a steep hill or the burning my tongue on hot coffee. I do not burn my tongue, and then, seconds later, feel the pain. When I burn my tongue I suffer immediately. The burning sensation evokes my life, overcomes me and pulls me within myself under the impact of its landing. My tongue itself does not suffer the pain, rather it is me who suffers even if the site of impact can be isolated on my tongue (or in my legs from a steep hill, in my finger from being pounded by a hammer, etc.).

Certainly the body-pole, a geometric entity and objective thing, is unmistakably alive when it takes positions in the world, bumps up against other objects and is scolded by hot coffee. But this primal capacity for life displayed in the exterior body ineluctably attends to the interior flesh whether I am conscious of it or not, whether I want it or not, and despite any hallucinations to the opposite. I am a living body as long as I am my body: “It is quite certain that even a man who is being deceived is alive. The knowledge by which we know that we are alive is most intimately inward.... Let a thousand kinds of illusion be objected against the man who says ‘I know I am alive’; none of them will worry him, since even the man who suffers from an illusion is alive.”⁵⁵⁰ I cannot escape my flesh because I cannot escape my life. The interior temporal streaming and spatial plasticity of the flesh is manifest as a non-reflective subjective power (see §29 above on *verbum intimum*) embodied within the objective body-body. Because of its spatial plasticity, flesh

⁵⁵⁰ Augustine, *De trin.*, 15, 21

appears not so much as localized within the chest cavity or inside the cranium but rather as a living content materialized within the forms, patterns and objective displacements of bodily acts in the world-horizon.

We pursue further the unity of the porous body by adopting here the metaphorical image of “mud.” As a single *Leibkörper* with two modes of givenness, the body (*Körper*) consists of the material element of earth that is soaked in the living water of flesh (*Leib*). The flesh pervades wholly each of the body’s multiple movements unifying them within a polarity in conjunction with other objects and body-poles: “Just as water, you see, collects earth and sticks and holds it together when mud is made by mixing it in, so too the soul by animating the material of the body shapes it into a harmonious unity, and does not permit it to fall apart into its constituent elements.”⁵⁵¹ In light of this metaphor, flesh assumes an order of display akin to water. Its temporal streaming and spatial plasticity is manifest in and through richly textured speeds and densities of flowing circulations, displacements and ruptures, like water. The malleable fluidity of flesh renders it structurally capable of pervading the exterior body wholly without also merging with the exterior body’s rigid polarity and empirical dimensions. By pervading in every respect my bodily presences in the world-horizon, my flesh orients the body in view of sense data, unifying the living body into a single body-pole, a *Leibkörper*. Lest a monism emerge, the unity of which we speak does not presuppose self-presence, for the structure of porosity is dislocated from itself on the basis of its temporal streaming and spatial movement. So, while not fully unified or self-enclosed, the porous body

⁵⁵¹ Augustine, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*, 2, 7, 9.

consists of a flesh and body, an “interior” *Leib* manifest in and through mediation of the “exterior” *Körper*.

The phenomenological consequence of the structure of the porous body, i.e., two modes of givenness in a single body, is that I cannot see the other interior flesh as if it were visible like an objective thing, like a red chair stationed before my eyes. Because of the gap separating flesh and body, I strain to see the other’s flesh. The other’s flesh is not a secret presence hidden in the nocturnal depths of the living present. But flesh is nonetheless elusive, mysterious and absent from being given in full-view of the world-horizon. If I can “see” with my bodily eyes the other’s flesh, it follows that I can only see its capacity as a living flesh mediated through its body. We can declare, after all, “in this life, as soon as we become aware of the men among whom we live, we do not merely believe that they are alive and displaying vital motions: we see it, beyond any doubt, by means of our bodies, though we are not able to see their life without their bodies.”⁵⁵² And furthermore, our proposal maintains that the elemental unity by which the porous body joins together flesh and body surmounts the rigid distinction typical of the duplicitous body. We can situate the unity in this way:

The life which he now lives in the body and which causes his earthly members to grow and be alive; but he is aware of it, not by means of the body’s eyes, but through an interior sense. The life of others, however, though it is invisible, he sees with a bodily eye. For how do we distinguish between living bodies and non-living objects, except by seeing simultaneously both the body and the life, which we cannot see other than with the bodily eye?⁵⁵³

⁵⁵² Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 29.

⁵⁵³ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 29.

Flesh is given as an interior living capacity, a primal temporal self-awareness capable of spatial expansion and plasticity, a living principle pervading wholly the exterior body's acts and world-engagements. So even though it is interior, a *verbum intimum*, flesh is seen by the other "with a bodily eye." We distinguish the living body from the object-thing because we see "simultaneously both the body and the life, which [I] cannot see other than with the bodily eye." However, the flesh assumes a unique mode of givenness inasmuch as it is interior. By virtue of both its temporal continuity with, and spatial plasticity over against, the body-pole, the appearing of flesh is (in)visible because it is mediated by the exterior body to other living bodies situated in the visible display of the world-horizon.

The account we are defending so far highlights the structural possibility of a porous body which integrates flesh and body even while maintaining their distinct modes of givenness. The porous body inhabits neither a site of pure flesh concealed within a body-shell (Henry) nor a psychosomatic unity consisting chiefly of kinaesthetic movements (Husserl) but rather a site framed in a space somewhere between these two phenomenological positions. On our view, the flesh is thereupon made visible in and through the exterior body exposed to the other bodies in the world. Yet, by emphasizing the flesh as the vital principle that gathers the body together, unifying the body with itself as a living "pole," we come close to a dualism of the sort that suggests our proposal privileges the flesh over the body so much so that there is a temptation to say that flesh can exist without the body. Does our proposal not resemble Henry's emphasis on pure *Leib* in its living reality in contradistinction to the "lifeless" objective body? Can we have a flesh without a body?

