SAVING FLESH, REDEEMING BODY

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PHENOMENOLOGIES OF INCARNATION AND RESURRECTION IN THE THOUGHT OF MICHEL HENRY AND EMMANUEL FALQUE

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Lay Abstract

This thesis examines two French Catholic phenomenologists whose work engages in a serious manner with embodiment. Michel Henry and Emmanuel Falque are both connected with the "theological turn" in French phenomenology. By using the tools of phenomenology, these thinkers take aim at the general phenomena of flesh and body and the religious phenomena of incarnation and resurrection. In this thesis I seek to uncover how their philosophical foundations inform their theological work, how they articulate a phenomenology of the body and the flesh in relation to incarnation and resurrection, and which thinker might provide a better account of these. My analysis reveals that both Henry and Falque have a similar understanding of a phenomenology of resurrection. What my analysis also shows is that although Falque is critical of Henry's position on the incarnation, Falque's critical response to it ironically mirrors it.

Abstract

This thesis examines two French Catholic phenomenologists whose work engages in a serious manner with embodiment and theological phenomena. Michel Henry (1922-2002) and Emmanuel Falque (b. 1963) are both connected with the "theological turn" in French phenomenology. By using the tools of phenomenology, these thinkers take aim at the general phenomena of flesh and body and the religious phenomena of incarnation and resurrection. In this thesis I seek to uncover how their philosophical foundations inform their theological work, how they articulate a phenomenology of the body and the flesh in relation to incarnation and resurrection, and which thinker might provide a better account of these. I begin by providing a succinct overview of phenomenology—as articulated by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger—paying attention to the phenomenological distinction between flesh (*Leib*) and body (*Körper*) that is vital to Henry's and Falque's analysis of incarnation and resurrection. I then lay out Dominique Janicaud's critical labelling of the "theological turn" in French phenomenology in 1991, as well as responses by those who continue to knowingly operate under that label. I then critically examine the work of Henry and Falque, first by laying out their philosophical approach and method, and then by working through each of their theological trilogies, showing how the former influences the latter. My analysis reveals that both Henry and Falque have a similar understanding of a phenomenology of resurrection, in that it is a move from body to flesh. What my analysis also shows is that although Falque is critical of Henry's position on the incarnation for neglecting materiality and completely understanding the human being as flesh, Falque's critical response to it ironically mirrors it: by turning to material forces and drives to better describe the body in his recent work, Falque recapitulates Henry's understanding of flesh.

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"One must still have chaos in oneself to give birth to a dancing star"
- Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*[1]

"Here's what I would say. I would say that the thing we talkin about is Jesus, but it is Jesus understood as that gold at the bottom of the mine. He couldnt come down here and take the form of a man if that form was not done shaped to accommodate him."
- McCarthy, *The Sunset Limited*[2]

"This, my child, is what the angels don't understand.
I mean to say that this is what they haven't experienced.
What it is to have this body; to have this bond with this body; to be this body
To have this bond with the earth, with this earth, to be this earth, clay and dust, ash and the mud of the earth,
The very body of Jesus."
- Péguy, *The Portal of the Mystery of Hope*[3]

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1954), 129.

[2] Cormac McCarthy, *The Sunset Limited* (New York: Vintage, 2006), 95.

[3] Charles Péguy, *The Portal of the Mystery of Hope*, trans. David Louis Schindler (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 52. Unless stated otherwise, all italics in quoted material in this dissertation are in the original.

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Introduction

The 20th century, it could be argued, witnessed a constant march of progress towards transcending limiting material conditions and human embodiment, which can be seen clearly today in the growth of virtual reality and transhumanism. However, the 20th century also saw a recovery of the importance of embodiment for interpreting human existence, and this is especially notable in recent decades. This return to the body has been carried out in several academic disciplines, but perhaps most markedly in the philosophical approach of phenomenology. The roots of this recovery can be traced back to figures like Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Emmanuel Levinas who in the beginning and middle of the 20th century emphasized finitude, embodiment, temporality, and intersubjectivity in their philosophies. Phenomenology has continued to underscore the necessity of the body for perception, and therefore for giving a full account of the human condition in the life-world, and for understanding phenomena therein.

A branch of phenomenology labelled the "theological turn" in French phenomenology—originally a derogatory label when coined by Dominique Janicaud in 1991—has turned its analytic lens to phenomena that are explicitly religious and in some cases invisible, therefore contravening some of the methodological rules of phenomenology, one of which is bracketing God and transcendence from analysis. While phenomenologists working in the "theological turn" have focussed their analyses on various religious phenomena—prayer, revelation, the eucharist, God—Michel Henry (1922-2002) and Emmanuel Falque (b. 1963) have given special attention to incarnation and resurrection, and to the status of flesh and body in these beliefs. Their engagement with these core theological doctrines using phenomenology has yielded rich fruit for both phenomenology and theology.

Henry and Falque discuss incarnation and resurrection based on the phenomenological distinction between body (*Körper*) and flesh (*Leib*). The former designates the objective, material body, and the latter refers to the lived or subjective experience of the body. Whereas most theories in both theology and philosophy posit the soul or mind as a distinct substance that exists beyond the body—seen perhaps most clearly in Cartesian dualism—phenomenology understands body and flesh as two ways of constituting embodied human being, where flesh is the embodied subjectivity instead of the distinct substance of the soul. This is a development aimed at overcoming the problematics of traditional dualistic approaches to the mind-body problem. However, several thinkers, including Falque, criticize Henry for defining the human being primarily as flesh, and therefore for having a Docetic view of Christ. Coming from the Greek *dokeō*, "to appear," Docetic understandings of Christ envision Christ as completely divine, his material humanity being only an illusion.[4]

In assessing the merits of Henry's and Falque's work as it relates to a recovery of embodiment in phenomenological and theological thought today, as well as a richer understanding of incarnation and resurrection, I lay out this dissertation in three chapters. The first gives necessary background in phenomenology and the "theological turn," and the second and third chapters critically engage the work of Henry and Falque respectively by comparing their "theological trilogies." Contra the critiques of Docetism in Henry's phenomenological reading of Christianity, I will show that Henry never denies material aspects to Christ or human beings, but emphasizes flesh for valid reasons, namely, that flesh is the material motivating force for life, an embodied subjectivity. I will show that Falque's critique of Henry arises because his approach is different than Henry's, with different aims, and so he misreads him. Despite these

[4] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 45.

differences concerning incarnation, Falque and Henry both read the resurrection as a resurrection in the flesh. Additionally, the moves that Falque makes in the final volume of his trilogy—moves that he sees as correcting the "error" in Henry's work—align his stance closer to Henry's, in that for both, forces and drives constitute the basis of the human being, that also Christ fully "is."

Chapter 1 gives a brief, focussed sketch of phenomenology, a description of Dominique Janicaud's critical labelling of the "theological turn" in French phenomenology, and finally examines some critical responses to Janicaud's position and the state of the "theological turn" today. Laying out these three sections will provide a grounding for understanding the work of Henry and Falque in the subsequent chapters. First, I succinctly outline what phenomenology is and what its aims are, especially as it relates to and informs Henry and Falque. In doing this, I limit myself to an examination of the two most important figures for phenomenology: Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. These two founders of phenomenology were instrumental in laying out its methods, aims, and key terms. The basic aim of phenomenology is to describe phenomena and how they appear to human consciousness. Important ideas are intention (that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something), the reduction or bracketing of one's natural or everyday relation to the world, and the methodological restriction to immanence and the exclusion of transcendence (and so phenomena associated with religion). Of special relevance to my discussion of Henry and Falque is the phenomenological understanding of the duality of the body, namely as body (*Körper*) and flesh (*Leib*), and I will detail how Husserl classically lays out this distinction.

Next, I look at the roots of the "theological turn" in French phenomenology. In 1991 Dominique Janicaud put forward his critique in *The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology*, in which he claims that some theologically-minded French phenomenologists

have abandoned certain necessary methodological principles in their work. By going beyond mere immanence and allowing transcendence into their analyses, these philosophers are no longer practicing phenomenology but rather theology. While those Janicaud identifies come from differing religious traditions—Judaism (Emmanuel Levinas), and Protestant (Paul Ricoeur) and Catholic (Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Louis Chrétien)[5] branches of Christianity—Janicaud claims that their philosophical, and specifically their phenomenological, approaches are no longer "purely" philosophical, but are guided instead by their theological presuppositions. In his critique, Janicaud is not out to denigrate theology, but rather to delineate clearly what phenomenology is, that is, what the true methodological approach of phenomenology is.

However, there have been numerous critical responses to Janicaud's work, and I examine some of these in the final part of Chapter 1. The responses in the thirty years since Janicaud's initial critique have come both from the thinkers that he names in his work as well as from others following in their footsteps. I explicate the essays by Marion and Henry that come from the 1992 *Phenomenology and Theology*, which is published together with Janicaud's work in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*. Although neither philosopher is directly responding to Janicaud, their work reveals a deeply phenomenological character apart from any theological infringement. I also highlight some pertinent essays from recent edited collections on the "theological turn" as well as a pre-Husserlian stream of phenomenology native to France, namely, the spiritualist tradition of figures such as Maurice Blondel (1861-1949) and Henri Bergson (1859-1941). What I show is that the thinkers operating within the "theological turn" have not abandoned the overall aims of phenomenology, but have pushed it to and beyond its limits for the sake of grappling with phenomena and appearing.

[5] Emmanuel Falque is too young to have been identified by Janicaud in this essay but would fit within the Catholic tradition that he critiques.

In Chapter 2 I engage the thought of Michel Henry. After a brief introduction I turn to Henry's first two works that lay out the methodological and thematic core of his thinking, before engaging with his final three theologically-inflected works. In 1963 Henry published his magnum opus *The Essence of Manifestation*, and two years later he published the closely related *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*.[6] In the first work he makes a break from phenomenology according to Husserl and Heidegger, and from a problematic that he sees in the history of philosophy, namely, that there is only one kind of appearing, understood as an ecstatic, outwards movement of the ego. He argues that there is another mode of appearing that is behind this which is immanent and non-ecstatic. This mode of appearing, and Henry's main contribution to phenomenology, he calls Life, and Life knows itself immediately via what Henry calls auto-affection. In the second work, Henry applies his idea of Life and the duality of appearing specifically to the body. Drawing extensively from the 18th century French philosopher Pierre Maine de Biran, Henry distinguishes between the objective, material body and the absolute, transcendental body as a way of overcoming the manner in which Cartesian dualism understands the body and subjectivity. The objective body is the one known to science and appears according to the world's truth, and the absolute body is only found in Life's mode of appearing. The difference between these two bodies applies directly to how Henry discusses incarnation and resurrection, which are topics that he addresses briefly in the conclusion of this work.

After laying out his foundational ideas about appearance, auto-affection, Life, and the transcendental body, I turn to a critical analysis of Henry's theological trilogy. Published in the last six years of his life (the last being published posthumously), these three are *I Am the Truth:*

[6] Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973); English translation of *L'Essence de la manifestation*, 2 vol. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963). Michel Henry, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975); English translation of *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps: Essai sur l'ontologie biranienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965).

Toward a Philosophy of Christianity, *Incarnation: A Philosophy of Flesh*, and *Words of Christ*.[7] In these texts Henry works out his earlier phenomenological ideas in and through the Christian scriptures and theological doctrines. The first volume analyses Christianity via the Gospel of John, arguing that Christianity perfectly articulates the philosophical ideas that he had been wrestling through in his first two philosophical works. Here we see him give a phenomenological account of the incarnation of Christ according to his idea of the duality of appearing, arguing that Christ incarnates flesh and not body. In the second volume Henry tackles incarnation in a more rigorous manner, moving from a general phenomenology of flesh to a more specific phenomenology of incarnation in the Christian sense. In support of his analyses, he engages with the work of two of the church fathers, Tertullian and Irenaeus. The last volume is a philosophy of language that applies his idea of a duality of appearing to the words of Christ, in order to understand which of Christ's words are human and which divine.

In Chapter 3 I critically engage the work of Emmanuel Falque. Again, I provide a short introduction to Falque and his work before highlighting his method and approach generally, and then move on to his theological trilogy. Throughout this chapter I will bring Falque into dialogue with Henry, pointing out the ways in which the two thinkers are similar, areas in which Falque charts a different path, and the importance of these similarities and differences. I begin by examining some of Falque's "non-trilogy" works. Unlike Henry, whose theological trilogy comes after his explicitly philosophical works, Falque's trilogy is interspersed with his other writings. That said, looking at some of these other works will provide insight into understanding

[7] Michel Henry, *I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); English translation of *C'est Moi la vérité: Pour une philosophie du christianisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1996). Michel Henry, *Incarnation: A Philosophy of Flesh*, trans. Karl Hefty (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015); English translation of *Incarnation: Une philosophie de la chair* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000). Michel Henry, *Words of Christ*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012); English translation of *Paroles du Christ* (Éditions du Seuil, 2002).

his trilogy. I primarily examine his 2013 *Crossing the Rubicon*[8] in which Falque lays out clearly the method and approach he uses in all his works. Here he argues that all thinking—philosophical and theological—must start with the unsurpassable immanence of the human being as such (*l'homme tout court*), that is, from the horizon of finitude. However, he also avers that theology transforms philosophical thinking and brings it to its fulfillment, in much the same way that, through the resurrection, he argues, Christ bring humanity to its fulfillment. Falque also pushes the bounds of phenomenology by forcing it to consider the extra-phenomenal, and seeks to correct contemporary phenomenology's over-emphasis on flesh over body, passivity over activity, and sense over non-sense.

I then move to an analysis of Falque's theological trilogy, which he calls a *Triduum philosophique*. Published between 1999 and 2011, Falque's books are *The Guide to Gethsemane: Anxiety, Suffering, Death*, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude: An Essay on Death and Resurrection*, and *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist*.[9] Unlike Henry's theological trilogy, which is more of a trilogy of happenstance, Falque's three books hold together around the three days of Easter (the Triduum). He starts by describing the anxiety and suffering that the incarnate and human Christ lived through while facing death; he then moves on to a phenomenology of flesh and body considering the resurrection of Christ. In these first two books, Falque emphasizes flesh much more than body when describing Christ's incarnation and

[8] Emmanuel Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology*, trans. Reuben Shank (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016); English translation of *Passer le Rubicon: Philosophie et théologie; Essai sur les frontières* (Bruxelles: Éditions Lessius, 2013).

[9] Emmanuel Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane: Anxiety, Suffering, Death*, trans. George Hughes (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019); English translation of *Le passeur de Gethsémani: Angoisse, souffrance et mort; Lecture existentielle et phénoménologique* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1999). Emmanuel Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude: An Essay on Birth and Resurrection*, trans. George Hughes (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); English translation of *Métamorphose de la finitude. Essai philosophique sur la naissance et la résurrection* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2004). Emmanuel Falque, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist*, trans. George Hughes (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016); English translation of *Les noces de l'agneau: Essai philosophique sur le corps et l'eucharistie* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2011).

resurrection. In his third volume, via a backlash of theology upon phenomenology, Falque examines in a deeper manner the material nature of human beings, especially looking at chaos, forces, and drives, and how these relate to the presence of Christ in the eucharist. In his work, more so than Henry or any other thinker in the "theological turn," Falque engages deeply with theological material and enacts his mantra of thinking as both a philosopher and a theologian.

When it comes to the question of body and flesh, Falque is critical of Henry's position on Christ for over-emphasizing the flesh over the body. I will argue that Henry is not overly concerned with the material conditions of Christ, and is not interested in any of the research or positions related to the historical Jesus. What is important to Henry when it comes to interpreting Christ are flesh and Life, which must be known and assessed beyond material and historical conditions. That is, they are to be known via the immanent mode of appearing, not the ecstatic mode of appearing. However, it is precisely this hypertrophy of the flesh that Falque is critical of as a stance that plagues the phenomenological tradition. As he moves from volume two to volume three in his trilogy, he attends much more to the material conditions of Christ and human beings, arguing that this more material focus is necessary to give an accurate description and understanding of human existence. Falque's descriptions of the incarnate existence of Christ are thus much more embodied than Henry. Despite this, I show that Falque's understanding and description of resurrection accords closely with Henry's, in that there is an emphasis on the flesh over the body. Additionally, when Falque seeks a more material focus for humanity in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* by discussing chaos, forces, and drives, he finds himself in areas very close to Henry, for Henry's notion of Life and flesh are understood as material forces.

I think that the key difference between Henry and Falque, without sounding too Wittgensteinian, is that they are playing different games. Because of this, they must be judged on

their own terms. I argue that Henry is best understood as doing more primary and foundational phenomenology, whereas Falque is doing more secondary and descriptive phenomenology. What I mean by this is that Henry's works, especially as demonstrated in *The Essence of Manifestation* and *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, are rigorous and detailed analyses into the understanding of appearing as such. As I will demonstrate in the first section of my Henry chapter, Henry shows a bullheaded pursuit of the very conditions by which phenomena (that is, appearances) can appear. He does not deny the reality of appearances; however, he does not spend much time describing them or how they specifically appear. His resulting phenomenology ends up looking more abstract and mystical, and thus evokes the claims of his critics that he displays a Docetic understanding of Christ, but that is only because he is attending to the deeper movements of Life that underly the phenomenon of appearing or manifestation.

Falque shows some degree of concern for the conditions of appearing, but his primary focus seems to be more broadly descriptive. This is not to say that he focusses completely on *what* appears rather than *how* it appears—I will show that Falque argues that, for example, the resurrected Christ is known by his *how* not his *what*, and that Bonaventure's understanding of God is by a phenomenological *how* as opposed to a substantial *what* or *who*. However, even in discussing how discrete phenomena appear, Falque seems to pay attention to how God can be known, for example, or for how Christ's suffering reveals his flesh to us. These analyses are helpful of course, but are not as deep, or foundational, as Henry's question concerning how any of these phenomena at all are possible, namely, not how do discrete manifestations show themselves to us, but how does manifestation as such manifest itself to us. Due to this distinction in their approach and focus, we cannot say that Henry is overall a better "theological" phenomenologist than Falque or vice versa, but that Henry is better at some things and Falque is

better at others. I will argue that the claim that there is Docetism in Henry's work is misguided because his critics, like Falque, misread what he is doing, especially concerning the duality of appearing; additionally, and perhaps ironically, the more that Falque tries to correct what he finds faulty in Henry, the more his position aligns with Henry's.

Throughout this dissertation I will highlight in my analyses the importance of theological thinking and resources for phenomenology. Although Henry and Falque are both labelled as thinkers in the "theological turn" in French phenomenology and are both Catholic, their theological presuppositions influence their work in different ways. This difference is due to differences in their personalities, to an increased receptivity to overtly theological themes in the French academy in Falque's time compared to Henry's, and to the fact that Falque, unlike Henry, has degrees in philosophy and theology.[10] With Falque the "theological turn" has become much more theological, as all his phenomenology critically engages with theology, and he boldly claims in *Crossing the Rubicon* that "the more we theologize, the better we philosophize" (25).[11] His inclusion of theological material into his phenomenology, and his thinking as a theologian at times, has deepened the insights that phenomenology can gain by not maintaining its methodological atheism and bracketing of religious phenomena.

However, while Falque is on the surface more theological than Henry, Henry's thinking is equally religiously committed. Of course, this comes out in spades in his theological trilogy, wherein he is still mainly doing phenomenology, but these religious leanings are apparent throughout his work. For example, when making some comments on Hegel in the final pages of

[10] Falque and Jean-Yves Lacoste are the only members of the "theological turn" to have academic degrees in theology. Martin Koci and Jason W. Alvis, 'Introduction: Transgressing the Boundaries: Introducing Emmanuel Falque', in *Transforming the Theological Turn: Phenomenology with Emmanuel Falque*, ed. Martin Koci and Jason W. Alvis (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), xxxvii fn5.

[11] He first makes this claim five years earlier in his habilitation. Emmanuel Falque, *God, the Flesh, and the Other: From Irenaeus to Duns Scotus*, trans. William Christian Hackett (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 16.

The Essence of Manifestation, Henry writes that "*all thought is essentially religious*" (727). Henry finds in the explicitly biblical and theological material he engages with at the end of his life the exemplars *par excellence* of the phenomenological ideas he had at the beginning. Phenomenology and theology are very much one and the same for Henry; and Falque, though he opts for distinguishing them as disciplines and suggests that thinkers ably move back and forth between them, argues that philosophy finds its completion in theology. As I work through this dissertation, I will unpack how these approaches to the relation between phenomenology and theology lead to more fruitful results for both disciplines.

What both Henry and Falque hold in common is an unapologetic desire to pursue the truth, wherever it leads them. Neither thinker, we will see, is content to follow the supposedly neutral atheistic methodological approach of phenomenology. Rather, they seek after phenomena and the conditions of their possibility wherever that search takes them. Is it just because Henry and Falque are Catholic that their philosophical analyses lead them toward God, the Bible, and theology for an understanding of reality? Or is it that by following their phenomenological investigations they cannot help but transgress the so-called atheistic *a priori* of the phenomenological method? I think the latter is more accurate, namely, that Henry and Falque show a mindset that exists prior to the modern severing of philosophy and theology. Thinking is thinking for them, as it was for the ancient Greek philosophers and the church fathers, and, come what may, their thinking using the tools of phenomenology has provided many fruitful results, not least of which is a more fulsome and imaginative way of understanding the givenness of reality.

Chapter 1: Tracing the Contours of the "Theological Turn" in French Phenomenology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide basic essential background on (1) phenomenology and its aims, specifically Husserlian phenomenology and Heidegger's development of it; (2) what the "theological turn" in French phenomenology is, and its attendant critiques; and (3) what philosophers within the French phenomenology strain of Continental philosophy of religion believe they are doing when analysing theological content. These three foci will provide a roadmap to our journey examining the specific works of Henry and Falque.

A Brief History and Overview of Phenomenology

In order to understand the "theological turn" in French phenomenology, and, in particular, what Henry and Falque are attempting to do in their respective phenomenologies, some context is necessary. Even though the word "phenomenology" has been part of the philosophical lexicon for some time—it was used by figures like Herder, Kant, and Fichte, and one especially recalls Hegel's use of it in his 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*[12]—phenomenology as a distinct approach enters the philosopher's toolkit in 1900, with the pioneering work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938).

Husserl's academic training was in mathematics and physics, but he soon turned his attention to questions of epistemology and intentionality more generally. His *Logical*

[12] Lauer points out that although both Hegel and Husserl have rigorous phenomenologies, the former's is "primarily a propaedeutic to philosophy—an introduction to his *Logic*," while the latter's is seen as "the whole of philosophy." Quentin Lauer, "Introduction," in Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 4.

Investigations,[13] published in two volumes in 1900-1901, were attempts at ascertaining the conditions of the possibility of knowledge, and subsequently became the foundations for phenomenology. It was in these texts that Husserl provided a description and analysis of many important concepts in phenomenology.[14] Shortly after, his student Martin Heidegger took Husserlian phenomenology and modified it in some important, indeed drastic, ways. From his earlier work right through to his last seminar, Heidegger moved phenomenology beyond mere intention and appearance—originally central points for Husserl—toward analyses of finitude, temporality, and inconspicuous phenomena. An overview of these two key thinkers will help us to situate both those named in the "theological turn" and Janicaud's critique of them.

Phenomenology is, in its most basic form, a description of reality as experienced by the human subject, which includes both experience itself and the objects therein. Phenomenology is thus a "method for philosophy" and "reflective and subjective in character."[15] This view of phenomenology is one that "marvels at the fact that there is disclosure, that things do appear, that the world can be understood, and that we in our life of thinking serve as datives for the manifestation of things."[16] By providing a thorough description both of the phenomena that appear, and also of their modes of appearing, phenomenology aims to be the foundation for all scientific endeavours, and to be a bedrock for how we understand the relations between truth and reality.

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[13] Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. J.N. Findlay, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1970); English translation of *Logische Untersuchungen* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1900/1901). Citations will be from the English translation unless stated otherwise, and henceforth as *LI* and section number.

[14] Dan Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 7.

[15] Marvin Farber, *The Aims of Phenomenology: The Motives, Methods, and Impact of Husserl's Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), 11. Moran writes that phenomenology is "a *radical* way of doing philosophy, a *practice* rather than a system." Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000), 4.

[16] Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 185.

Edmund Husserl and the Beginnings of Phenomenology

Husserl's main philosophical aim, which birthed what became phenomenology, was to get to a real understanding of things, or phenomena, in the world. He viewed phenomenology as "the exploration of the conceptual foundations required for any kind of knowing or cognising, without invoking or grappling with traditional philosophical theories or positions."[17] As such, his initial main opponent was psychologism, the belief that everything can be reduced to how the mind works.[18] His concern in the *Prolegomena* (part 1) to his *Logical Investigations* was the reduction of logic to psychology, and so to the erasure of that which is necessarily true outside of human subjectivity (§19). In this view, there are no truths or realities external to the human being; these are all explained as empirical facts of the mind.[19] Husserl knew that to understand meaning and truth, there needs to be a move from the empirical to the transcendental. Further, there needs to be reflection on the world and its truth that exists outside of the human being. One of the major impacts of Descartes's thinking, which Husserl was also trying to overcome, is the problem of egocentricity, that is, the ego understood as a self-enclosed whole, detached from the rest of the world. Husserl argued that the ego is open to the world and others, and that things in the world exist in reality and truly present themselves to human beings.[20]

Husserl's response to these problems led to his motto, and indeed the main rallying cry of phenomenology (which comes from §2 of the introduction to the second volume—the

[17] Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 92.

[18] Heidegger was also quite critical of psychologism in his 1913 dissertation, *The Doctrine of Judgment in Psychologism*. See Edward Baring, *Converts to the Real: Catholicism and the Making of Continental Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 92-96.

[19] Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 113-115.

[20] In *Logical Investigations* Husserl comes across as a realist. In his next major work, *Ideas* in 1913, he took a transcendental turn towards an idealist position, of which many were critical. I will make some of these distinctions clear in subsequent paragraphs, but an in-depth examination is outside the scope of this dissertation. I tend to read Husserl as more of a realist even after his "transcendental turn."

investigations—of his *Logical Investigations*): "to the 'things themselves'" (*zu den Sachen selbst*). He suggested that this approach was needed instead of remaining, oftentimes deludedly, at the level of "meanings inspired only by remote, confused, inauthentic intuitions—if by any intuitions at all" (*LI*, Intro. §2). The meanings he has in mind, such as scientific and linguistic concepts, often cover over phenomena rather than reveal them as they are in their essence; sometimes they even prevent human beings from investigating certain phenomena at all.

To truly understand things, and so to understand the world, the phenomenologist must attempt to have clear vision. Husserl addresses this point shortly after his motto, where he writes that "an epistemological investigation that can seriously claim to be scientific must, it has often been emphasized, satisfy the *principle of freedom from presuppositions*" (*LI*, Intro. §7). His scientific endeavour to return to the things themselves in a presuppositionless manner is the attempt to truly allow objects in the world to present themselves to human beings on their own terms. For Husserl, the presuppositionless stance "meant the strict exclusion of all assertions which could not be completely realized phenomenologically—i.e., in terms of intuitive experience alone."[21] To the extent that this is not done, these objects and truths will never be fully known or described accurately.[22]

But what does it mean for an ego to experience phenomena, and how does this happen, phenomenologically or otherwise? It is through the process of intentionality that is at the root of all experience and conscious acts. For Husserl, as he writes in is 1913 *Ideas I*, "intentionality is what characterizes *consciousness*," that is, it is "the own peculiarity of mental processes 'to be

[21] Farber, *The Aims of Phenomenology*, 30.

[22] Cf. *Cartesian Meditations*, §1, where Husserl writes: "I have chosen to begin in absolute poverty, with an absolute lack of knowledge." Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973); English translation of *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*. Ed. Stephan Strasser (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950, rpt. 1973). Husserliana (Hua) 1. Citations will be from the English translation unless stated otherwise, and henceforth as *CM* and section number.

consciousness *of* something.'" (*Ideas I*, §84).[23] This core doctrine of phenomenology means that every act of consciousness—whether seeing, imagining, judging, etc.—is always a consciousness of something, that is, each intentional act has an object of its intention.[24] It is important to note, too, that the object intended need not exist in reality for the act of intention to be carried out, as Husserl makes clear in §55 of *Ideas II*.[25] Intention can thus cover more than existing objects, but these intended objects are never merely within human consciousness (*LI*, V §11).[26] For Husserl, the process of intention is one-way, from the ego outwards towards external objects.

The corollary concept for intention is intuition, which is the givenness of phenomena to human consciousness via experience. Husserl's focus on intuition is a large part of the reason that he was so adamant on a return to the "things themselves," and so to things that our mind simply finds to be true rather than actively constructs. Intuitions are the other half of intention, in that they fulfill the intention. Intuitions come in varying degrees, depending on different modes of givenness, such that the greater the intuition the more fully the intention will be fulfilled, and thus truer knowledge of that object can be had. As Husserl writes in *Logical Investigations*, "*the experience of the agreement* between meaning and what is itself present, meant, between the

[23] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to A Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Fred Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998); English translation of *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie*. Ed. Karl Schuhmann (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976). Husserliana (Hua) 3. Citations will be from the English translation unless stated otherwise, and henceforth as *Ideas I* and section number.

[24] Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 8.

[25] The intentional relation "is not immediately a *real relation but an intentional relation* to something real. Therefore there is a distinction between: 1) the *intentional relation* … [and] 2) the *real relation* … The real relation collapses if the thing does not exist; the intentional relation, however, remains." Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989); English translation of *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*. Ed. Marly Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952). Husserliana (Hua) 4. Citations will be from the English translation unless stated otherwise, and henceforth as *Ideas II* and section number.

[26] Cf. Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, 19.

actual *sense of an assertion* [intention] and the self-given *state of affairs* [intuition], is inward evidence: the *Idea* of this agreement is truth" (*Prol.* §51). The intention-intuition relationship is key for Husserl and can hold only when phenomena are able to give themselves on their own terms.

While Husserl set some important groundwork for phenomenology in the *Logical Investigations,* it was not until the publication of *Ideas I* in 1913 that phenomenology was rigorously developed. One of the first important steps required to get back to the things themselves occurs in §24 of *Ideas I*, where Husserl lays out what he calls the "principle of all principles" that should guide phenomenological research. On this principle he writes, "*that every originary presentative intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition*, that *everything originarily* (so to speak, in its 'personal' actuality) *offered* to us *in 'intuition' is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being*, but also *only within the limits in which it is presented there*." Again, we should see this as being connected to his emphasis on a presuppositionless approach. It is not our concepts and dogmatism (scientific, linguistic, metaphysical, etc.) that (should) determine and define objects, but the very objects themselves that are the authority for their own presentation—which should be accepted as they give themselves. However, to really reflect on and understand these things as they are given in intuition, it is necessary to move from the natural attitude to the phenomenological or transcendental attitude.

In §27 of *Ideas I*, Husserl describes the natural attitude as the normal, everyday relation that human beings have to the world. On this natural relation to the world, Husserl writes: "I am conscious of it: that signifies, above all, that intuitively I find it immediately, that I experience it. By my seeing, touching, hearing, and so forth, and in the different modes of sensuous perception, corporeal physical things with some spatial distribution or other are *simply there for me, 'on*

hand' in the literal or figurative sense, whether or not I am particularly heedful of them." In the natural attitude human beings unquestioningly interpret the world as something over and against themselves and interpret their own ego as another object in the world (*Ideas I*, §33). But what accompanies this natural attitude are the theoretical views that we have, whether scientific, metaphysical, linguistic, etc. Although we take the world around us as obviously true, Husserl avers that these theoretical commitments have covered over what is actually given in the world.

Husserl's method for getting back to the things themselves is through the transcendental reduction of the ego. In order to begin an analysis of what is actually given, Husserl introduces the concept of bracketing. This phenomenological bracketing, known as the *epoché*, temporarily puts a given phenomenon under question outside of our normal, natural attitude, that is, our everyday understanding and experience of the world. Husserl is clear in §31 of *Ideas I* that the phenomenon or thesis under question is not given up or abandoned, but is only temporarily set aside: "*We do not give up the positing we effected, we do not in any respect alter our conviction … we, so to speak, 'put it out of action,' we 'exclude it,' we 'parenthesize it.'*"[27] In §32, Husserl states that the whole world and natural attitude should be bracketed, such that the theoretical positions, especially of the positive sciences, should not impinge on an understanding of anything in the world. In sum, reality is not denied or doubted;[28] rather, one's attitude to it has changed.

[27] Although Kersten has translated *klammern* as 'parenthesizing,' this dissertation will follow Gibson's 1931 translation, as well as the standard within phenomenology widely, of 'bracketing.' Dickinson makes the helpful point that Husserl is here continuing Cartesian doubt, but in a manner that does not doubt existence as such, but our concepts and views about it. Colby Dickinson, *Theology and Contemporary Continental Philosophy: The Centrality of a Negative Dialectic* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019), 36.

[28] Husserl even says that a whole new dimension has been added because of the *epoché*. See Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), §32; English translation of *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*. Ed. Walter Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954). Husserliana (Hua) 6. Citations will be from the English translation unless stated otherwise, and henceforth as *Crisis* and section number.

The bracketing that is carried out via the *epoché* allows one to move from the natural attitude to the phenomenological or transcendental attitude. It is, in Sokolowski's words, to "get 'nudged upstairs'" to a broader and more analytical viewpoint.[29] In itself bracketing does nothing; it only provides the means of getting to the transcendental attitude. Husserl writes in §71 of *Crisis* that the *epoché* is "the gate of entry through which one must pass in order to be able to discover the new world of pure subjectivity." Once the conventional, everyday world is bracketed, we move from the natural attitude to the transcendental attitude, a process known as the phenomenological or transcendental reduction (from *re-ducere*, which highlights the leading back or return to our transcendental foundation).[30]

Within the transcendental attitude, our consciousness becomes accessible to us (*Ideas I*, §33), allowing us to reflect on our consciousness of things (*Ideas I*, §34). Whereas in the natural attitude we merely intend things (objects, ideas, propositions), in the phenomenological attitude we intend intention itself. That is, by stepping outside of and beyond the natural attitude and into the phenomenological attitude, the objects and processes—in phenomenological terms, the *noema* and *noesis* (*Ideas I*, §§87-88)—in the natural attitude can be analysed. What is gained in the phenomenological attitude—the "*phenomenological residuum*" after bracketing the world—is "*pure consciousness in its own absolute being*" (*Ideas I*, §50). To return to the "things themselves" is to understand ourselves as those beings which are capable not just of affecting acts and making intentions, but of effecting reflections on these acts, of intending our intentions themselves.

Another key concept for Husserl is the correlation between what appears and appearing itself. In *The Idea of Phenomenology*, a series of lectures given in 1907, Husserl writes that "the

[29] Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 47.

[30] Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 49; cf. Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, 46.

word 'phenomenon' is ambiguous in virtue of the essential correlation between *appearance and that which appears*. *Φαινόμενον* (phenomenon) in its proper sense means that which appears, and yet it is by preference used for the appearing itself, for the subjective phenomenon."[31] This correlation between what appears and how it appears is central to phenomenological description. Although phenomenology does indeed concern itself with the description of phenomena in the sense of what appears, it is more concerned with *how* they appear.

In *Crisis* §48, Husserl comments that the correlation between 'what' and 'how' was known even in pre-Socratic philosophy; however, it "never evoked philosophical wonder … [and] never aroused a philosophical interest of its own." Paying attention to this relation is exactly what Husserl begins to do in his *Logical Investigations*. This correlation between what appears and how it appears "applies not only to perceiving, to bodies, and to the penetrable depths of immediate sensibility but to any and every entity within the spatiotemporal world and to its subjective manner of givenness" (*Crisis* §48).

Two important points emerge here. The first is that phenomenology should be open to every phenomenon that appears in the world, that is, there is nothing that should be precluded from phenomenological investigation. To really understand and describe phenomena means that phenomenology needs to pay close attention to each given phenomenon, as they each present themselves in their own manner to the ego. The second point, though, is that all objects investigated need to occur within immanence. To be the rigorous science that Husserl envisions phenomenology to be, it must remain within the sphere of immanence, where the only accepted "transcendent" thing is the ego. In §58 of *Ideas I*, he says that the phenomenological reduction

[31] Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 11; English translation of *Die Idee der Phänomenologie. Fünf Vorlesungen*. Ed. Walter Biemel (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950). Husserliana (Hua) 2. Citations will be from the English translation unless stated otherwise.

should be applied to God, conceived of as an "extra-worldly 'divine' being" that is absolute and transcendent in a way that the ego is not. Further, in §86 he writes that "every sort of transcendence" should be suspended or bracketed.[32]

However, Husserl's understanding of transcendence and immanence—and their relations to each other—is at times ambiguous, and certainly more complicated than I have just presented it. To anticipate Heidegger, but also looking forward to Janicaud's critique, it will be helpful to show briefly how Husserl addresses transcendence. Of course, central to Husserl's phenomenology is the transcendental ego, which is present within the natural attitude already, in a latent sense, but which comes to fruition in the phenomenological attitude.[33] However, the world itself also has a transcendent quality to it. In §47 of *Cartesian Meditations*, for example, Husserl writes that "*within* this '*original sphere*' (the sphere of original self-explication) we find also a 'transcendent world', which accrues on the basis of the intentional phenomenon," and in §49 he refers to the bracketed world as an "'immanent' transcendency." Husserl is not opposed to appeals to transcendence *tout court* in phenomenological analyses, but only to those in which transcendence is rendered in an absolute sense. What he suggests, then, is a view of transcendence-within-immanence.[34]

The relation between the ego and the world is also important in Husserl's work. At least in the early Husserl, a radical distinction between the transcendental ego and the world is present. In §49 of *Ideas I*, he writes about the relation between the human consciousness and the

[32] Husserl also writes, in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, that "that which is transcendent (not genuinely immanent) I may not use" (3).

[33] See Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 122-123.

[34] See Jan Patočka, *An Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology*, ed. James Dodd, trans. Erazim Kohák (Chicago, Il: Open Court, 1996), 91-93. Additionally, regarding the phenomenological reduction he writes: "If we reduce all conscious reality to absolute, pure phenomena, then, after the reduction, transcendence does not disappear; it is not crossed off and destroyed, but rather continues to belong to immanence, though no longer as *real transcendence* but as the *phenomenon of transcendence*, as the objective correlate of what is purely, *reell*ly immanent, that is, of lived experience as such" (102).

world. He states that despite everything he has said in regard to the ego having experiences in the world and real "'psychophysical' interconnections, … consciousness considered in its '*purity*' must be held to be a *self-contained complex of being*, a complex of *absolute being* into which nothing can penetrate and out of which nothing can slip, to which nothing is spatiotemporally external and which cannot be within any spatiotemporally [sic] complex." Erazim Kohák, commenting on this section, states that "it is inaccurate to speak of consciousness as being 'in' a world. Consciousness—the stream of lived experiences—constitutes a self-contained matrix."[35] This section is exemplary of the dualism and idealism that is present in Husserl's middle work, the work that Heidegger critically addresses in his early works, such as *Being and Time* and *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*.

Husserl's position on the relation between the ego and the world changed quite drastically in his later writings. In *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl addresses the fact that we are integrally related to the world—with regard to both objects and other subjects. In §60, he is clear that the ego "can be a world-experiencing ego only by being in communion with others like himself: a member of a community of monads," and that "*there can exist only a single community of monads*, the community of *all* co-existing monads."[36] In *Crisis* he carries this analysis further with his notion of the "life-world" (*Lebenswelt*), to which he devotes much of part three. He writes, for example, that "in whatever way we may be conscious of the world as universal horizon, as coherent universe of existing objects, we, each 'I-the-man' and all of us together, belong to the world as living with one another in the world; and the world is our world, valid for our consciousness as existing precisely through this 'living together'" (§28). As we can

[35] Erazim Kohák, *Idea and Experience: Edmund Husserl's Project of Phenomenology in* Ideas I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 90.

[36] Cf. §49 where he states that the "*Ego-community* … [is] *ultimately a community of monads*, which, moreover, (in its communalized intentionality) constitutes the *one identical world*."

see here, Husserl is clear—in a way that is different than his earlier thinking in *Ideas I*—that we are always present with others in a world of objects that is pre-given to us and exists only as shared.[37]

A final point to look at in Husserl, especially as it will inform our understanding and comparative discussion of Henry and Falque, is his understanding of the body—specifically, his distinction between the objective body (*Körper*) and the subjective body (*Leib*). The former is understood as the objective, material body, and is referred to in the phenomenological tradition as body; the latter is the subjective, lived body, and is referred to as flesh. In §35 of *Ideas II*, Husserl states that "the constitution of man as he presents himself to a naturalistic point of view" should be seen as "material body [*Körper*] upon which are constructed new strata of being: the Bodily-psychic [*leiblich-seelischen*]." Starting with the "psychophysical subject," Husserl avers that phenomenology can "provide the ultimate distinction between 'man as nature' and 'man as spirit'" (§35). Husserl's distinction between body and flesh is a way of grappling with the different aspects of a human being within an immanent plane based on our phenomenological experiences.

In §56 of *Ideas II*, Husserl writes that, when perceiving a human being, "I see the man [*den Menschen*], and in seeing him I also see his Body [*Leib*]. In a certain way, the apprehension of a man as such goes through the appearance of the body [*die Erscheinung des Körpers*] which here is a Body [*Leib*]" (252). This text highlights that, though human beings have a material body, we do not naturally pay this much attention, or even notice it—whether our own or others';

[37] Volumes 13-15 of Husserliana, which are yet to be translated to English, are all titled *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, and deal with lectures and seminars given in 1905-1920, 1921-1928, and 1929-1935 respectively. They highlight that Husserl was taking intersubjectivity under consideration in his philosophy. See also Ricoeur's commentary on the fifth *Cartesian Meditation* in Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, trans. Edward G. Ballard and Lester E. Embree (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 123-142. Husserl's work here does not necessarily make him any less of an idealist, at least as he can be viewed starting in *Ideas I*. The fact that the relationship between consciousness and the world is intersubjective rather than purely subjective does not alter the relationship *per se* between consciousness and the world.

rather, our gaze is directed to how another person "dances, laughs when amused, and chatters" (252). Later in the section he avers that an individual human is a "unitary Body [*Leib*], i.e., a body [*Körper*] which is animated and which bears sense" (255). When talking about the flesh, then, we should read it as the way that it experiences its own body —via different modes like seeing, hearing, lifting, carrying, etc. (*Crisis* §28)—and the way that others perceive it too. Although perhaps not as dualistic an understanding of human beings as in previous philosophical models—such as body-soul, or body-mind—there is a sense in which, though flesh and body are two distinct sides or aspects of the one body, a form of dualism remains in Husserl's thinking.[38]

Before moving on to Heidegger and the ways in which he develops phenomenology beyond Husserl, I sum up the major points on Husserl. Phenomenology for Husserl is a philosophical approach to truly understand things as they are given in the world to human experience. His approach necessitates attention not only to things and a description of them, but to the modes of the appearance (the correlation between the 'what' and the 'how' of appearance). By bracketing our natural attitude in and towards the world—including bracketing everything transcendent—we take on a phenomenological attitude and approach to these things. This distance allows us to analyse the world free from the presuppositions that we have in our natural attitude (science, linguistics, etc.). Whereas the early Husserl portrayed the ego as subjective and transcendent from the world in a very dualistic way, his writings near the end of his life emphasize that the self is always already present in a life-world with objects and other people.

[38] Although this distinction between *Körper* and *Leib* holds generally for Husserl and the phenomenological tradition, Franck writes that Husserl "initially distinguished their meanings and later used them interchangeably." Didier Franck, *Flesh and Body: On the Phenomenology of Husserl*, trans. Joseph Rivera and Scott Davidson (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 129.

Martin Heidegger and the Development of Phenomenology

After Husserl, Heidegger is the most important figure in phenomenology. As Husserl's student, Heidegger was up close and personal with the early foundational thinking of phenomenology. Yet, he was quick to take his leave from his mentor. Heidegger was critical of Husserl's transcendental idealism and his abstraction from real life, as well as how his attachment to metaphysical thinking affected his understanding of intention and phenomena. As Jason Alvis notes, "where Husserl focused on the deepening of an ego-oriented engagement with transcendental idealism, Heidegger wanted to root phenomenology in a realist yet dynamic ontology that sought an explication of the *how* of appearance for embodied, involved human beings who cannot become worldless."[39] The reasons for Heidegger's turn from Husserl are important for phenomenology generally, but especially so for the French phenomenologists who have been heavily indebted to him.

On Heidegger's turn from Husserl, Alvis states that "such a turn was on the basis of Husserl's negligence of the important, nonmetaphysical meaning or truth of Being. Being in the world, Dasein (Ex-sistence, being-open) is a more originary experience to thinking than a being-conscious (*be-greifen*, conceiving)."[40] The truth of Being is something that, according to Heidegger, Husserl never addressed, and this is because he did not take into full account what it means to be human. For Heidegger, taking seriously that human beings are beings in the world is the necessary starting place and condition for philosophy. Where Husserl made the first phenomenological reduction—the transcendental—to uncover a more fundamental sphere,

[39] Jason W. Alvis, *The Inconspicuous God: Heidegger, French Phenomenology, and the Theological Turn* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018), 12.

[40] Alvis, *The Inconspicuous God*, 60. Consciousness—a key, if not the key, term for Husserl—is absent in *Being and Time*, having been replaced by *Dasein.* Moran writes that Heidegger's *Being and Time* "replaced the study of intentional structures of consciousness with the more fundamental study of the relation between Dasein and Being itself." Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 194.

namely, pure experience over the natural attitude, Heidegger makes the second reduction—the existential—to reveal what he thinks is even more fundamental than Husserl's cognitive sphere, namely, subjects as agents in the world—or, *Dasein*—that are thrown into the world and live as being-in-the-world. Two important aspects of their phenomenologies surface here: how they talk about ontology, and how they talk about the life-world.

When it comes to ontology, Husserl and Heidegger differ (indeed, Heidegger differentiates himself on the question of ontology from all other philosophers, full stop). Sokolowski describes Husserl as being wide-ranging in the content that he subjects to philosophical analysis: "the structure of language, perception, time in its various forms, memory, anticipation, living things, mathematics, numbers, causality, and so on."[41] Heidegger, on the other hand, is described by Sokolowski as "philosophically a monomaniac," concerned completely with the "one question of being."[42] Despite this seemingly overt difference, Zahavi argues that their aims can be seen as quite parallel. Heidegger is adamant in the beginning of *Being and Time* that "*only as phenomenology, is ontology possible*" (§7).[43] But, according to Zahavi, if we are to understand Heidegger's question as "what is the condition of possibility for appearance and manifestation," then "Heidegger's fundamental-ontological question and Husserl's transcendental-metaphysical question are not that far apart."[44] Zahavi's reformulation of Heidegger shows that his turn from Husserl is not as drastic as it is normally portrayed.

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[41] Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 217-218. Lauer, however, states that Husserl is primarily concerned throughout his career with method, and "only rarely after *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900-1901), and then only with indifferent success, does Husserl himself engage in actual phenomenological analyses." Lauer, "Introduction," in Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, 6 n13.

[42] Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 218.

[43] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962); English translation of *Sein und Zeit*, 7th ed. (Tübingen: Neomarius Verlag, 1927). Citations will be from the English translation unless stated otherwise.

[44] Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, 152-153 n30.

These same dynamics are also at play in how these two figures understand the life-world, and how they conceive of the human being in relation to its world and environment. As I have already mentioned, Alvis argues that Husserl was more concerned with "being-conscious" than "being in the world." Heidegger was of course very concerned with the world in relation to *Dasein*, the roots of which can already be found in 1916, in his final publications before *Being and Time*.[45] Being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*) is, for him, a "*unitary* phenomenon" that indicates an *a priori* condition of *Dasein*: that it is an entity, is being-in, and in-the-world (*Being and Time*, §12). The human being and the world are not two entities or concepts that can be abstracted and set side-by-each: "there is no such thing as the 'side-by-side-ness' of an entity called 'Dasein' with another entity called the world." Heidegger is adamant that *Dasein* and the world are always already entangled with one another, and that being-in-the-world is part of *Dasein*'s essence.

In §20 of *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, a summer lecture course given in 1927, Heidegger avers that "because being-in-the-world belongs to the basic constitution of the Dasein, the existent Dasein is essentially *being-with* others as *being-among* intraworldly beings. As being-in-the-world it is never first merely being among things extant within the world, then subsequently to uncover other human beings as also being among them."[46] Heidegger clearly states that there can be no separation of self and world; *Dasein* is always being-in-the-world and

[45] See Martin Heidegger, "The Concept of Time in the Science of History," trans. Harry S. Taylor, Hans W. Uffelmann, and John van Buren, in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to* Being and Time *and Beyond*, ed. John van Buren (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 49–60, and Martin Heidegger, "Conclusion: The Problem of Categories," trans. Roderick M. Stewart and John van Buren, in *Supplements*, 62–68. In the latter he writes that "*living spirit is as such essentially historical spirt in the widest sense of the word*" (66), and so "history and its teleological interpretation in philosophy of culture *must become a determining element for the meaning of the problem of categories*" (67).

[46] Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), 278. He continues by saying that "world exists—that is, it is—only if Dasein exists, only if there is Dasein. … Self and world belong together in the single entity, the Dasein. Self and world are not two beings…" (§20, p.297).

cannot be understood outside or apart from it. Although central to Heidegger's thinking, these ideas were also aimed critically at Husserl's early work, which, as I showed in the last section, developed quite a bit in ways that more closely align with Heidegger's concerns.

Another main point of departure from Husserl is that Heidegger is more concerned with analyzing particular phenomena than answering questions about or strictly adhering to phenomenological method (a point that bears keeping in mind when we get to Janicaud's critique in the next section). Indeed, after reading *Being and Time*, Husserl wrote that Heidegger had "surrender[ed] both the method of my phenomenological research and its scientific character in general."[47] As we have seen, Husserl's aim with phenomenology was to get back "to the 'things themselves.'" However, he was quite strict and narrow on the method of how these phenomena could be manifested and philosophically described. Heidegger's greater attention to phenomena themselves meant that he needed, in some sense, to look beyond method. In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger writes that "there is no such thing as *the one* phenomenology, and if there could be such a thing it would never become anything like a philosophical technique" (§22, p. 328). For Heidegger, what is most important about phenomenology is, and must always be, the phenomena that are studied. Method, though important, plays second fiddle to phenomena: "When a method is genuine and provides access to the objects, it is precisely then that the progress made by following it and the growing originality of the disclosure will cause the very method that was used to become necessarily obsolete" (§22, p. 328).

It is this emphasis on the disclosure of phenomena that represents another difference for Heidegger. As we have seen, Husserl's guidelines for phenomenology laid its focus on things that appear to consciousness within an immanent horizon. According to Alvis, Husserl's "faulty

[47] This quote comes from a letter from Husserl to Alexander Pfänder in 1931. Edmund Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927-1931)*, ed. and trans. Thomas Sheehan and Richard E. Palmer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), 480.

preference for fixation, and therefore for that which appears clearly, over that which does not seem or appear," results from his too closely following the metaphysical tradition.[48] Heidegger makes a break from this, by both critiquing and seeking to overcome metaphysics, and by inaugurating a phenomenology that is geared towards that which does not appear, towards those phenomena which are not static. Heidegger's emphasis on the invisible and inapparent is crucial to understanding his philosophy, and it is this emphasis that those named by Janicaud in his critique of the "theological turn" draw upon in a major way.

In §7 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger lays out some key points on his understanding of what the concept of phenomenon is and how it will be used. He points out that phenomenon comes from the Greek root *phainesthai* (*φαίνεσθαι*), "to show," which is in turn related to *phaino* (*φαίνω*), meaning that wherein something can be seen or illuminate itself. Thus, "the expression '*phenomenon*' signifies *that which shows itself in itself*, the manifest." But he also mentions a second understanding of phenomenon, as that which "show[s] itself as something which in itself it is *not*"; thus it only seems to be what it is or appears to be so. Neither of these definitions are connected to what is meant by appearance or mere appearance. Drawing upon the idea of symptoms of a disease, Heidegger says that what appears indicates that which does not appear. The appearance is separate, then, from what is truly there: "appearing is a *not-showing-itself*." What it announces it also hides and veils in its announcing, and so its showing is also a hiding. "What thus shows itself (the 'phenomenon' in the genuine primordial sense) is at the same time an 'appearance' as an emanation of something which *hides* itself in that appearance—an

[48] Alvis, *The Inconspicuous God*, 62. Michel Henry makes a similar claim, by saying the whole Western metaphysical tradition has favoured visibility and exteriority. He writes that because of "the Greek *phainomenon* which reserves manifestation to the light of exteriority, modernity proves incapable of grasping the invisible in its proper phenomenological positivity." Michel Henry, "Phenomenology of Life," trans. Nick Hanlon, *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 8, no. 2 (2003): 105.

emanation which announces." There are thus phenomena that are clear and obvious, and those that are hidden or veiled.

Heidegger discusses the latter in more depth in his final seminar in Zähringen in 1973. It is here that Heidegger explicitly describes a "phenomenology of the inapparent" (*Phänomenologie des Unscheinbaren*).[49] What most deserves attention in phenomenology, he argues, is not that which appears clearly and obviously, but that which appears inconspicuously, and appears by a withdrawal or hiddenness.[50] To explicate his thinking here, Heidegger turns to Parmenides, on whom he conducted a seminar in Winter 1942/43.[51] He homes in on Fragment 6, where Parmenides writes "ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι," which Heidegger originally translates as "Being namely *is*." But he quickly goes on to state that the Greek εἶναι also means "to presence," and so translates this phrase as "presencing namely presences."[52] This tautology, Heidegger avers, is "the domain of the inapparent [*Unscheinbaren*]."[53] Presence presences, or makes itself present, by unconcealment, or, as Heidegger argues in *Being and Time*, as *aletheia* (ἀλήθεια), a central concept for Heidegger. Again in §7 of his magnum opus, after defining the phenomenon, he

[49] Martin Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 80; English translation of *Vier Seminare*, ed. Curd Ochwadt (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1986). In *The Inconspicuous God*, Alvis translates *Unscheinbaren* as 'inconspicuous'.

[50] Husserl's concept of the horizon from which all perception occurs, already implies that there are phenomena outside of the horizon, but that are always available to be perceived. Rather than something radically new, then, Heidegger's attention (and so too the attention of the thinkers named in the "theological turn") to the inapparent should be seen as a development of previous Husserlian insights.

[51] Of relevance to this discussion is the following: "They [the modes of concealment] appear therefore in each case already under the essential form of unconcealedness, which in a certain way retains within itself concealedness and concealment and even must do so." Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 64-65; English translation of *Parmenides* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992). Here Heidegger demonstrates how integrally connected showing and hiding are to each other.

[52] Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 79.

[53] Heidegger, 79. See also "The Origin of the Work of Art," where Heidegger has the tautological expression "the world worlds." Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), 43.

describes the logos as that which "is a letting-something-be-seen" in order to "let [entities] be seen as something unhidden."[54]

This notion of the inconspicuous, however, is something that is present throughout Heidegger's work. A few examples will easily reveal this. In his 1959 work *On the Way to Language*, he writes that "Appropriation [*Ereignis*] … is itself the most inconspicuous of inconspicuous phenomena [*Unscheinbarste des Unscheinbaren*], the simplest of simplicities, the nearest of the near, and the farthest of the far."[55] Twenty years earlier, in "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1936), Heidegger writes that "the unpretentious [*unscheinbare*] thing evades thought most stubbornly. Or can it be that this self-refusal of the mere thing, this self-contained independence, belongs precisely to the nature of the thing?"[56] And, as we showed in the previous paragraph, Heidegger's attention to inapparent and inconspicuous phenomena is a through-line all the way back to *Being and Time*.

The inconspicuous phenomenon is important for a few reasons. First is that Heidegger's analysis and discussion of inapparent phenomena is a definitive move away from Husserl's approach to and understanding of phenomena, namely as phenomena that are apparent and fixed. However, as mysterious and confusing as these phenomena are, they remain within immanence, and so do hold close to Husserl's restriction on phenomenological method. These phenomena also evade typical dichotomies—absence/presence, static/dynamic—and cannot be fully grasped. Alvis writes that "the inconspicuous is incapable of being exhausted, is never fully revealed, and

[54] In a footnote in this section he explains that the Greek word for truth is "not-hidden," thus the presence of the alpha privative in front of the verbal stem λαθ, meaning to be concealed. The notion of truth as revelation or unconcealment should be seen as set against coherence and correspondence theories of truth.

[55] Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), 128; English translation of *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Verlag Günther Neske, 1959). *Ereignis* is a notably hard term to translate. Stambaugh renders it "event of appropriation," in a text where even Heidegger writes that "it can no more be translated than the Greek λόγος or the Chinese Tao." Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 36.

[56] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 31.

is yet an entirely immanent character trait. This is more than a paradoxical nonshowing-showing, however. Inconspicuousness operates within mystery and represents a certain oscillation between types of presence and presencing."[57] Heidegger believes that this tautological and paradoxical manner of thinking is what gets to the heart of phenomenology: not simply that there are appearances and what they are, but how these appearances are made present.