Our proposal of a porous body necessarily entails an “exterior” body and its bodily presences realized in the temporal streaming of the world-horizon for three reasons. (1) Without the body, the flesh reduces to a vapour, a life-giving power with no outlet through which to give itself. Absent of the body, the flesh amounts to nothing more than a living capacity locked within itself, a self-giveness released into itself with no greater purpose than feeling itself. If it does not emerge in and through the “exterior” body-pole and its temporal streaming, then it follows that the flesh shall implode on itself, become static and without movement, and therefore, become unable to “animate” or mobilize and synthesize data gathered by the exterior body’s exposure to the world. (2) Only because the interior flesh discovers itself in and through mediation of the body, can the memory remember itself as a “self” in continuity with itself. Because it is exposed to the world through the exterior body, memory is not a closed-system but a fractured, disjointed movement tied to the flow of exterior data. Memory orders self-awareness by virtue of its immersion in the world-horizon and its temporal streaming, if even passively and non-reflectively. Without the temporality of memory I cannot remember, love and know myself as “myself” (i.e., triad of *verbum intimum*, §29 above). As an interior trinity of loving, knowing and remembering, the flesh lives in and through exposure to difference, and, in fact, flesh “gulps” down sensory data received by the exterior body’s involvement in the world. Understood on the basis of its temporal streaming and spatial plasticity, flesh maintains its ongoing self-awareness as this particular body-pole relative to other body-poles.⁵⁵⁴ (3) And finally, because of its temporal dislocation, flesh is released from itself, goes outside itself, and is naturally joined to,

⁵⁵⁴ Augustine, *De trin*, 11, 13.

and fitted for, the body: “The soul possesses a kind of natural appetite for managing the body. By reason of this appetite it is somehow hindered from going on with all its force to the highest heaven so long as it is *not* joined with the body, for it is in managing the body that this appetite is satisfied.”⁵⁵⁵ Indeed, in and through its body, the flesh exercises its temporal and spatial life in the world.

This chapter is now in a position to turn to the eschatological tension explicit in our proposal. We saw in chapter five that the eschatological desire is fostered by a contemplative *distentio*. There we argued that my desire to see God is put into play by a contemplative faith anchored in *memoria* (§31) that is ineluctably qualified by a future movement, an *epektasis* (§30). The interplay between *memoria* and *epektasis* sustained in contemplative desire unclogs the non-reflective interior entry (the *verbum intimum* given as *Leib*) to God, in whose image I am made (§§27-29). We now elucidate the specifically embodied manifestation of the temporal *distentio*.

§35. THE HOPE OF THE *RESURRECTIO CARNIS*

Our proposal of the porous body is cast in an unequivocal eschatological tense.⁵⁵⁶ The porous body displays a tension between flesh and body in the present only to be made manifest in one mode of givenness in the resurrection body to come. The body now is elusive and sequentially extended in its spatio-temporality only to be subsumed in the resurrection as a perfectly self-present body, in its eschatological luminosity and fullness. In this resurrection body, my bodily presences will be eternal in that I will dwell in the “heavenly city,” and no longer be a citizen of the

⁵⁵⁵ Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 12, 35, 68.

⁵⁵⁶ We see in Augustine an eschatological expectation *within* the world not an apocalyptic escapism that demands the messiah’s return or seeks to forecast the imminent return. For more on this distinction see Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 38-41.

“earthly city.”⁵⁵⁷ It is in this final resting place of eternal felicity where the flesh and body distinction dissolves and where the porous body is made whole. Flesh and body fuse into a perfect spiritual body that “can no longer take delight in sin.”⁵⁵⁸ In the heavenly city God “will be seen without end, loved without stint, praised without weariness.”⁵⁵⁹ Yet what does a porous body presume to describe by figuring the resurrection body as a harmonious integration of flesh and body? And equally important, what is the function of the resurrection body for me now on pilgrimage?⁵⁶⁰ It is crucial that we understand how the expression “I am my body” is founded on the future-tensed “I will be my body.” Brian Robinette notes this well, when he writes:

The phrase “I will be my body” also intends to emphasize that human identity is relational and eschatological. I cannot simply associate my identity with who I presently am. Nor can I be an authentic human person by securing my identity in a polarized relationship to the many bodies from which I subsist. As a being-unto-resurrection, I am a being unto-the-Other, a being from- and unto-corporeality, a being-unto-God’s absolute future.⁵⁶¹

Our proposal that the porous body is to become whole on that final day invests the porous body on pilgrimage now with profound theological import: “I cannot simply associate my identity with who I presently am.” We interpret the body

⁵⁵⁷ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 30.

⁵⁵⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 30.

⁵⁵⁹ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 30.

⁵⁶⁰ Certainly Augustine’s Christology developed throughout his long and illustrious career, and specifically, his view of the resurrection body underwent theological refinement from as early as 387 to a culminating and definitive statement of it in the last book of his late work *City of God* (428) to receiving further comment in his final work the *Retractiones* during which time he died in 430. I shall focus on *City of God* book 22 given that it is there, above all, where Augustine crystallized his mature position on the nature and purpose of the resurrection body. For the chronological development of his theology of the resurrection body spanning from his conversion until his *Retractiones* see Frederick Van Fleteren, “Augustine and the *Corpus Spiritual*,” *Augustinian Studies*, 38 (2007): 333-52.

⁵⁶¹ Robinette, *Grammars of Resurrection*, 177.

now, in its presently disjointed and precarious state, to be inexorably bound to the eschatological destiny of Christ's body—we are an unfinished “being-unto-resurrection,” as Robinette rightly insists. And further, our future resurrection is intelligible only because it is proleptically grounded in Christ's bodily resurrection that has already taken place. Our bodies are promised to rise on the final day because we base that promise on Christ's resurrection and ascension: “Christ's resurrection showed the immortality of flesh that he promised should be ours.”⁵⁶² This Christ event attested to in the gospels vouchsafes the promise of our own future resurrection, in which flesh and body shall come together perfectly, giving way to a sinless spiritual body.⁵⁶³ In proceeding to sketch this spiritual body, or resurrection *Leibkörper* that will rise on the final day, we are proposing a theological, not hypothetical, interpretation of the porous body. But this being-unto-resurrection is a theological reality put into play by faith and hope. For we, “truly believe and surely and firmly hope that we are going to be immortal after the manner of Christ. For at the moment we can bear the same image, not yet in vision but in faith, not yet in fact, but in hope. The apostle Paul was of course speaking about the resurrection of the body when he said this.”⁵⁶⁴ In other words, hoping in Christ's resurrection and final return secures our being-unto-resurrection now.

When we describe the resurrection body, we throw into contrast what our porous bodies are like now while on pilgrimage. As highlighted above, the porous body accommodates a gap, a distinction in the manner of givenness between the interior *Leib* and the exterior *Körper*. While we can underline a multitude of maladies that shapes the various profiles of the porous body, it could not be more

⁵⁶² Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 11. See also 22, 10.

⁵⁶³ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 10.

⁵⁶⁴ Augustine, *De trin*, 14, 24.

clear what it suffers from now when compared to the glorious state of the resurrection body on that final day. What we hope for in that final day exposes what we are in danger of today. The porous body hopes for a body which Christ promised us and authenticated in his own resurrection: a resurrection body in which flesh and body are in absolute harmony, unified without fracture or gap, without temporal and spatial distinctions and without the precariousness to which those distinctions gives rise.⁵⁶⁵ This resurrection body is what is to come, when “the flesh will then be spiritual, and subject to the spirit; but it will still be flesh and not spirit, just as the spirit, even when carnal and subject to the flesh, is still spirit and not flesh.”⁵⁶⁶

There are four main characteristics we can adduce regarding the nature of the resurrection body: (1) incorruptibility, (2) immortality, (3) lightness/beauty and (4) perfect vision/rest.⁵⁶⁷ It is crucial to note that these characteristics change the body qualitatively, not, as we might presume, substantively. Remaining in continuity with our porous body now, the resurrection dictates a body in which the present body-pole, “will remain the same, but with no fleshly corruption and heaviness remaining.”⁵⁶⁸ The body will be made fit to dwell in heaven, “not by losing its nature, but by changing its quality.”⁵⁶⁹ While we have to caution against wild conjecture and irresponsible extrapolation from our present state, we can claim the right to insist that flesh and body will not collapse into an invisible “ghost-like” apparition. As Paula Fredriksen has put it, in rather dramatic epigrammatic form: “The body you gave breakfast to this morning, the body that helped you navigate

⁵⁶⁵ Augustine wrote that in the final resurrection, “man will then not be earthly, but heavenly: not because his body, which was made of earth, will no longer be itself, but because, by heaven’s gift, it will have been made fit to dwell in heaven.” See Augustine, *City of God*, 13, 23.

⁵⁶⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 21.

⁵⁶⁷ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 1 ff.

⁵⁶⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 13, 24.

⁵⁶⁹ Augustine, *City of God*, 13, 23.

your automobile, the body with which you at this moment occupy your chair is... the very same body that will dwell in the heavens and see God.”⁵⁷⁰ If this is a rather dramatic assessment of the resurrection body, it uses hyperbole well to convey the fact that even though we shall continue to live-out bodily acts, those concrete profiles and exterior manifestations shall be transfigured and perfected in the resurrection—not eradicated. Our porous body now will not change into another entity altogether, but rather transfigured into a perfectly integrated form of what it already is. This may mean many things, but is crucial to highlight that it at least means, according to the patristic tradition forward: incorruptibility, immortality, beauty, luminosity.

First of all we can say in no particular order that the body-to-come is to be (1) *incorruptible*, that is: perfect, without temptation and without imperfection. The resurrection body shall also be (2) *immortal*. Christ “while holding fast to His own divinity, became a partaker in our infirmity, that we, being changed for the better, might, by participating in His immortality and righteousness, lose our condition of sin and mortality....”⁵⁷¹ We thus become immortal in an act of divine transformation when Christ returns, “we shall then have everlasting bodies, and so we shall be with Him everywhere....”⁵⁷²; or those who those who are caught up to meet Christ, “will leave their mortal bodies when they are caught up, and will straightway return into immortal bodies.”⁵⁷³ The discourse on the resurrection body also brings forth a body with a (3) *beauty* so majestic that its parts will be arranged perfectly, its stature strong and without blemish or deformity, so that “we need fear no bodily loss in the

⁵⁷⁰ Paula Fredricksen, “Vile Bodies: Paul and Augustine on the Resurrection of the Flesh,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective: Studies in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich on His Sixtieth Birthday*, eds., Mark S. Burrows and Paul Rorem (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 75.

⁵⁷¹ Augustine, *City of God*, 21, 15.

⁵⁷² Augustine, *City of God*, 20, 20.

⁵⁷³ Augustine, *City of God*, 20, 20.

resurrection of the body.”⁵⁷⁴ The resurrection body’s beauty shall also yield a sublime and aesthetic *lightness* such that “the body will go immediately to wherever the spirit wills; and the spirit will never will anything which is not seemly either to the spirit or to the body.”⁵⁷⁵ And finally, (4) the five senses of the porous body expand, taking into account the spiritual sense, especially the sense of sight, which is restored to “20-20” vision so that it can “see” God face to face. I know longer see God in an enigma or through a glass darkly but face to face.

The unity of flesh and body set into operation by the final resurrection signifies a complete, fully realized and perfected *corpus spirituale*. The resurrection body so understood is couched in terms of absolute harmony: the “elements of the body’s harmony... which are now hidden, will then be hidden no longer.”⁵⁷⁶ We also couch it in terms of perfect agreement: “For there will then be such a concord between flesh and spirit—the spirit quickening the servant flesh without any need of sustenance therefrom—that there will be no further conflict within ourselves.”⁵⁷⁷ Described thusly, the bodily eyes are not limited by their finitude and weakness but are reconstituted by a spiritual quickening that enables their gaze to beholden, delight in and “see” the invisible God. For the resurrection body is in such perfect command of its body that its “facility will be as complete as their felicity. This is why their bodies are called ‘spiritual,’ though undoubtedly they will be bodies and not spirits.”⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁴ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 14. Even those bodies unlucky enough, Augustine observes, to be dissolved in acid, to evaporate in thin air, to turn to dust under a crushing pressure or to be consumed by beasts or fire, all shall reunite with their bodies, fully restored with no fragmenting or fracturing. See Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 12-14.

⁵⁷⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 30.

⁵⁷⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 30.

⁵⁷⁷ Augustine, “Enchiridion,” in *Confessions and Enchiridion*, trans. Albert C. Outler (London: SCM Press, 1955), 23, 91.

⁵⁷⁸ Augustine, “Enchiridion,” 23, 91.

Yet the resurrection body recalls that our present porous *Leibkörper* maintains an internal gap, two distinct modes of givenness that tend to give way to internal conflict. As such, on the way to mortality in this world, the porous body is in danger of sin and the self-consuming power of thinking that it is an autonomous, self-empowered body-pole. An autonomous porous body is in danger of leaving behind its *Leib* in favour of its *Körper*, self-possessed and solipsistic in its idolatrous groping for the temporal and passing goods of the world (though it is impossible to leave behind one's *Leib*, we can only forget about it). In the earthly city, self-satisfaction anchored in pride leads to abuse of temporal goods for my own end. I worship myself in satisfying myself, usually in satisfying my bodily lusts. The danger remains that we think we shall become gods today only to perish in God's wrath tomorrow.⁵⁷⁹ This bodily pride happens by way of a bodily lurch into the world, a *distentio* not toward the resurrection body but toward the exterior body-pole in the world, toward the naturalism and physicalism increasing apace in the modern world where medical and cognitive science, technology and secularism advance with no sign of waning. In a secular age, the porous body becomes all too easily clogged and reduced to a body-pole that, "refers all its business to one or other of the following ends: curiosity, searching for bodily and temporal experience through the senses; swollen conceit, affecting to be above other souls which are given over to their senses; or carnal pleasure, plunging itself in this muddy whirlpool."⁵⁸⁰ The porous body, because it is given as an exterior body-pole in the world-horizon, is fragile. It must be on guard against forgetting that its possession of a body in the

⁵⁷⁹ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 30.