To conclude this section on Heidegger and our overview of phenomenology, before turning to Dominique Janicaud's critique of the "theological turn," a brief summary is in order. Heidegger sought to develop Husserlian phenomenology in several important ways, thus radicalizing phenomenology. His existential or ontological reduction sought to seriously grapple with the fact that human beings find themselves always already in a world; they are thrown into the world, and always entangled with it. Next, Heidegger gives more attention to intuition than intention, and so shows a preference for the phenomena themselves and how they are revealed, rather than for the method to move towards them. Finally, Heidegger redefines and expands phenomenology to include inapparent, inconspicuous, or otherwise hidden phenomena within its purview. Heidegger's embrace of the mysterious within the ordinary is crucial for understanding those figures named in the "theological turn," to which we turn now.

Dominique Janicaud and the "Theological Turn"

Having these relevant basics of phenomenology before us, especially as they relate to their original formulation by Husserl and development by Heidegger, we now look at a particular direction of phenomenology. In this section we will concern ourselves with a specific place—France—and a specific time—roughly the 1960's until the 2000's. It is in this place and time that

[57] Alvis, *The Inconspicuous God*, 68.

certain further developments were taken in phenomenology, which were pointed out in a critical manner by French philosopher Dominique Janicaud. But why did Janicaud identify such a "theological turn" of French phenomenology? And what were his concerns in doing so? I will examine the origins of this moniker and specifically why Janicaud applies it to certain thinkers and their work. I will also examine some later work by Janicaud to further contextualize his critique.[58]

The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology

The notion that there was a "theological turn" of French phenomenology is now accepted as a fact almost without second glance in the larger field of Continental philosophy of religion, a movement associated with the critique of Dominique Janicaud. In 1991, Janicaud published "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology,"[59] which came out of a report, or *constat*,[60] that he made in response to a request from the International Institute of Philosophy in cooperation with UNESCO (PTT 16). These organisations asked him to review French philosophy from 1975-1990, to show the main trends and foci within the field. Part of Janicaud's aim when writing this report was to see what differences there were between the timeframe of his study and the previous three to four decades, starting with Emmanuel Levinas's translation of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* from German to French, that were foundational for the emergence of

[58] Hent de Vries, in his 1999 work *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*, addresses many of the same themes and concerns as Janicaud does. I contain my analysis to Janicaud as he focusses on phenomenology and responds to Michel Henry. Hent de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

[59] Dominique Janicaud, "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology," trans. Bernard G. Prusak, in Janicaud *et al*., *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000); English translation of *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Paris: Éditions de l'Éclat, 1991). Citations will be from the English translation unless stated otherwise, and henceforth as PTT.

[60] In his introduction, translator Bernard Prusak writes that, as a *constat* is also a legal term, Janicaud is essentially putting the four authors he addresses—Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur, Jean-Luc Marion, and Michel Henry—on trial (PTT 3).

phenomenology in France. He is clear from the outset that there is an obvious distinction between these two timeframes, and that the latter is marked by a contravening of the intentions and method of the main figure and founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl.

A case in point for how Janicaud analyzes interpretations and uses of phenomenology is present in his discussion early on of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995). He points out that both philosophers have carried forward Husserl's work, yet he avers that, though similar in their "overcoming of intentionality and their opening of phenomenology to the invisible" (PTT 26), they are radically and mysteriously different from each other. Levinas posits an "unconditional affirmation of Transcendence" whereas Merleau-Ponty posits a "patient interrogation of the visible" (PTT 26). Janicaud states that a choice must be made between the two. But how he himself makes this choice—which he suggests that his readers do too—is telling for how Janicaud understands the figures that he is critiquing. Are we going to choose, he writes, "with the head or with the heart—arbitrarily or not? The task, insofar as it remains philosophical and phenomenological, is to follow the sole guide that does not buy itself off with fine words" (PTT 26).

Between Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, Janicaud has made the necessary choice: Merleau-Ponty is a true disciple of phenomenology, and Levinas, although showing "talent and singular originality" (PTT 27), has committed treason against the phenomenological method. Merleau-Ponty is "searching for the very words to approximate the richness of an experience each and everyone can undergo. His is a minimalist method, shunning hasty reductions and the idealist temptation … The intelligence is sprightly and quick, but … doubles back and deepens the sensible" (PTT 26-27). Since Merleau-Ponty restrains his search with reference to the sensible and thus to universal experience, his method remains purely phenomenological. Janicaud

continues his affirming account of Merleau-Ponty by writing that his "way presupposes nothing other than an untiring desire for elucidation of that which most hides itself away in experience. Phenomenological, it remains so passionately, in that it seeks to think phenomenality intimately, the better to inhabit it" (PTT 27). Despite Merleau-Ponty's philosophy being open to the invisible, Janicaud assures readers that his work is still phenomenological insofar as it remains immanent as opposed to transcendent. On this matter of the location of his study, Janicaud quotes affirmatively from Merleau-Ponty's final work, left unfinished at the time of his death: it is "not an absolute invisible …, but the invisible *of* this world" (PTT 34).[61]

While Janicaud has high praise for the method and approach of Merleau-Ponty, as remaining true to phenomenology, he is derisory towards Levinas. He takes this stance not only because Levinas's work is apparently not phenomenological—"the aplomb of alterity supposes a nonphenomenological, metaphysical desire," he writes (PTT 27)—but additionally that it claims to be phenomenological whilst being instead theological. Beyond his critique that Levinas's approach is nonphenomenological, it is being theological that seems to be the greater problem for Janicaud: "It supposes a metaphysico-theological montage, prior to philosophical writing. The dice are loaded and choices made; faith rises majestically in the background. The reader, confronted by the blade of the absolute, finds him- or herself in the position of a catechumen who has no other choice than to penetrate the holy words and lofty dogmas" (PTT 27).

Since Levinas, according to Janicaud, presupposes theological ideas, and often highlights this fact by capitalizing certain key terms, his work is no longer purely phenomenological. "Strict treason of the reduction that handed over the transcendental I to its nudity, here theology is restored with its parade of capital letters" (PTT 27). Although a student of Husserl, and a (if not

[61] Quoting Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 151; English translation of *Le visible et l'invisible, suivi de notes de travail* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964).

the) key figure responsible for bringing Husserl's thought to France, Janicaud assails Levinas for being a turncoat to his master and his method. Whatever philosophers decide to do with Levinas, they should not grant him "the least concession when it comes to methodological and phenomenological coherence"; what he is doing is "certainly not phenomenological" (PTT 27).

Beyond the issues that Janicaud believes Levinas has introduced into phenomenology, he shows equal concerns with regard to "the second Heidegger" (PTT 28). It is specifically Heidegger's "phenomenology of the unapparent" from his 1973 Zähringen seminar that causes him concern. He writes that this "formula causes difficulties less on the side of the 'unapparent' than in its maintaining of the reference to phenomenology" (PTT 28-29). The moves that Heidegger makes, Janicaud argues, has taken phenomenology away from its foundations, especially when it comes to a proper understanding and definition of phenomena. If a Husserlian understanding of phenomena is replaced with "a hearkening to a word whorled with silence, here—against all expectations—is a line extended towards the originary, the nonvisible, the reserved" (PTT 31). Janicaud ultimately lays all his cards on the table when he states that "without Heidegger's *Kehre* [turn], there would be no theological turn" (PTT 31). All the diversions in phenomenology of a theological nature, then, can be traced back to Heidegger's branching away from Husserl.

Janicaud is accepting of philosophers that carry forward and develop Husserl's thought beyond Husserl, so it is not Husserl *per se* that needs to be adhered to or followed. Indeed, Janicaud is not concerned with a "nonrespect of an orthodoxy" (PTT 35). Rather, he takes a firm stance on a few phenomenological principles (created by Husserl) that must be maintained for phenomenology to be phenomenology, and not something else. That is, he is concerned that phenomenology retains the "Husserlian concern for rigor and scientificity" (PTT 36). The

"fundamental Husserlian inspiration," he writes, and so the bottom-line of what must be adhered to, is that "the essence of intentionality is to be sought, by the phenomenological reduction, in phenomenal immanence" (PTT 35). Janicaud highlights that phenomenology must be rigorous and scientific in its approach, and it can only do this by limiting itself to the phenomenological reduction, within immanence. If a phenomenologist moves the location of analysis from the immanent to the transcendent, and so from sensible experience to experience that is located outside the self, or in the mind that cannot be accessed in a sensible way for analysis, then they have gone beyond the bounds of what can be called phenomenology, because they are beyond the bounds of sensible and immanent phenomena.

In the section of his report titled "Veering," Janicaud looks at the work of Jean-Luc Marion, working through what he takes to be Marion's influence on the "theological turn." From the outset of this chapter he is clear that he is not aiming his analysis at the theological in Marion, but rather at Marion's phenomenology: "our objections will be directed not at the theological as such, but at certain of its [Marion's 1989 *Reduction and Givenness*[62]] translations or intrusions into the phenomenological field" (PTT 51). Although he writes that this work is less overtly theological than Marion's two previous works—*The Idol and Distance* and *God Without Being*[63]—it still brings in the theological and presents concerns around phenomenological method (PTT 52). What Janicaud finds most questionable in Marion, which is in part due to his desire to think post-metaphysically and belief that phenomenology can be separated from

[62] Jean-Luc Marion, *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998).

[63] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001). Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

metaphysics (aspects of his thought drawn in large part from Heidegger), is Marion's description of the three reductions, the third of which is Marion's own.

These three reductions are the transcendental, the existential, and pure givenness. Janicaud finds all of them, especially Marion's reading of the first two, problematic when it comes to phenomenological method. The first reduction, the transcendental, is largely traced to Husserl, though Janicaud points out that, for Marion, it has relevant precursors in Descartes and Kant. However, he argues that Marion's understanding of this reduction is incorrect. Marion has reduced the reduction to: "constitution of objects (1) for a constituting I (2), the transcendental reduction opens onto only regional ontologies (3) and excludes all that exceeds the horizon of objectivity (4)" (PTT 57). Janicaud avers that Marion has misread Husserl on the distinction between the universal and the regional *epoché* (PTT 57), and Husserl and Kant on the relation between the "I think" and the constitution of objects for consciousness (PTT 58). Janicaud ultimately believes that Marion reads Husserl through, or alongside, Heidegger's incorrect reading of Husserl. Since Marion's second reduction is the one initiated by Heidegger, we turn now to see how Janicaud critiques it.

Marion presents Heidegger, Janicaud writes, as Heidegger himself does, as having a project that is "a radicalization and revival of Husserlian phenomenology" (PTT 59). The major move that Heidegger makes, in its most basic understanding, is from beings to the meaning of those beings, that is, from beings (the ontic) to Being (the ontological). Janicaud's critique of this move is that "Being is no longer understood as immanent to intentional consciousness, but inversely as the horizon of phenomenality, that is, in terms of the uncovering of the entity" (PTT 59). Further, and something that Janicaud criticizes Marion for covering up more than he criticizes Heidegger for doing, Marion is silent on Heidegger's augmenting of phenomenology:

that the reduction is not really an important part of the phenomenological method, and that it will be jettisoned with the deconstruction of metaphysics (PTT 60). For these reasons, Janicaud refers to Heidegger's account as a "pseudoreduction" (PTT 61), and thus questions how Marion develops his own third reduction following it (PTT 62).[64]

The third reduction, the one that concerns Janicaud the most and the one that is the most relevant to the origins of the "theological turn," is Marion's own development. As stated above, Marion's third reduction is that of pure givenness, or of the call. In Marion's understanding, the phenomenological method has changed significantly from that of Husserl. There is no longer a regional ontology or horizon restricted to this, but an unconditioned horizon; additionally, there is no longer any exclusion on the reduction—anything goes. For Janicaud, these moves of Marion's are unacceptable. He writes that "the qualifying terms … are neither human nor finite: pure, absolute, unconditioned—such is this call" (PTT 63). Janicaud's critique of Marion is that, because he has adopted terms that are not restricted to the human, his work is not phenomenological. Rather, it is theological. "The more phenomenality becomes attenuated, to the point of annihilating itself, the more the absolute inflates and amplifies itself, to the point of apotheosis" (PTT 63). A true engagement with phenomena and human experience is abandoned, Janicaud argues, and in its place Marion puts religious experience.

Janicaud states clearly that Marion's work has "no respect for the phenomenological order" (PTT 65), and so derides him for calling his work phenomenology when it cannot be. Marion's non-phenomenology can be understood as coming from two related sources: "to the problematic of the overcoming ontology (or metaphysics), and to the properly theological or spiritual dimension" (PTT 65). Due to the notions of pure givenness and the call, Marion has

[64] Janicaud claims that the problematic manner in which Heidegger developed the reduction from Husserl is the very source of the development of Marion's own reduction from Heidegger.

veered away from phenomenological neutrality towards clearly theological presuppositions. Whereas Husserl was explicit that God must remain outside of the phenomenological method (*Ideas I*, §58), Janicaud avers that Marion has trespassed this stance, as concepts like givenness, the call, and the promise can all be considered "as figures of Transcendence" (PTT 69). Having described how Janicaud sees a theological turn in Marion's work, we now turn to his analysis of Michel Henry.

Where Marion follows Heidegger more closely than Husserl, Henry, for the most part, aligns himself with Husserl; however, Janicaud says, Henry does not follow the Husserlian phenomenological method closely enough (PTT 71). Since Henry is almost explicitly concerned with immanence, from whence and how could there be a "theological turn"? The immanence that Henry describes is "the originary mode according to which is accomplished the revelation of transcendence and hence the originary essence of revelation" (PTT 72).[65] Although Henry claims that his project attempts to get to the things themselves—thus adhering to the Husserlian phenomenological mantra, *zu den Sachen selbst*—in a way more fundamental than even Husserl and Heidegger, his notions of auto-affection and manifestation as revelation propose a metaphysical and transcendent locus.

Janicaud argues that, for Henry, immanence becomes a kind of transcendence in itself. It has no structure, but is a "pure ontological category" (PTT 73).[66] "Immanence," Janicaud avers, "becomes the strict contrary of what it claims to mean: not adherence to phenomenological experience, but absolute autorevelation" (PTT 73-74). The phenomenological method focusses analysis on objective data in an immanent plane, but Henry's understanding of immanence negates, or even supersedes this requirement. Henry has used phenomenology as a means to his

[65] Quoting Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, 227.

[66] Quoting Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, 259.

own end—originary immanence—only to jettison phenomenology once he gets there. And the source of this originary immanence, Janicaud argues, is theology (PTT 74).

The terms that Henry uses to describe immanence and life are quite reminiscent of the theological attributes of God, Janicaud points out: "autoaffection, eternity, absence of finitude, omnicompleteness (it is all reality)" (PTT 74). Indeed, Janicaud says that these attributes seem to make immanence equal to God, but in a way that is more Hegelian—"the immanence of absolute spirit" (PTT 75)—than the orthodox Catholic understanding of God as "all-powerfulness, personality, infinitely good will" (PTT 74). These differences aside, the roots of Henry's phenomenology are very theological standpoints. What Janicaud finds objectionable in Henry's work is that he promotes a form of "fantastic metaphysical essentialism" (PTT 75) whereby knowledge can never be known or experienced, and thus what goes under the guise of phenomenology also, by definition, cannot be known phenomenologically. Janicaud points out that Henry draws from Meister Eckhart, in ways that line up with the early theological writings of Hegel, ideas in Kierkegaard, and even the words of Jesus. These may be fine, even "noble and magnificent" thoughts and thinkers, but what is their place in phenomenology and the phenomenological method Janicaud wonders (PTT 76).

After looking at *The Essence of Manifestation*, Janicaud turns to Henry's 1990 work *Material Phenomenology*, and especially the essay "The Phenomenological Method." Ultimately, Janicaud finds that Henry's phenomenological method is anything but that. Henry critiques both Husserl and Heidegger for reducing the objects of life to that which is revealed in the world; to the visible. If phenomenology aims at original appearing, that is, how things appear, then it cannot hold itself to a method that investigates only worldly things. Moving thus in the opposite direction of these two founders of phenomenology, "Henry's phenomenology

founds itself on the originary datum of a radical heterogeneity between transcendental life and the eidetic method" (PTT 79-80). In Henry's material phenomenology, a method no longer finds and investigates an object, giving it to knowledge; rather, an object, which is none other than life itself, gives itself. Janicaud states that this "method" cannot be rigorous or scientific. Again, for Janicaud it is because Henry at root makes theological claims that his method ceases to be phenomenological.

Janicaud highlights some explicit places where Henry is theological, for example, his discussion of the effectivity of God as "the Word [*le Verbe*] that comes into this world," language becoming the "Word of Life," and method becoming "the Way" (PTT 81).[67] We need not be knowledgeable in the Gospels, specifically the Gospel of John, to know where Henry is getting his ideas, writes Janicaud.[68] But what irritates him, and so becomes the source of his critique, is that Henry continues to maintain that his work is phenomenological. "It is not the intention here we call into question—whether it be theological or purely poetic—but the peremptory postulation of rigor when its essential condition, the correspondence between the method and the object of phenomenology, has been eliminated" (PTT 85). Janicaud concludes that because Henry starts with theological presuppositions, he twists phenomenology, ultimately breaking from it, in order to force it where he wants it to go.

In concluding his report, Janicaud seeks, in a final section entitled "Reorientation," to home in on what the phenomenological method is, what the future directions of phenomenology should be, and how these should relate to the theological. He affirms what Husserl has done with

[67] Quoting Michel Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, trans. Scott Davidson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 97–99; English translation of *Phénoménologie matérielle*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990). Citations will be from the English translation unless stated otherwise.

[68] Henry also connects Life, the Way, and Truth, which ostensibly points to John 14:6. See Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 98.

phenomenology to bring philosophy and science together (PTT 93). It is not an investigation merely to describe things that appear in the world, but to "return to the appearing of phenomena as they give themselves and as they can be recollected in certainty" (PTT 95). The focus on the appearing of what appears is of more interest to phenomenology, for Husserl, than just what appears; the way in which he does this is "with two sui generis methodological instruments, the reduction and eidetic description" (PTT 95). These two tools are, for Janicaud, the essential instruments in a phenomenologist's toolbelt—to not have or use these is to cease following the phenomenological method.

What is necessary and important for Janicaud, then, is that the phenomenological method does not presuppose anything, especially anything metaphysical, but merely relies upon experience itself. But such metaphysical presuppositions are exactly what he believes those named in the "theological turn" have introduced. Whereas Husserl wanted to hold a position between philosophy and science, between the transcendental and the empirical, those in the "theological turn" have shifted the balance away from science toward philosophical theology, offering concepts like "Archi-revelation, the pure call, [and] originary alterity" (PTT 96). They have done this, Janicaud conveys, because they have ceased to use the eidetic reduction.

As such, Janicaud refers to them as the "new theologians" (PTT 98) and argues that phenomenology and theology are, and must remain, two distinct disciplines: "phenomenology and theology make two" (PTT 103). By saying that God should not be part of phenomenology, he does not mean to imply that phenomenology should be atheistic. *Au contraire*. He wants there to be no ideological influence upon the phenomenological method from any direction (PTT 99-100).[69] In conclusion, he highlights what it is to do phenomenology: (1) "renouncing

[69] However, it is highly contested that a "neutral standpoint" can ever be neutral, or unaffected by any ideological position.

metaphysics (as *metaphysica specialis*) to explore experience in its phenomenal limits", and (2) having "a methodological attention capable of articulating the transcendental regard in the patient quest of invariants and in the complexity of being-in-the-world" (PTT 103). Phenomenology and theology are both worthy disciplines, he avers, but the former should remain constrained to immanent and visible phenomena only, while the latter concerns itself with those things that cannot be seen.

The Critique Deepens – A Defence of a Minimalist Phenomenology

In 1998, seven years after his initial report, Janicaud published *Phenomenology 'Wide Open': After the French Debate*.[70] In it, he seeks new directions and limits for phenomenology, especially in light of his diagnosis of the "theological turn," and so proposes a "minimalist" phenomenology. He argues that, though his first report was necessary, it was insufficient, and there is need to return critically to the "theological turn" (PWO 2). Part of the need for a return is that too much emphasis was put on the moniker, which was secondary, and not enough emphasis on the primary concern of method within phenomenology. Although he used the moniker with some jest, and in no way meant that the figures he was discussing were theologians as such, he is emphatic that there was such a methodological turn within phenomenology (PWO 2-3).

He points out, for example, how some of the essays within *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn"* support his point clearly.[71] Marion, for example, in his discussion of revelation as being strictly phenomenological, writes that "the theophany, where the surfeit of

[70] Dominique Janicaud, *Phenomenology "Wide Open": After the French Debate*, trans. Charles N. Cabral (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005); English translation of *La phénoménologie éclatée* (Paris: Éditions de l'Éclat, 1998). Citations will be from the English translation unless stated otherwise, and henceforth as PWO.

[71] These four essays by Levinas, Ricoeur, Marion, and Henry came out in 1992 and comprise the second half of *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn."* I address then in the next section.

intuition leads to the paradox that an invisible gaze visibly envisages me and loves me," and Henry talks about Life as God, whose message to us is that "You are the Sons" (PWO 5, quoting PTT 215 and 239 respectively). Janicaud also writes that Marion seeks to be methodologically strict, and so possibly responds to his critique in an earnest way, but that Henry takes the charge of being a "new theologian" even further, becoming even more explicitly theological in his work. Janicaud emphasizes, as he did in the earlier report, that he has no problem with a phenomenology of religion; what he rejects is a phenomenology that purports to be neutral in its presuppositions and investigations but is not (PWO 8).

A central question for Janicaud in this later work is not whether there has been a "theological turn" in French phenomenology, but whether "phenomenology must not be radically atheistic in order to succeed in its project to attain, describe and speak of the 'thing itself'" (PWO 9). Indeed, he wonders, must not phenomenology be atheistic if it is to adhere to an autonomous standpoint that is free of all ideological standpoints (PWO 10)? However, responding to the proliferation of investigations that go under the banner of phenomenology, and so nodding to the title of this work,[72] Janicaud is seeking the ways in which phenomenology can retain a sense of itself, "its own projects, its possibilities, and its limits" as it moves forward (PWO 12).

When it comes to Janicaud's understanding of the relation of phenomenology to both theism and atheism, he states that "one could easily defend a non-theological conception of phenomenology, without necessarily having to accept a radical atheism from the point of view of 'first philosophy'" (PWO 15). By this he means that phenomenology could be non-theological, without having to posit another ideology in its place. Providing two definitions of atheism—the first merely etymological and negative, the second a positive form of dogmatism (PWO 16)—

[72] The French *éclatée* indicates an openness, but also a bursting, explosion, and breaking up.

Janicaud says that phenomenology must opt for the first, an atheism not as something positive, but as a methodological negation of transcendence. This is crucial because of Husserl's insistence that God must remain outside the purview of the phenomenological method (*Ideas I*, §58). Neither theism nor dogmatic atheism has any place in phenomenology.

The minimalist phenomenology that Janicaud recommends adamantly spurns any kind of 'right' thinking, sticking only to the correct method. He writes that the phenomenological project should "suspend the natural or naïvely doxical attitude," and aim at the "bracketing of all worldly or doxical 'transcendence'" (PWO 18). By these claims, he seeks to make clear that phenomenology must approach its object with a completely neutral intention, bracketing anything that could, and would, distort how that object is seen. What is interesting here is that Janicaud extends his critique of the "new theologians" in "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology" to those working in phenomenology more broadly. Instead of just investigating the influence of "crypto-theism" on phenomenological method, he also investigates "the seemingly inevitable character of a persistence of Meaning and its idealistic or metaphysical substitutes" (PWO 21). Anything associated with an absolute, a metaphysics, or a transcendence is now seen by Janicaud as suspect.

Since tracing out all aspects of Janicaud's analyses in this text goes beyond the purview of the "theological turn" as such, I will focus on his discussion of Marion's work that came out after "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology." When discussing Marion's 1997 *Being Given*,[73] Janicaud suggests that phenomenology and theology might be intimately connected, if, and to the extent that, ontology and theology are inseparable, and phenomenology is metaphysical (PWO 32). With this in mind, how does he treat Marion's later work? He

[73] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

highlights early on how Marion's term "givenness" (*donation* in French), which Janicaud already addressed in his 1991 report, is suspect. This shibboleth for the whole of Marion's project (PWO 34), especially for how he understands Husserl and Heidegger, comes, Janicaud argues, from faulty translations of these two figures. Marion's idea of givenness is suspect because it rests not on literal translations of Husserl's and Heidegger's work (whatever 'literal' means), but upon terms that "often evoke other words and contexts" (PWO 34).

While all translation is an interested act, Janicaud avers that Marion's translations read too many of his own ideas into these texts. Husserl's *Gegebenheit* and Heidegger's *Geben* are translated by Marion as "givenness." Janicaud argues that translating these words this way "is not only inexact, but moreover it leads to serious distortions" (PWO 35). Janicaud discusses some of Marion's work with the Husserlian and Heideggerian texts, showing how his translations have distorted their meaning, in some cases even stating the opposite of what these authors intended (PWO 37, 39). None of these are innocent readings, but instead "fall within the framework of an interpretive *device* designed to 'neutralize' an extremely cumbersome object—namely, the very thought of Heidegger" (PWO 39). Marion's interpretive translations have ultimately led to a phenomenology whose concept of 'saturated phenomenon' is really a noumenon (PWO 43).

Again, Janicaud affirms that there is a theological agenda and outcome to Marion's work (PWO 43). Marion's use of concepts like givenness, revelation, idol, icon, and theophany almost guarantee that this will be the case. What Janicaud finds so distressing here is that Marion offers his work as a "wholly rigorous phenomenological project" when what he really wants to do is "at all costs to establish a single concept of a 'saturated phenomenon'" (PWO 44). In Janicaud's eyes, Marion's theological presuppositions have irrevocably informed his phenomenological

position. By not bracketing God and other notions of transcendence, Marion has ceased to be true to the phenomenological method. “The conception of phenomenology which emerges from all of these texts,” Janicaud avers, “is ‘maximalist,’ in the sense that it endeavors to sum up the tasks of first philosophy, all the while aiming at a disengagement from metaphysics” (PWO 44). Having defined Marion’s phenomenology as maximalist, we turn now to a final look at Janicaud’s idea of a minimalist phenomenology, and then, in the following section, to the responses of those he critiques.

Beyond just his critique of a “theological turn” of French phenomenology, Janicaud has extended his critique to phenomenology at large. Here his concerns centre on phenomenology’s connection with metaphysics, and with its aims of being first philosophy. On the issue of first philosophy, Janicaud writes that “phenomenology has shown that it cannot maintain a dominant and imperious position without paying a high price: the further its ambitions extend, the less its specificity is ensured. The phenomenon is sacrificed in its transcendental or even transcendent conditions” (PWO 64). By attempting to be a unified and unifying first philosophy—in some ways another version of a “queen of the sciences”—phenomenology has failed itself from the outset. As such, the minimalist phenomenology that he proposes can be seen as “a re-centering, a re-delimitation that is both terminological (in order not to speak a lot of hot air) and methodological (in order to allow the phenomenological phase to take its place better in a philosophical division of labor)” (PWO 67).

Janicaud wonders, can phenomenology truly be minimalist, in the sense he wants it to be? If phenomenology necessarily moves from immanence to transcendence—and so to revelation, givenness, the absolute, etc.—then, he argues, it is meaningless to talk about the “theological turn” as he identified in his 1991 report. The true “turn,” if it can be called that, is present from

the beginning of phenomenology, and is the realization of its ownmost possibility (PWO 80-81). Ultimately, he believes that a "wide open" phenomenology can avoid such moves to transcendence. For Janicaud's understanding of how to achieve this end, I quote him at length:

> Once the phenomenological enterprise gives up defining itself as first philosophy or at least as bearer of the mission of 'true' philosophy, it returns to the conditions of its own reception of phenomenality. This renunciation is not at all the product of feigned modesty but of a concern to recover what is specific to philosophy, and this proves to be irreplaceable. It is namely an attitude of neutrality that has eliminated doxic prejudices, allowing the description of a certain type of phenomena, seeking characteristic variants in them. The minimalist doesn't even raise this question. It is enough for him to be certain of advancing within the terrain of phenomenology by treating 'the way of appearing of things as an autonomous problem'[74] (even within psychism). (PWO 67-68)

Going beyond just a concern for theological presuppositions, Janicaud suggests that phenomenology should abandon all attempts at unity and absoluteness, at going beyond simple description, and instead satisfy itself with pluralistic responses to diverse phenomenal appearing. His minimalist phenomenology, which is "wide open" and so pluralistic in nature, endeavours to truly bracket out any sort of transcendence and remain within pure and simple immanence. This, he argues, is the way forward for a phenomenology that seeks to honour its method. Although in some ways this minimalist approach is a development in Janicaud's thinking, there are strong through-lines to his critical position in "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology," and this bears on how we should understand him in relation to the "theological turn" broadly.

A "Turn" or "Deepening" of Phenomenology? Responses to Janicaud

Having looked at Janicaud's naming of the "theological turn" and his critique of the philosophers therein, as well as his intensified critique of the implicit turn to transcendence inherent in phenomenology itself, we now examine the responses of some of the figures he has called out, as well as some of those who continue to operate under the umbrella of the

[74] This quote from Paul Ricoeur, *À l'école de la phénoménologie* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1986), 77.

"theological turn." Were these thinkers merely hijacking phenomenology for theology's use? Or were they up to something more promissory? I will argue that it is the latter. According to Zahavi, "all of these thinkers have tried to radicalize phenomenology by going beyond a so-called *surface phenomenology*. They have not been satisfied with mere analyses of object-manifestation or act-intentionality, but have tried to disclose a more profound and original dimension."[75] We turn now to the collection of essays that followed close on the heels of Janicaud's report in order to uncover what these philosophers have to say for themselves about this more original dimension, and how phenomenology can describe it.

Phenomenology and Theology

In 1992, a year after Janicaud's critical report was published, four of the philosophers that he critiqued published their own text dealing with the theme; only Marion, and only obliquely, responds to Janicaud, however. "Phenomenology and Theology"[76] contains essays by Jean-Louis Chrétien, Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, and Paul Ricoeur, and was edited and introduced by Jean-François Courtine. These four essays came out of a daylong series of studies at the École normale supérieure in May 1992, as a culmination of a two-year long seminar on the theme "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics of Religion" at the "Centre de recherches phénoménologiques et herméneutiques—Archives Husserl de Paris" (PTT 121).

In his introduction to these essays, Courtine writes that the intent of the seminar was to test the limits, aims, and method of phenomenology. What interested the researchers, he states,

[75] Dan Zahavi, 'Michel Henry and the Phenomenology of the Invisible', *Continental Philosophy Review* 32, no. 3 (1999): 234.

[76] Jean-Louis Chrétien et al., "Phenomenology and Theology," ed. Jean-François Courtine, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky and Thomas A. Carlson, in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000); English translation of Jean-Louis Chrétien et al., *Phénoménologie et théologie*, ed. Jean-François Courtine (Paris: Fleurus-Mame, 1992). Citations will be from the English translation unless stated otherwise, and henceforth as PTT.

"was to lead phenomenology to its limit or to confront it with limit phenomena, ones able to serve as touchstones for assessing the pertinence and the rigor of phenomenology's fundamental principles and the methodic procedures that constitute it" (PTT 122). Specifically, they were interested in what phenomenology could say about certain phenomena and their modes of appearing that are deemed religious, such as God, gods, prayer, praise, and the sacred. A corollary of this question is whether these phenomena and modes of appearing can challenge the traditional phenomenological *a priori* of a correlation between what appears and its appearing. If this is the case, then these phenomena would not be merely ontic, and so something that phenomenology could turn its gaze towards; rather, phenomenology itself, its "task and style," would be altered (PTT 123). These are the stakes and aims for the seminar, which these four essays address in various ways.

As I have largely examined how Janicaud addressed the work of Henry and Marion, due to their central importance for this dissertation, I will focus here on their two essays. In his essay in this collection, "The Saturated Phenomenon," Marion discusses his novel contribution to phenomenology that goes under the same name. He starts by laying out what philosophy of religion and religious phenomena would describe. "A phenomenon that is religious in the strict sense," Marion states, "that is, belonging to the domain of a 'philosophy of religion' distinct from the sociology, the history, and the psychology of religion—would have to render visible what nevertheless could not be objectivized" (PTT 176). An aporia is present immediately: how can something that cannot be objectified be made visible? These religious phenomena, then, test the limits of phenomenology precisely because they are limit cases, testing the possibility of what constitutes phenomena as such.

Marion goes on to question what the limits of phenomenology are, especially when it comes to the possibilities of and for phenomena themselves. To declare whether some phenomena are possible and others are impossible is to take a definitive stance on "the terms of possibility taken in itself" (PTT 177). The question of what phenomena are possible, though, is directly connected to the question of the possibility of phenomenality. By demarcating what phenomena are possible and impossible, philosophy thus seeks to determine phenomenality as such, that is, what and how phenomena can appear. For Marion, this means that "according to whether it is accepted or rejected, the religious phenomenon would become a privileged index of the possibility of phenomenality" (PTT 177).[77] From the outset Marion shows that he is concerned with the limits and method of phenomenology itself and is using religion and religious phenomena as a type of test-case for these.

After a brief look at Kant and Leibniz, and the ways that they discuss phenomena and their appearing, Marion concludes that "in a metaphysical system, the possibility of appearing never belongs to what appears, nor phenomenality to the phenomenon" (PTT 179). Phenomena and phenomenality under metaphysics are conditioned by reason, and as such are unreasonable on their own terms. Against the principle of sufficient reason needed for phenomena in these systems, Marion highlights how Husserl's "principle of all principles" (*Ideas I,* §24) renders a "phenomenality without condition" (PTT 180). This principle ensures that, via intuition, phenomena are able to present themselves on their own terms, and not the terms of another, that

[77] In his preface to *The Visible and the Revealed*, Marion writes this of phenomenology: "To what kinds of phenomena can it grant access? Which others does it refuse to admit, and according to what criteria? I certainly do not rule out that one might have the right or even the duty to limit the field of phenomenality and to relinquish accepting in it everything that claims to appear—for example, to push the radiance of the Resurrection or the evidence of theophanies into the shadows. But one must take the time and the trouble to justify this exclusion and to wonder about possible types of phenomena and degrees of phenomenality. One would certainly have to wonder whether this repression does not do more wrong to phenomenology itself (which would thus contradict its principal intention) than to the phenomena that it censures and that, despite this rejection, do not cease to manifest themselves." Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), xii.

is, reason. "Indeed," Marion writes, "*donation* alone indicates that the phenomenon ensures, in a single gesture, both its visibility and the full right of that visibility, both its appearance and the reason for that appearance" (PTT 181).

However, the matter is not so simple, as Marion quickly points out that Husserl's "principle of all principles" does put conditions and limits on the appearance of phenomena. If there are limits, then not everything can be given as it truly is, that is, in a perfect sense. These appearances of phenomena are delimited by the horizon under which they can appear. But if everything that can appear is inscribed within a horizon, how, Marion wonders, can they be absolutely given, according to Husserl? Further, since Husserl writes that these phenomena are given "to us," that is, to the transcendental I or ego, then all phenomena will be led and reduced to this I. The problem here again is that phenomena are not absolute and autonomous, but are circumscribed within the horizon of the transcendental I.

Marion states unequivocally that phenomenology must have an I and a horizon, or else it would be impossible; however, he is also unequivocal that phenomena must be truly free to give themselves as they are on their own terms (PTT 184). By thinking the givenness of phenomena on their own terms—the horizon and the reduction—the "originary character" of phenomenology, as viewed under the "principle of all principles," is under question. What Marion is seeking, then, is a phenomenon that "would reverse the condition of a horizon (by surpassing it, instead of being inscribed within it) and that would reverse the reduction (by leading the *I* back to itself, instead of being reduced to the *I*)" (PTT 184). Just because what is given may contradict or surpass limits does not mean that it is not a phenomenon, and so the manner in which phenomenology understands phenomena and phenomenality is subject to expansion.

The reason why an expansion is needed, according to Marion, is because of how Kant and Husserl came to understand (the limits of) intuition. Since there is a correlation between appearance and what appears,[78] there is also "perfect adequation between these two terms: the subjective appearing is equivalent to that which objectively appears" (PTT 186). Commenting on a section from *Logical Investigations* (VI, §37), Marion highlights that Husserl's understanding of adequation is metaphysical, and that it focusses on ideality. So, adequation is the equality between the ideal essence and the objectively given fact, or evidence. However, adequation is rarely achieved because, for Husserl, the ideal can never be given. Marion wonders why Husserl ties adequation, and therefore truth, to something that rarely appears, and therefore "compromise[s] the return to the things themselves by qualifying evidence and truth with ideality" (PTT 187).

The rub, as it were, is that Husserl does not himself hold to this position. In later sections of *Logical Investigations* (VI, §40, §63), Marion points out that Husserl states that there is more meaning than can be present in phenomena and in intuition. Although there can be perfect adequation in mathematics and logic, there will never be enough intuition to intend real objects. "When it is a question of a thing, the intentional object always exceeds its intuitive donation. Its presence remains to be completed by appresentation" (PTT 189).[79] Phenomena cannot appear on their own terms and without reserve, Marion argues, because of this lack of intuition. Husserl is following Kant here, especially, as Marion shows, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. In this text, although truth is understood as the adequation of intuition to an intended object (or concept), the latter depends on the former. Therefore, adequation is in a sense lost, for everything relies upon

[78] Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, 11; Husserl, *Crisis*, §48.

[79] Appresentation is "a kind of *making 'co-present,* '" where what is initially and immediately made present is filled in or completed by other aspects or dimensions than the directly presented. See Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, §50.

intuition. One may think or talk about the phenomenon on the basis of the intended object, but this object is only given to the extent that there is—and so is limited by—intuition.

Since phenomenality and what it shows are dependent on human intuition, it will necessarily be limited since human beings are finite; phenomenality and intuition are limited because human beings are limited. This means that certain phenomena cannot be, or cannot fully be, known or given in sensibility. In phenomenology, then, "phenomena are given by an intuition, but that intuition remains finite, either as sensible (Kant), or as most often lacking or ideal (Husserl)" (PTT 194). Marion argues that this is all necessary, given the terms of how phenomenology understands itself. For a phenomenon to be given, it must be given within a delimited horizon of a finite I, both of which are conditioned by the finitude of intuition. The question for Marion is: can we think of a "nonfinite intuition" that would give "unconditioned and irreducible phenomena" (PTT 194)?

Here we finally arrive at Marion's notion of the "saturated phenomenon." Instead of phenomena that are poor and lacking in intuition, he wonders why there would not also be phenomena that are rich and saturated in intuition, why there would not be "the possibility of a phenomenon in which intuition would give *more, indeed immeasurably more*, than intention ever would have intended or foreseen" (PTT 195). Here Marion again turns to Kant for justification, though from his later *Critique of Judgment*. In the rational idea, as we saw above, intuition determined the concept or intended object, and so delimited it, thus prohibiting the appearance of certain phenomena. In the aesthetic idea, however, it is the opposite: there are intuitions for which a concept is lacking (PTT 195-6). As in the first case there is a failure in ability to produce the object. The difference is that in the first case there is a lack of givenness—or donation—and in the second case there is an excess of givenness.

In the case of the saturated phenomenon, "the intuitive overabundance is no longer exposed within rules, whatever they may be, but overwhelms them; intuition is no longer exposed within the concept, but saturates it and renders it overexposed—invisible, not by lack of light, but by excess of light" (PTT 196-97). The question posed to phenomenology is how to describe this possibility, how to describe these phenomena which do not appear like most phenomena, which are defined by the excess of intuition over its lack, and so to the favouring of givenness itself. If this is a possibility, then, Marion argues, it behooves phenomenology to seek out and attempt to understand it.

Marion discusses the saturated phenomenon outside a traditionally phenomenological manner of understanding, but its possibilities are found in Kant's thought. Marion writes that it will be "*invisable*[80] according to quantity, unbearable according to quality, absolute according to relation, and incapable of being looked at according to modality" (PTT 198). The saturated phenomenon cannot be aimed at because it, by nature, cannot be foreseen. There is no way to understand it as a whole from parts that we would have access to, such that we could understand it by way of successive synthesis; rather, the phenomenon is given as a whole in what Marion calls an "*instantaneous synthesis*" (PTT 198-99). The saturated phenomenon is also unbearable, in that, by exceeding perception, intuition soaks the phenomenon to such a degree that the viewer's gaze is overwhelmed. Marion stresses that this phenomenon is still visible, just that the immensity of it "weighs too much upon that gaze" (PTT 200).

The third characteristic of a saturated phenomenon is that it is absolute in relation. By this Marion means that it has no connection, or analogy, with any other objects that can be experienced—it gives itself absolutely and in a manner that has no precedent or antecedent.

[80] From the French *viser*—to aim at—*invisable* means something that that cannot be aimed at or, phenomenologically speaking, intended.

Giving itself absolutely, the saturated phenomenon is absolute and does not depend on any object or horizon to appear.[81] Finally, the saturated phenomenon is incapable of being looked at according to modality, by which Marion means that the phenomenon given is nonobjectivizable, and therefore irreducible to the I. Unable to fully see the phenomena as object, which is still present as visible, the I sees but a blur or a mirage of the fullness that is given. This is, as Marion describes it, a counter-experience of a counter-phenomenon, such that it is no longer the I that constitutes the phenomenon, but the I that is constituted by the phenomenon (PTT 210). In a rebuff to Janicaud's report, Marion writes that "there is no drift or turn here, not even a 'theological' one" (PTT 211). Rather, Marion has highlighted a way of understanding how, because certain phenomena exceed regular experience, traditional phenomenology itself needs to be restructured.

Summing up his notion of the saturated phenomenon—which is *invisable*, unbearable, unconditional, and irreducible—Marion writes that the first two fit under Husserl's "principle of all principles," but the latter two do not. However, this is not a concern for Marion; rather, it is the opposite: namely, an opportunity to deepen the possibilities of phenomenology. It is with the saturated phenomenon that "phenomenology finds its ultimate possibility: not only the possibility that surpasses actuality, but the possibility that surpasses the very conditions of possibility, the possibility of unconditioned possibility—in other words, the possibility of the impossible" (PTT 212). Saturated phenomena should not be seen as marginal or limit

[81] Up to this point in his essay Marion has referred to and extrapolated from philosophers only: Plato, Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Kant, Husserl, and Heidegger. When talking about the absolute character of the saturated phenomenon, some biblical passages are introduced: on 207 n40, he refers to the crossing of the Red Sea, the Gospels, and the doctrine of the four senses of Scripture, and on 208 he writes "having come among its own, they did not recognize it," which is a clear, although unstated, reference to John 1:11, "He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him" (NRSV).

phenomena; rather the best definition of them is: phenomena that give themselves completely on their own terms. This is what Marion calls a "*revelation*" (PTT 213).

While Marion's argument has been philosophical all the way through, the final few pages are indeed where he gets himself in trouble with Janicaud in an explicit way. He states that "by *revelation* we here intend a strictly phenomenological concept," an appearance that can be understood as, or occur in the domains of, idol, icon, and theophany (PTT 215). The point Marion is trying to make is that there are three types of phenomena—simple, common, and saturated—and he merely uses these "religious" terms to give examples of them. Does this negate or undermine the phenomenological work he has done? I do not think so, but it does indeed lead one to question why he uses these three concepts to elucidate the three type of phenomena. Again, we can question why, having read Janicaud's report, Marion would end his essay by directly quoting part of St. Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of God, and say that the saturated phenomenon recognized as "*aliquid quo majus cogitari nequit*" (PTT 216; "that than which nothing greater can be thought") is what phenomenology should seek. That is, why would Marion resort to a Christian argument for God's existence from a position of faith to argue a philosophical claim? Despite these final points, we have seen how the whole of Marion's argument for the saturated phenomenon is not understood by him to be a substantial "drift or turn" to the theological, whatever the appearances at the end may suggest. We turn now to Michel Henry's essay to consider the philosophical rigour of Henry's argument.

In "Speech and Religion: The Word of God," Michel Henry argues that, in the Gospels, there are two types of language: human and divine. He posits this as a response to the question of how we can know that the Gospels "attest in some ways to [their] divine provenance, thereby establishing [their] truth, the divinity of Christ, that is, the truth of what he says and what he

does" (PTT 218). From page one of his essay, we can see that Henry is operating differently from Marion, and that he, as Janicaud points out in *Phenomenology "Wide Open,"* has become even more theological. References to God, Word, the scriptures, the Gospels, and Christ jump out at the reader from the first paragraphs. But is Henry's question phenomenological? Yes, I argue it is, since it concerns how certain words, ideas, and indeed realities are made manifest in the world, and, more importantly, how the world itself is given. Since Chapter 2 of this dissertation will be devoted to Henry, I will save an in-depth look at his philosophy until then, and so provide only a general outline of his thinking in this particular essay here.[82]

Henry begins his essay by looking at human words, which he defines as "signs relating to objects" (PTT 219). These words are thus tools that human beings use as means to an end, which involves controlling and using that which already exists. This ability to make something known is for language to be phenomenological. Henry makes this claim for two reasons, namely (1) that the word makes an individual object visible, and, this being primary, (2) the word gives Being or allows appearance as such.[83] "The term to designate the phenomenological essence of the word inasmuch as it lets appear and thus gives Being," Henry argues, "is Logos" (PTT 219).[84] There is thus an integral connection between Logos and Being, and so the Word is essentially phenomenological. What Henry goes on to argue—beyond the fact that the Word is phenomenological—is how it is phenomenological.

Following Heidegger, Henry avers it is the world that provides phenomenality for the use of language. It is the world, an outside, or an exteriority that allows for the word to perform its

[82] Much of what Henry discusses in this present essay is picked up in his later texts, especially *I Am the Truth* and *Words of Christ*.

[83] At this point, Henry has already started capitalizing Word while still referring to the human word. Unless quoting him, I will use lower-case 'word' when discussing his argument for the human word.

[84] In §7 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger too shows the strong connection between phenomena and logos, showing how each needs the other.

function, for it is exteriority that provides appearing—or Lighting—so that objects can be seen. This word, one Henry describes as finding "its phenomenological possibility in the coming outside of an Outside," is the human word, or "Word of the World" (PTT 220). This worldly word can be identified via three characteristics: (1) "it is given by showing itself outside, like an 'Image'"; (2) "it is automatically given as a nonreality," appearing by absence; and (3) it reveals that all things that are said, and therefore shown, are emptied of reality (PTT 220-21). Following this logic of the human word, Henry shows that the ego that thinks it, and so thinks its own appearing, necessarily signifies its own disappearance.

But the ego clearly remains, even when the "Word of the World has fallen silent" (PTT 222). The ego's ability to remain leads Henry to pose another question: "What do the Gospels say about the ego, what do they say about us?" (PTT 222). They say, he avers, "that we are the Sons," and that "Sons and filiation are found only in Life" (PTT 222). We have here the first case of a major division in Henry: world and Life.[85] So far, he has discussed the human word, and how this is a "Word of the World." It is in the world that human beings appear and disappear, where language is used instrumentally. In Life, however, human beings are truly born and given life (filiation), and this because "Life is the Word of God" (PTT 222). Henry is very clear that the use of "word" in "Word of God" does not mean to imply a similarity to that of the human word—other than that they are both "phenomenological through and through" (PTT 222). The Word of God is a revelation; it is not a word about something, but the word of something, namely God.

The key distinction between these two words, then, is this: human words point away from themselves to something else, to some other reality and exteriority that is, essentially, empty;

[85] There is also a distinction in Henry's thought between individual life (i.e., each human being) and absolute Life (i.e., God), the former being contained within and an expression of the latter.

divine words, on the other hand, do not point away to nonreality, but are themselves the reality—they are "Archi-Revelation as self-revelation, as autoaffection" (PTT 222). Human beings, instead of being understood as an ego are Sons and a Self. Born into Life, a Self bears Life through itself, that is, through auto-affection, and Life lives through each Self that it brings into Life. The phenomenality of Life and Self is identical, as Life lives through Life and each Self, and each Self lives through Life's auto-affection (PTT 224).

The identical phenomenality of these two points to a further truth: the "quasi-identity of the essence of man and that of God, namely, Life" (PTT 225). This shared essence, Henry argues, "is not merely phenomenological," but is what he calls "Archi-phenomenality" (PTT 225). By this term he means to identify that it is not merely something ontic, and so appearing in the world, but rather ontological, something that gives the world. Indeed, it is both what gives and how it is given, sign and signified. Henry turns here to Meister Eckhart, the mediaeval Christian mystical theologian, to help explain his idea. Eckhart's line—"The Eye with which I see God and the Eye with which God sees me is but one and the same Eye"— is, metaphorically speaking, how the shared phenomenological essence of Life can be understood (PTT 226).[86]

Touching again on the notion that human beings are not to be understood as an ego that is born in the world, Henry highlights that the human ego has a transcendental birth. This birth is one that stands outside of the world, and therefore outside of appearing and disappearing. While the worldly self indeed comes and goes in a moment of time, the transcendental Self "never ends if it is true that the arrival of the Self in its Self as autoaffected in the autoaffection of absolute life happens only inasmuch as this autoaffection happens" (PTT 232). Since the Self is generated as Life's auto-affection—that is, Life living itself—the Self cannot cease to be, because then Life

[86] Henry does not cite Eckhart, but the quote is from Sermon 57. See Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, ed. and trans. Maurice O'C. Walshe (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2009), 298.

would cease to be. Here again Henry refers to Eckhart, who says that we are "unborn" (PTT 233),[87] and that we must pass through God, or Life, in order to fully be. These notions remain phenomenological for Henry: "That God—or, if one prefers, Life—is more intimately within me than myself is not a mystical pronouncement, but a phenomenological one" (PTT 233).[88]

This look at Henry's essay, though succinct, gives a clear understanding of his approach to phenomenology, and his phenomenological approach to life. He obviously is not shy about using explicitly Christian language in his writing; he talks here about scripture—often generally, but also specifically at times (whether citing them or not)—God, the Word, and draws on the theologian Meister Eckhart. All of this makes it easy to say that he has theological presuppositions that inform and direct his work. However, hopefully this brief overview will suffice for now to demonstrate that he is interested in the phenomenological meaning of words and language, how these convey meaning and make things appear, and what—if there is a God—divine words would be and signify, as well as how we would know them as such. These ideas will be examined more extensively in the next chapter. Having looked at two of the essays that make up the response portion to *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn,"* I turn my attention in conclusion to some contemporary secondary commentary on and work with the "theological turn" in order to give a sense of where this movement is today.

Further Responses to the "Theological Turn"

Since Janicaud's 1991 report that named the "theological turn" in French phenomenology and the 1992 collection of essays by four philosophers called out as being in this movement, the "theological turn" has showed no signs of slowing down or going away. The philosophers named

[87] Quoting Sermon 87 in Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 424.

[88] Henry is drawing on Eckhart again, this time from Sermon 66 in Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, 334. See also Augustine's *Confessions*, 3.6.11.

by Janicaud have continued to work in a similar vein—some until they died, and some to this day. There have also been new voices added to the dialogue, most notably, I shall argue, Emmanuel Falque, who is one of the most important figures in the "theological turn" today. In this section, I will look at some relevant texts in order to highlight why many of these authors think that Janicaud's critique was misguided, and how these philosophers continue to argue that their work is primarily philosophical, rather than being strictly theological. As such, they argue that there was not a turn in phenomenology away from its purity and towards theology, but rather that there has been a deepening and radicalizing of phenomenology itself.

Although Janicaud is quite critical in "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology," he is not beyond critique himself. He is adamant that his critique was centred on the lack of proper (Husserlian) phenomenological method in those philosophers he was calling out. However, Janicaud's method can, and should, also be called out. Alvis, for example, writes that Janicaud's "approach entailed, from the opposite end of the spectrum, a different kind of methodological requirement by claiming that theological concepts putatively *cannot* appear for investigation, thereby limiting phenomenology's wide-open horizon, which is supposed to remain entirely unsuspecting to thoughts as they are given."[89] J. Aaron Simmons also contends that "for Janicaud, the phenomenological method is not simply about *how* to proceed in philosophical investigation; it is also about *what* is available for investigation in the first place."[90] As we have seen in Marion's piece above, §24 of Husserl's *Ideas I*, if followed closely, should allow for the appearance of any phenomenon, and so adherence to phenomenological method should not preclude any phenomenon from investigation.

[89] Alvis, *The Inconspicuous God*, 15.

[90] J. Aaron Simmons, *God and the Other: Ethics and Politics After the Theological Turn* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 156.

Janicaud's follow-up work in *Phenomenology 'Wide Open'* also invites critique, though perhaps from another angle. As we have seen, he shows concern over the consequences of phenomenology's desire and intent to be "first philosophy." His "minimalist" response may seem helpful on some fronts, yet it does not seem to respond to the realities of our world. Retreating from the "first philosophy" endeavour to an approach that siloes and separates every discipline seems to be telling of a very modern approach to reality. But an approach like this does not fully acknowledge the arbitrariness of these boundaries—especially in this case between phenomenology and theology—or the messiness of life. As Dickinson argues, "there is no strict boundary between theology and philosophy. There is only a plurality of thoughts and discourses that overlap with one another in a manner and proportion that we are likely never to fully comprehend or systematically organize."[91] Falque's work, as we will see in Chapter 3, seeks to disrupt and further problematize this boundary. Ultimately, it seems that Janicaud's metaphysical understandings of human beings and reality have led to presuppositions that guide his work into narrow and restrictive stances.

In the translator's preface to Jean-Louis Chrétien's work *The Call and the Response*,[92] Anne Davenport, discussing the role of the infinite in philosophy, writes that "as long as we admit the infinite as a non-objectifiable element within philosophy, we must admit a level of phenomenological revelation accessible to the unaided natural light."[93] A main part of Janicaud's critique in "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology" is that certain philosophers have

[91] Dickinson, *Theology and Contemporary Continental Philosophy*, 121. On this point, see also Jean-Yves Lacoste, *From Theology to Theological Thinking*, trans. W. Chris Hackett (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2014).

[92] Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, trans. Anne A. Davenport (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

[93] Anne A. Davenport, "Translator's Preface" in Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, xviii.

allowed thinking of the infinite into philosophy in an inappropriate manner.[94] However, the infinite clearly has a place in philosophy, according to Davenport, the question is rather how it should be addressed. If it is to be treated in such a way as to not objectify it, then other methods must be used to understand how it is manifest to us. By taking the infinite seriously, she writes that "there is thus no 'theological turn' of phenomenology: rather, phenomenology becomes the extreme plenitude of philosophy. Radical phenomenology is not, and could never be, 'theological.'"[95] To describe and understand the ways that the infinite is made known and manifest in the world is a philosophical question, and indeed one that pushes phenomenology to its limits.

In 2005, an edited volume looking at the theological interests of post-Heideggerian philosophy in France was published. *God in France: Eight Contemporary French Thinkers on God*[96] collects nine essays, one that surveys the general themes, and eight that address the main thinkers in the field. In his introductory essay that helps give context for the collection, "God in France. Heidegger's Legacy," co-editor Peter Jonkers writes that, of the many philosophical influences, Heidegger is among the most important for these thinkers. Heidegger's critique of onto-theology and his desire to rethink metaphysics has allowed these thinkers to find new ways to talk philosophically about God and religious phenomena.[97] Jonkers highlights that these thinkers see themselves as philosophers not theologians, and that their work is philosophical first and foremost.

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[94] He is reticent that the infinite, or "'nonknowledge' of the mystical Night," is being sought after using "the conceptual or terminological instruments of good old academic philosophy" (PTT 34).

[95] Davenport, "Translator's Preface," xxvi.

[96] Peter Jonkers and Ruud Welten, eds., *God in France: Eight Contemporary French Thinkers on God* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005).

[97] Peter Jonkers, "God in France. Heidegger's Legacy", in *God in France: Eight Contemporary French Thinkers on God*, ed. Peter Jonkers and Ruud Welten (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 7.

One of Janicaud's main critiques is that these thinkers have introduced a "metaphysico-theological montage" (PTT 27) into proper philosophical discourse. However, Jonkers argues, this is tantamount to saying that these thinkers are doing the same thing as natural theology, and are thus stuck within the same trappings of metaphysical thinking. What these philosophers have consistently done, rather, is to think of transcendence outside of the traditional thinking of onto-theology and apologetics.[98] In an attempt to renew philosophical thinking, they are asking, from a philosophical perspective, "whether there can be a givenness which goes *beyond* onto-theology, transcending our (power of) thinking, but which at the same time moves us most profoundly and throws us out of balance."[99] Since Janicaud misreads both the means and the ends of these philosophers—whether accidentally or intentionally—he comes to see them as subverting philosophy with theology. By highlighting that they may be understood to be doing the opposite, Jonkers reverses the force of Janicaud's critique.

What Jonkers's essay also highlights is the importance and lasting effects of Heidegger's thinking on their work. The legacy of Heidegger is, essentially, his naming of onto-theology, his attempts to deconstruct this form of metaphysics, and his openness to inconspicuous phenomena. The French thinkers discussed in this collection, Jonkers argues, have taken the thrust of Heidegger's thinking to heart. While Jonkers touches on figures as wide-ranging as Derrida, Lyotard, and Girard, I will mention his thoughts on just a few of the figures relevant to this project. He writes that Henry sees a parallel between Christianity and radical phenomenology in that both describe the revelation of revelation, whereas traditional Husserlian phenomenology stops at the revelation of objects. Christianity is, for Henry, essentially unrepresentable, and so

[98] Jonkers, "God in France. Heidegger's Legacy," 9–10.