⁵⁸⁰ Augustine, *De trin*, 12, 14.

created order is, in fact, a “part-ownership.”⁵⁸¹ I forget I am between flesh and body when I lurch outward entirely into the zone of bodily senses, dwelling their alone, loving sensual gratification and privileging the atomized body; given over to bodily senses entirely, the porous body forgets its subjective *Leib* and its being-unto-resurrection given to it by God. Such forgetfulness clogs its theological pores and thereby gives the impression that it is nothing more than a body-object of which I have full ownership, a corpse, a *Körper* to be commodified like any other object.

Given the dangerous world in which the porous body lives, it is no wonder that, without being-unto-resurrection, it is allied with mortality. Indeed, the moment we enter the world we are “endlessly dying”⁵⁸² and on our way to our mortal end. Our present state gravitates toward corruption and death—on a precarious and dangerous path toward death. Our spiritual vision is clogged and thus obscured by the weakness and corruptibility of the porous body. Jean-Yves Lacoste helpfully highlights that our spiritual life of hope in the coming eschaton is in continual “danger” as long as we dwell (and we always do) in the world. Created in the world, the porous body, “runs the risk constantly of being enfolded within being-in-the-world... The world urges us to conform to its measure of, i.e., to its mode of existence.”⁵⁸³ In other words, the porous body occupies a fragile state, tarrying amid the danger of the world where, if not careful, it can limit its destiny to the objective body-pole in the finite horizon of the world. The world can be a perilous place.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸¹ Augustine, *De trin*, 12, 14.

⁵⁸² Augustine, *City of God*, 13, 11.

⁵⁸³ Jean-Yves Lacoste, “Plus qu’existence et être-en-danger,” in *Presence et Parousie*, 145-68, reference on 164.

⁵⁸⁴ Augustine writes that the earth is full of a great mass of evils: “If therefore, there is no security even in the home from the common evils which befall the human race, what of the city? The larger the city, the more is its forum filled with civil law-suits and criminal trials. Even when the city is at peace and free from actual sedition and civil war, it is never free from the danger of such disturbance or, more often, bloodshed.” Augustine, *City of God*, 19, 5. See also 19, 10-11.

It is only by professing hope in the resurrection to come that we protect (and remember) the two manners of givenness unified in a single body. As an unfinished body waiting in faith for the wholeness of the resurrection body, we must not forget the unity of flesh and body, and this despite their distinction. It is, “not yet in vision but in faith, not yet in fact but in hope,” that we seek the resurrection body in the heavenly city where the presence of God is on full display. During the pilgrimage now, the porous *Leibkörper* fights against the modern “forgetfulness” so pervasive in the West in which *Leib* is relegated to the margins. By expressing a word of hope *Leib* is memorialized and reincorporated in and through the eucharist. This eucharistic word professes hope in the heavenly city to come in which, “Christ perfects the great abundance of His sweetness for those who hope in Him.”⁵⁸⁵ It is in this *City*, or this social gathering of saints, that all come together to constitute the body of Christ, the site of intersubjective harmony and peace: “such is the salvation which, in the world to come, will also itself be our final happiness.”⁵⁸⁶ To the social and sacramental bodies we now turn.

§36. THE SOCIAL AND SACRAMENTAL BODY OF CHRIST

We have sought to overcome two problems that render untenable Henry’s “duplicitous body:” *first*, Henry’s splitting of the body into two irreconcilable halves, between a pure flesh (pure non-temporal auto-affection), and impure body in the world (pure temporal hetero-affection). And *second*, his Gnostic-like aversion to the body in the world, an aversion sustained by an over-realized eschatology that suggests the presence (*parousia*) of God is fully manifest within my flesh. Up against

⁵⁸⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 21, 24.

⁵⁸⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, 19, 4.

both of these points, we highlighted how two modes of givenness are unified imperfectly in a single body (*Leibkörper*) (§34), which in consequence fosters the hope for a perfect integration of flesh and body in the resurrection to come (§35). Building off of those two theological truths, this section retrieves the intrinsically social and sacramental character of the present porous body where the hope for the resurrection body is confessed, together as a corporate confession. As a co-*Leibkörper*, all the saints labour together alongside the wicked (the tares and the wheat) in imperfect community—until that final day.⁵⁸⁷ By emphasizing the institutional and sacramental aspects of the body of Christ, we overcome a third problematic in Henry: the relation to the other.

Recall that Henry's theory of the "la relation à autrui" outlines a communal site that is non-temporal, non-worldly, fully within Christ's acosmic flesh (§33). The entryway to the other on this account is interior because the "Word made flesh" is always already present as a living present internal to each ego. Accordingly, we turn inward, disqualify the body in the world so as to accomplish the return back to the living present. In order to provide a corrective to such a monistic and non-worldly consideration of the body of Christ inasmuch as it is detached from the institutional and sacramental bodies, we re-emphasize the visible display of the institutional church and sacrament of the eucharist (*Körper*) as principal sites where I relate to the other. And yet this relation to the other we put forward does not deny the knitting together of the saints in the body of Christ as a concrete invisible unity (*Leib*).⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁷ There is little in the secondary literature on Augustine's notion of the "body of Christ." The one substantial descriptive article stems from the mid twentieth-century. See Stanislaus J. Grabowski, "Augustine and the Doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ," *Theological Studies* 7 no.1 (1946): 72 – 125. Certainly there is more work to be done in this rich area of Augustine's thought.

⁵⁸⁸ While we emphasize ecclesiology here as a means of illuminating the body from a theological point of view, Graham Ward is right when he says that a fuller theological analysis of the body

The locution “body of Christ,” eventually denominated as the “Mystical body of Christ,” takes on a social manifestation; but it is a social in-gathering of the saints in Christ whereby the porous body does not lose, but maintains, its singularity as a body-pole given in an objective spatio-temporal horizon. Interior and exterior modes of givenness are thus preserved, but it is their distinction, not juxtaposition, to which we attend here. In the words of Goulven Madec, “Interiority and community are not juxtaposed but profoundly unified in the person of Christ who is in the plain sense of the scriptures, the interior teacher and the Head of the Body of which is the church.”⁵⁸⁹ We prioritize here the exterior relation to the other that touches off an interior communion of flesh in the body of Christ. Understood in this way, “my body” is my absolute “here” as this particular living body-pole distinct from other body-poles. My body-pole as an objective “here” is given together with bodies over “there,” and together we constitute the visible social body of Christ, namely the institutional church. Nevertheless I am able to enter into a communion of flesh with the other body over there who confesses with me the hope in the Resurrection body. As pilgrims on the way to the Heavenly City, how do we experience each other if I am a body-pole distinct from every other body-pole?

Perhaps the first point to observe about the experience of the other is that the institutional body of Christ, as the site of communion of flesh, is on *pilgrimage* in the world, making communion of flesh a difficult task to realize.⁵⁹⁰ As a result of pilgrimage, the porous body remains troubled by many trials, clashing wills,

(which takes us beyond the scope here) would entail reflection on creation, incarnation, ecclesiology and eucharist. See “Transcorporeality: the Ontological Scandal” in *Cities of God* (London: Routledge, 2000), 81-96.

⁵⁸⁹ Goulven Madec, “Augustinisme” in *Lectures augustiniennes* (Paris: Institut d’Études Augustiniennes, 2001), 295-311, reference on 296.

⁵⁹⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, 18, 47; 20, 9.

misshapen desires and sin, “for not even holy and faithful worshippers of the one true and supreme God are secure from the deceits and manifold temptations of the demons.”⁵⁹¹ Most of all the church on pilgrimage consists of a mixing or intermingling of good and evil, the saints mixing with the wicked. Such is the perilous state of the institutional body of Christ: “At this time, therefore, many reprobate are mingled in the church with the good. Both are as it were collected in the net of the gospel; and in this world, as in a sea, both swim together without separation, enclosed in the net until brought ashore.”⁵⁹² Our account of the body explains not only the “mixing” but also the internal conflict of the body of Christ. The fact that my particular *Leibkörper* is a distinct body-pole and at a distance from the other body-poles over there constitutes a fact not neutral in itself. Such distance engenders conflict. Giving way to sin and conflict, the distance between “my body” and the “body over there” characterizes a feature through which the church on pilgrimage must negotiate. In what way?

The upshot of this distance between body-poles is that, as discrete, visible bodies who gather together in the exteriority of the church, body-poles are incapable of entering into full union: I am a leg, you are an arm and yet another is a finger. We all appear contiguously and separate as body-poles in the world, standing at an objective distance from each other. I cannot, as this member of the body occupying my own space, somehow “merge” with or become one with another member of the body. My “here” as this particular limb is here by virtue of its relation to the other’s “there” as a different limb. A thumb, as spatially relative to other components, does not appear as a leg, but as a thumb only. The bodily distance between porous bodies

⁵⁹¹ Augustine, *City of God*, 19, 10.

⁵⁹² Augustine, *City of God*, 18, 49.

places not just distance but also *resistance* at the centre of our relation. We are exterior to each other. The resistance this exteriority discloses the basic individuation of the objective body as a polarity, as this “me” who is here and not over there. As Husserl put it succinctly, “As reflexively related to itself, my animate bodily organism (in my primordial sphere) has the central “Here” as its mode of givenness; every other body, and accordingly the ‘other’s’ body, has the mode “There.”⁵⁹³ But this is no mere neutral description of embodied life, as Husserl may presuppose. The distance between body-poles can, and usually does, lead to resistance that assumes subjective states such as anxiety, insecurity, and the temptation to inflict bodily harm on one another. In this state of hardship, “we often believe that someone who is an enemy is a friend, or that someone who is a friend is an enemy.”⁵⁹⁴ Given that “social life is surrounded by such darkness”⁵⁹⁵ each body-pole is weak and frail and succumbs to resisting, rather than communing with, the other body. As such, alienation, anxiety and insecurity are not uncommon to those members of the institutional body of Christ. Saints and the reprobate intertwine together as body parts constitutive of the body of Christ, but their integration is hampered by an ever greater distancing, giving way to resistance that is manifest as conflict.⁵⁹⁶

Yet there is hope for pre-eschatological communion of flesh with the other. Even though I am not less than an exterior body-pole, I exceed that geometric limitation. I am not merely a monad whose body is shut up within itself in a closed system incapable of sharing bodily with other bodies other than through resistance, or its obverse, the intentional act of empathy, as Husserl thinks. From a theological

⁵⁹³ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 116.

⁵⁹⁴ Augustine, *City of God*, 19, 8.

⁵⁹⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 19, 6.

⁵⁹⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, 18, 51.

point view, we can examine how the body of Christ provides the common point where bodies meet, where bodies commune together in spirit, hope and love—a communion of flesh. Such a communion is given in both time and space: temporality as *memoria* and *epektasis* and spatiality as a spatial plasticity, both time and space are conditions for the possibility of a communion of flesh in Christ.

Husserl is, however, correct in one respect in regard to the body. He rightly depicts the relationship among bodies, no matter communing in and through empathy or in and through the body of Christ, as an intersubjective system of “monads.” Certainly I cannot, as Husserl observes, place myself inside the other’s body. My *Körper* cannot coincide with the other’s *Körper*, for that is both temporally and spatially impossible.⁵⁹⁷ But in contrast to the inter-monadic system famously elaborated in Husserl’s fifth chapter of the *Cartesian Meditations*, the body of Christ enables each porous body to be unified together on the basis of the porosity of flesh. The interior *Leib* is given not only inside me but also outside of me, spilling over the edges of the psychosomatic monadic sphere elaborated by Husserl. If this is true, it follows that, despite the conflict and the tension resulting from the bodily distinction between my “here” and your “there,” the church is a single co-*Leibkörper*, a single communion of flesh brought about by the headship of Christ—who is both invisible *Leib* and visible institutional/sacramental *Körper*. And while the separation of the wheat from the tares will take place by winnowing as on a threshing floor in that final day, the porous body’s pre-eschatological state is nevertheless both fleshly (*Leib*) and bodily (*Körper*), and is thereupon enabled to commune in love and hope with others on the basis of *Leib* mediated through the *Körper*.

⁵⁹⁷ For more on Husserl’s monadology with regard to the phenomenology of the body, see Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, §§55-6.

Which leads us to our final point in this section: in the institutional and sacramental body of Christ our bodies gather together so as to open up a space in which communion of flesh can occur. A “cosmic Christ” (not an acosmic Christ) disclosive of the institutional and sacramental reality of the body of Christ in the world-horizon joins the saints together in communion of flesh. But it is critical to observe once again, that phenomenologically speaking, no absolute unity is possible. The actuality of “my” communion with “you” in the ecclesial horizon of the body of Christ is *not* constituted within the auto-generation of an acosmic “Word made flesh” that transcends, altogether, the body polarity situated in the world. Though my flesh may come into communion with your flesh in and through hope and love in Christ, my flesh remains tied to my body just as your flesh remains tied to your body. I am a single body with two modes of givenness whereby the interior flesh assumes a mode of dynamic givenness that is in surplus to the strict monadic sphere of the Husserlian *Leibkörper*. Such a surplus is precisely what enables me to enter into abiding and deep spiritual communion with you; we are thus porous to each other on the basis of the surplus of flesh each of us inhabits (surplus as spatial plasticity and eucharistic temporality). But my flesh cannot merge with your flesh. I cannot enjoy the presence of your flesh inside my flesh nor can I enter your flesh, hollowing out a home there and reincorporating myself there. The reason why this is impossible is because flesh and body are given together within one body, which in turn, presupposes that my flesh may never disentangle itself from its incorporation within a body-pole, the geometric givenness of the polarity of *Körper* and its temporal continuity.