[99] Jonkers, "God in France. Heidegger's Legacy," 10.

its God "cannot be conceived in terms of Being, as happens in onto-theology."[100] When it comes to Marion's work, especially in *God without Being*, Jonkers points out that his notion of the idol and understanding of God in this manner show the idolatrous trappings of thinking about God via metaphysics.[101]

However, in the same manner that these thinkers have radicalized phenomenology, thus moving beyond Husserl's initials aims, Jonkers points out that they have also moved beyond Heidegger in important ways. Beyond his critique of onto-theology, Jonkers shows that Heidegger also describes a "loss of the gods" that is a result of human action and destiny more so than a conscious, that is, atheistic, choice.[102] As such, a return to the gods is either too late or too soon, as the coming and going of the gods is a result of the destiny of Being and outside of humanity's control.[103] Further, Jonkers points to the extensive steps Heidegger thinks are necessary to return to God, and even to a re-thinking of what "the word 'God' is to signify."[104] Despite Heidegger's openness to religion in some sense, he is reticent about a quick return to God, cautioning that the return of the God can only be brought about by the lengthy process of

[100] Jonkers, "God in France. Heidegger's Legacy," 30.

[101] Jonkers, "God in France. Heidegger's Legacy," 30–31.

[102] Jonkers, "God in France. Heidegger's Legacy," 16-17. He is quoting from Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 116–17. The full quote that Jonkers draws on: "This expression [the loss of the gods] does not mean the mere doing away with the gods, gross atheism. The loss of the gods is a twofold process. On the one hand, the world picture is Christianized inasmuch as the cause of the world is posited as infinite, unconditional, absolute. On the other hand, Christendom transforms Christian doctrine into a world view (the Christian world view), and in that way makes itself modern and up to date. The loss of the gods is the situation of indecision regarding God and the gods. Christendom has the greatest share in bringing it about. But the loss of the gods is so far from excluding religiosity that rather only through that loss is the relation to the gods changed into mere 'religious experience.' When this occurs, then the gods have fled. The resultant void is compensated for by means of historiographical and psychological investigation of myth."

[103] Jonkers, "God in France. Heidegger's Legacy," 23.

[104] Jonkers, "God in France. Heidegger's Legacy," 23. He is quoting from Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 230. The full quote that Jonkers refers to is this: "the thinking that thinks from the question concerning the truth of Being questions more primordially than metaphysics can. Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy is the essence of divinity to be thought. Only in light of the essence of divinity can it be thought or said what the word 'God' is to signify."

deep thinking about Being, and the relation between concealment and unconcealment. Nevertheless, the French authors in this discussion have been quick to bring God back into thinking, and they have done so largely because they think that Heidegger's hesitancy comes from his too closely aligning the holy with Being, such that Being precedes or is necessary to understand God.[105] In a similar manner to their radicalizing of Husserlian phenomenology, these thinkers have also sought to radicalize Heidegger's thinking, especially as it relates to the full meaning of the critique of onto-theology, and the ramifications of thinking God in light of this critique.

Another edited collection, *Words of Life: New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology* (2010), contains essays focussed on Henry, Marion, and Chrétien, as well as on the "theological turn" more generally.[106] In his introduction to the collection of essays, co-editor Bruce Ellis Benson writes that in his report, Janicaud believes that "phenomenology should be either agnostic or even atheistic."[107] The authors "in this collection," however, "are unwilling to concede that such a starting point is either obvious or necessarily desirable."[108] What Benson argues, as we have seen others argue, is that there was not a turn in phenomenology, but a deepening of phenomenology, such that these thinkers have really taken phenomenology to, and beyond, its own limits in the service of phenomenology's initial aims. While the authors of these essays, and the authors and themes they are concerned with, may be religious or theological, the overarching concern is with phenomenology and its limits.

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[105] Jonkers, "God in France. Heidegger's Legacy," 31, 36.

[106] Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba, eds., *Words of Life: New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

[107] Bruce Ellis Benson, "Introduction," in *Words of Life: New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology*, ed. Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 3.

[108] Benson, "Introduction," 3.

In his essay in this collection, "Continuing to Look for *God in France*: On the Relationship Between Phenomenology and Theology," J. Aaron Simmons examines the edited volume *God in France*.[109] He highlights how the authors therein argue that there has been a deepening of phenomenology, and not a turn. The impulse of the authors named in the "theological turn" and carrying on in its wake "may indeed push phenomenology beyond the limits that were laid out by Husserl in *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*. Nonetheless, the work being done by Marion, Henry, Levinas, Derrida, Girard, and Lacoste is still properly described and correctly regarded as 'phenomenology.'"[110] While Simmons thinks that this collection of essays offers a good critique of and response to Janicaud—for example, by showing that Janicaud's rigid stance on the separation of the apparent and inapparent in phenomenology does not hold water[111]—he also argues that *God in France* remains aligned with Janicaud, in that both believe that the theological and philosophical should be rigidly separated.[112]

Instead of saying that theology and phenomenology must be absolutely separate, for fear that former would seek to dominate the latter—which is often taken as presuppositionless—and that there should be no distinction between the two, such that talk about God loses any determinate content, Simmons proposes that theology and phenomenology should remain distinct and in conversation with each other. In his view, "phenomenology and theology are separated, but only because of the variant sources of authority to which they appeal—and not

[109] J. Aaron Simmons, "Continuing to Look for *God in France*: On the Relationship Between Phenomenology and Theology," in *Words of Life: New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology*, ed. Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 15–29. See his reduced version of this chapter, but within the context of his overall ethical-political project: "Reconstructive Separatism: On Phenomenology and Theology," in J. Aaron Simmons, *God and the Other*, 153-165.

[110] Simmons, "Continuing to Look for *God in France*," 15.

[111] Simmons, "Continuing to Look for *God in France*," 19.

[112] Simmons, "Continuing to Look for *God in France*," 23. However, Jonkers does say that "thinking about these questions [of transcendence and method] offers to both philosophy and theology an opportunity for a crossover, which is mutually enriching." See Jonkers, "God in France. Heidegger's Legacy," 42. It is this "crossover" that is Falque's preferred method, and which I address at the start of Chapter 3.

because of the content of one or the other."[113] Key to this debate is to realize that not only theology but phenomenology as well has its presuppositions, and then to be aware of the content of these presuppositions. Keeping an ongoing conversation between these distinct approaches "is valuable not only for increasing rigor in theological thinking, but also for the expansion of philosophical horizons."[114]

A final point, and one that has largely gone unnoticed or unsaid, concerns the different receptions of Husserl in France. In *Phenomenology in France: Early Encounters*,[115] Christian Dupont points out that there were two distinct receptions of Husserlian thought: one by French philosophy and another by French religious thought. Their backgrounds and interests led to different appropriations of Husserl. The philosophical tradition's "interest in phenomenology was encouraged by the interpretation of phenomenology as a continuation of the Cartesian tradition, that is, as an attempt to secure the foundations of science and logic through reflection upon consciousness."[116] Wanting to break with the "strict rationalism" of the philosophers, those in French religious thought found that "the descriptive methods of phenomenology appealed to philosophers of religion while the emphasis on intuition aided theologians seeking to affirm the role played by the intellect in the act of faith."[117]

Dupont highlights in a striking way that there was already a proto-phenomenology in the spiritualism of philosophers such as Henri Bergson and Maurice Blondel at the turn of the

[113] Simmons, "Continuing to Look for *God in France*," 27.

[114] Simmons, "Continuing to Look for *God in France*," 29.

[115] Christian Dupont, *Phenomenology in French Philosophy: Early Encounters* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014).

[116] Dupont, *Phenomenology in French Philosophy*, 5.

[117] Dupont, *Phenomenology in French Philosophy*, 5-6.

century.[118] He argues that "the original philosophical insights of Bergson and Blondel functioned as immediate precursors to the receptions of phenomenology in both French philosophy and French religious thought."[119] Dupont's work is important because it demonstrates that, at the time even of Husserl's reception in the 1920's and 30's, there was already an engagement with the religious in philosophical thinking. If this is so, then Janicaud's critique of a "theological turn" is no longer apt, and even his pointing to Heidegger as the original source of the turn is incorrect. At the very least we could not even characterize the "theological turn" as occurring in the late 19th century, with Bergson and Blondel; better, we might just acknowledge that the investigations of these philosophers are perfectly acceptable within French philosophical thought generally. As such, we should see two distinct branches of phenomenological thinking, one that is closer to Bergson and Blondel, and one that is closer to Husserl and Heidegger.[120] Michel Henry and Emmanuel Falque, though deeply guided, as we will see next, by the phenomenologies of Husserl and Heidegger, are equally influenced by the more spiritually-inflected phenomenologies of the earlier French spiritualists.

[118] Starting with Maine de Biran in the late 18th century, spiritualism refers to "philosophies centered upon the interior life of the individual subject, which was regarded as spontaneous, active, and creative." Dupont, *Phenomenology in French Philosophy*, 30.

[119] Dupont, *Phenomenology in French Philosophy*, 16.

[120] Dickinson argues that "what we see in the phenomenological 'turn to theology' or the general continental philosophical 'return to religion' is really little more than an unveiling of the same forces and dynamics that have been here all along, and which are the root source of a secular liberal humanism that pervades Western thought." Dickinson, *Theology and Contemporary Continental Philosophy*, 129-30.

Chapter 2: Life and World in Michel Henry

Introduction

Michel Henry (1922-2002) is one of the major figures in 20th century French philosophy; however, he often flies under the radar when compared to his contemporaries. He was active among such figures as Levinas and Ricoeur, Foucault and Derrida, Deleuze and Lyotard, as well as the later years of Sartre and de Beauvoir. Yet compared with these other philosophers, his acclaim and influence have seemingly been minor, especially in the English-speaking world.[121] Despite that, Henry was a highly original thinker. His valuable contributions both to phenomenology and to the philosophy of religion cannot be overstated. Indeed, recent translations of his works, and publication of a monograph[122] and an edited reader,[123] highlight the current relevance and importance of his thought—an importance that is only beginning to be addressed.

Henry's whole *oeuvre* can be seen as focussing on and explicating his idea of Life, which is his unique contribution to philosophy. Although it shares similarities with the Schopenhauer's Will, Bergson's *élan vital*, and Whitehead's view of God in his process metaphysics, Henry's understanding is different. His whole philosophical endeavour has been to discover the source and foundation of our individual experience. In order to do this, Steven DeLay argues that his search required "an overturning of the entire history of philosophy."[124] What Henry ends up with is the notion of two modes of appearing: pathos-filled immanence (Life) and ecstatic

[121] Scott Davidson attributes this lack of recognition to Henry's "antipathy to the passing Parisian fads and thus to the apparent 'untimeliness' of his thought." Scott Davidson, "Translator's Preface," in Michel Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, trans. Scott Davidson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), ix.

[122] Karl Hefty, *Life as Revelation: Michel Henry's Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, forthcoming).

[123] Michel Henry, *The Michel Henry Reader*, ed. Scott Davidson and Frédéric Seyler (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2019).

[124] Steven Delay, *Phenomenology in France: A Philosophical and Theological Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 43.

transcendence (world).[125] The latter is the one that has dominated the history of philosophy—especially in the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger that Henry takes his leave from—and understands life and consciousness via exteriority and separation. Henry's unique notion of Life, which comes from a radicalizing of phenomenology via its reversal, is an immediate and immanent experience—what he calls an auto-affection. The seeds of this notion of Life are planted in his early works on philosophy and blossom in his late works on Christianity. He also carries out his analysis of Life in works on art,[126] psychology,[127] economics,[128] and culture.[129]

Henry's schema of the duality of appearing applies to how he understands the body, which is in line with the phenomenological tradition broadly speaking. The body is objective and material (*Körper*) and corresponds to the ecstatic mode of appearing in the world. Flesh (*Leib*), on the other hand, is the lived body that Henry describes as auto-affection, and which corresponds to Life's mode of appearing, pathos-filled immanence. As we will see, Henry describes these two modes of appearing as being quite radically separated. As such, it has led to certain figures critiquing him for views identified with Docetism—that Christ only appeared to

[125] In his early work philosophical works, Henry distinguishes between life (*la vie*) and world (*le monde*), but in his later theological trilogy, he refers to absolute Life (*la Vie absolue*). In general, both 'life' and 'Life' should be read the same way when Henry refers to pathos-filled immanence, and thus in distinction to ecstatic transcendence (the world). For Henry, a living being is a life in Life. For consistency and clarity, I will use the capitalized form of 'Life' throughout this dissertation when Henry is describing this mode of appearing. Henry is not always consistent with capitalization; however, there are also times when the translators render *la Vie* as 'life,' in which case I modify the translation to read 'Life.'

[126] Michel Henry, *Seeing the Invisible: On Kandinsky*, trans. Scott Davidson (London: Continuum, 2009); English translation of Michel Henry, *Voir l'invisible: Essai sur Kandinsky* (Paris: Éditions François Bourin, 1988).

[127] Michel Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Douglas Brick (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993); English translation of Michel Henry, *Généalogie de la psychanalyse: Le commencement perdu* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985).

[128] Michel Henry, *Marx: A Philosophy of Human Reality*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983); Abridged English translation of Michel Henry, *Marx*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1976). Michel Henry, *From Communism to Capitalism: Theory of a Catastrophe*, trans. Scott Davidson (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); English translation of Michel Henry, *Du communisme au capitalisme. Théorie d'une catastrophe* (Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 1990).

[129] Michel Henry, *Barbarism*, trans. Scott Davidson (London: Continuum, 2012); English translation of *La Barbarie* (Paris: Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle, 1987).

be a human being but was in fact fully divine—and Gnosticism—a religious system that believes that materiality is evil, and that salvation comes via special knowledge. Joseph Rivera, Kevin Hart, and Emmanuel Falque are representative of these critiques.[130]

On the charge of Gnosticism, Hart writes that "Henry is unquestionably Gnostic in his affirmation that the soul is uncreated" and that "his 'philosophy of Christianity' is Gnostic, not Christian."[131] Regarding Docetism, Falque writes that "paradoxically, everything happens as if, according to us, God was never really incarnated in *Incarnation*, or at least not temporally and visibly in a body, on the earth, and in a history,"[132] and theologian Joseph Rivera writes that "certainly there is more than a mild Docetism at work in Henry's appropriation of the Incarnation."[133] While both Falque and Rivera go on to nuance these claims in subsequent works,[134] part of my analysis will be to show how these claims could have arisen, and what Henry actually attempts to describe in his work. I turn now to the start of Henry's journey, his early phenomenological works that introduce his key concepts, so that we can see how he describes body and flesh in the incarnation and the resurrection.

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[130] In his book on incarnation and embodiment in Christianity, Ola Sigurdson, while not explicitly citing Henry for Docetism, does intentionally leave him out of his work for having a transcendental idealist notion of the flesh: "I will however not discuss Henry's phenomenology of the body in this study, primarily for two reasons: 1) the fact that the sort of transcendental embodiment that Henry calls the flesh risks reducing embodiment to an ideality; 2) the fact that my interest is oriented towards the concrete practices where embodiment is perceived, which calls for a hermeneutic phenomenology rather than a transcendental theology." Ola Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies: Incarnation, the Gaze, and Embodiment in Christian Theology*, trans. Carl Olsen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 17 n36.

[131] Kevin Hart, "Inward Life", in *Michel Henry: The Affects of Thought*, ed. Jeffrey Hanson and Michael R. Kelly (London: Continuum, 2012), 103. See also Jad Hatem, *Le Sauveur et les viscères de l'être: Sur le gnosticisme et Michel Henry* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004).

[132] Emmanuel Falque, 'Is There a Flesh Without Body? A Debate with Michel Henry', trans. Scott Davidson, *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 24, no. 1 (2016): 163.

[133] Joseph Rivera, "The Night of Living Flesh and Sainthood in Michel Henry", in *The Postmodern Saints of France: Refiguring 'the Holy' in Contemporary French Philosophy*, ed. Colby Dickinson (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 227.

[134] Rivera's monograph on Henry reveals a much more nuanced understanding of Henry's duplicity of appearing, and how this relates to the flesh and body of Christ. Joseph Rivera, *The Contemplative Self after Michel Henry: A Phenomenological Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015).

Henry's Philosophical Foundation

To the extent that Henry's late Christian trilogy—all published in the last six years of his life and immediately after his death (1996, 2000, and 2002)—presents a distinct direction and focus in his thinking, the three texts can only be understood as a continuation of, and so a development from, his earliest works.[135] His discussions of, for example, Life, the Word, and incarnation, all find their origin in his investigations in *The Essence of Manifestation* (1963) and *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body* (1965).[136] Also important in these texts is his understanding of phenomenality as revelation. This section will provide an explication of these two texts and their major themes, with an eye towards providing the foundation necessary for understanding his Christian trilogy. In these two works, Henry lays out an innovative philosophy that runs counter to the history of Western philosophy, especially as it challenges phenomenological ideas such as intentionality and manifestation. Henry's project is a radical phenomenology: to uncover the origin of life in a completely subjective and immanent manner and to uncover the source of manifestation.

[135] Hackett points out that, because of Henry's essay in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn,"* his *oeuvre* has been received in North America in reverse-order, and so he is seen "as a 'theological' philosopher in the first place" without first taking into account his earlier philosophical works. W. Chris Hackett, 'Michel Henry (1922-2002)', in *Religion and European Philosophy: Key Thinkers from Kant to Žižek*, ed. Philip Goodchild and Hollis Phelps (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 311. I am laying out this chapter so as to take him first as a phenomenologist, and then see how his theological works develop from this foundation.

[136] Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973); English translation of *L'Essence de la manifestation*, 2 vols. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963). Michel Henry, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975); English translation of *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps: Essai sur l'ontologie biranienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965). Citations will be from the English translation unless stated otherwise.

Essence, Manifestation, and Life

The Essence of Manifestation is Michel Henry's early magnum opus and was his Ph.D. dissertation carried out under the supervision of Jean Wahl and Jean Hyppolite.[137] In his preface to Girard Etzkorn's English translation, Henry writes that *Essence* "was born of a refusal, the refusal of the very philosophy from which it has sprung" (xi). The work, which he describes throughout as a "universal phenomenological ontology," is heavily indebted to the phenomenologies of both Husserl and Heidegger; however, he radicalizes their insights on manifestation, phenomenality, and intentionality, and ends up revolutionizing phenomenological thinking. His dense philosophical analyses in this text extend over 900 pages (just under 740 in the English translation), so a thorough examination cannot be given. I will, however, pull out what I take to be the major threads of the argument—enough to feel its warp and weft—in order to provide a foundation for understanding his Christian trilogy.

Henry begins *Essence* by stating his intent: "The meaning of the Being of the ego is the theme of this investigation" (1). Although Descartes's notion of the 'ego cogito' was a novel idea and foundational for later philosophy (and theology), Henry, following Heidegger, critiques him for not asking about the Being of this ego—Descartes's philosophy is not radical enough. Not content to stay at the level of particular things or types of things,[138] Henry is interested in "that which affects them all equally" (2). For him, then, "*First Philosophy is universal ontology*" (2). The universal phenomenological ontology that he develops is in distinction to both regional and formal ontologies, as both are, and will always remain, secondary and dependent. What Henry seeks is to show forth the universal of Being itself, the essence of every thing (11).

[137] When Henry defended his dissertation, it was under the title *The Essence of Revelation*, and only changed to *The Essence of Manifestation* when he published it. Karl Hefty, 'Phenomenality or Revelation: Michel Henry's Approach to Christianity', *Analecta Hermeneutica* 8 (2016), 212.

[138] Henry writes that "the *cogito* is no more than an instance of a particular and determined Being grasped with apodictic evidence" (14).

Since the essence of all things is Being, it is true to say that the Being of the essence is the essence of Being. The essence of beings can only show itself, or be understood, when all beings—"every effective existant" (11)—are set aside. As the essence is not a thing, it is a privation of existence, but in a positive sense. Henry states that "Being is Being only on the foundation of Nothingness within it. Nothingness is not nothing; it is the effective operation whereby Being realizes itself" (12). Because beings are made existants "by their expulsion to the outside of Being," Being and Nothingness are to be seen in identity (12). If philosophy, even phenomenology, has made any attempt at understanding Being, it has heretofore stopped at beings, at things which can be seen within a given horizon. What Henry is seeking is the essence of Being itself, and so the essence of the horizon, that is, that which lets things appear at all.

The "phenomenology of reason," by which Henry seems to indict Husserl, is either unwilling or incapable of understanding the meaning or essence of the horizon (16). This type of phenomenology will always remain at the level of beings, and so regional or formal ontology. What Henry seeks is that which makes all objects appear, a transcendental horizon. He writes that "that which permits each Being to manifest itself, to become a 'phenomenon', is the milieu of visibility wherein it can arise as an effective presence. The unfolding of such a milieu, *as the transcendental horizon of every Being in general*, is the work of Being itself" (19). For Henry, thinking about Being is synonymous with thinking about this "*universal phenomenological horizon*" (19). The fundamental problematic of Henry's radical phenomenology can now clearly be seen: how to conceive of and describe the essence of manifestation. Traditionally, phenomenology has said that phenomena need a foundation or horizon to appear but does not ask about this foundation itself. Here, Henry says that this foundation itself is a phenomenon, but based on the notion of revelation: "*a revelation which owes nothing to the work of*

transcendence" (40). However, whereas all other phenomena are objects that are reducible to the horizon of appearing—the 'what' reducible to the 'how'—revelation as a foundation is "*irreducible to the 'how' … The original revelation is its own content unto itself*" (40). What appears is thus synonymous with its appearance.

This foundation takes place within immanence, that is, it is an immanent revelation. As the foundation of transcendence, revelation is a phenomenon, and an irreducible one, "insofar as it is an immanent revelation" (41). According to Henry, knowledge of Being is ascertained through human being, and so he avers that "the phenomenological Being of the ego is one with the original revelation which is accomplished in a sphere of radical immanence" (41). The foundation is thus an inner experience of Life in pure immanence, an immanent revelation to the ego. The phenomenon that is the foundation is not, like the phenomena that are brought to light within it, visible. "The 'invisible'," Henry clarifies, "is the mode of a positive and truly fundamental revelation," and this again due to the identity of the 'what' and the 'how' of appearing (44). Looking at intentionality is relevant here. In phenomenology intentionality is the act of directing one's consciousness towards a transcendental object in order to ascertain its essence. As such, intentionality is always a move outward, away from oneself, and towards exteriority; phenomenology is thus predicated upon a subject-object dualism. "Consciousness is precisely the power of showing," Henry contends, but only on the condition that human beings are defined by a relation with the exterior (95). He is curious, however, about how we can know these acts of intentionality, and, if so, by what method.

The solution gets to the heart of Henry's phenomenology, and of his novel contribution to it, namely, self-affection, or auto-affection. Henry shows that the origin, as the manifestation of Being, has both an ontological and a phenomenological character: "The original character of the

manifestation of Being means that that which is first present, is not a being, but present-Being itself and as such" (140). This manifestation is not the result of a process; rather, native to the essence of manifestation is self-manifestation: "the essence of Being is self-manifestation. *Self-manifestation is the essence of manifestation*" (143). Henry argues that this must be the case, for if the intention of intentionality is another intentionality, that is, a conscious and exteriorizing act, then we still have not grasped the essence of intentionality.

This is the moment at which Henry truly breaks from and radicalizes Husserlian phenomenology, for he lays out an argument by which appearing as such is not given in an intentional manner. In its stead Henry proposes auto-affection, whose givenness is purely by itself to itself. It is a self-manifestation, a self-revelation, or, Henry's preferred formulation, an auto-affection. "To receive a content is to be affected by it. … To be affected by itself, to affect itself, is to constitute itself as auto-affection. *Auto-affection is the constitutive structure of the original essence of receptivity*" (233). For something to affect itself is thus to bypass intentionality, as there is no acting outwards or exteriority, there is no world or transcendence. Auto-affection is not dependent on any other structure. Henry writes that "*auto-affection designates the retro-reference to self of the essence of manifestation, namely, this very essence grasped in that which constitutes the ontological possibility of its own manifestation. … Auto-affection determines the essence of manifestation as that which makes it possible*" (235). Since it is not dependent on anything outside itself or aimed at anything outside itself, auto-affection is the most originary point of manifestation and occurs completely within immanence.

Henry's notion of auto-affection, or affectivity, is not an abstract or transcendental condition. For him, auto-affection is rooted in immanence—"*the possibility of auto-affection*," according to Henry, "*resides in the original essence of receptivity, namely in immanence*"

(243)—and provides the very foundation for transcendence—"*immanence is the essence of transcendence*" (249). Immanence is the essence of transcendence because it both reveals it and makes it possible. Identifying this structure as such, Henry argues, is what enables us to ascertain the essence of manifestation. He writes that "the determination of the essence of transcendence as immanence is identical to the bringing to light of that which makes possible the coherence of the internal structure of the essence of manifestation" (267). Auto-affection, as a non-intentional relation of self to itself that is the essence of manifestation, occurs in the sphere of immanence. As the condition for the possibility of visibility, it is in itself the invisible.

At this point in *Essence* Henry makes a brief, yet important, excursus to the work of Meister Eckhart—a figure whose thinking will re-emerge in his Christian trilogy. Henry affirmingly cites Eckhart that "the core of God is also my core, and the core of my soul, the core of God's,"[139] and that the human being is not a creature but is "non-born"[140] (310). God and the human being are thus integrally entangled with one another, and, radically, are to be seen as identical. Quoting Eckhart again, Henry writes that "*God and I are one in process*" (324).[141] As God and the human being are one, both their essence and their revelation are one. Henry asserts that, because of this identification, "in loving the soul, God loves himself and this in such a way that there is in reality but one love, one single operation, and the love whereby God loves the soul is ultimately nothing other than the love whereby the soul loves God, nothing other than the love whereby God loves himself" (312). There is, as Henry reads Eckhart, no real separation

[139] Quoting Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation*, trans. Raymond B. Blakney (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1941), 126.

[140] Quoting Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation*, 231. Although Blakney has "born" instead of "non-born," this appears to be a typo, as Henry's original text reads "non-né" (387). Walshe's more recent translation reads "unborn." Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, ed. and trans. Maurice O'C. Walshe (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2009), 424.

[141] Quoting Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation*, 182. Again, where the Blakney translation has "process," Walshe's translation has the line as "God and I are one in this operation" (332), which is a closer reflection of the text Henry was quoting: "*Dieu et moi sommes un dans l'opération*" (405). Italics are Henry's.

between God and the soul of the human being. The love of God for the soul is God's love for Godself, and thus a non-intentional relationship. The expression of love and the being of the human being are nothing other than the self-affection of God, who is the essence.

Emmanuel Falque has a chapter on Eckhart in *God, the Flesh, and the Other*, and critically engages with Henry's work in several places. According to Falque, Henry's purely affective reading of Eckhart, which denounces things and the world, is unfounded (92). Further, Henry's interpretation of "Eckhart's thought as a total immanentism" removes the distance between God and creation, removes transcendence, and puts forward identification and generation in place of resemblance and creation (93-94). Here Falque notes, looking at the whole of Henry's work, that "pure auto-affection was skillfully transferred from the relation of man to himself (*Essence of Manifestation*) to the relation of man to God (*I am the Truth* and *Incarnation*)" (94). Falque wants a rediscovery of Eckhartian thought, but he is worried about the dangers of misinterpretation of his complicated thinking, such as he sees in Henry's work.

Connected to his idea of auto-affection and deriving from his reading of Eckhart, Henry introduces a vital and novel concept that he will develop further in his subsequent work, the concept of Life. "*That which has the experience of self, that which enjoys itself and is nothing other than this pure enjoyment of itself, than this pure experience of self, is life*" (285). Life, as we can see, is indelibly tied up with the concept of auto-affection. Life is the experience or affection of itself. But it is also intimately connected with immanence and the invisible. Henry writes that "immanence not only constitutes the foundation of a situation, it is the essence of life. This is why life is what we never see and what constantly escapes our view" (382). Life is by its nature invisible and so cannot be seen, that is, it does not manifest itself in the world. However, it is the foundation for the revelation that is visibility, and so what allows the world to be seen.

"*The original revelation of the essence to itself, which is constitutive of its reality, is the invisible. … [T]he invisible is not the antithetical concept of phenomenality, it is rather its first and fundamental determination*" (438). What is important to understand here is that the invisible and Life are tied together, they are one and the same.

Something to note now, since it will be relevant to my critical interpretation of Henry's Christian trilogy, is the radical distinction between Life and world. The same structural distinction between the invisible and the visible lies at the root between Life and world. Henry writes that "everything which presents itself in the world and manifests itself therein under the title of 'phenomenon' henceforth is shown to be without any relationship to existence or with that which it essentially comprises" (448). Further, "it is the absence of any relationship between these two worlds which appears in this antinomy, in such a way that what manifests itself in the one, namely, in the world, has nothing to do with the reality of life nor its original accomplishment in the invisible" (449). In terms that could not be more clear, the world (which is visible and transcendent) is completely distinct from Life (which is invisible and immanent).

Henry claims that this understanding of reality is an achievement of Christianity. The radical distinction between Life and world "is accomplished for the first time in Christianity wherein this understanding finds its concrete historical realization" (448). Although he finds the source of this understanding in Christianity, especially in its critique of the "world"—he points to the paradoxical sayings of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:3-10) and Jesus's admonition to "render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" (Matt. 22:21) as evidence—he is quite clear that this is not a moral critique, but one that is "on the level of the ontological structures of the real" (449). Henry makes this claim in order to say that the world is not something which is deemed bad now but can, or will, be better at a later point; rather, the

world is ontologically distinct and, in his reading of Christianity, negative, and cannot and will not change. His ontological distinction between Life and world directly influences their status as what is real and what is not. "That which reveals itself in the invisible and under its form, in its phenomenological and ontological identity with it, is reality. The world, on the other hand, is the ontological milieu of unreality" (450).

Because of this radical dichotomy between Life and world, Henry avers that, since the essence and Life are the invisible, we can never see Life in the world. The world, in its very ontological structure, cannot contain the essence or make it manifest (451). Put bluntly, reality "cannot take its place in the world" (451). As we saw above, Henry describes the foundation, or the essence of manifestation, as occurring in the sphere of radical immanence; it is an immanent revelation. In this way, the invisible is immanent and endemic to Life, whereas the visible is transcendent and characteristic of the world. "*For the invisible is nothing which might be beyond the visible, it is nothing 'transcendent', it is the original essence of life such that, since it takes place in a sphere of radical immanence, it never arises in transcendence and, moreover, cannot show itself in it*" (453). Since Life is radically separated from the world, Henry writes that "no entity … can contain it or show it" (453).

Having deliberated on this distinction between, on the one hand, reality, invisibility, and Life, and, on the other, unreality, visibility, and the world, Henry now returns to his notion of affectivity. Auto-affection is Henry's proposal for the non-intentional appearance of appearance, for the revelation of the essence to itself. To really understand him on this point, I quote him at length:

> *The simplest experience, namely, that which it inaugurates before the ecstasy and in it, the immediate experience of self, the original* feeling [*sentiment*] *which the essence has of itself, can this not be recognised and grasped?* THAT WHICH IS FELT [*SE SENT*] WITHOUT THE INTERMEDIARY OF ANY SENSE [*SENS*] WHATSOEVER IS IN

> ITS ESSENCE AFFECTIVITY. *Affectivity is the essence of auto-affection, not its theoretical or speculative possibility but its concrete one; it is immanence itself grasped no longer in the ideality of its structure but in its indubitable and certain phenomenological realization; it is the manner in which the essence receives itself, feels itself, in such a way that this 'self-feeling' as 'self feeling by self', presupposed by the essence and constituting it, discovers itself in it, in affectivity, as an effective self-feeling by self, namely, as feeling*. (462)

Affectivity, then, is an immediate and non-intentional experience. Rather than a movement outside of one's self or consciousness, thus requiring a separation between self and world or a subject-object dualism, affectivity is what occurs before any outward movement and separation, and indeed what allows for it.[142]

The very experience of affectivity is within and defines the self. He writes that affectivity "constitutes the Being of the Self" (465).[143] The Self is the place where the affecting and the affected are identical. The Self, in this pure experience of auto-affection, is totally self-sufficient. "Affectivity is that which puts everything into relation with the self and thus brings it into opposition with everything else in the absolute sufficiency of its radical interiority. Affectivity is the essence of ipseity" (465). The Self, or subjectivity, however, is also identical with Being, and so the essence of the Self is essence, is Being. Affectivity is equal to subjectivity, which is equal to Being and Life: "That which silently arrives in itself and collects itself in the all-powerfulness of the Being-Self and coheres with self in the helplessness of being delivered to itself by its original passivity with regard to itself … this is life" (476-77). The essence of manifestation,

[142] Henry distinguishes between sense and feeling. He writes that "*affectivity has nothing to do with sensibility, with which it has constantly been confused, but is rather structurally heterogeneous to sensibility*" (463). Sensibility, and thus perception, requires an intermediary, and is the affection of one thing on another. Feeling, on the other hand—which, he writes, "*does not differ from the essence*" (463)—requires no intermediary. It is an immediate experience or feeling of the self by itself.

[143] Although he is not consistent in his capitalization after this point, Henry does make a shift here from self (*soi*) to Self (*Soi*) when talking about the absolute unity of affecting and affected. He writes "*the self-feeling of self [*se sentir soi-même*], the experience of self [*s'eprouver soi-même*], the being-affected by self [*soi*], this is the Being and the possibility of the Self [*Soi*]"* (465).

which is nothing other than the manifestation of essence, is thus the coming to Self of Self in affectivity—it is Life living itself.

Henry has been following the inquiry regarding manifestation itself. He contends that we "cannot pretend to assign a place to that which is the condition of every place" (478). The milieu cannot be assigned a place because it is place *tout court*. And this place, or foundation, is affectivity: "*Affectivity is the universal foundation of all phenomena and determines them all originally and essentially as affective*" (486-87). As this ultimate foundation, "*affectivity is not a phenomenon or some thing which manifests itself, rather it is manifestation itself and its essence*" (533). That affectivity is the essence of emotions, is a fundamental characteristic in Henry's understanding of Life as pathos.[144] Pathos, which he defines as suffering, or undergoing experience, is synonymous with affectivity and Life.[145] He writes that "*the possibility of suffering must be grasped in Being as the possibility of Being itself, as identical to the essence of affectivity and prescribed by it.* … [T]he 'pathos' of the absolute does not reside in its contingency but in its essence" (659). Yet suffering as such is not the complete picture for Henry, for the undergoing of suffering in perfect affectivity leads to the feeling of joy: "the obtaining of self, the becoming and the arising of feeling in itself, in the enjoyment of what it is, this is enjoyment, this is joy" (660-61). Just as suffering is identical with Being, so too is joy. It is vital to keep in mind that the experience of these feelings is an immediate experience of Life.

[144] When discussing pain, for example, he writes that "*the reality of pain is its manifestation, its first arising, its revelation, yet, in such a way that this revelation is constituted by pain itself and finds in it, in pain as such, the effectiveness of its phenomenality*" (541). What is true about pain, and what is true and essential about anything, is its immediate experience of itself.

[145] In a note to her translation of Henry's *I Am the Truth*, Susan Emanuel writes that Henry's use of the terms *pathos* and *pathétique* are connected to the Greek root of the terms, and are used to mean, respectively, "what one has suffered, one's experience" and "subject to feeling, capable of feeling something." Michel Henry, *I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), ix.

In summary, we can see the many important contributions Henry made to philosophy in his first work. In *Essence* Henry makes clear how, by remaining within the phenomenological milieu, he radicalized phenomenology. The novel idea of auto-affection as an immediate and non-intentional relation of the self's experience of itself, as well as thinking within the sphere of immanence, and therefore grounding the transcendental Self in immanence, are some of the salient points in Henry's thought. By seeking the essence of manifestation and by trying to ascertain how intentionality shows itself, Henry ultimately ends up with a philosophy of Life living itself. However, his philosophy also contains a radical separation: Life, immanence, the invisible, and reality on one hand, and world, transcendence, the visible, and unreality on the other. These ideas will all come into play in his late Christian works.

Although some thinkers critique Henry for having forms of dualism, which are then connected to readings of Docetism in his work, Henry can also be read as a monist. I showed how Henry is critical of the history of Western thought for only suggesting and presupposing one form of appearance, what he identifies as the world's appearance. He calls this "ontological monism" and devotes the first section of *Essence* to dealing with it, suggesting a duality of appearing instead. Henry's discussion of the deep connection between Life/God and livings, such that Life generates itself through livings—a point that will come out more fully in *I Am the Truth*—does indicate a philosophical monism. If there is only one Life and it is the only reality, then there is a radical monism in Henry's thought. His thinking here is likely the natural outworking of his (implicit) Spinozism. Although Henry wrote his master's thesis on Spinoza, Spinoza makes almost no appearance in his writing after that.[146] Yet, his thinking belies Spinoza's impact. John Mullarkey, commenting specifically on Henry's relation to the

[146] Michel Henry, *Le bonheur de Spinoza* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004). This was originally published as two articles in 1944 and 1946.

"theological turn," writes that "Henry, the first of these divine thinkers, remains Spinozist throughout and materialistic to excess. His is a heterodox thought of God, a radical empiricism rather than a 'radical orthodoxy'."[147] Henry scholar Karl Hefty, however, states that "the charges" of Spinozism "are misapplied and ultimately unhelpful."[148] I think that Henry conceives of Life as an ontological monism, and what is critiqued as Docetism or dualism in his thinking is not a distinction of two different substances but of two modes of appearing of the same substance. We turn now to his *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body* to unpack these ideas in relation to different types of bodies.

Flesh as the Absolute Body

Although published two years after *The Essence of Manifestation* in 1965, Henry completed *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body* in 1948. He had originally intended this work on the body to be a chapter in the work he would do in *Essence*, so this work should be viewed as applying his analyses in *Essence* to the body. The subtitle to this work is *An Essay on Biranian Ontology*, and Henry's analyses are almost completely developed from the work of the modern French philosopher Pierre Maine de Biran (1766-1824). Already an outlier and minor figure in his own time, Maine de Biran remains largely so today. With Henry being so influenced by Maine de Biran's philosophy, he fits more closely within the Bergsonian-Blondelian phenomenological stream as touched on in the final section of Chapter 1. What Henry ultimately draws from Maine de Biran—as part of an overcoming of Cartesian dualism with respect to the

[147] John Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline* (London: Continuum, 2006), 53. Scott Davidson also writes that "the influence of Spinoza is evident in Henry's later work through his continued commitment to a philosophy of immanence and, in particular, through his later reliance on Spinoza's notion of immanent causality to articulate the immanent structure of life." "Translator's Preface," in Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, x.

[148] Karl Hefty, 'Is There a Body without Flesh?', *Crossing: The INPR Journal* 1 (2020), 70.

body—is the notion of the absolute body in relation to the objective body, which he lines up with his notion of self-affection and its projection in the world. I explicate some key points from the text, and especially focus on his concluding remarks on Christianity.

In this work Henry is trying to ascertain the grounding of subjectivity within a phenomenological ontology, and of the relation between this subjectivity and the body. In order to accomplish these tasks, he avers that one cannot start in the realm of pure subjectivity—something that has been problematically done time and again in philosophy—but from "the incarnate being of man … [which] is the original fact" (3). Further, we should not view this change in perspective as a contingency, but a move that is "required by the very nature of things" (3). Our body is not, Henry argues, the *partes extra partes* of the Cartesian system of extension, but is a living body. After outlining three types of bodies—the biological body, the living body, and the human body (4-6)—Henry argues that our body is originally none of these (8). Rather, our original body is a transcendental body, "*a body which is an 'I'*." (8).

Henry credits Maine de Biran with this initial discovery of our body as a subjective body. He sums up Maine de Biran's teaching thus: "*a body is subjective and is the ego itself*" (11). In Maine de Biran's teaching there are two kinds of beings associated with two kinds of knowledge. There is transcendent being, whose knowledge, what Maine de Biran calls exterior knowledge, is given via "the mediation of a phenomenological distance" (12); and there is the ego, whose knowledge, what Maine de Biran calls reflection, is given immediately without mediation.[149] Reflection in the Biranian sense is not an outward or ecstatic activity, and so not an intentionality; rather, it is foundational for all intentionality. The cogito is a "natural judgement

[149] Henry clarifies that, for Maine de Biran, reflection means the opposite of how it is traditionally understood and used philosophically, namely, "the operation whereby that which was immediately given to us withdraws from us and, through the mediation of its phenomenological distance, falls under the jurisdiction of the transcendental horizon of being" (12).

which … spontaneously expresses natural life, 'a judgment coeval with our very existence'" (22).[150]

What Henry picks up from Maine de Biran here is that experience, and the judgments that it entails, is immediate. There is not another foundation that underlies experience, rather "experience is its own origin" (26). The world, and thus the world of experiences, is real, but only on account of the ego's real relation with it, and of the ego's reality itself. Because the world and the ego are integrally tied, with the ego giving Life to the world, the world "is not a dead world but has a life, the very life which the ego gives it. The life of the world is that of the ego" (31). This world is not the world of science and positivism—which is an "abstract world … a surface world" (32)—but a real world where the power and force of the ego interacts with real objects around it.

Another key factor that Henry draws from Maine de Biran is an ontological basis for the ego. Maine de Biran is after not characteristics or qualities of the ego, but the essence of the ego, that is, what makes it an ego as such. His analysis leads to "*the identification of the being of the ego with that of subjectivity*" (37). He also determines that the being of subjectivity was its appearance, and thus it is radically different from all other beings. Indeed, for Maine de Biran, "*the ego is not a being*" (37). All beings are known or appear in exteriority; the ego, however, is manifested internally and immediately, consistent with Henry's work above. The ego is native to "*the sphere of absolute immanence*" (38). By belonging to immanence and in a manner by which it knows itself immediately, the ego "is identified in its being with life itself" (39). But how does experience and knowledge of oneself happen?

[150] Quoting Maine de Biran, *Essai sur les fondements de la psychologie et sur ses rapports avec l'etude de la nature*, in *Oeuvres de Maine de Biran*, ed. Pierre Tisserand, VIII (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1932), 627.

According to Maine de Biran, it has to do with feeling. Henry approvingly quotes him as saying that "*the feeling of the ego is the primitive fact of knowledge*" (41).[151] Adding his interpretation to this text, Henry writes that the ego is not able to be the condition of any and all knowledge unless it is itself not another thing; rather, it must be radically different from all other things, and thus have a different mode of manifestation. To this end, Henry states that "it is because the ego presents itself to itself in an internal transcendental experience, or rather, it is because it is the very fact of thus presenting itself … which we have elsewhere called the fundamental ontological event of auto-affection—that it realizes in itself the first condition of the experience of the world and the effectiveness of our access to things" (41). Henry sees auto-affection in Maine de Biran's notion of the ego—the self given to itself in the interiority of radical immanence. The ego must have some reality, must have a body, Maine de Biran argues, for it to truly exist and have the ontological foundation that he has been describing. Because Maine de Biran has identified the ego with its feeling itself, he argues that the being of the ego is defined by movement rather than thinking. Henry thus writes that "the ego is a power, the *cogito* does not mean an 'I think' but an 'I can'" (53). The being of the ego is thus power, force, movement, and feeling.

As a result, Henry highlights three things about the immediate relation of a self to itself: 1) movement is known by itself, i.e., there is no distance between ourselves and our actions; 2) movement is in our possession, i.e., we are ourselves the power that acts in the world; and 3) movement is not an intermediary or instrument, i.e., our movements take place immediately, spontaneously, and without recourse to representational distance (58-60). The ego directly feels itself and directly acts in the world. What Henry finds in Maine de Biran, in keeping with *Essence*, is that the muscular actions associated with movement are not sensations but are

[151] Quoting Maine de Biran, *Essai sur les fondements de la psychologie*, 115. Emphasis Henry's.

feelings. He writes that Maine de Biran's "entire philosophy consists precisely in the affirmation that the feeling of action does not result from a sensation, that action is known in itself insofar as it pertains to the sphere of subjectivity" (70). In Henry's language, the ego is not ecstatic but is auto-affection.

In describing our immediate knowledge of our body, Henry insists that this is not a knowledge like other forms of knowledge—in which the knower and known are separated—the knowledge of movement "is known to us immediately and … is less a knowledge of our body than the phenomenological being of this body itself" (71). That our subjectivity can understand the world must mean that it is a body in the world, and that the world can be known by the body. On their ultimate relation, Henry writes that "the knowledge of the world by the body and the original knowledge of the body by itself are, however, not two different knowledges because the second is rather the very substance of the first" (93-94). On their dissimilar modes, he states that "the body is present to us in the absolute immanence of subjectivity, the world in the element of transcendent being" (94). However, for the very reason of its founding nature, Henry describes the body's knowing as a "power of knowledge" as opposed to an "actual knowledge," that is, that it is the ontological possibility of all forms of knowledge (94). Clearly a new understanding of the body and subjectivity is being developed here. Henry is critical of the traditional philosophical understanding of these, namely the empirical conception in which subjectivity is based on spatio-temporal individuation (102). He argues instead that individuality must be "encountered on the level of absolute subjectivity, … [as] a *transcendental individuality*" (103). It is the immediate power of movement, and the subjective feeling of this, that is the principle of individuality.

Henry seeks a foundation for a phenomenological ontology that would answer three questions: 1) "why does the being of our body split into an originally subjective being and a transcendent being which manifests itself to us in the truth of the world"; 2) "why do these two bodies, nevertheless, constitute but one"; and 3) "why do these two phenomena take on the characteristic of being mine" (115)? The answer to these questions lies not in a distinction between two things, but between two modes of one single thing. "The difference between the original being of this power and the organ which seems to be its instrument is in no way situated on an ontic level, it is not a difference between something and something else, it is an ontological difference, *not a difference in individuality, but in the manner of being*" (116). Thus, there is not two bodies as two things—which would be an ontic dualism—but two bodies as two modes of appearing of the one body—which is an ontological dualism.

The ontological dualism that is at the essence of our being, one that precisely excludes ontic dualism, is a prerequisite for our understanding and experience of the world. The transcendental, subjective body—above described as our power—is a revelation; the transcendent body—above described as our organs—is a manifestation. However, if we intuitively feel or know that both of these bodies are mine, is there, Henry wonders, a unifying foundation for them? His answer is a defiant no, as phenomenology is not about appearances, such that there would be behind them a real being; rather, "phenomenology shows us that *being is its own revelation*" (119). Since we are presented with two phenomena, Henry must find their unity in one or the other.

His answer is to say that the transcendent body, which is that of the organ, is based upon the subjective body. He writes that "*the unity and the belonging to the ego of the transcendent body are constituted on the foundation of the original being of the subjective body, on the*

foundation of its unity and its belonging to the ego" (120-21). Two bodies thus appear as phenomena in the world as distinct modes of appearing, with the absolute body constituting the transcendent body and the source of its union with it. To our original body is bound the organic body, a mass that yields to the effort applied by the original body. The unity between these two bodies is so strong that, Henry argues, both evade phenomenological reduction. Because the organic body is inseparable from the subjective body, and especially the foundation it provides, it is irreducible. However, the original being of the subjective body cannot subsist on its own, but only on the condition of its unity with the transcendent being of the organic body. This mutual irreducibility does not mean that the two bodies are symmetrical, however. Though inseparable, the foundation of the unity and "ontological dignity" remains with the subjective body and it alone (127). Beyond just an understanding of the constitution of the organic body, Henry endeavours to also understand "the constitution of our *represented* and *objective* body" (128).

This third body, which is the represented or objective body, arrives from a different manner of knowing the transcendent body. So far I have shown how Henry understands the organic body as an immediate and interior knowledge. However, this is only one mode of knowledge. Henry draws on Maine de Biran's distinction between immediate and secondary modes of knowledge (128).[152] Immediate knowledge is what we have already discussed above, where we know our body directly via an immediate internal experience. Secondary knowledge is to know the body from without; it is to know the body as an object, as an external representation. It is the former knowledge which is more primary than the latter. Nevertheless, Henry argues that

[152] Henry quotes from Maine de Biran, *Essai sur les fondements de la psychologie*, 215-16: "Hence, independently of the external knowledge of the form and the figure of the parts of our body, as an object relative to the sense of touch and sight, there is an internal apperception of the presence or the consistency of this body of ours, totally relative to a special muscular sense which cannot act and be known except *from within*, without its being able to be represented *from without*."

"all classical theories"—referring to Cartesianism generally, but here also to Condillac—have no knowledge of the immediate body and understand the objective body as the only body (128).

The three bodies, which are three distinct phenomena, are 1) the original being of the subjective body, 2) the organic body, and 3) the objective body. Henry contends that the false problem of the union of the body and the soul results from the philosophical tradition having understood the objective body as the only body.[153] What he has been trying to show is that the objective body is founded on a prior experience and knowledge of the subjective body (e.g., the eye based on seeing). According to Henry, "the life of the objective body is not absolute life but a *representation thereof* and, consequently, we must recognize that there is not an absolute identity between our objective body and our original body, but that there exists between them a true duality" (133). The being of the objective body is a representative identity which is based on the real identity of the being of the subjective body. Henry reaffirms here that although there is a genuine duality here, it is not an ontic dualism, but an ontological one.

Henry wraps up *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body* with a conclusion on the problem of the incarnation, which presents readers with an initial foray into Christian topics such as flesh, spirit, sin, and salvation, and so naturally provides a helpful segue for us from his philosophical foundation to his theological trilogy. As we will see, his reading of Christianity tends to be quite singular; this narrow understanding of what is in fact a diverse and wide-ranging collection of traditions is problematic. Henry states that the absolute body is situated in the world, and therefore in relation with it, but precisely because of its not being in the world: "our body can be in the world only on condition of being nothing of the world" (191).[154] Steering

[153] "The objective body which is the object of an external perception and which can become the theme of scientific research is the only body which philosophical tradition knows" (132).

[154] Although he does not cite it here, nor in the rest of the conclusion, the echoes from the Gospel of John are clear. In John 15:19 we read Jesus telling his disciples, "you do not belong to the world," and in John 17:16 we read Jesus

clear of both crass materialism and airy idealism, Henry finds a place for absolute subjectivity within the sphere of immanence. Henry mentions the battle of flesh and spirit in the Christian tradition, with the body weighing down the spirit, and thus the person, from living a divine life (204). Here too he points out the connection between sin and flesh and body, which he sees as being equated in Christianity. When it comes to the "phenomenon of incarnation," he avers that problematic results have arisen because only the objective body has been considered (205). Henry writes that "it is certain that tradition establishes a relationship between the corporeity and the finitude of human nature," where, taken to the extreme in Christianity, "the body receives the meaning of being sin" (206). This schema leads the Christian to want to overcome the body in order to achieve salvation, which is seen as true life, "a life of the 'spirit'" (206).

Henry instead argues that the body that Christianity really puts forward, which he states is synonymous with flesh, is neither the objective nor organic body, the two forms of the transcendent body. Rather, this body "*designates nothing other than a determined mode of human existence*" (206). Christianity thus truly understands the body as an intentionality and not as a physical or objective thing. This intentionality "is offered to us as a possible determination among an infinity of other existential determinations corresponding to different types" (207). All these intentionalities occur in the existential view of the body; viewed ontologically, they all cohere as possibilities within the absolute body. Henry avers that, when it comes to the Christian notion of the body, we must be careful to keep these two understandings of the body separate.

There is the definite and historical mode of existence which, within the religious consciousness, is the sinful existence of "the 'body'" (207). This "particular and contingent form" is what Christianity calls "the body or the flesh" (207). Sinful existence is one of the

praying to the Father, "they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world" (NRSV). Henry will pick up on these verses explicitly in his theological trilogy. I point them out now to indicate that the Johannine influence in Henry's trilogy seems to be present in an underlying way from the beginning of his thinking.

infinite possibilities of existence, and is therefore not a necessary mode of existence, and was not determined by the absolute body. Henry writes that sin "*is a purely existential meaning which Christian anthropology confers on the word 'body' when it makes it designate a state close to sin or capable of leading thereto. The body thus understood in no way designates an ontological reality; it is neither the objective body, nor the organic body, nor the absolute body as such*" (207). Sin, then, in Henry's reading of the Christian tradition, has no ontological effects on reality; instead, sin is only an existential a mode of being, an intentionality.

The existential mode of being that is labelled sin, although labelled body and flesh in Christianity, is distinct from the ontological bodies that Henry has laid out: absolute, organic, and objective (207). However, it presupposes them and requires them in order to attain to concrete, historical existence. The corollary to this position, which follows quite logically, is that salvation from sin is also an existential and not an ontological reality (207). To get the force of Henry's proposal on these issues, I quote him fully:

> Consequently, neither salvation nor sin can be related as such to ontological structures. The 'flesh' and the 'spirit' both designate in Christianity specific modes of existence which are, doubtless, opposed in a radical way with regard to the religious value conferred on them and with regard to the metaphysical meaning which they subsequently receive with regard to the destiny of man, but which are nonetheless two modes of existence, i.e. two intentionalities belonging as such to the same ontological sphere of absolute subjectivity. *From the ontological point of view, there is, therefore, no difference between 'flesh' and 'spirit'*. (207-08)

The view that Henry espouses here is quite radical, and it is critical for interpreting his later Christian trilogy. Sin and salvation, 'flesh' and 'spirit' are intentionalities, and do not affect or relate to the absolute body, which is (related to) Life itself.

This view is opposed to the Greco-humanist view of the human being, namely, a dualism of body and spirit. Here, human nature is an "equilibrium" between "two opposed termini whose requirements it must equally satisfy" (208). The body in this view is only the objective body, and

so "it remains something contingent, perishable, inferior" (208). Henry avers that the Christian view questions "the very unity Western tradition" for one reason: that it conceives of the body "not as a determined and contingent mode of our historical existence but as an ontological reality constitutive of human nature" (208). Because Christianity views the body this way—and only because it does so—it is able to posit certain dogmatic claims such as the resurrection of the body.[155] This claim will always appear untenable unless we understand the body in question as the subjective body (208).[156]

But if "the Christian tradition presents us, regarding the body, with two radically opposed theses to that extent that it asserts, on the one hand, that the body is sin and, on the other, that it is called to the resurrection," is sin then promised divine glory? (209). The way through this aporia is again solved by the subjective body. For Henry, there is no difference between flesh and spirit, between sin and salvation on the ontological level. So, "the body is capable of being sin only if it is also capable of being resurrected. Sin or the resurrection, finitude or salvation arise only interior to the category of subjectivity" (209). The body is sinful only existentially, only as a mode of existing, and, similarly, the body is saved, but this too, it would seem, only as a manner of being, as an intentionality. As sinful, the body is an existential intentionality that concretizes the consciousness's turn from God (210).

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[155] "For it is only if our body is, in its original being, something subjective that the brief allusions made by dogma [*faites par la dogmatique*] with regard to its metaphysical destiny can be anything other than extravagant conceptions. Actually, they necessarily had to appear as extravagant in the eyes of the Greeks, such as the one which makes the resurrection of the body a dogma [*un dogme*]" (208). Henry does not cite it, but in this paragraph, he is clearly referring to Paul's discussion of the resurrection of the body in 1 Corinthians 15.

[156] Jean Leclercq—director of the Michel Henry archives—writes that for Henry, "Greek thought contributed precisely to a devaluing of the body, considering its reality and its future at the level of intelligible knowledge alone. In Christianity, however, according to Henry, each body receives its effective condition because it is first considered as a 'living Self', with its own powers, separate from any understanding based upon the duality of soul and body." Jean Leclercq, "The Search for a New Anthropological Paradigm: Michel Henry's Reflections on Incarnation", trans. Andrew Rubens, in *Embodiment: Phenomenological, Religious and Deconstructive Views on Living and Dying*, ed. Ramona Fotiade, David Jasper, and Olivier Salazar-Ferrer (New York: Routledge, 2016), 10.

Henry finds the correlation between sin and finitude unsatisfactory. That finitude is necessarily sin is "no longer sufficient" for the ontological analysis that he is carrying out (210). Over the next few pages, Henry lays out four different definitions for finitude: 1) to be subject to the determination of being-there in an original way, 2) to be subject to the determination of being-there in a derivative way, 3) to be related to a world, and 4) the finitude of a determined intentionality (211-215). The first two, he avers, apply only to the transcendent body, and thus not to "*the original being of our absolute body*" (216). The latter two, however, are existential understandings of finitude, and are therefore intentionalities of the absolute body. These existential modes seek determination in the transcendent or ontological sphere, a determination which "confers an absolute meaning" (216).

Based on these assertations, Henry concludes that "*the infinite power of the determination is finitude in the Christian sense*. The 'body' of Christian tradition essentially refers to such a finitude" (217). He makes clear in no uncertain terms that finitude is an existential mode of being, and not an ontological one: "*To the extent that it qualifies not a transcendent element … but a mode of existence, i.e. a determination of the life of absolute subjectivity … finitude has no ontological meaning but only an existential meaning*" (217). What the Christian tradition "designate[s] by the words 'body' and 'flesh'" is finitude and an existential mode of being, and further, for Henry, "it is this cult of the finite which is sin properly so-called" (217). Although finitude, and therefore sin in the Christian sense, is an "imperfection of life," this is only an existential imperfection; Life in an absolute sense remains unaffected (217). In Henry's reading, flesh, sin, spirit, and salvation in Christianity are all understood as existential modes of being related to the absolute body but are not part of and do not affect the absolute body as such.