Correspondingly, communion of flesh also means that our body-poles are in a similar over-arching scheme, within the same institutional and sacramental body.

When my flesh enters into such a communion with your flesh on the basis of love and hope in Christ and the resurrection body to come, our bodies are necessarily brought together as well. I must rise out of the chair, walk out the door and situate myself within the walls of the church, just as you shall. When my flesh is in communion with your flesh it implies that we are occupying the same space bodily within the institutional body of Christ (though not literally the same church building. I can be in Edinburgh and you in London, for the body of Christ is spread out over the world-horizon).

But we give a more rigorous account of the possibility of communion of flesh: if I cannot disentangle my flesh from my body, how can I commune with your flesh at all? We recall that flesh appears with a peculiar mode of givenness with regard both to *spatiality* and *temporality*. (1) All flesh puts into play a spatial plasticity, a dynamic extension in and through the body inasmuch as the suppleness of flesh is not imprisoned within the strict, pre-fixed silhouette of the bodily limbs, their movements and monadic enclosure. Flesh is, in fact, a living subjectivity fractured to, and able to enter into communion with, other flesh on the basis of the “Word made flesh” because all flesh images the Word. (2) In addition to spatial plasticity, another characteristic of flesh is that it is typically in temporal continuity with the body. Triggered by a contemplative intentionality (*memoria* and *epektasis*), however, flesh becomes fractured temporally to the pure presence of the eternal Word. My flesh and your flesh therefore ascend together to the present, through the curvature of *memoria* and *epektasis* (§31). However, the flesh’s temporal porosity to the present does not allow for flesh to ascend beyond the temporal sequencing of the body, as if the flesh could literally rise outside of the steady temporal continuity of

the body. Retention and protention cannot be left behind in a bid for an “out of body” experience, but retention and protention are nevertheless modified from a theological point of view. The temporal curvature of retentional and protentional acts does not result in a break from temporality, rather curvature modifies temporality without escaping it. As such, the temporal curvature put into play by a contemplative intentionality also assumes something like a plasticity because the temporality and the spatiality of the flesh are not neatly distinct. Recall that the temporality of flesh and the spatiality of flesh are co-given within the same *Leib* itself. And so, because my flesh is temporally and spatially plastic and your flesh is temporally and spatially plastic, we are able to enter into an abiding communion outside ourselves precisely because flesh is not restricted to our bodily monadic spheres.

When I gather together, therefore, with your flesh in the body of Christ, our inter-flesh communion is a “transcorporeal” experience incapable of being brought to light fully by a hermeneutical-narrative structure. I am not *merely* a “metaphorical body” among other metaphorical bodies whose narrative-discourse is “received and understood only in and through language,” as Graham Ward puts it.⁵⁹⁸ In the body of Christ we are not joined together *only* as characters in a plot, nor are we *only* imaginatively inscribed within a narrative-linguistic/metaphorical body of Christ. Rather, I am primarily received and understood in relation to the other in and through flesh, and on the basis of our mutual porosity to the “Word made flesh.” But this concrete relation to the other is never conceived of apart from the objective body-pole. For the body-pole, too, is alive because it is joined with the flesh. The objective

⁵⁹⁸ Ward, “Transcorporeality,” 95. In a subsequent essay Ward does refer positively to the “malleable and porous” nature of the body manifest through the flow and exchange of desire that happens within the body of Christ, but the peculiar structure of “porosity” to which he refers remains to be clarified in greater phenomenological detail. See “The Body of the Church and its Erotic Politics,” in *Christ and Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 92-110, reference on 109.

body-pole perceived in the world cannot, in principle, appear as a mechanistic *res extensa* or, worse, an illusion that de-realizes my flesh (Henry).

My relation to the other is thus realized on the basis of a mutual temporal and spatial porosity, evoked in and through the objective body-pole—and thus a relation necessarily prior to, but not separate from, narrative, language and metaphor. We thus ask again: if I cannot disentangle my flesh from my body, how can I commune with your flesh at all? This intersubjective communion of flesh may be clarified by the eucharistic body. As Jean-Luc Marion helpfully points out, the eucharist as the liturgical right par excellence, is a central site of theological discourse itself. In the eucharist, saints are incorporated within the body of Christ. This is not achieved by way of real presence (enclosed *in res* literally within bread and wine, i.e., transubstantiation) nor is it accomplished in and through the conscious attention conferred on the offering by the congregants gathered. Instead, Marion elucidates the eucharist explicitly over against immediacy or reification, whether reified in the host itself or in the community's consciousness of the host. The eucharist appears as eschatological, for it is mediated through time, both *memoria* and *epektasis*. Mediated and visible, the sacramental body of Christ communicated through the bread and wine constitutes a living icon of the body of Christ. Mediated visibly, the consecrated bread and the wine give to the saints the invisible unity of love and spirit. But such a unity is linguistic and symbolic insofar as it touches off an invisible communion of flesh unable to be thematized by language or symbol. Along these lines, Marion writes, “the spiritual body of Christ constituted by the Church. A

spiritual body, in other words a body infinitely more united, more coherent, more consistent—in a word, more real—than any physical body.”⁵⁹⁹

The proposal we are advancing here elaborates a relation to the other on the basis of flesh as a mode of givenness distinct from, but not juxtaposed to, the givenness of the objective body-pole. Hence, (and this is where we may diverge from Marion), the mutuality of flesh in communion is always mediated by the body. Each *Leib* is therefore fused together in love and hope on the basis of their common porosity to the eternal Christic *Leib*, but this is always mediated by Christ’s cosmic body (*Körper*) that joins all other bodies into visible ecclesial and sacramental bodies. In and through the church and its sacramental rites, we are “fused somehow into one spirit in the furnace of charity:”

“He did not say ‘that I and they may be one,’ though as he is the church’s head and the church is his body he could have said that ‘I and they’ may be not one ‘thing’ but ‘one person’ since head and body make the one Christ.... so they are cleansed by the mediator that they may be one in him, not only by virtue of the same nature whereby all of them from the ranks of mortal men are made equal to the angels, but even more by virtue of one and the same wholly harmonious will reaching out in concert to the same ultimate happiness, and fused somehow into one spirit in the furnace of charity.”⁶⁰⁰

It is thus here in the ecclesial exteriority of the body of Christ that saints enter into a concrete inter-flesh communion that is put into play by, but not fully analyzable by, eucharistic language and symbol. The communion of flesh, while not overcoming the

⁵⁹⁹ Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 179. For more on Marion’s complex understanding of the “Eucharistic site of theology,” see Marion, *God without Being*, chapter 5. For his illuminating critique of transubstantiation and community reification, see 166 ff. Also see my article on how the mystical body has been deployed in recent French phenomenology, including Marion. See Joseph Rivera, “*Corpus Mysticum* and Religious Experience: Henry, Lacoste, Marion,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (forthcoming).