Henry points out how the Christian understanding of the body differs from the understanding that begins with the Greeks and has continued to contemporary humanist traditions. Christianity, in his view, understands the body (synonymous with flesh) as an intentionality or mode of being, and the Greek tradition understands the body as the objective body. Without giving a citation, he points to Paul's interactions with the Corinthians on the resurrection of the body (1 Corinthians 15). He says that the dogmatic claims will only make sense if the body is taken to be subjective and not objective. However, these claims "necessarily had to appear as extravagant in the eyes of the Greeks, such as the one which makes the resurrection of the body a dogma. This is why the Corinthians started to sneer when St. Paul claimed not to reserve to the soul the privilege of this resurrection" (208).[157] Because the believers in Corinth understand the body as objective, they baulked at Paul's claims that it will be resurrected. They believed that only something like the immaterial soul can move on past death.

Henry continues: "Rather it is clear that if this original being of our body is something subjective, then, like the 'soul', it falls under the category of things which are liable to be revived and judged" (208-09). In Henry's view, the Corinthian Christians were in disbelief regarding Paul's claims about the resurrection of the body not because they disbelieved in resurrection, but because they had a different view of what would be resurrected. In their dualistic understanding of the human as composed of body and soul, they understood that the soul would ascend to the divine world in some sense, but that the body would be left behind. Henry makes the point that they should not have been confused or in disbelief, because the 'body' that Paul was talking about is, for all intents and purposes, analogous to how they understood 'soul'. According to

[157] Henry gives no citations here, but he is likely referring to 1 Cor. 15:12—"Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?"—and 1 Cor. 15:35-36—"But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?' Fool!"

Henry, then, the source of the problem is essentially linguistic, and therefore related to the terms of the debate (what we mean by body) rather than the debate itself (will a resurrection happen).

Is it really so simple, though? Has Henry actually satisfied the source of the Corinthians' doubt, by saying that what Paul, and Christianity as a whole, means by 'body' is what they know as 'soul'? Or is this the result of a modern, phenomenological reading onto the text? Earlier in 1 Corinthians Paul discusses how the wisdom of God is both "a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1:23). Although specifically addressing the crucifixion of Christ, it would seem that Paul intends his opinion to apply to the whole of Christ and the Christian message, and thus to his resurrection. If what God enacted in the resurrection of Christ is to be a genuine "foolishness" to the Greeks, in ways that circumscribes their wisdom (v. 22), I think that we must understand the impasse here as something more than a misunderstanding of what is meant by body, that is, that when Paul said body he really meant the subjective body, and thus that which is akin to soul. In any case, Henry needs to provide a better case for his understanding of "the category of things which are liable to be revived and judged" (209), and why this only applies to the 'soul' and subjective body. As it stands, Henry appears to remain Greek in his thinking and interpretation of Paul: that objective, material bodies will not be resurrected. However, Henry never cites Paul or any passages from 1 Corinthians 15 (the 'resurrection of the body' chapter), and so does not interact with Paul's discussion on the difference between the natural, material body that is sown and dies, and the supernatural, spiritual body that resurrects (1 Cor. 15:36-44).

Unfortunately, Henry only discusses resurrection in this text, and seemingly ignores it in his later Christian works. Interpreters are thus left to extrapolate further his beliefs on this crucial Christian teaching. Kevin Hart, for example, suggests that Henry is uninterested in the

resurrection because it is an event in the world.[158] He writes that Henry's "philosophy of Christianity is an eschatology that excludes the hope that is rooted in the Resurrection of Christ precisely because it is radically under-realized, and it is under-realized with respect to the future precisely because it is over-realized with respect to the immemorial past and the present."[159] I think that Henry has a realized eschatology, such that the resurrection of the body means to be in a proper relation with Life. The incarnation of Christ thus brings immediate salvation, since salvation is the perfect alignment of Life living itself, and thus of Life in the flesh and not body. A fuller explanation of this idea will come out as we work through Henry's theological works, to which we turn now.

Henry's Theological Trilogy

Henry's earliest works are clearly philosophical. Yet, we can also see his significant engagement with Meister Eckhart in *The Essence of Manifestation*, and his reflections on the Christian themes of flesh, body, sin, spirit, and salvation in the conclusion to *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*. His works for the next twenty years centre largely on art, politics, psychoanalysis, and culture. In 1988, though, Henry overtly shifts his writing toward more explicitly theological engagement. From 1988 to 2000 Henry presented papers at the International Conference on Hermeneutics in Rome that engaged with Christian concerns.[160] It

[158] Kevin Hart, '"Without World": Eschatology in Michel Henry', in *Phenomenology and Eschatology: Not Yet in the Now*, ed. John Panteleimon Manoussakis and Neal DeRoo (London: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 177.

[159] Hart, '"Without World"', 192. In a paper on Michel Henry's eschatology in the same edited collection at Hart's, Jeffrey Hanson does not even use the word resurrection once, perhaps pointing to its insignificance for Henry's soteriology and eschatology. Jeffrey Hanson, 'Phenomenology and Eschatology in Michel Henry', in *Phenomenology and Eschatology: Not Yet in the Now*, ed. John Panteleimon Manoussakis and Neal DeRoo (London: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 153–66.

[160] E.g., "Théodicée dans la perspective d'une phénoménologie radicale" (1988), "Acheminement vers la question de Dieu: Preuve de l'être ou éprouve de la vie" (1990), "La parole de Dieu: Une approche phénoménologique" (1992), and "Qu'est-ce qu'une revelation?" (1994).

was during this period, too, that his final monographs were written, and are the ones I engage with next: *I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity* (1996), *Incarnation: A Philosophy of Flesh* (2000), and *Words of Christ* (2002).

Although these three works form a trilogy, it is more of a circumstantial one, in that they are three books on Christianity. This is in distinction to Falque's trilogy, which follow the three days of the Easter weekend. However, Henry's books do hold together and follow one from the other. Working through each book of this trilogy in chronological order, I explicate the main themes of each text, and show how they are derived from his earlier works. His radical distinction between the two modes of appearing—Life and world—is further developed here as formulated in Christianity and biblical texts. Henry conceives of Christianity as a force and action, and not as thought or *logos*. This stance is a rebuttal of the claim of Gnosticism in his work, but also helps us understand how he reads scripture. As Leclercq writes, "Henry discounts the questions of the content and form of the Scriptures, as this would make them only a 'logos', a kind of almost psychologising reductionism, whereas the Scriptures are to be read as the saying of life."[161] Specific historical and hermeneutical questions are thus disregarded in how Henry reads and understands Christianity—both theologically and biblically—focussing instead on how Life is revealed.

His engagement with theologians is thus quite minimal: he largely draws from Tertullian and Irenaeus, and avoids contemporary theologians altogether, likely due to their modern and historicist mindset. When it comes to the Bible, Henry's use varies. In *I Am the Truth*, Henry relies almost completely on the Gospel of John for his understanding of Christ and Christianity; *Incarnation* is remarkably light on biblical references, but, while again using mostly John, he

[161] Leclercq, 'The Search for a New Anthropological Paradigm', 13.

does incorporate more citations from Paul's letters. The largest change comes in *Words of Christ*, where he almost completely avoids John and focusses on the Synoptic gospels. This broadening of Henry's analysis, to include the whole of the Gospels' understanding of Christ, provides a more fulsome account of Christ and the incarnation.[162] Importantly for our purposes, we will see how he applies his phenomenological analyses and ideas of flesh and body to the biblical accounts of the incarnation and to the words of Christ, and respond to the critiques of Docetism and Gnosticism in these formulations.

I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity

Published in 1996, *C'est Moi la vérité: Pour une philosophie du christianisme* is the first text in Henry's late theological trilogy and marks a distinct change in the focus of his thinking.[163] However, Henry makes clear that his approach is philosophical and not theological or religious. I will show that his thinking here is not disjointed from his earlier work but is rather the 'logical' direction that his thinking would take.[164] The very title for his text is revelatory of this continuity of thinking. Although translated in English as *I Am the Truth*, leading one to assume that the French would read *Je suis la vérité*, a more direct translation would render it as *It Is Me, the Truth*. Indeed, although many French translations of the Bible have "Je suis le chemin, la vérité,

[162] However, commenting on his use of biblical texts Gschwandtner writes that "it is not clear that their theological import or historical accuracy matter to him in any significant fashion. These issues are clearly not what is at stake in his discussion." Gschwandtner, 'Michel Henry: A God of Truth and Life', in *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press), 310 n7.

[163] Michel Henry, *C'est Moi la vérité: Pour une philosophie du christianisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1996); English translation Michel Henry, *I Am the Truth*: *Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003). Citations in this section will be done parenthetically from the English translation unless stated otherwise.

[164] John Behr writes that rather than a "theological turn" in his work, Henry "found in Christianity, especially as expressed by John, the paradigmatic structure of phenomenology that he had been investigating" from *Essence* to *Barbarism* on. John Behr, *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel: A Prologue to Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 274. See also Joseph Rivera, 'The Night of Living Flesh': "it was not until the mid-1990s that Henry made a decisive theological turn if only as a natural continuation in what was already a theologically informed trajectory" (217).

et la vie" for John 14:6, Henry modifies it to "C'est moi…" so as to "accentuate the self-givenness to itself of absolute Life in the dative/accusative case."[165] The emphasis that he places on a non-ecstatic and non-representational understanding of reality in his early writing is thus clearly still at work here.

In addition to the emphasis on a non-representational view of reality, Henry also addresses familiar themes, such as Life and world, affectivity and pathos, flesh and body, human words and divine words, and truth. When it comes to truth, Henry is clear from the outset of the book that he will not be concerning himself with truth as abstract and indifferent, or as falling under the schema of "'true' or false'," but with the "essential truth" that insures Christians their salvation (1). As part of this emphasis, he states that he is not concerned with the question of whether Christianity is true or not, but with the question of what it takes to be and offers as truth.[166] This claim is somewhat bold, but perhaps understandable under the purview of a certain Christian approach to the truth of Christianity.

He starts by saying that how we answer the question of the meaning of Christianity, including its content, comes from the texts in the New Testament; however, he then strongly claims that "*what the answer depends upon, the truth of Christianity, has precisely no relation whatsoever to the truth that arises from the analysis of texts or their historical study*" (3). Henry makes this claim for two reasons: 1) that an historical analysis of the events in these texts will necessarily fail, in that the majority of events that have occurred and people that have existed

[165] Michelle Rebidoux, *The Philosophy of Michel Henry (1922-2002): A French Christian Phenomenology of Life* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012), 164 n39. Interestingly, the "La Segond 21" translation of the Bible from 2007 renders this verse as "C'est moi qui suis le chemin, la vérité et la vie." The Greek for this verse, as well as the other "I am" statements in John, is *ego eimi* (Ἐγώ εἰμι), which is most often translated as "I am" in English.

[166] "What is generally (but polemically) referred to as Henry's hyper-transcendentalism also means that he does not set out to look at Christianity as a historical truth, which is not something he denies but whose study he leaves to the so-called 'historical' sciences, including the sciences of language. According to him, to take this direction would be to regionalise Christianity, to reduce it down to an intentional phenomenology, and, of course, to indefinitely postpone the act of faith in life." Leclercq, 'The Search for a New Anthropological Paradigm', 14.

have been passed over by history, and thus escape its criterion of truth; and 2) that a criticism of the texts themselves, to which historical analysis must go since it cannot verify the events or people, also fails, as the closer it gets to finding the place for the text, that is, "its date, its dependence on a context that is social, economic, ideological, and religious," and thus the "truer" it is, the more detached the text is from anything other than that specific place (5).

So, what is the truth of Christianity according to Henry? He is adamant that it is not that there was an historical Jewish man wandering, preaching, and healing, or that this man claimed to be the Messiah and God. He argues instead that "the truth of Christianity is that the One who called himself the Messiah was truly that Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, born before Abraham and before time, the bearer in himself of Eternal Life" (6). Who Christ is, and thus the truth of Christianity, is not dependent on the truth according to history, which necessarily fails; Christ is true regardless of this truth. But the truth of historical truth, and of texts *tout court*, is, for Henry, not truth at all, but a lie.[167] Language is powerless to create or even postulate a reality outside of itself. Since language is referential, it points to and signifies things, but it is not that thing itself. Henry's conclusion is that "*it is not the corpus of New Testament texts that can offer us access to the Truth, to that absolute Truth of which the corpus speaks. On the contrary, it is Truth and Truth alone that can offer us access to itself and by the same token to that corpus, allowing us to understand the text in which Truth is deposited and to recognize it there*" (9).[168]

This statement contains several crucial points for unpacking Henry's understanding of truth, Christ, and scripture. First, there is a strong distinction between the truth of the world and

[167] "Lying is not one possibility of language alongside another with which it might be contrasted—speaking the truth for example. … Language, as long as there is nothing else but language, can only be lying" (8).

[168] Henry's thinking here can already be seen in his 1992 essay "Speech and Religion: The Word of God" in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate* that I touched on in Chapter 1, and is something he addresses in detail in Chapter 12 of this current text. *Words of Christ* is also completely focussed on this idea.

Truth as such.[169] This contrast maps on to the schema that he put forth in his earlier texts, which separates world and Life—a separation based on the difference between ecstatic and non-ecstatic modes of appearing. What the world considers as truth is always representational, pointing away from itself. Truth, for Henry, which is Christ, is reality itself. Scripture cannot on its own give access to Truth, the Truth that is Christ. Instead, it is Truth itself that enlightens the readers of scripture to see Truth there, and scripture is only a dead letter without it. Only Truth can be its own witness to itself.

Elaborating further the nature of truth, Henry says that the truth of the world is two things: what is shown, and self-showing (13). Since what is seen depends on the possibility of its being seen, what is shown is true in a secondary or derivative sense. The essence of truth, Henry writes, is this primary act of "apparition, manifestation, revelation" (13). And, if what is revealed in a text, like the New Testament, points to a pre-existing revelation, it behooves us to ascertain what this revelation is. Since showing relates to truth, then only that which shows itself is truth. Further, only that which shows itself truly exists. Being and truth are thus equivalent, a view that "dominates the development of Western thought" (14). What also occurs in this understanding of truth, is that phenomena are projections or representations that must be placed before us in order to be seen by us. This "placing before" is, especially as theorized from Kant onward, an act of consciousness, where consciousness is reduced to a relation to these things. Henry thus writes that "the 'world's truth' is nothing other than this: a self-production of 'outsideness' as the horizon of visibility in and through which every thing can become visible and thus become a 'phenomenon' for us" (17). The truth of the world, rather than granting Being rescinds it, rather than bringing things to light ultimately annihilates and destroys them.

[169] When lower-case, "truth" refers to the truth of the world or the general idea of truth; when upper-case, "Truth" refers to absolute Truth or Christ (i.e., truth in Life's mode of appearing).

Needless to say, since the truth of the world by definition destroys what it shows forth, Henry feels impelled to find another understanding of truth. Drawing on Paul's statement that "the form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor. 7:31), he argues that Christianity's Truth is the only form of truth, the form of truth that does not pass away. The definitive separation between these two forms of truth is that the world's truth places the thing outside itself, and thus separates truth itself and the thing; Christian Truth, however, does not have this separation. Henry writes that in Christianity's Truth, "there is no separation between the seeing and what is seen, between the light and what it illuminates" (24). The truth and what makes it true are identical.

Put into phenomenological terms, the Truth of Christianity unites phenomena and phenomenality, that is, what appears and how they appear. In *Essence* we saw how Henry was concerned with phenomenality or manifestation itself. He concluded that the essence of manifestation was the manifestation of the essence, was the manifestation of itself as the essence. "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*" (25). In Christianity's Truth, as Henry reads it, there is no separation between revelation and what is revealed, for what is revealed is revelation itself. Christianity is the "theory of this givenness of God's self-revelation shared with man" (25).

Henry is faced with some crucial questions at this point. If Christianity's Truth is diametrically opposed and irreducible to the world's truth, and as such can never appear in the world, how can human beings know it? Further, if Christ is the revelation of God, how is it possible that we can ever know or have access to Christ? Henry suggests that there is but one

place where this Truth can be known: in Life. This is because "*Life is nothing other than that which reveals itself*—not something that might have an added property of self-revealing, but *the very fact of self-revealing, self-revelation as such*" (27). The corollary that Henry draws from this, which he calls "the first fundamental equation of Christianity," is that "God is Life" (27); we cannot ascertain this theoretically via consciousness, but only 'know' it via Life itself.

Although there are biblical passages that define God as or in relation to Being, Henry says that these formulations cannot adequately apply to God, as Being is a human word relating to the appearance of things in the world's notion of truth. He lists as examples Exodus 3:14, "I am who I am,"[170] and Revelation 1:8, "I am the Alpha and the Omega … He who is, who was, and who will come, the Almighty" (28). But the word and concept of Being means nothing to the Christian; it is only Life that carries meaning and is useful for understanding God. He cites Revelation 1:17, "I am the living one," 1 Timothy 3:15, "the living God," and Luke 24:5, "He who is living," as support for this equation of God and Life (28). So, Life both reveals and is that which is revealed, but this self-revelation of Life is only possible to the extent that it has no relation with the world. He states boldly that "Life is possible only because its own mode of revelation ignores the world and its 'outside.' *Living is not possible in the world*" (29-30). Life and Truth, therefore, only exist outside the world and its mode of appearing.

When it comes to the relation between Life and reality, Henry performs another inversion. It is not reality that is primary, with life occurring in it, but Life that is first, containing reality inside itself. For this reason, he avers that philosophers like Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche have misunderstood Christianity in their critiques of it. If reality is in Life, and thus in God, and not in the world, the flight of Christians from the world is a movement towards and not away

[170] In the Septuagint "I am" is *ego eimi* (Ἐγώ εἰμι), as in the "I am" statements in John. Henry's critique of these "Being" statements should be seen as connected to his preference for *C'est Moi* over *Je suis* in the title of this book.

from reality (30). Life, Henry argues, refers to the more fundamental essence Living, "whose specific phenomenality is the flesh of a pathos, pure affective material" (30). All reality takes place within this affective substance. In Christianity, since God is love, love is "the self-revelation of God understood in its *pathētik* phenomenological essence, specifically, the self-enjoyment of absolute Life" (31).[171]

Having distinguished between two forms of truth, Henry goes on to disambiguate the terms life and Life. Similar to the distinction between the two types of truth, he claims that in Christianity Life takes on an original and radical phenomenological meaning. The Christian understanding of Life "differs totally from what biology studies" (34). The distinction is "between, on the one hand, the phenomenological matter of which Life is made as self-revelation, as original truth, and, on the other hand, the nonphenomenological matter of the elements constitutive of chemical or specifically biological properties" (34). Instead of taking the position that there are thus two forms of life that, though different, could exist side-by-each, Henry takes a more radical stance: "*there is only one Life*," and the sciences have directed us further away from knowing it, not closer (36).

The Truth of Life—terms which are equated for Henry—is not reducible to the world's understanding of truth or life. Henry thus claims that in the world "*we see living beings but never their life*" (40). The world is incapable of showing or revealing Life to us; Life can never be fully intuited or perceived. Therefore, one of the main aims of this text is to reflect on the "dissimulation of the absolute phenomenological Life that is the sole real life" (42). We never see Life in the world, Henry maintains, as a result of the substitution of the external appearance of every living being for the self-revelation of (their) life (42). This substitution is "one of the

[171] Susan Emanuel translates the French "*pathétique*" as "*pathētik*" because of how the contemporary English understanding of "pathetic" has "reversed the meaning of the root." See her note in Henry, *I Am the Truth,* ix.

most enduring traits of Western thought" (45). To the extent that Christianity's Truth has been reduced to the world's truth, so too has Life been reduced to living beings. At the root of Western thought's "diverse ways of despising life" there lies "the incapacity to construct a phenomenology of life" (50). Only Christianity, Henry avers, has (or is) such a phenomenology.

Christianity's "radical phenomenology" says that Life is constitutive both of God and of human beings (50). But Life and God share the same essence, they are the same. From these points, Henry claims that "the relation of Life to the living is the central thesis of Christianity" (51). This is a relation which takes place within Godself and generates (from Life's view) or births (from the livings' view) livings from Life. Life's self-generation leads to the First Living, which is Christ, the firstborn Son; what engenders the First Living is Absolute Life, or the Father. In this processual relation there is generated "transcendental man," which are called the "Sons of God" (51-52). As with Truth and Life, and his inversion of the concepts as normally understood, Henry is concerned now not with fathers, sons, and birth in a biological sense, but with the Father, Sons, and transcendental birth, that is, a generation of livings from Life.

At the start of Chapter 4—"The Self-Generation of Life as Generation of the First Living"—Henry makes some claims that can be interpreted as being Gnostic. Pertaining to what could be described as a special and esoteric knowledge, Henry writes that

> Without rigorous knowledge of what Christianity takes as life, such a teaching [the teaching of Christianity] is reduced to a tissue of enigmatic propositions barely heard, and only by "believers," those who make such assertions without understanding them. On the other hand, for someone who penetrates the interior essence of Life, the enigmatic content of Christianity is suddenly illuminated in a light of such intensity that anyone perceiving it in this light finds himself profoundly unsettled. (53)

That Christianity first needs "rigorous knowledge," such that only one (of few?) who "penetrates" it will be "illuminated," seems on the surface to smack of Gnosticism. Christianity is of course enigmatic, scandalous, and mysterious in nature, and both Christ and Paul talk about

its difficulties. Henry's language seems to play these up in a way that these enigmas can only be understood by those that are initiated into their secrets, giving fodder to his critics. However, as I have already been pointing out, Henry's aim is anti-Gnostic, in that Christianity is not about thinking at all—which is in the world's truth—but is Life.

Returning to the distinction between the meanings of both life and truth, it was necessary for Henry to have laid these out so that we can properly interpret scripture. Christianity teaches that there is one Life and one God, and that these are identical. Here he quotes Ephesians 4:6, that there is "One God and Father of us all, who is over all and through all and in all" (54). Life, and thus God, is not static and unchanging, but is "an active essence, … the power of engendering that is immanent in anything that lives and unceasingly gives it life" (54). Henry is unequivocal that the God of Christianity cannot be thought, as thinking and proofs fall under the rubric of the representational and objectivizing truth of the world. Human beings can know God only because they have access to God in and through their relation to God. Henry writes that "the living comes forth in Life by depending on the very coming forth of Life in itself, by identifying itself with it—with the self-revelation of Life itself that is identical with the Revelation of God" (55). Human beings, or livings, can enter into relationship with God as they come forth from God. Henry, following the critique of onto-theology laid out by Heidegger, avers that the concept of Being cannot be used when talking about Life. "Life 'is' not" he writes. "Rather, it occurs and does not cease occurring" (55). Therefore, Life is in the endless and continual process of self-engendering; this is the essence of Life, and therefore the essence of God.

Life is also defined by the experience and enjoyment of itself. That is, Life's continual coming into itself is also its continual enjoyment of itself in coming into itself. Henry writes that this experiencing of self is "the first form of any conceivable phenomenality" (56). Feeling

oneself is both the origin of phenomenality, but also the way in which phenomenality is phenomenalized "as pathos and in the affective flesh of pathos" (56). In this self-experiencing and self-enjoyment that occurs in the affective flesh, there is no gap between experience and what is experienced. The phenomenological process wherein Life self-generates produces Life as, simultaneously, revelation (form) and revealed (content). This process is singular and is "a singular Self that embraces itself, affects itself, experiences itself and enjoys itself, in such a way that this embrace of itself in which this Self embraces itself is no different from the embrace in which life grasps itself, possesses itself, being simply the mode in which it does so" (57). It is the "Self" which is Christ, or, in Henry's terms, the "First Living."

In the ongoing self-generation of Life there are two main terms: Absolute Life, which is the Father, and the First Living, which is the firstborn Son, Christ. These two are integrally connected in the process: "No Life without a Living. Not a Living without Life" (60). The Father is the procession which "eternally engenders the Son within himself," and the Son is engendered by the Father as the First Living, in which "the Father experiences himself" (57). Since the Son is eternally generated, He is present with the Father from the beginning, and indeed as the beginning; they are "consubstantial" (75). Henry is clear that the Son as the First Living is not first in a chronological sense, but principally as the One who makes Son-ship possible, the "Arch-Son" who comes to be in the process of the Father's self-generation (58). This "Arch-Son" is the "Unique Son as the Word," since there is only one Life eternally engendering itself (58). Henry refers to this process of the self-generation of Life, as well as the Arch-Son and his Arch-birth, as transcendental to make salient that they do not occur, in any sense, in the world.

Henry again returns to the content of Christianity, which he avers is not reducible to the historical existence of Christ and his story (60). Rather, "Christianity consists in the network of

transcendental (therefore acosmic and invisible) relationships," of which Henry describes four: 1) between absolute Life and the First Living, 2) between absolute Life and all livings, 3) between the Son and sons, and 4) between all sons (61). It is this first relationship, between the Father and the Son, which, Henry believes, is what Christ thinks is the "*only thing that matters*" (62). This Father-Son relationship, wherein the Son is from the beginning co-eternal with the Father in the Father's self-generation, such that the Son can equate himself with the Father, is described most clearly in the Gospel of John. Henry describes this relationship as one of "reciprocal interiority, since the Son is revealed only in the Father's self-revelation, while the Father's self-revelation takes place only in, and as, the revelation of the Son" (67). We turn now to Henry's pointed analysis of a phenomenology of Christ.

Turning specifically to the Prologue of the Gospel of John, Henry homes in on John's high, and radical, Christology. The Prologue talks of the "One who is originally engendered in Life inasmuch as it engenders itself, namely, the Arch-Son whom he [John] calls the Word—Logos, or 'Revelation'" (78). Commenting on the first two verses of John 1, Henry avers that Christ as the First Living is engendered by Life and does not move outside of Life, and therefore the Word is of the same essence as Life, thus showing their "reciprocal phenomenological interiority" (78). By placing a son—here, the Son—at the beginning, John "explodes the very concept of birth … [and] the concept of son," once again revealing the different notion of Truth and Life in Christianity (79). In human relations, a father is exterior to his son and a son is exterior to his father; in Life, however, Life and living are "one within the other, the Father within the Son, and the Son within the Father" (79). But John also claims that Christ came into the world, for the purpose of the salvation of humankind.

Christ's coming into the world reveals to humankind his Father, who is also the Father of all human beings. Henry writes that "God's Revelation, which is the condition for the salvation of men, must be Christ incarnate, made flesh" (81). He questions at this point what the incarnation really is, such that Christ would be more than just a human being, and how one would be able to know that he is Christ. He opines that John 1:14 shows that Christ is not a human being, as his "glory" is synonymous with Truth and revelation as such, which occur only interior to Life. Looking at 1 John 1:1-2, Henry claims that it is not through Christ's appearance as a human being that humanity connects with Life and the Word, but that what is said to be revealed by this man is precisely Life manifest in and through itself (81-83). Henry points to John the Baptist's inability to know Christ until God had told him so (John 1:31, 33) as evidence that Christ cannot be known from appearing as a human being. He thus concludes that it is not humanity or the truth of the world that reveals Christ, but that "only God's revelation can reveal the Word, which is, moreover, nothing other than God's self-revelation" (83).

The question remains, then, how can Christ be known? It comes down to a matter of two different phenomenologies. There is, on the one hand, "the one of Life and its self-revelation in the Word of Life (the Johannine Logos)," and, on the other, "the one that finds its essence in the light of the world, in the ek-stasy of 'outside' (the Greek *logos*)" (87). Phenomenology, traditionally understood, is about bringing things to light, thus showing them as true in the world. What John writes, as Henry describes it, is that the Light needed to show the Truth of Christ cannot appear in this world. Henry cites John 1:4-5 and 9 as support for Christ's alternate phenomenology: "In him was Life, and that Life was the light of the men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. … The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world" (86-87). He argues that the light of the world is illusory because

Christ is the true Light, and this is identified by the light of the world being turned to darkness when the true Light enters it.

Henry's argument here means that for Christ to appear as Jesus, he can no longer appear as Christ. He writes that "for Christ to appear in the light of the world as this man Jesus, simply in the form of a man whom others recognize as a man and nothing more, *it is absolutely necessary that he be deprived of his divine condition*, of his own revelation in order to become nothing other than this objective and worldly appearance as a man" (87). Since Christ cannot appear in the world, his claims that he is more than a man are met with incredulity, and accusations of blasphemy. We only have access to Christ and can only know him in Life and Truth, which is the mode of phenomenology that is appropriate to him. It is thus not the body of Christ, the objective man Jesus, but rather the words of Christ that reveal him. Pointing out that Christ only says what the Father has told him (John 7:16; 8:28; 12:49-50), Henry contends that "his speech, the speech of the Word, identical with the Word, is none other than the speech of God—his self-revelation, accomplishing itself in this Word and its guise" (90).[172] Thus it is only by his words that Christ reveals himself to the world, words which are nothing other than the self-revelation of God.

With these two opposing phenomenologies Christianity is left with a problem: it says that Christ came into the world to save human beings, yet human beings cannot see Christ as he cannot reveal himself according to the world's light and truth. The solution to this aporia, Henry avers, is that Christianity believes that human beings are Sons of God already, and so can know Christ on this basis. That is, human beings can know Christ on the condition that they cease to understand themselves as beings according to the truth of the world (93). Indeed, Henry states

[172] We do well to remember the words "and its guise" when we address the claims of Docetism in Henry's thought. Immediately after this quote, Henry also writes that "Christ reveals himself, not as a man whom nothing differentiates from another man" (90).

that "the central affirmation of Christianity regarding man is that he is the son of God" (94). In doing so, it also affirms that human beings are not intra-worldly beings, are not essentially Being-in-the-world, either naturally or transcendentally (96). Rather, everything that can be said about Christ is to be equally applied to human beings as Sons of God.

Henry turns now to an explicit interaction with the doctrine of Christ's two natures. He argues that when attempts are made to unite the two contradictory natures, two problematic things are presupposed: "on the one hand, that there is a preexisting nature of man that occurs as a co-constitutive element in Christ's nature—which is, on the other hand, conjointly explained by his divine origin" (99). They are problematic, he argues, because Christ did not think he was a human being, both in how he talked about himself and with others, and, more importantly, because there was nothing like a human nature present when Christ was engendered (99). What is further problematic is that the human nature that one typically understands in Christological discussions is the very one that Christianity rejects: a human being as a worldly being. Therefore for Christ, as much as for human beings, there is no external "autonomous human nature" or "an essence of *humanitas*;" both have their complete essence in Life (100). Henry contends that we cannot understand Christ on these (faulty and anti-Christian) notions of human nature, but that the human being must be understood based on the notion of Christ as the First Living.

The human being, for Henry, is not understood in the ways that sociology, anthropology, and biology do. Rather, understanding the human being based on Christ necessitates thinking according to the radical phenomenology of Life that Henry claims Christ reveals. This phenomenology shares a similar intuition to that of Christianity, namely, that "*Life has the same meaning for God, for Christ, and for man*" (101). To define the human being is to define it as having within itself the essence of divine Life, and nothing other. Quoting Jesus in John 17:14 as

support—"They are not of the world any more than I am"—Henry affirms a stance wherein both human beings and Christ share the same phenomenological flesh, and therefore the same mode of appearing. Carrying the implications of his ideas further, for God, Christ, and human beings to share the same essence means that human beings are not created and are not the image of God (103).[173] Although this thought certainly goes against generally accepted understandings of the teaching in Genesis 1:26-27, that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, Henry makes the claim because all human beings are Sons. As such, they are born not created, and cannot be images because images only exist in the world and not in Life.

If Life has the same meaning for God, Christ, and human beings, what, then, separates them? If they all share the same essence, are they not essentially the same? The continuous self-generation of Life creates the singular, transcendental Self, such that each human being is also this Self. He suggests that if we follow Meister Eckhart and Christianity in calling "Life God," then we can say both that "God engenders himself as me" and "God engenders me as himself" (104-05).[174] To differentiate God from the human being, Henry makes a distinction between a strong and weak concept of self-affection. Strong self-affection, that belonging to God, is defined by being the content of its affection (e.g., joy, suffering), but more importantly by creating this content. The weak concept of self-affection, that which defines the human being, is similarly defined by being the content of its own affection, but by not having created this content (106-07).

[173] "The thesis that God created man in his image therefore signifies two things: first, that man was in fact *not* created—and this is why he is not a Being-of-the-world; and, second, that 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 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" (103).

[174] Quoting Maître Eckhart, *Traités et sermons*, trad. M. de Gandillac (Paris: Aubier, 1942), 146. These lines come from Eckhart's German Sermon 6.

Henry also makes a distinction between human beings and Christ, or, Sons and the Arch-Son, which helps explain how God and human beings are related. All human beings are Sons of God, but they are so only as "Sons within the Son" (109). Livings and self-affection are not possible outside of Life, and Christ, as the Arch-Son, is this Life. No Son can exist outside of the Arch-Son; the Arch-Son thus precedes all Sons not in an anterior or chronological sense, but in an ontological sense, in that the Arch-Son is the transcendental condition for all Sons existing. Henry points here to John 8:58—"Before Abraham was, I am"—and Romans 8:29—Jesus is "the firstborn among many brothers." Thus, although the Father, the Son, and all human beings (Sons) share the same essence, Henry differentiates them based on their relations to one another, and principally on the foundational or creational aspects of the Father and the Son.

Christ is more than just the intermediary between God and human beings; he is the intermediary between "each me and itself, the relation to self that allows each 'me' to be a me" (116). What allows each person to be a person—a transcendental ego—is the self-affection that is Life. This very relation is Christ, and more specifically, is the phenomenological flesh. Henry argues that each "me" is itself in this flesh, but that it does not give its flesh to itself; it is not its flesh. "My flesh, my living flesh, is Christ's," he writes (116). Because Christ is the gate through which all the sheep pass (John 10:9), every interaction between people must go through Christ, and so, Henry contends, whatever human beings to do each other, whether good or ill, they literally do to Christ (Matt. 25:40) (116-17).

It is vital to understand how Henry understands the human being in order to assess how he understands the incarnation and salvation. Human beings share the same essence as the Father and the Son, namely Life. Further, human beings are not created but are born, and are therefore Sons of God. In *I Am the Truth,* Henry differentiates between life and truth in the world and in

Christianity. Here he states baldly that "*the man of the world is merely an optical illusion. 'Man' does not exist*" (124). Since the true nature or essence of human beings is Life, that is, to be Sons of God, they are not identifiable as the empirical human being of the sciences that is seen in the world. This worldly conception of the human being is made from the standpoint of the world's truth and is thus false and illusory. He writes that "*natural man is ruled out from the very moment when his condition as Son is posited*" (129). According to its true nature, the human being does not appear in the world. Human beings can only be a Self in Christ and in Life.

The distinction that Henry makes between "natural man" (*l'homme naturel*) and "Son of God" (*Fils de Dieu*) or "Son within the Son" (*Fils dans le Fils*) plays a decisive role in how he understands sin and salvation in the Christian narrative. Being a Son of God is the essential nature of a human being. Its Self is given to itself, and it lives its life in Life. When the ego forgets this gifting, and instead takes itself to be the source and ground of itself, the worldly human being is created—Henry calls this the "*transcendental illusion of the ego*" (140). There are thus two mutually exclusive ways of being: on the one hand, there is the human being who is not of this world, who is "belonging-to-Life," and on the other hand, there is the human being who is of this world, and who is therefore defined as "belonging-to-the-world" (145). The forgetting of its true nature as Son is akin to sin, as it separates the living from Life and projects it out into the non-existence of the world.[175] However, "Christianity asserts the possibility that someone may surmount this radical Forgetting and rejoin the absolute Life of God" (151). Reuniting with Life is, for Henry, salvation.

[175] Gschwandtner writes that "Henry talks about sin as a forgetting of our divine sonship, our source in life, and as a denial of the divine Life that flows in us. … We 'sin' when we forget our original givenness of life as the source of our own life and instead become preoccupied with the 'things of the world' which are external to us and distract us from our affectivity and our flesh." Christina M. Gschwandtner, 'Michel Henry: A God of Truth and Life', 133.

To reunite with the absolute Life of God, "the ego/person lost in the world, preoccupied only with things and thinking of itself only in relation to things … must perceive, by contrast, its true condition, that of a living that does not draw its condition from itself" (152). This "allowing people to secure their salvation" is the salvation that Christianity offers (152). Henry avers that salvation, by virtue of being reunited with Life, means that the ego will not know death; this by definition cannot be attained by thought, consciousness, or reason, for these are all ecstatic modes of projection native to the world's truth (153). Salvation is only found in the immanent and non-ecstatic modality of Life. Salvation is achieved by carrying God within oneself, a claim that Henry makes via an unusual interpretation of 1 John 5:18, "Anyone born of God does not continue to sin" but "keeps him [God] safe" (161). To become a Son of God is thus to move to a state of inseparability from God; to reunite oneself with Life. Carrying God within oneself is also, Henry points out, "to believe that Jesus is the Christ and that the Christ is consubstantial with the Father," pointing to 1 John 4:2 and 5:1 for support (161).

What interests Henry more than the reunification of Sons of God with God is how they could have ever been separated in the first place. Since all livings are Sons, and all livings come to be only in Life and as a result of Life's self-generation, Life is already presupposed as an *a priori* necessary condition for there to be livings. Henry writes that "it is due to this absolute presupposition always included in him that the Son can and must regain the condition that is his" (164).[176] He describes the possibility of separation—though never a complete separation—from Life in context of the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Though a Son of God, the prodigal son has forgotten his condition. It is forgetfulness that is key for Henry: when a Son of God forgets his condition and turns towards the world, he comes to believe that he is self-

[176] Although Henry does elsewhere describe this reunification of Sons with God as only a possibility, as he discusses actions that lead either to salvation or perdition, his use of "must" here could lend itself to a view of universal salvation.

founding and autonomous (164). Forgetfulness can, however, be overcome by the transformation of life that is motivated by Life, a movement which Henry attributes to the Christian ethic (165).

This duplicity in appearing and forgetfulness might lead to a significant problem in Henry. As I have shown, Henry consistently affirms that flesh is reality and that body is an appearance, a guise, a detraction. Flesh is who a Son of God is in reality, and body is what a human being is when they are viewed without flesh or see themselves as self-founding. The transition from Son of God (flesh) to human being (body) is one tied into the notion of forgetting, which is sin for Henry. However, this transition did not and could not happen for Christ. The biblical account states, and the resultant theological views require, that Christ, as God, never forgot his condition, never sinned, and never took himself as a self-founding ego. For this reason, Christ has to remain flesh in Life and could not appear as body in the world. To the extent that he was visible in the world (appeared or showed himself in this mode), he would cease to be Christ. Henry certainly comments on people seeing Jesus, but he does not provide a sound philosophical or theological explanation for how this could happen (but, to the extent that it did happen, it would be only Jesus and not Christ that they were seeing). The only solution, as I see it, would be, not that Christ appeared on his own terms as Jesus (the human being) in the light of the world, but that the (sinful) perception of human beings caused him to be seen this way to them. That is, sinful humanity perceived Christ as Jesus because they saw him as a human being in the world's mode of appearing.

Henry argues that for human beings to achieve salvation in Christianity takes on the dimension of action. As we have seen, Henry points to the need to believe in Christ in order to achieve reunification with Life. Now, Henry shows that there is a move from word to action, where actions, specifically within the Christian ethic, are necessary for salvation. He points to

Christ's words in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father" (165). This movement from word to action shows that there is a necessary movement away from the world and its truth (language is representational and thus an ecstatic mode) to Life and Truth (Life is action) (166). But not all action is productive of salvation, as there are actions that lead to Life (works of mercy) and actions that lead to death (actions that are self-focussed). This separation exists because in the latter, the inward-turned and illusory self-founding ego is the actor, whereas in the former it is "the Arch-Son who acts in me" (169).

Although Christianity rejects words and the law in favour of deeds and love, it is the word and scripture—and the Word that gives them force—that carries the immense weight of revelation. So, Henry wonders, how is it that human language can contain the divine Word, and how is it that divine revelation can appear in these words? In Chapter 1 I touched briefly on how Henry was beginning to wrestle with this problem in his essay "Speech and Religion: The Word of God" in *Phenomenology and the 'Theological Turn.'* I showed how he describes human words as following the law of language, namely, as words that are significations. Divine words, on the other hand, do not signify and have no referent; there is no separation between sign and signified. Henry avers that "it is this other Word that allows us to understand Scriptural speech and, in addition, to understand that this speech is of divine origin" (217).

The human word is, unsurprisingly, connected to the world and its form of truth. These words appear, but their mode of appearance is to appear in the world. Both words (the sign) and what they point to (the signified) must appear in the world. But this making-seen of human language is representational and ecstatic, "only possible within the horizon of visibility of the 'outside'" (218). The space between words and what they point to reveals the unreality of human

words, that is, they are not the thing that they point to. What human words say, then, are empty, and human language as a whole is incapable of making exist that which it says (219). For this reason, Henry writes that there is a "functional indifference of this word toward everything it says" (223). Human words can talk about anything and everything, but in no case do they cause the things talked about to appear.

Divine words are almost the complete opposite of human words, sharing only their ability to manifest something. What divine words reveal, however, is nothing other than the divine Word—they manifest themselves without any separation. "Life's speech reveals Life and gives Life," Henry writes, therefore highlighting that in divine language the sign is the signified (220). Further, what the divine Word, which is Life, speaks, is nothing other than Life. Divine language is the self-generation of Life as Life, without any representation or separation. Unlike human words that are powerless to create what they name or predicate, divine language can and does create, and indeed is the very Life that it names. Human words are ultimately empty, whereas divine words are living and acting; the former are unreality, while the latter are reality.

With the yawning abyss, then, between these two languages, how is it that scripture, composed as it is of human words, can contain the Word? Henry is clear that "text, here Scriptural text, has never been the object of our study" (229). Scripture only points to objects that are illuminated in the world's truth and described by the world's words. It is only via an understanding of the Word of Life that the word of the world (and therefore scripture) can be understood (229). Henry is clear that it is not scripture that points out to human beings their true condition, but the fact that they are already Sons full of Life that reveals this to them. It is because human beings have forgotten their condition as Sons of God that scripture is needed to remind them of their true condition, and of the Life that is constantly at work self-generating

itself in and through them. And on the other hand, it is only because human beings are always already Sons that they can see the Truth of scripture.

What is relevant for the overall argument of my dissertation is how this distinction between the world's truth and Christianity's Truth correlates to body and flesh. The reality of action, action's Truth, is carried out by the invisible and living body, that is, the flesh; the body according to the world's truth is only the "empty shell" of real action (241). This distinction also necessarily applies to visible characteristics. Pointing to Christ's rejection of a natural genealogy, and Paul's assertion in Galatians 3:28 that in Christ there are no apparent distinctions, Henry writes that what individuals truly are as Sons of God is not what can be seen in the world (e.g., being born in a specific place and time, to specific parents, having a sexual determination, etc.) (248). Sons of God all have one Father and their characteristics all flow "from the divine and invisible essence of life" (248). Christianity is veritably a flight from the world and from the objective body, but only because it is a flight towards Life and the reality of the living body.

The living body is defined by Henry by its self-affection, which occurs via its "*pathētik* and living flesh" (252). It is this flesh that allows each Self to be a Self and to enter into Life. But the flesh of each Self is given to it and finds its existence in the flesh of Christ. Thus, an interaction between two Selves must be carried out through the flesh, and Christ is therefore the mediator between any and all interactions. The relation of a Self to itself and to other Selves occurs only in Life. What is essential to the Being of human beings, that is, what makes a Self a Self, is nothing that science talks about or assesses; indeed, in the world's truth a person is reduced to an automaton, Henry argues (266-67). Since the human being is not essentially material, flesh is not composed of anything measurable or material. In *Incarnation* Henry discusses flesh, body, and incarnation in much greater detail, which is where we turn now.

Incarnation: A Philosophy of Flesh

Henry continues his philosophical interaction with the theological themes of Christianity in his 2000 work *Incarnation: Une philosophie de la chair*.[177] This work should be seen as a development of his overall philosophy in two aspects. First, he continues to explicate his theory of a radical phenomenology of Life. While drawing on figures like Descartes, Husserl, and Heidegger, and the Western philosophical tradition more broadly, he inverts many long-standing assumptions about truth, vision, subjectivity, and thinking that are germane to these figures and fields. Second, in *Incarnation* he specifically tackles questions about flesh, incarnation, and salvation as they fit within his phenomenology of Life and Christianity. These are questions that he began to investigate in his conclusion to *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body* fifty years before *Incarnation*, and pick up from where he left off in *I Am the Truth*.

Henry divides *Incarnation* into three sections. The first, "The Reversal of Phenomenology," is an analysis of the key points of phenomenology, especially as seen in the work of Husserl and Heidegger, but also drawing on the thought of Descartes. He points out the insufficiencies and aporias of, and created by, their thinking, and posits a way of moving beyond them. This way is his phenomenology of Life, whose truth and revelation is opposed to that of the world. In the second section, "Phenomenology of Flesh," Henry puts forward his notion of flesh, as the self-affective material of the lived body. He thus builds on his previous distinction between the objective body and living body, and how the former is founded on the latter, which is the reality of the human being. Finally, in "Phenomenology of Incarnation: Salvation in the Christian Sense" Henry uses his analyses in the first two sections to guide his reflections on sin, salvation, and incarnation within Christianity.

[177] Michel Henry, *Incarnation: Une philosophie de la chair* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000); English translation Michel Henry, *Incarnation: A Philosophy of Flesh*, trans. Karl Hefty (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015). Citations in this section will be done parenthetically from the English translation unless stated otherwise.

In his introduction, Henry states that all living beings are incarnate, but that, since human beings only have access to their own experiences, he will speak only of incarnation in reference to human beings (3). Already we can see that he is taking incarnation as a broader principle that is at work in Life, and therefore something that is related to the incarnation of Christ but also beyond it. That is, that the incarnation of Christ is a special instantiation of a general incarnation. He also makes clear that "an abyss separates forever the material bodies that fill the universe, on the one hand, and the body of an 'incarnate' being such as man, on the other" (3). Flesh and body are complete opposites for Henry, a claim that he will elucidate throughout this text, and which is integral for his understanding of the incarnation. To be incarnate is not to have a body, but to be flesh (4). The Christian gospel claims that salvation occurs through the flesh of God made man; this is the proposal that the church fathers had to defend against the Greeks and the Jews, for it contradicts both their understandings of divinity and humanity (8, 10).

He avers that Christianity maintains two things regarding the incarnation: 1) that in it, Christ took on a flesh like ours, and that 2) human beings are defined as flesh (11). Since scripture does not say that Christ took on the human condition or a body, but rather flesh, humanity must be defined and analysed as flesh, and this is what Christ must assume. Redefining humanity thus, Henry argues that another implication results: we must think not in terms of a God-human relation, but a Word-flesh relation (12). God's "becoming-man" is really "the Word's 'becoming flesh'" (14). Henry does not deny that Christ existed historically, but for him this is not an interesting or relevant question. What is central is whether this historical person who claimed to be Christ was actually, indeed could actually be, Christ, that is, could Christ become incarnate in the flesh (15).

In putting forward his own phenomenology of incarnation, both generally and specifically, Henry takes aim at what he sees as problems in the traditional Christological positions, those positions that say that "the Word becomes-visible in the visible body, which it has taken on and assumed" (16). First, if the Word assumed a body appearing like a human body, human beings would not recognize the Word as otherwise than a human being, that is, the Word's "journey on earth [would] unfold with insurmountable incognito" (16). Thus the more like a human being the Word would be, the less likely salvation would be, and the more unlike a human being the Word was (via words and deeds), the more likely he would be recognised as the Word, and therefore actualize salvation (17). The second problem Henry takes issue with is that the Gospel of John does not say that the Word "took on a body, or assumed the appearance of one," but that the Word, not even taking on the appearance of flesh, was rather "made flesh" (17). Summarizing his stance on these two issues, he writes that if we adhere to them, then "we are truly dealing with obscurities, impossibilities, and even absurdities" (17). He believes his thinking overcomes these problematic views.

His thesis and approach is the same as John's, which, he contends, is that there is a distinction between flesh and body, and that the Word was made the former and not the latter. On the earth there are only bodies and no flesh; the flesh, he says, comes only from the Word (18).[178] Henry likes John so much because he sees no aporias in his thinking. Henry writes that "at no point does the reader of John have the impression of crossing an obstacle course, or straddling an abyss of absurdities, or being crushed against a wall of aporias" (18). One of the things that John puts forward is a new definition of humanity: "*an invisible, and at the same time carnal, human being—and invisible in so far as carnal*" (19). As a final point of launching his

[178] When Henry talks about "earth" here, he is referring to objective material. As such, it falls under "world" in his Life-world dichotomy.

analysis, Henry states that he will be elucidating the claims that the flesh manifested the Word, and that both flesh and Word are modes of Life's manifestation.

Since Part 1, "The Reversal of Phenomenology," is largely a recapitulation of the ideas I have discussed previously, I will immediately engage with Part 2, "Phenomenology of Flesh." Henry argues that it is only the phenomenology of Life, which results from the reversal of phenomenology, that can understand the body and the flesh. In the phenomenology of Life there are two modes of appearing: world and Life, and it is the body that appears in the former and flesh that appears in the latter (94). What he is critical of is the presumption in Western thought that the worldly appearance of the body is taken to be identical with the experience of the body. He traces the origin of this thinking to Galileo who, he argues, separates the sensible body and the material body. Extracting sensible knowledge and qualities from the body and classifying them as unreal, Galileo avers that the real body is the one that is subject to, or defined by, geometry and materiality (96-97).

The science Galileo put forward distinguishes between the "only 'apparent'" sensible qualities and the reality of the geometrically defined extended body (99). Galileo does not disregard these sensible qualities, but defines them as biological effects. Henry argues that this conceptual move means that life is no longer self-founding, but reduced to a "blind reality" that ultimately escapes from the world (101). Descartes accepts Galileo's distinction between the sensible body and the extended body; his own reduction serves merely to invert which of these is real and which is illusory. Henry writes that "*cogitationes*, which the Galilean reduction claims to exclude from the knowledge of the real universe, become through the decisive reversal the incontrovertible condition and foundation of this knowledge" (104). The root of the distinction between Galileo and Descartes is their approach: ontological (Galileo) and phenomenological

(Descartes) (104). The certainty of the body for Galileo comes from its scientifically-determined worldliness; for Descartes, from the interior knowledge that I have of it (105).

Following Descartes's counter-reduction, which Husserl also follows, Henry affirms the distinction between sensibility and the body, and their relation to each other. The structures of sensibility are not, and cannot, be in the world; there is a "pure Sensible … whose appearing is nevertheless the 'outside' of the world" (109). Henry thus discusses the worldly, sensible body, and the transcendental body:

> So we are inevitably referred from a sensible, worldly body, which is an object of the world, to a body of another order entirely: a transcendental body endowed with the fundamental powers of seeing, sensing, touching, hearing, moving, and being moved—and defined by these powers. A 'transcendental' body, because it is a condition of possibility for the worldly, sensed body. A sensing body, and no longer sensed. … A subject-body, as opposed to an object-body, whose condition it is. An *a priori* 'subjective body' that is different from the objective body, in the sense that it appears as its foundation. (110)

Here we can see Henry elucidate the distinction that he makes in his earliest works, especially *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*. There is the worldly, objective, scientific body on the one hand, a body that is ultimately inert, and there is the subjective, transcendental, and lived body, which enlivens and empowers the worldly body.

However, this distinction remains insufficient for Henry, so he adds another originary term to it. In the relation between the sensing and sensed body, the former founds and acts through the latter. For example, seeing sees through the eye. But, for Henry, this means that the subjective or transcendental body is defined by intentionality, which is necessarily an ecstatic and exteriorizing act. Henry argues that, although the transcendental body opens up the sensible world, it is incapable of providing its own manifestation (116-17). "The transcendental body, which opens us to the sensed body (whether it is a question of our own or of things), rests upon a corporeity far more originary, which is transcendental in a final, non-intentional, non-sensible

sense, the essence of which is life" (117). The subject-body and object-body are ultimately both objects that appear in the truth of the world.

Crucial to Henry's project of reconceptualizing our understanding of the body is precisely to understand it not as an object in the world, but as flesh in Life and Truth. What Life reveals is "*an invisible, originary corporeity*," which is "precisely a flesh, a flesh like ours, which never occurs anywhere but in life" (120). When the appearing of the body is seen from Life as opposed to the world, there is both a change in the mode of appearing and the content of what appears (120). The flesh, which for Henry is the originary corporeity behind the subjective-objective body relation, is the result of Life coming into its own—Life generates flesh by its own affectivity and flesh draws its "*phenomenological substance*" from it (121). Henry writes that Life and flesh never occur one without the other—there is a "reciprocal interiority of Flesh and Life"—and that this relation "concerns a life like ours only because, before time, before every conceivable world, it is established in absolute Life" (121). Henry writes that John follows the teaching of Christ in understanding God as Life; therefore, it is also the case that the originary corporeity of flesh has always existed within God (121).

The experience of self-affection is not caused by, nor is it the cause of, anything outside of itself. Rather, in the passive coming-to-life of Life, there is pure affectivity. To the extent that it passively undergoes the self-affection of Life, "every living being has a flesh, or, to be more precise, is flesh" (123). It is for this reason that, Henry argues, the dualism of soul-body, or even subjective-objective body, does not concern human beings as they really are, because there is only Life coming into itself as life. Extending the reciprocity of Life and flesh forward, Henry claims that there is no Self or ego without a flesh, and no flesh without a Self, and therefore "I and Flesh are one" (124). Since every flesh comes from the Arch-Flesh, Henry points out how a

phenomenology of flesh (which he addresses in this section) necessarily leads to a phenomenology of incarnation (which he addresses in the final section). A key claim that Henry makes here is that John's "the Word was made flesh" (John 1:14) connotes the relation between the Arch-Flesh and flesh, and that this relation "takes place in Life, far from the world, before it, and independently of its appearing" (125). Henry unpacks this more in his final section.

Henry turns next to examining Tertullian (155-240 AD) and Irenaeus (130-202 AD). What is at issue for both, as it relates to their responses to certain heterodox beliefs, is that the nature of the flesh that Christ assumed was identical to that of human beings, for only by doing so would his incarnation, death, and resurrection have salvific efficacy. Henry points out that Tertullian's early descriptions of the flesh of Christ are in fact very worldly. For example, in *On the Flesh of Christ* Tertullian describes Christ's flesh thus: "of the muscles as clods; of the bones as stones; the mamillary glands as a kind of pebbles. Look upon the close junctions of the nerves as propagations of roots, and the branching courses of the veins as winding rivulets, and the down (which covers us) as moss, and the hair as grass, and the very treasures of marrow within our bones as ores of flesh."[179] But Henry contends that neither for Tertullian nor for Marcion (whose heterodox views Tertullian is rebutting) is this material what really inspires, has feelings, or has impressions (129). Indeed, Henry argues that nothing of the materiality that Tertullian has just described "*will define the reality of Christ's flesh, and the reality of our own flesh too*" (129).

The notion that Henry ultimately puts forward is that the phenomenological distinction between flesh and body is proposed by these church fathers. According to him, "*when impressional determinations are substituted for objective ones, the Christian problematic*

[179] Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ*, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 3, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 530.

insurmountably dissociates body and flesh (and thus makes it impossible to confuse them)—the former are given back to the world in such a way that it is never a flesh, the latter restored to life in such a way that, in itself, it is never a body" (130). The earthy imagery of clods, stones, and grass that Tertullian writes about are the body, whereas hunger, joy, suffering, etc. are the flesh. The hermeneutical moves that Henry makes here, as well as lack of textual citation, make this position a little dubious. Saying that the incarnation and passion of Christ "now have their reality and truth" from this impressional flesh as opposed to the body needs more justification. But this is Henry's position, and he develops it further by looking at the thought of Irenaeus.

According to Henry, Irenaeus understands the reality of the flesh not based on worldly materiality (the Greek *bios*) but on phenomenological reality. He is clear that this flesh is not "the flesh of heresy (for example the astral flesh of Apelles …), but precisely our own flesh" (132). Based upon this separation of flesh and body, Henry writes that there has been a "true reversal of the Gnostic positions" (132). The flesh the Gnostics did not want Christ to have was a real one like human beings; thus, they granted him some sort of apparent, spiritual, or astral flesh. However, according to a phenomenological reading, it was the worldly body that they regarded as being inappropriate for Christ that is actually irreal, because everything that appears in the world loses reality to the extent that it appears there. The place where flesh is "only apparent" is the world, whereas Life is where flesh is real and has "true substance" (132).

From this reversal, Henry posits two main points: "*far from being incapable of taking on flesh, life is its condition of possibility. Far from being incapable of receiving life, the flesh is its phenomenological effectuation*" (133). Here, as we have seen before, the Word and Life are synonymous for Henry, therefore all flesh comes from the Word and is capable of receiving it. Henry points to the Genesis creation account, showing how the breath of Life creates flesh by

vivifying the material earth. Henry argues that Irenaeus posits what Henry refers to as "the cogito of flesh" or "the Christian cogito" (135). Life is immanent in flesh and makes flesh what it is, such that there is no flesh without Life. To support his idea of a "cogito of flesh," Henry quotes Irenaeus: "The flesh is capable of receiving and containing the power of God since in the beginning it received the art of God and thus a part of itself became the eye that sees, another the ear which hears, another the hand which palpates and works […]. Yet that which participates in the art and the wisdom of God also participates in his power" (134).[180] Flesh is that which comes from Life, and therefore is capable of containing Life within it; Henry writes that there is no flesh that does not contain Life in it. Life is thus the animating force of flesh and is what allows flesh to be the "cogito" for the human being. This "Christian cogito" differs from the philosophical one in that it is not formulated by thought, but precisely by itself.

Drawing on these two church fathers, as well as returning to Maine de Biran, Henry correlates flesh with affectivity, power, and action. In place of the Cartesian "I think," flesh for Henry is an "I can." These powers to act "are in me as a single body, that is to say, a single flesh … This is how I act: in the pathos-filled immanence of my flesh" (144). It is Life's self-givenness in and through the flesh of every Self that is the power to act, and this power is known to each Self immanently, therefore independently and before thought and world, but not independently of Life (144). This line of thinking, Henry argues, overcomes the aporia of human action as the soul acting on the body (150).[181] Instead, the flesh acts on itself, the immanent

[180] Quoting Irenaeus of Lyon, *Contre les hérésies* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1991), 384; it comes from 5.3.2. Interestingly, the text Henry chooses to omit (identified by the square brackets) points to the more "earthy" parts of a human being. Here is the missing text from the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* edition: "another, the sinews stretched out everywhere, and holding the limbs together; another, arteries and veins, passages for the blood and the air; another, the various internal organs; another, the blood, which is the bond of union between soul and body" (529).

[181] In an article published shortly after *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, Henry is critical of the notion of the soul, writing that "the concept of 'soul' has a meaning, if it refers, not merely to reality, but to the fundamental structure of all possible reality." Michel Henry, 'Does the Concept of "Soul" Mean Anything?', trans. Girard

organic body, and the world attains its reality not via its appearance, but merely as the absolute limit to the acting of flesh (151). Even in an interaction with another human being, a worldly object is not encountered, he argues. One does not see eyes or hands in another, but movements like gazes, glances, grasps, etc. (153).

Henry is quite clear that our human experience is therefore akin to "something like a body 'inhabited by a flesh'" (154). As I have shown, he makes a clear distinction between flesh and body, and describes the reality and appearance of each:

> My flesh is thus not only the principle for the constitution of my own objective-body—it hides its invisible substance in it. Such is the strange constitution of the object we call our body: In no way does it consist in the visible species to which we have always reduced it; in its reality, precisely, it is invisible. No one has ever seen a man, but no one has ever seen his body either, at least if by 'body' we mean his real body. (154-55)

As much as flesh and body are related, they remain distinct. The former is invisible and is the "real" body, absolutely inconsistent with the visible body that we normally consider "the body," which is the objective body in Henry's schema. A human being is essentially invisible, and thus structurally cannot be seen. All that can be seen of the flesh are its movements.

Henry writes that the "action of the flesh upon its own thingly body … is not an ek-static relation to the world but a practical relation to the content of this world (a relation shielded from the world's appearing); it takes place and is revealed to itself only in our invisible flesh" (160). What flesh does, he avers, remains completely on an immanent and invisible level. The pairs of, for example, seeing/being seen and touching/being touched are activities only of the flesh. He states that "my own thingly body is no more touched than touching," and is thus merely an "external apparition" (161). Because of this relation, he also refers to the body as a "body double," again highlighting that it is not the real body (162). That flesh is of primary importance

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Etzkorn, *Philosophy Today* 13, no. 2 (1969), 114; English translation of Michel Henry, 'Le concept d'âme a-t-il un sens?', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* LXVI (1966): 5–33.

and foundational for Henry is clear, but now he spells out that "an arrival in the flesh precedes any conceivable flesh" (166). It is at this point that his investigations into a phenomenology of flesh take a step forward—by taking a step back—to a phenomenology of incarnation.[182]

At the end of the middle section, Henry mentions that flesh, biblically speaking, is the site of both sin/perdition and salvation, as he does in the conclusion to *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*. It is this capacity that necessitates his move from looking at flesh generally to a phenomenology of incarnation. I have shown above how each living has, and more properly is, flesh. But it is the proceeding of absolute Life that causes each flesh to be flesh. Henry writes that "this living being, this Self, and this flesh do not arrive in themselves except in the proceeding of absolute Life, which arrives in itself in its Word, and experiences itself in this Word, which experiences itself in it, in the reciprocal phenomenological interiority of their common Spirit" (170-71). Two important things are seen here: the first is this movement—incarnation—of Life that creates flesh, and the second is the trinitarian formula of Life, Word, and Spirit. Henry contends that the Trinitarian God lives in each Self as the condition for its life.

Henry points to two "Johannine utterances" that are of utmost importance when discussing incarnation: "in the beginning was the Word" and "the Word was made flesh" (170-71; John 1:1 and 1:14 respectively). Incarnation is a weighty question because it concerns "the nature of the relation of man to God, the nature of Christ, and finally the possibility of salvation" as well as "the possibility of sin and perdition" (171). Henry will analyse these two claims made by John in order both to assess what they mean on their own terms, and how they effect the "two-fold potentiality" of the flesh (172). To understand the givenness of flesh and the relation between God and humankind, Henry refers to the dynamics of the gift. A gift is commonly

[182] Falque notes with surprise "how little theology there is in the part on the 'Phenomenology of Incarnation', which is introduced as follows: Salvation in the Christian Sense." Emmanuel Falque, 'Is There a Flesh Without Body? A Debate with Michel Henry', 147.

understood to include the giver, the givee (receiver), and the gift; but this is a relation of exteriority, and so cannot be how Life gives itself. Life gives itself to the living and dwells there so intimately and inseparably as to be the very power of each self (175).

Due to the inseparability of each living from Life, Henry argues for the distinction and separation of flesh and body. Since the living cannot be separated from Life, it cannot be exteriorized. As such, the worldly body, "far from defining our actual body (our invisible and indivisible flesh) is only its external representation" (176). Who a human being really is, then, is undefinable apart from Life, which is why Henry writes that even a sinner rests on Life, which lives through him (177). The fact that a human being lives at all and has the power to act, regardless of its state of sin, is only because it lives in Life, and Life flows through it. Henry quotes Paul: "In him we live, move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28; 177). The generation of each Self in Life is at once the generation of its flesh, of itself as flesh.

After describing the intimate connection between Life and living, Henry turns to the problem of sin. If each living receives its Self and individual life from Absolute Life, from which it is never separated, how is it possible for a living to sin? Henry's understanding of sin in *Incarnation* is the same as it is in *I Am the Truth*, namely, a forgetting of (the givenness of) Life. His answer to how this is possible is that it is a free yet almost inevitable outcome of Life's givenness.[183] "Yet it is precisely because life's givenness is a real and effective one, because life is given totally and without division, *because its gift is the self-givenness in which every power receives itself and hence is self-empowered*, the 'I can' has come to forget the most original gift

[183] In his chapter "Overcoming Forgetfulness: Henry's Challenge of Self-Givenness," Steinbock writes that "according to Henry, the forgetfulness in question does not arise from external conditions but is paradoxically rooted in the very process in which Life generates in itself the 'Myself' such that the very condition of being a Son of God in the Son is dissimulated with the very genesis of this condition. Through the very birth of Myself, this me or this myself does not cease to forget this birth, namely, its condition of Son." Anthony J. Steinbock, *It's Not about the Gift: From Givenness to Loving* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018), 65.

of life" (184). What Henry says here is that Life is so effective in its self-givenness that every Self comes to think that it is the source of its own power, and so a self-founding ego in contrast to a living from Life. Because forgetting is part of thinking—in that "forgetting consists precisely in no longer thinking something" (185)—it is endemic already to the world and its form of appearing and truth. But, so too is memory, as memory is what was once and can again be thought (185). In Life, Henry avers, there is no thinking, and so neither forgetting nor memory; he calls this a "radical Forgetting" in which "Life bathes" (186). For a living to remain in Life and know that its power comes from Life is to have this radical forgetting, but this radical forgetting seems (almost) impossible to maintain because, as detailed above, Life is so effective in its self-givenness. When a Self forgets its origin in the self-givenness of Life, it is thinking itself (which is the source of the Self's forgetting) that is the cause. Sin as forgetting is thus seemingly built into the movement of Life, which would make the Christian notion of the Fall a structural and not a contingent reality.[184]

Continuing with his analysis of sin, Henry turns to Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety*. He finds in Kierkegaard the connection of anxiety to possibility and power (188) and is especially interested in his saying that "innocence is ignorance" (190).[185] The loss of innocence, which is directly connected to exteriority, is sin. But this loss of innocence, for Kierkegaard, is connected to the transcendental 'I can' and the power therefrom. These powers are revealed to us in anxiety (192; quoting *CA* 44). Indeed, Henry writes that "anxiety penetrates innocence entirely. It endows it with the pathos proper to it" (192). Thus, "sin presupposes itself" as the act,

[184] If the Christian notion of the Fall itself is structural, one can question why salvation, via the incarnation of Christ, is necessary. Further, to say that Life was so effective at its self-givenness that sin resulted leads ones to question both how this can be viewed as "effective," and the "intelligibility" of Life.

[185] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, trans. Reidar Thomte (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 37. Henceforth cited as *CA*.

the leap, which is built into the very possibilities and power of the 'I can' endowed in each living in the self-generation of absolute Life (193; quoting *CA* 32, 42, 43, 77). Henry points to where Kierkegaard discusses the paradoxical union of body and soul, and that their synthesis is a third, the spirit (195; citing *CA* 43-44). This synthesis is the source of innocence (195), and therefore of anxiety (197). The anxiety arises, Henry argues, not from the spirit having this unimaginable synthesis objectively before it, but "*being* this" synthesis (196). Each living is this unity of body and soul; however, Henry writes that although each living has an objective body, in reality it is flesh: "As for me, while I perceive my own body in the world, *I am this hidden flesh* … which endows my objective body with the characteristics it has" (199). Sensibility, the 'I can' of the flesh, resides invisibly within the objective, worldly power.

It is the fact of being flesh, this originary body with its power and possibility, that is the root of anxiety (201). Sin, far from eradicating anxiety, only prolongs it. Henry does say that the "capacity to sin is not sin," but these two are so integrally connected that the capacity "makes the incitement to sin omnipresent" (205). Henry turns to a lengthy analysis of the erotic relation developed in conversation with Kierkegaard in order to show the connection between desire and anxiety, and the distinction between body and flesh. The erotic relation between two lovers is one that takes place completely within immanence, where the two individuals meet as flesh and not as bodies. Based on this distinction lies another: "the separation of the real and the unreal" (216). In the erotic relation, what one touches and desires is not the (objective) body, but the (subjective) flesh of the other; again, the touching-touched relation is a relation of flesh and not body. Henry writes that flesh "is what is desired. It is precisely because it does not show itself in the being-there of the thingly body that it is and can be desired" (217). The erotic relation, Henry

therefore avers, is a relation of flesh, "a carnal and not a thingly relation," in which desire and anxiety are present, but are directed towards the flesh inhabiting a body (217).

Yet, since desire in the erotic relation ultimately fails, in that neither lover can reach what they desire, the relation is reduced to an interaction between objective bodies in the appearing of the world. Henry argues that this change—from a relation of flesh to a relation of body—is part and parcel of the "active and deliberate destruction of reality," which is "nihilism" (218). The state of nihilism, for Henry, is when Life has been minimized, eliminated, or otherwise reduced to nothingness by human beings that have forgotten their condition as Sons in Life, such that only the world is known or present.[186] However, precisely because the erotic relation between lovers is no longer in Life and between flesh, but in the world and between bodies, it has ceased to be a relation of desire and is now merely a relation operating according to the laws of modern science (221-22).

It is at this point, after having examined the likelihood of sin arising via forgetting, memory, and desire, that Henry turns to the incarnation of Christ and salvation. Here he begins by juxtaposing Genesis with the Prologue of John. He finds in Genesis the "first known account of a transcendental theory of man," by which he means the "the pure and *a priori* possibility of the existence of something such as man" and nothing to do with "the historical and factual appearance of men upon the earth" (227). The separation that Henry places between a naïve (i.e., literal) reading of Genesis and his own is stark:

> Like God, man is nothing of the world, and nothing in him can ultimately be explained by the world. Like God, man is not the product of a process that sits outside itself in the form of an image. Man has never been posited outside God. Man is not an image we could see. Man is nothing visible. No one has ever seen God, but no one has ever seen a man—a man in his actual reality, a transcendental living Self. It is only in the idolatrous process of profanation that we strive, in vain, to see him. Because life is never visible. It is

[186] Henry extensively develops this idea in *Barbarism*, which details how a certain barbarism has resulted as culture has systemically and progressively eliminated Life.

> because he is Life that God is invisible. And for this reason man is too. Man has never been created, he has never come in the world. He has come in Life. And it is in this sense that he is in the likeness of God, cut from the same cloth as Him, as every life and as all the living are. From the cloth that is the pure phenomenological substance of life itself. (229)

This dense passage cuts to the heart of Henry's philosophy, especially as it impinges on the essence of human beings and their relation and similarity to God. Rather than the *imago Dei* being rationality or morality, human beings are not even an image *per se*, as images are projections or representations in the world. The likeness that human beings share with God is in having their reality in Life.

Looking again at Irenaeus, Henry teases out the importance of the "Filial condition" in Christian salvation (231). He quotes *Against Heresies*: "Truth […] appears when the Word of God was made man, *making himself like man and making man like him*" (231, emphasis and brackets Henry's; 5.16.2). Glossing this, Henry avers that the incarnation is a possibility because human beings are already incarnate, and that Life is their condition of being. Since all flesh comes from the Word, there is "*an essential affinity between the original creation of man and the Incarnation of the Word*, such that only the second allows us to understand the first" (231-32). The original generation of human beings in the Genesis account, then, the "insufflation of life in a body of mud," is the generation of flesh by Life (232). Further, the Life that has generated flesh is never absent from it; flesh is not possible without Life and always dwells in it (232).[187] It is this strong connection between the Word and human beings from the beginning that is the condition of possibility for the incarnation of the Word.

Henry writes that, according to Irenaeus and against the Gnostics, it is true both that it is possible for the Word to be incarnate, and that the Word, who is Christ, exists before his entry into history. John 1:3 points to everything coming from the Word in the beginning, therefore to

[187] He cites *Against Heresies* 3.16.6, that the Word has always been present to human beings and united to them.

the Word being the absolute beginning. Henry does say that Christ has two natures—Word and human being, the latter being assumed until death on the cross—that they are not equal, and that the divine nature generates the human one (233). From Irenaeus, Henry writes that there is "one and the same" Word, not Jesus and Christ separately (233; *Against Heresies* 3.16.2). But Henry knows that possibility must move to actuality, for only in the reality of the incarnation is salvation obtained. The paradox again emerges, as flesh is both where sin and salvation occur.

As discussed above, the self-generation of the Word as flesh was so effective as to make the forgetting of one's condition a likelihood. Because human beings used this power to become what they wanted and so fell "prey to sin and death," the Word had to assume "a finite flesh like ours" (234). By taking on "the sin and death inscribed in our finite flesh" and "destroy[ing] them by dying on the Cross," the Word has restored human beings to their original condition, namely, as transcendental Sons in divine Life (234). The restoration of humanity to this original condition is only possible if the Word incarnates "sinful and mortal" flesh, for this is the flesh that must be destroyed (234). Henry quotes Irenaeus from *Against Heresies* (3.18.7), that "the one who had to put sin to death and redeemed man worthy of death was made into that very thing he was, which is to say, this man kept in slavery by sin and held under the power of death, so that sin was put to death by a man and thus man leaves death" (234). By taking on, and only by taking on, sinful flesh, the Word—as a human being, if Henry is agreeing here with Irenaeus—overcomes sin and death and therefore restores human beings to their original condition.

Henry next turns his analysis a few centuries forward to Augustine. He finds in him the possibility of the deification of humanity, where God's becoming-human makes possible the becoming-God of humanity (234). He points to Augustine's commentary on John 17:19 (Tractate 108.5), where he writes that human beings can only be sanctified by Christ because

they are in Christ (235). And more radically, because they are Christ. Henry writes, human beings are "'sanctified' in a radical sense, meaning not to become holy ones, but this One who alone is Holy: God. Sanctified, that is, deified, and only as such saved" (235). We see again how, for Henry, the incarnation of the Word is possible because everything is always already in the Word. He quotes Augustine: "He thus sanctified himself in himself, that is, man in the Word, because the Christ is one, Word and man, sanctifying man in the Word" (236).[188] It is the presence of the Word via incarnation, and this alone, that sanctifies the man Jesus, that is, the Word as flesh and absolute body sanctifies the worldly appearance of Jesus as human being.

However, Henry is clear that the two natures of Christ are not distinct and irreducible. He writes that "the coexistence of the Word and man in the Christ is at no time presented as an assemblage of two opaque and irreducible realities. On the contrary, one and the same principle of intelligibility or rather Arch-intelligibility runs through the Word and the man in order to unite them in the Christ" (236). This "Arch-intelligibility" is nothing other than the self-revelation of Life. Thus, the same reciprocal interiority that is shared between Absolute Life and the Word is also shared between the Word and all human beings (236). Henry refers to John 17:22-23, where Christ prays to his Father "that they may be one as we are one: I in them and they in me, that their unity may be perfect" (237). The salvation of human beings is therefore only possible because they are in Christ; "one with him," Henry writes, "they are Christ himself" (237).

The relationships between all living Selves are only made possible on the basis of Life that is present in each one.[189] Due to their shared bonding in Life, Henry argues that all communities are essentially religious (244). However, he also argues that all communities are

[188] Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John, 55-111*, trans. John W. Rettig (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 282.

[189] Henry concludes *Material Phenomenology* with an very interesting section—"For a Phenomenology of Community"—that contains the roots of what he discusses here. Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 118-134.

invisible, and outside of space and time (245). Since all Selves are in reality flesh, living in absolute Life, communities too share this existence in Life and not the world. Henry does (reluctantly) admit that communities also have an "'appearance in the world'" (in quotation marks), but that this is "only a simple semblance cut from reality," where a community, more than individual Selves, "carries with it the possibility of dissimulation and deception" (245). This notion of community as a union of transcendental Selves in Life is precisely what is at work in Henry's understanding of the mystical body of Christ. In this community that happens apart from and before the world (245), "*each one loves himself in the 'other' who (with every exteriority here out of play) is never external to him, but on the contrary internal and consubstantial*" (246). In the Christian community, all Selves, though remaining Selves, are consubstantial with each other due to the shared reciprocal phenomenological interiority between themselves and the Word, as the First Living. Henry writes that "only by the Incarnation of the Word in the flesh of a man—who has as such 'come from God,' is 'sent by him,' namely the Messiah, or the Christ—does the union that overcomes this abyss take place" (246). Through this salvific work the deification of human beings takes place: "the restoration of his original condition" (246).

In bringing *Incarnation* to a close, Henry concludes with a few key summative points. One of the most important is the Christian presupposition, found mainly in the Gospel of John and then implicitly in the church fathers, that for the incarnation to be possible, living flesh must be substituted for material body when understanding how "the Word became flesh" happened (255). He writes that, even though worldly perception sees "our body as a body of flesh (*Leibkörper*)," our real flesh is before and beyond the world (256). The "intelligible Logos" did not come "in a material, putrescible body," but rather in flesh, of which it is "the radical and final, transcendental, phenomenological condition" (256). Connected with this transcendental

possibility of (the incarnation of) all flesh stands the prior incarnation of the Word (256). When God breathes Life into the mud, this Life is "the common Spirit of the Father and the Son that inhabits every flesh and makes it alive" (257). Although a human being is both "earth and flesh at once," these two are irreducible one to another: "everything that is body is body … But also everything that is flesh is flesh, there is not an ounce of matter in it" (257).

According to Henry, this understanding of flesh, and therefore this understanding of the human being, is a radical development of Christianity. As long as the incarnation continues to be understood in a manner where flesh means (objective, material) body, problems and aporias will result. It is precisely for this reason that Henry is so adamant that we should not confuse these: "Is it not enough to recall a final time that the Incarnation of the Word is not its coming in a body but in flesh?" (258). Henry does mention a few times here that the Word did come in a body that was seen (258), and that the incarnation of the Word was in a visible body (259). In any case, it is this flesh that human beings, too, are, and the incarnation reminds them of their true condition. For truly, "our flesh is not the opaque body that everyone hauls with them from the time they are said to be born—the body on which without surprise, but in anxiety and throughout his existence, they will watch for every particularity, every quality and every defect, every modification, every decline, and every wrinkle that draws invincibly on the face of man or woman the stigmata of its decrepitude and death. … Our flesh is God" (261-62).

Here at the end of *Incarnation*, let us consider more closely the critiques of Docetism in Henry's thought. Docetism is the Christological position—deemed heretical by the early Church—that says that Christ is fully divine and only appears to be, but is not really, human. There is thus a radical split between who Christ really is, fully divine, and what Christ appears to be while on earth, a material human being. As we have seen, what matters for Henry in the

incarnation is Christ's assumption of flesh, not (an objective) body, as it is flesh and not body that is the reality of a human being. Indeed, his body is a contingency that seems in many ways unnecessary. According to Rivera, "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 bracketed as a subsidiary and unnecessary aspect of the Incarnation."[190] One does not need to carried away with a quest for the historical Jesus, as clearly Henry is not, but Henry does seem at times to count Jesus's appearing as a visible body as unnecessary or a detracted mode of appearing, referring to it variably as a "guise," "apparition," and "illusion." This move seems to misconstrue aspects of the New Testament that point to Jesus's historical and material existence in a meaningful way.

But disregarding Jesus as such, that is, disregarding this worldly mode of appearing, which Henry understands as the objective guise of Christ, is exactly what Henry does. We have seen how, in *I Am the Truth*, Henry clearly claims that Christ did not, and indeed could not, appear in the world. He writes: "for Christ to appear in the light of the world as this man Jesus, simply in the form of a man whom others recognize as a man and nothing more, *it is absolutely necessary that he be deprived of his divine condition*, of his own revelation in order to become nothing other than this objective and worldly appearance as a man" (87); and later, "the speech of the Word, identical with the Word, is none other than the speech of God—his self-revelation, accomplishing itself in this Word and in its guise" (90). This talk of a "guise," tied in with Henry's stance that worldly appearing is negative, leads Falque to opine that "incarnation probably does not 'change' anything, or almost nothing in, Michel Henry. … Paradoxically, everything happens as if, according to us, God was never really incarnated in *Incarnation*, or at

[190] Rivera, 'The Night of Living Flesh', 223.

least not temporally and visibly in a body, on the earth, and in a history. … The incarnation is shown in Michel Henry, but there is somehow nothing to see."[191] Falque is clearly critical of what he sees in Henry's thought as the lack of materiality and certain biblical accounts that present Christ in a more embodied and historical manner. However, all of this falls under the world's appearing for Henry and so he bypasses it in the service of Life. Falque's critique thus arises due to his misreading of Henry's understanding of Christ via the duality of appearing.

When it comes to incarnation, Henry puts forward a complex notion, for it effects both all living beings and Christ, and seems to take place outside of and before space and time.[192] Rivera writes that "the Incarnation for Henry is not only the event whereby Christ assumes flesh. It is also the strange but necessary event (if the nihilistic spirit of modernity is to be avoided) whereby Christ takes on flesh inside me, giving my flesh to me."[193] The incarnation is therefore more than just Christ taking on flesh in one person, but being the flesh of all living Selves. Henry says that the flesh of a living is Christ (*I Am the Truth* 116) or God (*Incarnation* 262), and that John's "and the Word became flesh" points to an event that happens in Life and not the world, space, or time (*Incarnation* 125). As Rivera notes, Henry puts forth a view of incarnation where "Christ's Incarnation (taking flesh) and our Incarnation (taking flesh) are one and the same self-revelation."[194] That is, that the incarnation is one case of a general incarnation shared by all

[191] Falque, 'Is There a Flesh Without Body?', 163.

[192] Recall his claim at the start of *Incarnation* that incarnation concerns all living beings. Henry writes that "incarnation concerns all living beings on earth since these are all incarnate beings" and makes "an initial decision to leave living beings other than human beings outside the field of our investigation" (3).

[193] Rivera, 'The Night of Living Flesh', 217.

[194] Rivera, 'The Night of Living Flesh', 221. Ruud Welten writes that "according to Henry, incarnation is not an event that was realized only in the birth of Jesus. Man is incarnated. Jesus is the Arch-Son." Ruud Welten, 'God Is Life. On Michel Henry's Arch-Christianity', in *God in France: Eight Contemporary French Thinkers on God*, ed. Peter Jonkers and Ruud Welten (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 139. Welten also argues that "the question Henry elaborates is not how Life (the Word) becomes flesh, but how flesh becomes living" (139), and so the (intent of the) incarnation is a type of reverse-incarnation (or at least twofold): "Incarnation refers to the flesh that has become living and, thereby, the flesh that has become Word" (140).

living beings. Henry reads John 1:1 and 1:14 together, so that the Word was made flesh in the beginning. Which view of course makes sense if all human beings are flesh, and this flesh is Christ. However, Henry does not fully account for the "becoming material" or "becoming historical" of Christ('s flesh) and what this would mean, a point which Emmanuel Falque addresses in his own work.

In his essay "Is There a Flesh Without Body: A Debate with Michel Henry," which specifically examines Henry's *Incarnation* at colloquium dedicated to this book at l'Institut catholique de Paris on 19 January 2001,[195] Falque highlights his issues with Henry. He writes that "the connection between incarnation or being taken into a properly human flesh (the phenomenology of the flesh) and the incarnation or the exclusively divine coming into the flesh is not self-evident," and so "nothing ensures, at least in reading Michel Henry's work, that the divine incarnation in a flesh pure and simple (*Inkarnation*) also expresses the becoming human of God (*Menschwerdung*)" (140-41).[196] Falque argues that Henry avoids the identification "between the carnal incarnation of God and his historical and corporeal humanization in the figure of the incarnate Word," an identification that he endeavours to work out in his own trilogy (141). Falque takes Henry to task for saying that John says that Christ became flesh, and therefore not body, writing that "it does not suffice to say that he 'entered into our flesh' according to a somewhat unilateral interpretation of the Prologue of John. It is also necessary that 'he is made body' *like us*" (158). It is for this reason that Falque emphasizes a need to move

[195] Falque, 'Is There a Flesh Without Body? A Debate with Michel Henry'. This was first published as Emmanuel Falque, 'Y a-t-il une chair sans corps?', *Transversalité* 81, Jan-Mar (2002): 43–76, and later as 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*, éd. Philippe Capelle (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2004), 95–133. A modified version is found in Emmanuel Falque, *The Loving Struggle: Phenomenological and Theological Debates*, trans. Bradley B. Onishi and Lucas McCracken (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018), 143-173. The colloquium was titled "Phénoménologie et Incarnation: Autour du Professeur Michel Henry."

[196] Whereas in German there are two words to denote these two different movements, in French the one word (*incarnation*) defines them both.

from discussing (just) "incarnation" to analyzing "incorporation", which focusses on Christ's assumption of a human body.

Henry had occasion to respond to Falque, as well as other commentators at the colloquium, in his paper "Phénoménologie de la chair. Philosophie, théologie, exégèse. Réponses."[197] Although thankful to Falque for his attentive reading of his work and questions that caused him to be more precise, Henry feels that Falque has misunderstood him on some of the key points related to incarnation, flesh, and body. He claims that "the suspicion of Gnosticism aimed at the phenomenology of flesh seems to me unjust, not only because it is the totality originating in our concrete corporeity that this phenomenology claims to reach, but also because the secret motive of gnosis is totally foreign to it" (171-72).[198] When it comes to Falque's push for a focus on "incorporation," Henry conveys that this can only come after positing the flesh, and a general incarnation. "At the same time," he writes, "it is the problem, constantly posed by E. Falque, of the coming into this body - of the 'incorporation', and no longer of the incarnation - which also requires to be placed in a horizon of thought unknown to tradition. Now this new horizon of intelligibility is nothing other than the phenomenology of flesh" (180).[199] He finally concludes that "we must accept the paradox: it is not a

[197] Michel Henry, 'Phénoménologie de la chair. Philosophie, théologie, exégèse. Réponses', in *Phénoménologie et christianisme chez Michel Henry: Les derniers écrits de Michel Henry en débat*, éd. Philippe Capelle (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2004), 143–90. This was first published as Michel Henry, 'À Emmanuel Falque', *Transversalité* 81, no. Jan-Mar (2002): 105–17. I will be quoting from 'Phénoménologie de la chair', and the translations are mine.

[198] "le soupçon de gnosticisme visant la phénoménologie de la chair me semble injuste non seulement parce que c'est la totalité originaire de notre corporéité concrète que cette phénoménologie prétend atteindre mais encore parce que le motif secret de la gnose lui est totalement étranger."

[199] "Du même coup, c'est le problème, sans cesse posé par E. Falque, de la venue dans ce corps, - de l'«incorporation», et non plus de l'incarnation - qui exige lui aussi d'être replacé dans un horizon de pensée inconnu de la tradition. Or ce nouvel horizon d'intelligibilité n'est rien d'autre que la phénoménologie de la chair."

phenomenology of the world [body], it is only a phenomenology of life [flesh] which can account for the historical existence of men and their concrete destiny" (182).[200]

Karl Hefty, in his aptly titled response to Falque, "Is There a Body without Flesh?,"[201] also contends that Falque has sorely misunderstood what Henry is claiming and trying to do. His title is as rhetorical as Falque's, he claims, as Henry clearly affirms that a body only comes to be first as flesh (55). He suggests that what Falque finds missing in Henry—"the body in its visible, material, incorporated reality—and to have this together with flesh"—can only come about by first accepting Henry's position, that is, that a flesh is first given before a body comes to be (65). Hefty avers that the charges of Gnosticism against Henry are unfounded and inappropriate (70). "I suspect that ultimately Falque's objections to Henry presuppose that one has already refused Henry's basic theses concerning phenomenality and the duplicity of appearing" (71). Hefty, like Henry, believes that the human being appears twice: in the world as a body, and in Life as flesh, and it is the latter that founds that former. The claims of Docetism in Henry's understanding of Christ should be rejected, then, although there might be room for more attention to materiality—a point that we will see Falque address in his own work.

To riff on the well-known phrase of Athanasius—"For He was made man that we might be made God"[202]—we might imagine Henry saying, "God did not and cannot become man, and that man is not man but God already," for even human beings are not truly human beings, but Sons of God. For Henry, the human being is two: flesh and body, and he is adamant the former is what is reality, the latter only an appearance and a guise. What Henry has done here is to offer a

[200] "Il faut assumer le paradoxe: ce n'est pas une phénoménologie du monde, c'est seulement une phénoménologie de la vie qui peut rendre compte de l'existence historique des hommes et de leur destin concret."

[201] Hefty, 'Is There a Body without Flesh?'

[202] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, ed. Archibald Robertson, vol. 4, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second series (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 65.

new definition (or reversal) of humanity.[203] The same doubling of Christ also occurs in human beings/Sons of God. John Behr writes that "the self is 'doubled', between, on the one hand, the 'me' that lives at the heart of Life, hidden in Christ, but which has forgotten itself, absorbed by the world, and, on the other hand, my appearance as an 'I' in the world."[204] Again, this doubling only occurs because of the forgetfulness that is sin (which occurs almost necessarily because of the efficacy of Life's self-generation). The ideal is to only be flesh, to only be a 'me' within Life. Falque suggests this same ideal of movement from body to flesh in his notion of the resurrection.

Turning to the last pages of *Incarnation*, before moving on the final volume of Henry's trilogy, we ask with Henry, how does humanity come to know the invisible Word, and thus enact the restoration of its original Filial condition? Henry argues that the Word can only be believed—not thought—and that this belief is only made possible because the Truth of the Word is always already in each Self as the condition for its generation in Life as a transcendental Self. It is therefore not seeing that is believing, nor believing that is seeing, but having the Word already dwelling inside one, as one's flesh, that allows one to believe the Word (260). Of a more general interest is his claim that philosophy and theology have the same method, namely thought, but that they are differentiated by the latter's source and object being sacred scripture. He writes that scripture is sacred not because of what it is, but because of whose words it contains, that it is "the Speech of God" (253). It is the Word in human beings that allows them to see the words of scripture as the Word. These thoughts on language and scripture provide a natural and embedded segue to the final work of his trilogy, to which I turn now.

[203] Cf. Behr, *John the Theologian*, 321.

[204] Behr, *John the Theologian*, 286.

Words of Christ

Rounding out Henry's Christian trilogy is *Paroles du Christ*,[205] which was completed while he was dying in hospital and published posthumously in 2002. In this work, which is less than half the length of the preceding two, he continues to wrestle with questions and concepts that are prominent in the preceding works, and especially in his essay that appears in *Phenomenology and the 'Theological Turn'*. Some of the main questions that he is following here are: How can Christ be both divine and human? Are his words divine and/or human, and how can hearers/readers differentiate these? How can revelation be understood phenomenologically? And, perhaps especially, how can Christ's divine words be understood in the world? Framing these inquiries is the familiar scaffolding of Henry's thought, namely, the distinction between the world and its truth and appearing, and Life and its Truth and appearing.

As in his other works, Henry is focussed on a phenomenology of Life; however, he is also seeking out the revelation—Arch-revelation—that is behind and before phenomenology, and also Christianity, that makes them possible. In the same way that his previous two works in the trilogy were not an analysis, argument, or interpretation of biblical and theological texts, *Words of Christ* too is more about Henry developing a theory of language based on his phenomenological account of revelation, which then uses biblical texts as its test-case. Scripture, like all human written words, is composed in human language whose words refer to external things and thus show themselves in the world. Divine words, on the other hand, do not have this separation of sign and signified, they are instead coincident with and appear in Life.

[205] Michel Henry, *Paroles du Christ* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002); English translation Michel Henry, *Words of Christ*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012). Citations in this section will be done parenthetically from the English translation unless stated otherwise. As the first two books in his trilogy have a sub-title beginning "philosophy of," this one could be sub-titled "A Philosophy of Language."

Henry begins from the theological standpoint that Christ has two natures, divine and human (3). God lives in Christ as the Word, and Christ also has human flesh. He thus surmises that Christ's words must also be dual: sometimes they are God's words and sometimes they are human words (4). The task of his analysis is to differentiate which words come from which nature of Christ, and thus to differentiate between two kinds of words, or languages. This task is an essential one, he argues, in order to truly understand scripture, and even to correctly understand the human condition (9). In human language there is a unity of two things: acts of speech and what they speak about (5). Although these are a unity in language, they can be easily demarcated into their composite parts. Applying this theory of language to the Word of God would be a failure, Henry believes. But if the Word of God is a different language, how we would be able to tell? Can we human beings hear a word spoken in divine language? For Christ's "claim is not only to transmit a divine revelation but purely and simply to be in himself this Revelation, the Word [*Parole*] of God" (9). The sign is the signified, to use linguistic theory.

Henry first looks at the words that the human side of Christ speaks to human beings about themselves. These can be filed under "wisdom speech," which "would be distinctive only by the depth of their views and by the conclusions which one draws from them in order to provide rules of conduct for their listeners" (11). Looking at passages in Matthew (15:11-20) and Mark (7:14-23), Henry aims to show that there is a distinction between the exterior world and its inert things, and the interior and impressional flesh of human beings. Commenting on the famous 'Do not worry' passage (Matt. 6:25-34), he again highlights the distinction between human beings and the rest of the universe, but also the hierarchy: human beings are superior over all else (14-15). What is really underlying this hierarchical distinction is the relation between the visible (world) and the invisible (Life)? While in some ways secondary to his discussion of the two types of

language, Henry also brings up his body-flesh distinction in this context. He writes that the human being does show itself in the world via its objective body, but that this is "only the visible appearance of a living flesh. … Only this living flesh … constitutes our true reality" (16). Here again we see how humanity's "true reality" is flesh.

Henry points out more saying and speeches of Christ (e.g., Matt. 6:1-18, 23:27-28) that distinguish "between the visible and the invisible, the external and the internal," reality and (worldly) appearance (17). Despite everything that Christ reveals in these human words about the human condition, they remain that: human words, which are tied to a "'human system,' where everything proceeds from humans and all is referred to them" (19). Nevertheless, even in this state they are able to launch a critique of the human world. Christ's words speak of familial discord (Matt. 10:34-36; Luke 12:51-53), reversal of hierarchies (Matt. 20:1-16; Luke 18:14), and loving one's enemies (Luke 6:27-34). In all these cases, Christ condemns the common "habitual and natural human relationships" (27). The key to understanding Christ's paradoxical teachings on these matters is, Henry argues, located inside every human being (25).

Henry argues that Christ's words show that human beings are not really just human beings. Christ's revelation "comes to shatter our human condition to the point that it actually ceases to be human, properly speaking" (30). Although human beings can appear in a certain way in the world, God's gaze sees them for who and what they really are (Matt. 6:3-4, 6). The overcoming of "natural" reciprocities—for example in Luke 6:27-34, which says love your enemies, bless those who curse you, and offer your other cheek when struck—is essential to Christ showing human beings their true condition. When the natural human mode of reciprocity is done away with, then humanity comes to know that its condition is not founded in these human modes of interaction but is founded by its relation to God. In loving enemies and

expecting nothing in return, human beings discover their true condition: "*you will be sons of the Most High*" (33, quoting Luke 6:35; emphasis Henry's). We are to be like God, shining our light on the evil and the good alike (Matt. 5:45). According to Henry, "*non-reciprocity indicates the immanent generation of our finite Life in the infinite Life of God*" (34). What is known as the "human condition" is what results when the original condition of "Sons of God" has been forgotten.

Examining the human words that the human nature of Christ speaks to human beings has revealed that their true condition is "Son of God," not "human being." But this very relation depends on the words that Christ speaks about himself (39). Discussing the Beatitudes, Henry avers that Christ can only talk about the Kingdom of God if he himself knows about it; but further, he argues that Christ shows his intervention in this process himself. Henry highlights how in Luke 6:22-23 and Matthew 5:11-12 Jesus says that believers will endure ridicule "*on account of the Son of Man*" (44, quoting Luke 6:22; emphasis Henry's). By stating this, Henry believes that Christ reveals that he is the gateway, the path to God, and is as such the revelation of God (44). By telling people to give up their life for his sake and to follow him (Luke 9:23-24), Christ sets up a radical distinction between himself and all other Sons; he "holds the life which does not pass away" (48).

Christ's divine nature has been progressively revealed by the words that he has spoken to others. Henry now turns his analysis to Christ's words about himself. When Christ interacts with the Samaritan woman by the well (John 4:1-42), he explicitly says that he is the Messiah and (the source of) Life. In other passages, Christ talks of "the relationship of identification between [himself] and his Father," for example, Matthew 11:27 and Matthew 10:40, where he says, "whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me" (50-51). Indeed, in Luke 19:44 Christ

clearly states that he is God: "… *you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God*" (51, emphasis Henry's). In these passages, the meaning of Christ's words is the same for him as for the people, that his "identification with the Christ and the Messiah is his identification as Son of God, and his identification as Son of God is his identification with God himself" (55). Are these words different than human words, Henry wonders? Can Christ legitimate them, and if so how?

Although there are many instances where Christ shows that he is not an ordinary human being, and so sets himself apart, the way that he is able to justify his words and actions cannot come from the world or from human words, Henry argues. His legitimation must come from God's word [*parole*], from the Word [*Verbe*] (63). Looking at John 5, 7 and 8, where Christ is being accused by Pharisees and Temple authorities, Henry highlights that the law requiring a witness to support testimony (8:13) is only applicable to human beings. Since Christ has already destabilized human genealogy—there are no earthly fathers, but only one Father—Christ has claimed that he is not a human being and therefore not subject to the law. Christ does not need witnesses to authenticate his claims. Yet he does provide this, as recorded in John 5:37: "and the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf" (66; cf. John 8:18). Henry argues that these words and arguments of Christ clearly point to his divinity, to his being the Word.

In distinguishing the word of Life from the word of the world, Henry rehearses what we know of the latter. The world's word is tied to appearing in the world and has three characteristics: 1) appearing is exteriority, 2) it is neutral towards what appears, and 3) it cannot create what appears (71-72). But, according to Henry, there exists "a different word, more original and more essential than that of the world" (73). If Life is a self-revelation, it has a word that is endemic to it. It is here, Henry thinks, that the Christian *Logos* contrasts and contradicts the Greek *logos* (74). This *Logos*, this Word, is the word of Life, not the word of the world (John

1:1, 4 and 1 John 1). The justification for this connection that "unites the word and life" is not theory, argument, or logic, but "an indisputable experience" (74). Life reveals itself as itself; the saying is the said. This word, this revelation, is that "which John calls the Word [*Verbe*] of God and which is his Word [*Parole*]" (75). To the words of the world—marked in their exteriority as words "*about*"—is contrasted the words of Life—marked by their self-revelation as words "*of*" (76). Because Life is only ever a revelation of itself, as a self-revelation, it cannot be other than itself, and so Life is equated with Truth (77).

Since God is Life, as indicated in the Prologue to John, human beings can know God immediately as living beings themselves (82). Returning to this connection between Life and Truth, and to the reciprocal interiority shared by the Father and the Son, Henry says that Christ is never outside of Life and that his words are always the Truth (87). Christ has been sent by the Father, and his words are the Father's (John 8:16, 18, 26, 28). Henry proposes that, following this line of thinking, we can legitimate the words of Christ. If we try to interpret the words of Christ about himself as words of the world, the authenticity of his words can never be shown. However, if we interpret his words as words of Life, since he is the Word, doubt is removed and the reality of what he says is immediate (89-90). To those who say they do not believe his words, Christ says that they do not truly know the Father (John 8:54-55). Henry now considers how we can know the Father, and so know the Truth of the Word.

One way that Christ does this is via parables. Parables, Henry writes, have as their goal "to establish an analogy between two universes, that of the visible and of the invisible, of the finite and of the infinite, in such a way that a series of events occurring in the first prompts us to form a notion of the second, namely the reign of God" (92). The paradigmatic parable is of the sower, where the seed is the Word and the soil is the hearer's heart (Matt. 13:3-8, 18-23; Mark

4:3-8, 14-20). Before looking at how human beings can know Christ as God, Henry first examines all the ways in which this is blocked. In the parable there are three unsuccessful attempts at sowing, which Henry deems evils that prevent the seed from taking root. The source of evil is ultimately the illusion of the ego, which is created when the Self forgets its original condition in Life as a gift from and sustained by Life. When the ego is created by thinking it is self-founding, the result is a "heart blind to Truth, deaf to the Word of Life, full of hardness, exclusively preoccupied with itself, taking itself as the point of departure and the end of its experiences and of its actions" (97). Despite this condition, which is evil and leads to all and sundry kinds of sin, the light of Life is never fully extinguished (100).

Since human beings are actually Sons of God born in Life, their original language, despite their ability to speak words of the world, is the word of Life (102). The words of the world are based on and always refer back to the more ancient words of Life, without which they are impossible. "*The human word can in no way be reduced to a word of the world;*" Henry writes, "*it is first that of life*" (103). Since the words of Christ and these more originary words of Life in human beings "are linked to each other by a decisive affinity," precisely as words of Life, the abyss that impedes the understanding of Christ's words as divine, of seeing him as the Word, is overcome (103). Human beings can understand the words of Christ and can therefore know that he is the Word of God because these same words are in them. Because both are Sons of Life, they speak the same words. However, this knowledge of the words of life that human beings have is not a worldly knowledge; rather, it is an "immediate understanding" that comes "consubstantial" with being a Son (104). Thus, the same legitimating power that the Word has for his words, human beings, by virtue of being Sons, have for theirs.

The problem of evil remains to be resolved at this point, Henry writes. How, since human beings, as living, are generated in and by Life and sustained by Life, does evil arise? The "heart" is both where livings come into their Life, but also where evil springs from (105). Henry has a cryptic remark on this point. Evil hates and rejects Truth, and yet cannot sever the link it has with it; but, "it is this link that motivates its hatred" (105). He still has not answered the question, though: whence comes this evil? He does state that our senses—hearing, seeing, touching, etc.—"are all powers that thrust us into the world," and so into the unreality and illusory nature of the exteriority that he condemns (106). These very powers, however, seem to only come from the efficacy—recall my comments on this in *Incarnation*—of the self-generation of Life. So, Henry's position here would seem to be that Life is so efficacious at self-generating that it has created livings that are thrust into the exteriority that is the world. Henry also writes that Christ's power to forgive sins and give Life is to restore what "has been disfigured or lost," meaning that evil and sin are not part of the original givenness of Life (110). The plan of salvation is to "recapture" those that have gone astray from Life (112). Despite this, Henry is quite clear that the power to refuse to hear God comes from God: "That in them which refuses to hear is, without doubt, evil – but also the freedom given to them at the same time as their life" (113). Thus, consubstantial with the self-generation of Life in and as livings, comes the freedom, power, and likelihood, of livings to refuse to hear the Word of Life, and to be thrust into the world.

Henry concludes *Words of Christ* by discussing how human beings can "*hear the word of Christ in their hearts*"—it is precisely, he argues, via "*comprehending the Scriptures*" (117). The Word first spoke through the prophets, and then through Christ, but this is the Word through which all life has always been engendered, and so it is a Word that exists outside of space, time, and texts (117-18). But, and this is perhaps the key point that Henry is making, because human

beings as livings are created in and sustained by Life, they immediately and innately "know" Life through experiencing it. Thus, they "are the irresistible proof of what the Word [*Parole*] says to [them]" (119). Livings can know and legitimate the words of Life, the Word of Life, because they too share in this Life. "Only the Spirit permits us to know the Spirit," only Life can know Life, only Life is its intelligibility (120). The incarnation of the Word in the flesh of Christ, and by this uniting of his flesh to that of human beings, is what ultimately allows them to hear the Word, a hearing which has been distorted by evil, the "unreality" of the world. The Word, which has always been identified with Life, comes in Christ to be identified with flesh.

Conclusion

Michel Henry certainly has done quite a bit to radicalize phenomenology. Using the language and ideas of Husserl and Heidegger, as well as Descartes, he pushed phenomenology to and indeed beyond its limits. Although drawing on and interacting with these figures, his thinking is also akin to the material monism of Spinoza and process metaphysics of Whitehead. Using John Mullarkey's language, we can say that he is a "process phenomenologist" as opposed to a "'classical' phenomenologist" like Husserl or Heidegger.[206] This "process" dimension to his thinking is directly related to his understanding of God and Life, which are equated for him. Although we see this processual development of Life living itself through livings in all his work, including his Christian trilogy, he explicitly cites Eckhart in *The Essence of Manifestation* as saying that "*God and I are one in process*" (324). Unlike the classical phenomenologists, Henry is committed to understanding philosophy and life in a completely immanent and material manner.

[206] Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy*, 48. Later he writes that Henry has a "process phenomenology of affectivity" (p. 68).

Although Henry is noted as one of the philosophers of the "theological turn" in French phenomenology, we can see now that his questions and analyses operate largely within the bounds of phenomenology itself, and are not so much a turn in phenomenology as a deepening of it. As we have seen, the natural outcome of his deepening of phenomenology is found for Henry in the Christian scriptures (especially the Gospel of John). Henry has pushed the boundaries of phenomenology and forced it to confront and question some of its long-held presuppositions. His focus on immanence and materiality as well as his positing the non-intentional relationship of affectivity has led to great changes in the field, most notably as adapted by Jean-Luc Marion in his discussion of revelation and givenness. The self-founding subjective ego of philosophy is replaced by a Self, a flesh given in the dative.

His contributions to philosophy of religion are also of vital importance. Bypassing the constraining effects of modernity—seen in his critique of the science enacted by Galileo and carried through to today, as well as his critique of historical criticism in the field of biblical studies—Henry is able to breath new life into interpretations of scripture and theology. Although his radicalization of both phenomenology and theology around understandings of flesh and body in relation to the incarnation has led to critiques of his views as forms of Gnosticism and Docetism, and has caused him to be a marginal figure in both disciplines, this is because his thought is quite intentionally "out of time." Henry's thought, like that of the other philosophers in the "theological turn," attempts to enrich our capacity for imagination, especially regarding how we understand reality and embodiment.

When it comes to questions of flesh and body, we see that Henry is not concerned with the biological body and with historical appearances of Jesus. He does not deny these, but his analytic focus is elsewhere. As a good phenomenologist, he gives an account of the flesh and

what it is, but bypasses questions of the ontic makeup of humanity and of Christ, especially in his incarnation and resurrection. I have highlighted Falque's main critique of Henry's view of flesh and body, and in the next chapter I will explore in much more detail Falque's reasons for this, and his phenomenological response to it. Falque, we will see, is much more intentional than Henry about going into theological complexities and drawing from theological sources; and he attends to a much more descriptive and historical account of the embodied existence of Christ. I turn now to Chapter 3 on Emmanuel Falque, explicating his phenomenology of flesh and body.

Chapter 3: Christ in Flesh and Bones in Emmanuel Falque

Introduction

Emmanuel Falque (b. 1963) is the foremost figure working in the "theological turn" in French phenomenology today. While carrying forward the project of the previous generations of thinkers in the "theological turn" into our current age, he has chosen to do so in decidedly different ways. Unlike Levinas, Ricoeur, and even Marion, all of whom take pains to clearly demarcate the boundaries between philosophy and theology and downplay the theological side in their philosophies, Falque makes no such move. As Bradley Onishi writes in his translator's introduction to Falque's *The Loving Struggle*, "in some sense Falque is the most unabashedly Catholic of all the members of the theological turn." Onishi sees this as a benefit, though, and continues, "yet, he is also the most open, both philosophically and theologically, to debate, dialogue and transformation with other modes of discourse."[207]

Falque has been actively publishing material in both ancient and mediaeval thought as well as contemporary phenomenology since the mid-90's, yet it is only in the past 7 or 8 years that he has really been taken up in a serious manner in North America. Three of his articles had been published in English (2001, 2007, 2009) before his first book translation in 2012. It is likely because of this relative obscurity in the North American world that his name is missing in the 2010 collection *Words of Life: New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology*[208] (which came out well after the first two volumes of Falque's theological trilogy and other of his key works

[207] Bradley B. Onishi, "Introduction to the English Translation: Is the Theological Turn Still Relevant? Finitude, Affect, and Embodiment", in Emmanuel Falque, *The Loving Struggle: Phenomenological and Theological Debates*, trans. Bradley B. Onishi and Lucas McCracken (New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018), xxiii. Onishi writes elsewhere that for Falque, "the goal is not to demonstrate the philosophical plausibility of revelation or other theological phenomena but to enable a transformative encounter between theology and philosophy that can reorient and enliven both disciplines." Bradley B. Onishi, 'Philosophy *and* Theology: Emmanuel Falque and the New Theological Turn', in *Evil, Fallenness, and Finitude*, ed. Bruce Ellis Benson and B. Keith Putt (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 101.

[208] Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba, eds., *Words of Life: New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

had been published), as well as the 2013 work *The New Phenomenology: A Philosophical Introduction* by Simmons and Benson, which covered all the major figures associated with the "theological turn" except Falque.[209] Christina Gschwandtner did, however, include a chapter on Falque in her 2013 *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy*.[210] Since 2012 all of Falque's major works have been or are in the process of being translated into English, and there is a growing secondary literature on Falque, including the recently edited volume *Transforming the Theological Turn: Phenomenology with Emmanuel Falque*.[211] This shows that Falque is coming to be recognized as an important voice in contemporary phenomenology in a North American context, and the standard bearer of what was initiated in the "theological turn."

There are two major distinguishing features in Falque's works that set him apart from other thinkers in the phenomenological milieu, even those who are situated in the "theological turn." The first is his questioning of the boundary between philosophy and theology, and his desire to openly and boldly cross back and forth between the two. The boundary between the two disciplines is arbitrary at best, and he believes that approaching phenomena from both disciplines is necessary and beneficial in order to fully understand them. Second, Falque sets himself apart from his peers by inverting the focus of his phenomenology. Although similar to them in his pushing phenomenology to its limits and investigating the non-phenomenal,[212] he critiques the

[209] J. Aaron Simmons and Bruce Ellis Benson, *The New Phenomenology: A Philosophical Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

[210] Christina M. Gschwandtner, *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

[211] Martin Koci and Jason W. Alvis, eds., *Transforming the Theological Turn: Phenomenology with Emmanuel Falque* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020). This is the first book of its kind in English. A comparative exists in French: Claude Brunier-Coulin, éd., *Une analytique du passage: Rencontres et confrontations avec Emmanuel Falque* (Paris: Éditions Franciscaines, 2016).

[212] See, e.g., Emmanuel Falque, 'The Extra-Phenomenal', trans. Luke McCracken, *Diakrisis Yearbook of Theology and Philosophy* 1 (2018): 9–28. "I wish to interrogate the (non)significance of the *impossibility of appearing itself*

tradition for its approach from above (idealism), and thus for privileging sense over non-sense, passivity over activity, and flesh over body. He does not set himself against these, exactly, but emphasizes the need to first fully explore the other side of the dichotomy. Thus, Falque aims his phenomenological lens at the chaotic, the active, and the material in order to describe what is most primary to the human being. His investigations—philosophical and theological—are founded in immanence, finitude, and the human condition as such (*l'homme tout court*).

These connected approaches make Falque a very interesting figure to work with, especially with regard to his relation vis-à-vis Michel Henry. This chapter on Falque proceeds in a similar way to the previous chapter on Henry; however, due to the differences in their respective approaches, it cannot be identical. In Henry, there is a clear separation between his late Christian trilogy and his earlier philosophical works, a distinction that was easy to lay out in that chapter. Falque's *oeuvre* does not reflect this easy distinction, which is one of the most apparent differences between the two thinkers. The three books in Falque's trilogy have been interspersed from the beginning of his writing with his other works, and even these other works move between philosophy and theology. In this chapter, then, I will separate into two sections Falque's 'non-trilogy' and trilogy works, with the understanding that there is not a chronological movement from one to the other. First, I will examine Falque's 'non-trilogy' works, as they both elucidate his thinking on body, flesh, and incarnation, as well as inform the reader as to his general method in approaching these themes. Having this foundation in place, I turn in the next section to his triptych, examining both his thinking in each text as well as the trilogy as a whole. Throughout, I will highlight those areas in which he is aligned with and critical of Henry's

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that marks the *destruction of the horizon of appearing*. In short, the issue is not the *givenness of the phenomenon of non-givenness* (a phenomenology of night); rather, it is the *non-givenness of givenness itself*—neither by *privation* nor by *excess* but by *abnegation* (the night of phenomenology)" (25-26).

thinking when it comes to body and flesh, ultimately arguing that Falque—despite his efforts—has a phenomenological position very similar to Henry's.

Falque's Method: The Continual Criss-crossing of Philosophy and Theology

In this first section I will analyze Falque's key 'non-trilogy' works in order to lay out his general method. Doing this will allow for a better understanding of his theological trilogy. I start by looking at a more recent work, *Crossing the Rubicon*, in which he lays out in a clear manner the method he employs in his previous works, namely, the need to start from a philosophical standpoint that will be transformed into a theological one. I then look at his dissertation and habilitation—*St. Bonaventure and the Entrance of God into Theology* and *God, the Flesh, and the Other*, respectively—followed by a recent work highlighting debates with contemporary French thinkers, *The Loving Struggle*. In all these works Falque's attention to embodiment and finitude can be seen, as well as his weaving together of both phenomenological and theological approaches and thinkers. Another point of distinction between Henry and Falque will be highlighted as we proceed in this section: unlike Henry's fundamental search for the very condition of phenomenality, which I laid out before examining his trilogy, Falque's analyses are much more second-order, describing and highlighting the ways that he and other thinkers approach and describe phenomena.

Crossing the Rubicon: The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology

Falque's *Crossing the Rubicon: The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology* is, *à la* Descartes, his 'Discourse on Method'.[213] In it, he unfolds and makes clear what he is doing in his

[213] Emmanuel Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology*, trans. Reuben Shank (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016); English translation of *Passer le Rubicon: Philosophie et théologie;*

previous books, and it also provides a guide for how to understand his later books. Published in 2013, it comes after his trilogy and the majority of his works that I discuss but serves as a helpful starting point. Commenting on this work and Falque's overall approach, Colby Dickinson states that "what Falque envisions is a mutual crossing of boundaries so that philosophy and theology are capable of traversing over and past one another—a renewed vision of what metaphysics *can* be."[214] In his introduction to the English translation of *Crossing the Rubicon*, Matthew Farley writes that Falque does not demarcate his position on the relationship between philosophy and theology from the get-go, rather, "whatever the differences are between philosophy and theology, … they can only be clarified along the way by a joint practice."[215] Although Falque claims, like Michel Henry, to be a philosopher first and foremost, it is clear that he is not doing so in the sense that he has to obey the contingent (and relatively recently erected) borders between the two.