⁶⁰⁰ Augustine, *De trin*, 4, 12.

basic distance separating my body from your body, is actualized on the basis of the porosity of display whereby each flesh's surplus enables it to exceed its geometrical body-pole. My flesh is spatially fluid, vulnerable and a living capacity and is porous to other flesh but is only joined to your flesh once it is understood from the vantage point of the eucharist, which modifies the flesh by opening it to the "Word made flesh" outside of the temporal succession of the world-horizon. By unclogging those temporal and spatial pores each of us has by virtue of being an *imago Dei*, inter-flesh communion is brought to fruition, however imperfect, by participation in the sacramental body of Christ. My flesh and your flesh are "fused somehow into one spirit in the furnace of charity" when our bodies receive the eucharist mediated through bread and wine; and when received in hope and love, the bread and wine evokes a communion of flesh because we "eat within, not without; he who eats with his heart, not he who crushes with his teeth."⁶⁰¹

Like the institutional church, the theological intelligibility of the eucharist is twofold, both *Leib* and *Körper*. It is a visible word, spoken by the clergy in linguistic speech-acts, expressed in and through the sacramental *Körper*. Yet the eucharist is also an invisible "Word made flesh," an eternal *Leib* through which my *Leib* and your *Leib* are fused together in hope and love. Graham Ward's explication of the "transcorporeality" of the eucharist body proves exemplary here as a decisive antidote against the modernity's temptation to reduce bodies to atoms or inert commodities, or to conceive of the eucharistic body as a reification enclosed within and extended through the bread and wine. So when Christ says "this is my body, take and eat," Christ is referring to what Ward articulates philosophically as an

⁶⁰¹ Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 26, 12, 3.

“ontological scandal.” The body of Christ, as eucharist, is broken and dispersed across the body of Christ as church. Leagued irremediably together, the eucharist and church intertwine, so that the visible corporate disclosure of my body (*Körper*) and your body (*Körper*) are gathered together in the corporeality of the church to receive the sacramental bread and wine in the unity of our flesh (*Leib*). The objective bread and wine (*Körper*) is also the spiritual body of Christ communicated in grace to the flesh of the saints (*Leib*). Christ does not “cut himself up” and disburse his body to be consumed in bite-sized pieces in exterior form. Rather the “Word made flesh” nourishes his body spiritually, animating the church to be a living, invisible phenomenon of love and hope. Stretching my flesh (plasticity of both temporality and spatiality) beyond the rigid boundaries of the body-pole, the eucharist enables my flesh and your flesh to commune without taking leave of our bodies. Though we may relate as distinct bodies, our communion is such “that we may be his members, unity joins us together. That unity may join together, what causes it except love?”⁶⁰²

We are now in a position to say a brief word about how the body of Christ shall appear in perfect unity on that final day—that day when the sorting of wheat and tares shall happen and when God appears in full splendour (no longer in an enigma). How might the perfected co-*Leibkörper* appear in the fullness of God’s presence? Might we, together as the perfected body, see God “face to face?”

§37. SEEING GOD

We have been arguing that to unveil the porous self we must investigate the body as a focal-point. As a site for theological reflection, the body can be

⁶⁰² Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 27, 6, 1.

reconfigured by the resurrection body, the institutional body and the sacramental body. To accomplish this, we proceeded from a porous body whose characteristic feature is that it contains two modes of givenness joined within a single body, a *Leibkörper* (§34). And because our proposal, to be clear, is a discourse aimed at unifying the *Leibkörper* in a manner that explicitly overcomes Henry's duplicitous body and the over-realized eschatology on which it rests, we inscribed the porous body within an eschatological framework (§35). The institutional body in which the porous body confesses faith in the resurrection body to come is the body of Christ, the church/sacrament—the institutional community where the wheat and the tares live precariously by the logic of love, the definitive expression of which is the eucharistic or sacramental body (§36). The resurrection body, we argued, shall be perfect, fulfilling the porous body's hope for fullness, so that "when the complete comes, the incomplete will pass away... for now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face" (1 Corinthians 13.10-12). It is the eschatological consummation of the resurrection body that we approach here, cautiously, in this final section.

Once the porous body is raised on the last day, it is transfigured by the Spirit, made whole and perfected in its imaging of the "Word made flesh." Our proposal of a porous body, holding together *Leib* and *Körper* in unity (however precarious and incomplete), insists that the resurrection body is not disembodied, detached from its *Körper*, as if shed like old skin. Rather the *Leibkörper* is transfigured, becoming whole and immortal in its eschatological presence. In such a transfiguration, *Leib* and *Körper* interpenetrate, so that I see God with my bodily eyes as if I see that table in front of me, in the perfect light of the noonday:

It may well be, then—indeed, this is entirely credible—that, in the world to come, we shall see the bodily forms of the new heaven and the new earth in such a way as to perceive God with total clarity and distinctness, everywhere present and governing all things, both material and spiritual. In this life, we understand the invisible things of God by the things which are made, and we see Him darkly and in part, as in a glass, and by faith rather than by perceiving corporeal appearances with our bodily eyes. In the life to come, however, it may be that we shall see Him by means of the bodies which we shall then ear, and wherever we shall turn our eyes. In the world to come, wherever we shall look with the spiritual eyes of our bodies, we shall then, by means of our bodies behold the incorporeal God ruling all things.⁶⁰³

The phenomenological truth embedded in this extended quote is that the porosity of display, in its temporal fulfilment to come, gives way to full presence, *parousia*. The body no longer conforms to the porosity of its mortal and frail body but rather appears whole, standing within the presence of God in which all is made luminous by the light of glory. Of the porous body, God's glory perfects it bringing it into plain site so that the interior is made exterior and the exterior is made interior, the two modes of givenness becoming one. The kind of vision with which the saints will see God enjoys perfect clarity, no longer obscured by the distinction between *Leib* and *Körper* (and no longer in need of the eye of faith). Neither the duplicity nor the porosity of display will suffice, for it is the glory of divine display itself that is manifest, rendering every appearance luminous and perceptible: "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3.2). The porous *Leibkörper* attains its destiny as the eschatological *Leibkörper*, which is still a *Leibkörper* but one which consists of one mode of givenness, both spiritual and physical given in and through the same gift.

⁶⁰³ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 29.