Falque notes that the space between philosophy and theology, like the Rubicon for Julius Caesar, is not actually that wide. What makes the crossing weighty, however, is the meaning attached to the distinction itself, and thus to the gravity or precarity of one's crossing. His stated aim is to "trace the stages of the itinerary that defines another and a new relationship between philosophy *and* theology with careful attention to their conjunction—*and*—rather than to their disjunction—*or*—as is most often practiced today" (18). Falque still sees a difference between the two disciplines, on which he writes (in a perhaps too-simplistic manner): "The difference between philosophy and theology consists less in *what is studied* (the object), than in their specific *points of departure* (from below or from above), their proper *ways of proceeding*

Essai sur les frontières (Bruxelles: Éditions Lessius, 2013). Citations in this section will be done parenthetically from the English translation unless stated otherwise.

[214] Dickinson, *Theology and Contemporary Continental Philosophy*, 116.

[215] Matthew Farley, "Introduction" in Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 4.

(heuristically or didactically), and the *status* of the objects analyzed (according to the category of possibility or effectivity)" (22). By these analytic terms, Falque holds the following: that philosophy departs from an acceptance of facticity and the "human per se," whereas theology sees the human being starting from corrupted infinitude, a more spiritual being; that philosophy proceeds in a slow movement of questioning where the beginning point (doubt) is genuinely different than the end point (some form of certitude), whereas theology's beginning and end are the same, since questions are not seriously wrestled with—the revealed is taken as given; and that philosophy holds certain religious phenomena (e.g., the incarnation) as only a possibility for analysis, whereas theology takes them as an actuality.

What is also important in Falque's view is that for him theology transforms or fulfills philosophy, which is where his confessional stance is clear. However, theology is important for Falque only if it is arrived at through a philosophical starting point. He believes that "the pedestal common to humanity waits its philosophical foundation in order to be 'metamorphosed' theologically" (20). Before there is any confessional faith and religious adherence, there is a general perceptual faith or belief that everyone possesses; indeed, this perceptual faith is necessary before one can even doubt. This "originary faith or *Urglaube*" finds its realization when it is taken up and transformed theologically (20). Even though Falque works from a stance wherein theology brings philosophy to its completion, all thinking must begin by way of philosophy. He argues that "in philosophy as in theology, the horizon of finitude will always remain primary, at least as a function of that with which, as humans, we are *first* confronted" (22).[216] This fact is the reason that he is so intent on describing, understanding, and always

[216] Aspray questions the necessity—theologically, but also philosophically—of starting from the horizon of finitude put forth by Heidegger, as Falque believes must be the case. He asks: "is *our conception of finitude* not itself finite, heuristic, changeable? Does Heidegger himself, then, not give us license to challenge his 'fundamental starting point' *on its own terms*?" Barnabas Aspray, 'Transforming Heideggerian Finitude?: Following Pathways Opened by

starting from finitude and the body. Not content to "stop on the threshold of one discipline—immanence in the case of philosophy, or transcendence for theology," Falque endeavours to weave them closer together, to explore their metamorphosis, in order to see how they are "bound in the God-man capable of unifying and incorporating them into the mystery of the Trinity" (23).

Laying out the book in three parts (interpreting, deciding, crossing), each containing two steps, Falque claims that what is most important in this text, and in his work overall, is to actually make the decision, like Caesar, to cross. "Crossing the Rubicon is actually to carry out the crossing;" he writes, "inspecting the banks of the river is helpful but serves only to distinguish them better" (24). Falque's wager is that moving between the two disciplines, and indeed for each discipline not to stop at the threshold of the other, mutually benefits them both. "The more we theologize, the better we philosophize," he avers, citing a claim he makes in his previous work, *God, the Flesh, and the Other* (25, citing *GFO* 16); he of course also believes the reverse, that the more we philosophize, the better we theologize, as he makes clear by the need to begin with human finitude. This motto is what propels Falque's work, and we do well to remember it, especially when we get to his trilogy.

Part I of this book focusses on interpreting, and thus begins with hermeneutics and Falque's attempt to clarify a distinctly Catholic approach to hermeneutics. In the first chapter, "Is Hermeneutics Fundamental?," he pays homage to both Ricoeur and Levinas, the latter questioning Heidegger in his 1951 essay "Is Ontology Fundamental?"[217] Falque first lays the groundwork for identifying "Ricoeur's Protestant hermeneutic, centered on the *meaning of the text*" and "Levinas's Jewish hermeneutic, shaped by *the body of the text*" (30). This schema will

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Emmanuel Falque', in *Transforming the Theological Turn: Phenomenology with Emmanuel Falque*, ed. Martin Koci and Jason W. Alvis (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 170.

[217] Emmanuel Levinas, 'Is Ontology Fundamental?', in *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 1-11.

lead into the second chapter, "For a Hermeneutic of the Body and the Voice," where he puts forward "the possibility of a Catholic hermeneutic, anchored this time in *corporeality* as the center and heart of the activity of interpretation" (30). Falque sees textual hermeneutics as being tied to the Protestant idea of *sola scriptura*, such that the Word only becomes incarnate in the written word; his emphasis on embodiment leads him by contrast towards a *corpus totum*, which is a return to the body, the voice, and the spiritual senses (19).

Falque is clear that he is not out to quarrel with Ricoeur and Levinas on religious grounds,[218] but is seeking to be true to a distinctly Catholic approach to hermeneutics, which for him means getting at what is prior to the text, namely the body and the voice.[219] He points to Ricoeur's essay "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation"[220] as being exemplary of Ricoeur's view of hermeneutics, one that leads to an "emancipation from the one who wrote the text (the author), emancipation of the one who receives the text (the reader), and emancipation of that to which the text refers (the referent)" (33). For all the benefits of textual hermeneutics, which Falque discusses, he bemoans the fact that the detachment and autonomy of the text in Ricoeur's thinking leads to its detachment from the body. What is needed, he thinks, is a "hermeneutics of the body" (35).

[218] In an interview with Richard Kearney, Falque writes: "I am not first a Catholic because I want to defend a position, or out of a dogmatic conviction, but because it is where I am spiritually rooted, as Levinas is rooted in Judaism and Ricoeur in Protestantism. We can learn more from our differences." Emmanuel Falque and Richard Kearney, 'An Anatheist Exchange: Returning to the Body after the Flesh', in *Richard Kearney's Anatheistic Wager: Philosophy, Theology, Poetics*, ed. Chris Doude van Troostwijk and Matthew Clemente (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018), 103.

[219] Katerina Koci critiques Falque for not also addressing the active and conscious role of the ear, and thus the reader and addressee of a text. See Katerina Koci, 'A Friendly Tussle Between Hermeneutics and Phenomenology: From Ricoeur to Falque and Beyond', in *Transforming the Theological Turn: Phenomenology with Emmanuel Falque*, ed. Martin Koci and Jason W. Alvis (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 93–105.

[220] Paul Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 75–88.

Levinas's "Jewish hermeneutic" is also missing something, Falque argues. In Levinas, the text "is transformed or rather oriented 'otherwise'," it "becomes a trace" and "spoken word" (44). Unlike Ricoeur's Protestant hermeneutic which focusses more on the individual and the text as "the mode of a presence" of God, Levinas highlights the importance of community and "*the trace* of an absence" of God (45). The communal focus in Levinas, which comes from an understanding of reading that begins with "Talmudic glosses on the text" (44), is closer to how Falque imagines a Catholic hermeneutic. Additionally, Levinas does have more of an emphasis on embodiment than Ricoeur. Falque points to, for example, Levinas's *Beyond the Verse*, where he writes that there is "a contraction of the infinite in the scripture" and that "the square letters are a precarious dwelling" for God (45).[221] There is in Judaism not the incarnation of God, as in Christianity, but there is God's incorporation in the letter. Falque, though, wants to move past the letter and speech to the incarnate body of human being.

Moving from "the *written text* to *living* and *incarnate body*" (past Ricoeur's Protestant hermeneutic) and from "the *professed word* to the *exemplified voice*" (past Levinas's Jewish hermeneutic) (46), Falque puts forward a Catholic hermeneutic. In this approach, he writes that "I come not only to the *world* but also to the *text* with my flesh and body. Moreover, the text only becomes incorporated in me when I also become capable of incorporating myself in it, in the same way as we become incorporated in Christ or in the church" (48). What is clear is Falque's focus on the primacy of embodiment, and especially of God's becoming a body (and not just a text). God's body is both "'a body of speech to be recited'—that is, mouthfuls of scriptural verses—and a 'Eucharistic body' to be assimilated—that is, partaking of a meal or even as contemplation or adoration" (49). Partaking of this "double table" exemplified in

[221] Emmanuel Levinas, *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures*, trans. Gary D. Mole (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), x and 121, respectively.

Catholic mass, the human being is focussed neither on the meaning of the text nor the body of the letter, but on the text of the body, that is, the voice and the incarnate flesh (54).

Again, Falque takes pains to highlight that his Catholic hermeneutic should not be seen as part of some sort of confessional struggle with either Protestantism or Judaism. He is simply trying to put forth what he thinks is the distinctly Catholic approach to these matters. He argues that in both these other confessional stances, the text remains primary, whereas in Catholicism the text is only one of the two tables, the other being the eucharist (i.e., the body) (55). Falque's reading of these other religious traditions is, however, superficial. For example, the idea of the "double table" is found also in certain Protestant denominations (e.g., Lutheranism), which highlights his narrow understanding of Protestantism and his reductive reading of Ricoeur's "Protestant Hermeneutics."[222] Jean Greisch—Ricoeur specialist and fellow Catholic philosopher—is concerned that Falque's labelling is too simplistic and artificially reductive, that his use of "'confessional' nomenclature to characterize philosophical enterprises gives rise to serious objections," and that Falque skirts the majority of Ricoeur's work that is not properly "Protestant" or textual.[223] In response to Greisch's critique, Falque avers that he is aware of the breadth and variety of Ricoeur's hermeneutics, but that in *Crossing the Rubicon* he wants to focus on how Ricoeur was received in France, primarily in biblical exegesis and Catholic theology.[224]

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[222] See Koci, 'A Friendly Tussle Between Hermeneutics and Phenomenology', 95.

[223] Jean Greisch, 'Où passe le Rubicon? Un problème de géographie spirituelle', in *Une analytique du passage: Rencontres et confrontations avec Emmanuel Falque*, éd. Claude Brunier-Coulin (Paris: Éditions Franciscaines, 2016), 315–40, especially 322-29. "Cette façon d'utiliser une nomenclature «confessionnelle» pour caractériser des enterprises philosophiques n'est pas sans susciter de graves objections" (326).

[224] Emmanuel Falque, 'Un «écart» de génération: À Jean Greisch', in *Parcours d'embûches: S'expliquer* (Paris: Éditions Franciscaines, 2016), 124–32. "Que nous ayons centré le débat avec Paul Ricœur sur la seule «herméneutique textuelle» dans *Passer le Rubicon* ne vient pas de l'ignorance des autres formes de l'herméneutique (de la faillibilité par exemple), mais de la manière dont l'herméneute fut reçu en France, en particulier dans sa terre d'accueil de l'exégèse et de la théologie d'inspiration catholique" (129).

While both Protestant and Jewish traditions contain the *logos* in the text in language (Ricoeur) and speech (Levinas), Falque contends that neither attend to the corporeality of the voice itself, to that which is the basis for language and speech (58). This focus on language without a body is not only a theological problem, but is also a phenomenological one, Falque contends. Even in the figures who discuss a notion of "the call," such as Heidegger, Derrida, Marion, and Chrétien, "the call" has no voice, it is not grounded in anything corporeal (60). But "there will never be a voice without a body," Falque argues, and both phenomenology and theology must attend to this fact (64). The speaker may remain hidden but is made manifest bodily in the voice. Falque's ideas here are especially pertinent as they concern Christ as the Word. In Catholic thought there is neither a body without a voice (the incarnation) nor a voice without a body (the eucharist) (72). The notion that Falque puts forward, of a Catholic hermeneutic of "*the text of the body*," locates both speaking and embodying in the voice (73). Interpretation, while not neglecting the written text, must be for Falque a matter written to, and in, the body. But interpretation is only the first step; one must also decide.

The second part of Falque's method, "Decision", consists of two parts: "Always Believing" and "Kerygma and Decision." Here he highlights that before one ever believes in a confessional or religious manner, one always already believes in the world; and, following from this, one is paradoxically to choose to choose, in the situation where one must choose something. The theological, for Falque, is always grounded first in the philosophical. The 'higher beliefs' contained within theology are only properly assessed or developed from a proper understanding of their rootedness in a primary belief in the world. As indicative of this idea, Falque points to §7 of Husserl's *Experience and Judgment*, where he writes that "an actual *world* always precedes cognitive activity as its universal ground, and this means first of all a ground of universal passive

belief."[225] Seeing a continuum from "a philosophical perceptive faith" all the way to "a theological confessing faith," Falque argues that "'philosophical belief' or 'perceptive faith' is the place of the greatest human community—where both God himself and our act of confessing faith must become incarnate" (79-80).

One of philosophy's, especially phenomenology's, greatest lessons is that human beings have an innate natural trust in the world. Before we can doubt or mistrust our senses or a belief, there is always already a trust and a perceptive faith. Theology, or religion more broadly, needs to take this primary faith into account in order to be transformed by it. Falque writes that "*religious faith*, often wrongly mistrusting the world and the ordinary belief of humans, should recognize first the trusting attitude that abides in each and everyone's originary *philosophical faith*—whether a believer or not" (83). In attempting to overcome this primal faith in the world, by doubting it or suspending it via the phenomenological reduction, we end up with the illusory stance that our consciousness is neutral and transparent and that we are without prejudice (89). We can see clearly here how for Falque, philosophy and theology relate—again, on a continuum—with the latter needing the former for its grounding, and, a point that will be explored later, the former finding a deeper form of belief in the latter.

Any sort of confessional believing must take into serious consideration the primary and universal fact that all human beings always already have faith in the world. This natural or passive belief always comes before any form of decided belief. What Falque wagers is that the decisive act of confessional faith does not move beyond this initial philosophical faith, but instead transforms it (99). Falque sees as emblematic of this transformation the move from a philosophy of religion to a philosophy of religious experience. In the former, one remains in the

[225] Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, trans. James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 30. Quoted on Falque, 79.

more distanced and objective position towards religious objects (he lists Hegel, Schelling, and Fichte as examples); however, in the latter one subjectively reflects philosophically from a position of faith on what led them to their religious belief (listing Augustine, Kierkegaard, and Weil) (104). The decision to act does not prevent someone from continuing to philosophise; rather, a metamorphosis of the act of philosophising also takes place.

For Falque, the act of deciding necessarily leads one back to a deeper and truer sense of experience and reality. He writes that "a true phenomenology of the religious life, or in my terms a *philosophy of religious experience*, must undertake to lead us back to a pure consciousness and attain the essence of the religious phenomena by means of the lived experiences of consciousness" (105). Falque is not here suggesting that one must be religious or have a confessional faith, but that a return to the facticity of the author in question is necessary so as not to separate their experience and what they experience, and therefore to truly understand their thought (106).[226] Another important connected point he makes is that the decision for transformation—choosing to choose—necessarily leads to a transformation of how we understand the act of deciding (107).

The act of deciding, though, is only ever done secondarily to another decision, that is, "deciding is not choosing but responding" (111). Whether in the form of Heidegger's secular notion of the call, or a religious notion of being claimed or chosen by God, the one who makes the act of choosing does so *a posteriori*. Theology here transforms philosophy, as in the act of choosing (moving from pre-reflective to reflective) one comes to realize that one has already been chosen. In the act of deciding it is neither only God nor only the human being, but both

[226] Here he quotes Heidegger on the double sense of experience in factical life, in that "it is precisely the fact that the experiencing self and what is experienced are not torn apart like things that expresses what is essential in factical life experience." Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 7.

cooperating (114).[227] Rather than a solipsistic act, believing and deciding in a Christian sense is communal: both between the believer and God, and the believer and her community. The "in-common of believing" in the theological sense still needs the "believing-in-common of the always believing" in the philosophical sense (115-16). After deciding, one must, like Caesar, actually cross the Rubicon.

In the final part of *Crossing the Rubicon*, Falque again reminds readers that all thinking must start with the experience of the human being as such, via the horizon of human finitude (122-23). Although theology and philosophy are distinguished by their approaches and not their contents, as mentioned above, theology (from above) requires a grounding in the human experience and finitude addressed by philosophy, especially phenomenology (from below) (124). What he elaborates in the first chapter of the final part is how "only in the overlaying (tiling) and transformation (conversion) of the below of philosophy by the above of theology can the one and the other respectively come to make sense" (124). The starting point of finitude and the work of philosophy are never done away with, for Falque, as theology overlays philosophy's work with its own; but in overlaying it, theology also transforms philosophy's meaning. Philosophy offers theology its deep understanding of humanity and nature; Catholic theology offers philosophy the transformation of these via the Trinity and the resurrection.

Starting philosophically means, for Falque, always starting with finitude, the natural and immediate manner of one's own being. On the approach of finitude, Falque is very influenced by Heidegger;[228] however, he is also influenced here by John Duns Scotus (127).[229] Falque sees

[227] "God works in us the willing and the doing of his good design" (Phil. 2:13).

[228] Falque likes how Heidegger seeks to understand the limit of finitude as not a limitation, pointing a number of times to this excerpt from *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*: "Thus, in order to designate the finite in human beings it might suffice to cite any of our imperfections. In this way, we gain, at best, evidence for the fact that the human being is a finite creature. However, we learn neither wherein the essence of his finitude exists, nor even how

finitude as a limit, but in such wise that it is a gift from God integral to who human beings are. As much as human finitude will be metamorphosed by the resurrection, so too will philosophy be transformed by theology; nevertheless, the starting point must not be hastily abandoned, Falque argues. Recognizing that human beings are a "limit phenomenon," Falque takes seriously that God takes on and "overlays" the fullness of this condition, and then transforms it (130-31). It is because Christ, as the God-man, acts as the mediator between humanity and divinity that the human condition, and philosophy's ken, can move towards and be overlaid by theology.

Reading metaphysics not as an "after" or a "beyond" but rather "in the sense of its *crossing* or *traverse* in the experiential sense of its suffering as of its passage," Falque arrives at the last stage of his *itinerarium*: "Finally Theology" (135). Although Falque writes that "*one enters the other's field in order to respect the boundaries*," he still sees the immense benefit to both sides of crossing back and forth between the disciplines of philosophy and theology (138). Philosophers should be encouraged "to practice everything" including "theologizing," and theologians too should be encouraged to use all philosophical tools available to them (138-39). Instead of stopping at the threshold—arbitrary in many ways—that separates philosophy from theology, Falque encourages members from each discipline to step over, and to experience the transformation of their self and their thinking.

What Falque seeks, and indeed what he carries out with vivacity in his own work, is not the mindset of philosophy or theology, but philosophy *and* theology (148). "The prohibition of

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this finitude completely determines the human being from the ground up as the being it is." Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 154.

[229] Falque quotes Scotus: "I say that contingency is not merely a privation or defect of Being like the deformity in the second act which is sin. Rather, contingency is a positive mode of Being, just as necessity is another mode." Falque cites this from Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, ed. Mary McCarthy (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), vol. 2: *Willing*, 134-35. The citation Arendt gives is Arthur Hyman and James J. Walsh, eds., *Philosophy in the Middle Ages: The Christian, Jewish, and Islamic Traditions* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967), 597.

the passage of philosophy to theology is not a matter of forbidden fruit or even an error in which not to fall," he contends. "Only the history of philosophy and theology erected that wall. The twentieth century created the breach in it; the twenty-first century will have to find a passage through it" (148). It is here that Falque sees theology making a "counterblow" against philosophy, especially the phenomenological tradition within which he operates. He highlights three areas in which he feels that phenomenology—even that associated with those figures in the "theological turn"—has gone astray. These are: "first, the hypertrophy of the flesh over against the body; second, the surplus of sense over nonsense; third, the over-determination of passivity with respect to activity" (149). His work, as I will soon detail, seeks to describe the minimized phenomena of body, nonsense, and activity, and thus challenge the phenomenological approach.

The emphases upon flesh, sense, and passivity are all prominent in Henry's work, Falque avers, and so it is beneficial to point out Falque's critique of him here. On his inversions, Falque writes that "it is no longer the flesh or *Leib* that explains Christ's Incarnation as with Henry, but Christ's Incarnation that questions *Leib* or the meaning of its consistence *qua* body" (149). Instead of moving from phenomenology to theology, as Henry does, Falque will move from theology to phenomenology to articulate this inversion. Clearly continuing his criticism of Henry, Falque quips that "only without reading Tertullian or in reading him poorly, is it possible to think that the flesh of Christ is no more than an illustration of the lived body in its interiority or auto-affection. Rather," and this is Falque's suggestion, "it is a body 'spread out' in its organic character, as inaccessible to conceptuality as it is determinative for my affectivity" (150).[230] If Falque really means "flesh of Christ" instead of "body of Christ" when critiquing Henry, he has sorely misread him.

[230] Falque's notion of the "spread body" [*corps épandu*] is developed in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* and represents a body mid-way between the lived body (*Leib*) and the objective body (*Körper*).

Additionally, on the relation between philosophy and theology, Falque critiques Henry for not knowing (or distinguishing) when he philosophizes and when he theologizes (142), and for also relying almost exclusively on the Bible and not on theology (148). As we will see in his trilogy, Falque uses a much wider selection of the Bible than Henry and uses more theologians than Henry too. I wonder, regarding Falque's claim that Henry relies almost completely on the Bible, if Falque thinks that Henry is more Protestant than Catholic, following the impulse of *sola scriptura* (as Falque understands it) rather than the richness of the Catholic tradition.[231] However, this may be due to Henry's desire to side-step the scientific and historicist thrust of much of contemporary theology and biblical studies, and to attempt to read the Bible on his own understanding of its terms, also informed by the theological traditions.

Moving on to the final pages of *Crossing the Rubicon*, Falque makes some concluding remarks on criticism he expects will arise, for instance, that he is theologizing phenomenology or making a phenomenological turn of theology. Falque states that these views arise from a stance wherein one can, and even should, only either philosophize or theologize. He is clear that he prefers being a philosopher, but that he can do this even better if he also at times theologizes (150). The continual movement of crossing the Rubicon reveals that philosophy and theology should not be set in opposition, nor merely be complementary, but engaged together in "a common *ascesis* or spiritual exercise" (152). Ultimately, as he shows here in his 'Discourse on method', Falque yearns for a new unity between philosophy and theology; theologians should not be afraid to stop at the philosophical threshold, and philosophers—whether believers or not—should also push their work into the domain of theology. Indeed, this latter suggestion is one of the distinct features that sets Falque apart from previous figures in the "theological turn":

[231] In distinction to his understanding of the Protestant notion of *sola scriptura*, Falque writes of "the tradition and the magisterium handing on and interpreting the biblical message, the very pillars of Catholicism" (41).

philosophy needs to explicitly move into the theological domain in order to maintain its own coherence, and philosophers should be theologians at times. In these moves of crossing the Rubicon, both the disciplines and those who practice them will be transformed.

There are some issues with Falque's method and direction, especially as laid out in *Crossing the Rubicon*. One deals with the possibility of being both a philosopher and a theologian—if not simultaneously then at least at different points of thinking, when one is on one or the other side of the philosophical/theological divide. Although Falque maintains that he is a philosopher first, it may be more apt to called him a phenomenological theologian. Here I agree with philosopher Jakub Čapek, that Falque "is somebody who crossed the boundary in one sense—from philosophy to theology—and looks back but does not return."[232] We need not condemn Falque for having assumed this theoretical stance, but it does nuance his call for a continual crossing of the boundary between philosophy and theology. One can indeed cross back from the theological side to the philosophical, but only in such a manner that their approach to philosophy would be mediated from a theologically-metamorphosed lens.

This theological mediation of philosophy applies to their relation. While Falque maintains that philosophy is not the servant of theology, he proceeds in *Crossing the Rubicon*—and in his thought generally—from philosophy upwards to theology. Philosophy is important and has its role, but it is ultimately transformed by theology. Falque has, however, been interpreted in numerous ways on this point. Joseph O'Leary contends that Falque has swallowed theology within philosophy;[233] Bradley Onishi avers that Falque vies for a genuine transformative

[232] Jakub Čapek, 'Philosophy and Theology: What Happens When We Cross the Boundary?', in *Transforming the Theological Turn: Phenomenology with Emmanuel Falque*, ed. Martin Koci and Jason W. Alvis (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 49.

[233] Joseph S. O'Leary, 'Phenomenology and Theology: Respecting the Boundaries', *Philosophy Today* 62, no. 1 (2018): 99–117.

encounter rather than conversion;[234] and Christopher King argues that there is a conversion on a disciplinary level but not necessarily on the level of the practitioner.[235] Falque's aim to keep philosophy and theology as separate disciplines—though with a desire to transform the former by the latter—stands in distinction to Henry's aim. Henry sees Christianity and the Bible as describing the same reality as philosophy—indeed, describing it better than philosophy, as they are not caught up in ecstatic thinking—as his work on John in *I Am the Truth* clearly demonstrates.

Saint Bonaventure and the Entrance of God into Theology

Having a grasp of Falque's methodological approach we turn now to the first of his works, his doctoral dissertation from 1998, *Saint Bonaventure and the Entrance of God into Theology*, pointing out some of his pertinent thinking there.[236] Unlike Henry, Falque was trained as a mediaevalist and his graduate work reveals a deep knowledge of and working with ancient and mediaeval theological texts. Yet, the phenomenological influence—Jean-Luc Marion was his supervisor—can already clearly be seen at this stage. My look at this text will not be as exhaustive as *Crossing the Rubicon*, but will highlight the key features of Falque's "crossing" between philosophy and theology. As well, I will point out areas in which he directly interacts with the themes of finitude, embodiment, and incarnation.

[234] Onishi, 'Philosophy *and* Theology: Emmanuel Falque and the New Theological Turn'.

[235] Christopher J. King, 'On the Conversion of Philosophy: The Problems and Promise of Emmanuel Falque's Theology of Philosophy', *The Heythrop Journal* 62, no. 1 (2021): 75–84.

[236] Emmanuel Falque, *Saint Bonaventure and the Entrance of God into Theology: The Breviloquium as a Summa Theologica*, trans. Brian Lapsa and Sarah Horton, rev. William C. Hackett (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2018); English translation of *Saint Bonaventure et l'entrée de Dieu en théologie: La somme théologique du Breviloquium (prologue et premiere partie)* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2000). Citations in this section will be done parenthetically from the English translation unless stated otherwise.

Falque's interest in Franciscan thought goes back to his adolescence, and is, for him, more than just a way of thinking; it is "something lived and even practiced" (xx). *Saint Bonaventure* displays this Franciscan inflexion on the phenomenology of givenness of his supervisor Marion: not a phenomenology of the extraordinary (what Marion gets by following Denys the Areopagite), but a phenomenology of the ordinary or hypercognizable (what Falque gets by following Bonaventure) (xxi). This study also displays the influence of Heidegger, especially his distinction between the *causa sui* God and the God before whom one could dance and sing (xxii).[237] Falque wants to use the style of phenomenology to inaugurate a new approach to mediaeval thinkers, and also to bring to light some of the unique, even phenomenological, insights of Bonaventure (xlviii).[238]

In the Introduction, Falque lays out his approach as phenomenology *and* theology, and argues that the merits of this should be judged after the fact and not before it, as Janicaud does in his critique of the "theological turn" (li). In *Saint Bonaventure* Falque shows that the Seraphic Doctor is already thinking and writing in a phenomenological manner. Falque points out that Bonaventure was highly descriptive, that he formulates a "language of the flesh" into a phenomenological method, and that his theology in a way evades the critique of onto-theology (lv). The overarching thesis of this text is that there is a difference in how God enters both philosophy and theology. In the former, philosophy itself is in charge of God's entrance and makes space for God to enter, but to enter as a concept, as *causa sui*; in theology, as Falque will argue following Bonaventure, God enters on God's own terms, and therefore as Trinity (lvii).

[237] See Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, 72: "This [*causa sui*] is the right name for the god of philosophy. Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god."

[238] Cf. Merleau-Ponty's famous Preface to *Phenomenology of Perception* for a discussion of phenomenology as a manner or style. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Routledge, 1994), viii: "the opinion of the responsible philosopher must be that *phenomenology can be practiced and identified as a manner or style of thinking*."

The beginning of theology must always be to let God enter in God's own manner, namely, as Trinity.[239] We must keep in mind, however, that for Falque theology begins only after philosophy has run its course. That is, before one gets to theology and its claims, one must have already passed through philosophical analyses starting with the basic fact of human finitude.

The phenomenological character that Falque finds in Bonaventure is his attention to the different modes of the appearing of God and scripture, that is, to their *how* more so than to their *what*. For example, Falque points to a passage from the *Breviloquium* where Bonaventure writes that "because Scripture has this special mode of proceeding, it should be understood and expounded in a way that corresponds to it. Since it hides several meanings under a single text, the expositor must *bring hidden things to light*."[240] The task of the expositor of scripture is thus very phenomenological, to make manifest what is hidden through description and exposition. Pointing to a Bonaventurian reduction, *à la* Descartes and Husserl, Falque aims to capture the performativity and descriptivity of his work, and ultimately his "redirection from all things and from the self toward the Trinitarian God" (25). Bonaventure's reduction leads to his unique understanding of the Trinity.

How to talk about God, and more so to define God, whether in philosophy or theology, has always been notoriously difficult. Augustine's *De Trinitate* remains in many ways the benchmark for grappling with God as Trinity. However, Falque argues that from Augustine up to Aquinas God is reified and understood according to substance (31).[241] This whole Latin tradition

[239] Falque points to the Prologue of Bonaventure's *Breviloquium*, where he writes that "we must begin at the source. That is, we must reach out in true faith to *the Father of lights*, bending the knee of our hearts, so that through his Son and in the Holy Spirit, he might give us a true knowledge of Jesus Christ." Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, trans. Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M., vol. IX, Works of St. Bonaventure (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), 4. Quoted on Falque, lix.

[240] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, 19. Quoted on Falque, 1.

[241] Falque's argument on Augustine's augmenting metaphysics by theology (moving relation from an accident towards the substance of God, in Book V of *De Trinitate*), but ultimately ending up with substance (Book VII of *De*

understands God—and even the Trinitarian persons—as "what" (*quid*). Richard of St. Victor makes a positive development on this position, asking "who" (*quis*). But it is Bonaventure who, in a very phenomenological manner, seeks to understand God via a "how" (*qualiter*) (31). Bonaventure is thus concerned with the "'manner' or the 'style' of the divine appearance more than the means of its manifestation" (38). Chapters two through six of the *Breviloquium*, which Falque does not address, go on to describe the unity and plurality of God in God's appearings, and thus show Bonaventure's desire not to understand what God is in Godself (an ontological pursuit), but in how God appears to human beings (a phenomenological pursuit).[242]

Unlike his predecessors, especially Anselm, Bonaventure offers no proof or argument for the existence of God. Granted, he, like Anselm, takes God's existence as self-evident. Yet Bonaventure sees as empty the deductive reasoning and causal interrogation of someone like Anselm. Instead he pursues a line of reasoning that seeks after how God is present in creation. Falque suggests that "this is one of the Seraphic Doctor's ways of pouring new wine into old skins" (46). For Bonaventure, God is known by God's effects, and therefore can be seen in nature. Following in the footsteps of his master Francis, whose deep connection with nature is well-known, Bonaventure too finds God in nature. It is thus the "earthiness of Bonaventure's Franciscanism" that draws Falque's interest, in large part because of its tending towards phenomenological analyses (52).

Trinitate), is found in Emmanuel Falque, 'Metaphysics and Theology in Tension: A Reading of Augustine's *De Trinitate*', trans. Joeri Schrijvers, in *Augustine and Postmodern Thought: A New Alliance Against Modernity?*, ed. Lieven Boeve, Mathijs Lamberigts, and Maarten Wisse (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 21–55. This essay appears slightly modified as 'Metaphysics and Theology in Tension (Augustine) ', Chapter 1 of *God, the Flesh, and the Other: From Irenaeus to Duns Scotus*, trans. William Christian Hackett (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 25-46.

[242] "Three specific traits characterize *God's entrance*, which is above all Trinitarian, *into theology*, and they are also precisely those of the method of phenomenological reduction: (a) the suspension or the bracketing of any judgment about the existence of God; (b) the assertion of a mode of knowing adequate to the object sought; (c) and the evaluation of a mode of appearing as such (*quomodo*), i.e. independent of the what (*quid*) and of the who (*quis*)" (44).

In *Saint Bonaventure* Falque highlights two important points for our purposes. First, the close relation between theology and phenomenology. Bonaventure's thought shows a type of bracketing or reduction in the manner of Husserl, and also a focus on the mode or manner of appearing (the *how*) rather than a concern about the substance of the things that appear (the *what*). Second, Falque appreciates the ways in which Bonaventure, clearly in the Franciscan tradition, seeks to find God in and through nature, that is, God's creation. Related to this is the manner in which Bonaventure discusses the importance of sense and affect in knowing God. "God is only expressed," Falque writes, "—in a Franciscan mode—through that which can be seen or touched" (215). In a way that he makes clear in *Crossing the Rubicon*, Falque is already here giving "both theology and phenomenology the chance to cross-fertilize" (216 n13).

God, the Flesh, and the Other: From Irenaeus to Duns Scotus

Falque's 2006 habilitation, *God, the Flesh, and the Other: From Irenaeus to Duns Scotus*, again uses both phenomenology and theology in its investigations.[243] The three main foci for the book—God/divinity, flesh/embodiment, and the other/alterity—have all been key areas of investigation in Continental philosophy; these, Falque argues, were also key concerns for earlier theological thinkers too. In addition to highlighting some of Falque's method, my examination of this text will focus largely on the middle section titled "The Flesh," where Falque looks at two of the figures that Henry uses in *Incarnation*, Irenaeus and Tertullian. We will see that Falque reads them differently from Henry. In his Preface to the English translation, Falque writes: "The 'visibility' of the flesh in Irenaeus and its 'solidity' in Tertullian reveal in fact the density of the

[243] Emmanuel Falque, *God, the Flesh, and the Other: From Irenaeus to Duns Scotus*, trans. William Christian Hackett (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015); English translation of *Dieu, la chair et l'autre: D'Irénée à Duns Scot* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008). Citations in this section will be done parenthetically from the English translation unless stated otherwise.

body, prohibiting thereby every form of gnosis, certainly in philosophy and theology, but also, specifically, in phenomenology (through the encounter with Michel Henry in particular)" (xxiii). Combining these foci, I will analyze how Falque talks about the incarnation, and embodiment generally, in a philosophical manner. For "to rediscover the *meaning of the incarnation in general*" is to chart a specific course: "The course is not primarily confessional, nor even theological. It is above all philosophical inasmuch as the 'carnal mode of the human' is what we must rediscover today" (7).

Falque is unique among contemporary phenomenologists in that he is not antagonistic toward metaphysics like his predecessors and peers. For him, the overcoming of onto-theology, by Heidegger and Marion especially, has been overcome. He is critical of Henry, therefore, for "jettisoning Hellenism" in how he approaches his theological trilogy (29, 31). Rather, he thinks that theology can, and does, transform metaphysics, pushing it to its limits (31). In this middle section of *God, the Flesh, and the Other*, Falque delves into flesh, making clear why he thinks it is an important avenue to explore: "for Christianity, one must pass by way of the flesh in order to speak of God properly, *and then*, even pass by way of his flesh in order to speak of the human properly" (114). Studying flesh and the incarnation does not only have theological importance; it is also integral to philosophy. With the "turn taken by Neoplatonism," philosophy took a turn away from the body that is only currently being recovered (115). This "turn," *pace* Falque, would seem to be the very reason that Henry "jettisons Hellenism." These ancient thinkers—Irenaeus and Tertullian—are apt guides in helping us rethink the body, Falque shows, inasmuch as they steered clear of Neoplatonism (unlike Augustine) and operated in a mode of thinking "still infatuated with corporeity" (117). Falque affirms that this is the positive motivation for

Henry's return to these two thinkers;[244] however, Falque contends that their focus on corporeity is lost in Henry's focus on auto-affection (118).

In his chapter on Irenaeus—"The Visibility of the Flesh"—Falque delves into the thinking of this second century church father, highlighting his emphasis on Christ's visibility. He points to Irenaeus's focus on the necessity of understanding Adam in order to understand Christ. Falque highlights a unique feature of Irenaeus, namely, a focus "not, paradoxically, in the direction of the deification of man, so often invoked, but in the *hominization of God*—neither going without the other" (118-19). Irenaeus aims to show, by way of discussing Adam alongside Christ, that in the incarnation Christ was made visible. For example, Falque quotes from Irenaeus's *Demonstration of the Apostolic Teaching*: "In being born of a Virgin by the will and wisdom of God, the Lord received a flesh formed according to the same economy as Adam, for the sake of showing that *he also* was formed in a flesh *like that* of Adam and was being made the *same man* as him" (121-22). In both cases, God is intimately involved—"gets his hands dirty," Falque writes (122)—in drawing forth these two, Adam and Christ, from the virgin material (earth and womb).

Falque states that all of Adam (body and soul) is taken up and "serves as the foundation in Irenaeus for the *insertion of God* into the human compound …. Thus the divinity is never given independently of the *fullness of humanity*" (125-26). Here he draws from *Against Heresies* (5.1.1), where Irenaeus states that Christ gave "His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh, and has also poured out the Spirit of the Father for the union and communion of God and man, imparting indeed God to men by means of the Spirit."[245] Irenaeus is clear in *Against Heresies*

[244] Falque also comments here that, although Henry has come to this realization, he is "seemingly ignorant of every theologian (such as Balthasar, for example)" (118). Falque thinks that Henry is not theological enough, or does not engage theology and theologians enough, even when he discusses very theological material.

[245] Quoted on Falque, 125.

that human beings are a synthesis or composite of body and soul (or, earth and breath), and he uses body and flesh interchangeably when making these descriptions.[246] It is this complete composite, and not any individual part, that images God. Falque highlights Irenaeus's anti-Docetic position on this: "man, and not a part of man, was made in the likeness of God. Now the soul and the spirit are certainly a *part* of the man, but certainly not *the* man; for the perfect man consists in the commingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father, and the admixture of that fleshly nature which was moulded after the image of God."[247] The very materiality that makes up human existence, then, is necessarily a part of the imaging of God.

Irenaeus is very clear, Falque highlights, that Christ was seen and felt, and therefore that he was a material body that manifested God. He shows how in *Against Heresies* Irenaeus writes that "the Father therefore has revealed Himself to all, by making His Word visible to all," and "through the Word Himself who had been made visible and palpable, was the Father shown forth."[248] The God-made body of Adam is able to contain God (*capax Dei*), but through Christ's assumption of it, a transformation leads to its true end: "a divine body," Falque writes, "or at least one called to be divinized" (137). What Irenaeus conveys, via the "visibility of the flesh," is that God both sees and is seen in and by the flesh—that flesh, as Falque reads Irenaeus, points to the materiality that Christ assumes. What is important here, Falque argues, is that there is as much emphasis on the anthropomorphosis and hominization of God as there is on the theomorphosis and deification of human beings (142). While critical of Henry's reading of

[246] Some instances in *Against Heresies*: "since they [human beings] are compound by nature, and consists of a body and a soul" (2.13.3); "Now man is a mixed organization of soul and flesh, who was formed after the likeness of God" (4. Pref. 4); and "our substance, that is, the union of flesh and spirit, receiving the Spirit of God, makes up the spiritual man" (5.8.2). Irenaeus's interchangeable use of body and flesh, and the union of this with the soul, clearly seems to challenge Henry's reading of him.

[247] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.6.1; quoted on Falque, 128.

[248] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.6.5 and 4.6.6; quoted on Falque, 132.

Irenaeus, it is curious that Falque does not discuss Henry's notion of a "Christian cogito of the flesh" that Henry finds in Irenaeus, even if to critique it. I assume that Falque's silent omission of the idea is connected to his critique of it. In any case, he emphasizes against Henry that Christ for Irenaeus is decidedly visible, but does not take into account Henry's notion of the duality of appearing.

Turning from Irenaeus to Tertullian, Falque turns from "the visibility of the flesh" to "the solidity of the flesh" (the title of his chapter on Tertullian). Like Irenaeus, Tertullian emphasizes that "Christianity is essentially carnal, all the way from its starting point, in the 'Word made flesh' of the incarnation, to its end, in the 'flesh become Word' of the Resurrection" (143). Falque explains that in his timeframe—Tertullian lived in the late second and early third centuries—Christ's spiritual nature was generally agreed upon; it was the status of his body that was controversial. He quotes from Tertullian's *On the Flesh of Christ*: "for about His spiritual nature all are agreed. It is His flesh that is in question. Its verity and quality are the points in dispute. Did it ever exist? Whence was it derived? And of what kind was it?"[249] Combatting the main heretics of his day—Marcion, Apelles, and the Valentinians—Tertullian responds that "Christ had human flesh derived from man, and not spiritual, and that His flesh was not composed of soul, nor of stellar substance, and that it was not an imaginary flesh."[250] Falque therefore highlights that Tertullian sets himself the task of answering "what sort of flesh ought we, and can we, acknowledge in Christ."[251]

Falque sums up Tertullian's rebuttal of the heretical thinkers quite nicely:

[249] Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ*, I; quoted on Falque, 145. Falque points out the phenomenological nature of Tertullian here, that he is not concerned only with the reality of Christ's flesh, its 'what', but also with its quality, with the 'how' of its manifestation.

[250] Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ*, XV; quoted on Falque, 146-47.

[251] Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ*, XXII; quoted on Falque, 146.

> Christ had no other purpose in becoming incarnate than to assume our ordinary flesh that exists wholly within the horizon of birth and death (contra Valentinus) and of manifesting through it a salvation of the flesh rather than of the soul alone (contra the Valentinians), but let us not forget to give to the flesh a "real solidity" in its appropriation (contra Marcion) and to confer on it its true genesis in its specificity relative to other bodies (contra Apelles). (152)

What Tertullian does, in contradistinction to these thinkers, is to give the flesh of Christ real substance and solidity. What Tertullian aims for, and Falque agrees, is not mere substantialism or realism, in a way that would be a form of reductive materialism; however, one must seriously understand Christ by "making a detour through our own flesh" (152). Falque points to the ninth chapter of *On the Flesh of Christ*, where Tertullian highlights both the lived experience of the flesh, and its very earthiness. First, Tertullian mentions Christ's "sufferings," that he "hungered … thirsted … wept … [and] trembled;" second, he describes the flesh's earthiness: "of the muscles as clods; of the bones as stones; the mammillary glands as a kind of pebbles. Look upon the close junctions of the nerves as propagations of roots, and the branching courses of the veins as winding rivulets, and the down (which covers us) as moss, and the hair as grass, and the very treasures of marrow within our bones as ores of flesh."[252] The very material nature of Christ's body is that which is necessary to manifest to others his movements and lived experience. Said otherwise, the body constitutes the flesh (154-57).

In a way that challenges Henry's reading of Tertullian, Falque shows how Tertullian distinguishes the soul and the flesh. He points to chapter 13 of *On the Flesh of Christ*, where Tertullian writes that "the soul is called soul, and the flesh, flesh; nowhere is the soul termed flesh, or the flesh, soul." [253] By manifesting his soul through his flesh, Christ manifested life and saved the human soul. Although distinct, for Tertullian the soul and the flesh are inextricably

[252] Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ*, IX; quoted on Falque, 154-56.

[253] Quoted on Falque, 157.

linked together, both on earth and in the resurrection.[254] Falque writes that "it is true that the definition of 'Life' as 'auto-revelation of the self' (Henry) is already discovered in Tertullian. It is necessary, however, to unite such a conception directly with the 'density' and 'solidity' of the flesh (*solidam carnem*)" (160).[255] In Tertullian's thought, flesh and soul are distinct yet connected, such that there can be no flesh without a soul and no soul without flesh. Although Falque agrees with some of Henry's interpretations of Tertullian, he ultimately concludes that Henry has misinterpreted him. "One would be surprised to find Gnostic leanings in an author who relies on the most virulent of anti-Gnostic thinkers to develop his theses (see [Henry's *Incarnation*] §24)!" (324 n68).[256] Falque argues Tertullian means for solidity to refer to the whole human being, and thus to "body" as much as to the lived experience of "flesh."

In *God, the Flesh, and the Other* Falque has continued to exercise his method of reading phenomenology and theology side-by-each, seeing how both disciplines can interpret and be transformed by the other. What he reveals is that some of the primary concerns of contemporary Continental philosophy have been addressed already in ancient and mediaeval thinkers, and we benefit ourselves today by understanding how they wrestled with these problems and what solutions they came to. In his two chapters on Irenaeus and Tertullian, Falque shows how these early thinkers understand the visibility and solidity of the flesh of Christ. Contra Henry's reading of them, Falque argues that it is not the soul and flesh that are synonymous but flesh and body, and that the flesh/body of Christ is both inextricably linked with the soul, and is visible and solid.

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[254] Cf. Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ*, XII.

[255] Although I cannot find the use of '*solidam carnem*' in *On the Flesh of Christ*, Tertullian does use it in Book 5 of his *The Five Books Against Marcion*. In chapter 4 he writes "the flesh of Christ is not putative, but real and substantial [*iam non putativam, sed veram et solidam carnem*]." Tertullian, *The Five Book Against Marcion*, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, Vol. 3, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 438.

[256] Another point showing that Tertullian and Henry are different is that Tertullian uses flesh and body synonymously, and thus talks about the flesh dying, which for Henry does not happen.

However, it is not clear that Falque has taken into account how Henry understands a duality of appearing, and how this would relate to how flesh is visible, that is, how it appears. We turn now to a text that came out shortly after the completion of Falque's trilogy, wherein he again weaves together phenomenology and theology and engages with Henry's work.

The Loving Struggle: Phenomenological and Theological Debates

In *The Loving Struggle: Phenomenological and Theological Debates*, Falque uses the form of *disputatio*, learned from the mediaeval figures he knows so well, to engage the main figures of French phenomenology: Derrida, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Marion, Henry, Chrétien, Lacoste, Romano, and Greisch (a mix of Christian, Jewish, and atheist thinkers).[257] He engages their work both to show his indebtedness to it, but also to push against it, especially in ways that he sees as beneficial for theology, phenomenology, and their relation to each other. Falque is clear that he is rejecting "a posture of *assimilation*" that he sees at work in much of French phenomenology, where thinkers "swallow [others] up into their own thinking"; rather, he is clear that his thought is informed by others, and that it will remain distinct from them as needed (5). Again, I will focus my discussion on his disputes that have the most relevance to the themes of embodiment and incarnation, namely, those with Merleau-Ponty and Henry.

Before getting to his interaction with these two figures, I will engage a few more points on Falque's approach. In his Introduction to the English translation, Onishi conveys that in the same manner that Aquinas viewed rationality as the common ground between believers and non-believers, today that shared ground is finitude, especially as defined by Heidegger (xxii).

[257] Emmanuel Falque, *The Loving Struggle: Phenomenological and Theological Debates*, trans. Bradley B. Onishi and Lucas McCracken (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018); English translation of *Le combat amoureux: Disputes phénoménologiques et théologiques* (Paris: Les Éditions Hermann, 2014). Citations in this section will be done parenthetically from the English translation unless stated otherwise.

However, even in phenomenology Falque has not seen this fully explored or accepted. Onishi thus writes that "French phenomenology has focused too much on the linguistic and revealed at the cost of the material and quotidian" (xxv). Thus, setting himself apart from previous phenomenologists, even those—perhaps especially those—in the "theological turn," Falque is committed not to going "upwards" towards the heights of revelation, sense, and apophasis, but downwards towards the depths of finitude, non-sense, and animalistic drives (xxvii).[258]

Merleau-Ponty, one of the few atheist thinkers that Falque addresses in *The Loving Struggle,*[259] is one of the major influences on Falque's thinking, which is not surprising, as his analyses focus largely on embodiment.[260] In his chapter on Merleau-Ponty, "A Phenomenology of the Underground," Falque follows Merleau-Ponty's lead in making sure that even phenomenology itself is not carried to the airy heights of thinking (this being Merleau-Ponty's critique of philosophy generally), but remains attentive to the beneath and the below. Here Falque quotes from *Signs*, where Merleau-Ponty writes that "what resists phenomenology within us—natural being, the 'barbarous' source Schelling spoke of—cannot remain outside phenomenology and should have its place within it."[261] What Merleau-Ponty seeks is an

[258] This impetus is at work in Falque's most recent book, which explores Freud's work on unconscious drives. I will not be discussing this text but note it as an example of Falque's investigations into non-sense, active drives and passions, and materiality. See Emmanuel Falque, *Nothing to It: Reading Freud as a Philosopher*, trans. Robert Vallier and William L. Connelly (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020); English translation of *'Ca' n'a rien à voir: Lire Freud en philosophe* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2018).

[259] Although raised a Christian and influenced by both the Thomism of Jacques Maritain and Christian existentialism of Gabriel Marcel, Merleau-Ponty is best described as an atheist, though one who should not be described as an anti-theist, for his work often wrestled with the human understanding of God. Cf. Baring's chapter "Postwar Phenomenology" on Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur for the history of his influences. Baring, *Converts to the Real*, 308-341.

[260] While Falque relies heavily on Merleau-Ponty's thought in his own work, he notes that "it is astonishing that neither Ricoeur, Henry, Chrétien, Marion nor Lacoste ever cite Merleau-Ponty." Falque and Kearney, 'An Anatheist Exchange', 96. This claim is meant to be hyperbolic, as it is tacitly false that these figures never cite Merleau-Ponty. However, it does stress Falque's claim that French phenomenology, especially that in the "theological turn," has been turned towards sense and apophatic heights as opposed to non-sense and materiality.

[261] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 178. Quoted on Falque, 46.

understanding of "brute being,"[262] that which is universal to all life, and therefore the current need, Falque believes, to steer phenomenology towards the non-phenomenological. This change in scope will transform phenomenology, but still align it with its overall aims.

Of course, one of the main terms that Merleau-Ponty uses to describe this universal "brute being" is flesh. While Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh is connected to his discussions of embodiment, Falque cautions against too quickly identifying his notion of flesh with the concept of *Leib* that is discussed in phenomenology from Husserl onwards (57). Indeed, Falque quotes contemporary Merleau-Ponty specialist Emmanuel de Saint-Aubert, who states that in Merleau-Ponty's complete writings, "*only two personal notes, not destined for publication*, link 'flesh' and '*Leib*'."[263] Flesh, then, for Merleau-Ponty, is a term used to name that most basic and elementary medium that everything rests in and is connected by.[264] The relation or manner of being that the flesh is means that it is neither mine, nor yours, nor the world's; it is neither subject nor object. Falque writes that it is not *Leib* and neither is it Descartes's extended body (*res extensa*), but what he calls in his own work "the spread body" (*corps épandu*) (60). What Falque takes from Merleau-Ponty is his insistence not to overcome but to dig deeper, and thus to find a more originary rootedness in the chaos of non-sense and materiality (65).

Turning now to Michel Henry, the chapter "Is There a Flesh without Body?" is an expanded version of Falque's response to the publication of Henry's *Incarnation*.[265] Falque

[262] Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 22.

[263] Emmanuel de Saint-Aubert, *Du lien des êtres aux éléments de l'être: Merleau-Ponty au tournant des années 1945-1951* (Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin: 2004), 150. Quoted on Falque, 57.

[264] Falque comments that Merleau-Ponty's intention in the use of "flesh" is similar to Augustine's intention in the use of the term "person" when he was discussing the Trinity: it is not to be precise, but rather to avoid saying nothing (58; cf. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 5.10).

[265] Emmanuel Falque, 'Y a-t-il une chair sans corps?', *Transversalité* 81, no. Jan-Mar (2002): 43–76. Reprinted as 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: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2004), 95–133.

writes that although Henry is untrained in theology, he produces ostensibly theological works, and yet masks his theological entrance into philosophy—a move that Falque wants to question (126-27).[266] Looking specifically at Henry's work on flesh, Falque does not "mean to suggest that he maintains a trivial dichotomy between the flesh and the body," but that "there is no indication of any genuine *access* to the body through the flesh" (144). He finds that Henry's understanding of flesh is so pervasive that the body is essentially lost in the process. And, as we have seen in Falque already, attention to the universal conditions of finitude and materiality cannot be passed over, even when discussing experience, manners of existence, or life itself.

What Falque sees at the root of this problem in Henry's thinking is that he does not separate divine and human incarnation: "God's pure and simple enfleshment (*Inkarnation*)—and the 'humanification' of God (*Menschwerdung*)" (145). What is needed, Falque argues, to bring these two together, is, in addition to the phenomenology of flesh that Henry provides so well, "a theology of the body—that is, of pure organic matter" (145). In my assessment of Henry I show how his discussion of Christ and use of scripture has the effect of de-historicization. Part of Falque's intention in looking at the historicity that comes via materiality is to recover this aspect. Henry's rejection of historicism in his Christian trilogy is coupled with his rejection of Judaism and the Hellenizing influences on Christianity (146). These moves have led, Falque contends, to Henry's understanding the world and the body as an accursed condition (148). Henry's

[266] Falque makes a poignant comment on the state of affairs that somewhat requires this masking: "I am free to be a philosopher among the philosophers and, eventually, to be a philosopher among theologians, but never am I free to be a theologian among philosophers" (127). This condition is slowly changing in the French Academy, as seen in the progressive generations of those in the "theological turn" and in thinkers like Badiou, Nancy, Franck, and Romano. However, as Bruce Ellis Benson points out, Falque still works as a philosopher/theologian at an ecclesial school, l'Institut Catholique de Paris. Benson concludes that what underlies this distinction is power. See Bruce Ellis Benson, 'Where Is the Philosophical/Theological Rubicon?: Toward a Radical Rethinking of "Religion"', in *Transforming the Theological Turn: Phenomenology with Emmanuel Falque*, ed. Martin Koci and Jason W. Alvis (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 25–40. However, what also underlies Falque's comment is his belief that the two disciplines are and need to be separate; it seems that Henry does not buy into the same framework.

corrective has merely served to reintroduce an already existing problem, namely a flesh-body dualism, thus "reactivat[ing] the very thing it sought to reject at the heart of his project" (149).

As I showed in the previous chapter, Henry maintains throughout his work that his focus is always phenomenological, and his analyses, especially with regard to his attempted escape from Judaic and Hellenic thinking, have served this purpose well; however, they have done so at the cost of the theological, Falque argues (149). Rejecting these two other modes of thinking (Judaic and Hellenic) has caused Henry to read the Prologue to John's Gospel in a completely phenomenological manner, thus equating John's "flesh" (*sarx*) with Husserl's "flesh" (*Leib*). Falque admits here, at least implicitly, that phenomenology (at least as practiced by Henry) cannot provide a comprehensive account of the biblical understanding of the incarnation. Falque argues that Henry's thinking leads to the stance wherein it becomes necessary to "dissociate what always goes together, *to separate the flesh from the body*" (149).[267] A more nefarious dualism follows from this, Falque argues:

> But wouldn't instituting such a disjointure re-inject Christianity with precisely that which was rejected in Hellenism: not with the unperceived opposition between the body and the flesh (*sarx/soma* or *Leib/Körper*), but with a fundamental dualism like the one entrenched in Greek philosophy (*psuchê/soma*). Put differently, suppressing the Hellenistic dualism does not suffice to dispel its basic logic: such an oppositional thinking would merely translate the soul-body dichotomy into a new flesh-body split. In 'abandoning' Greek philosophy, Henry thereby preserves its original rationale, from which phenomenology since Husserl has tried to free itself: thinking in the form of opposition or separation. (149)

Here we can clearly see the issue that Falque has with Henry, namely, his thinking remains dualistic in a very oppositional manner.

Falque affirms that Henry is trying to put forth a different view of the flesh, one that heretofore has only been found in Maine de Biran, Descartes, and Irenaeus (150). But he argues that this would have been more successful had Henry been more attentive to materiality, other

[267] Quoting Henry, *Incarnation*, 125.

parts of the Bible, and other theologians. In addition to suggesting that Henry would have benefitted from a "phenomenological reading of the Synoptic Gospels," he also says that "the theological, which should have been explicitly treated in and integral to the third part of the work [*Incarnation*], was intentionally avoided, as evidenced by the paucity of references to the properly human experience of Christ's suffering in the Gospel of John" (155-56).[268] Where theology is expected, or would greatly improve his analyses, Henry sticks with phenomenology (161). Falque's critique of the over-emphasis upon a particular kind of flesh in Henry has led Falque to reorient his own focus.

Falque therefore contends that "*incorporation* and not incarnation—which is to say Christ's assumption of a human body ('irrigated by blood, constructed by bones and traversed by veins' [Tertullian])—remains, as I see it, the most crucial problem for any christology" (156). Phenomenology has focussed too much, Falque believes, on flesh (*Leib*) and as a result has neglected the very materiality and organicity of bodies (*Körper*). Whereas "the history of philosophy" has moved "from the body to the flesh and from the flesh to its *pathos*," there must be a movement back to a retrieval of the materiality of the body (156). Falque is not downplaying the importance of phenomenology, even when it comes to theological and specifically Christological questions; indeed, he is clear that there must be a true attentiveness to the body. However, he argues that "in rushing to discover the essence of humanity"—what Henry and others have done by looking to the flesh—"one forgets the human's basic animality" (166). Falque is not so much against the possibility of invisible phenomena or attempts to describe them, but merely against forgetting—especially in the case of flesh—the very visible and solid material bodies that allow these phenomena and descriptions to exist (166).

[268] As I showed in the previous chapter, Henry does interact primarily with the synoptic Gospels in *Words of Christ*.

Falque critiques Henry's *Incarnation* for putting forward a "nearly Spinozistic 'carnal monism'" which, by completely focussing on the living body of the flesh, "retains no consideration of human thingliness and therefore utterly neglects the 'old body'" (167). It is this neglect and forgetting of the body that ultimately troubles Falque and leads him to see certain Gnostic traits in Henry. Contra Henry's assertion that "Christ was not an ordinary man," and his "parricide of Tertullian," Falque argues that the church fathers were united in their efforts against the "Gnostics and the currently pervasive thesis of the *Christos angelos*" (169).[269] Indeed, the thrust of the church fathers' work was to demonstrate "the unlikelihood of the Word's incarnation in the daily ordinariness of our simple material corporeity" (169). Falque seeks to carry out the patristics' impulse in his own work, by attending to the extraordinary in the ordinary: "What is truly extra-ordinary about the Word's incarnation is precisely that it took place in and through the most *ordinary* aspects of our human condition, specifically that it gave itself in a *body*" (170).

Falque concludes by affirming the phenomenological value of much of Henry's work in *Incarnation*. Yet he is critical of Henry's lack of a phenomenology of materiality and his almost absent theological engagement, arguing that his work therefore has less theological and phenomenological import than it could have. Falque connects Henry's work to Merleau-Ponty's, quoting from *Sense and Non-sense* that "the Incarnation changes everything."[270] However, unlike the atheist Merleau-Ponty, the Christian Henry is quite different: "The Incarnation, to be frank," writes Falque, "probably 'changes' *nothing* or very little in the work of Henry. … Paradoxically, it is as if God was never actually *incarnated* in *Incarnation*, at least not temporally and visibly, that is, in a *historical, earthly body*" (171-72). Although Henry, in *Incarnation*, has claimed to

[269] The first quotation is from Henry, *Incarnation*, 231.

[270] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 174. Quoted on Falque, 171.

reveal a reversal of Gnosticism, Falque argues that his notion of flesh repeats it. Henry's flesh is like "the 'special or astral flesh'—to which Apelles ascribed in contrast to Tertullian or to 'the flesh of angels before the creation of the world' described by Boehme" (172). Contra Henry, Falque avers that the essence of Christ's flesh is in its organicity, a point that we will see clearly when we examine Falque's own position on these issues in his trilogy (190).

For Falque, foundational to human beings is their animality, which, though they transform it into humanity, they never ultimately abandon (185). It is precisely this animality that Christ assumes, for God's likeness to human beings is from God's descent to humanity and not humanity's ascent to God (182). As opposed to the hermeneutic/linguistic turn, and even the "theological turn," Falque identifies his own work within the "factical turn" (241-47). Following the work of Heidegger and Jean Greisch, Falque is intent on always funneling his thinking through the lens of facticity and finitude. As I showed specifically in what he draws from Merleau-Ponty and in his critique of Henry, Falque is attentive to materiality, organicity, and corporality; his moves are downwards and underneath, rather than upwards and beyond. By following this schema, Falque believes that he is thinking like a Christian and living like a philosopher (251).[271] Having examined Falque's 'non-trilogy' works, with an ear to both his method (the criss-crossing of phenomenology and theology) and his emphases (materiality and finitude), we are prepared to work through his theological trilogy.[272]

[271] He fleshes this out by saying that this means "daring to address properly theological concepts—to think as a Christian—by translating them philosophically in order to speak precisely of and to basic human experience, the mode of our humanity *tout court*—to live as a philosopher" (251).

[272] Falque refers to *Crossing the Rubicon*, *The Loving Struggle*, and *Parcours d'embûches: S'expliquer* (a collection of his responses to papers given at a 2014 colloquium on his thought) as a "methodological trilogy" [*trilogie méthodologique*]. Emmanuel Falque, *Parcours d'embûches: S'expliquer* (Paris: Éditions Franciscaines, 2016), 279.

Falque's Theological Trilogy

Having examined the *modus operandi* of Falque's approach to thinking, both philosophically and theologically, we come now to his theological trilogy. Again, we must keep in mind that, unlike Henry, the books in Falque's trilogy do not come at the end of his (philosophical) thinking and writing but are rather interspersed throughout it. However, his own method suggests that this is a fitting pattern, that is, a dialectic, or even criss-crossing, rather than a linear pattern. Although this factor distinguishes Falque and Henry, they both repeatedly claim that they are philosophers first and foremost, and that this stance guides their interpretations and descriptions of biblical and theological content. Similar to how the subtitles to the first two books of Henry's trilogy contain the words "*philosophy of*" (and, as I suggested, the third could arguably also have this subtitle), the subtitles to the books in Falque's trilogy also indicate their philosophical approach: "*Lecture existentielle et phénoménologique*" for the first book and "*Essai philosophique*" for books two and three.[273] In 2015 the three books were published together (revised and expanded) under the title *Triduum Philosophique,* again highlighting Falque's aim to be a philosopher first. We will see, though, that Falque is more explicitly theological than Henry, and moves his analyses in these three texts from a philosophical to a theological approach.

Because of his background and training in theology, Falque is quite knowledgeable about theological material and is adept in his use of it. He engages with the thought of many patristic, mediaeval, modern, and contemporary theologians. He makes use, too, of papal encyclicals and the content from liturgical texts of the Roman mass (for example, the eucharistic liturgy of the mass). In these ways he sets himself apart from Henry, as well as most of the other thinkers in

[273] In all three cases these words have been (curiously) dropped in the English translation.

the "theological turn." Indeed, Gschwandtner writes that "in Falque, 'theological phenomenology' reaches its height."[274] Additionally, Falque also uses the Bible in a much more holistic manner than Henry. He draws from all four of the Gospel accounts of Christ, from the letters of Paul, and books from all three parts of the Hebrew Bible, whereas Henry focusses almost completely on the New Testament, and primarily on the Gospel of John. Falque's more comprehensive account of both biblical and theological material gives his rendering of the incarnation and the resurrection more credibility theologically.

The term *Triduum* in *Triduum Philosophique* reveals how Falque is formulating this trilogy, and so understanding it here will better help us unpack these three books and the movement between them. On the surface *Triduum* of course declares that there is "three" of something, specifically "three days." However, *Triduum* has a distinct meaning within the Christian tradition, namely, the three days of Easter. These three days encompass the Passover meal, passion, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Falque intends the three books of his trilogy to address and move through these pivotal events in the life of Christ and the drama of Christianity. While his trilogy covers the events of Thursday, Friday, and Sunday, Falque has expressed the intention to write a book on Christ—focussed on the embodiment of Christ—on Holy Saturday.[275]

Falque's trilogy thus holds together as a philosophical reflection on these three days and moves the reader through them with an ear towards finitude and embodiment. However, he moves the reader through in a slightly inverted manner. The order of the books goes from Good

[274] Christina M. Gschwandtner, 'Emmanuel Falque: A God of Suffering and Resurrection', in *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 185.

[275] Falque, *The Loving Struggle*, 24 n14: "This is a field that still has to be explored (this time in a book about Holy Saturday, the descent into Hades in a philosophical sense, and its theological rereading through sin and the possibility of salvation)." See also his Preface to the English translation of *The Guide to Gethsemane*, where he writes that "I have started work on another triduum concerned with the depths of Evil and with Holy Saturday (*The Mystery of Iniquity* in the framework of *Theological Recapitulation*)" (xv).

Friday, to Easter Sunday, and finally (back) to Holy Thursday. Falque states that his aim here is precisely philosophical, "proposing to start off from humankind and leading toward God, for we are eventually converted in him"—this "conversion" pointing to Christ's initiation of the eucharist at the Passover meal (xv). This approach is clearly in lock-step with his method. For Falque all thinking must start from the basic and universal facts of being human: embodiment, finitude, facticity, etc.[276] When these aspects are skipped over, or at least not fully examined, philosophical and theological thinking will always arrive at a dead end. To enter into Falque's triptych, then, we start with Good Friday, and the anxiety of the God made human.

The Guide to Gethsemane: Anxiety, Suffering, Death

Although *The Guide to Gethsemane* is the most recent of the trilogy to be translated into English, it is actually the first to be published, coming out in 1999, a year after Falque had completed his dissertation on Bonaventure.[277] The themes of the sub-title—anxiety, suffering, and death—are the main foci of this text and are addressed through the last hours of the life of Christ, from Gethsemane to Golgotha. Falque's aim is to elucidate the ways in which his analysis of Christ can be revelatory for a deeper understanding of our humanity today, and to read the crucifixion via the incarnation and not via the resurrection—that is, to understand the crucifixion starting from the finitude that Christ shares with all humanity, not his transfigured finitude after

[276] In the Translator's Foreword to *God, the Flesh, and the Other*, Hackett writes that the books in the trilogy "assume Falque's familiar manner of proceeding: taking up a thematic dear to contemporary Continental philosophy (death, finitude, and flesh) and setting them beside corresponding, perennial themes in theology (the suffering of Jesus, the resurrection, and the Eucharist) in order to bring about both a dilation or widening of the philosophical questioning and a new illumination of the theological" (xv).

[277] Emmanuel Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane: Anxiety, Suffering, Death*, trans. George Hughes (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019); English translation of *Le Passeur de Gethsémani: Angoisse, souffrance et mort; Lecture existentielle et phénoménologique* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1999). Citations in this section will be done parenthetically from the English translation unless stated otherwise. The close proximity of *Saint Bonaventure* and *The Guide to Gethsemane* shows how adept Falque was at both mediaeval theology and contemporary phenomenology at the start of his career, Falque working predominantly with Heidegger in the current text, as well as with Husserl, Sartre, Levinas, and Marion.

the resurrection. He begins his study with an examination of the 16th century Isenheim altarpiece by Matthias Grünewald, which captures so well the pain and suffering of Christ on the cross in keeping with the themes of his book: "(a) The body as 'exposed' rather than 'purified' by suffering; (b) Agony as the usual burden of death before it becomes the way of salvation; (c) Anxiety as an interrogation of meaning, not simply the complaint of the wicked; (d) Life as a 'taking on board of suffering [*pâtir*]' rather than life as *passage*" (xviii). What Falque is interested in here—the altarpiece and his analysis—is how in the incarnation Christ takes on everything that makes up humankind.

Falque points first to the ways in which the crucifixion panel on the altarpiece shows how Christ has taken on human sickness, and thus that there is a finitude separate from sin and its effects (xxii). All sickness and even death are tied to a finitude distinct from sin, which are later to be transformed via Christ in his "redemption of our sins" (xxii). Before this metamorphosis takes place, life and finitude must be taken at face value. That is, although suffering is not the final word in the story, it is the first, and must be properly understood (xxviii). Falque writes that "what is at stake in taking on board 'suffering' is not simply making divine, but also making human: the nodal point and place of synthesis of all filiation" (xxviii). Christ's burden before and during the crucifixion is to bear everything involved in human finitude *tout court*, and the resurrection does not erase this.[278]

Turning from this meditation on the Isenheim altarpiece, Falque first seeks to reorient our approach to suffering and death. Once primarily belonging "exclusively to the domain of Christian experience," these topics have been addressed philosophically in the past few centuries

[278] Onishi highlights Falque's aim here: "In order to most fully understand Christ's redemption of fallen humanity, theology must cease interpreting the life and death of Christ through the Resurrection—and the hope that it engenders—and then moving to the Crucifixion. Instead, theology, just as in philosophy, must begin with the anxiety before death experienced by every human, which is exemplified in the Passion." Onishi, 'Philosophy *and* Theology: Emmanuel Falque and the New Theological Turn,' 103.

by figures like Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Camus (1).[279] For the philosopher, "the ultimate truth concerning suffering and anxiety cannot be told other than in the inescapable finitude of the human condition and thus in death" (1). Contra Heidegger's belief that Christians diminish suffering because they view death through the lens of life, Falque seeks in *The Guide to Gethsemane* to refute this point, instead suggesting that "the Son teaches us in his body, positively and in the unique language of the 'Word made flesh,' exactly what it is to be one of humankind, when the human being, in human flesh, suffers from no longer understanding God" (3).[280] Falque's entry point, though, still adopts Heidegger's horizon of finitude in order to do this.

We already see in this early work of Falque's an intention that will be carried out in the rest of his works: an attention to human finitude which is foundational and shared universally. Before someone is a Christian, they are a human being, and thus death and the anxiety one has about death must be assessed prior to questions of faith. Falque writes that "only in terms of the weight or consequence we give to death can we estimate the weightiness that should be accorded to resurrection—our own and that of Christ" (8). So, if Christians minimize death and suffering because of the promise of a new life, it is this new life too that is minimized. Falque suggests that this move comes from the all-too-prominent association in Christianity of death with sin. But he goes on to argue that Christ lived and died first by virtue of his being human—in that all human beings die—and only secondarily did Christ die for salvation (10). He cites positively the 20th century French Jesuit Gustave Martelet, saying that "in symbolising sin by death, the Bible does

[279] Falque shows his Euro- and Christian-centric bias here—these three thinkers still predominantly "European" and "Christian" in their thinking—declining to mention the discussions of suffering and death in traditions outside of Christianity, like Judaism, and outside of Europe, particularly Buddhism.

[280] Falque is referring to a note to §49 of *Being and Time*, where Heidegger writes: "The anthropology developed in Christian theology—from Paul to Calvin's *meditatio futurae vitae*—has always already viewed death together with its interpretation of 'life'." Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of* Sein und Zeit, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 408 n6.

not intend it to be taken for granted that biological death comes only from sin."[281] Death, then, and the suffering that accompanies it, is part of human finitude as such, and must be analysed through this lens.

To understand human finitude *tout court*, and so to properly understand the suffering of Christ, it is necessary to give up "both a pure ideal of perfection and the simple statement of my own imperfection" (12). Falque argues that human beings were created in a state of finitude before the Fall (which included suffering, sickness, death), and that this was called good by God.[282] Before and in addition to Christ redeeming human beings, Christ shows them how to be human beings, which is clearly demonstrated in how he suffered. "Through his incarnation … Christ teaches us first of all to be human beings—that is, precisely, not to flee from our own finitude" (13). Set against "an unwavering Christian tendency to see death, even if only biological death, within the horizon of sin" (10), Falque argues that "the distorted image of God in humankind, or the sinful mode of the human being, is thus read less in finitude itself (suffering, aging, death) than in the refusal to accept it as such" (14). The attempts by human beings to be "like God," as in the Genesis creation myth, or to be like some other ideal of perfection, is to reject the natural manner of being human that is given to human beings by God.

For Falque, this ultimately means that finitude is good, and that Christ came first and foremost to affirm this. Salvation is part of God's plan and desire, but it is given additional to human finitude created in God's image, and not something foundational to it. Falque writes that "redemptive salvation is given to us as an extra—an overflow of a gift that precedes it. The term

[281] Gustave Martelet, *Libre réponse à un scandale: La faute originelle, la souffrance et la mort* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1992), ix-x. Quoted on Falque, 11.

[282] Falque does state in a later essay that "we have no knowledge whatsoever of the first Adam," and thus of the exact conditions of humanity before the Fall. Emmanuel Falque, 'Evil and Finitude', trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner, in *Evil, Fallenness, and Finitude*, ed. Bruce Ellis Benson and B. Keith Putt (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 85.

'redemption' describes an ontic property that we 'have' or 'receive' (historically), of the existential that we 'are,' at least in the eyes of God, in the very fabric of our being (election and filiation)" (14). With or without the fall and sin, then, human beings were destined to find their redemption and fulfillment in Christ. That is, they were to have this redemptive character added on to their natural finitude. Christ, through his suffering and anxiety over death, clearly reveals this affiliation with humanity in its natural finitude. Falque is adamant, though, that a distinction remains between the anxiety and suffering Christ feels regarding sin, and the anxiety he has about simply being human (17-18).[283]

Although Falque draws heavily on Heidegger's analytic of *Dasein* and the horizon of finitude, he challenges Heidegger's claim that Christians cannot truly fear death because they interpret it from the assuredness of resurrection. He points to Pascal as a Christian thinker who does take anxiety over death seriously, citing Pascal's *Pensées*: "All I know is that I must soon die, but what I know least about is this very death which I cannot evade."[284] Falque argues the Christian as much as the atheist fears death, its unknowability only accentuating the anxiety (23). Falque distinguishes between two kinds of anxiety: anxiety over death and anxiety over sin. The former is a fear over biological death and finitude as such, and the latter results from the improper living of this finitude, a spiritual death (23). He points to a translation of Genesis 2:17 that reads the two Hebrew verbs literally as "you will die of death" as indicative of the distinction between these two anxieties (23).

By separating what has so long been connected—sin and death/finitude—Falque hopes to bring both into clearer focus. That is, by distinguishing them, we come to understand both sin

[283] Falque is critical in this regard of Hans Urs von Balthasar for not separating these two, pointing to some claims from Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Christian and Anxiety*, trans. Dennis D. Martin and Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000). See Falque, 16 and 123 n24.

[284] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A.J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 158. Quoted on Falque, 128 n4.

and finitude in a truer sense. He remains clear that existentially these two are often, if not always overlapped since the fall, such that anxiety about sin comes from anxiety about finitude, and where one ends and the other begins is hard to pin down. The force of Falque's argument, then, is first from an analytic or conceptual level; however, it also has existential implications. Yes, the resurrection has ramifications for how the Christian responds to anxiety over sin, but this does not necessarily, Falque claims, affect anxiety over death and finitude (25). So, if Christ took on the fullness of humanity yet was without sin, as Christians claim, how can his suffering and anxiety be revelatory for understanding human anxiety over finitude and death?

In the middle section of the book, Falque takes a deeper look at the anxiety and death that Christ faced. Instead of following the psychological perspective on anxiety—which goes through Freud and examines desire and loss—Falque reads anxiety as primarily metaphysical and phenomenological, following Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* (30; cf. 132 n7). Here Falque turns to Christ's experience in the Garden of Gethsemane. He looks particularly at Mark 14:33-34, which reads that Christ "began to be struck with terror *and* amazement and deeply troubled *and* depressed. And He said to them, My soul is exceedingly sad (overwhelmed with grief) so that it almost kills Me!" (30; AMPC, italics in the Bible translation). Falque points to the Greek for "struck with terror *and* amazement," *thambos*, as showing Christ's alarm in the face of a threat that leads to his drawing back, which we see in his plea to his Father a few verses later, "take this cup from me" (33-34). Jesus is ultimately afraid and full of sorrow—in the wholeness of his incarnate being—regarding his impending death; we see it in "the alarm in his recoil before the cup, the self-abandonment in his sorrow, and the search for help from others before the emerging threat" (36).

In discussing how Christ responds to his own impending death, according to the minimal account of scripture, Falque points out the shortcomings of three prominent views. Christ was not stoically resigned to the mere act of atonement, fading away in ignominy; Christ did not have certitude of the resurrection, protecting him from anxiety about the same death suffered by all human beings; and there is nothing heroic, in a Nietzschean sense, in the act and accomplishment of Christ (37-39). Instead, Falque argues that Christ experienced a very real and human sense of fear and anxiety towards the unknown. He connects Christ's consciousness in this moment to a distinctly Christian—though using Heideggerian terminology—understanding of temporality. Specifically, he homes in on §65 of *Being and Time*, where Heidegger writes that "*temporality is the primordial 'outside-of-itself' in and for itself*. We therefore call the phenomena of the future, the character of having been, and the Present, the '*ecstases*' of temporality."[285]

Falque reads this distinctly Christian understanding of time as being lived out by Christ before his final hours before death. Its "ecstatic" and phenomenological nature means that this notion of time is concerned more with the how than with the what or when of an event (41). Since not even Christ knows the hour of his second coming (Mark 13:32), the emphasis is on the manner (the *how*) in which one prepares themselves for it, namely, to "be on guard! Be alert!" (Mark 13:33).[286] Falque suggests that Christ had this exact manner of alertness in his life, especially as seen in Gethsemane. Christ thus revealed how to truly be alert: "not because one is *waiting for a future event* that is always still to come, but because the future remains in reality always already something that *can at any moment* orient one's present" (42). Falque reads the

[285] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, 377. Falque points out how Heidegger had already been working with Christian notions of the "already" and "not-yet" before his break from Christianity (41). See Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 3-42.

[286] Falque also points to the Parable of the 10 virgins/bridesmaids, of whom only 5 were ready for the bridegroom's coming. See Matthew 25:1-13.

(hope of the) resurrection as being more about life lived in the here-and-now, rather than in a life-after-death, a notion he applies to Christ as much as to all human beings (43). Falque's stance here accords with Henry's, namely, that Christ brings life here and now.

Looking again at Mark 14:33, Falque turns to an examination of Christ's second reaction: that he was "deeply troubled *and* depressed." The Greek here translated as "deeply troubled *and* depressed," *adêmonia*, points more to anxiety and anguish. Falque argues that in accepting "the cup" (Mark 14:36), Christ has overcome his initial fear (*thambos*), and now moves into anxiety (*adêmonia*). He writes that "the onset of anxiety and of anguish (*adêmonia*) at Gethsemane comes above all for Christ … within an *indefiniteness* concerning what his anxiety is 'in the face of'" (47-48). Not fully knowing what awaits him, yet willing to surrender his own will to that of another (the Father), Christ is confronted with the question of the meaning (or meaninglessness) of his own life (48-49). Falque highlights here, too, a distinction between God's absolute power (*potentia absoluta*) and God's conditional power (*potentia ordinata*) (50-52). God's kenotic self-emptying into Christ is a move from one power to another, and Christ's anxiety accompanies this curtailing of power from absolute to conditional (52).

The anxiety that Christ faces, more so than the fear, forces him into isolation. This fact is highlighted by his three times moving from prayer to the Father to seeing his disciples in Gethsemane (Mark 14:37-42). Finally, after the third time Christ realizes that he is isolated in the anxiety of his self-surrender to the Father and accepts this condition (54). Falque here points to Hans Urs von Balthasar's *Mysterium Paschale*, where he writes that Christ experiences "the horror which isolates."[287] The anxiety over his impending death leads Christ, Falque suggests, to a different manner of living his life. Here he follows Heidegger's discussion in §48 of *Being and*

[287] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, trans. Aidan Nichols (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 100. This phrase is Balthasar's rendering of the Greek *adēmonein* in Mark 14:33, which on the following page is rendered "the 'terror which isolates'" (101). Quoted on Falque, 54.

Time of three different possibilities of *Dasein*'s response to death. Although Christ's end, like every human being's, is death, the meantime is full of possibilities for how it will be lived. Falque names three possible responses to death: "first, an 'ownmost' possibility that shows what is mine; second, an 'absolute' possibility that measures me in my capacity to take it on in relation to myself; and third, an unsurpassable ('not to be outstripped') possibility that renders possible anticipating it through the free sacrifice of the self" (59). Although the time between Christ's acceptance of his death in Gethsemane and his execution on Golgotha is short, how he responds to his death and lives through his anxiety is informative for us to follow.

Christ does not know the details—the exact what or when—of his death; his focus, and the phenomenological reading that Falque offers, is on the manner that he lives his life in the face of death (66). In Gethsemane and on Golgotha Christ never forsakes what is "ownmost" to him: as Son we hear him call out to his "Abba" (Mark 14:36; Luke 23:46). In his acceptance of the Father's will, Christ takes on his "ownmost possibility" which "is most *absolute* to him," separating and isolating him into a position only he can fulfill. He ultimately makes the unsurpassable move of surrendering himself to the Father's complete will (66-67). While this tripartite schema is developed from Heidegger, Falque feels the need to move beyond it, especially as it concerns one thing: the incarnation itself.

The suffering, anxiety, and ultimately the death of Christ is not merely the act of sacrifice and the carrying of the cross, it is about the full weight of carrying the flesh in the incarnation. Falque points to Tertullian who, in *On the Flesh of Christ* (V), avers that Christ carried the flesh (*carnem gestare*) before he carried the cross (*crucem gestare*) (65).[288] It was only because Christ was fully incarnate that he was able to fully experience anxiety, since, Falque argues, "it is only

[288] Cf. Falque, *God, the Flesh, and the Other*, 164.

flesh that is capable of expressing anxiety in all its radicality" (65). Precisely on this point Falque moves beyond Heidegger, for Heidegger's analysis of anxiety and possibilities for death are "seen solely through a *consciousness* of the horizon of death" (66).[289] It is the lack of attention to flesh and body in Heidegger's work that leaves his discussions of anxiety wanting.[290] Falque points to Luke's account of Christ in Gethsemane—where Christ's anxiety was so intense as to manifest in sweat as blood—to highlight how Christ reveals anguish incarnate (67; Luke 22:44).

In the final section of *The Guide to Gethsemane,* Falque turns to a deeper examination of the embodiment of Christ, and to the relation between the Father and the Son. Concerning this relation, Falque talks about its dual revelation via Christ's death. He states that "while death *reveals* the man in a philosophical perspective (Hegel, Heidegger, Sartre), the death of the Son is accepted also, and decisively, in theology as what is *revealed* and *revealing* of the Trinitarian being of God" (76). As much as Christ suffers in the flesh—again, both the characteristics of finitude generally as well as the sinful impingement on this, although he is without sin himself—he is able to pass this experience on to the Father, through their most intimate communion, therefore offering him the experience of finitude. This intimate communion and self-surrender of the Son becomes a model for Christians to follow. "Shown first of all in his flesh—incarnate or resurrected—the *life* of Christ demands of the Christian's *life* today that it is also incarnate, although in another mode, in a flesh that is singularized by love for our neighbor" (80).

[289] Later, Falque refers to "the paradoxical angelism of Heideggerian anxiety, which is suffered uniquely in the interior depths of the consciousness" (82).

[290] Falque refers to Didier Franck's critique of Heidegger, that, despite certain things be "ready-to-hand" and "present-to-hand," *Dasein* has no hands. See Didier Franck, *Heidegger et le problème de l'espace* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1986). I also mentioned in the previous section how Falque is critical of Heidegger's notion of the call for not having a voice. Falque's critique of Heidegger here, in regard to how his analytic fails to fully grasp Christ, seems to be analogous to his critique of Henry's understanding of Christ, in that Henry's Christ is too much of a "consciousness" that is not fully embodied (i.e., is a flesh with no body/hands).

To truly understand the relation between the Father and the Son, the Son's incarnation, and a Christian's call to discipleship, Falque argues that, in addition to needing to move beyond Heidegger's phenomenology, theology must also surpass Levinas's phenomenology (80). Falque is rightly critical of the Christianising approaches to Levinas's work, and this is ultimately because of a difference between Jewish and Christian understandings of how the Divine can be manifest (76, 148 n16). Although the concept of "the face" in Levinas is "in reality faceless,"[291] Falque does write that "the face" is still "incarnate in a flesh that singularizes it" (80). However, the Christian is called not just to accommodate the other, as Falque reads Levinas, but to break open a self-enclosed self. The follower of Christ today is thus called to live a fully incarnate life that is self-sacrificially turned outwards in love to their neighbours.

We have already seen how, in the first section of *The Guide to Gethsemane*, Falque details how Christ incarnated the fullness of human existence and finitude; here, Falque points out that in dying, too, Christ is fully embodied, as his body would have decayed had the Father not freed him from it (80-81, citing Acts 2:24 and 31). "In order to guard against any resurgence of 'Docetism'," Falque argues we must understand Christ as fully assuming human flesh from birth to death (81). Seeking to move beyond contemporary phenomenological approaches that lead to Docetic understandings of Christ, Falque draws here—as he does often in his work—on a line from Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* (§16) on descriptive phenomenology: "Its beginning is the pure—and, so to speak, still dumb—psychological experience, which now must be made to utter its own sense with no adulteration."[292] Before the complexities of language and the development of thought, before order and sense, there is the "still dumb" language of the flesh.

[291] Falque quotes Levinas: the face "is neither seen nor touched." Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 194.

[292] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 38-39. Quoted on Falque, 82.

And when Christ is crushed under the anxiety of his impending death in Gethsemane, and begins to sweat blood (Luke 22:44), his flesh expresses what language cannot. With Christ's flesh, "what speaks is, on the one hand, only what is seen in a rupture of the flesh (the open rib), and, on the other hand, it is what can only be understood in inarticulate discourse (the cry of the abandoned)" (83).

Falque turns, in the remainder of the book, toward a phenomenology of incarnate suffering, and to a body that speaks this rather than speech. He does not believe that God sends suffering, or that there is salvation via suffering; rather, God "simply requires of human beings that there should be no limit to love—even where there is suffering—because that alone (love and not suffering) remains credible" (85).[293] Following the phenomenological impulse on the question of suffering means that Falque is not concerned with asking who, what, or why, but only how. So, "at most we might ask of Christ … to tell us in his flesh *how* he suffers, or, perhaps we should say, *how to offer* one's suffering when one suffers" (87). Bypassing the what and why questions, and seeking to get to the body before the articulations of speech, Falque seeks to uncover how the body reveals through suffering.

For Falque, Christ's suffering is in his flesh, but flesh understood as a medium more so than an instrument or substance. Here he follows Aristotle's *De Anima* and Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible* (89).[294] Both philosophers—and Merleau-Ponty is clearly reaching back

[293] He refers here to Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone is Credible*, trans. D.C. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004).

[294] Aristotle, *De Anima*, II.11: "The flesh plays in touch very much the same part as would be played by an air-envelope growing round our body; … Consequently it must be composed of earth along with these, which is just what flesh and its analogue tend to be. Hence the body must be the medium for the faculty of touch, naturally attached to us, through which the several perceptions are transmitted." Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 139: "The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term 'element,' in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a *general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being. The flesh is in this sense an 'element' of Being."

to ancient philosophy for this idea—understand flesh as a medium between a person and their world. Pointing out instances of Jesus's feet being anointed/washed (John 12:3), Jesus washing his disciples' feet (John 13:5), and Jesus's dead body being wrapped for burial (John 19:40), Falque highlights that Jesus "reveals himself, and is revealed, as constituted of the same 'texture,' or of the same 'fabric,' as humankind" (90). The many kinesthetic experiences and actions of Christ—eating, healing, drinking, seeing, feeding, speaking, etc.—further reveal phenomenologically "what there is of his flesh as 'the body itself' or 'the organic body' (*Leib*) much more than his body simply as corporal substance (*Körper*)" (92).

The flesh (*Leib*) or "fleshly vivacity" (*Leiblichkeit*) discussed here by Falque of course points to the subjective experience of Christ in the world and refers to how Christ's objective body (*Körper*) appears to himself (92). But how Christ first experiences himself reveals to other human beings how they too can, and should, experience their own bodies, that is, he reveals the proper manner of being a body. Falque additionally argues, this time drawing on Protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann, that through the communion of the Son and the Father, the Son can pass on phenomenologically to the Father (through the *how*) an experience of suffering (and life generally) that the Father cannot experience substantially (via the *what*) (93).[295] Of course, as a human being, even Christ has limits to his suffering. The sufferings of Christ, first in Gethsemane and then on Golgotha, are so extreme that he is forced to face the reality that he cannot separate himself from it, but that he can bear it no longer (95).

As he dies hanging on the cross, Christ reveals the limits to finitude, and the movement from a discourse of speech in words to one of the body. "When the Son indeed 'cries out'—

[295] "The suffering and dying of the Son, forsaken by the Father, is a different kind of suffering from the suffering of the Father in the death of the Son. … The Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son." Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, 40th Anniversary Edition (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 359.

nailed to and exposed upon the cross even in the nakedness of his flesh—he resolves ultimately to be nothing *but flesh* (incarnate and suffering) and silences his speech definitively, even if that means solely addressing himself to his Father at the height of his abandonment" (95-96). Falque continues, drawing from Mark's Gospel, by showing that Christ first calls out to the Father in articulate words—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (15:34)—but later only in a cry beneath or before words—"with a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last" (15:37) (96). It is with the rending of his body, mirrored by the rending of the Temple curtain (Mark 15:38; Heb. 10:20), that truth is revealed, both about God and about human beings (96).

Set against the penal substitution interpretation of Christ's suffering, Falque sees a type of substitution when it comes to sharing our suffering, that is, that human beings no longer suffer alone. Rather, human beings suffer with Christ. Falque draws again from Moltmann, who writes that "Jesus suffered and died alone. But those who follow him suffer and die in fellowship with him."[296] Christ does not die in the place of human beings, and each human being does not die in his; but, "like a guide or ferryman [*Passeur*] taking in charge the one who passes or whom he guides, Christ transforms, starting from today, the meaning of my suffering" (102). The presence of Christ with each human being, and the knowledge that he has gone before, encourages the believer to also live into their finitude, all the way through its suffering: "philosophically because *I am thrown into it*, and theologically because the One comes who, to the bitter end, has taken on this burden and 'pitched his tent among us' (John 1:14 JB, note 1b)" (102).

The three-part movement of *The Guide to Gethsemane* has gone from (1) finitude as such, apart from any notion of sin, to (2) Christ's assumption of this fully, as revealed in his anxiety, and finally (3) to a phenomenology of incarnate suffering, which is about bearing the

[296] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 76. Quoted on Falque, 102.

cross in addition to bearing the flesh. By fully inhabiting human finitude to its limits, Christ "leads us in a way toward an *elsewhere* and consequently invites us to live *otherwise*—without however leaving the basis of his flesh" (109). Falque's analysis of incarnation via the passion of Christ demonstrates that there is a finitude before sin that is good; that Christ bore this finitude as well as the cross; and that there is a language that the body speaks, and a truth it reveals, before the clear articulations of speech.

Falque's discussion of the incarnation leads him to a position quite similar to the one he claims is a form of Docetism in Henry's thought. This is perhaps not surprising, as Falque's critique of Henry came out only after Henry's *Incarnation*, which was published a year after *The Guide to Gethsemane*. So, it is likely that Falque held to a view very similar to Henry's at this time and was only motivated to change it after. As we have just seen, Falque focusses almost completely on the lived body (*Leib*) of Christ, and thus to how he lived his body rather than attending to the body itself. His focus on Christ's flesh as *Leib* does seem to accord well with a phenomenological analysis of the incarnation; however, it is a stance that Falque will critique himself on in subsequent volumes in his trilogy.

How Falque gets to his position on the incarnation also needs to be critiqued. Falque is clear about his phenomenological starting point: our own embodied finitude (*l'homme tout court*). However, when it comes to an understanding of Christ we can have no direct phenomenological account of Christ's personal experience. Gschwandtner writes that

> it is not Christ's experience *per se* that gives us insight about our own finitude but the hermeneutic portrait of Christ's finitude as described by a particular author—Paul or Luke or the Johannine community. How Christ is *depicted* to grapple with his pain and suffering may well provide interesting phenomenological insight, but that is not the same thing as a claim about how God *does actually experience* our animality.[297]

[297] Christina M. Gschwandtner, 'Corporeality, Animality, Bestiality: Emmanuel Falque on Incarnate Flesh', *Analecta Hermeneutica* 4 (2012): 11.

Falque thus needs to complement his phenomenological analyses with a fuller, or more clearly delineated, hermeneutics. Additionally, William Woody points out that there is a circular logic at play here, where Falque "deduce[s] the experiences of Christ *from* a prior understanding of humankind in order to posit and to describe a normative model *for* humankind."[298] Falque's phenomenology of the incarnation is helpful, both philosophically and theologically, but it does require some nuance on the hermeneutical entry point and the limits to which all human beings can be measured against Christ. Keeping these things in mind, we turn to the second book of Falque's trilogy, on the resurrection on Easter Sunday.

The Metamorphosis of Finitude: An Essay on Birth and Resurrection

The second book in Falque's trilogy, and the first to be translated into English, is *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, which came out in 2004.[299] Again, although it is the middle book of the trilogy, it considers the final part of the Easter *Triduum*, the resurrection of Christ. In order to talk about the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of human beings, Falque argues that he must first talk about birth, for the resurrection is a type of second birth. The book is composed of three parts and begins in many ways where the previous one left off, by starting with finitude and one's birth into the world. The middle section looks at the metamorphosis of this finitude. Finally, in the third part Falque offers a phenomenology of resurrection, wherein he describes the metamorphosed world. Overall, Falque aims to show that "for *everyone to be transformed* … is the universal *metamorphosis* proposed by St. Paul as a definition, no less, of resurrection" (1).

[298] Woody, S.J., 'Embracing Finitude,' 125.

[299] Emmanuel Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude: An Essay on Birth and Resurrection*, trans. George Hughes (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); English translation of *Métamorphose de la finitude. Essai philosophique sur la naissance et la résurrection* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2004). Citations in this section will be done parenthetically from the English translation unless stated otherwise.

From the beginning, Falque draws on the so-called "resurrection chapter" in 1 Corinthians, where Paul writes of the resurrection of the dead: "Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Cor. 15:51-52). In these verses, and in the chapter as a whole, the themes of birth, metamorphosis, resurrection, and embodiment all coalesce. As a Christian and a philosopher, Falque admits that he is entering into a tension. Christians and Christian theology tend to interpret the resurrection as an event unique to Christ, and philosophers tend to reject it as a possibility for human beings as such (2). But this is a tension he enters, believing that there is a way to be a better philosopher and theologian in the process, and to see that bodily resurrection is a possibility for all human beings. However, and we do well to bear this in mind, Falque mentions, in reference to Jesus's interaction with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21), that Jesus points us to "an existential analysis of the resurrection" (5). While he does talk about a bodily resurrection, and the relation between the spirit and the flesh, we need to see how Falque will work out this existential analysis when it comes to his phenomenology of resurrection.

In part one, "Précis of Finitude," Falque again looks at finitude as the necessary starting point of thinking for both philosophy and theology. Human beings have no access to or experience of God that is not mediated through their own experience (15). And this insurpassable starting point is human embodiment and finitude. Falque makes clear that there is in fact a distinction between "finitude and the finite," though these are often conflated, and that finitude should be seen in a positive light independent of both the finite and the infinite (17-18). The beginning of Christianity—"the impassable horizon of the finitude of man"—however, is not the same as its end—"the transfiguration through Christ of this same finitude" (18). Christ enacts this transformation, Falque contends, not primarily by what is "*extra*ordinary" but rather by

sharing "our most ordinary human condition independently of sin" (19). Before there can be a "phenomenology and theology done 'from above'" it is necessary that there must first be a "phenomenology done from below" (20). It is this latter course that Falque takes readers on in the following pages.

He first tackles this question of finitude by examining time. Human beings are in time as much as they are in the world. As such, he argues that our understanding of time should start from the human, as opposed to understanding time starting from the concept of eternity, as human beings only have experience of the former (22-23). A better way of understanding temporality, at least from a Christian angle, is to not separate eschatology and creation. From this vantage point, "the resurrection, cornerstone of Christianity, is *ontologically* the first principle *of* everything or, better, *of* the whole, including the creation itself projected by God" (24). Creation and eschatology are held together in the incarnate and resurrected Christ. Following Augustine's analysis of time in the eleventh chapter of *Confessions,* Falque avers that time cannot be demonstrated but only experienced. Thus, "we are not so much *in* time as we *make* time" (26). Drawing upon Heidegger as well (*Being and Time,* §72), Falque argues that time, and thus human beings themselves, are oriented towards the future, and time is oriented towards eternity.

"Toward a Metamorphosis," part two of *The Metamorphosis of Finitude,* takes a closer look at the resurrection and how it affects embodiment and finitude. Here Falque follows the idea of metamorphosis as a birth, and indeed a rebirth of the human being that "is seen through its *effects* rather than as an actual moment of transformation" (44). Further, it is here "that we find the breath of the *Spirit,* as also the lived experience of the *flesh*" (44). In the chapters that follow, Falque responds to the question "Why is God resurrected?" in terms of both causality and finality (45). Ultimately, he follows a track that leads from a resurrection that changes everything

to the incorporation of humanity into the Trinity. It is only once this is in place, along with what he lays out in Part 1, that a phenomenology of resurrection can be attained.

Falque first engages with Nietzsche's thinking on resurrection and embodiment in Christianity. According Nietzsche's reading, the Christian take on embodied resurrection is negative. Its features are that "(a) the subject barely takes responsibility for himself; (b) the will to go on and on is an escape from the world; and (c) archaic notions of corporality are found in a renunciation of the self and of one's own distinctive drives" (52-53). Falque takes this critique seriously, and so engages Paul's writing anew on embodiment and resurrection. Paul's interpretation of the flesh (*sarx*) and spirit (*pneuma*) offers a very different anthropology than the Greek notions of body (*soma*) and soul (*psychē*) (53). For Paul, flesh and spirit are two modalities or manners of living the body, and thus are to be understood phenomenologically and not ontologically. "Flesh" (1 Cor. 15:39) and even "glory" (1 Cor. 15:40-41) are to be read as qualities and not substances. Here Falque's reading agrees with Henry's.

Falque's phenomenological reading of Paul extends directly to how he understands the resurrection of the body. "As for the *resurrection of the body*, … it is less its substance as such that concerns us than the *modalities of its being, or of its movements* (Husserl), according to how they are turned toward others (following the spirit) or turned in on the self (following the flesh)" (55-56). Falque even takes this reading to the eucharist: when Jesus, in John 6:55, gives his flesh (*sarx*) as "true food," Falque claims that "God gives us at the same time his *manner of being through his body*" (56). He makes a bold claim a few pages later, stating that "the *escape from the tomb* has for too long in Christianity been taken as *the raising of a biological body*," and so "without a veritable distinction at the heart of corporality (between the organic body and the body of lived experience), the Christian today does not know what to say about the resurrection

of the body (or the flesh)" (58). With this phenomenological distinction in place Falque can say that "what revives of me … is not my biological or organic body but the *manner* that I have of living through this same body. In short, the body that is most truly my own, … is what God resurrects at the heart of my inner self. And so one cannot be satisfied with a purely biological interpretation of the body in Christianity" (58-59).

While Falque is certainly clear on a few things here, there is also some ambiguity in what he has written. He emphasizes a phenomenological understanding of the body, such that it needs to be understood both as body and flesh, and that flesh refers to the manner, mode, or quality of the (organic) body. Further, he seems to say that Pauline discussions of resurrection, and even Jesus's references to flesh, refer to this manner of being, not to a substance. However, Falque also writes that "one cannot be satisfied with a purely biological interpretation of the body in Christianity," thus suggesting that in some sense a biological resurrection still occurs and needs to be understood, but not without having the phenomenological reading (59). This reading seems to hold weight, as Falque brings up Paul's metaphor of the body as a seed: sowed one way and raised in a new way (1 Cor. 15:42). But as much as this verse talks about a "transformation," it follows directly from Paul's previous discussion of glory, and thus to the phenomenological change of "transfiguration" (60).

Sticking with this distinction between flesh and body, and with an emphasis on the phenomenological reading of the resurrection, Falque next examines the effects of the resurrection. Playing on Merleau-Ponty's line from his essay "Faith and Good Faith" that "the Incarnation changes everything,"[300] Falque suggests rather that "the Resurrection changes everything," the title of chapter 5. It is indeed the resurrection (of course not apart from the

[300] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Faith and Good Faith" in *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 174.

incarnation and crucifixion) that directly affects both human beings and God. Reading the resurrection as a "metamorphosis of finitude," Falque tracks this change in a Trinitarian manner: the Father accepts the Son's flesh, the Son passes on his experiences to the Father, and the Holy Spirit is active in this transformative process (63). In this movement, human finitude is both metamorphosed and taken up into the unity of the Trinity.

In looking first at the Father, Falque reiterates a point made in *The Guide to Gethsemane*, namely, that there is a human nature independent of sin that Christ fully incarnated. This assumption of finite and mortal life—again, apart from sin—that eventually leads to suffering and death is an experience undergone by the Father. Falque writes that "this *ordeal (or test) of man* becomes also an *ordeal (or test) for God*, in and for the *faith* that the Son maintains in his relationship with his Father" (66). Here Falque draws on Moltmann, who writes in *The Crucified God* that "the Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son."[301] The Father is thus pulled into the ordeal of the Son, and the Son is able to pass on to the Father the "weight of finitude" and the "burden of this death" (67). Although only the Son experiences finitude in an embodied fashion, and therefore suffering and death, the unity of the Father and the Son means that the Father experiences these as well.

The process by which this happens follows what Husserl calls "apperceptive transposition," wherein the Son can "*transfer fully* to the Father, into *his* experience of consciousness (as spirit), what he himself has undergone in his lived experience of the flesh (as body)" (67).[302] This phenomenological exchange, by which I come to know the experience

[301] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 359. Quoted on Falque, 66.

[302] See especially *Cartesian Meditations*, §50 "The mediate intentionality of experiencing someone else, as 'appresentation' (analogical apperception)". Cf. also Chapter 5 "Dialogue and the Perception of the Other" in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Prose of the World*, trans. John O'Neill (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

(consciously) of another as my own, means that the Father experiences consciously what the Son experiences bodily. Falque writes that only the Son "suffers *carnally* (in the flesh). But by the unity of the Trinity ('one of the Holy Trinity'), he transposes spiritually into the Father what he has of fleshly suffering" (69-70). In this exchange there is a real change in the Father, Falque contends. Although the Father is omniscient, there is a distinction between knowledge about and knowledge of. It is this latter—the suffering of embodied finitude—that the Father could only come to know through the Son via apperceptive transposition (74). What this means is that the Father, and indeed the Trinity, "is no longer at the end as He was at the beginning" (73). As Falque will discuss later, something of the human being is brought into the Trinity via the resurrection.[303]

Having looked at the resurrection in terms of the Father and the Son, Falque now turns to the Holy Spirit, and so to the "how" of the resurrection. "The resurrection is not a crossing from the Being-there (*Dasein*) to a Being-elsewhere—'looking up toward heaven' (Acts 1:11). It is on the contrary a *transformation* of the *Being-there* to the *Being-itself* (identity and reflexivity) … Far from a flight into an over there, the resurrection brings us back here below and, most strongly, to our own interiority" (75). Again, we see Falque's emphasis on a phenomenological rather than ontological or substantial reading of the resurrection. It is not about a spatio-temporal (quantitative) change, but instead about a change in the manner of living (qualitative). The resurrection "is a *transformation of the self by another than the self*," this "other" being the Holy Spirit, both as person and as force (75).

[303] Woody is critical of Falque for attempting to give a phenomenological account of the Father and the interior life of the Trinity. William C. Woody, S.J., 'Embracing Finitude: Falque's Phenomenology of the Suffering "God with Us"', in *Evil, Fallenness, and Finitude*, ed. Bruce Ellis Benson and B. Keith Putt (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 115-133, esp. 125-27.

First, what is metamorphosed by the Holy Spirit in the resurrection is the very finitude of human beings. The Son fully takes this on in the incarnation, and in the resurrection transforms this finite bodily existence (76). But what is this process like, or how does it happen? Falque is openly mum on this, saying that nobody knows (77). However, what can be known from the biblical account is that it happens immediately, "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:52). Thus, Falque argues that "the event is not temporal, but temporalizing. The *event* of the resurrection is not in time, but makes time" (78). Again, this is to say more about its effects than how it happens. However, the resurrection is an event that has already started, and is being carried out by the force of the Holy Spirit. Falque cites Romans 12:2, where Paul exhorts his listeners/readers to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" as an example of the effects of the resurrection happening immediately. Here Falque's position is again in alignment with Henry's, namely, that Christ (though in his resurrection for Falque and incarnation for Henry) leads to real transformative changes for the believer immediately.

Falque examines more closely the effects of the resurrection on the human being, especially as it relates to embodiment, for the resurrection only really matters to us if it affects us (81). What was true at creation—human beings and God separated as created and uncreated—no longer applies in the same way after the resurrection.

> What takes place *for* the Word—his own metamorphosis by the Father under the force of the Spirit—then also takes place *in* the Word.[304] That is to say, it takes place *for* us, ourselves, if we suppose that we are *in* him. The metamorphosis of finitude is not simply the transfiguration of his finitude by the Father, it is also the *transformation of our own finitude in Him* (the Word), at the summons of the Father and under the force of the Holy Spirit. (83)

[304] Falque cites Colossians 1:15-20 previous to this quote: "**16** for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. **17** He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. … **19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven."

The resurrection of Christ thus indelibly connects human beings to the Trinity: his resurrection is connected to the resurrection of human beings, and the fullness of humanity that was taken on by Christ "we can and must ascribe to God" (83).

It is more than just the "souls" of human beings that are taken up into God, Falque is arguing, but their very corporality. In the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:9), Falque writes that "neither the Son, nor we ourselves, remain the same," saying specifically that "it is our entire bodies that follow the movement of the *ascension* of the Son—understood here as the *incorporation* of the Son—toward his Father" (84). More than just God's presence within the Christian, there is also, via the resurrection of the Son, the transformation of the Christian into God. This incorporation is carried out in two interconnected ways: the church, as the body of Christ, and the eucharist, wherein through the act of consuming Christ the believer is consumed by Christ and becomes part of him (85-86).[305] The resurrection, Falque argues, transforms the limits of human finitude, being incorporated into God spiritually, bodily, and dynamically (90).

Having looked at what is to be transformed, Falque examines in the final part of the book a "Phenomenology of the Resurrection." He does this by looking at our changing perception of space, time, and the body. Commenting on the two cities in Augustine's *City of God*, and the biblical descriptions of heaven and earth, Falque avers that these are not two distinct places, but rather two distinct manners or ways of being (95-96). So, "the mode of being of our relation to God is what counts rather than the place in which we find ourselves and by which we believe ourselves related to him" (96). The lifting up of the Son in the resurrection (cf. John 3:14) "gives access to that 'on high' ('*heavenly things*') capable also of clarifying our 'down below' ('*earthly things*')" (97). Falque continues a few lines later by stating that "this resurrection is a way of

[305] Falque deals with the eucharist and this dual consumption in a much more detailed fashion in the final volume of the trilogy, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist*.

being that was always already there" (97). I find this problematic on two counts: first, it suggests that God did not need to incarnate Godself, and that the possibility for this way of life could have been carried out by anyone, that is, all possibilities are already accessible and nothing new needed to enter the system. Second, it seems paradoxical to say both that this way of being has always already been there for human beings, and that Christ's resurrection (the "metamorphosis of finitude") has transformed and expanded the limits of our finitude. These concerns may be addressed by Falque's idea that the resurrection is ontologically present at creation. Overall, a phenomenology of the resurrection reveals that humanity is not to inhabit another world (a substantial or quantitative change), but to inhabit this same world otherwise (a qualitative change, or change in perception).

A "true ontology of the Resurrected One" includes both the unity of God and humanity discussed above, and the possibility of living differently in this world (102). Falque argues that the resurrection has more ontological than ontic effects. "*It is not human nature or nature itself that is to be transformed but transformation or metamorphosis (resurrection) that forms mankind's nature and nature itself*. 'It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me' (Gal. 2:20)" (105). Falque avers that there is no set and stable human nature that is changed in the resurrection (here he follows the existentialist mantra that existence precedes essence); rather, the metamorphosis of the resurrection is primary, and we live into its effects. This ontological/ontic distinction also applies directly to the resurrection: "the event of the resurrection … is not an event *of* the world, or one that is produced *in* the world, but the event that 'makes worldly the world'" (107). The resurrection, Falque argues, opens up a new way for a human being to be in the world and in time, which takes place for the believer immediately. The resurrection thus affects the flesh more than the body, meaning that it effects not one's

material or objective nature (*Körper*), but one's manner of living (*Leib*). Again, although Henry does not talk about the resurrection explicitly in his theological works, his understanding of the effects of the incarnation lines up with Falque's position on resurrection.

In addition to the world and space, Falque also discusses the effects on time initiated by the resurrection. As it is humanity's subjective relationship to the world that matters after the resurrection, so too is it humanity's subjective relation to time (112). We can say that it is not objective or clock-time (*chronos*) that matters, but instead lived time (*kairos*). Returning to a verse discussed above—"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:52)—the human being is only changed in a moment in the resurrection (ontic event) because "the moment itself … will produce my transformation" (ontological event) (114). So, as above with the world, the resurrection does not put believers (at least immediately) into a different time, but instead puts them into the same time differently (115). But there is still an urgency that accompanies this: "The *resurrectional modality* of life becomes, for the Christian, life itself, in the urgency of a today that cannot be postponed until tomorrow" (124). "Eternity" and "eternal life" are not to be experienced in some other time but are to be experienced as an intensified mode of the present.

Falque avers that, although "eternal life *is* for now," "the resurrection (of the body) is for tomorrow" (125). In the final chapter of this text—"A Flesh for Rebirth"—Falque finally takes up the manner of embodiment in the resurrection. First, resurrection is meaningless unless there is a rebirth that occurs; that is, resurrection is rebirth (129). Comparing rebirth with birth, in conversation with Jesus's encounter with Nicodemus (John 3:1-8)—especially their discussion on being born from below and born from above—Falque argues that the reasons and ends of (re)birth are not known by the one being (re)born; what can be known are only "*the effects of my (re)birth,* or my ways of relating to it," thus making it existential (130). In the same way that

birth happens, and the human being who is born cannot get behind it or cause it, so too does resurrection happen, and humanity lives into its effects. Through Nicodemus, we see the difficulty in believing that this birth from above (resurrection) is possible.

The resurrection, Falque argues, thus entails our belief in God's making possible what humanity deems impossible. From this belief comes his existential and consciousness-based interpretation: "The truly Christian miracle is, rather than the miracle as such,[306] that we are *able to believe* in the miracle. In the same way, the resurrection in its authentic meaning is what is given to us *to believe in,* at least as much as it is a resurrection in itself" (135). He continues a few lines later with this same emphasis on belief, by writing that "for me, that is above all what to be resurrected or reborn implies today: *to believe in Christ's resurrection* as a *given, or something addressed to me*" (135). The Christian of course does not cause the resurrection "to be" (substantial), but in and through their life lets it "show forth" (phenomenological) (135). But what then becomes of the flesh, in all this focus on consciousness and belief?

It is in the last dozen pages of *The Metamorphosis of Finitude* that Falque really addresses the resurrection of the body specifically, focussing on discussions of flesh (*Leib*) and body (*Körper*), and so I engage these pages more closely. Falque suggests that in our contemporary world the reason for disbelief in the bodily resurrection comes from "the lack of a *contemporary anthropology* that would fit a body capable of being transformed" (136). The new anthropology he proposes is based on the phenomenological distinction of the lived body (*Leib*) and the objective body (*Körper*). "The *fleshly body* and the *resurrected body* are certainly one and the same body, supposing that we understand by 'flesh' not our bodily substance (*Körper*) but the manner in which we live and experience our bodies today, as living bodies (*Leib*) that influence us and by which we are influenced" (136). Falque is consistently clear that the

[306] The "miracle as such" refers to Christ's physical and objective (that is, ontic) resurrection.

incarnation is more than Christ just taking on flesh, but that his becoming a human being is in the fullness of embodied existence. Contra Falque's reading of Henry, there is no flesh without a body (137).

The "resurrection of the flesh (*Leib*)" does not, Falque argues, "imply a denial of the reality of the substantial and material *body* (*Körper*) in the Christian incarnation" (137). Nevertheless, he continues, "a total identification of the *biological body* with the *resurrected body*, beyond the single case of the incarnation, leads to major aberrations" (137). Although it is of course important that Christ took on a material body—against Gnosticism—what is more important for Christ is the manner in which he lived his body. Falque therefore argues that "it was in this way of living that he was resurrected and therefore that we shall be resurrected also" (138). He substantiates this claim by pointing to a few of Jesus's post-resurrection appearances to some of his disciples by the sea (John 21:1-14) and to two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). In both cases Jesus is not recognized by his body (*Körper*) but by his flesh (*Leib*), that is, not his materiality but by how he lived it out (138-43). What is most real about corporality, then, is not what it is, or that it is, but rather how it is.

This "contemporary anthropology" is necessary, Falque contends, because without it, that is, by just taking "body" as substantial materiality, "the resurrected God is he who magically defies all the most ordinary laws that apply to the appearance of a phenomenon" (139). Here Falque is referring to the "mis-appearances" of the post-resurrectional Jesus (e.g., the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), and Mary Magdalene in the Garden (John 20:14-16)), as well as to his appearing to multiple people at the same time in different places (non-localizability) (Mark 16:9-14;[307] 1 Cor 15:6), and his passing through walls (John 20:19,

[307] These verses come from the debatable longer ending to Mark, but they do also seem to indicate a progression that need not occur all on the same day, which is how Falque interprets the passages, thus leading to his incredulity.

26). Taking all these post-resurrectional verses into account leads Falque to opine that we must "go beyond the natural viewpoint and substantial corporality" when understanding the resurrected body (140). What is important when conceiving what is raised, then, is just not to remain at the level of materiality, Falque seems to be arguing. He is not suggesting that the risen Christ is immaterial, but rather that what is raised is "his *way of living this materiality or, in other words, his body*, which is the *fleshly and relational* modality of his being (his divine being) in this world" (142).