In the new heaven and new earth, even if I shut my eyes, I shall not block the display of God's glory from my gaze, for we must forbid "that we should say that the saint in the life to come will not see God when they close their eyes; for they will always see Him in the Spirit."⁶⁰⁴ We have attained in the eschatological *Leibkörper* the pure display of creation itself, for it has longed to be perfect and complete without temporal flow, corruption, frailty or seeking in faith/hope. The temporality of confessing faith as the unclogging of pores is rewarded by the opening of all pores, without delay and to abandon. There is no *memoria* and no *epektasis*, both temporal ecstasies are used only to unveil what is hidden. In the new heaven and new earth, all is on display, nothing hidden and thus everything present in the presence of eternity. There is no distance between *Leib* and *Körper*, for their relation, too, is laid bare in its perfect unity. The distance between distinct *Leibkörperen* severally ordered in the body of Christ as a single co- *Leibkörper* are in such perfect in harmony and peace that there is no discord, anxiety or sin (and yet each is perfectly singular in her own lived-pole as this particular *Leibkörper*). It is therefore in this enduring bodily presencing before the glory of God in which we "shall see him as he is" (1 John 3.2). It through this perfect and full vision "that the image of god will achieve its full likeness of him when it attains to the full vision of him—thought this text from the apostle John might also appear to be referring to the immortality of the body."⁶⁰⁵ It is in the eternal body, what St. Paul calls the incorruptible body in 1 Corinthians 15, that the full vision of God is received by grace, and lived and enjoyed forever in the delight and felicity. And here, in the mystical body of Christ, we are all ordered but also joined in spirit and body within Christ's body, so that we

⁶⁰⁴ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 29.

⁶⁰⁵ Augustine, *De trin*, 14, 24.

appear in the bright noonday sun together with the “perfect man, that is, Christ, and of his body, that is, the church, which is his fullness.”⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, 22, 18.

Conclusion

§38. CONCLUSION

This dissertation has sought to achieve two goals: (1) to critically introduce and contextualize Michel Henry's duplicitous self with particular reference to his theological turn and to isolate the phenomenological and theological problems to which it gives rise; and (2) to construct over against Henry (while appreciating his theological turn) an eschatological self whose temporal and bodily modes of appearing are firmly situated within the world but also directed to a God who transcends the world.

To that end we have arranged the chapters of the dissertation within three interlocking parts, proceeding from context, to exegesis, and finally, to constructive reflection. The first chapter locates Henry's work in the contemporary scene, setting him within phenomenology's theological turn. Chapter two highlights Henry's critical readings of Husserl and Heidegger, and it is in this chapter that we begin to glimpse the subjective mode of display—auto-affection as the living present—that shall animate his theological turn.

The second part consists of a critical introduction to Henry's theological turn in light of two principal themes tied to the living present: temporality and the body. Chapter three discusses the non-temporal origin of the self Henry unveils. By giving me a non-temporal origin it follows that I am born within God and endlessly given to myself within the life of Christ. Without reference to past or future and thus without reference to my appearing in the world-horizon, I appear in my apodictic essence as this dative/accusative "me" born from within the eternal life of Christ—I am a Son of

God in my essence. This “tense-less” living present, we argued, necessarily entails a misguided movement toward monism. Here monism is a qualified non-temporal monism defined as a transcendental origin that assures that I must share immediately in God’s essence if I am to appear as a self at all. Moreover, because it is the *parousia* in which I share and from which my nocturnal living present subsists as a self, there can be no temporality involved in my birth. Without hesitation this leads to another theological blunder, one that correlates my passive embrace within God’s presence with an over-realized eschatology. Nestled within the nocturnal site of my subjectivity, in my pure self-affection, is the parousiaic glory of God’s self-giving manifestation. The disclosure of the living present brings into full light the manner in which God is ineluctably present to me as a phenomenon. Chapter four continues in this vein. The body so conceived by Henry is split, irreparably, between an interior *Leib* and an exterior *Körper*. The “Word made flesh” appears in its incarnate presence inside me giving flesh to me, giving rise to my *Leib* without relation to my *Körper*, once again leading to an absolute monism that privileges the interior mode of display at the expense of the exterior.

Part three indicates a way forward. Henry’s imaginative elucidation of the interior self remains fruitful precisely because it situates the self between the poles of temporality and the body and links my origin, not to the sovereign self-positing subject, but to God. Chapter five incorporates resources from St. Augustine (both phenomenological and theological) in order to bring to light the temporal modes of the self, and in particular, the temporality of pilgrimage that fosters the contemplation of a God who transcends time. Pilgrimage assumes a theological self whose status as an *imago Dei* is constitutive of an interior non-reflective self-

awareness we all have as unique subjects created by God. While I do not feel myself in a pure and elemental auto-affection as Henry may think, I nevertheless appear to myself in a subjective site that is not communicable by language or thematizable by the standard subject-object opposition. My interior non-reflective self-awareness is not pure because it remains temporal and of a piece with the world-horizon God created. And yet I am not alienated from God while on pilgrimage in the world—as if I were abandoned to the world by a God whose creative presence is fully removed. As the Creator who brought forth heaven and earth and all that is within, temporality is not self-enclosed or horizontal but is fractured to God’s eternal repose. I am porous to God by virtue of my involvement in a created order God made and saw as good. Two temporal movements realized in and through the world-horizon are invoked as means of grace that God deploys to unclog my inner porosity to God: *memoria* and *epektasis*. Backward and forward directionalities are given to the self who enjoys God through the eucharist, the site par excellence of contemplation. While never escaping from the world I am enabled through a eucharistic play of temporality to move toward the presence of God outside of time. *Memoria* and *epektasis* interlock in the eucharist, “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor. 11. 27). When I remember God I also lean forward in eschatological expectation for the *parousia* to come.

The final chapter integrates the temporal pole with the bodily pole of the self. Here the *Leib* and *Körper* are reunified into a single *Leibkörper*, which is then discussed as a unique body-pole with a living flesh that can enter into abiding communion with other body-poles in the body of Christ. Here not only is the eucharistic body once again adduced as a leitmotif characteristic of the

eschatological self but so are the ecclesial and resurrection bodies. Understood in this way, the eschatological body that I am together with others in the institutional body surmounts Henry's non-worldly monism and the over-realized eschatology that maintains my flesh is already in perfect union with the flesh of Christ. The eschatological body does not, and cannot, make God present to me as a phenomenon. The glory of God is to be longed for in the resurrection body to come, where I shall see God face to face and where no phenomenality but God's luminous holiness may appear. In the eternal Sabbath of life I shall see God; until then, I am set the task of seeking the "Sunday of Life" and remaining under its eschatological conditions while I undertake pilgrimage here and now in the world.

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