While Falque does not deny materiality, instead insisting that we must not reduce the resurrection to substantiality, what does he say about it? He mentions the event where Jesus offers his pierced hands and side to Thomas (John 20:27), and where Jesus states to his disciples that "a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" and eats fish with them (Luke 24:39, 42-43). Falque's response here is very restrained: "Is this to say that the body resurrected 'in flesh' (*sarx*) and in bones (*ostea*) has in some way or other our molecular corporality, which would be as substantial as it is material (*Körper*)? Here we must be silent" (143). So, while not denying the materiality of the resurrected body, there is nothing that we can say about it. And why this silence? Because we need to signify an absence of one thing (substance) to speak of another mode of being (appearance) (143). The emphasis on a phenomenology of the resurrected body thus seems to only be able to do that: offer a phenomenological account. Falque's position, then, continues to look much like Henry's: the material body is never denied, but is merely downplayed to emphasize the flesh, especially in the resurrection.

Falque insists that the phenomenological *epochē* that brackets our natural attitude to move to the phenomenological attitude is as necessary in the resurrection as it is for other philosophical ventures. "The resurrection," he writes, "is not simply the *manifestation*, or the

appearance, of another mode of presence of the *flesh*. It is also a disqualification, or rather a *withdrawal*, of the substantiality of the *body*" (144). In the resurrection, then, what matters or comes to the fore is the manner of living one's body (flesh, *Leib*) rather the material body itself (body, *Körper*). In order to "reach the resurrected Christ," Falque argues that "we need to renounce *objectivity*," as "*the objectivity of the disappearance* (of the body)[308] signals the *disappearance of objectivity* (of all reified bodies in the resurrection)" (144). When understanding the resurrected body, we need to take into serious account what a spiritual body is, and how it manifests itself—a move which presents a philosophical and theological challenge to the reductive materialist forms of 'realism' in modernity.

The transition from a material or earthly body to a spiritual or heavenly body—something that is discussed by Paul (1 Cor. 15:35-54)—is a process, Falque suggests, that is attested to in the ascension of Christ. The delayed ascension of Christ after his resurrection (40 days according to Acts 1:3) points to a conversion process of this former, earthly body to the latter, heavenly one. This is the reason why Jesus tells Mary not to hold on to him, as he had "not yet ascended to the Father" (John 20:17) (145). Falque writes that "when the *body withdraws* and the *flesh becomes manifest*, it is then that he *shows himself*" (145). To crassly oversimplify this: the resurrection means less body (*Körper*) and more flesh (*Leib*), and it is the phenomenon of Christ's flesh that appears to people and makes him known to them.

Referring to our discussion in Chapter 1 on the key ideas of phenomenology, we recall that, although human consciousness is always conscious of something (Husserl), it is ultimately the phenomenon that shows itself forth (Heidegger, Marion). Applying this idea to Christ, Falque argues that it is not human beings who go in search of Christ in the manner they see fit (as an

[308] Falque is referring here to the accounts of Jesus's body not being in the tomb when his followers went there (John 20:5-7, 13), as well as Paul's claim that "'*flesh* and *blood* [what we have called here the *body* (*Körper*)] cannot inherit the kingdom of God' (1 Cor 15:50)" (144; bracketed insert Falque's).

objective phenomenon), but instead the resurrected Christ who reveals himself to humanity in his own way or manner (the subjective phenomenon of his flesh) (146). It is only when his disciples view him as he phenomenalized himself to them (as flesh, not body), that they were able to recognize him as he truly was.[309] In this way, Falque compares the resurrection of Christ to his incarnation, "in that a faceless Christ or, perhaps better, Christ as we wish to see him allows himself to be recognized in his *fleshly mode of being*, so that we shall find him again in the image of our neighbor" (147). The incarnated Christ is like the resurrected Christ: both appear contrariwise to what is expected—he reveals himself by withdrawing.

What begins for Christ in the incarnation is completed in the resurrection. Not denying that Christ became fully human, and thus fully material in every way that human beings are, Falque avers that Christ's goal was to become flesh. "The corporality of the Resurrected One is not, or is no longer, of the order of the *materiality of his body* but rather the *expressivity of his flesh (his lived body)*" (148). How Christ lived his 33 years on the earth was all part of the process that culminated in his death and resurrection, and towards his becoming flesh. Falque therefore writes that "his 'becoming body' (incarnation) thus anticipates his 'becoming flesh' (resurrection)," which is carried out through the transformation or metamorphosis of his human finitude (148).

In his conclusion, Falque contends that "the Resurrected One is no longer the materiality of his body (*Körper*), but is the lived experience of his body (*Leib*)" (150). Although he argues that theologians or philosophers must be silent on some things when discussing the body (i.e., what the materiality of a spiritual/resurrected body is), and that we must take a phenomenological approach to the resurrection, he does not hesitate, at least here, to make some

[309] Gschwandtner writes that after the resurrection Falque believes that "Christ no longer has an objective body but instead appears to the disciples' consciousness." Gschwandtner, 'Corporeality, Animality, Bestiality', 6.

substantial and ontic claims: the resurrected One *is not* body, but *is* flesh. Even though our language of discussing the body today (phenomenology) is different than the Middle Ages (scholasticism) (151), perhaps our language is still grasping at elusive metaphors (like Paul in 1 Corinthians 15) when attempting to understand the body of the resurrected Christ. "To be *resurrected* with a body (or in the flesh) is above all to *metamorphose*," Falque contends, and it is this conversion and transformation of the body that must be kept in focus (152).

Falque's account of the resurrection comes primarily in *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, and it is, by all accounts, a very phenomenological and existential one—not surprising given how influenced he is by Heidegger. His focus is on living a transformed life here and now—not living in another world, but living in this world otherwise. This is a valid claim to make, but there remains the possibility of a loss of eschatological hope. Woody claims that Falque "downplays or disregards the *eschatological* dimension of resurrection. His emphasis on the immanent nature of resurrection in this life—dependent upon our existential attitude or disposition—dispenses with any eschatological hope for a world to come and the final resurrection of the body."[310] The hope we can have, then, is a hope for a metamorphosed life now. Falque does not completely disregard eschatology, but his existential interpretation seems to confine him to talking about a changed existence here and now.

Woody raises further problems with Falque's understanding of the resurrection, and this concerns how it relates to Christ and to human beings. Throughout his texts Falque comes to conceive Christ's humanity via an understanding of humanity in general, and to understanding this humanity via how Christ lived his life. Yet human beings have to live their lives with Christ both before and after the resurrection. Has Falque fully taken into account that Christ was

[310] Woody, S.J., 'Embracing Finitude,' 130.

without sin before death, and that he was transformed in a significantly singular way in the resurrection? Woody does not think so. "If we take seriously the claim that Christ lived without sin and yet was only resurrected by the Father at the historical moment of the Resurrection *after* his Passion and death, Falque's understanding of resurrection cannot apply to Christ himself and the historical Resurrection."[311] If the resurrection means merely that the "modes" or "manners" of living one's life have been metamorphosed and are now Christlike, then either Christ was sinful before his resurrection—as he was not living in the "resurrected mode" that Falque describes—or he was resurrected all along—meaning that the resurrection effected no real change in Christ.[312]

The first two volumes of Falque's trilogy have focussed on the incarnate life of Christ, exemplified through his final hours, and the resurrection of Christ as a re-birth. While paying special attention to finitude and embodiment, Falque also emphasizes the importance of the flesh of Christ, that is, the importance of how Christ lives his embodied existence. His discussions of embodiment find their consummation in the final volume of his trilogy, which returns in new ways to questions of finitude and embodiment in conversation with the eucharist. Here we will see Falque attempting to focus much more on body (*Körper*) than flesh (*Leib*).

The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist

Falque concludes his theological trilogy with *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, published in 2011.[313] There is a decisive shift in this final volume: although the focus is still on

[311] Woody, S.J., 'Embracing Finitude,' 129.

[312] Woody, S.J., 'Embracing Finitude,' 130.

[313] Emmanuel Falque, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist*, trans. George Hughes (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016); English translation of *Les noces de l'agneau: Essai philosophique sur le corps et l'eucharistie* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2011). Citations in this section will be done parenthetically from the English translation unless stated otherwise. For a summary of his theses in this book, see Emmanuel

embodiment, Falque takes on a much more theological tone,[314] as well as stronger retrieval of the material and animal nature of humanity. Although overcoming the body-soul dualism was beneficial to both philosophy and theology, Falque argues that phenomenology has merely put the body-flesh dualism in its place, and then focussed on one pole of it (flesh/*Leib*). While body-flesh is a progression from body-soul, it poses new questions to both philosophy and theology: "Hasn't philosophy forgotten the *material* and *organic* body in coming to speak of flesh as lived experience of the body? And hasn't theology become blocked in its discussion of the organic or the living body of Christ?" (1). These are general questions, of course, but they are also questions that relate directly to his earlier works in this trilogy. What has recently been helpful for these disciplines—the phenomenological focus on flesh (*Leib*)—has resulted in directing attention away from an understanding of the objective body (2). As a result of his own reflection and the critiques of others, Falque here seeks to amend his lack of attention to the organic body.[315]

Whereas his earlier work focuses on the lived experience of the body—flesh/*Leib*—and so is in line with phenomenology broadly speaking (citing Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Chrétien, Marion, Lacoste, and Henry), in this book Falque turns his attention to what has been overlooked, the "philosophy of the organic" (citing Nietzsche and the painters Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud) (3). All the phenomenological work on the body heretofore has, by and large, neglected "the 'body' as such," that is, the organic body of our everyday experience (3). Rather

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Falque, 'This Is My Body: Contribution to a Philosophy of the Eucharist', trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner, in *Carnal Hermeneutics*, ed. Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 279–94.

[314] Ciraulo calls this book "a phenomenological foundational theology of the Eucharist." Jonathan Martin Ciraulo, 'Viscera to Viscera: Emmanuel Falque on the Body of the Eucharist', *Modern Theology* 34, no. 1 (2018): 103–10.

[315] Notably from Emmanuel Tourpe, who critiques Falque's emphasis on the lived body as being a form of modalism (390). For his critique and Falque's response, see Emmanuel Tourpe and Emmanuel Falque, 'La chair et l'être: Échanges autour d'un livre récent', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 104, no. 2 (2006): 387–403.

than focussing on the suffering body or resurrected body (as in his other two books that look at Good Friday and Easter Sunday), he focusses here on the erotic body, the body that is given over to the other and transformed into the agapeic body. Falque's trajectory in this book is thus staged in three parts: first, he looks at the abyss and chaos of human embodiment, leading to the biblical/theological figure of the sacrificial lamb; second, he comes to an understanding of sexual difference in humanity by way of understanding its animality; and finally, theologically, he discusses the transformation of animality in the erotic giving of bodies in the eucharist (3). Unlike other phenomenologists, and unlike his own previous work, Falque is no longer going upwards in a transcendental ascent of the disembodied *Leib*, but rather digging deeper into the chaotic and unknown depths of *Körper*. Although Henry is one of the phenomenologists whose work Falque aims to correct, Falque's discussion of the material and organic nature of the human being draws strong parallels to how Henry describes the immanent and material nature of flesh.

Part one of *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* details this "Descent into the Abyss" and Falque's attempt to recover in phenomenological thinking that upon which humanity is built and constituted, as that with which it can never be without. Falque needs to start here, with this abyss, because it "is precisely what the *This is my body* of the eucharist comes to explore, comes to take on, the better to transform" (7). Echoing what he says in *The Guide to Gethsemane*, though developed in a much richer way here, Falque makes clear that "Christ plunges into the abyss of humankind and the world" that exists before or without sin (7). Again, in order to truly understand Christ and humanity, Falque must start his analyses with that shared by all human beings: the chaos and abyss that lies at the deepest levels of nature.

An important idea that Falque puts forward in this text, touched on in *Crossing the Rubicon*, is what he refers to as the "spread body" (*corps épandu*). A development from his own

conceptions of embodiment in previous texts, this understanding of embodiedness is a middle ground between the subjective, phenomenological flesh (*Leib*), and the objective, scientific body (*Körper*) (12).[316] Neither fully objective nor fully subjective, the spread body accords more with our ordinary, quotidian understanding of flesh or organic matter. Drawing from Nietzsche, it is the "unconscious of the body" (13). Falque criticizes phenomenology for its sharp dualism between flesh (*Leib*) and body (*Körper*), and its inability to "know how the body is material, unless it is made objective" (14). It is fitting, then, that Falque critiques his own thinking in *The Metamorphosis of Finitude* for also neglecting the material body: "A 'docetism of the flesh' would be a possible reading of my previous book on the Resurrection … if it were not balanced here by a kind of 'biology of the body' in the context of a reflection starting from the eucharistic *this is my body*" (241 n9). *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* is his attempt to find a more nuanced and fulsome account of the body.[317]

Falque contends that both philosophy and theology need to recover this sense of the body in order to truly understand the human condition, and especially theology for how it understands the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. In an overview of Greek and Christian myths of the origin, Falque highlights the fact that humanity comes from chaos (15-18). As such, we must understand both the incarnation and the eucharist as dealing with the chaos that forms human beings: Christ fully takes this on and transforms it. In grappling with these issues, Falque seeks to push phenomenology to its limits. Whereas phenomenology has heretofore focussed on and overemphasized flesh, intentionality, and passivity, here Falque attempts to recover the

[316] It can also be seen as a body between Descartes's *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. In French there is the subtle play on words between the extended (*étendue*) and spread (*épandue*) bodies.

[317] For a development of his notion of the "spread body" in relation with ethics and palliative care, see Emmanuel Falque, 'Toward an Ethics of the Spread Body', trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner, in *Somatic Desire: Recovering Corporeality in Contemporary Thought*, ed. Sarah Horton et al. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019), 91–116.

materiality of the body, a non-signifying and fundamental chaos, and activity or force. He is still informed by Merleau-Ponty in this endeavour,[318] but even more so by Nietzsche.[319]

Falque finds in Nietzsche's work a deep grappling with the forces, drives, and passions that swirl beneath our well-refined, though illusory, egos. He cites Heidegger's work on Nietzsche: "Chaos is the name for bodying life, life as a bodying writ large. Nor does Nietzsche mean by chaos what is tangled as such in its confusion, the unordered, arising from the removal of all order; rather, chaos is what urges, flows, and is animated, whose order is *concealed,* whose law we do not descry straightaway."[320] Chaos is thus seen as fundamental, but more importantly as something positive. "Bodying" is taken in a verbal form by Nietzsche, and taken up by Falque, to indicate the whole movement of the chaos and passions underlying human life. The reversal of phenomenology that Falque is enacting here aims to reveal, theologically, that "in taking on our humanity, [Christ] also took on and took into his care our animal origins"—that is, Christ took on the chaos, non-sense, and active passions endemic to being human (29). It is these that, on stage at the Last Supper, comprise a God "ready to accept responsibility for all and ready to transubstantiate all" (30).

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[318] He cites Merleau-Ponty's "The Philosopher and His Shadow": "What resists phenomenology within us—natural being, the 'barbarous' source Schelling spoke of—cannot remain outside phenomenology and should have its place within it" (*Signs*, 178; quoted on Falque, 244 n27).

[319] He quotes Didier Franck, saying that for Nietzsche it is "the body and the body alone that philosophizes." Didier Franck, *Nietzsche and the Shadow of God*, trans. Bettina Bergo and Philippe Farah (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 344 (quoted on Falque, 24). Franck is drawing from Nietzsche's notebooks, where he writes "the body philosophizes" (*der Leib philosophirt*). Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, KSA 10, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1882-1884*, Hrsg. Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1967), 226. For a good comparison of Merleau-Ponty and Nietzsche on the body, see Lars Petter Storm Torjussen, 'Is Nietzsche a Phenomenologist?: Towards a Nietzschean Phenomenology of the Body', in *Phenomenology and Existentialism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, Analecta Husserliana, CIII (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), 179–89.

[320] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, ed. David Farrell Krell, trans. Joan Stambaugh, David Farrell Krell, and Frank A. Capuzzi, vol. 3 The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 80. Quoted on Falque, 26.

The embodiedness and animality of Christ takes on a certain clarity at the Last Supper. At this Passover meal that he shares with his disciples, Judaism (the sacrificial lamb) and Christianity (Jesus as the lamb of God) come together. "In eating the body—*this is my body*—the disciple receives, in fact and paradoxically, *all* of divinity, including all of creation, which is concentrated there and which we share in our animality. The incarnation is an assumption and recapitulation of *all*—nothing slips away from God except sin" (32). We can only understand the eucharistic "this is my body" when we understand the "perfect consonance … between Christ given to eat and the paschal lamb as sacrificial lamb" (35). The child who was laid in the manger (Luke 2:7) will later give himself as food (John 6:52-56), the sacrificial lamb has become the paschal lamb. There are deeply symbolic resonances here, but they reveal the animality in the humanity that Christ takes on and redeems (38).

From chaos and animality Falque turns to eros and sexuality, as the final part of an understanding of the eucharist. In both the eucharist and the sexual encounter there is a gift of the body from one to the other, and in each there is a consumption/consummation (45-46).[321] Falque follows Paul in demonstrating the connection between these two. In chapters 10-11 of 1 Corinthians, Paul discusses "the sacrifice (10:23-33), man and woman before God (11:1-16), and the Lord's Supper (11:17-34)" (47). Looking at Paul's letter to the Ephesians, however, Falque shows how the analogy between the erotic and eucharistic/charitable "this is my body" is radicalized. When Paul writes "husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25), he "makes the second (the charitable [eucharistic] body) the model for the first (the erotic body)" (48).[322] When it comes to the question of the presence of

[321] The French *consommation* has both meanings.

[322] In drawing closer the connection between these two, Falque also compares the altar linen in a church to the marital bedsheets, "such that there is not in reality a fulfillment of the erotic for a couple except with the 'hand' of

Christ in the eucharist, Falque shies away from a substantializing reification in objectivity—what has been falsely over-emphasized in "transubstantiation"—wanting instead to focus on abiding (John 6:56) (49-52). The believer thus dwells and remains in Christ, this relational aspect being more important, Falque suggests, than objective presence.[323]

In part two of this text—"The Sojourn of Humankind"—Falque delves even deeper philosophically into the topics he has already brought up: animality, organicity, and sexuality. Turning first to animality, Falque is clear that neither God nor human beings are animals—since human beings are "already metaphysically humanized" and "belong theologically to the divine" (64-65)—but that they (human beings, and God as Christ) undeniably have animality in their composition. This nature is something that we need to reckon with, Falque argues. "The animal in humanity actually tells us nothing about humankind if it is not philosophically experienced (Chaos, passions, drives …); it also remains insignificant for the believer if it is not taken on and accepted theologically (incarnation and eucharist)" (65).[324] Falque avers here that the animality that makes up human nature must be first accepted and analysed philosophically, but comes to take on a richer meaning with the theological claim that God meets humanity in its animality. Before human beings are thinking (Descartes's *cogito sum*) or dying (Heidegger's *sum moribundus*), they are simply animals that live—here a philosophical claim before the entry of theology (66). A concern that Falque sees, both philosophically and theologically, is an improper relation to our animality, where consciousness or mind is accessed without means of the body. In trying to surpass animality there results a Gnosticism or Angelism "which always leads to

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he who contains and transforms them in his *agape*" (49). The "hand" here refers to Rodin's sculpture *The Hand of God*, in which an intertwined couple—Adam and Eve—are emerging out of a clod of dirt in God's hand.

[323] He writes that "*abiding in Christ*—such then is 'the fundamental act of Christian being' that the philosophical approach finds in the theological abode of the eucharisticized bread" (53).

[324] Ellipses in original.

distancing us from our materiality as well as from our humanity" (73). But humanity also goes the other direction, relating to its animality in such a perverted and evil manner that it results in "bestiality" (sinfulness), thus dropping below what other animals are capable of (73-74). He lists "pornography, prostitution, perversion of the self, and so on" (75) as paradigmatic of the bestiality brought about by the fall and sinfulness.[325] The former relation he calls "*mind without body*" and the latter "*body without mind*" (70).

The *anima-animus* distinction highlights the relation with difference between human beings and animals: *anima* points to basic animality and vitality present in all animals, whereas *animus* points to consciousness or the rational mind, which is what only human beings have (75).[326] This linguistic relation also appears in Genesis. As God breathed the "breath of life" into the formed "dust of the ground" that was Adam, making him a "living being" (Gen. 2:7), so too did God breathe into "every living creature" that "out of the ground the LORD God formed" (Gen. 2:19) (75-78). The Hebrew for "living being" and "living creature" both mean "breath of life," also pointing to the identity between human beings and animals.[327] Pointing out Aristotle's definition of human beings as a political animal as a turning point in thought (85-86; *Politics* 1.2), Falque says here that Western thought's focus on the 'political' or 'rational' has led to a forgetting of the 'animal' (86). But Christ's incarnation, he contends, does (and must) assume and transform "our share of animality (Chaos, passions, drives; difference between male and

[325] In this context he quotes Pascal (a quote he is fond of using throughout his work): "Man is neither angel nor beast, and it is unfortunately the case that anyone trying to act the angel acts the beast." Pascal, *Pensées*, 242. Quoted on Falque, 72.

[326] Gschwandtner lauds Falque's reincorporation of animality into discussions of humanity; however, she argues that he posits too strong of a distinction of human beings from animals (human superiority), rather than a distinction among animals. Gschwandtner, 'Corporeality, Animality, Bestiality', 16 n22.

[327] Falque cites (77) a note from the *Traduction œcuménique de la Bible* on Gen. 2:19: "The animal is qualified as a living creature (literally breath of life) like man…. The Yahwist author, before showing the superiority of man over the animals wishes to recall that they have respiration in common," 47 (ellipses Falque's). *Traduction œcuménique de la Bible*. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1975-1976.

female) to raise it into a humanity (desire, recognition, fecundity; difference between man and woman) that itself desires to be incorporated into God (Trinity and filiation)" (87). What philosophy and theology have largely downplayed or sought to quickly bypass has not been forgotten in Christ's incarnation.

In his continued movement from (phenomenological) flesh to body, Falque moves from embodiment and animality to the level of matter and the organic. "The organicity of the animal," he writes, "as of our own bodies, comes first from its materiality as subject to decay (putrefaction), even though, while living, it is nourished by breath [*souffle*], or by 'thrust' (*poussée*)" (100).[328] Drawing on passages in the Hebrew scriptures (Ezek. 37:1-14; Isa. 40; Eccl. 3), Falque shows that there is a natural corruption and decay of both animal and human flesh (101-03). Spinoza and Nietzsche philosophically also point to the deep basis for human beings in raw, organic material.[329] "The body in Spinoza (corpus), and the flesh in Nietzsche (*Leib*, in the sense of the vibration of the organic rather than the simple phenomenological lived experience), are seen as truly 'marvellous'" (107). There is in both thinkers an "unknown" and "unconscious" of the body that surpasses that of our normal consciousness, and even Freud's unconscious (107). The body is not seeking to "know" but to live, to body forth (108). Substance and consciousness derive from this underlying force—not the other way around—and both philosophy and theology must grapple with this fact. In his moves away from what he sees as phenomenology's problematic over-emphasis on flesh—especially as he sees in Henry's work—Falque's understanding of the body as a living force ironically shows strong parallels to Henry's notion of Life.

[328] By 'thrust' (*poussée*) Falque refers to the underlying dynamism or force of life.

[329] Falque also discusses the painters Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, and Lydie Arickx, and the poet Antonin Artaud for how they "show" the body in raw materiality (112-17).

Taking this more vitalist account of the body in humanity, Falque now intends to draw it closer to the phenomenological understanding of flesh. Whereas he has focussed on the phenomenological flesh over body in his treatise on resurrection (*The Metamorphosis of Finitude*), he seeks in this more recent text to identify the body in the eucharist. However, he wants to do so in a way in which these two are still connected in the person of Jesus Christ, as there is too great a distance between them theologically (and philosophically) (119).[330] In the Catholic Mass, and especially during the time of the eucharist, one comes "not simply with the *I can of my consciousness*, but also with the *I move by means of my body*" (122). Falque draws an interesting parallel between phenomenological "flesh and bones" (Husserl's *leibhaftig*)[331] and the "flesh and bones" of the resurrected Christ (Luke 24:39).[332] "Flesh and bones" here does not refer to just materiality, but to the whole of the person, that is, to material body (bones) and lived flesh (123). Therefore, the real presence of Christ in the eucharist is not just his body (organic material), though that is there, but rather it is his whole being.

Falque returns again to the theme of the erotic, and to the eucharist as Christ's body given over in love. His aim is to link the erotic and the eucharistic together in a linking of *eros* and *agape*. What this reveals is that "it is not human love (*eros*) that serves as model for divine love (*agape*), but rather divine love (*agape*) that, in espousing human love (*eros*), succeeds in integrating and transforming it at the heart of the eucharistic act" (134). Before there is a

[330] On this point he cites Gustave Martelet: "The scepticism that shakes the faith of Catholics today in the eucharistic Presence is perhaps the symptom of unease, caused by the theological rupture between the eucharist and the Resurrection, which is itself explicable by the absence of a true anthropology of the body." Gustave Martelet, *Résurrection, eucharistie et genèse de l'homme* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1972), 130. Quoted on Falque, 120.

[331] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I*, §24 ("in its 'personal' actuality" ["*sozusagen in seiner leibhaften Wirklichkeit*"]) and §39 ("Any perceiving consciousness has the peculiarity of being a consciousness of the *own presence 'in person' of an individual Object*…" [*Jedes wahrnehmende Bewußtsein hat das Eigene, daß es Bewußtsein der leibhaftigen Selbstgegenwart eines individuellen Objektes ist*]). In French, *leibhaften* and *leibhaftigen* are rendered as *en chair et en os* ("in flesh and bones").

[332] Falque further develops the ideas in this section in Emmanuel Falque, 'In Flesh and Bones', trans. Christopher C. Rios, *Crossing: The INPR Journal* 1 (Fall 2020): 5–27.

consommation—whether an erotic union or a eucharistic eating—there must be desire for the other. Falque points to Jesus's enactment of the Last Supper (Luke 22:15), recounting Jesus's passion to be with he disciples at the Passover meal: "I have eagerly desired" (NRSV) or "with desire I have desired" (KJV, ASV). It is this intense desire for the other in both acts that is necessary for it not to become a mere mechanical procedure (136-37). In both the erotic and eucharistic act, the body offered is transformed and transforming. Falque writes that "the desire in the conjugal eros is not simply human; it humanizes—in the same way that the gift of the body in the eucharistic agape is not simply divine; it divinizes. The dynamic of desire must be such in the erotic night (as it is in the eucharistic Mass) that the meeting of the bodies produces a profound transformation of the self" (157-58). The dynamism of these acts means that individuals are not static bodies, but in the process of becoming, ever oriented toward a transformation. The human being, Falque argues, becomes more human in the self-giving of the erotic act, and God becomes more divine in the self-giving in the eucharist.

In part three of *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, "God Incorporate," Falque shifts from a more philosophical mode to an explicitly theological one. Once again, the three chapters focus on the three main concepts of animality, embodiment, and *eros*. Now, however, Falque details the way in which all three find their true transformation in the incorporation of the divine in humanity and humanity in the divine (173). On this double sense of incorporation, Falque writes that "the incorporation of God … does not simply incorporate God to man and man to the bread in the particularizing movement of kenosis (a subjective genitive), but also, and even more, integrates man with Christ and Christ with the Church in the universalizing project of eschatology (an objective genitive)" (175). The eucharist—which is fully Trinitarian, in that the liturgy invokes the Father and the Holy Spirit in the transubstantiation of the Son—ultimately

gathers up the animality and organicity of human bodies into a divine and pleasurable perichoresis with the Trinity. In this union, where *eros* has been transformed into *agape*, each member desires and gives themselves to the other leading to "a true happiness" (176).

As we have seen above, for Falque Christ assumes all of human nature, which means all of the animality that comprises a human being. It is this whole that he offers in the eucharist. After talking about the scandal of the eucharist and realist debates around Christ's body and blood in the eucharist, Falque says that we should still be amazed "that a man could thus *give himself to be eaten*" (187; John 6:54-57). Our understanding of the transformation that takes place in the eucharist will only occur if we start from Christ's scandalous offering, and our questions which come out of an "infantile naïvety" (188). However, Falque also complements a reading of "carnal realism" (188) with a phenomenological reading. Visiting the debate on the eucharist between mediaeval theologians Lanfranc of Bec (ca. 1010-1089) and Berengarius of Tours (999-1088), Falque concludes that "flesh and body hold together in the act of the eucharist. The matter is not more important than the manner (as for Lanfranc), nor the manner more important than the matter (as for Berengarius). We need to think of a kind of continuity, from the body to the flesh, or from the historic Jesus to the Resurrected Christ" (194). Trying to hold the phenomenological and ontological together, Falque concludes that, in the eucharist, that which is in me that has been assumed by Christ (animality, drives, chaos) is offered back to me (198). In this act, our animality is transformed into humanity in the process of filiation (becoming children of God).

Moving from a recognition that Christ shares fully what human beings are, as far as animality is concerned, Falque discusses embodiment and its transformation in the eucharist. This discussion entails what it is that Christ offers and that Christians consume. In the act of

transubstantiation, the substance of the bread and wine are converted into the body and blood of Christ, but their species remain the same (200). Christ's presence in these elements is thus in a special and mysterious manner. But Christ's presence is also in an objectified manner: he tells his disciples "this is my body" in such a way that he objectifies it; as Falque notes, this is a distinction from "I have a body" and "I am a body" (202). But, after making himself a thing—a "this"—and having his objectified presence consumed in the eucharist, the follower of Christ is led to again see him as a subject (202-03). Even as object, however, the presence of Christ in the eucharist is not reified in a static fashion. Instead, following Aquinas and Leibniz, the substance of Christ is an act of being or an active force (203-04). The substance of Christ that is offered up in the eucharist is, then, a power or force—and specifically, the Holy Spirit is this force.

In consuming God during the eucharist, the believer is also consumed by God, and here is where the double sense of incorporation is realized. According to Falque, "nobody simply eats God, but we are always in some respect eaten by him. From our being anthropophagous (eating the body of Christ) what becomes clear is a kind of theophagy (to be eaten or incorporated into the body of Christ)" (205). The believer consumes Christ, yes, and is vivified by the body and power therein, but the believer too becomes food for God, causing the body of Christ to grow, live, and function in the world.[333] In offering himself fully, the believer who comes to consume Christ must also offer herself fully to Christ. Despite the importance Falque places on the organic, he comes finally to a more holistic position: "Appearing in flesh and in bones, the Son, as we have seen, is not given in the bread and the wine *with* the flesh or *with* the bones. It is, rather, a question of his 'person,' or the 'thing itself' (*Sache selbst*), and not simply a compound of organs" (216). Christ who is consumed in the eucharist is not to be understood as reduced to

[333] "Eating his body in the mode of assimilation, and being eaten by him in the form of incorporation, we constitute *ad intra* and phenomenologically his embodiedness, which allows him *ad extra* to appear and be manifest" (219).

pure organicity or *Körper*, but as a person who lives their embodiment out in an inseparable manner, *Leib* and *Körper* together.

Although Christ has taken on the fullness of the existence of human being and has taken that up with him into the Trinity upon his ascension, there remains a fundamental distinction between God and human beings. This separation and differentiation is what allows there to be a movement between God and humanity, especially as demonstrated in the eucharist. The communion between God and human beings leads to an abiding of each in the other, as noted in the "Bread of Life" discourse (John 6:56), the discourse on the "True Vine" (John 15:1-11), and Jesus's "Prayer to his Father" (John 17:20-21) (227). There is a permanence to this abiding that leads to feelings of joy and being at home.[334] "The true joy," Falque writes, "is not simply to possess God in himself (assimilation), but to give oneself up to him (incorporation), without ever losing that difference that always and forever forms the site of self-identity as well as the site of pleasure (desire and differentiation)" (231). Christ shows us that the truest way to be human, and the truest relation to embodiment, is not to have a body ("I *have* a body") or to be a body ("I *am* a body"), but to offer up one's body for others ("*This* is *my* body") (233).

Falque's attention to the body in his discussion of the resurrection in *The Metamorphosis of Finitude* leads in one direction: from body (*Körper*) to flesh (*Leib*). As I noted in the section where I discuss that book, he thinks that, although Christ was fully embodied in the totality of human existence, his goal was to become flesh (*Metamorphosis*, 148). The goal of Christ's life, and thus the teleology for humanity, is to transform body (*Körper*) into flesh (*Leib*), a movement achieved in the resurrection. In *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* Falque attends to a backlash of theology on philosophy and a backlash of the organic body on the lived body. Both philosophy

[334] Falque notes how "permanence" comes from the Latin *manere*, meaning "to remain, stay, endure, abide" (227).

and theology, he argues, have neglected the material makeup of the human being—accessing mind, consciousness, and flesh (*Leib*) without the body—which has led to an over-spiritualization of Christ and humanity. Falque shows that only by paying attention to the materiality constitutive of human nature, as well as the underlying forces, drives, and chaos, can philosophy and theology understand what a human being is. This view takes on especial theological import when examining the doctrines of the incarnation and the resurrection.

Nevertheless, despite this shift in his attention back to the organic and to a notion of the "spread body" (*corps épandu*) in his discussion of the eucharist, Falque does not abandon the movement from body to flesh in the resurrection. In *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* he analyzes the forces and organicity foundational to humanity, and shows how these are present in Christ in a special way in the eucharist. He thus ends up with two movements: the movement of Christ from flesh to body (eucharist) and the movement of Christ from body to flesh (resurrection). Although there is philosophical attention to these two movements, Falque's stance is *in fine* a theological attempt to give a more holistic understanding of the human being. Reflecting both the movement of Christ to earth (the incarnation and the eucharist) and then back to earth metamorphosed and eventually heaven (the resurrection), this bi-directionality in Christ becomes foundational for Falque's understanding of the human being as such. The presence of Christ in the eucharist is the whole person of the resurrected Christ, both "flesh and bones," that is, both *Leib* and *Körper*.[335]

[335] Gschwandtner does, however, critique Falque's understanding of the eucharist for being too individualized and not focussing on the communal aspects present in the liturgy. See Christina M. Gschwandtner, 'Mystery Manifested: Toward a Phenomenology of the Eucharist in Its Liturgical Context', *Religions* 10, no. 5 (2019): 1–18. Her claim was first developed in a paper presented at a colloquium surrounding Falque's thought in 2014. See Christina M. Gschwandtner, 'L'expérience de la liturgie: Comme phénomène religieux commun', in *Une analytique du passage: Rencontres et confrontations avec Emmanuel Falque*, éd. Claude Brunier-Coulin (Paris: Éditions Franciscaines, 2016), 135–53. In his response to Gschwandtner, Falque submits that "perhaps there is a certain form of individualism in contemporary phenomenological practice that does not sufficiently see the 'community' in which the body of Christ is always given," but that "one never celebrates alone, just as one never communes only 'for

Conclusion

In the first section, I showed the ways in which Falque has always approached his subject material from the perspectives and writings of both philosophy and theology. He believes that both disciplines have their own domains and approaches, but that each can be used beneficially to talk about the same phenomena. I have also shown Falque's emphasis on finitude and embodiment. These are essential to being human, and thus the unsurpassable starting point for all philosophical and theological discourse. To bypass them too quickly, or to derive finitude from infinity, leads to idealist notions of infinity or angelism (theologically and philosophically) which then lead to incoherencies in how human beings are understood.

In part two, which looks specifically at Falque's theological trilogy, I both laid out the trilogy and its movements, and did so by mapping it onto his outlined method. It is clear in his trilogy that he consistently moves between philosophy and theology, and that he does so because he realizes that both of these disciplines and approaches are able to help him achieve his aims. We have also seen his commitment to embodiment and finitude in his theological-phenomenological understanding of the incarnation, the resurrection, and the eucharist. In all these cases Falque's approach starts from the experience of our own embodied existence, and uses his preferred philosophical position to interpret this: phenomenology. I have also shown how Falque's own position on these matters developed, especially as seen in the changes he makes in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* in response to *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, attempted to amend an over-emphasis on flesh over body.

I have also addressed in places the relations between Falque and Henry. I have pointed out in this chapter how Falque is critical of what he sees as Henry's idealism and "angelism"

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themselves'" (81). See Emmanuel Falque, 'Vers quelle "adoration eucharistique"?: À Christina M. Gschwandtner', in *Parcours d'embûches: S'expliquer* (Paris: Éditions Franciscaines, 2016), 78–83. Translation mine.

when it comes to his understanding of flesh. Henry's position has led Falque to accuse him of Docetism and, if not a flesh without a body, at least an incommensurability between these two because of an over-emphasis on flesh. However, in both *The Guide to Gethsemane* and *The Metamorphosis of Finitude* Falque also emphasizes the flesh over and above the body. In response to what Falque sees as Henry's and phenomenology's lack of attention to the material body—which he admits to also neglecting in the first two volumes of his trilogy—Falque focusses on materiality in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, in such wise that organicity is not lost to ethereality.

That said, Falque's emphasis on forces, drives, and chaos in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* shows many parallels with Henry's understanding of Life and flesh as an active and material force. Although their language is slightly different, Falque's attempt to get at the forces underlying human animality circles him back to a position very similar to Henry's. Falque does not explicitly engage with Henry's *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, which is either an unacknowledged debt, or a glaring oversight, for Falque's views in the final volume of his trilogy show much in common with Henry's analysis in this foundational text on the body. I think that if Falque were to understand Henry's views as elucidated in this text, and have a better understanding of Henry's notion of the duality of appearing, his criticism of Henry would be greatly minimized. I showed, too, how their understandings of salvation are very similar. Although Henry's understanding of salvation seems to be tied to the effects of the incarnation itself, it lines up with how Falque understands the resurrection, namely, a change in one's manner of being (*Leib*), and thus a movement from objective materiality to the lived body.

Unlike the other phenomenologists associated with the "theological turn," Falque both wears his faith on his sleeve and is not afraid to ruffle the feathers of either philosophers or

theologians by crossing the boundary between them. Commenting on Falque's Catholic identity, Onishi writes that "for him, to be Catholic is always to be catholic—the particularity of the Catholic identity stems from the universality of experience—finitude, embodiment, worldliness."[336] This openness seems to do in part with Falque's personality and theological training, but also to a development in French phenomenology itself, and to a growing acceptance in the French Academy. Falque is more boldly theological than his preceding generation (e.g., Marion, Lacoste), and they more than the one that preceded them (e.g., Henry, Ricoeur). Falque indeed thinks that the age of rigidly separating philosophy and theology is over. On the one hand this is a positive stance to take, but on the other it leads to the hard (perhaps impossible) balance between phenomenological description and theologically normative and universal claims.[337]

However, like the other phenomenologists in the "theological turn," and in this he and Henry are similar, Falque sees himself working primarily as a phenomenologist. As such, he sees his thinking as being carried out within the bounds of phenomenology, yet in such a way as to push phenomenology to and past its limits. His critiques of phenomenology's presuppositions and assumed requirements—as seen especially in "backlashes" documented in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* (theology on phenomenology) and *Nothing to It* (psychoanalysis on phenomenology)—are no doubt transforming the meaning of phenomenology, and thus deepening its descriptive milieu and power. There is a certain nonchalance about Falque and his work that is freeing: he believes that the issues of the "theological turn" have been overcome, and that the overcoming of onto-theology and metaphysics has also been overcome. These were

[336] Onishi, "Introduction to the English Translation" in Falque, *The Loving Struggle*, xxiii.

[337] "A normative phenomenological perspective, however, fails to account for a possible multiplicity of standpoints and experiences—a fact that numerous critics have convincingly demonstrated in their engagement with phenomenologies of embodiment. Nonetheless, he proceeds to articulate not just 'an' individual experience or 'his' particular perspective, but rather posits a singular account of these events from an overarching 'human perspective,' expressed in its preeminent fullness through the experience of Christ." Woody, S.J., 'Embracing Finitude', 125.

necessary movements in philosophical thinking, and he is informed by them, but he is unwilling to remain stuck in their morass.

The ongoing importance and relevance of Falque and his work will, of course, have to be judged over time. His methodological insistence on the border crossing between disciplines is helpful, but there are certainly those disciplines that will want to protect the sanctity or integrity of their own approaches, and disciplines whose shore Falque has, as of yet, not crossed over to. There are, therefore, philosophers who may try to extract only the philosophical import of his work, and theologians the same with his more theologically inflected moments. But whatever the case may end up being, Falque reveals to us what the boldness of thinking and writing looks like. He lives out what it means to be a seeker of truth starting from the only place we can, our embodied finitude. This insight, surely, can be appreciated by every thinker, regardless of what bank of a certain river they find themselves on.

Conclusion

I will briefly recap here what I have shown in the three chapters, then highlight some similarities in Henry's and Falque's thought before turning to a more detailed look at their differences and what the significance of these differences entails. I succinctly outline what effects their different views have on the understanding of flesh and body as it relates to incarnation and resurrection. When it comes to the charge of Docetism in Henry's work, I argue that Falque makes this claim because he misunderstands Henry, and that in trying to correct what he sees as a fault in Henry's work, Falque ends up having a position closer to Henry's. Finally, I discuss three possible avenues for future research.

In Chapter 1 I laid out a brief foundation necessary for understanding Henry and Falque that included an overview of phenomenology, Janicaud's critique of the "theological turn" in French phenomenology, and critical responses to his position and the state of the "theological turn" today. Phenomenology was inaugurated by Edmund Husserl at the beginning of the 20th century, when he sought a more rigorous manner of understanding how phenomena present themselves to human beings. In order to do this, he suggested the motto "to the things themselves." As part of the method of phenomenology, transcendence—including God and religious phenomena—was excluded. Husserl's most famous student Martin Heidegger developed phenomenology in important ways. Chief among them, at least as it concerns those in the "theological turn" who appropriated him, was the methodological move to include inconspicuous phenomena, that is, phenomena that do not appear in a straightforward manner. This alteration allowed for further inroads into including religious phenomena within phenomenology. For both Husserl and Heidegger, phenomenological analyses are carried out via

intention, and a bracketing of one's natural attitude—how one experiences the world in everyday life—to take on the phenomenological attitude.

In 1991, Dominique Janicaud critiqued a trend in French phenomenology stemming from Levinas's work in the '60s. Labelling this trend the "theological turn," Janicaud argues that these phenomenologists have abandoned the method of Husserlian phenomenology in which transcendence had to be bracketed. Moving beyond the bounds of immanence, they were calling their work phenomenology but were in fact, he claims, doing theology. These thinkers, however, argue that their work continues to be phenomenological in nature. Although they do contravene some of the protocols of Husserlian phenomenology, they are pushing the limits of phenomenology on phenomenological grounds. That is, their modifications to phenomenology are in service of and in response to phenomena. I also highlighted some essays in contemporary collections dealing with the "theological turn." What we see is that there is strong precedent already in Heidegger to broaden the bounds of phenomenology, and a parallel strain of phenomenology native to France that predates Husserl, namely, French spiritualism. This succinct layout provided the necessary framework onto which I then mapped Henry and Falque, and assessed the importance and relevance of their contributions.

In Chapter 2 I critically engaged with the thought of Henry on the question of flesh and incarnation. In order to do this, I first looked at his philosophical grounding laid out at the beginning of his career. In *The Essence of Manifestation* and *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body* Henry undertakes a careful (and lengthy) critique of Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology, arguing that they follow the lead of Western philosophy in general in only believing in one mode of appearing, namely, an outward, ecstatic, and transcendent one. He argues for a second and more important mode of appearing, which is a non-ecstatic and

immanent mode of appearing that he calls auto-affection. These two modes of appearing are distinguished as Life and world. This duality of appearing directly bears on how Henry describes the relation between flesh and body. Auto-affection is an immediate experience of the self, which is how Henry understands flesh; the body is known via the ecstatic mode of appearing, as a projection in the world.

I then showed how Henry works out these earlier phenomenological ideas in regard to Christianity in his theological trilogy. In *I Am the Truth*, Henry argues, using primarily the Gospel of John, that Christ takes on flesh not body in the incarnation, and is declared to be the Truth and the Life. What is important about Christ, and therefore necessary in order to understand what Christianity claims to be true, is that Christ does not appear in the world and as a body, but in Life and as flesh. Henry does not deny that Christ was a material and historic person, and so the critiques that find Docetism in his works are unfounded; rather, these aspects of Christ are not determined by Henry to be most important in relation to the movement of absolute Life. In *Incarnation* he picks up some underexplored areas in *I Am the Truth* related to incarnation and flesh. He provides a stronger rationale for a phenomenology of flesh and, drawing on Tertullian and Irenaeus, provides a grounding for this coming to flesh in a phenomenology of incarnation. Finally, in *Words of Christ*, I showed how Henry applies his idea of the duality of appearing to a philosophy of language, namely, to an interpretation of which words of Christ are human and which divine, and how it might be that human beings can understand both sets of words.

After analysing Henry's works around questions of flesh and body, I turned in Chapter 3 to an investigation of Falque. Unlike Henry, who has a clear break between his theological trilogy and his explicitly philosophical works, Falque's theological trilogy has been interwoven

with his other works. However, all his other works have also been a blend of phenomenology and theology. I laid out his rationale and method for his approach in the first section. Focussing primarily on *Crossing the Rubicon,* where Falque puts forward the method he uses in all his works, I highlight his position as one in which both philosophical and theological thinking start from the basic and insurpassable horizon of finitude. This means that thought begins philosophically; but Falque argues that philosophical thought moves toward and is transformed by the theological. Despite this movement from the philosophical to the theological, Falque also argues that the boundary between the two disciplines should become more porous, and encourages thinkers from both disciplines to cross over and practice thinking from the other side from time to time—a practice which is beneficial to both philosophy and theology, he argues.

After laying out Falque's approach to thinking, I turned to a critical analysis of his theological trilogy, making salient the ways in which his ideas align with and diverge from Henry's. We must bear in mind that, like Henry, Falque's approach here is still philosophical, which is marked by calling his trilogy *Triduum philosophique*. Falque's trilogy, unlike Henry's, hangs together in a very explicit and intentionally theological way: the three days of Easter. The first volume starts with Good Friday, and details the incarnate suffering of Christ from the Garden of Gethsemane to the cross on Golgotha. In the second volume, I argued that Falque interprets the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday as a second birth in which Christ takes up and metamorphoses human finitude, and fulfills in the flesh what he assumed in the body. Finally, Falque returns to the beginning of the Easter weekend, Holy Thursday and Christ's initiation of the eucharist at the Last Supper. Here I argued that there is a development of Falque's thought from flesh to body, as Falque enacts a "backlash" of theology onto phenomenology in order to recover a deeper sense of the material and organic nature of the

embodiment of Christ. And yet here too Falque's move towards forces, drives, and chaos unintentionally and ironically aligns him with Henry.

Phenomenology is a very powerful philosophical approach for understanding ourselves and our world, and both Michel Henry and Emmanuel Falque demonstrate this in their work. Although their backgrounds and approaches are different, and they find themselves working in a slightly different time period, both thinkers are motivated by similar aims. The first is to push phenomenology to its limits, and so to transform and deepen phenomenology according to its own impulse. The second similarity is their shared focus on immanence. As I have shown, Falque is critical of Henry for being too focussed on transcendence, but Henry, as much as Falque, is concerned with Life, force, and embodiment from a very immanent position. A third similarity is the intimate relation between philosophy and theology. Despite being philosophers first, and Henry more so, both thinkers engage with biblical and theological texts, and doctrines such as incarnation and resurrection. For both thinkers, theology ultimately reveals and transforms philosophy and the world.

Although both Henry and Falque are central figures in the "theological turn" in French phenomenology, and are both Catholics, they are certainly theological in different ways. This fact is due, I think, both to their training and to the context in which they were writing, and perhaps to their individual personalities. Henry's degrees were all in philosophy, whereas Falque has degrees in both philosophy and theology. Additionally, each generation of those in the "theological turn" are more openly theological in their work, a sign, it seems, both of their boldness and a growing acceptance of religion in the French academy. Henry's use of theologians is quite minimal, even in his theological trilogy, sticking almost exclusively with Meister Eckhart, Tertullian, and Irenaeus. His work deeply engages with the Bible (almost

entirely the New Testament), but Henry does this largely untethered from a tradition or commentaries that guide his phenomenological reading of them. His stated reason for this untethering is that these resources cannot reveal the Truth of Christianity in the ways that his phenomenological analyses can, which ultimately reveal that Life guides and provides understanding, and, since we are in Life, we can understand scripture through this alone.

Falque, on the other hand, engages with a myriad of theological figures throughout history and across the ecclesial divide: Augustine, Origen, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Eriugena, Scotus, Aquinas, Bonaventure, Rahner, von Balthasar, and also Protestant thinkers such as Jüngel, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Barth, and Bultmann, all find a place in his work, and this is only a list of the major and recurring figures. Falque also goes to scripture for his analyses, but uses both the Old and New Testaments more broadly than Henry. So, even though both are philosophers first—a stance even Falque maintains—Falque is clearly more at home in the theological and biblical canons and goes there with the eye of a phenomenologist, seeing how their thought can enlighten his own. Falque is "much more explicitly religious in his analysis than Henry," Gschwandtner writes, but he also "pays far more attention to 'secular,' especially scientific, insights."[338] With Falque, then, the "theological turn" has become decidedly and overtly more theological than with Henry. But, unlike Henry, he believes that worldly insights are also useful and trustworthy resources for coming to a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation.[339]

As I suggested in my introduction and have demonstrated in the preceding chapters, the crucial difference between Henry and Falque is that they have different aims, and so we must

[338] Gschwandtner, 'Corporeality, Animality, Bestiality', 10.

[339] Curiously absent from Falque's work is Caroline Walker Bynum's 1995 work on the resurrection of the body. Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

assess them on the basis of this distinction. I showed that Henry is best understood as doing foundational phenomenology, whereas Falque primarily is doing descriptive phenomenology. Henry deeply analyzes the conditions of appearing as such, and the nature of the human being in relation to this. His focus on the conditions for appearing does not mean that he denies appearances, but he does not spend as much time describing them or how they specifically appear. Because of this, Henry's phenomenology does read as being dense and abstract, but this is only because he is attending to the deeper movements of Life that underly the phenomenon of appearing.

Falque, on the other hand, is more of a descriptive phenomenologist; he describes phenomena, and also compiles and compares the insights of different thinkers. His focus is thus more on describing how distinct phenomena appear. This is not to say that he focusses completely on *what* appears rather than *how* it appears, as I showed in several places. However, even in discussing how discrete phenomena appear, he is more concerned with the discrete phenomena rather than their appearing as such. This distinction in approach means that Henry and Falque will come to different views on the understanding and description of phenomena. Both provide helpful analyses, but the distinction requires that we do not judge them by the same criteria.

It is only by having this distinction clearly in mind that we can properly and finally make conclusions about Henry's and Falque's positions on a phenomenology of flesh and body in relation to incarnation and resurrection. First, because Henry and Falque are phenomenologists, their analyses of body and flesh are concerned with *how* a body is lived, experienced, and manifested, not with *what* it is, that is, not what the body is ontically or substantially. When it comes to the incarnation, then, both Henry and Falque affirm that Christ was an historic and

material person. However, because of their distinct approaches to phenomenology, Henry is much more focussed on the flesh of Christ, as conditioning how Christ appears in Life and Truth. Falque is concerned that only focussing on this aspect of Christ's appearing might lead us to think that this is the only condition for understanding how Christ appeared—or that Christ did not appear at all—and results in an inability to link flesh and body in ways that could lead to Docetism. He thus attends much more carefully to the material conditions of the body that enable flesh to be, and to a more detailed reading and existential analysis of Christ's life and death. Here reading Henry and Falque together on the incarnation is helpful, since their stances complement each other rather than contradict one another. Their views on the resurrection of the body are almost identical. Both claim that Christ is known by his flesh, or his mode of living his body. In Falque we see a clearer progression from body to flesh as Christ moves from incarnation to resurrection, but they both agree that the resurrected body is, to the extent they can say this, flesh not body.

What is most noteworthy, I have argued, about the relation between Henry and Falque is that when Falque makes his "theological backlash" on phenomenology for over-emphasizing flesh to the detriment of the body, his move towards a retrieval of the material and organic nature of the human being leads him to territory already travelled by Henry. Falque looks to the drives, forces, and chaos that undergird the organicity of the human body. But these are the same forces that Henry finds in the work of Maine de Biran, and takes up in his understanding of the absolute body which is the flesh. In his critique of Henry's position and response to it, Falque's analyses actually and ironically take him even closer to it. This reveals that Falque largely shares Henry's understanding of flesh and the root of human life; however, it reveals too that the closer these

theological phenomenologists get to the "root" of matter, there is a primal or originary force and dynamism at play, namely, Life, or God—definitively revealed by Christ.

What are some of the future directions that research could take with regard to Henry and Falque? As I have shown, Falque's work is marked by "backlashes" (theological in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, and psychoanalytic in *Nothing to It*), "crossings" (between theology and philosophy in *Crossing the Rubicon*), and "amorous combat" (between contemporary French philosophers in *The Loving Struggle*). What "backlashes" and "crossings" are still to come? First, there could be a richer interaction between phenomenology and analytic theology and analytic philosophy of religion. Although Falque talks about a crossing between "philosophy and theology," by "philosophy" he means "phenomenology." This may be acceptable in his native France, but in an Anglo-American context, philosophy of religion primarily refers to an analytic rather than a Continental approach to subject matter. A crossing between these two approaches and disciplines could be beneficial to all. James T. Turner, Jr. and Joshua R. Farris, for example, would be apt sparring partners for a future *disputatio*, as their works deal with responses to substance dualism in relation to the human being and the resurrected body.[340]

A second way in which their work—with Henry in mind here more than Falque—could be taken up in helpful ways is in relation to contemporary culture and science. Henry was already critical of conventional scientism in his own day, describing his society in the mid-80s as a form of "barbarism" that, across the spectrum (socially, politically, scientifically, and in education), stultifies Life.[341] The Western world largely still seems beholden by the progressivist myth that scientific and technological advances will save society, and that a university education

[340] James T. Turner, Jr., *On the Resurrection of the Dead: A New Metaphysics of Afterlife for Christian Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2019); Joshua R. Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology: A Cartesian Exploration* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

[341] His critique comes across most clearly and forcefully in *Barbarism*, but is also evident in *I Am the Truth*.

is best suited to making new producers and consumers. Henry concludes *Barbarism* with a modicum of hope, by writing that there are individuals who "would like to transmit this culture [i.e., the culture of Life], to enable one to become what one is, and to escape the unbearable boredom of the techno-media world with its drugs, monstrous growth, and anonymous transcendence. But it has reduced them to silence once and for all. Can the world still be saved by some of them?" (142). These words, especially regarding the "monstrous growth" of the "techno-media world," are even more relevant in our world today. Under the banner of progress, Western societies continue to inhibit Life across the globe. Henry's work on immanence and Life, and also Falque's emphasis on embodiment and finitude, provide helpful—and hopeful—avenues to critically respond to the disincarnating and dehumanizing trends of our techno-scientific, media, and socio-economic programs.

Finally, the thought of Henry and Falque could be taken up in the fertile ground between phenomenology and cognitive sciences. Both thinkers have written books on psychoanalysis—Henry's *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis* in 1985, and Falque's *Nothing to It: Reading Freud as a Philosopher* in 2018—and there is certainly good work to be done at the interface of phenomenology and psychoanalysis, especially on the question of forces and drives.[342] However, in the cognitive sciences, the ideas of embodied cognition and enactivism are very promising domains in which to apply Henry's and Falque's thought. These fields assume the necessity of human embodiment for cognition and the mind, and take seriously the relation between human beings and their environment for thinking, behaviour, and affect. Thinkers like Shaun Gallagher

[342] A recent example is Rudolf Bernet, *Force, Drive, Desire: A Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Sarah Allen (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020).

and Thomas Fuchs are already applying insights from phenomenology to brain science, and insights from Henry and Falque could make further contributions.[343]

As a final concluding word, I reiterate that both Henry and Falque contribute a breath of fresh air to thinking. I do not say philosophical or theological thinking because, as I hope I have demonstrated, for these two thinkers the boundary between these disciplines is quite arbitrary and need not be strictly adhered to. Yes, it exists, and it will continue to exist, in the academy and wider culture. But what Henry, Falque, and others in the "theological turn" as a whole have done is expand the range of thinking beyond the silos of the modern academy. They encourage and foster interdisciplinarity, engaging with thought in the realms of philosophy, theology, psychoanalysis, and art. Their style of thinking hearkens back to pre-modern thinkers for whom distinct, heavily bounded disciplines were not the norm; rather, they use any and all tools available to them in search of the truth. Here their phenomenological analyses of the flesh of Christ relate directly to their approach to thinking: it does not matter *what* one is, but *how* one lives life in pursuit of the truth.

[343] Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Shaun Gallagher, *Enactivist Interventions: Rethinking the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, Third edition (New York: Routledge, 2020); Thomas Fuchs, *Ecology of the Brain: The Phenomenology and Biology of the Embodied Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Fuchs is the Karl Jaspers Professor of Philosophical Foundations of Psychiatry at the University of Heidelberg, and, like Jaspers, is both a philosopher and a psychiatrist.

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